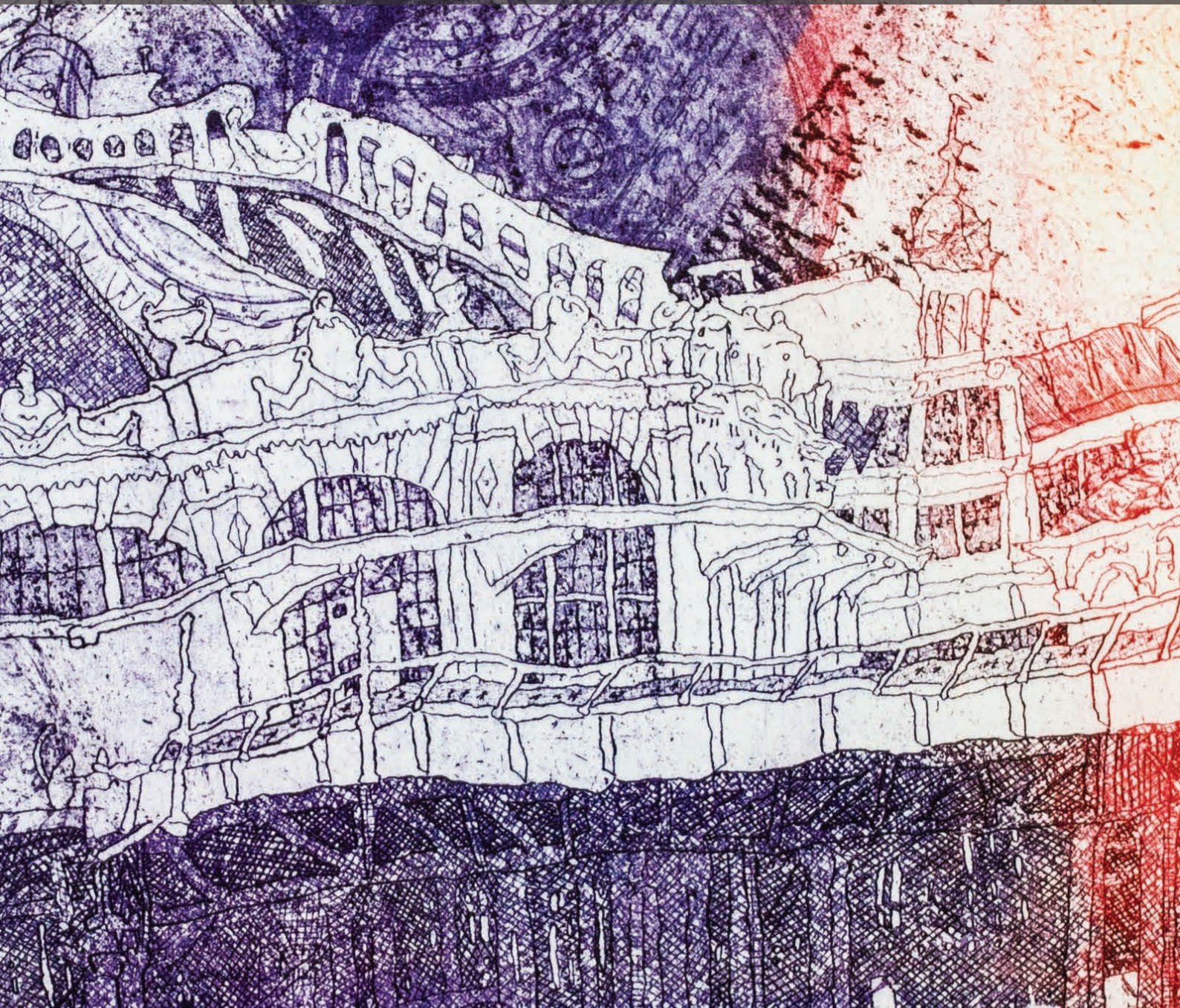


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Table of Contents

<i>Manufacturing Politicians: Angela Merkel's Image in the Spanish Press during the German Federal Elections</i> Lorena R. Romero-Domínguez Miriam Suárez-Romero	pp. 1 - 14
<i>Documentary as Autoethnography: A Case Study Based on the Changing Surnames of Women</i> Hande Çayır	pp. 15 - 30
<i>The Mythical Boer Hero: Deconstructing Ideology and Identity in Anglo-Boer War Films</i> Anna-Marie Jansen van Vuuren	pp. 31 - 41
<i>"Monitoring" the Entire "Spectrum": The Influence of Journalism Ideology on the Content Producers of a South African Public Radio Station's Current Affairs Programmes</i> Anna-Marie Jansen van Vuuren	pp. 43 - 54
<i>Different Histories, Different Narratives: ICT Uses as "Habitus"?</i> Angeliki Monnier	pp. 55 - 68
<i>Perception and Construction of Children's Perspectives on Japanese Superheroes: A Comparative Study on the Ways Children in Singapore and Malaysia Appropriate Media Cultures</i> Nunna Venkata Prasad Shanthi Balraj Baboo Ambigapathy Pandian	pp. 69 - 78
<i>Women as Reflected in Egyptian TV Commercials</i> Nesrin El-Sherbini Salwa Darwish Iman Bastawisi Maha El-Tarabishi	pp. 79 - 94
<i>Theo Angelopoulos: "A Voyage in History, Time and Space"</i> Iakovos Panagopoulos	pp. 95 - 102
<i>Bypassing the Camera: The Image Production Possibilities of Taiwanese Experimental Images</i> Lin Hsin-I	pp. 103 - 109
<i>The Representation of History in the Feature Film "The Chronicle of Yerevan Days"</i> Shmavon Azatyan	pp. 111 - 120
<i>Cinematic Representations of Girls Who Participate in African Political Conflicts</i> Norita Mdege	pp. 121 - 132

<i>From Greatcoats to Gym Tunics: Reading History through Images of Women Playing Netball</i> Margaret Henley	pp. 133 - 148
<i>The Uses of Instagram for Self-Presentation and Self-Promotion of Thai celebrities</i> Pan Chatchaiyan	pp. 149 - 161
<i>Queer Approach to Homosexuality in Indian Culture</i> Anuja Pandey	pp. 163 - 176
<i>Re-Thinking Politics in Film: Thai Independent Cinema After the Coup d'état 2014</i> Sopawan Boonnimitra	pp. 177 - 189
<i>The Dependence on International Film Festivals of Thai Independent Cinema</i> Peerachai Kerdsint	pp. 191 - 201
<i>Lesbians (On Screen) Were not Meant to Survive</i> Federica Fabbiani	pp. 203 - 212

Manufacturing Politicians: Angela Merkel's Image in the Spanish Press during the German Federal Elections

Lorena R. Romero-Domínguez, University of Seville, Spain
Miriam Suárez-Romero¹, University of Seville, Spain

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Abstract

Spanish public opinion shows, according to sociological surveys, a disaffection towards the Chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel. From the influence of the media on current prevailing opinion in society, this article analyzes the opinion pieces published in the Spanish reference press: *El País*, *El Mundo* and *La Vanguardia*. The period surrounding the last three federal elections in the German country is taken as temporal reference point. Through the methodological technique of content analysis applied to these texts, the investigation studies what kind of valuations are transmitted about a woman erected as leader of Europe, who does not have the sympathy of the citizens of so-called peripheral countries. Aspects like the media ideological influence in the image creating process are also analyzed in order to establish whether a distorted image based on a negative-aspects approach has been created or not.

Keywords: Angela Merkel, public opinion, Spanish press, economic crisis

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1. Introduction

Media select and interpret current affairs for citizens, shaping opinions according to certain interests. A persuasion that directs our way of looking at events and restores valuations, attending to a complex studding of interests beyond the informative purposes.

In this process, the influence of opinions expressed in the diaries can be understood as the result of an activity that exceeds the limits of information and approaches own propaganda labours. To this fact, critical studies are required to know why we think in a certain way and how media channel society's views.

This is the main purpose of the present investigation. The subject of enquiry is the image that the Spanish press has offered about Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany during the last three federal elections.

The choice of this politician is motivated by the lack of studies on her media treatment, taking as a starting point the citizenship's opinions about Merkel shown in some surveys conducted by sociological centres. 'Transatlantic Trends', an annual poll of European and American public opinion developed by the 'US German Marshall Fund' and the 'Compagnia di San Paolo', can be quoted as an example. The results report of the twelfth study, carried out in 2013, shows that a large majority in the Netherlands, Germany, Sweden and France approves the European management of the Chancellor (73%, 64%, 59% and 58% respectively), while Spain, Portugal and Italy, the three most affected countries by the economic crisis, express strong rejection (82%, 65% and 58% disapprove it respectively).

On the basis of these premises, the objective of the article is to determine the Spanish press positioning with regard to the German Chancellor, evaluating the possible changes that could exist during the last three federal elections and analyzing aspects like the media ideological influence in the image creating process. The final purpose is to establish whether a distorted image based on a negative-aspects approach has been created or not. From this purpose, we formulate the hypothesis of the research:

- H1. The Spanish press has taken a stand against Angela Merkel in their opinion pieces, contributing to forge a negative image of the Chancellor in the society.
- H2. From 2008, year of the beginning of the crisis, there has been a quantitative and qualitative progression in opinion pieces devoted to the Chancellor, increasing the total amount and the tendency to highlight negative aspects.
- H3. The editorial policy of the studied journals influences and determines the conveyed image of Angela Merkel in the texts.

2. Media influence on public opinion: Angela Merkel and the economic crisis in Spain

The press is a social control instrument, directing its efforts to produce consensus, as it was called by Lippmann (2003) and retaken by Chomsky and Ramonet (2010). It is necessary to keep the citizens in their mere observer's status through a permanent fear and a continuous entertainment. But then comes a time when this is no longer

effective as distraction and it is required to switch to a higher level and disseminate fear of ‘enemies’, creating ‘first-line monsters’. Ours is called Angela Merkel.

Morelli (2001) –basing on Arthur Ponsonby- updated the propagandistic technique involving the identification of the enemy with the devil (2001:53): “The reader and the citizenship need ‘good’ and ‘bad’, clearly identified, and today the simplest is to treat it as *the new Hitler*”.²

In October 2011 Angela Merkel visited Athens. She was received by a demonstration of Greek citizens carrying banners and placards equating her with Hitler, hugging him or wearing the uniform of the *Schutzstaffel* (popularly known under the acronym *SS*). The critics focused on the fact that the austerity measures promoted by Merkel emerged as a reinforcement of German power in Europe, as had happened in the events that had led to World War II. A common association in the country's newspapers, as Kundnani (2013) indicates.

And not only Greece has *hitlerized* her: in early 2013, Cypriot citizens attended to a protest march with Hitler moustaches and Merkel masks, an image that was also seen in November 2012 in Portugal. The Spanish press has also make use of this strategy: the newspaper *El País* published -and later retired- a journalistic opinion column written by the Professor of Applied Economics, Juan López Torres (2013), from the University of Seville. He argued that, like Hitler, Merkel had declared war on the rest of Europe, this time to assure German economic space.

Everyday observations -as the above- are the reason why this article tries to find out the media influence on the creation of Angela Merkel's image. The real Spaniards' knowledge about her does not explain the largely negative position adopted by the population, so media have had to play a crucial role, given that what the average citizen knows about the Chancellor comes mainly from them. Following Ellul (1990), without mass media, there is no modern propaganda.

Domenach (1955) also wrote about the necessity of a *pre-existing substrate* as the basis for the rule of transfusion, connected with mythology and clichés. He also theorized about the importance of simplification. This coincides with the growing personalization of politics marked by Zamora Medina (2009). We all know Angela Merkel and most of the criticism focuses on her, not on the *Christlich Demokratische Union* (CDU) -her party- or Germany.

Spaniards do not know the Chancellor for her political career in Germany, but for being the protagonist of the economic crisis in Spain as *de facto* leader of the European Union. Kuttner (2012) synthesizes the general opinion about this guidance: ‘The German chancellor's remedy of austerity is killing Europe, and the failure to contain financial speculation is spreading the epidemic.’ Nevertheless, the roots of the crisis are far behind.

Since 2007, the Spanish economy presented an inflation that exceeded one point the Euro zone rate. This was complemented by a broad current account deficit and the influence of the global financial crisis originated in the United States of America,

² Translated from Spanish by the authors.

from where the explosion of the property bubble spread worldwide (Flores and Van Duin, 2014). All this triggered the onset of economic recession in 2008. One year later, in 2009 -concurring with the re-election of Merkel in the Chancellery-, the first saving bank underwent an intervention and it was created the Fund for Orderly Bank Restructuring (FOBR) for the financial sector.

The Spanish government formally asked the European Union for banking financial support. 35 measures were adopted to reduce spending and, once signed the Memorandum of Understanding in 2012, the Eurogroup granted an aid of 100,000 million euros for Spanish banks. The country experienced these years the creation of the *Sareb* (Company for the Management of Assets proceeding from Restructuring of the Banking System, or simply 'Bad Bank'), the reorganization of the nationalized banks and numerous cuts to reduce public spending.

In late 2013 -beginning of the third and current term of Merkel- the first positive and significant datum after years of recession is announced. The Economic Bulletin on 13 October 2013 of the Bank of Spain pointed the following (2013:41): 'According to the available information, still incomplete, about the evolution of the Spanish economy in the third quarter of 2013, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) would have grown by 0.1 per cent quarter on quarter in this period [...]. If confirmed, this would be the first step of the product from the first quarter of 2011.'³

This context has a significant influence on the Spaniards' conception of Angela Merkel because of her leadership role in the Eurozone crisis as the head of the largest economy in the group. As Ulrich Beck (2011) points, the telephone of Europe belongs to Angela Merkel. She starred -and continues today- the country media landscape.

3. Methodology

In order to study the texts about the Chancellor in the Spanish press, the selected body of scholarship is composed of the most read general information diaries in Spain, based on data from the General Mass Media Survey of the Spanish Association for Communication Media Research (AIMC). *El País*, *El Mundo* and *La Vanguardia* head the list, in this order.

The selected period comprises the week before and after the last three federal elections to choose the German Chancellor: 2005 (18 September), 2009 (27 September) and 2013 (22 September), coinciding with the production peak of information and opinion on the country and its political representatives. Merkel won all these ballots, so she has been leading the Teutonic country's government for a decade so far.

Addressing the overall objective of the paper, only the opinion pieces have been selected for the investigation. They reflect the ideology of the newspaper business group (Escribano, 2008) and they have an inherent influence and ideological orientation capacity.

³ Translated from Spanish by the authors.

The content analysis is the selected technique to carry out the study. Krippendorff (1990) notes that this method allows to formulate inferences from coding form data, together with a codebook. According to Neuendorf (2002: 132), together they 'should stand alone as a protocol for content analyzing messages.' We agree with the practical function of this technique highlighted by Bardin (2002): become distrustful.

Sociologists Mayntz, Holm and Hübner (1993) define the content analysis as a research technique that identifies the linguistic properties in an objective and systematic way, in order to obtain conclusions of the non-linguistic properties of people and social groups. Drawing on these inputs, the following coding form is applied to the sample:

CODING FORM

1. Name of the coder and date of codification
2. Daily newspaper: *El País* / *El Mundo* / *La Vanguardia*
3. Headline
4. Journalistic genre: editorial article / column / opinion article / tribute / letter from the director / criticism / analysis
5. Date of publication
6. Location (journal section and page number)
7. Extension
8. Author and his/her institutional link with the media
9. Overall thematic
10. Economic concepts. It measures the presence and assessment (positive/ negative/ neutral) of the ensuing concepts: euro, economic crisis, reforms, fiscal policy, budgetary balance, public debt, labour market reform, job creation, unemployment deficit reduction, economic growth, budget cuts, bailout or others.
11. Angela Merkel: in order to know the frequency of occurrence and the connotations shown in the Chancellor representation, the coders mark and reproduce the quotations in which she appears, thereby allowing to determine what positioning has taken the author and the general valuation (positive/negative/neutral) that has been transmitted.

4. Results

The first data after the analysis is provided by the frequency of occurrence: in 45 studied days (fifteen per year), Angela Merkel has been present in 129 opinion pieces, as it has already been said, 40 from *El Mundo*, 46 from *El País* and 43 from *La Vanguardia*. Filtering by years, there are 36 units in 2005, 30 in 2009 and 63 in 2013, what means a remarkable quantitative progression.

The most used genre is the journalistic column (35 per cent), followed by the opinion article (22 per cent) and the editorial article (17 per cent). The preponderance of the column indicates that, when giving opinions on the Chancellor, it has been used a very nearby and personalized format with fixed signatures and spaces.

The most used section is *Opinion*, which comprises 56 pieces. It is closely followed by *International*, with 49. The fact that the largest space is formally dedicated to opinions -so they are clearly marked as such- means that there has not been an intentional reader manipulation: they differentiate between opinion and information. A different situation is seen in the *International* section, which only has seven pieces less than the previous one. As it is not well differentiated, it is possible to talk here about a potential reader mix-up. For example, when publishing a notice about Angela

Merkel with a column on the same theme aside in the page, the supposedly objective and aseptic nature of the information is lost because of the obvious influence that the opinion fragment has on the understanding of the news.

With regard to the pieces placement, the analyzed texts predominantly appear on even-numbered pages (74) versus the odd ones. Furthermore, both partial results of the newspaper and the total sum show a predominance (49.61 per cent) of text with an extension of less than half a page, which may indicate a lack of deepening in the treatment of Merkel.

Focusing on the publishing dates -in order to know if it has been done a continuous follow-up or some interrupted publications-, the next figure combines the data from all years and newspapers:

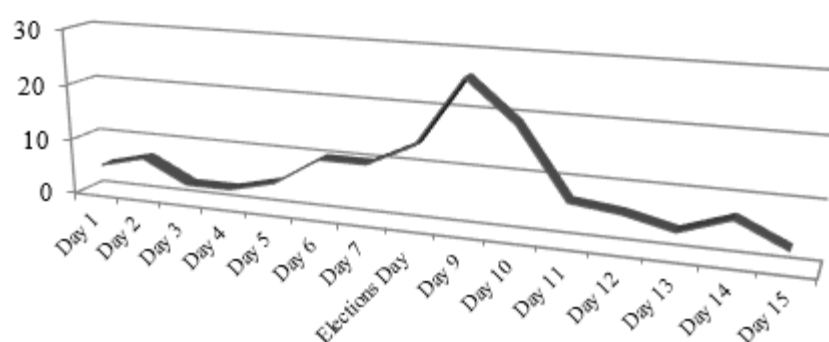


Figure 1: Publication days (all newspapers in 2005, 2009 and 2013).

Source: Prepared by the authors.

It is noteworthy that the highest amount of texts is published during the days surrounding the elections, concretely from the seventh to the tenth, thus corroborating the effectiveness of the temporal selection criteria. These days fit the following periods: from 17 to 20 September 2005; from 26 to 29 September 2009 and from 21 to 24 September 2013. Nevertheless, although there is a peak on the graph, opinion texts about Merkel are published throughout the delimited time (the week before and after the last three federal elections). This can be seen as a truism in 2013, when Merkel is a renowned person in Spain, but it is not so obvious in 2005 and 2009.

All the same, the assiduous appearance is not correlated with an authoring repetition as the average is of one unit per author. But there is an undisputed tendency: the linkage of these authors with their media is majoritarian, either as staff members, journalists or as integrants of the management board (altogether, 91 pieces are signed by linked authors), a tendency also fulfilled in the partial data of individual newspapers. This suggests a respect for the ideological line of their respective media.

Giving up formal aspects and deepening into the content, the study delves into the general topic of the texts about the Chancellor. Those combining economy with international policy are outstanding (46.51 per cent). Considering the inclusion in international politics as logical when studying electoral periods, the most significant finding is the association with the economic issues. We thereupon examine which

specific concepts has Merkel been represented with, on the basis of the following summarizing table:

	Total pieces	Positive	Negative	Neutral
Euro	17	25.53%	58.82%	17.65%
Economic crisis	39	30.77%	69.23%	0%
Economic reforms	42	69.04%	26.19%	4.76%
Fiscal policy	25	44%	52%	4%
Budgetary balance	3	66.67%	33.33%	0%
Public debt	15	6.67%	86.66%	6.67%
Public debt reduction	12	25%	75%	0%
Labour market reform	22	72.73%	22.73%	4.54%
Job creation	15	33.33%	60%	6.67%
Unemployment	33	24.24%	72.73%	3.03%
Deficit reduction	9	33.33%	66.67%	0%
Economic growth	36	22.22%	47.22%	30.56%
Budget cuts	16	43.75%	56.25%	0%
Bailout	13	23.08%	76.92%	0%
Others	1	100%	0%	0%

Table 1: Economic concepts in *El Mundo*, *El País* and *La Vanguardia* during the lastt three German federal elections. *Source: Prepared by the authors.*

The most commonly used concepts are ‘reforms’, ‘crisis’, ‘economic growth’ and ‘unemployment’, in this order, but only the first one has a positive valuation. They have been carried out by governments of all political hues in every country, so there is no ideological difference between newspapers, opting all for a reform course. The other three main terms have an overall negative assessment. What is more, only three of fourteen catchwords have more positive than negative appreciations: ‘economic reforms’, ‘labour market reform’ and ‘budgetary balance’.

After interpreting the counting results, it is possible to assure that the general appraisal made by *El País*, *El Mundo* and *La Vanguardia* in the selected length of time is superiorly negative: there are 61 negative pieces, against 35 positive –fewer than a half- and 33 neutral.

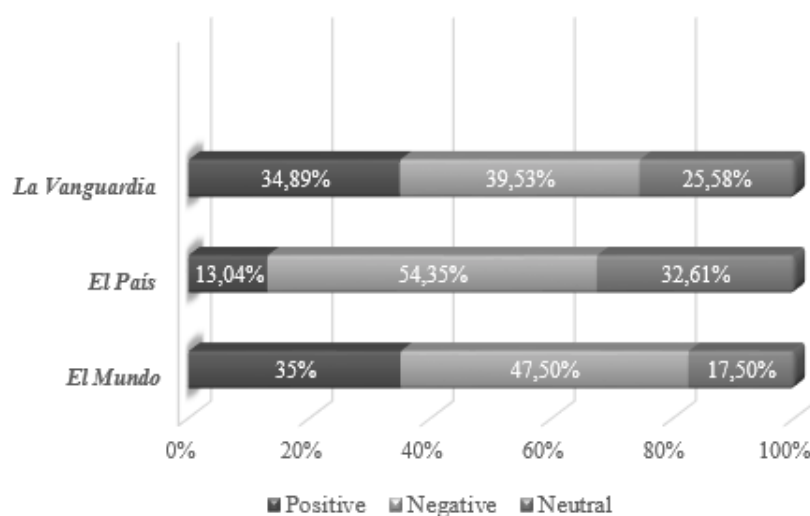


Figure 2: Compared results of the treatment of German Chancellor Angela Merkel in the analyzed newspapers. *Source: Prepared by the authors.*

Starting from Figure 2 above, the periodical *El Mundo* presents a largely negative positioning (47.5 per cent). However, it sometimes supports Merkel in 2005, claiming that if she won, it would be a strong stimulus for all women engaged in politics, and Germany would become the 'locomotive of Europe' again, then favouring Spain and the European Union.⁴ German recovery –the country runs through a crisis at that time– is thus univocally associated with the necessary victory of Angela Merkel. A speech in support that is radically changed the next day, after elections, when *El Mundo* published another editorial article criticizing her lack of leadership and noting that her campaign had been hesitant and full of childish mistakes.⁵

The unexpectedly good results of the political party *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (SPD) are attributed to the same Angela Merkel that, according to the newspaper a few days before, would restore the splendour to the German country. In such a way, the problem is now the confusion of the conservative political agenda, especially in tax matters, added to the serious limitations of Merkel as candidate.

In 2009 this sea change is performed again: before elections, the most repeated thesis is that 'in difficult times, it is better to go for sturdy personalities'. To bet on the strength of the 'Mother of Germany', a woman who loves and cares them like a real mother.⁶ But the day after the elections of 27 September 2009, the mood changes.

In 2013 there is not the quantum leap seen in the elections of 2005 and 2009 because, against all odds of the writers, she continues in the chancellery (and even more reinforced). It is said that most citizens are satisfied with the way the Chancellor has managed the public debt crisis, ensuring that Europe would not be too expensive to taxpayers.⁷

Negative evaluations are the most numerous again in 2013 (45.45 per cent). Criticisms focus on the economic and pro-European line. The negative image of Merkel, it is said, has to do with the disappointment with Europe and the euro, with her main role in the distinction between good and bad and with the management of a crisis that has punished the weakest.⁸ This is an example of the Spanish public opinion orientation regarding the Chancellor, the manufacturing of an image that has been partly shaped by the press, which has also made its own differentiations between victims and guilty.

In respect of the second newspaper, *El País*, there is not any predominantly positive text in 2005, ten of them are negative and one is neutral. Some arguments are clear and note that 'Mrs. Merkel' has not understood her wrong political assessment of a situation that remains full of crises, so choosing her for the Chancellery would be imprudent.⁹ She is still an unknown political figure and journalists doubt about her political qualities. Even so, the CDU wins with a scanty victory that is minimized: the vantage of Merkel consists of three or four seats, what means that her electoral

⁴ Merkel: un impulso para la economía europea. *El Mundo*, 18 September 2005, p.2.

⁵ Alemania, entre la 'Gran Coalición' y el 'Gobierno semáforo. *El Mundo*, 19 September 2005, p.3.

⁶ Es la quietud, estúpido. *El Mundo*, 26 September 2009, p.44.

⁷ Europa no desata pasión. *El Mundo*, 18 September 2013, p.33.

⁸ Angie, un modelo para Rajoy. *El Mundo*, 22 September 2013, p.46.

⁹ ¿Qué se puede elegir? *El País*, 16 September 2005, pp. 5-16.

success is the closest thing to a defeat.¹⁰ A few days later, there is a step from the criticism of the results to the personal critique.

The year 2009, however, is not as severe with the Chancellor and it is even written that she is one of the most remarkable political figures in Europe, pretending to be normal, speaking clearly and without pretentiousness: 'our neighbour Angie'.¹¹

Nevertheless, there is a step back in 2013 and over half of the texts are negative again. Most opinions are associated with her attitude towards Europe and articles proclaim that she is interested in Europe as a trade bloc with a governed currency.¹²

According to some writings, Merkel has handled the situation her way during the last four years and, although the crisis pressured Germany to lead the economic and political revival of the continent, *Mutti* ('mom' in German, Merkel's nickname) did not attend to the History.¹³

The nickname *Mutti* is steadily used in a sarcastic way. The idea that 'mom' takes care of everything so Germans do not have to worry about anything is combined with the use of stereotypical *femme fatale*. For example, one of the authors of *El País* talks about the coalitions trading period and expresses that Angela Merkel will have to find another partner willing to form with her a couple like those spiders whose male partner is smaller than the female and, when the mission is over, it is eaten.¹⁴

Lastly, we examine *La Vanguardia*. The prevailing assessment is negative again (39.53 per cent), although it should be recognized that the difference with the positive pieces (34.89 per cent) is not as significant as it was in the other two newspapers. Nor is there a high quantitative distance between years.

In 2005, the disagreement with the chancellor is openly shown. She is described as an inexperienced and uncommunicative fledgling.¹⁵ The cuts to the Welfare State are among the protagonists topics of the period and it is made a negative assessment of Merkel, also nicknamed as the 'sad victor'.¹⁶ 2009 is once more the only year with a prevalence of positive judgments.

She is no longer the treacherous girl of her mentor nor the little charismatic candidate of 2005, but the 'the disciple' of Kohl, a person with a personality reinforced by its high scientific, intellectual and social Christian political formation.¹⁷ One notable difference that exemplifies why the positive and negative appreciations of Angela Merkel in the daily show so similar results.

In fact, in 2013 there is exactly the same number of pieces in both evaluative ends. Nevertheless, not all do a positive review, emphasizing in this way the duality of opinions that can be observed in *La Vanguardia*. It is said that Angela Merkel does

¹⁰ Se busca coalición. *El País*, 20 September 2005, p.14.

¹¹ Europa, ¿algo más que una gran Suiza? *El País*, 3 October 2009, pp. 31-32.

¹² La Europa alemana. *El País*, 19 September 2013, p.8.

¹³ Alemania tiene un problema. 23 September 2013, p. 6.

¹⁴ Mamá ganó las elecciones. *El País*, 24 September 2013, p.5.

¹⁵ La incógnita alemana. *La Vanguardia*, 16 September 2005, p. 22.

¹⁶ La edad de oro, en declive. *La Vanguardia*, 25 September 2005, p. 13.

¹⁷ Europa tiene a Merkel. *La Vanguardia*, 3 October 2009, p.24.

not have enough determination and courage to lead the continent, and their European counterparts have the feeling that she disproportionately exploits its economic superiority.¹⁸

5. Conclusions

After analyzing all the data extracted from the study of the opinion texts, it is possible to answer the provisional proposals that have guided the research process:

H1. We can maintain that the analyzed Spanish printed press -which has the largest number of readers in Spain- has positioned against the Chancellor. As seen in the results and discussion paragraphs, the joint assessment extracted from *El País*, *El Mundo* and *La Vanguardia* is mostly negative. In fact, opinion pieces that make a negative value of the Chancellor almost double to those that do so positively.

With the aforementioned reflexion about the orientative role of media on public opinion, we can conclude that the press has exerted a negative influence on society through the content of opinion texts. In the pages of the Spanish diaries, Angela Merkel has been derided as opponent and caricatured because of her style; she has been compared with an amoeba and her sexuality has been matched with a salt shaker; her achievements have been presented as defeats; her merits as worth of somebody else and, at the beginning, her measures has been described as the result of the incompetence. In short, we have been guided to pigeonhole her on the side of 'good' or 'bad'.

H2. Comparing the periods of the last two German elections, which coincide with the economic crisis, a progressive evolution is observed in the results. On the one hand, the number of opinion pieces increases -2013 doubles to 2009-. On the other hand, the negativity of opinions grows -2013 tripled to 2009-. Plus there are more pieces dedicated to Angela Merkel, it may be noted a trend towards the predominance of arguments against her, coinciding with the development of the economic crisis itself, as demonstrated by the inclusion of numerous economic and financial terms in the texts.

If we consider the first stretch of time, from 2005 to 2009, there is a decrease in both quantity (number of pieces) and qualitative (in negative rating) in *El País* and *La Vanguardia*. 2009 is, therefore, an exception to the upward trend of 2005-2013. The crisis in Germany ends in 2009 due to the measures taken by Angela Merkel in her first term, and Spain is in the beginning of the crisis, which may explain the uniqueness of the treatment that has been done.

H3. Considering the ideologies of the newspapers, it would be logical to expect that *El Mundo* and *La Vanguardia* adopt a favourable attitude towards the Chancellor, and *El País* an unfavourable one. As discussed in the first hypothesis testing, it is not true, because all of them make a negative judgement of Angela Merkel as a whole. Nevertheless, according to the editorial lines, there are differences between newspapers. The percentage of positive texts in *El País* is the lowest of all. In contrast, *La Vanguardia* presents a smaller difference between positive and negative

¹⁸ No es Merkiavelo. *La Vanguardia*, 21 September 2013, p.12.

pieces, so percentages hardly vary, as it happens in *El Mundo*. Of course, we must add to these figures neutral appreciations.

Therefore, although the conveyed image of Angela Merkel is generally negative, the editorial line continues to have a demonstrable influence on the difference between the two ideological extremes, which is lower in conservative newspapers than in the progressive one.

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Contact email: miriamsuarez@us.es

Documentary as Autoethnography: A Case Study Based on the Changing Surnames of Women

Hande Çayır, Istanbul Yeni Yuzyıl University, Turkey

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Abstract

In the autoethnographic research method, researchers analyse their own subjectivity and life experiences, and treat the self as ‘other’ while calling attention to issues of power. At this juncture, researcher and researched, dominant and subordinate, individual experience and socio-cultural structures can be examined. As an emerging researcher and filmmaker I have made the seventeen-minute documentary *Yok Anasının Soyadı* which is defined as a form of self-narrative that places the self within a social context. The interdisciplinary nature of this enquiry highlights the link between surnames and identity, which is a crucial human rights debate, and also focuses on the feminist quote “the personal is political”.

Keywords: Autoethnography, documentary, human rights, identity, personal is political, surname.

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Introduction

I shall speak about women's writing: *about what it will do*. Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies—for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into text—as into the world and into history—by her own movement
(Cixous 875).

In 2008, when I was planning to write a statement of purpose for an MA degree application, one of my friends tentatively warned me—after witnessing my enthusiasm—that I could not study self in an academic context. In the impulse of the moment, I could not remember Meister Eckhart's well-known words that “a human being has so many skins inside, covering the depths of the heart. We know so many things, but we do not know ourselves” (Allen 33) or La Fontaine's “He knows the universe and does not know himself” (Slater 164) or Yunus Emre's “Knowledge means to know yourself, heart and soul / If you do not know yourself / You will have to study to find out” (Eryaman 59). In short, although I could not respond then, my friend's comment failed to convince me and triggered the momentum to delve into the subject.

In 2012, at the very beginning of my PhD journey in Communications, it all recurred in the same way. In the *Inquiry of Knowledge* course, we, as students, were tasked to discuss our prospective PhD theme, to select a methodology, and to contribute the factual and theoretical knowledge of communication discipline. Thankfully, I had already researched a topic while making my documentary and wanted to go further with it. For that reason, I wrote in my academic paper that I would like to research women's changing surnames in Turkey; as a starting point, and a case study, I would like to use my own personal experience. In the meantime, I questioned the aim of the scientific research: is it about knowing oneself better, or rather about knowing more about something outside the self?

After spending a huge amount of time with books, suddenly something beautiful happened: I came across a methodology called autoethnography. In an overview concerning the methodology, autoethnography was described as:

[...] autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse personal experience in order to understand cultural experience. This approach challenges canonical ways of doing research and representing others and treats research as a political, socially—just and socially—conscious act. A researcher uses tenets of autobiography and ethnography to do and write autoethnography. Thus, as a method, autoethnography is both process and product (Ellis, Adams, Bocher 273).

Autoethnography allows me to frame my values within the academic setting. My panoramic research (Eco 10) includes fundamental chapters featuring surname change, methodology, theory, documentary and communication. The first chapter is about surname change, mainly in Turkey: How do human beings experience the surname change issue in terms of the protection of equal legal, social and economic rights? The second chapter's focus will be the method, autoethnography, where the

researchers analyse their own subjectivity and life experiences, and treat the self as 'other' while calling attention to issues of power. I will also be investigating the method through such questions: Why does someone want to study her / him own self? How will someone collect the data about the self? How will s / he manage the interpretation process? What will be the outcomes? In the third chapter, my focus will be the theoretical framework, mainly depending on feminist theory, while viewing the personal as political and giving voice to 'other'. Hence, the cinema of 'me' has been transformed into collective expressions of identity. In the last chapter, I will strive to set a relationship between what I did in my documentary and the possible effects in the communications discipline, where the capacity of digital media has the power to change the political game. In other words, social media challenges traditional media and increasing accessibility has made the Internet a creative hub that connects people with others who have the same goals.

1. What is in a Surname?

How do women experience the surname change issue in terms of the protection of equal, legal, social and economic rights? To begin with, I started to think about this question in a larger context when my surname was changed without my consent after my marriage. One day I realized I had two diplomas, each with a different name on it; however, both those people are me. Visually, my name has multiplied like an amoeba: Hande Çayır, Hande Aydın, Hande Çayır Aydın. From this visible sign, people around me—for example, civil establishment—have gained the apparent right to talk about my personal life in the public sphere.

Afterward, I remembered the feminist quote 'personal is political', started my own research, and found out that women in Turkey are required to change their surname when they marry and divorce. If they would like to continue using their ex-husband's surname after a divorce, they need to get permission from both the ex-husband and the state. Because of this unfair policy, some women have appealed to the ECHR and subsequently the ECHR is requiring the Turkish government to pay an indemnity. Thus, the link between surnames and identity is a crucial human rights debate. The media portrays this issue as one that is currently being solved. However, after my visit to the Turkish Grand National Assembly, I came to the conclusion that the process is not moving forward at all.

Legally, women in Turkey have two options after marriage, either they have to abandon their first surname and take their husbands surname, or alternatively they have to use both surnames. There is no option to keep their 'own' surname, which again actually comes from another man, their father. In the end, for example, my surname became Aydın instead of Çayır and the whole story began. My writing and films have been published with the surname Çayır. Then, I was legally named Aydın. I did not know what to do. It was such a schizoid case. My identity became multiplied and I have stuck with Hande Çayır Aydın in case of emergency. Some people know my professional Çayır identity; legal partners have to meet with me as Aydın. The similar case triggered the example of *Sybil: The classic true story of a woman possessed by 16 separate personalities* (Schreiber, 1) classified as non-fiction and was a bestseller.

More and more, men have the right to take their surname back after a divorce, which is what happened to well-known Turkish TV personality Serap Ezgü in 2010¹ (Milliyet 1). Did this affect her economically? Has the forced surname change been a barrier for her career? How can this happen to a public figure? How does this reflect in contemporary media sources such as newspapers, advertising, television and cinema? These questions surfaced as readily as my anger. As Goffman says in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, “When an individual appears in the presence of others, there will usually be some reason for him / [her] to mobilise his / [her] activity so that it will convey an impression to others which it is in his interests to convey” (4).

The very first case from Turkey was that of Ayten Ünal Tekeli’s, which yielded positive results in 16 October 200. Ayten 2 Ünal is a feminist lawyer and her clients know her by her first surname. In the meantime, because any change in her surname could create inconvenience, she applied to the court. When Turkish Civil Law declined her case, she applied to the ECHR, and the result was positive. From that day on, she did not have to use the second surname legally.

After the Ünal-Tekeli case, women in Turkey started to apply to the ECHR for their surname rights. Asuman Bayrak was one of those women who called herself a businesswoman. Focusing on Bayrak’s narrative in my documentary, I saw that she made a difference in women’s lives with the innovative choices in the face of this imposition:

I got married in 1992. When I got married, I had to tick a box on the form in order to use my own surname with my husband’s. I didn’t do it. In any case, I never thought about changing my surname. However, I guess five or six years after my marriage, a thief entered our office and stole all my identity cards. Until that day I have never changed my surname. I didn’t feel it was necessary. I thought, if I don’t change it, it remains as it is. But when I went to apply for a new identity card, I could see that my surname was gone and had been replaced with my husband’s surname. I called my lawyer about it;

¹ Serap Ezgü is a well-known TV announcer who has a career of more than twenty years with the name “Ezgü”; the audience know her with the surname of Ezgü. When she and her husband made the decision to divorce, as the rights protect the husband, the husband took her marriage surname from her with a court decision in July 2010. Now she is called Serap Paköz, which is totally a new name.

² The applicant, Ayten Ünal Tekeli, is a Turkish national, born in 1965 and living in İzmir. After her marriage on 25 December 1990 the applicant, who was then a trainee lawyer, took her husband’s name pursuant to Article 153 of the Turkish Civil Code. As she was known by her maiden name in her professional life, she continued putting it in front of her legal surname. However, she could not use both names together on official documents. On 22 February 1995 the applicant brought proceedings in the Karşıyaka Court of First Instance (“the Court of First Instance”) for permission to use only her maiden name, “Ünal”. On 4 April 1995 the Court of First Instance dismissed the applicant’s request on the ground that, under Article 153 of the Turkish Civil Code, married women had to bear their husband’s name throughout their married life. An appeal by the applicant on points of law was dismissed by the Court of Cassation on 6 June 1995. The decision was served to the applicant on 23 June 1995. By one of the amendments made to Article 153 of the Civil Code on 14 May 1997, married women acquired the right to put their maiden name in front of their husband’s surname. The applicant did not prefer that option because, in her view, the amendment in question did not satisfy her demand, which was to use her maiden name alone as her surname (<http://www.aihmiz.org.tr/?q=en/node/98>).

she said not to accept any documents. So I didn't, and for two years I carried a paper that replaced my stolen ID. I didn't know what to do. I got so angry. Later, with my husband's consent and his witness and with my business partner, we appealed to the court. Asuman Bayrak is known as Asuman Bayrak in a business context, so her surname must not change. However, even though the judge was a woman, she decided against me. Then we appealed to a higher court. Again the decision was against me. In any event, this process took four or five years. During that period, I lived without any identification. I couldn't go abroad, I could not do anything. However, eventually I had to retire. So legally we had to divorce. So we did, but we live together. In order not to change my name, we had to get divorced but we still live together. When we were opposed in Turkey, we appealed to the ECHR. That took four or five years; last year in October we finally got a decision in our favour. However, there are two cases before mine in Turkey, and at the moment the government does not recognise the decision of the ECHR. So if I get married again, the Turkish government will again change my surname. But I am determined to fight against it to the bitter end. Now, the ECHR is requiring the Turkish government to pay an indemnity. So we are waiting for the results of that process.

(*Yok Anasının Soyadı / Mrs. His Name*, 2012)

Among other things, does taking on a man's surname after a marriage empower one? As one could always be certain of who the mother of a child was, it might serve for another objective. From that point, a study called *What's in a name? The significance of the choice of surnames given to children born within lesbian-parent families* can be examined, as it focuses on family practices and boundaries. Biological mothers' roles in naming—sperm bank—babies question the structure of heterosexual family decisions, and the question arises: Are homosexual family structures possible with their own parameters, or are those the only copies of the current system? Homosexual sex does not involve procreation, but only desire; because there are two penises or two vaginas, which make a baby impossible, as is also mentioned in Lee Edelman's work *No Future: Queer Theory and Death Drive*. Consequently, in other words, in this system, there is no future, no generation, and no surnames at all.

The heterosexual family institution is also questioned by Talat Parman's article *Merhaba Bebek Merhaba Aile: Bireyin Doğumu ve Adlandırma (Hello Baby Hello Family: An Individual's Birth and Naming)* as follows:

The very first method to humiliate people, even make them non-human, starts with namelessness. If you erase people's names, then you make them invisible. Even in the Nazi concentration camps, it is the absolute reason that people have no names but numbers on bracelets (translated by me 15).

2. Methodology: Autoethnography

Simply put, *auto* means self, narrator, I; *ethno* means others, communities, cultures, they, we, society, nation, state; *graphy* means writing, and the process. To put it in other words, autoethnography is a qualitative research method that focuses on self study, where researchers are using data from their personal life stories as a means to understand society. In their article entitled *Autoethnography is a Queer Method*, Stacy

Holman Jones and Tony E. Adams collected some of the more provocative “too” examples mentioned above, as follows:

Autoethnography and queer theory are both also often criticised for being too much and too little—too much personal mess, too much theoretical jargon, too elitist, too sentimental, too removed, too difficult, too easy, too white, too Western, too colonialist, too indigenous. Yet at the same time, too little artistry, too little theorising, too little connection between the personal and political, too impractical, too little fieldwork, too few real-world applications (e.g. Alexander 2003, Anderson 2006, Atkinson 1997, Atkinson and Delamont 2006, Barnard 2004, Buzard 2003, Gans 1999, Gingrich-Philbrook 2005, Halberstam 2005, Johnson 2001, Kong, Mahoney and Plummer 2002, Lee 2003, Madison 2006, Owen 2003, Perez 2005, Watson 2005, Yep and Elia 2007) (Nash and Kath 195).

As an academically-recognised methodology³, autoethnography follows a social scientific inquiry, and has been expected to be analysed in a broad sense of socio-cultural context. Conjointly, connecting the personal to the cultural is also affirmed in the pioneers', Ellis & Bochner's and Reed-Danahay's, writing. To put it in another way, in grounded everyday life, autoethnography explicitly works against traditional approaches and conventional academic critics and disciplines. By doing so, marginal experiences—usually the invisible ones—are represented while focusing on fluidity, subjectivity, responsiveness, transformation and contribution. Researchers understand and analyse themselves as well as society by the help of autoethnography, which is also a researcher and reader-friendly method. Thus, sharing the output leads to transformation and to the development of cultural sensitivity.

3. Feminist Theory

This is not only about my story; women throughout Turkey's history have resisted these identity issues. For example, in the topic of surnames, I came across an author, Cahit Uçuk⁴ (1911-2014), who never changed her surname, even after four marriages. She admired and followed the work of Halide Edip, and reacted to the surname situation in *Hürriyet* newspaper on 18 January 2003, as follows:

[Uçuk] likes Halide Edip most. [...] However, Edip's signature changed after a marriage, and she signed as Halide Salih. One year later, she would be Halide Edip Adıvar. [...] She thought that since Halide Edip was a well-known author and she thought that there was no need for this surname change at all (translated by me).

³ Autoethnographic output is being published in numerous academic contexts, including but not limited to *Qualitative Inquiry*, the *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, the *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, the *Journal of Sociology*, the *Journal of Career Development*, *Cultural Studies*, the *Journal of Transformative Education*, the *Journal of Men's Studies*, and *Public Relations Inquiry*. In addition, 1361 pages are listed while searching for autoethnographic articles on the Sage Journals homepage, and each page includes 10 articles, which means there are 13,610 published articles on Sage alone.

⁴ <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/koca-soyadi-alan-halide-edipe-inat-cahit-ucuk-oldu-122589> (13 June 2016)

As first-wave feminism focused on women's voting rights, that is to say legal rights and issues of equality, Cahit Uçuk's demand is an understandable one. Fatma Aliye (1862-1936), for example, acquired the surname 'Topuz' after the surname law came into effect. According to Yaraman's book *Elinin Hamuruyla Özgürlük / Freedom with Women Hands*⁵ in 1890 Fatma Aliye also signed her translation book *Meram* (Volonté by Georges Ohnet), with the name 'A Woman' (67). Behice Boran (1910-1987), an active politician, author and sociologist, was known for being fired from the Academy because of her views and was the first Turkish woman socialist member of Parliament who never deviated from her first surname after marriage. According to an anecdote, the head of a meeting called her 'Hatice Tatko Boran' instead of Behice Boran, where Hatko⁶ was her husband's surname; the subsequent fallout was so intense that the person in question was disciplined by a superior. Boran was adamant about never using her husband's surname.

Another instance of a surname issue from this period is Şükûfe Nihal (1896-1973), who wrote an article for a newspaper at the age of thirteen regarding women's education rights, at a time when women were rarely seen in newspapers. Although she married twice, she never used anything other than her first surname, and preferred to be called either Nihal or Şükûfe Nihal⁷. Furthermore, Firuzan⁸ (1932-...) never used a surname as author. The actress Melek Kobra⁹ (1915-1939), on the other hand, used four different surnames even though she only lived to the age of 24. Initially she used 'Sabahattin', her father's surname. After the Surname Law went into effect, the family took on the surname 'Ezgi'. She then married Ferdi Tayfur and became Melek Tayfur. When her journal was discovered after her death, however, she had signed all the entries 'Melek Kobra', a name that she had chosen.

As an author, Nezihe Muhiddin¹⁰ (1889-1958) preferred not to use her husband's surname during her literary career; Muhiddin is her father's surname. Likewise, anchorwoman and journalist Jülide Gülizar (1929-2011) did not use her father's surname 'Göksan', instead creating the surname 'Gülizar' to sign her work. As she says with her own words in Özlem Bayraktar's work *Ekranda Bir Kadın Olarak Kendine Yer Açmak (To Gain Ground on the Screen as a Woman)* "A lot of women artists change their surname when they get married. When they divorce, it changes again. This reduces their reputation to zero when they announce their new name" (152). When she became popular, people maliciously called her father by her surname, which made her father quite angry. Her father's reply is meaningful in this respect: Dear wife, tell your daughter Jülide that she does not use my surname; but don't give her surname to me (153). Author Sevgi Soysal (1936-1976) also used different surnames in her career, such as 'Nutku' for her first book *Tutkulu Perçem* in 1962 and 'Sabuncu' for her second book *Tante Rosa* in 1968. Ayşegül Yaraman emphasized the following in the article *Sorunları mı Sorumluluktan, Sorumluluğu mu*

⁵ The book is signed as Ayşegül Yaraman-Başbuğu, and at the time it was asserted that this was the first conscious double surname usage in Turkey.

⁶ <http://www.amargidergi.com/yeni/?p=1880> (11 June 2016)

⁷ <http://www.amargidergi.com/yeni/?p=2060#more-2060> (10 June 2016)

⁸ <http://www.enternasyonalforum.net/3653-post1.html> June 2016)

⁹ <http://www.ucansupurge.org/yazdir?2C368827BCA87463C97E24B51D0B9212> (10 June 2016)

¹⁰ <http://www.lacivertdergi.com/portre/ornek-kadinlar/2014/12/30/kadin-haklarina-adanmis-bir-omur-nezihe-muhiddin> (11 June 2016)

Sorunlarından: Kadınlık Durumu, Kadınlık bilinci ve Sevgi Soysal / Femininity Condition, Femininity Consciousness and Sevgi Soysal:

Sevgi Soysal never used the surname she was born with. She acquired three different surnames from different men and published her work under these different surnames. Both her life and work document the specific period of time in which there are contradictions where the woman is both the witness and the accused. There are traces of women's struggles that have happened before. [...] In her short life, Sevgi Soysal used four different surnames, and this legal situation mirrors the struggle of the '80s in which women sought to use their father's and husband's surnames together. They later got that right, and in 2000, women struggle to have the option not to change their surname at all (translated by me).

Singer Müşerref Akay was also initially known by the surname 'Tezcan'; however when she divorced, she was forced to give up the surname, because her ex-husband did not want her to keep it. Although the system and some husbands insist on giving a new surname to a woman when she gets married, they take it back when the agreement goes downhill. I even personally know a clerk who conspired to protect surname unions, and deliberately did their job as slowly as possible. Turkish Airlines¹¹ is another example of pressure to unite family names, with a campaign in which partners travelling under the same surname receive a discount of 20%. Furthermore, some of my female friends have very long surnames or masculine ones that they would like to change; however, I have also seen double-barreled surnames like Hanzade Doğan Boyner or Ümit Boyner Sabancı, where the Doğan, Boyner and Sabancı families' surnames represent not only a personal decision, but also a combination of very famous families, statures, and brands. What is the function of a surname, then?

The same logic applies when it comes to foreign surnames. For example, Turkish artist Hande Ataizi married Benjamin Harvey, a foreign national, and became Hande Harvey. As 'Harvey' is an international surname, newspapers wrote that it was very attractive: She is so lofty!¹² On the other hand, in popular media, we saw a famous woman, Seda Sayan, who had relationships and marriages with younger men, which threatened the hegemonic system. She never changed her surname. On one hand, bestselling writer Elif Şafak prefers to use her mother's name as a surname. On the other hand, we know the lawyer and sociologist Nermin Abadan-Unat¹³ with two surnames. At the age of 93, professor Nermin Abadan-Unat brought the issue of double surnames to the court, asserting that it was problematic to pass through airports in order to attend conventions, meetings or symposiums. 'Abadan' is her surname, which was acquired from her late first husband. In her court filing she noted the following:

¹¹ <http://www.sabah.com.tr/ekonomi/2015/11/12/thy-yuzde-20-soyadi-indirimi-yapiyor> June 2016)

¹² <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/hande-harvey-cok-havali-oldu-23204154> (5 June 2016)

¹³ http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/56575/iki_kocasinin_da_soyadini_istedi.html (20 June 2016)

Invitations from abroad create a distressing problem, in that ‘Nermin Unat’ and ‘Nermin Abadan Unat’ are the same person, but I cannot prove it. To solve at least this issue, I would like to use my two husbands’ surnames together (translated by me).

As a traditional act, in many societies, women usually take on the husband’s surname after marriage. History tends to be the story of husbands / men and the agreement all starts with name destruction. One is not born with those surnames, but later becomes Mrs. Hemingway or Mrs. Engels or even Mrs. Richard Dalloway, which enables a critical perspective upon the past. In short, hegemonic discourses erase women’s voices, lives, rights and even their habits and names.

On the other hand, feminist / writer Mary Wollstonecraft kept her first surname after a marriage and signed papers as ‘Mary Wollstonecraft femme [or wife of] Godwin’ in 1797 (Mitzi 160); meanwhile Mary Macarthur and Violent Markham were elected for Parliament with their first surnames (Agnes 226). Also, Helena Normanton, the first female barrister in England, got her passport in her first surname in 1924 (Mossman 451). Moreover, as our names are symbols for our identities and personal integrity, Lucy Stone, a 19th century American woman, signed papers as ‘Lucy Stone (only)’, which can be considered as strong statement for that time period (Bysiewicz and Gloria 598).

Apart from patriarchal customs, there are a lot of reasons for accepting a new surname: Being a married couple, rejection of a father’s surname or an attempt to create a new identity, feel close to a husband’s surname, or bond to children. Whatever the reason is, first of all, it is an issue with a heterosexist perspective, which assumes that men-men, women-women relationships do not surround us; this is not the reality. Historically, names have been used to oppress people and taking on a husband’s surname was a gesture of erasing identity. For example, black people left their African names when forced into slavery. It has been asserted that African-Americans have no knowledge of their family naming traditions. Thus, the last name reflects a heritage that has been conditioned, although “having their names and absolute identities totally taken away upon enslavement left African American slaves almost clueless as to who they were, where they came from and what purpose they served in the earth other than that of abject slavery” (R. Muhammad 27).

Furthermore, slaves had to take on their owners’ name, which is another example of dominance over others via the imposition of surnames. Likewise, as it is stated in the article *The Long-term Effects of Africa’s Slave Trades*:

There were a number of ways of identifying the ethnicity or ‘nation’ of a slave. The easiest was often by a slave’s name. Slaves were often given a Christian first name and a surname that identified their ethnicity [e.g., Tardieu, 2001]. As well, a slave’s ethnicity could often be determined from ethnic markings, such as cuts, scars, hairstyles, or the filing of teeth [Karasch, 1987, pp. 4–9] (Nunn 7).

4. Spreadability

Participatory culture argues that power on online participatory platforms includes open-endedness (Ganaele 91). In a networked culture, we spread information—consciously or otherwise—via social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, Friendster, MySpace, YouTube channels and game clans. In my case, I have consciously made the decision and produced a documentary, which is telling my story as well as others', with a visual communication and cultural studies background. It is worth sharing with others, as everybody has a surname, where it created an environment in which people spoke up, and in some cases changed their opinions. Spreadable media¹⁴ focuses on cultural practices, and discusses why sharing is an effective tool or creates a domino effect. Digital media, which I used frequently during my documentary's distribution process, provided a reimagining of social and political participation. For instance, Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford and Joshua Green use terms such as 'spread', 'spreadable' or 'spreadability' to define media circulation, and this concept assists our collective conversation.

My research offers a way of conceptualizing social media, as a system of elements using both digital and traditional media, and highlights a case study of efforts to reach a significant audience. Keeping in mind that in a world where "one-third of teens share what they create online with others, 22 percent have their own Web sites, 19 percent blog, and 19 percent remix online content" (Jenkins 3), with one click, I could communicate with almost anyone I wanted to, and very quickly. During that sharing process, people around me from Generation Y advised that I should only send the link to professionals. I did not listen to them because I agreed with Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford and Joshua Green, who say in their book entitled *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture* that, "our message is simple and direct: if it doesn't spread, it is dead" (18). To this extent, in this 'Selfie Age', my documentary and its relation with participatory culture can be considered rather sophisticated 'mesearch', where the Internet and its power are growing day by day. Thus, I created my documentary four years ago; now we have a variety of recording apps such as Snapchat or Scorp, using moving images as a core element. Four years from now, communication and its forms will become totally different; however, one thing will be left the same: expression.

Plus, Tami Spry, an autoethnography expert and keynote speaker of one of our conferences, came with us to the karaoke bar. Besides, Spry wrote an article entitled *Call It Swing: A Jazz Blues Autoethnography*, and my new academic friends were interested in music, mostly jazz. During that evening, they were singing different kinds of music, and performing to a high standard, but I refrained from participating. It occurred to me that expression with passion could be taken as a whole, not only in a karaoke bar, but also in academic work. While watching those impromptu performances, I decided that I was not going to be some random academician. If I cannot sing on the night after a conference, then what is the meaning of life?

¹⁴ *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture* is a book written by Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford and Joshua Green, in which they discussed the term. Thus, "Henry Jenkins (1992) coined the term 'participatory culture' to describe the cultural production and social interactions of fan communities, initially seeking a way to differentiate the activities of fans from other forms of spectatorship" (19).

Years passed, and in 2016, I suddenly found myself in a jazz course conducted by Sibel Köse, a very experienced prominent jazz musician known not only in Turkey but also internationally, and the story of my musical journey is currently under construction. Hence, finding my way started with a camera as the instrument of expression, but even now that a microphone has taken its place, the truth remains that storytelling is storytelling. That night in that karaoke bar, I did not know that I had already instinctively used a specific form of singing method in my documentary, which included some non-verbal sounds. Afterwards I realised that me-search and me-construction have always been under way, and are an open-ended process. Within myself, there are numerous pieces of me who are talking to each other, and those selves are passing the fantastic ball to each other every day, at any moment. In a nutshell, my documentary and my research process have, after a few obstacles, brought new opportunities. This, in turn, has created a totally new world for me, which these days is filled with joy and laughter.

Conclusion

This practice-led documentary-thesis, which gave me the opportunity to gain both academic and inner vision, pushed forward the desire to understand my own decisions and acts as an emerging researcher and woman to be carried through in an independent world. I suggest that shifting women's position in society does not start from changing the law but traditional patriarchal mechanisms in society. It starts with individuals simply saying no to change their surnames, or their oppressive fathers, husbands or bosses—whatever the authority is. It also starts with offering uncanny academic methods for PhD research, such as autoethnography, with continuity in performance-based acts, with deconstructing the given methods, learning jazz, with regaining a certain freedom in singing, and with spreading the message to a community. By doing that, I offer that we are becoming myopic to mainstream ideologies and our open-endedness will be influenced, where, at that moment, the discipline is not important: it can be an autoethnographical documentary, unusual methodology, a theory around the margins like feminism, a participatory culture that creates collaborative interrogation so as to explore self in the presence of others to gain a collective understanding of their shared experiences and knowledge. The goal is to evolve and shift the acceptance of fluctuating self as a social subject in those auto + ethno (method), scat + ensemble (jazz), personal + political (self), individual + collaborative (participatory culture), and me + you (documentary) spheres, in which we tell our stories that reflect our own experience as a critical self-reflexive discourse, while adding our emotions in detail, and focusing on ourselves as researchers. At that point, the private inevitably becomes public, and it is a process that bridges the autobiographical, personal to cultural, social and political. I believe that eventually—given the possibility of spreadability and circulation of meaning—my story became y(ours).

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Contact email: handecayir@gmail.com

***The Mythical Boer Hero:
Deconstructing Ideology and Identity in Anglo-Boer War Films***

Anna-Marie Jansen van Vuuren, University of Johannesburg, South Africa

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Abstract

In this paper the author deconstructs the role of the Hero character in a sample of South African- or Anglo-Boer War¹ case study films. The author argues that the Boer soldier, one of the prominent figures of White “Afrikaner” history, has been transformed into a mythical hero during the past century. The key question the author investigates is how the predominant historical myth of a community (in this case that of the White South African “Afrikaner”) influence the narratives told by its popular culture. Starting with the first South African “talkie” film, *Sarie Marais*, the Boer hero-archetype has been used as a vehicle for ideological messages in an attempt to construct White Afrikaner identity from an Apartheid Nationalist Party perspective. Through investigating the various archetypal guises of the Boer Hero in the films *Die Kavaliers*, *Verraaiers*, and *Adventures of the Boer War* the author reflects on how the various case studies’ historical contexts directly correlate with the filmmaker’s representation of the hero. Therefore, the predominant ideology or the identity that the creator subscribes to directly influences the representation of the hero figure in the story.

Keywords: Afrikaner; Archetype; Anglo-Boer War; Culture; Hero; History; Identity; Ideology; Myth; Narrative; South Africa

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¹ Worden (1998: 144) states that the term South African War is more accurate than the term “Anglo-Boer War” in reflecting “*that many other South Africans were caught up in the conflict*”; whilst Pretorius (2009a: ix) argues that the former term was adopted in the 1960’s by British and English-speaking South African historians that disregards the involvement of Great Britain, “*the party all historians now agree had a major share in causing the war*”. There does not seem to be consensus on the use of either the term “South African War” or “Anglo-Boer War”, but as most South African and international scholars are currently using the term “Anglo-Boer War”, the author has elected to use the latter term in this paper.

Introduction

The media, whether we speak of the old traditional media or the new social media, is concerned with the production and distribution of knowledge. As McQuail (2010) points out, this knowledge assists the audience in making sense of their social world: from certain historical events to the present society that surrounds them. The information, images and ideas communicated through the media are “maps of who we are” and “where we come from” and therefore serve a purpose of identity construction whilst orientating the audience towards the future (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 2007).

The idea of identity construction through media consumption of “who we are is affected by what we watch and listen to”, has long been established by scholars such as Stuart Hall, Pierre Bourdieu, Elizabeth-Noelle Neumann, Douglas Kellner, Raymond Williams and countless others from the Global South who have not achieved as much academic fame as their peers from the Global North. Therefore this paper builds on these well publicised theoretical frameworks, whilst applying it to specific historical film case studies. In choosing to specifically study *historical films* as case studies, the author pays homage to predecessors such as Browne (1983, p. vi) who wrote that, of all media, the audiovisual is the most effective tool to create a concept of a specific history amongst users, because “although words lie flat and dormant to some readers, it is difficult to miss messages carried in a motion picture.”

In discussing the myths and ideological presentation of the Boer hero archetype, one needs to first understand the term “Boer” (which literally translated to English means “farmer” and the historical and ideological connectation to this film. The “Boers” (the protagonists of these selected case studies) were the founders of the two independent republics (The Transvaal and the Orange Free State) within the borders of the country that is now known as South Africa. They were the descendants of the *Voortrekkers* - white settlers from the Cape Colony who rejected British colonial rule and its policies. This resulted in “The Great Trek”, a migration of these settlers (and their black workers) from the South to the North of the country, within the period of 1835 to 1845 (Pretorius, 2009). However, this paper is concerned more with the myths created around the Boers in popular culture, than with actual historical Boer figures.

The myths surrounding the “Boer Hero” already emerged within the time period of the Anglo-Boer War² itself, with authors such as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1902, p. 1) drawing on the Boers’ history to praise their prowess on the battle field:

“Take a community of Dutchmen, of the type of those who defended themselves for fifty years against all the power of Spain, at a time when Spain was the greatest power in the world. Intermix with them a strain of those inflexible French Huguenots who gave up home and fortune and left their country for ever at the time of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. The

² The armed conflict between forces from the British Empire and the Boers occurred from 1899 to 1902. The Boers fought for the sovereignty of their two republics which was then known as the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. In the last couple of decades, local historians have tried to emphasise that although little has been written on the role of other indigenous groups in the war, they played an integral part in the conflict. As Pretorius (2009, p. ix) explains: “*In the past, mistakenly, the war was seen as a clash that only involved the Boers and the British. Now we recognise that black people played an important part in this war and they were deeply affected by it*”.

product must obviously be one of the most rugged, virile, unconquerable races ever seen upon earth.”

Doyle does not hold back in the rest of description:

“Take this formidable people and train them for seven generations in constant warfare against savage men and ferocious beasts, in circumstances under which no weakling could survive, place them so that they acquire exceptional skill with weapons and in horsemanship, give them a country which is eminently suited to the tactics of the huntsman, the marksman, and the rider. Then, finally, put a finer temper upon their military qualities by a dour fatalistic Old Testament religion and an ardent and consuming patriotism. Combine all these qualities and all these impulses in one individual, and you have the modern Boer-, the most formidable antagonist who ever crossed the path of Imperial Britain” (Doyle, 1902, p. 2).

Doyle’s writing is a valuable definition one could use to read, analyse and decode the fictional representation of the Boer, as its portrayal in popular culture can be seen in a sense as the continuation or extension of the myths already created by the foreign media during the time of the actual Anglo-Boer War.³ The Boer republics’ struggle for freedom and independence from the British were revered by the rest of the world who had come to loathe the Empire and what it stood for – and this reverence can be seen in various European and North American newspapers at the time, depicting the Boer Nation as “David”, standing up to its “Goliath” (KrugerHouseMuseum, 2015). It therefore illustrates Abercrombie & Longhurst (2007)’s definition of myths: Those narratives that reveal the “core aspects, understandings or assumptions” of a society or culture.

The “David and Goliath”-image that the media used to as an indexal semiotic representation of the Boer and Brit conflict, also reminds one of the works on mythology by Vladimir Propp, Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell. Joseph Campbell interpreted Jung’s theories on psychological archetypes to establish his theory on Hero myths, “those myths that attribute inferred events to legendary or historical personages” (Segal, 1999, p. 33).

Campbell also coined the term “monomyth” to explain narratives that display the same essential pattern in which the mythological hero departs on a journey, overcomes many obstacles, undergoes a supreme ordeal, and returns with a treasure or elixir (Campbell, 2008). Christopher Vogler (2007, p. xxvii) appropriated the latter monomyth to form the Hero’s Journey; a structural pattern that many screenwriters use in plotting their screenplays.

The author used a theoretical framework based on the works by the aforementioned authors on myths and archetypes for this paper. She used narrative textual analysis to interpret the overall mythical pattern and portrayal of the hero archetype in the case study films. (Stokes, 2003, p. 67) states that narrative “conveys the ideology of a culture”. Therefore by analysing these films’ narratives, it will give one an insight

³ For examples of these foreign media representations, one can visit the house museum of the then president of the Transvaal Republic, Paul Kruger, in Pretoria, South Africa (KrugerHouseMuseum, 2015).

into the social and cultural context within which the filmmakers created these Anglo-Boer War films.

It is also imperative to note that although the author tried to remain as objective as can be possible within a semiotic narrative textual analysis, she is a White Afrikaans person or so-called “Afrikaner” and as objective as she might try to be, the discourse on Afrikaner identity will influence the spectacles or frame from which she approaches this paper’s analytical discussion.

The author selected case studies from a large body of films (created from 1931 to 2013) that portray the historical time period of the Anglo-Boer War. As the author subscribes to the view that the visual medium plays a fundamental role in the creation, dispersal and negotiation of ideological meaning between the filmmaker and the audience, her sample mainly consists of case studies that she could use to illustrate that the dominant interests or ideologies of a specific society have a profound influence on its films and drama series (albeit the filmmakers may choose to support or oppose it through their films).

The representation of the “traditional” mythical Boer Hero: A Historical context *Sarie Marais* (1931)

The short film *Sarie Marais* (1931), is recorded by historians as being the first South African so-called “talkie”⁴ (Maingard, 2007). *Sarie Marais* was made whilst the country was still a dominion of the British Empire, known as the “Union of South Africa” (Ross, 2002)⁵. It is also an important contextual factor that South Africa was under the rule of the Empire, precisely because the Boers lost the Anglo-Boer War - the same War that was now being represented in this short film.

The film narrates the story of a Boer prisoner of war, Jan, who writes a love letter to his girlfriend, Sarie. He tells her of his longing to return to her and his farm in the Transvaal. Then a British officer arrives with the news that a peace treaty has been signed and that the war is over. A joyous celebration follows and at the end of the film Jan manages to reunite with Sarie (Albrecht, 1931)⁶.

Starting with *Sarie Marais* (1931), followed by the short *Moedertjie* in the same year, Afrikaans language films were used as part of a much larger campaign to propagate White Afrikaner Nationalism in South Africa (Jansen van Vuuren, 2014). Throughout this cultural campaign of the 1930’s and 1940’s, the myth of the “strong and courageous” Boer became the cornerstone of the South African Nationalist Party’s construction of White Afrikaner Identity (Giliomee, 2003). The National Party’s propaganda made fruitful use of the Anglo-Boer War, using this historical conflict as a metaphor for their struggle to preserve the national identity of the White Afrikaans people, and a justification for their Apartheid ideology (Pretorius, 2009, p. 4).

⁴ A film that uses audible dialogue to tell the story. It is contrasted with a silent film that marked the first phase of cinema history.

⁵ Historically it is worth noting that in the same year the Statute of Westminster got passed. This Bill gave the country sovereignty. Although the country was still regarded as being under the British crown, the UK could no longer make laws on behalf of them (Ross, 2002).

⁶ See the author’s Ph.D. thesis for a complete discussion of the film *Sarie Marais* (JansenVanVuuren, 2016).

Therefore the representation of the mythical Boer Hero in *Sarie Marais* clearly illustrate the argument that representations in films, similarly to other media, are also related to the power relations of a society.

It is also worth mentioning that in the same time period the German Nazi regime used the Anglo-Boer War, and more specifically, the Boer President Paul Kruger, for their own nationalistic purposes (Steinhoff, 1941). Director Hans Steinhoff created the film *Ohm Krüger* as Nazi propaganda by painting Queen Victoria, Winston Churchill and Joseph Chamberlain in a negative light (Van Nierop, 2016, p. 46). He also drew parallels between Paul Kruger and Adolf Hitler, which caused of a lot of controversy within South Africa in 1941. The censorship board made quite a few cuts and changes to *Ohm Kruger* before releasing a dubbed Afrikaans version of the film to local audience (Botha, 2012; Van Nierop, 2016).⁷

***Die Kavaliers* (1966)**

South Africa became a republic on 31 May 1961, and with this the White Afrikaans government managed to “shed the shackles” that bound them to “the antagonistic British Empire” (Botha, 2012, p. 50). Therefore this became the ideal time to celebrate their victory in gaining their independence from their former “enemy” through the filmic medium (Jansen van Vuuren, 2014).

From the 1930’s to the 1960’s, the South African film industry was predominantly producing musicals, adventure stories, comedies, wildlife and romantic war films - even at the height of the late 1950’s, when the anti-apartheid movement reached a climax with the Women’s March in 1956 and the Sharpsville massacre in 1961. Botha (2012, p. 51) states that “since the introduction of a regulated subsidy system in 1956, the Nationalist government and big business collaborated to manipulate local filmmaking. Ideology and capital came together to create a national cinema that would reflect South Africa during the Verwoerdian⁸ regime of the 1960s,” (Botha 2012:51). The clash between ideologies could especially be witnessed in South African films of the 1960’s and the 1970’s, because most of these films were made with either a pro- or an anti-apartheid stance, even if it was not overtly visible in the narrative of these films (Tomaselli, 2013).

In the 1960’s, seven feature films set in the time period of the Anglo-Boer War were released (Le Roux & Fourie, 1982, p. 71), causing the author of this paper to dub the sixties “the decade of the Boer Hero” (JansenVanVuuren, 2016). When analyzing these films it becomes quite clear that they are all predominantly stories of willing Boer Heroes fighting their “enemies” (the British) in an archetypical storyline reminiscent of Campbell’s “hero myth” (JansenVanVuuren, 2015).

A classic example of an Anglo-Boer War case study that demonstrates these archetypical characteristics is the feature film *Die Kavaliers* (1966). As already indicated in the title, the film tells the story of a group of Boer soldiers (called ‘the

⁷ Van Nierop (2015: 46) comments that it is ironic that the German film attacks the British concentration camps, whilst they themselves would later implement the Nazi “death camps” during the 2nd World War.

⁸ Reference to the then Prime Minister and so-called “architect of Apartheid”, Hendrik Verwoerd (Botha, 2012).

Cavaliers') who is fighting for a "just" cause, namely the freedom, independence and land of the Boers. The Hero of the film, Field Cornett Chris Botha, is a courageous willing hero who encompasses all the aspects of the "mythical Boer Hero".⁹ Therefore one may argue that *Die Kavaliers'* representation in the film is a visual demonstration of the National Party's definition of a "the true Afrikaner", described by Botha (2012, p. 52) to be an ideology characterized by idealistic conservatism, an attachment to the pastoral past, the ideals of linguistic and racial purity and an adherence to religious and moral norms.

These films were also used by those in power, at a time when Black Freedom Fighters and other opposition groupings led a struggle against the government, to remind White Afrikaans audiences of the suffering their ancestors went through to protect their land in the Anglo-Boer War (JansenVanVuuren, 2015). This is a typical example where the ideological context of a film directly influences its subliminal messages, as Lambrechts & Visagie (2009, p. 76) explains: "Born in a context of suffering, it elevates certain ideals to an end that, in time, begins to exert an absolute attraction for people. It subtly draws a false image of reality before their eyes, an illusion from which images of ideological opponents are generated." However, in 1994 South Africa became a democracy and the fall of the white Afrikaans Nationalist Party from power led to the rise of an era where filmmakers would challenge the traditional White Afrikaner identity through their representation of the Boer Hero. These post-1994 Anglo-Boer War films will serve as the case studies of the second part of this paper.

Redefining the mythical Boer Hero: A post-1994 perspective *Verraaiers* (2012)

The nineties defined a new era in South Africa where artists and filmmakers (especially white liberal ones) had freedom to challenge the status quo (De Jager, 2014). Nevertheless, it would be almost 20 years before a new feature film about the Anglo-Boer War to be made. With the film *Verraaiers* (2012), the writer-producer, Sallas de Jager, and executive producer, Piet de Jager, redefined the mythical Boer Hero that generations of White Afrikaners used, in the words of Nel (2010, p. 2) "to legitimise their identity and foster a sense of belonging in South Africa".

The story's protagonist, Commandant Van Aswegen, is set up as a willing hero that defends the Boer republics in the raging conflict with Britain (JansenVanVuuren, 2015). However, he gets branded as a traitor after he surrenders and signs the peace treaty, even though it is to prevent his family from being sent to a British concentration camp. Van Aswegen, his son and two sons-in-law are tried for treason and at the end of the film three of the four characters are executed for treason (Eilers, 2013).

Scholars such as Browne (2013, p. 449) applauded the film for challenging the preconceived myth of the "pure and innocent Boer" fighting for their land in a "just manner" "There appeared to be an attempt to unlock long-secured memory chests and reveal that which, for many Afrikaners, could be distasteful and awkward truths".

⁹ Refer to Jansen van Vuuren (2015, pp. 57 - 66) for an in-depth analysis of the film *Die Kavaliers* (1966).

Adventures of the Boer War (2011-2014)

The author found *Adventures of the Boer War* one day during a random search on You Tube using the key words “Anglo-Boer War Films”. It is a series of web based short films in which the producers use Lego figures to tell stories set against the backdrop of the Anglo-Boer War. It is interesting that the creator used Lego as a medium for his films before Hollywood popularized it again with the *Lego-movie* (2014). The *Lego Movie* coincidentally was released in the same year in which Kramer stopped making *Adventures of the Boer War*. According to the writer and director, Kevin Kramer, (2015) he stopped making these films because of a lack of time and academic pressure.

The author analysed five of Kramer’s episodes/short films, namely *Getting ready for the trip* (Kramer, 2011a), *Recruiting Tards* (2011b), *Sergeant Peter’s marching band* (Kramer, 2011c), *The Thing* (Kramer, 2011d), and *Screwy Drill* (Kramer, 2012). An interesting first observation when one watches these films is that there is no attempt at historical or period accuracy. It is basically a “sendup” making use of slapstick comedy. In his e-mail correspondence Kramer (2015) states that he created *Adventures of the Boer War* when he was only 15 years old. At the time he was learning about the British colonial period in his high school curriculum. He explains that through this series of short films, he tried to combine his passion for Lego with his admiration for the vintage North American series from the 1960’s, *F-Troop*.

F-Troop tells the story of a group of misfits at a desolated army post during the American Civil War. According to its description in the International Movie Database, *F-Troop* relied on character-driven humor such as verbal and visual pranks as well as slapstick, burlesque and physical humor (IMDB, 2003). According to Kramer (2015) *F-Troop* frequently changed and adapted historical facts, events and people to fit into their own comical stories, and he wanted to use the same style in *Adventures of the Boer War*. This is evident in the opening title of his films which read: “The story taken place tells of the Past (*sic*). Its characters portrayed are fictional (*sic*). It deserves no place for hate (*sic*),” (Kramer, 2011b). It appears as if Kramer has put a disclaimer at the beginning of his films to avoid a backlash against his satirical and mocking use of historical facts in his films.

In the selected film case studies analysed, Kramer represent his main characters, who are mostly British soldiers, as idiots that gets captured or caught out by the Boers. However, he doesn’t really portray the Boer soldiers in a positive light. He mostly uses the Boer characters as anonymous side characters that have to serve as villains or enemies for the British. And in most of the storylines, Kramer’s purpose is to show how funny or naïve the deeds of the characters at both side of the spectrum are. This might be attributed to both his anti-war approach (revealed in the e-mail correspondence with the author) and his North American background. He explained that he has no ancestors or relations who fought in the War. When asked why he decided to specifically set the series within the time period of the Anglo-Boer War, he responded that he did it because through his studies he had grown to detest British Imperialism, and secondly, that “it had never been done before” (Kramer 2015).

Conclusion

In this paper the author identified certain elements in the construction of the mythical Boer Hero in selected Anglo-Boer War film case studies. Historical films build on existing myths or create new myths through their representation of historical events or figures. Through these myths the filmmaker gives ideological messages that either corresponds to or challenge those of the dominant society. These ideologies in turn shape and construct the consumers' identities.

The paper starts with a brief discussion of two prominent Anglo-Boer War films that were made from a White Afrikaans Nationalist perspective, namely *Sarie Marais* (1931) and *Die Kavaliers* (1966), before introducing the reader to the first Anglo-Boer War feature film made post-1994, *Verraaiers* (2012). Thereafter she discusses a series of Anglo-Boer War short films, namely *Adventures of the Boer War*. Therefore, through analyzing the case studies, an argument is made that the predominant ideology or the identity that the creator subscribes to directly influences the representation of the hero figure in the story.

The Apartheid government tried to use these Anglo-Boer War films from the 1930's onwards to promote the Afrikaner Nationalism Ideology. Where "living on a farm" used to be the material base for "Boer identity" in South Africa, the Nationalist Party used everything in their means to create a new White Afrikaner identity that would also suit the urban White Afrikaner. Turning the Boer-figure into a mythical hero with whom which all White Afrikaans speakers could identify, they used the films made from the 1940's to the late 1960's to represent narratives of a historical struggle where the willing Boer Heroes fought a just cause for land, freedom and independence.

Since the democratic transition in 1994, filmmakers have challenged the mythical willing Boer hero and reconstructed their own representations of this archetypical character. A good example of this is the feature film *Verraaiers* (Traitors) that was made by a White Afrikaans filmmaker. In contrast, short film series *Adventures of the Boer War* was made by an American who has no ties to South Africa or this historical conflict. This clearly influenced his approach to the subject matter, as he made these films using a satirical gaze that pokes fun at both the Boers and the British soldiers.

From the brief analysis and interviews with the filmmakers, this paper illustrates that the media and especially historical films construct identities through the representation of "myths", and that a new generation is challenging traditional myths by redefining the mythical Boer hero identity on film.

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Contact email: ajansenvanvuuren@uj.ac.za

***“Monitoring” the Entire “Spectrum”:
The Influence of Journalism Ideology on the Content Producers of a South African
Public Radio Station’s Current Affairs Programmes***

Anna-Marie Jansen van Vuuren, University of Johannesburg, South Africa

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Abstract

More than 20 years after the demise of Apartheid, South African journalists are still in the process of determining their own “journalistic ideology” according to a “Global South” approach. Various scholars argue that this approach should be anchored in African values and philosophies (such as *Ubuntu*), and take the unique South African context into consideration. In this article, the author has identified certain issues that could influence a reporter’s “journalism ideology”, such as education and training, newsroom routines and the role of the audience. She used these issues as a starting point for open-ended interviews with producers that create and edit content for the Current Affairs shows on RSG, one of the public radio stations at the South African Broadcasting Corporation.¹ The media forms part of a network of shifting power relations and in a country where many of its citizens live under the breadline, radio still wields a huge amount of influence. Herman and Chomsky’s propaganda model is used as theoretical framework informing the type of questions the author asks in her qualitative interviews, as she also regards media practitioners’ performance and actions as being strongly influenced by “the basic institutional structures and relationships within which they operate”.

Keywords: Journalism ideology, “Africanisation”, newsroom, Radio, RSG, SABC, South Africa, Current Affairs, “Global South”, power, content, sound, airwaves.

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¹ With the death of RSG Current Affairs editor and senior producer, Suna Venter in July 2017, making international headlines, this research conducted in April 2016, provides a brief “snapshot” of the newsroom values of the radio station where she spent her last days before being targeted as part of the SABC 8.

Introduction

“The exploration of how journalists articulate their own role, and how they conceptualise ideas, is of utmost importance for broadening the understanding of journalism as a contextual and reflexive practice,” (Rodny-Gumede, 2014, p. 67).

In South Africa, where radio is still one of the most popular mediums amongst audiences, traditional radio journalists still have a lot of influence. Here, radio is “constant and stable”, and “unlike other media, where people have become quite fickle - particularly in print, those who have favourite radio stations still listen loyally to them,” (Krost Maunder, 2015, p. 1). This can also be measured in terms of advertising: “While radio’s share of total world expenditure is on the decline, South Africa’s is on the rise” (Beck, 2015, p. 4).

There are close to 200 radio stations broadcasting analogue or digitally in the country. At the same time, online radio stations that only have a digital footprint are also being created to attract niche audiences (Beck, 2015, p. 5). Therefore, in taking radio’s the power and influence as a medium into consideration, I decided to use qualitative interviews with a sample of the producers of “Radio Sonder Grense” (abbreviated as “RSG”), one of the largest radio stations in South Africa, as case studies for this qualitative paper. I focused on determining how the producers’ “journalism ideology” influences the way in which they select and produce content for the RSG’s daily Current Affairs programmes. For the purpose of this paper I define “journalism ideology” as being a core belief system that are created whilst journalists are studying or getting hands-on “on the job experience” (Tuchman, 1977).

Social context of the study

South Africa, with its population of roughly 54.96 million people, is a country with a diverse range of languages, cultures ethnic groupings (StatsSA, 2015). Since the country’s transition to democracy in 1994, the media has undergone various changes in terms of ownership, editorial staff and content. The purpose of these far-reaching changes were for the media to act as the instrument of transformation (Wasserman & De Beer, 2005, p. 76). Institutions that served largely as mouthpieces for the White Apartheid government, such as the state broadcaster, the SABC and the Afrikaans press were affected most by these changes (Harber, 2004, p. 79). The SABC specifically states in its editorial policy that it is *not* “the mouthpiece of the government”. Its policy document adds that the public broadcaster should not “broadcast its opinion of government policies, unless they relate directly to broadcasting matters,” (SABCBoard, 2016, p. 14). However, more than 20 years into democracy, at the time of writing this paper, the SABC is still frequently criticised for being a mouth piece for the new ANC-led government (Moerdyk, 2016).

The SABC has a mandate to provide broadcast corporation in all 11 of the country’s official languages, and thus each of these language groups have their own radio station dedicated to broadcasting content specifically catering for their needs and interests (SABC, 2004).

Four of the SABC’s radio stations: RSG, SA FM, 5 FM and Radio 2000, are the only South African radio stations that broadcast nationwide on the airwaves (TheMedia,

2015, p. 43). This means that if you do not have access to data to listen to online radio or on your mobile phone, and you are reliant on listening to regional radio stations, these four stations would still be accessible on a normal transistor radio from any part of the country (Reid, 2016, p. 30).

Rationale

At its peak times, RSG broadcasts to an audience of almost ten million listeners locally and internationally (via their online footprint), (Nevill, 2017). Therefore it is relevant to use the interviews with the producers who work for the Afrikaans language public radio station as research case studies, as very minimal research has been done in the recent past about RSG – a radio station that is regarded as one of the biggest in South Africa in terms of audience size and broadcast signal reach (Nevill, 2017, p. 44).

In terms of previous research, I could only find one scholarly work on RSG. Adapted to a book chapter called *Finding a home in Afrikaans Radio*, Froneman (2006) discusses the transition of the former Apartheid Afrikaans radio service, “Afrikaans Stereo” to the present radio station “RSG”, one of the eleven public radio stations at the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC).

Whilst highlighting that some Afrikaans community radio stations was at the time still clinging to *volksnasionisme*² (he uses “Radio Pretoria” as an example), he argues that the Afrikaans public radio service has been “reconstructed as a non-racial station in step with the new political dispensation” (Froneman, 2006, p. 11). His article focuses on the broad changes made at RSG. He discussed how they incorporated new programmes that appealed to a different demographic, for example religious programmes that focused on Islam. RSG also achieved transformation by employing producers and presenters from other cultural backgrounds, especially the Coloured³ community.

Froneman (2006, p. 11) argues that RSG’s brand identity “accepts incorporation into a wider South African nation” whilst actively supporting “the construction of an inclusive Afrikaans language community, but within the ideological framework prescribed by the ruling class.” As Froneman did not explore the Current Affairs shows or news service of RSG in his research, it is a relevant topic to discuss in this paper.

Methodology

The journalists whose interviews are used as case studies for this paper all work for RSG’s Current Affairs programmes. Technically they are employed by the SABC News and Current Affairs division, and not by the radio station RSG *per se*, but as the current affairs programmes *Monitor*, *Spektrum* and *Naweek-Aktueel* are broadcasted

² The ideology propagated by the White Afrikaner National Party that inspired the country’s Apartheid policies. It forms a base for the Nationalistic White Afrikaner ethnic identity (Degenaar, 1975).

³ In South Africa the term “Coloured” is an ethnic identity subscribed to by a cultural grouping that has distinct traditions differentiating them from other cultures. In this context the term “Coloured” is not used to refer to mixed race parentage.

on the Afrikaans radio station, RSG, I will use the term “RSG Radio Current Affairs” to differentiate them from the other current affairs sections at the SABC.

Firstly I conducted a qualitative survey by sending an e-mail to the full time staff members and regular freelancers of RSG Radio Current Affairs inviting them to participate in the study. Because of busy schedules most of the producers declined to participate in the research or failed to reply by the time the study was completed. I managed to interview five out of the eleven journalist-producers at RSG, and as my sample also included a “senior producer” (“editor”) and presenter, I felt that I would have sufficient data to construct an argument. Thus the selection of the interviewees was made purely on their willingness to take part in the study, and their availability for an interview, as I conducted all the interviews during the first week of April 2016. Statements that are made by these respondents reflect their own opinions and do not necessarily represent those of the South African Broadcasting Corporation.

The participants of the five in depth qualitative interviews are:

- 1) Hendrik Martin, a senior producer that has worked at RSG Current Affairs as both a journalist and producer for twenty years.
- 2) Wilna Matthee, a senior producer at RSG Current Affairs that has worked in various capacities at the SABC for the last 25 years.
- 3) Anita Visser, the co-anchor of *Monitor* who has worked at RSG Radio Current Affairs for 20 years. Prior to becoming a presenter she was a producer on the programmes.
- 4) Marlineé Fouché, a journalist/producer at RSG Current Affairs for almost four years.
- 5) Metzi van der Merwe, a journalist who has been a producer on RSG Current Affairs for almost 20 years.

An auto-ethnographic approach

At the time of writing this paper, I have worked on a freelance base as a journalist and producer for RSG Radio Current Affairs for ten years. Therefore, in the next section, I follow an auto-ethnographic approach and mostly draw on my own experience of the inner workings in describing the RSG Current Affairs’ newsroom in terms of its structure, format and style.

If one turns the dial to RSG on weekday mornings between 6 am and 8 am, one would hear the voices of the anchors, journalists and producers of *Monitor* (“monitor”), the morning current affairs programme. The lunch time current affairs programme is called *Spektrum* (“spectrum”) and is broadcasted weekday afternoons between 1pm and 2 pm, whilst *Naweek-aktueel* (“weekend actuality”) is broadcasted on Saturday afternoons between 12 am and 1pm. RSG also has a weekly news and current affairs overview programme on a Sunday evening between 8 and 9, called *Kommentaar*. In the latter programme the anchor discusses the news of the week with various political analysts, newspaper editors and other news organisation managers. *Kommentaar* is the only current affairs show broadcasted on RSG that does not feature a wide range of contributions from the various producers, as it has a “talkshow” format.

RSG's Current Affairs programmes follow a public service format similar to that of the BBC. The broadcast is made up of packaged interviews, sound reports, actuality and other contributions. The majority of the programme's content is produced "in house" by the producers that are specifically employed by RSG Current Affairs, but between two to five stories per show comes from the other SABC regional offices. If these regional stories are only available in English, the producers will translate the script to Afrikaans⁴, before voicing, editing and packaging it all together.

There are three daily news meetings that are crucial in determining the RSG "news diary" and programme content. The executive producer, Foeta Krige, and the relevant senior producers⁵ attend these meetings, together with the producers assigned to a programme on a specific day. During these meetings the executive producer, senior producers and producers make suggestions of topics to "cover" in the programme, whilst also giving feedback on the other participants' suggestions. This feedback is crucial in determining the final "diary" for the programme.

In the following part of the paper I will explain the theoretical framework and also summarise some of the current debates on the role of "journalism ideology" in South Africa.

Theoretical framework: Towards an "African approach" to Journalism

In the last decade many scholars made the case that the journalism profession in South Africa is in search of an "occupational ideology" and that a more fundamental approach should be used to comprehend local journalism (Berger, 2005). The function of journalism could be understood differently by the various role-players, from the functionalist perspective to the libertarian 'watchdog of democracy' viewpoint to those promoting the "Africanisation of news" for a "national interest" (Rodny-Gumede, 2015). As many South African journalists were educated in tertiary institutions with a mostly "Western libertarian"-view, some scholars still grapple with what a "Global South" or "African" approach to journalism ideology will look like.

"Africanising the media" is a phrase often used by those who have tried to exert control on the South African media. One may argue that the term "African journalism" are often exploited and used to muzzle or manipulate the media, instead of advancing a true new belief system or "journalism ideology" suited for South African newsrooms. A recent South African example was the lead-up to the country's municipal elections, where the SABC's then Chief Operating Officer, Hlaudi Motsoeneng, stated that the public broadcaster would focus more on "good news" and would avoid showing violent protests (Rabkin, 2016).

Berger (2005, p. 134) states that South Africa journalists need to balance the traditional Fourth Estate-role with the country's developmental needs, whilst Rodny-Gumede (2015, p. 109) argues that amid calls for an "Africanisation" of journalism,

⁴ They are required to do these translations because of the public broadcaster's language policy to broadcast current affairs in each of the country's official languages (SABC, 2004).

⁵ The senior producer could be regarded as the "editor" in the traditional newspaper sense, in contrast to a more traditional newsroom RSG has three senior producers/editors that alternate between the various shifts and shows.

the adoption of *Ubuntu*⁶ Journalism could be a framework to open up the news media to a broader South African audience. However, scholars have criticised the contemporary notion of “Ubuntu” for being a historically burdensome term, as it was “appropriated for ‘domestication’ purposes as apartheid began to unravel in the 1980’s,” (Tomaselli, 2016, p. 3).⁷ According to Tomaselli (2016, p. 5) “Ubuntu” is now being applied across disciplines and in any context, and therefore “by being all things to all people, the popular and ideological use has eclipsed the discursive trajectory”. Therefore, as Tomaselli (2016, p. 9) argues for a post-Africanist rather than an Ubuntu-approach for intercultural communication, a similar argument could perhaps be made for a post-Africanist approach to journalism in South Africa.⁸

Nevertheless, whilst scholars are debating these issues surrounding the role and functions of journalism, it is the attitudes of the journalists who work in a certain society that determine their ideology, norms and values (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p. 96). Keeping these debates surrounding a “South African journalism ideology” in mind, the final part of this article will explore the “journalism ideology” of the case study respondents who produce RSG Radio Current Affairs. The subheadings indicate the core question that the interviewees’ answers relate to.

The influence of education and training on a producer’s “Journalism Ideology”

According to Shoemaker & Reese (1996, p. 64) the following factors are intrinsic to a journalist: their personal and professional background, their education, personal attitudes, values and beliefs, professional orientations and role conceptions, and lastly their viewpoint on their professional role and ethics. They explain that this process of “socialisation” (in which a new journalist “discovers and internalises the rights and obligations of his status” as well as the institutions’ “norms and values” are primarily shaped on the job or in professional education (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996, p. 61). These arguments concur with most of the answers of the respondents.

Senior producer, Wilna Matthee (2016), explains that the principals of journalism were “drilled” into her whilst she was studying and then again when she began working in the newsroom. Whilst it has been many years since then, she still applies the same basic guidelines.

Senior producer Hendrik Martin (2016) studied political sciences and law during his first year of university, and according to him his studies had a profound influence on his journalism approach and also on questioning Apartheid as a young journalist.

Anchor Anita Visser (2016) states that she has a “conservative” journalism ideology that is based on the “old news rule” that three sources need to confirm a story before it can be broadcasted: “It does not help to be first with a false story. Rather confirm

⁶ *Ubuntu* is an African concept that promotes the communitarian idea of human interconnectedness. The word comes from the Zulu language and translates to “we are people through other people” (Tomaselli, 2016, p. 1).

⁷ Tomaselli (2016, p. 5) explains that *Ubuntu* was creatively repurposed by apartheid intercultural scholars “as an indigenous means to better manage labour relations, corporate governance and social responsibility” and that it is still used in this way after the end of Apartheid.

⁸ Rooted in pragmatism, this post-Africanist approach will advocate to include the world’s best practices, irrespective of which country they originate from (Tomaselli, 2016, p. 9).

your facts, because you will lose credibility with your listeners if your story later turns out not to be true.” Although this statement might sound obvious to those that has studied journalism or media studies, Visser emphasises that in radio, where the pressure is on to broadcast and “break” new stories every hour, this can be neglected, especially with the tight deadline they have for the midday current affairs programme, *Spektrum*.

Producer Metzi Van der Merwe (2016) explains that she has never really given her own journalism ideology much thought. She does mention that one aspect that she can identify concerns her relationship with sources. Because of the pressure in a radio deadline driven newsroom (where one usually have about three hours to find sources, record interviews, script, voice and package), most of the RSG Current Affairs journalists share the contact details of their sources (from political commentators to government spokespeople) with each other, unless it is a confidential source or individual has specifically asked for his/her information not to be shared. Van der Merwe (2016) says there have often been times where she preferred not to share “contacts” and “numbers” and she feels this relate to her own “journalism ideology”.

All five of the producers whose interviews served as case studies concurred that the role of journalists are globally the same, namely to establish what is happening in their society and report on it accurately. Producer Marlineé Fouché (2016) explains

The influence of Newsroom routines on news selection and content production

In South Africa, similar to most countries, many journalists embark on their careers and enter industry full of high ideals but the frustrations of having to produce journalism that can mostly pass for “churnalism” greatly affect their workflow and the quality of work they produce (Delmar, 2008). At RSG Current Affairs, the producers usually have about three hours (from 9 to 12 am) to produce content for their midday current affairs programme. During this short space of time, producers have to arrange interviews, record them, write a script, package and edit the soundfiles of the story. According to Van der Merwe (2016) the result of this is that at times one may use an analyst that is easy to get hold of and readily available to be interviewed, instead of a peer that might be considered to be “the best in the field”, but difficult to get hold of telephonically (as one need to record an interview to cut soundbites from it).

Tuchman (1977, p. 43) argues that through journalists’ routines they actually “make news” by allowing everyday occurrences to be recognised as news. In a similar manner, at RSG Radio Current Affairs, as with most other newsrooms, there are certain “routinised” practices that the producers do to accomplish their tasks.

Visser (2016) explains that the atmosphere in their newsroom might seem “loose and comfortable”, but that every producer has his/her own role and task within the workflow: “the editorial team abides by the rules and the result is a seamless broadcast”. She describes a top down hierarchical broadcast protocol: “Presenters are there to present a programme, but it’s the senior producer’s programme and he or she has the final say about which stories will be broadcasted”.

Visser adds that the interaction and banter between the presenters, senior producer and producers during the daily news meetings is another integral part of their

newsroom culture: “Outsiders have commented that it seems robust and adversarial, but it gives everyone an equal chance to comment on a story that was pitched for the programme”.

The race, gender and age of the participants of the news meeting directly influence the outcome of the meeting and the news diary for the following day (Matthee, 2016). Matthee comments that since the RSG Radio Current Affairs team is a sample of the broader RSG community, the producers’ input could be the deciding factor in her decision to include a story in the programme.

Fouché, as the youngest of the respondents, admits that when she gets assigned to a story, her interview questions are often guided by the senior producer’s advice. Thus, the angle are often dictated or shaped by the decisions made at the news meeting. This sentiment is shared by Van der Merwe, who explains that the stories she pitches at the news meeting are directly influenced by her own prior experience of the senior producers’ decision-making processes: “Through working with them, you get a feeling of what type of story suggestions will be accepted, and you will *only* pitch these types of stories to them, because if you do stories that are not prioritised by the senior producer, it will not be used the programme. It does not mean that these stories will go to the recycle bin, but they will then be used during the weekend show where less “breaking news” or “softer” stories are used” (Van der Merwe, 2016). Thus the RSG daily news meeting routine, similar to those in other newsrooms, serves as a gatekeeping mechanism that could constrain a producer: he or she might argue to “let a story in”, the senior producer can accept or veto it, and even the producers themselves could be gatekeepers by not even pitching the story. Shoemaker & Reese (1996, p. 106) describe this as “the occupational setting” that limits the individual’s decision-making. Still, the respondents concur that as the senior producers rotate weekly (and at times daily), it gives them an opportunity to pitch different types of stories at the meetings, in contrast to a typical South African newspaper setup where there is usually one news editor in charge of the daily meetings.

The influence of the sound medium on the content of current affairs programmes

Although the respondents agree that news values are an important aspect of their decision-making process, they all emphasise the importance of the radio format in determining their content. Martin explains that certain stories are more suitable for the sound medium than others: “The immediacy of radio and the the impact of emotion in the voice of a victim that tells the story of an accident or disaster, are two of the strongest elements of the medium, and will definitely play a role in which stories get selected and how they get produced for broadcast”.

Matthee (2016) also explains that radio as a medium has its advantages and disadvantages: “Unfortunately an e-mail response to your questions is not enough - in radio you always need a soundbite from a source.” A way around this would be to use other types of information in a voice over, but according to Matthee this may create its own challenges for the producer.”

Fouché’s journalism ideology is also reflected in how she uses the radio medium to tell stories: “I try to use as little as possible of my own speech (*voice-over*) in the audio package, and instead focus on using soundbites. In doing this, the story is

mostly told by the source instead of me.” I would interpret this last statement as being a prime example of how a journalists’ ideology could influence her routine/workflow, and thus in turn influencing the content or format of a news story.

The role of the audience in determining the news selection process

Fouché (2016) affirms that knowing audience preferences influences her news selection. “There are stories that one has to be careful about airing regularly or explicitly since we have a conservative listenership.” Nevertheless she explains that she regularly “pushes the boundaries” by producing an unconventional story that an audience member “might feel uncomfortable with”. She then produces it in such a way “that it is not harsh and explicit but conveys the relevant information”. She adds that she has made peace with the fact that if a listener does not want to hear the information, they will switch to another station.

Martin (2016) agrees with Fouché’s observation, stating that at times he needs to give the listener some “medicine” (those news that he feels they *need* to hear) together with the news that they would like to hear. “There are certain things that the listener does not want to hear about, but remember, we have a mandate at the SABC to promote reconciliation. So at times we need to report accordingly”.

In terms of audience feedback Van der Merwe explains that listener comments often directly leads to story ideas and at times it also gives the reportage a different direction/angle than the one she initially intended.

Matthee explains that the wants and needs of an audience directly influence the weight she would give to a story. This in turn will have a direct influence on the time allocated to the story in the two hour current affairs show (e.g. a 3 minute prerecorded package versus a 15 minute discussion with live studio guests).

Conclusion

There are ensuing debates about the role of journalism in the post-Apartheid democratic South African society. Yet, whilst the academics are having a discourse about journalism paradigms suited for the “Global South”, radio producers are actively creating content that influences audiences, based on their own journalism ideologies.

It can be concluded from the interviews with the producers that their “journalism ideology” are strongly influenced by their studies when they start out in the field, and that they still keep to these same norms during their news production process. These same norms combined with newsroom routines influences their news selection and production process. In the meanwhile internal pressures such as keeping to strict broadcast deadlines and working for a sound influence the content they produce. Lastly the newsroom routines could lead to gatekeeping and self-censorship within the news meeting context, although all participants have strongly emphasised that they do adapt their styles and approaches to the various senior producers they work for, and thus it is a constantly fluid process.

Other contributing factors influencing the content that are ultimately broadcast on RSG Current Affairs include: the audience's ability to give feedback about the news content, the producers' privilege being of choosing the experts that can either confirm or challenge the official slant of the news; and the strict broadcast protocol (such as the senior producer instead of the presenter being ultimately in charge of the show).

During these interviews, the organisational influence of the public broadcaster, the SABC, was identified as having a strong influence on the journalists' news selection, and this could be the subject for future research.

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Contact email: ajansenvanvuuren@uj.ac.za

Different Histories, Different Narratives: ICT Uses as “Habitus”?

Angeliki Monnier, University of Lorraine, France

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Abstract

History forms narratives, narratives form media uses? The present paper formulates a theoretical proposal, that of considering the uses of information and communication technologies (ICT), particularly social media, as “*habitus*”, inspired by Pierre Bourdieu’s Field Theory. My thesis draws on a research conducted on the professional network LinkedIn. It examines the way two discussion groups, held by Greek and French migrants respectively, use this platform. The comparative approach raises the question of *habitus* as *praxis* related to situated and ideologically charged socio-historical representations of migration. The online discursive practices of each group suggest the existence of an *illusio* common to their members regarding the relevance and the objective of the discussions. Different forms (*eidos*) of *illusio* seem to operate as different symbolic capitals that shape the groups. Following Pierre Bourdieu’s sociology, my ultimate assumption is that these divergences are related to the positions that Greece and France hold within the international migration field.

Keywords: Habitus, social media, migrants on line, Greek diaspora, French diaspora, migration field, narratives, history, field theory

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Introduction

History forms narratives, narratives form media uses? The present paper formulates a theoretical proposal, that of considering the uses of information and communication technologies (ICT), particularly social media, as “*habitus*”, inspired by Pierre Bourdieu’s Field Sociology. I employ the term “*habitus*” referring to a set of unconscious practices conditioned by the social, cultural and political context that permeates their users (obviously also determined by the strategic prescriptions and the technological characteristics of the media). It is through the users’ “*illusio*”, “dispositions” and “symbolic capital”, that this context can be identified. Pierre Bourdieu’s Field theory is in the centre of my theoretical framework.

My thesis draws on a research conducted on the professional network LinkedIn. It examines the way two discussion groups, held by Greek and French migrants respectively, use this platform. The comparative approach raises the question of *habitus* as *praxis* related to situated and ideologically charged socio-historical representations of migration. The online discursive practices of each group suggest the existence of an *illusio* common to their members regarding the relevance and the objective of the discussions. Different forms (*eidos*) of *illusio* seem to operate as different symbolic capitals that shape the groups’ narratives¹. Following Pierre Bourdieu’s sociology, my ultimate assumption is that these divergences are related to the positions that Greece and France hold within the international migration field.

Introducing the collective dimension of the ICT uses

To understand the significance –but also the originality– of this proposal for the ICT studies, it is important to retrace the main approaches that have shaped the analysis of ICT uses until today. This research domain emerged at the intersection of the Theory of Diffusion and the Cultural Studies, following the Uses and Gratifications approach (Maigret, 2003: 260-264). More specifically, three main traditions that have fueled research directions in this area during the period 1980-1995 (Jauréguiberry & Proulx, 2011: 32-84). The first landmark drew on Everett M. Rogers’ (1962) work on the diffusion of technical innovations and considered uses as activities of consumption. The second was related to the development of the Engineering Sciences, which in the 1940s analyzed the design of technical devices and the relationship they establish with humans in terms of ergonomics and use. Within this approach, several scholars (e.g. Akrich, 1987; Bardini & Proulx, 1999; Jouët, 1993; Thevenot, 1991) insisted on the prescribing role of technical devices, in the Foucauldian sense of the term, and placed the concept of “affordance” (Bardini, 1996: 141-142) in the center of their researches. Bruno Latour’s work on the sociology of science and technology, which advocates interobjectivity as an analysis frame (Latour, 1994), fell within this posture. A third contribution came from research on media reception, with frequent references to Michel de Certeau’s (1980) “arts of doing”.

Undeniably, these works have shed light on the complexity of the relationship between humans and machines, yet they have their weaknesses and limitations. Francis Jauréguiberry and Serge Proulx (2011) point out the tendency to overestimate

¹ We will not be delving here into the meaning of “narratives”. There is abundant literature on this topic and a recent very thorough text we can refer to, by Baroni 2016.

the autonomy of users or to consider technologies as exogenous to society, having their own logic, often opposite to that of individuals. More recent works in this area try to overcome these flaws. Nowadays, ICT uses are considered as “brief forms of passages [that agents perform] between different logics of action and different regimes of engagement” (*ibid.*: 101). In this vein, to understand the uses of communication technologies within contemporary societies, we must first apprehend their underlying logics of action: a logic of integration and recognition in a system of reticular and technological affiliations; a utilitarian logic of gain and power in a system of competition; a detachment and empowerment logic in a system of individualization and subjectivity (*ibid.*: 106).

However, as Francis Jauréguiberry and Serge Proulx (2011: 96-97) point out, researches often omit to highlight that ICT uses are also rooted in a set of structures: discursive formations, cultural matrices, systems of social relations of power. The latter forge individual routines and generate patterns of use. In this sense, the uses are embedded in an already established history of social and communication practices. Andrew Feenberg (2004: 55) notes, for example, that the use of technical devices entails a social significance that opens to cultural and political horizons. Christine Servais (2009: 11) argues that the relation between individuals and technologies is adjacent to the articulation between the singular and the collective dimension of mediation, which should also be analyzed. Finally, Francis Jauréguiberry and Serge Proulx (2011: 82) remind us that it seems “impossible to imagine a process of appropriation which would be exclusively individual. The integration of technical objects in our daily practices necessarily presumes a set of common experiences among users”²; hence the need to introduce here an approach based on the concept of *habitus*.

The heuristic value of the concept of *habitus*

The heuristic value of Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* lies in the fact that it helps consider online activity beyond its individual dimension. Bourdieu defines the *habitus* as “incorporated history”, “reactivation of the meaning objectified by the institutions”, “standardization of the experience”, “common code”, or ultimately “subjective but not individual system of internalized structures, common patterns of perception, conception and action, which are the condition of any objectification and any perception” (Bourdieu, 1980a: 94-101). This approach puts emphasis on the *habitus* as a set of relatively homogeneous practices and shared meanings within a group. It does not advocate the acceptance of an absolute determinism which leaves no margin for individual creativity; these margins prove, however, limited, often predictable by the *habitus* itself. “Like any art of inventing, the latter can produce an infinite number of practices, relatively predictable (like their corresponding situations), but limited in their diversity” (*ibid.*: 93).

The idea of the existence of a transcendent referent “above” individual human practices was strongly criticized by Bruno Latour (1994) in his actor-network sociology. The author argues that any action is local and always “flatly” arranged, woven into objects, through the mediation they provide:

² All translations of French texts were conducted by the author.

“The fact that an interaction has the contradictory form of a local frame and a muddled network, does not mean, however, that we should leave the solid ground of interactions to move to ‘some next level’, that of society. Both levels exist, yet their connection cannot be demonstrated” (Latour, 1994: 41).

Bruno Latour’s theory on interobjectivation stresses the key role of the materiality of the objects in our relationship with technology. Nevertheless, the defense of a socio-historically situated subject helps not only to humanize this relation but also to maintain its richness and depth. As Olivier Voirol (2013: 178) points out, “regardless of how humans are related to non-humans, it is always humans that encounter non-humans to which they endow a sense and a value of use or exchange”. The heuristic value of *habitus* becomes here significant.

The concept of *habitus* was developed by Pierre Bourdieu in the late 1960s to analyze the field of artistic activity, creative genius and revolutionary innovation. It was further explained in *Esquisse d’une théorie de la pratique [Outline of a theory of practice]* (1972) and formalized in *Le sens pratique [Practical reason. On the theory of action]* (1980), where it was mainly associated with social class. Explaining different *habitus* as conditioned by “a particular class of the conditions of existence”, Pierre Bourdieu defines them as:

“systems of durable and transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is to say, as principles generating and organizing practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aim of purposes or intentional mastery of the operations necessary to achieve them, objectively ‘regulated’ and ‘regular’ without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of an orchestra chief” (Bourdieu, 1980a: 88-89).

Habitus, as “internalization of externality”, is the “grammar” available to individuals to adapt and cope with social life. This grammar is learned, often unconsciously, and is therefore not innate, but its uses may be malleable and allow varying degrees of improvisation. Because of the structuring power of every acquisition (lived and/or learned: history, norms, behaviors, patterns of perception, etc.), *habitus* limits the scope of an idealist subjectivism which focuses on the creative action of the subject. Being a set of possibilities available to individuals within the limitations inherent to the conditions of its production, it also puts into perspective the power of an absolute structuralism that sees only mechanical causal relationships between the structure and the subject. In *Méditations pascaliennes [Pascalian meditations]* (1997), Pierre Bourdieu refines and clarifies his thoughts:

“One of the major functions of the concept of *habitus* is to prevent two additional errors intrinsic to the scholastic view: on the one hand, the claim that action is the mechanical effect of the constraints imposed by external causes; on the other hand, the teleology, especially within the theory of rational action, that agents act freely, consciously and, as some say, in a utilitarian perspective, ‘with full understanding’, the action being the product of a calculation of chances and profits” (Bourdieu, 1997: 200).

In other words:

“Dispositions do not automatically result in specific actions: they are revealed and are accomplished only in appropriate circumstances and in relation to a situation. They may therefore remain in a state of potentiality, just like warlike courage in absence of war” (Bourdieu, 1997: 215).

In this frame, considering ICT uses as *habitus* entails raising the larger question of the contribution of Field Sociology to the study of communication phenomena.

Field Theory to study communication?

Habitus renders human discourse and behavior meaningful, through their inscription in broader socio-historical frameworks, whose logics and functioning influence, in subtle and often unnoticed ways, spontaneous individual practices. *Habitus* carries the trace of the ideologies by which it was forged. The latter are to be found in the various fields of social organization (school, state, church, politics, etc.) and in their articulation.

Developed by Pierre Bourdieu in parallel to that of *habitus*, the concept of field focuses on the position occupied by a social agent, individual or collective, within the system of relations which circumscribes an area of activity. Various *habitus* emerge depending on the different positions occupied by agents in a field. Initially applied in the domain of artistic creation, the field reveals a relevant concept for analyzing power relations and implicit laws that underlie the organization of human societies on professional, political, etc. level.

In this frame, communication processes can be analyzed not only as messages, codes, transfers or simple binary relations, but also in terms of the positions occupied by the production instances or the communicating agents within the social space. These positions reflect –but also engender– different stakes that are contextually situated: “Symbolic activity is socially conditioned” (Champagne & Christin 2004: 48). Indeed, the points of view of the social agents “depend, in terms of content and symbolic force, on the position that those who produce them occupy; it is only through a *situs analysis* that these points of view can be reconstructed as such, i.e. as partial views taken from a point (*situs*) within the social space” (Bourdieu, 1997: 264).

Every field generates a *habitus*, based on a set of resources, the “capital” (economic, cultural and social) available to its protagonists. It is characterized by the existence of an *illusio*, i.e. a form of its members’ conviction in its relevance as a social space meaningful for them, both challenging and engaging. *Habitus* becomes a form of capital, as it embodies unconscious learned patterns of perception and thought, and as “it contributes to varying degrees, to do, undo and redo space” (Bourdieu, 1997: 264).

The concepts of field, *illusio* and capital complement the heuristic value of *habitus*. They form a conceptual framework whose implementation in the field of communication technologies and new media can provide new insights. What I will try to show in this work is that the use of digital platforms can –and should– also be understood in terms of the various *habitus* that users develop online, and whose logic,

beyond the question of their creative appropriations –as was advocated by Michel De Certeau (1980) and crystallized in his famous formula “arts of doing”– carries the traces of their socio-historical conditioning. These traces are identified in the users’ underlying *illusio* regarding the meaning of their online activity. My hypothesis is that the latter functions as a form of symbolic capital, which is related, among other things, to the articulation and the hierarchies of the international migration field within the international geopolitical sphere.

To empirically demonstrate this thesis, my study will adopt a comparative approach between LinkedIn discussion groups held by Greek and French migrants³. More specifically, a *situs analysis* will show that when these expatriates come together online on a professional networking site, their practices are not the same. Their divergences can be apprehended based on the relation that each group has with migration. This relation proves to be historically and politically shaped and functions as a form of symbolic capital, which impacts the presumed objective of each group and the contents published.

A case study to illustrate the theoretical proposal

The present paper draws its main thesis on the results of a comparative study between two LinkedIn migrant groups: in the first, migrants are of Greek origin, in the second, their origin is French. Both groups are “private”, i.e. not accessible to non-members. This is the reason for which I prefer, as to respect the privacy of their members, neither reveal their exact designations nor provide quotes from their participants. Indeed, Guillaume Latzko-Toth and Serge Proulx (2013: 41) point out the problematic distinction between “public” and “private” sphere when it comes to online discussion forums. The authors highlight that discussants are not always aware of the degree to which they are publicly exposed when exchanging on the Internet and point out that a sudden visibility of such groups, even within a scholar work such a scientific article, amounts to “turn the spotlight on what was in the darkness” (*ibid.*: 42).

About 200 “threads of discussion” for each group were extracted and registered in June 2013, covering the period of approximately a year. They were first examined in relation to the practices and profiles of the discussants (the roll-out of the discussions, the types and the intensity of the participants’ engagement, the gender and the geographic location of the latter), then in terms of the messages conveyed (speech acts and referents). A content analysis including a categorical semantic approach (L. Bardin, 1977) was a main part of the project. For the present paper, which aims at demonstrating the heuristic value of the Bourdieusian approach when it comes to ICT uses, I will only present results that are relevant to the article’s main point and refrain from thoroughly displaying the project, which goes beyond the comparison of these two groups as it is presented here.

The Greek group, established in 2007 by a Greek expatriate, aims at “bringing together Greek communities around the world and exchanging business opportunities”. The discussions are not visible to non-members, and admission is granted on request. Three administrators (two of them located in Greece, the third

³ Parts of this work have been published in Koukoutsaki-Monnier, 2015, but within a different theoretical scope, as to illustrate a theoretical model regarding the symbolic constructions of nationhood.

abroad) are reported. On the 4th of February 2013, the group had 4993 members. Most discussants display a location in Greece (figure n° 1).

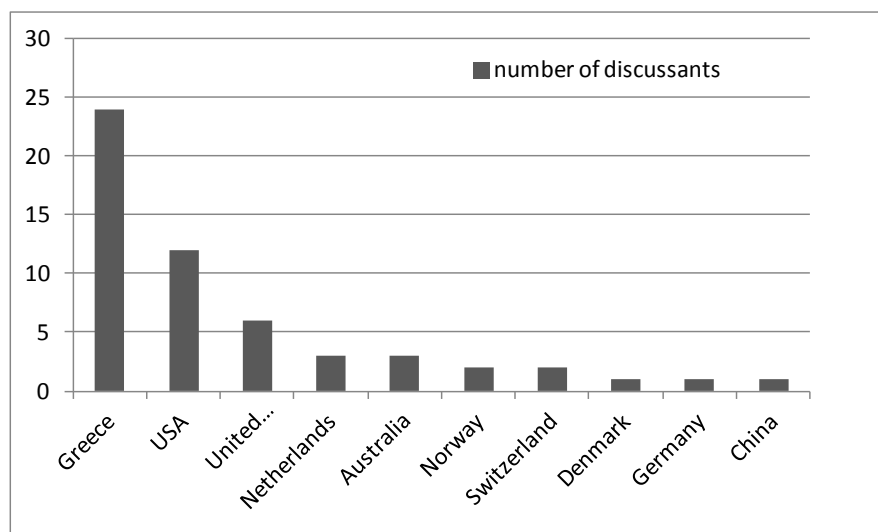


Figure n° 1: The geographic localization of those who initiate discussions within the Greek group.

The French group announces itself as a non-profit network, created in 2010, which aims at addressing French expatriates to provide “community services and media” and “facilitate the expatriation”. On the 4th of February 2013, it had 1,089 members. Almost have of the participants display a location in France (figure n° 2).

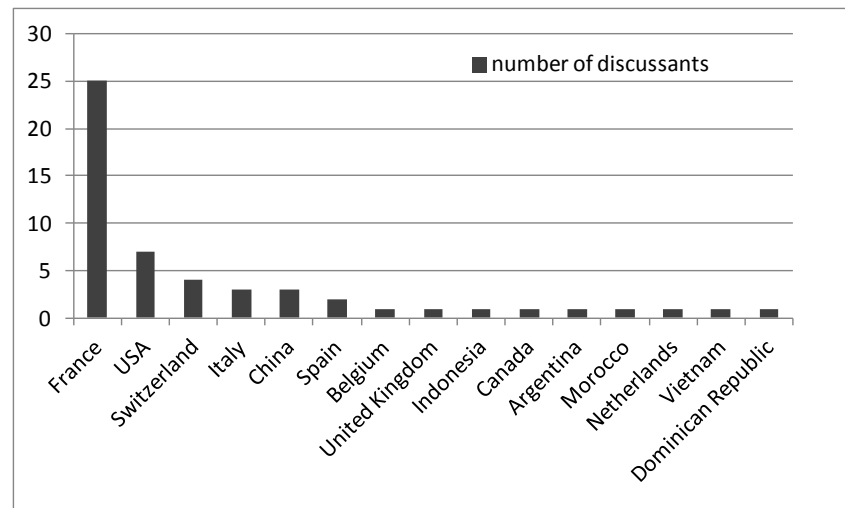


Figure n° 2: The geographic localization of those who initiate discussions within the French group.

Analysis of the Greek group reveals that Greece is the main referent in the discussions (figure n° 3); and referring to Greece entails exchanging about the Greek crisis. The group becomes a field where participants share the latest news, display their knowledge in economic, historical, political, etc. issues, provide analyzes and forecasts, agree or argue on what seems to have become the great “trauma” of contemporary Greeks. They seek to identify those responsible for the crisis, its victims, and its consequences for themselves and for others. They point to the irresponsible governance of the country during the recent decades, but also to the role

of international organizations (EU, IMF, etc.) and the geopolitical stakes in which a small country like Greece is trapped. They return to the past and question the very meaning of “Greekness”, the legacy of ancient Greece, Byzantium, etc. They criticize the mentality of an inhuman materialism and individualism that seems to have transformed contemporary Greece into a cold society. Sometimes they compare themselves to other countries, questioning the inevitable hierarchies built and lived between different societal groups. They finally raise the issue of the role or even the duty of the Greek diaspora and explore the horizons of action available to them.

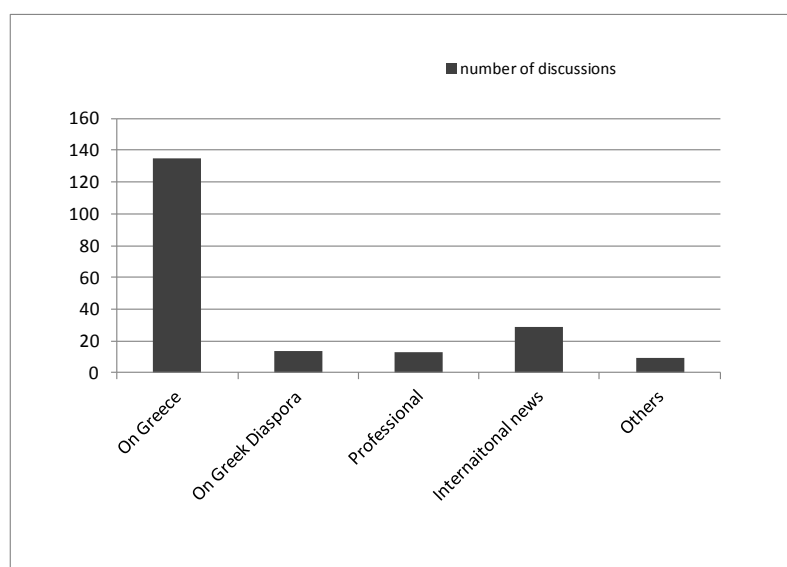


Figure n° 3: The referents of the discussions within the Greek group.

The main referent within the French group, the issue that unquestionably dominates the discussions, is that of expatriation (figure n° 4), addressed both in its practical, functionalist aspects, as well as in terms of its identity repercussions –and discussed almost exclusively in French (only 10 posts are written in English). Some lexical fields are significant: “shock”, “risk”, “hardship”, “investment”, “cultural”, “tax”, “tax exile”, “mobility”, “experience”, “profit”, “added value”, “prepared”, “coming back”, “optimize”, etc. The use of the platform as a support to promote business is much more pronounced than in the Greek group; some participants explicitly appear as specialized consultants in expatriation.

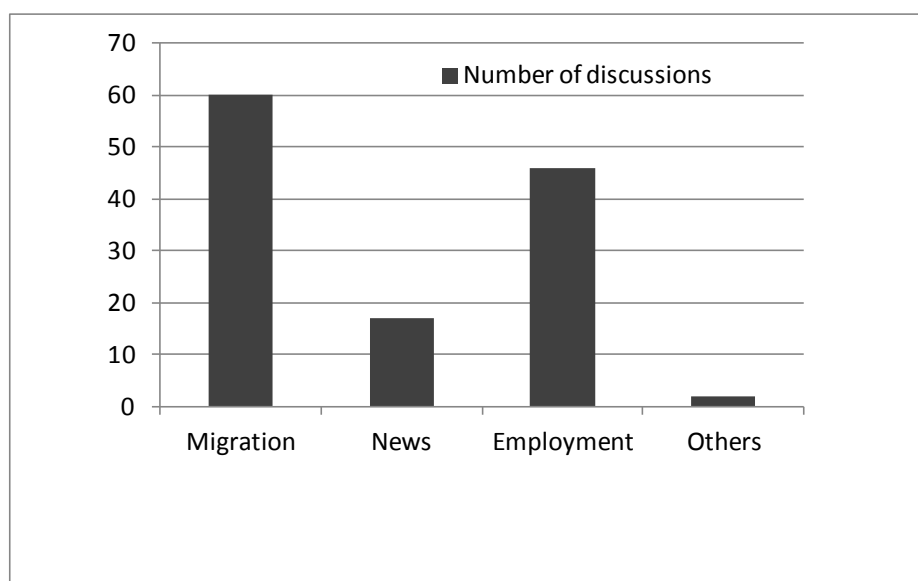


Figure n° 4: The referents of the discussions within the French group.

Concerns about self-image are not formulated in the same way between Greeks and French. For the former, the question is the image of the country, tarnished by the current crisis. For the latter, it is the direct contact with the Other, on the background of the French colonial past, which colors the discussions. The pride of the “nation” and the “origins” still transpire through the contents published, but France is not an issue to debate; it does not structure the narrative construction that underlies the discussants’ exchanges, as it is in the case of the Greek group. It is the human being, the migrant, who is positioned at the center of the narrative; it is the experience of migration that builds the main story. For Greeks, the need is to assert membership; for French, it is about exploring an individual experience.

The fact that Greek and French migrants perceive differently the objective of an “ethnic” group on a professional social media may be linked – and it is this thesis that I defend *in fine* in this paper – to the *illusio* that unites them and renders their participation meaningful. The use of the platform is thus conditioned, beyond the technical, economic and social prescriptions of the device, by a certain belief about what constitutes the *relevant question* for the group, the stake of the exchange:

“To begin to argue, one must be convinced that arguments worth the discussion, and must believe, in any case, in the merits of the exchange. The *illusio* is not an explicit principle, one of those theories that are raised to be defended, but an action, one of those routinized things we do, because they are always done like that [...] When asked about the reasons for their visceral involvement in the game, the participants have ultimately nothing to answer and the arguments that can be invoked in such cases are merely *post festum* rationalizations intended to justify, to oneself as well as to others, an unjustifiable investment” (Bourdieu 1997: 147).

My argument in this paper is that the representations and patterns of thought that determine how Greek and French migrants invest a professional social media should be associated to distinct *habitus*. Indeed, between France and Greece, the relation to expatriation is not the same: neither in the past nor today; neither as to the reasons for the departure, nor in terms of destination countries. This relation was forged through

history and continues to be reproduced in everyday life. It entails the construction of a certain self-image, the image of one's native country or country of origin, of one's membership ("national", cultural, etc.) and of the Other. Greeks and French join online migrant groups in a differentiated manner because they are impregnated with these socio-historically determined representations, which are associated to the position that their countries hold in the international migration field.

Promises and pitfalls of the analytical framework: Did you say "disposition"?

Analyzing online practices in terms of "dispositions" forging *habitus* entails focusing on the *modus operandi* of the social "agents" (Pierre Bourdieu rejects the term "actors", see Bourdieu, 2013: 81). It means examining the way they seem to have incorporated several *doxa* and to have developed a specific *ethos*. However, analyzing online migrant practices in terms of "dispositions" may sound as an *oxymoron*. Migrant populations are supposed, by definition, to incarnate the hybridity that characterizes contemporary societies: to what extent can the behavior of a Greek or a French migrant be attributed to his/her alleged "Greekness" or "Frenchness"? We can reply to this question by arguing that adherence to an "ethnic" group, as a conscious and rational individual act implies a certain acceptance of the collective identity the group claims. According to social psychology (Jacquemain *et al.*, 2005-06), it is not because individuals can combine various belongings that the intensity of them is weaker. Furthermore, we should not forget that the constitution of the groups of our empirical study is far from being purely "transnational". As shown before, in both cases examined, most of the discussions are initiated by individuals located in the country of origin (Greece and France, respectively). Far from generating non-territorial spaces, the platform favors a rather concentric organization of migrant populations. The role of the center reveals to be important because it establishes the dynamics of each group and fixes its agenda. Of course, other discussants can significantly influence the flow and the content of the messages conveyed. However, their activities seem to be "isolated cases".

Has the center the right to speak on behalf of migrants? Isn't there an ethical issue? Indeed, the center may not be legitimate to speak for them, but it can *address* itself to them. Those who initiate and carry the discussions function, in many ways, as "leaders" in the sense given to the term by the anthropologist Christian Geffray (1997). According to this author, the words of the leaders are not autonomous speeches but should be understood within the community they address:

"The leader speaks and what he says, the object of his words, cannot be regarded as irrelevant to the public around him [...]. The leader [...] must be able to offer his voice and develop his speech, so that the members of the population that he addresses will recognize, in one way or another, the expression of a point of view they share" (Geffray, 1997: 5).

In this frame, "disposition" is linked to *habitus*. It reflects what is significant for the discussants –though not necessarily for all members– of the group. Our last concern will be to demonstrate how, in this study, online migrants' *habitus* are associated to their countries' position within the international migration field.

Linking the *habitus* to the field

The concept of migration field, inspired by Pierre Bourdieu's theory, has been developed in geography. According to Gildas Simon:

"The migration field can be defined as a transnational space that unites –regardless of their distance– places of origin, of transit and of installation. It refers to a space structured by stable and regular human migrations as well as by other flows (material, ideational) induced by this movement. The usefulness of this analytical tool is that it applies to all geographic and cultural combinations, and that this social construction is characterized by its fluidity and its potential for spatial re-compositions, while maintaining long term stability. This concept has the advantage of being located at the articulation of the concept of field, whose generative fertility was shown by Pierre Bourdieu, and the concept of migration space, understood as a social space produced by the actors of the geographical scope" (Simon, 2008: 15).

Migration field is a "space under tension because it is invested as a carrier of migrant hopes, utopias and myths, imaginaries deeply rooted in collective mentalities, in the shifting borders between identity and otherness" (Simon, 2008: 15-16). It carries the symbolic charge of the act of crossing political boundaries that remain more than ever a reality in a world inhabited by security concerns, as well as issues related to social mobility (*ibid.*: 19). The social migration field, as a product of history subtended by the economic, political, etc. imbalances which determine the flow of people on a global scale, shapes, through the trace it leaves on the public institutional policies – including State and school– the way the members of a society understand their relation to themselves and to others. In this sense, it becomes symbolic capital, as "transfiguration of a balance of power into meaning" (Bourdieu, 1997: 347). Understanding the migration *habitus* developed in two different societies entails questioning the way each of them addresses, through its history and by its institutions, the issue of migration. Inevitably, it involves investigating the role that these societies hold in the migration field.

In 2012, according to data provided by the French government, 1 611 054 French were officially registered on French consulates outside the country (which counts over 66 million habitants), including 42,2 pct. of "bi-nationals". Cédric Duchêne-Lacroix (2005) highlights the bias that the French system of consular registrations engenders, but also notes that, from a historical standpoint, French emigration proves "numerically small compared to many other European countries, which, owing to several demographic and economic crises, have fueled strong migration flows to America and within the continent" (*ibid.*: 847). French emigration also proves to be limited compared to the waves of immigration that France, traditionally an "immigrant country in a continent of emigrants" (Blanc-Chaléard, 2001: 9), has encountered.

On the contrary, Greek diaspora, one of the oldest in the world, refers, according to 2009 data provided by the General Secretariat for Greeks Abroad, to five million people, which corresponds to almost 50 pct. of the population of the current Greek State (about 11 million). It spreads all over the globe except for a large part of the Asian continent (east of the Middle East), with more than half of it in North America (Bruneau, 2004). These calculations are of course quite generous to the extent that

they try to take account of the descendants of Greeks from mixed marriages. However, Greek diaspora has undeniably a long history. Over the years, the country's several structural problems and its economic and political dependency on the "great powers" have fueled a rather idealistic rhetoric of migration. From the 1980s, with the improvement of the living conditions in Greece, the migratory movement declined considerably and the rhetoric of "extramural success" relatively faded. Nevertheless, the crisis in which the country has collapsed since 2010 seems to have revived both. Since 2011, some speak of "exodus" and "brain drain", related to the problem of unemployment in Greece, which peaked in 2012 and continues (in 2012, unemployment averaged 55 pct. in youth under 25 years and 21 pct. for the general population [OCDE 2013]).

In this sense, in France, country of immigration by definition and former colonial power, the relation to migration is not the same as in Greece, traditionally country of emigration, seen even by some as a "crypto-colony" of Western Europe and the United States (Herzfeld, 2013: 492). It would thus be illusory to ignore the imbalances of the migration field and the way they are reflected in the "common sense", the narratives that share the members of a society, transformed into "culture", "webs of significance" (Geertz, 1973), and symbolic capital. The latter forge the collective *habitus* in the form of "schemes of perception, thought and action" based on a certain definition of the world, or a way of looking at it by making it "exist as a relevant issue by reference to a particular way of questioning reality" (Bourdieu, 1980a: 89).

In this frame, a society's relation to migration is to be apprehended in connection with the position it occupies in the migration field, which is subject to domination rules and games within the political and economic international sphere. To summarize, we can advance the thesis that the topography of the (international) migration field, both in its diachronic (historical) and synchronic form, affect the symbolic constitution of national fields (in terms of narratives of self-image, relation to others, etc.). The latter shape –to varying degrees of course, according to their historical temporality– the *habitus* of social agents, which in turn reproduce or restructure the immigration field.

Conclusion

Understanding ICT uses in the prism of *habitus* was the challenge that was given this work. It led us to examine how Greek and French migrants invest a professional online networking platform, because of their own relationship to migration. I tried to show that this relation is socio-historically determined, related to the positions occupied by Greece and France in the international migration field. These positions generate representations and narratives that operate as dispositions and symbolic capital for each group. Obviously, linking the micro-social to the macro-social level, i.e. trying to explain behaviors through their social and historical inscriptions, may prove misleading, lead to shortcuts, reproduce stereotypes. However, the need for *historicizing* collective behaviors seems to be an essential prerequisite for their understanding. In this sense, Pierre Bourdieu's Field theory is of heuristic value as it helps analyzing communication processes in perspective with the time and space in which they are realized.

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- Contact email:** angeliki.monnier@univ-lorraine.fr

Perception and Construction of Children's Perspectives on Japanese Superheroes: A Comparative Study on the Ways Children in Singapore and Malaysia Appropriate Media Cultures

Nunna Venkata Prasad, Abu Dhabi University, United Arab Emirates
Shanthi Balraj Baboo, Sultan Idris Education University, Malaysia
Ambigapathy Pandian, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Malaysia

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Abstract

Japan has emerged as one of the global players in media content, and many of Japanese media artifacts enjoy immense popularity in many Asian countries, including Malaysia and Singapore. A study was designed to understand and document the perception and construction of children's perspectives on Japanese superheroes that will reveal the ways children understand their own media cultures, the difficulties and pleasures that they encounter in their desires to engage with the superhero narratives. Furthermore, the study provides insights on how Japanese media plays a significant role in our children's lives, shaping their values and developing their awareness of the outside world. The study adopts a cross-sectional, comparative approach, looking across different media in two geographical locations: Singapore and Malaysia. These two countries have experienced significant impacts in terms of cultural and economic power with Japan. Arising from diverse cultural contexts in terms of religious and ethnic orientations, it will be interesting to note the trends in children's engagement with the Japanese superhero narrative in these neighboring countries. In this paper, we present a comparative understanding on the ways children in Singapore and Malaysia appropriate media cultures related to Japan in their everyday lives. The study reveals that the Singaporean and Malaysian children converged on several points; nevertheless, there were notable differences between the two groups. They identify with these characters and believe these series have helped them develop socially, emotionally, and cognitively.

Keywords: Media Culture, Media Literacy, Japanese Superheroes & Young People.

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Introduction

In this new digital media age, children face significant new opportunities of encountering different cultures. Engagement with global media texts and artefacts not only involves a complex intersection of visual images and information, ideas and narratives across an array of multimodal formats, but also offers opportunities for children to be creative and knowledge producers. In other words, children are not merely consumers of media texts; they are actively engaged in a range of activities - fantasies, make believe play, drawing, writing and other forms of meaning-making - reflecting, incorporating and commenting on these media texts. Some of these activities involve the purchase of particular media products - for example branded toys or games - others such as role-play, drawing or storytelling. Children as storytellers, players and artists draw upon familiar elements from media narratives to create their own meanings.

The world of Japan is one that attracts them and they are exposed to Japanese initiatives through superheroes to face the challenges posed by this new mediated global environment. Japanese cultural products can shape not only how the child thinks about herself, but how she relates to others and the Japanese society at large. Interestingly, Japan has a segment of her popular culture devoted to fantastic stories about individuals or characters with superhuman powers. These stories tell of heroes with strengths that children may identify with in the hope becoming as successful as these characters. It then becomes imperative to understand how these heroes play an important role in shaping children's media cultures. To understand this phenomenon, a study was designed to provide evidence-based insights to inform current understanding on children's media cultures in Malaysia and Singapore with regard to favourite and influential Japanese superheroes. This study gave insights on the ways Japanese Superheroes were incorporated in their growth as young people.

Project Framework and Design

This study addresses the various ways in which children engage with the Japanese superhero narrative that cross media boundaries - comic books (manga), animated television shows and films (anime), video games, toys and other design products (stickers, posters, accessories, stationery). The work of Buckingham (2008) and Fox (1993) are helpful in developing our understanding of how children use superhero stories to make sense of their world and how these stories develop skills that are key to their social-cultural development. Paley (1984) argues that young children construct stories based on superheroes in order to explore inner fantasies of control and empowerment over their environment. Media culture can further be a site for exploring some of the most powerful elements of our psyches (Kress, 2003, Muramatsu, 2002) and the discourses of superheroes can be particularly appealing for young children who are constantly involved in exploring oppositional binaries of right and wrong, good and evil, male and female (Dyson, 1996; Davies, 1997).

The research works by Clerkin (2012), Yamato et al (2011) and Martin (2007) highlight that other than ideological values and mythic elements, research on superhero narratives also reveal three main impacts on the children's media cultures:

- (i) Bringing children from different countries and cultural contexts together;

- (ii) Allowing superhero narratives and media practices to cross borders to children's other lifestyle interests in fashion, design, music and toys products;
- (iii) Enhancing intellectual and creative development, helping children in their learning, specifically as creators and meaning-makers in media literacy and skills development.

The superhero genre in very broad terms can be seen as narratives, encompassing stories of action and adventure in which the main protagonist uses some form of supernatural power in order to overcome one or several antagonists. In many ways they are similar to stories about heroes of mythology and fairy tales, as found in many cultures. Essentially, superhero stories are about the struggle of good over evil and the striving for identity (Buckingham, 2002). Superheroes may be represented in many different modes, in films, animated series, comic books, in children's toys and video games. Superheroes as a cross-media genre can be defined by certain characteristics in terms of story and plot, characters and iconography and their essence may be summed up in specific icons (Dyson, 1997). Like any other genre, the superhero genre is flexible, open ended and ever changing. (Cupit, 1989)

Within the framework of a social theory of media literacy, children's engagement with superheroes and activities such as viewing, reading, talking, playing and drawing can be understood as actions where children "seek to define their social identities, both in relation to their peers and in relation to adults" (Buckingham 2003: 48). David Buckingham's works with children and media provides some insights into children's diverse views and their sophisticated understanding of media texts and cultural practices. His work asserted that, as an audience, children brought very diverse readings to any given media text and used complex criteria of judgments and distinction situated somewhere between the actual text and the social context. Children's talk could not be understood just at face value, but had to be also understood as a social practice.

There are many ways and methods of harnessing young children's fascination with superheroes through creative activities in order to facilitate the understanding of children's media cultures (Cupit, 1989; Dyson, 1997). Storytelling, narration, drawing, acting, writing can unveil children's expressions as well as present innovative ways of seeing children as active meaning makers.

More specifically, this study was interested about children's captivation with Japanese superheroes with a focus on the following objectives:

- To chart children's favourite Japanese superheroes and the forms of enjoyment derived from these icons.
- To explore how and why children identify with superheroes as icons representing cherished values of Japanese culture.
- To examine how children use Japanese superhero stories to develop media literacy skills and creativity.

The study draws from existing theories in literacy studies, media and cultural studies and childhood studies to focus on social and cultural context in understanding the superhero narrative in children's lives as well as the ways accommodate this

experience into their play and imagination. Drawing from the insights of the projects conducted by the scholars above, the present study offers a comparative international understanding on the ways children in Malaysia and Singapore appropriate media cultures related to Japan in their everyday lives.

Methodology

The study draws on quantitative methods for the empirical framework – who is interested in what superheroes, how is the superhero narrative relevant to their everyday lives, for what purposes and the forms of social impact and enjoyment. The research design then shifts the focus towards the contextual and the interpretative in exploring the significance, the awareness and management on values, beliefs and ideas derived from these superhero narratives and the ways children use media literacy skills in making sense of their surrounding world. Other techniques include photography, audio and video recordings as compilation of materials produced by respondents in documenting their consumption and enjoyment of the Japanese superhero narrative. The study offers a rich cultural documentation of media experiences and practices related to Japan.

Questionnaire surveys were implemented to examine Japanese superhero popularity, significance and perception of values, ideas and beliefs among children in a face-to-face random location quota sample of 250 children (150 children from Malaysia and 100 children from Singapore) from 14 - 16 year old children. Following, the quantitative phase of data collection, this study also embarked on the creative, where the works of children in visual representations were explored to give deeper insights in the ways children make sense of their media and cultural experiences.

Analysis & Discussion

The purpose of this study was three-fold; not only were we interested in understanding the most liked Japanese superheroes by Malaysians and Singaporeans, we also aimed to explore how and why children identify with these characters and whether these series might contribute to their social-cultural development, emotional skills, and ability to creatively solve problems. In general, the Singaporean and Malaysian respondents converged on several points, namely the age at which they started showing interest in Japanese superheroes, their general attitudes toward helping others, their preference for preventing conflict rather than indulging in fights, and their perceptions of the extent superheroes facilitate social, emotional and cognitive development. Nevertheless, there were notable differences between the two groups, including their familiarity with Japanese superheroes, relative comfort (or discomfort) with sexy characters, reasons for liking an animated character, perceptions of the values portrayed by Japanese superhero series and how superheroes solve conflict, and attitudes toward female characters.

In many ways, our study showed that young Singaporeans and Malaysians are similar. Both groups reported showing an interest in Japanese animated superhero programmes and comics at an early age, often between 6 and 10 years old. Very few became engaged with these shows after they were 16 or 20 years old. Apart from that, both groups shared positive attitudes toward helping others. For example, the majority of respondents reported feeling happy to be able to help others solve their problems. Despite this, a large proportion of all respondents preferred to prevent conflict, rather than take active

measures to resolve an issue. The majority did not feel they were brave enough to fight, and very rarely wrote to their authorities about social problems. Furthermore, almost all respondents recognised that animated Japanese superhero shows have made a positive impact on their social, emotional, and cognitive development. In particular, both groups agreed that Japanese characters have helped them understand other cultures and the concept of justice, how to build self-confidence, creatively solve problems, distinguish good from bad and fantasy from reality, and consider a variety of perspectives before reaching a conclusion. Moreover, our results suggest that young Malaysians and Singaporeans are empathetic toward victims of cruelty in both real-life and fictional situations. Many would also concede in a losing battle. Based on these results, we can conclude that young Singaporeans and Malaysians overlap on many levels when it comes to viewing Japanese superhero comics and programmes, and deriving social and emotional benefits from these media.

At the same time, there were significant differences between the Malaysians and Singaporeans in our sample. Most notably, the ethnic profile of the two groups differed; almost all respondents in the Singaporean sample identified themselves as Chinese, whereas the Malaysian sample was more heterogenous and consisted mainly of Malay respondents. Besides that, our study suggests that young Malaysians may be more familiar with Japanese superheroes than their Singaporean counterparts; while the majority of the Malaysian respondents were unfamiliar with three animated series (i.e., *Akira*, *Cyborg 009*, *Mazinger Z*), most Singaporeans were unfamiliar with five Japanese cartoons, including those listed above. The groups also differed on their reasons for liking an animated character. Although looks were an important factor for both Malaysians and Singaporeans, the Singaporean participants were more likely to think that props, power, and intelligence influence the preference for a character. In contrast, the Malaysian group was more likely to value a character's charisma and self-defence skills. For the most part, both groups recognised that positive values were portrayed in Japanese animated shows, but felt more strongly about some values than others. In particular, young Singaporeans were more likely to perceive teamwork and responsibility in Japanese superhero media, while young Malaysians were more likely to perceive friendship and strong traditional values.

Although both groups generally had positive attitudes toward helping others, young Malaysians were more likely to feel that helping those in need was their responsibility. The groups also differed on how they perceived the ways superheroes solve conflicts. Even though more than half of the Malaysian sample thought Japanese superheroes use masculinity to overcome conflict, about a quarter of Singaporeans disagreed with the same statement. Conversely, more than a quarter of the Malaysian respondents disagreed that Japanese superheroes could solve conflicts by being gentle or feminine. These results are in line with a general trend of differences between the groups. Our data suggest that the young Malaysians in our study hold more traditional and patriarchal conceptions of gender roles, compared to young Singaporeans. While about half of the Malaysian respondents agreed that female characters should be gentle and responsible for domestic chores, about one-third of the Singaporean sample was unsure or disagreed with these statements. Still, the majority of both groups expressed that female characters need to be aggressive and respect powerful men in order to overcome conflict. Another point of divergence in the data lies in the participants' relative comfort with revealing appearances. The vast majority of young Malaysians reported feeling unsure or shy to see sexy Japanese animated characters, or to be too sexy themselves. In

contrast, the majority of young Singaporeans did not report feeling shy to see Japanese characters with revealing outfits.

Despite the precautions taken to control extraneous variables in this study, there are several limitations that we wish to recognise and hope to overcome in future iterations of this research. One limitation of our study is the inability to attribute the differences between the Malaysian and Singaporean groups to culture alone. Because the ethnic makeup of the groups were sharply distinct, we are unable to definitively say that cultural differences exist with regard to attitudes toward Japanese superheroes. However, we can be certain that a difference exists between the groups we have surveyed. Another limitation of the study is that we are relying on survey data and the retrospective evaluations of respondents to understand how Japanese superheroes have influenced social, cognitive, and emotional development. Although we have obtained clear results from asking participants direct questions about animated Japanese characters, there is the risk that their answers have been influenced by more recent experiences in their life, or by the desire to appear socially acceptable. Furthermore, we did not evaluate whether participants were still active consumers of Japanese comics and shows. In the future, researchers should continue to explore the social and cognitive benefits of Japanese superhero shows by comparing individuals who have spent little time with these characters, to those who consider themselves active fans.

Children's Creative Construction

Engagement with media involves a complex intersection of visual images and information, ideas, research and references across an array of digital and print formats. Children can no longer be framed as a group of docile, passive receivers of media content but rather as a group of people who harness creativity, knowledge and skills in producing media and visual material themselves. This work builds upon the research on media audiences and media literacy and brings focus to media activities that form a significant part of everyday thinking and learning of children today.

In this part of the study, the children formed groups of 5-6 and developed stories and characters based on their favourite Japanese heroes. Creative media activity provides a framework and pedagogy for living, learning and working towards cultural understanding. The project amplifies children's creative voice, provides a means of expression and allows children to build stories, inspired by Japanese superheroes. Selected children in Malaysia and Singapore used the visual medium as a tool for expression and reflection in developing stories on Japanese superheroes. This part of the project revealed how children in Malaysia and Singapore developed stories that reflected local concerns as they built on Japanese superhero characters in constructing creative media cultures.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Malaysians and Singaporeans tend to begin showing interest in Japanese superheroes at a young age, but show different patterns of engagement with the content of Japanese animated series later on. Our results suggest that young Malaysians may be more familiar with Japanese superheroes in general than young Singaporeans, and both groups perceive different values within these animated shows. In general, young Malaysians seem to have a more traditional view of gender roles than Singaporeans,

even as they pertain to female characters in Japanese fiction. Malaysians also tend to be more uncomfortable with the sexy appearance of these female characters. Nevertheless, the majority of both groups agreed that Japanese superheroes have helped them become more inclusive and sensitive toward the needs of others; become more self-confident; and become better problem solvers who are able to tell right from wrong. As a whole, this suggests that Japanese superheroes overcome cultural boundaries and can be helpful in the social, emotional, and cognitive development of children from diverse backgrounds.

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Contact email: nunna.prasad@adu.ac.ae
shanthi@upsi.edu.my
pambigapathy@unimas.my

Women as Reflected in Egyptian TV Commercials

Nesrin El-Sherbini, Modern Sciences and Arts University, Egypt
Salwa Darwish, Cairo University, Egypt
Iman Bastawisi, Cairo University, Egypt
Maha El-Tarabishi, Modern Sciences and Arts University, Egypt

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Abstract

In the Arab countries, many studies have tackled the image of women in different media platforms, like in drama, movies, literature, and in theatre; however, very few studies have focused on the image of women in advertisements whether in electronic or in print media. In Egypt, representation of women in TV commercials has received little attention. Since advertising is considered a mirror for the society, and a platform that reflects real life, it is essential, therefore, to study the image of women in Egyptian TV commercials. In light of the Feminist Theory which is concerned with females and their suppression, this study aims at examining the representation of women in Egyptian TV commercials. The study employs the qualitative research methods of qualitative content analysis and in-depth interviews to examine, on 386 Egyptian TV commercials, how the Egyptian women were portrayed in terms of contexts (e.g. rural or urban), occupations, ages, physical appearances, life styles, social roles, social values, and social stratifications. In addition, some technical features of the advert like the type of appeal(s) used, and the visual technique were explored. Results have shown that Egyptian women have not been fairly represented in the advertisements.

Keywords: Stereotyping, Women, Feminist Theory, TV Commercials, Egyptian Advertisements

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Introduction

Mass media and its effects are effective and veritable instrument for communication and spread of data. The mass media – print and electronic apply significant impact in present day social orders. The electronic, especially, the TV is one medium of the mass media with extensive impacts. The components of sight, sound, and action make TV an influential medium of mass media. This influence pertains to the way that TV unlike other mass media joins the components of picture, content, and sound. As a result of the influence of pictures and sound, it has the capacity to duplicate reality as well as to convince its viewers since its contents are seen. Hence, it is considered a viable method for advertising or what is delegated TV commercials, particularly in developing nations because of the high rates of illiteracy.

Advertising does not live in a vacuum but rather is a basic component of societal and social frameworks in which they exist. The formation of advertising has fortified together pictures of people and items and has appropriated and changed a huge scope of images and thoughts. Acting as a "twisted mirror", advertising additionally shows and mirrors certain social propensities, for example, mentalities, practices and qualities, strengthening certain ways of life and theories of the group that help in promoting the product/service or idea.

Aim and Significance of the Study

The ways that audiences comprehend and make sense of the social world around them are greatly influenced and shaped by the media representations (Lavie-Dinur & Karniel, 2013). In deed it is clear to highlight that in the context of the TV advertisements, females are always framed in stereotypical mode. They are mostly represensted as housewives; they depend on men, as sex object, subordinate roles, and more likely to be set in the domestic sphere (Chuku et al. 2014, Debbagh 2012).

Working within the framework of feminist theories, this study employs analysis discourse to examine the cultural values, symbols and messages conveyed in a population census of advertisements presented in Egyptian TV of year 2016, in which women featured prominently in order to explore the women's representation in Egyptian TV commercials; and see how femininity is represented through modes of sexual deference, sensuality, mothering, housewifery, cleanliness, compassion, females' attachment to nature, nurturing and family, responsibilities and patriarchy in advertisements.

Theoretical Framework

The Feminist Theory:

Ideas of importance to women can be found in classical social theory (in Marx, Durkheim, Weber, and Simmel), but the issue of gender as a variable in the analyses of social phenomena came into its own with the advent of the contemporary women's movement (Farganis, 2014).

Feminism draws on the work of early sociological and psychological theorists, most particularly Marx, Engels, and Freud.

The Marxist feminists, (as Clare Burton and Nancy Hartsock), argues that it is not the biological differences that determine the status of women, but the economic system of ownership and private property. Those women of the bourgeois or working class are more likely to be hired than men to serve the capitalist system, because they are hired cheaper than the male counterparts. The liberal feminists (as Sylvia Hewlett and Cynthia Fuchs Epstein), however, believe that sexism is the fundamental determinant that causes inequality between men and women. It is the biological differences that force women to play the emotional, sexual, and household servant role, and that in turn leads to have a depressed, dependent, and mindless bodies. Moving to the radical feminists (as Mary Daly and Catherine Mackinnon) who argue that the social institutions are the main tools for the oppression of women and domination of men. It is the patriarchy system that teaches the men how to dominate, and women how to subdue themselves (Farganis, 2014).

There are a broad range of feminist theories with different perspectives that creates tension among them. Therefore, it is preferred to use plurals theories and a focus on the theorizing process. Linda Gordon (1979, p. 107) in Osmond and Throne (2009) proposed a definition to start with. Gordon (1979) wrote, feminist theory is "an analysis of women's subordination for the purpose of figuring out how to change it." Her definition ties three themes together which are: a focus on women and their own experiences; highlighting that in certain social situations women are suppressed or subordinated; and assurance that this unfair subordination will put to an end. These themes have produced a fourth crucial theme which is the attention to gender and relations of gender as basic to all aspects of social life, including not only women but also that of men (Osmond & Thorne 2009).

The Feminist theory is related with females' disparity and subordination (Trier-Bieniek, 2015). It is a wide term that depicts the utilization of feminist ideas and thoughts to a scope of specialties and fields. Fields as assorted as biology, anthropology, geography, economics, history, literary criticism, sociology, education, theology, and the philosophy of science all have related feminist hypotheses and have been inspected by feminist scholars (SenGupta, Seigart, & Brisolara, 2014).

All feminist theories have been involved in different ways and through different means with setting up the 'subject-position' of females. To state that a female is a human is to unravel her from the hazardous connection to objectification, partiality and social norms and it is, in particular, to set up her on an equivalent balance with "men" and all that this subject-position gives (Rich, 2006). American critical feminist researchers contend that an analytical viewpoint in sexism will show not just that females in the media are sub-par compared to men, but also the constrained and disparaging representation of females are basically connected to the functioning of the capitalist system. In addition, the images and portrayals approach endeavored to answer the inquiries: what sorts of representations of females are there in the media and what do they uncover about females' position in the culture; whose portrayals are they and whom do they benefit; what are the results of those representations; and, how do these representations come to have meaning? (Baran, Davis, Striby, 2014).

This theory is used for the purpose this research to find out the way women are depicted in the Egyptian TV commercials, thus uncover whether they are subordinated, marginalized, oppressed and other assumptions underlay by the theory.

Review of Literature

On reviewing the literature of the topic under examination, it has been found that many studies were done in the point under research, however, most of these studies were not conducted on the Arab media. Only limited number of studies were done on that area. Few studies examining the image of females in advertisements have been conducted in Egypt; however, many studies have tackled such issue on the international level. Studies have included countries such as the USA, France, Spain, China, Pakistan, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, India, etc.

Most of the studies have analyzed specific months in the year (maximum three months), and none has analyzed long periods. At the same time, some studies have replicated previous ones to compare and see whether the image has changed overtime or still the same.

In a meta-analysis of advertising content studies, it was indicated by Ahernethy and Franke (1996) as quoted in Al-Olayan and Karande (2000) that the studies that explore the image of females in the advertisements involving the United States dominates the literature, in which 40 out of 59 studies analyzed dealt with United States media not others. In reviewing the literature, they noted that "much less is known about advertising information in other countries. For example, no study has examined the advertising information in any African nation, any part of the Middle East other than Saudi Arabia, or any of the 'economies in transition' associated with the former USSR."

It has also been found that the images of women constructed by the media change over time as they depend on the specificities of each particular country (Dabbagh, 2012).

Among the studies aimed at exploring the image of women in TV commercials is the one by Chakiry (2014) who conducted a study in Morocco to compare the image of women in American and Moroccan TV advertisements. The study was intended to examine the themes and contexts in which the woman appeared through a comparison of different products' advertisements in different decades. The products' advertisements that were analyzed are: *Tide*, *Mr. Proper*, and *Lesieur*. In these advertisements, the researcher analyzed the image of women and examined whether the image has changed over time or not in relation to theme and the context. Another set of advertisements were analyzed to see the association of women to body and sexuality. The analyzed products' advertisements were: *Dove*, *Sunsilk*, *BB Garnier Cream*, and *Veet*. This study provided a sort of comparison not just across cultures but also across time in which the researcher compared the image of females in recent and old advertisements as well. The study was based on a small sample and lacked supportive research methodology like intensive interviews or quantitative content analysis. Also Ullah and Khan (2014) conducted a study on a sample of Pakistani television advertisements featuring women which were qualitatively analyzed. The researchers found that women were generally portrayed as sex objects. They were just objects of desire, leisure, sex, rather than people with affection. In this study, the researchers chose the sample from four private Pakistani TV channels and one public channel. They selected photographs and verbal messages on which they apply the critical discourse analysis (qualitative method). This study was limited to identifying

the physical features of women used in TV commercials, who was actually decorative models. The study did not focus on women's roles in the advertisements. The study also employed only qualitative method for examining image of women on a limited number of photographs and verbal messages. While other studies employed quantitative analysis like the study by Furnham, Babitzkow, & Ugucioni (2000), which was carried out on gender stereotyping in TV advertisements in French and Danish television. The study employed the quantitative method of content analysis, in which 165 French TV advertisements, and 151 Danish TV advertisements were analyzed based on an established coding categories. The sample was chosen from the periods of October 1995 in France and November 1995 in Denmark. The statistical analyses were carried out separately and then compared to each other. Results have shown that in French advertisements there were more stereotypical representation for gender than in Danish TV advertisements. This study is very significant in which it is based on two separate studies that were carried out on their own, and then their results were compared. The researchers employed the quantitative method of content analysis which contributed to reliable results based on statistical evidence; However, the timeframe from which the sample was selected is too small as it was only one month in one year. Also Furnham, Pallangyo, & Gunter (2001) examined the representation of men and women in a sample of Zimbabwean TV commercials, the sample analyzed included 110 advertisements to figure out the gender of the central figure, age, mode of presentation, product types, credibility basis, location, role, location, reward type, argument, background, and end comment. The sample examined was taken from a 38-day period in November-December 1999 from the sole commercial television channel in Zimbabwe (ZBC) and other 92 advertisements were taken from three advertising agencies in Zimbabwe. The study mainly aims at determining whether men and women were portrayed differently in advertisements. Results have shown that in all of the coding categories, there are significant gender differences, with exception in the favored gender of the central figure. Men were appeared as specialists, laborers or experts, and also definitive and proficient about functional explanations behind purchasing an item. Females, on the other hand, were portrayed as the customers of items, the main decision maker of consuming products buying processes, and as involving parts characterized essentially in connection to other individuals (e.g., spouse. mother), and being more concerned about the social centrality of buying a product or a service. This study employed the same coding categories used in the previous study. It is also apparent from the sample that the timeframe from which the sample is selected is too small to reveal consistent stereotypical image in depiction. A study focusing on the Arab countries was conducted by Kalliny, Dagher, Minor, & De Los Santos (2008) to compare the cultural differences through the depiction of women in TV advertisements. The study compared 721 TV commercials from Egypt, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates against each other, and also compared them to United States of America. From 12 hours of programming, TV commercials were videotaped from each country. The variables used were: gender use, advertising purpose, gender modesty, information content, the use of comparative appeal, and price information. Results showed no significant difference regarding the depiction of women whether in the Arab countries or the USA; however, they tend to be more conservative in their dress in the Arab countries than in USA. The researchers in this study chose the sample from channels that are broadcasted nationwide to make sure it reaches as much as possible from the public; however, they missed an important aspect which is the advertising sponsor. The chosen Lebanese channel (LBC) has a Saudi Arabian

advertising sponsor, thus, the advertisements are all Saudi Arabian and not Lebanese. Therefore, the sample from the Lebanese's channel is not valid or reliable because it does not represent the Lebanese culture. Ferrante, Haynes, & Kingsley (1988) replicated a study conducted in 1972 in USA. Content analysis was done on 1480 TV commercial to determine the manner in women were portrayed in TV advertisements to examine whether a change has undergone or not. Results have shown that women found to be portrayed in a wider range of occupations and appeared in a setting outside home than in 1972. Other aspects remain the same as the product type, the voice-over, and age categories. This study examined a big sample, however, the timeframe was too small (from October 6, 1986 to October 24, 1986), which a very short period.

While the above studies focused on the representations of women through the analysis of TV advertisements, other studies focused on the image of women in print advertisements.

One of these studies done by Al-Olayan, & Karande (2000) intended to compare the portrayal of men and women, the use of comparative advertising, the extent of information content, and other variables in print advertisements in USA and the Arab world. The researchers content analyzed 1064 from Egyptian, Lebanese, and United Arab Emirates, as well as Pan-Arabic general interest, family, and women's magazines, together with 540 advertisements from three US general, family, and women interest's magazines. Results revealed that in Arabic advertisements, people are less depicted than in US advertisements. Women Arabic advertisements are always associated to the products that relate to their presence; such as, cosmetics, beauty products, or household products. The models in the advertisements always wear long dresses covering their bodies. Although the number of advertisements analyzed is big, the period which the study covers is too short (three-month time period). Another study conducted by Alozie (2005) in Nigeria aimed to configure the portrayal of the African women in advertising of Nigerian print media from 1998 through 2000 in which women played dominant roles through means of rhetorical analysis. The researchers analyzed the available sample included in five newspapers which constituted 93 advertisements. Results showed that the Nigerian mass media advertisements used to promote household products without resorting to the use of gender and sex stereotypes, while in other business-oriented advertisements, females were presented in professional setting with some stereotypical hints.

Research Questions:

This paper intends to answer the following question:

- How are women represented in Egyptian TV commercials?
- How does the representation of women in Egypt differ in subcultures (rural vs. urban)?
- Does the representation of females in TV commercials in Egypt reflect a true image of the Egyptian women?
- What are the social roles of the females as appearing in the TV commercials?
- What are the occupations of females as appearing in the TV commercials?
- What are the social values of females as appearing in the TV commercials?
- What are the appeals that are mostly used in the commercials?

- What are the visual techniques that are mostly used in the commercials?

Study Population:

The study population is the Egyptian TV commercials of year 2016 of both governmental and private channels, which feature adult females prominently which are 386 ads, while advertisements of public service or charities are excluded. This study analyzes a census population of the TV commercials that meet the determined criteria.

Research Methodology:

Qualitative research methods are articulated on a philosophical view point that can be considered as “interpretivist” which is interested about how the social world around us is interpreted, experiences, depicted, or created. Some of the qualitative methods explore these elements in different contexts such as language, text, social implications, or processes. Others focus on the whole components of complex social world in which we exist (Mason, 2002).

This study employs two qualitative research methods, which are qualitative content analysis and intensive interviews. To start with the qualitative content analysis, it is one of various research techniques used to analyze content information. This Content information may be in verbal, print, or electronic shape and may have been gotten from account reactions, open-ended study questions, interviews, center gatherings, perceptions, or print media, for example, articles, books, or manuals. Qualitative content analysis goes past only checking words to inspecting dialect intensively with the end goal of arranging a lot of content into an effective number of classifications that speak to comparable implications. These classifications can speak to either express similarity or surmised correspondence. The objective of content analysis is "to give information and comprehension of the wonder under investigation (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005)."

In the methodology, qualitative content analysis was used to analyze the image in which Egyptian females were portrayed.

The second method of research used by the researcher is the intensive interviews or in-depth interviews. It can be defined as a one-to-one interview in which the interviewer goes to the interviewee's (respondent) place or the interviewer invites the respondent to a field service location or research office. It can be either structured interview in which standard questions are asked in a preset order, or unstructured interview in which general questions are asked that make interviewers free to determine what further questions to ask to obtain the required information (Wimmer & Dominick, 2013). In this research, the researcher conducted unstructured interviews with scholars and experts in the field of advertising in Egypt to get an overview about the image of women in advertising and whether the frames in which women are portrayed in TV advertising are equal to reality and reflect the real society or not. The interviewees included university professors in the fields of advertising, marketing, journalism, broadcasting, and feminist studies; and advertising experts.

Results and Discussion

In this part, the most significant results are presented. On analyzing 386 Egyptian TV commercial of the year 2016 in both governmental and private channels, it has been found that Egyptian women in advertisements are abused and misrepresented.

1. *Gender Domination*

Women are greatly objectified; they are set as decorative objects/models in the background, or surrounding the man silently which underestimate the actual role of women in the Egyptian society.



Figure 1: Tiger Chips ad



Figure 2: Dabur Vatika Gel ad

The above shots of ads show how the ladies are set behind men just for decoration. The main character in the ad is the man while the women are just in the background standing or dancing silently.

Moreover, they are positioned as subordinates to men in which men are always superior to women. This reflects the concept of patriarchal society that still predominant in the Egyptian society despite the fact that Egypt has gone tremendous transformations in women's right and they took a proper presentation in the constitution, the Egyptian parliament, and the society at large.



Figure 3: Fern Margaine ad

The above shot of ad shows how men are sitting at the table waiting for the ladies to serve the food. The men are sitting down while the women are standing which reinforce the concept of patriarchal society.

Women are displayed as withdrawn from active participation in the social scene and therefore dependent on others. This contradicts the actual Egyptian women in real life, because the provide for is not limited to men as in Egypt 32% of Egyptian families are fended for by females. And according to the latest labor force statistics, females occupies 23.2% of the labor force in the formal sector and 70% in the informal sector (Wikipedia, n.d). Thus, the portrayal of women dependency on the man is not true. That is why the Egyptian women advertising need to emphasize more on changing the misconception related to women withdrawal from active participation in the social scene.

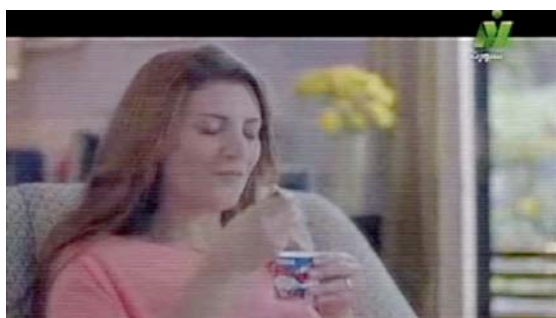


Figure 4: Nestle fruit yoghurt ad



Figure 5: La Nouva Vista Compound ad

The shots above show how the ladies are inactive and isolating themselves from the active life.

Females appear to be presented in domestic contexts. Most of the ads present the female in the position of a housewife. According to Tarek Nour (2017), one of the pioneers in the field of advertising in Egypt, these portrayals are derived from our Egyptian culture. It is embedded in our traditions that women always exist domestically as housewives while the man is the one who works.

But it can never be disregarded that recently, Egyptian women are taking active part in the development of the society. The ads ignore that females in Egypt are now taking over several high positions. For example, there are three female ministers, 89 females in the Egyptian parliament, and others in the judiciary, mayors, sheikhs and Ma'Zoun (the one who formulates marriage contracts for Muslims).

In addition, most of the voiceover of the ads were presented by men which reinforce the subordination of females. This actually coincides with previous studies who indicated that the male voiceover is used more than female's voiceover (Dominick and Rauch, 1972; Whipple and Courtney 1980; Gilly, 1988; Furnham and Voli, 1989; Lovdal, 1998; Mwangi, 1996). This consistency between Egypt and other countries in the use of the male voiceovers indicates that advertisers seem to believe that male voice is more credible, authoritative, and convincing than the females'.

Among the social values associated with the female are that they care about their family. The mother who always seeks to please her husband and kids. This is a true

reflection as mothers in the Egyptian society are emotionally involved with their family members and consider it as the most important priority in their life.

Most of ads depict the Egyptian women in western outfit even the veiled ones. I totally agree that the image of Egyptian women in most of the TV ads reflect the western outlook of Egyptian females. This is true as most of the females regardless of their social stratification, they imitate the western cultures regarding their outfits.

Very few number of females in the ads were presented veiled, although the veiled females in Egypt is much more than unveiled especially in the popular areas in Egypt and the predominant rural areas.



Figure 6: Eva B-White facial scrub ad

The above shot shows how the ladies are all dressed in modern outfits even the veiled lady is dressed in modern as well.

Mostly females of the commercials were middle-age adults, with very few number appears old. This can be reasonable because middle-age adults are the actual market segment that is the active part of the household. El-Hadidi (2017) believe that the middle-aged adults are mostly the target market of the different products and services, because they are the ones who became independent from their parents', and thus they are decision-makers in their new homes.

2. *Subcultures*

The Egyptian subcultures such as those of upper Egypt, the rural areas, the Bedouins, and the Nubians were not reflected in the majority of the ads. This is a very important and crucial point that the Egyptian TV women ads should reflect the different subcultures that exist in the Egyptian community. Thus most of the contexts presented are urban whether domestic or out-of-door. Lydia Ghobrial (2017), an advertising expert, contends that the subcultures are rarely used in case of some detergents that are targeting those with lower income. A journalism professor, Prof. Nagwa Kamel (2017), is completely against the focus on subcultures which is the main cause of what happened and still happening in other countries such as Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, in which there is a focus on minorities that creates the division of the nations. They are all Egyptian and ads must talk to Egyptians all as one identity not different identities. The concentration on these minorities creates social division. Still in Egypt we do not have ethnicity. If we do that, we will create chaos. And that will be considered destructive media. These divisions may result due to the presentation of minorities as different identities, which cultivates hatred towards the majority, and the consequences may range from social unrest to civil wars and/or nations' division.

Most of families depicted in the ads were from middle/upper and upper social classes, while those of lower/labor social classes were ignored. This justifies why some French or English words were used with the Arabic ones. Moreover, as intended by Kamel (2017), the focus on the luxurious products for high standard lifestyles, while presenting the worker class only in the cause-related campaigns asking people to donate, generate in return emotions of frustration among these strata. The ads now create frustration among the lower/labor classes. For example, in the ads presented in Ramadan, most of the them are about residency compounds and villas or cause-related ads aiming at collecting donations, despite that not all Egyptians are millionaires nor are they beggars. Previously, there were ads for investment certificates, or detergents that suit and benefit different strata of the society. But nowadays ads bring about both class and social discrimination. It is very confusing, thus, if anyone views those ads asking people to donate and at the same time other ads featuring luxurious villas and compounds worth four million Egyptian Pounds and more. On the other hand, other university professors in the fields of broadcasting and advertising, Prof. Mona El-Hadidi (2017) and Prof. Safwat El-Alem (2107), contended the contrary; they believe that the field of advertising is a fancy world that aspire people, and make them try to reach that dreamy home, for example, in the future.



Figure 7: Dettol cleaner ad

The shot of ad above shows the social stratification that dominates the Egyptian TV commercials which is the middle/upper social class.

3. *Technical Features*

Humor appeal is the appeal that was mostly used in the ads. That can be presumed to the humorous nature of the Egyptian people. In addition, Kamel (2017) opinion articulates around the idea that the use of the humor appeal is something needed nowadays due to the bad economic situation that leave people in a state of depression. Also female celebrities were largely used in ads of different products and services. This is because the fact that Egyptian audience admire and like to imitate the famous celebrities. In general, celebrity endorsement is the most dominant visual technique used worldwide and in Egypt as well. For many people, celebrities whether athletes, actors, actresses, anchors...etc. are considered role models, thus using them in association to different products/services helps to a great extent in encouraging and influencing the buyer decision making process.



Figure 8: Vodafone ad



Figure 9: Dettol soap ad

The above ad shots present the how different celebrities are used, including actresses, athletes, anchors, and others. In figure 8, for example, the ad used a famous Egyptian actress 'Laila Elwy' along with a famous Egyptian actor 'Ahmed El-Sakka', while in figure 9, the ad features a famous TV presenter and actress as well. According to Ghobrial (2017), celebrities are used a lot although they are not connecting to the brand, but still it depends on the consumer and the brand. For building equity or awareness, they can be used. But with other objectives the marketer does not have to use them. Pepsi and Vodafone, for example, are using all celebrities in the world but because they are trying to build equity. They are trying to entertain the consumer. Other ads are done with new faces and zero celebrities and you find them very successful and their sales can reflect that.

Conclusion

The study analyzed a number of 386 TV commercials in which females featured mainly. Females are not fairly represented in the advertisements. It appears that females dominate the commercial sector; however, they were positioned superficially. Women are objectified, and presented for the desire of patriarchy.

Ghobrial (2017) contended that there is a stereotypical representation for women not just in TV ads but across the globe, because they are categorized; you have the housewife, the educated career women and the blonde hair head and you have a mix of all. And it probably depends on the genre like in humor you find some treats that come and can make fun of like gossiping, or petulant. So you exaggerate certain characteristics about the female just to make your message get across. And at the same time you can see in the 'Melody' channels campaigns, different stereotypes for women were presented. The one who is beautiful, gorgeous and objectified, and the smart one. It is not the consumer who wants the stereotypes, it is the creative task is to reach the audience without using stereotypes because when you find the insight, it should be universal. When you try to reach the people emotionally it should be

something that everybody can share; a man or a woman, Egyptian or not, so when we execute ideas we have to make sure it does not follow the stereotype pit.

It important to note that the issue of television representations of gender whether advertisements, drama, movies, or programs is crucial, partly due to the fact that TV viewing cultivates certain images regarding different groups of the society, and holding strong stereotypes regardless the fact that there might or not be a direct causal relationship.

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Contact email: nnader@msa.eun.eg

Theo Angelopoulos: “A Voyage in History, Time and Space”

Iakovos Panagopoulos, University of Central Lancashire, United Kingdom

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Abstract

This paper aims at analyse the historical and dialectical approach of Angelopoulos's mise-en-scene as well as its connection to historical events in his films: *Day's of '36* (1972), *The Travelling Players* (1975), *The Hunters* (1977), *Alexander the Great* (1980). Angelopoulos was particularly interested in Greek History of the twentieth century and put it under examination, because of the events that the Greek nation had been through during WWII and the Greek Civil War (1946-1949) and after them. The visualisation of the history from the point of view of the defeated gives him the opportunity to develop his narratives and style and allows us to conceive the story through a new language: melancholy, a materialist poetics with a Marxist taste, which follows the lives of those who lost someone or have been lost into the maelstrom of the historical events. This first period of Angelopoulos's film-making coincides with the most turbulent political and historical years after WWII: the dictatorship (1967-1974) of the colonels. The director uses the dictatorship as his advantage in order to represent history from a critical point of view and with a dialectic approach. He makes a reference to the current situation through a kind of political and theatrical scene that he creates in his films, which could include different places and different times, using forms and techniques of the well-known Bertolt Brecht's "epic theatre". Without flashbacks, he navigates into the historical events that appear in front of the audience as present.

Keywords: Theo Angelopoulos, film history, Greek film studies, Greek civil war trauma

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Introduction

Theo Angelopoulos was embraced by the Greek audience because he managed to wake up their collective memory and communicate with them through history, time and space. The period when he shot his first trilogy was during the dictatorship (1967-1974) of the colonels in Greece. Angelopoulos managed to deliver his political message against the dictatorship by visualising and criticising its historical background. He deals with “taboo subjects” of the Greek nation such as: the German occupation (1941-1944), the freedom of Athens (1944), the British invasion (1944), the battle of Athens (1944), the “white terror” period (1945-1949), the Greek Civil War (1946-1949), the Marshall plan (1947) and the governments after that, and he opens the “secret back door” of Greek history that was hidden from the people for many years.

As Prof. Stathi states “...critics had hailed Angelopoulos as “the film director of history”...with few exceptions that’s not completely true. Angelopoulos emerged in the film a singular model of political cinema, rather than a new historical cinema” (Stathi, 2012: 18). He managed to wake up the collective memory from all these events using history, myth and theatrical alienation.

This announcement will present the historical events from the dialectical point of view of Theo Angelopoulos in the films: *Day’s of ’36* (1972), *The Travelling Players* (1975), *The Hunters* (1977), *Alexander the Great* (1980). The way with which the director used the dictatorship of the colonels as an advantage for his narration will be also mentioned.

Angelopoulos’s relationship with history and politics

The creation of narratives for a historical/political film has to pass through the actual historical events and from the director’s perspective of these events. Angelopoulos had a very critical point of view with a dialectic approach. So, in order to represent historical events, he needs not only to take all the elements of this specific reality, but to modify them, too. The creation of this “new reality” is a journey from the real world to the perspective of the director for it and the combination of these two (Stathi, 1996).

German occupation and Greek Civil War were the main historical chapters that influenced his youth. After his studies in France, he returned in Greece in 1964, where the political status was very vague. Note that the dictatorship of the colonels started four years later. His first two feature films, *Reconstitution* (1970) and *Day’s of ’36* (1972) as well as the biggest part of *The Travelling Players* (1975) were shot during the dictatorship which made it difficult for him and for the rest of the open minded directors to produce films. Angelopoulos managed to use the current political situation as an advantage not only to succeed the style and aesthetics of his films, but also to politically criticise the dictatorship, by aiming at the root of its creation. He felt that the events, which brought that regime into life, were rooted back in Greek history, in the period before the dictatorship of Metaxas 1935. This is why the first film of The Trilogy of History is about the period before the dictatorship of Metaxas.

Angelopoulos approached history not from events that are known, but from stories and personal lives of humble people. Prof. Stathi is writing that *“Angelopoulos is dealing with the minor heroes, who are always the same, “poor” and nameless, and who, in different clothing, the same as themselves and yet different, inhabit the seasons as one turns into the other, weaving the net of that which we call popular memory. All the things that propel their fate can be found behind the stage of history, and they always lead, with ritualistic precision, to its usual tragic repetition* (Stathi, 2012: 19). That is the reason why Angelopoulos’s narration aims at the heart of the collective memory of Greek nation. He presents events that actually happened to family and loved ones and are in the Greek DNA. Understanding these events and their historical background means understanding a part of the collective Greek identity, which is hidden from them for almost a century.

Trilogy of history Days of '36 (1972)

In Days of '36 (1972), Angelopoulos connects the two Greek dictatorships of 1936 and 1967 with an imaginary line. He communicates his political message against the Junta regime by visualising the period before the dictatorship of Metaxas. Prof. Stathi states: *“Ten films could be made about the colonels’ junta, and all of them could present the facts with verisimilitude and precision, however, if they do not touch upon the essence, which is mainly the general climate, but also at the same time the particular climate which precedes the conception, manifestation and establishment of all dictatorships, in all eras and in all countries, then something will be lacking.”* (Stathi, 2012: 20). The interesting and important messages that the director attempts to portray in his film come actually from the events that are happening in silence. The eye contact of the authorities in the prison, the whispers between the prisoners, the laughs in Sofianos’s cell etc. Angelopoulos said that: *“I tried to place the important aspects of this film behind the doors, away from telephones, with just whispers of truth. The dictatorship is on the structure of this film. It was because of the circumstances I was working under. It’s a film about the unspoken about those things we are not allowed to tell. I couldn’t express my own opinion. This way, I created a censorship for the aesthetics of my own film.”* (Crysanthou, 1981: 101). Angelopoulos introduces the dictatorship’s atmosphere through the claustrophobic effect in his cinematography. All the important events are happening in closed rooms and the camera is traveling from 90 to 360 degrees’ shots to show the walls around the action. The whole place is secluded from the authorities. Behind the door of the court is the police informer. In the most secluded parts of the city there are parastatal members. Everything is monitored by the state so the viewer, even in the scenes without walls, can feel the atmosphere of the dictatorship. Of course a basic element that helps this aesthetics is the alienation and the theatrical form that is used by these shots-sequences.

The chaotic reaction of the authorities and its true connection with lumpen working class elements can be observed in the film. Their decision to poison Sofianos is an element of their fear to obey the orders of the government that is controlled by the British government. The poison, as a weapon of murder, is mostly used by abused wives and represents the fear of taking action. Thus, it has a determinant role in the narration. Moreover, the friendly discussion that the audience is listening to inside Sofianos’s cell between him and the lawyer shows us the way the regime use criminals like Sofianos to act on its behalf.

There is a resistance message in this film but in the same time a feeling that these actions of resistance will not lead to revolution. Sofianos requests to listen a song and a turntable is placed in the middle of the prison yard. The long tracking shots of the prison in silence listening to music stops and the prisoners make noise against the restriction of freedom in the prison. This noise ends with the guards firing in the air. That truly shows the basic feature of all dictatorships and connects once again the two historical periods of 1936 and 1972 (Kolovos, 1990). Angelopoulos criticises dictatorships in general with many comedian references in his *mise-en-scene*, too. The ceremony for the new Olympic stadium takes place in the middle of nowhere, the attendants are few and from a certain class, the hymns they sing don't make any sense and all the audience can hear is the clapping. That surrealistic scene has an element of criticising both the dictatorship of Metaxas and the colonels. The way that the dictators use the history of ancient Greece, misrepresenting the actual essence of its philosophy and using some parts of it full of ignorance is exactly what the audience can observe in this surrealistic ceremony. The strict censorship that made Angelopoulos communicate his political message using silence was one of the basic steps in order to create his own aesthetics and gaze in cinema. The additional element that made the director as known as he is until today is his influence by Bertolt Brecht's techniques and aesthetics.

The Travelling Players (1975)

In *The Travelling Players* (1975), the director uses alienation and theatrical forms to let history represents itself to the audience. It is a linear narration but for events that happened in the past and works as a perfect circle. The second shot of the film starts, with the members of the traveling players in front of the train station in 1952 and ends with the same shot but with different members in 1939. The actors alternate between watching the events of history taking place before their eyes, and then appearing to go back in history, to attend something that took place in their absence (Stathi, 2012). In this film, there is no need for flashback to remind historical events and memories. History is always present and represents itself through narration. With the different characters of the traveling players, Angelopoulos wanted to show the different types of people in society. From the communist (Orestis), who fights for his ideology, and the informer (Aigisthos) of the police, to the girl (Hrisothemis) that will use her body to get a bottle of oil during the German occupation. To underscore that he uses myth as his operating tool of history. He connects the members of the traveling players with the myth of the Atreides and with elements of Oidipodas myth and he summarises the adventures of the traveling players into a familiar archetypical model, which runs through the space and time of history (Stathi, 2012). That is also one of the basic elements of "epic" cinema. The audience has to observe these three sections of the film and watch history mixing with myth. After that, they will have to use these elements to find the connection with the problems of their reality. That is also related with Bertolt Brecht's idea of *Weltanschauung* (common sense). The members of the play are common people without any historical importance. They connect with history without even wanting to.

The director uses three alienation monologues in this film. The characters represent history and explain the historical events by looking straight at the lens. They explain events from the Catastrophe of Smyrna in 1922 until the end of the Greek Civil War

in 1949. Angelopoulos also uses time swifts, influenced again by Bertolt Brecht, in this film. He cuts the linear structure and leaves history always on the stage.

With this perfect cycle of history and narration, the audience experience history from a different perspective and observes the events in a time and space that is not steady, connect them with their reality and understand the course of history from the point of view of people that everyone can connect with.

The Hunters 1977

The Hunters was a film-shock for the time period that it was shot. As Vasilis Rafailidis states: *“This is a film that hit the winners of the Civil War under the belt, a film that wasn't funded by the Greek state, something that is totally reasonable because you do not buy the bullets for the gun of your enemy”* (Rafailidis, 2003: 16). The film deals with the historical guilt of the bourgeois who worked with the Nazis during German occupation and of the terrible crimes they committed during the Civil War, for which they were never punished. As Prof. Stathi wrote: *“The historical mistake, which cannot be recognised by history, is experienced by those who, exiled in the snow, will remain there forever, with no saying to the big decisions. The “political sickness” described by this film is full of ghosts, forgotten at the edges of official history. If history forgets, then it can also be forgotten. It can, but that doesn't happen. The collective memory will always transform historical figures into mythical entities, into archetypical constructions that replace heroes and give them a timeless dimension.”* (Stathi, 2012: 20). This film deals with the illusion and anxiety of the winners that know that the ghosts of their past will rise up and hunt them for their crimes.

All his films are burdened by a heart-breaking sorrow and nostalgia for the revolution, the great dream that was betrayed and aborted. Angelopoulos underlines that The Hunters repentant communist and the “subjugated Left” held onto *“that lost revolution, like an trauma, like an open wound”* (Amengual, 2012). This can be identified in the scene where the ex-communist who became a member of the hunters and betrayed his ideas, asks the corpse of the partisan *“When is the revolution going to happen?”*. During the surrealist tribe, the audience can observe the responsibilities of the bourgeoisie and the people who served them. The most characteristic scene is when the “hotelier” gets in the hotel that is given to him as a reward for his “support to the state” after the Civil War. The audience can observe the traitor who worked with the Nazis in the past become a respectful business man of the presence. Wearing the same clothes and doing the same job, as the informer of the current state. The “rape of history” that happened from the ruling class after the Civil War is totally represented by the rape of Kotamanidou by the invisible king Konstantinos. That works perfectly with the 360 degrees shot that travels the audience from reality to imagination and from present time to past with one single shot.

At the same time, Angelopoulos is criticising the leaders of the communist party. He leaves a huge question of why that happened and the communists didn't win. The audience can observe his critique from the reference of the partisan's body to Aris Velouhiotis. Velouhiotis was the only leader of the communist army that disagreed with its decision and the way they betrayed the Civil War in Greece by signing the Treaty of Varkiza (1945) etc. Vasilis Raphailidis wrote: *“...as far as the myth of Aris*

Velouhiotis exists (the costume design of the partisans have a clear reference on him in the Hunters 1977), the leftwings will contact (without their will), a way of historical terrorism to the rightwings, because it will be impossible to “execute” the living myth (of Aris).” (Rafailidis, 2003: 21).

The film works in a perfect circle, as after the dream of the communist’s returning and executing the hunters, they decide to bury the body back in the snow and leave the whole narration in the air, like nothing had happened. As Stamatiou wrote: *“the hunters bury with their bare hands the body back to the snow. As cats hide their impurities in the same way the hunters bury their own”* (Crysanthou, 1981: 69).

Alexander the Great 1980

The director in *Alexander the Great* (1980) deals with the mythical figure of Alexander the Great. Angelopoulos didn't include this film in the Trilogy of History because he wants to use it as his own personal reflection in politics and history. The director is using myth and history to create the ultimate mythical figure of Alexander the Great who has elements from different types of historical leaders throughout Greek history. Myth helps history to be realised and acquire meaning (Stathi, 2012).

Angelopoulos uses this film to put together and criticise all the historical events that he had visualised in his previous films. He deals with the idea of socialism and the myth of the hero that will save the world. This is one of his political films that truly put together his whole belief system. Angelopoulos criticises the decision of the communist party throughout the historical period of 1935-1952. The director raises the question of all the historical mistakes of the communist party through the narration of the film: like the agreement of Varkiza in 1945, the agreement of Yalta, the battle of Athens, the help that the Soviet Union never sent to the Greek partisans and others. Angelopoulos shows that with Alexander’s behaviour in the film. Alexander was talking with the authorities in order to come to an agreement for his freedom and let the official state to use him as a caricature of the revolution. A significant example was the photograph that was taken when Alexander the Great was photographed like he was killing a dragon just like Saint George did in the Christian paintings. The director presents three different types of socialistic ideas but he criticises only one of them. The first is the authoritarian socialism of Alexander the Great and his group that didn't want to collectivise their property, used their weaponry to gain power, and made deals with the official state to win their freedom. The second type of socialism is the way that the Italian anarchist group was thinking of. And that is that they wanted a fully understanding of the socialist ideas from the farmers, that couldn't have a dialectical approach to other beliefs and ideas. The third one is the approach of socialism from the teacher. The teacher created an open, democratic way of socialism, where everyone equally can discuss their opinion without the use of violence. Angelopoulos wanted to criticise the gain of power from one specifically group and especially from one leader that “will save the human kind from its suffering”. The myth holds its background to religions. We can detect a clear reference to them, as well as to Stalinism, where Stalin as the ultimate hero could act in any way he wanted without following the basic ideas of socialism.

However, from the film derives a positive message. First of all, he shows the true power of the bourgeoisie every time when there is a big movement against it. The

scene of the aristocrat in the middle of an empty field with his fine clothes and with the same appearance on the mountains when the surrealistic tribe of Alexander the Great starts, shows exactly what the director was approaching in *The Hunters* 1977, too. And that is that the ruling class is totally helpless and worried in the case of revolution of the working class against it. In addition, in the end of the film when Alexander is being eaten by his people and in the place of his body is the head of a statue, shows how history becomes myth. When that happens, history is never forgotten. It will always rise up from the collective memory and remind the crimes of the ruling class. The last scene where the young Alexander is wandering to the cities fully equipped with the ideas of socialism and knowing the historical mistakes of the past is a positive message for the future of humanity.

Conclusion

This paper analysed the historical and dialectical approach of Angelopoulos' mise-en-scene as well as its connection to historical events in his films: *Day's of '36* (1972), *The Travelling Players* (1975), *The Hunters* (1977), *Alexander the Great* (1980). Looking closely his work, it is noticeable that he communicated his political approach without stating it clearly. His point of view comes out from the eyes in the *Day's of '36* (1972), the alienation monologues of the members of *Travelling Players* (1975), the terror of the bourgeoisie in the looks of *The Hunters* (1977) and the ancient statue of *Alexander the Great* (1980).

Angelopoulos used the dictatorship of the colonels as his advantage to describe the events from a different point of view and present the history from the side of the defeated. The strict censorship and the references to slow cinema and Bertolt Brecht's techniques helped him to forge his own style and gaze in cinema and communicate his own political message through his mise-en-scene. By using time swifts, alienation effects, non-cathartic ending, narration in a cycle, slow tracking shots, references to myth, ancient tragedies, folklore and religion, he manages to wake up collective memory and bring history back on stage. And that's because history is always present in his film and looks the audience straight in the eyes waiting for the collective memory to wake up and demand a political payback.

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Contact email: iakovospanagopoulos@yahoo.co.uk.

***Bypassing the Camera: The Image Production Possibilities of Taiwanese
Experimental Images***

Lin Hsin-I, Tainan National University of the Arts, Taiwan

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Abstract

In the article, Experiment - My Film History by Taiwanese artist, Kao Chung-Li, Li stated that “animation” served as cameraless, hand-made, and physically strong “images” that remind us of the importance of “how images are produced”. They reproduce and transform Taiwan’s image history. Like “cameraless film” or “drawn-on-film animation”, Kao reassembles ready-made objects, old photographic film, projectors, and other such things through the “physical properties” of animation, serving as a component of his own resistance to Western experimental films. This paper discusses the image production conditions of Kao’s “cameraless film” works, discussing the bodies, images, and physical properties in animation. Then, the physical performance, news narrative, and theater properties of living newspapers are compared to the narrative aesthetics in Taiwanese report dramas. With the aesthetic dialect of two kinds of moving images, this paper raises the image production possibilities of Taiwanese experimental images.

Keywords: cameraless film, Drawn-on-film animation, Taiwanese experimental images

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Introduction

In an article for *Experiment: My Film History*, Kao Chung-Li stated: "...I have previously written an article in which I summarize the entirety of western film history as one that focuses on the camera (delivery side). But, without a film projector, how can one see the machine images? You would all then ask that, without a camera, where would all the machine images played by the projector come from? ...Is this truly the only way to obtain machine images? Can there be a way to bypass the relationship with the camera to obtain these machine images? Animation is an example." Kao Chung-Li uses the "physical properties" of animation, such as ready-made objects, old film, projectors, and other such assembly, as components that resist Western experimental film. "Simultaneously, they are machine images as well as image machines. This is the image reality we need to face."

The image reality referred to here is an active development and reorganization of image machines to reverse the position of the "receiving side", instead of doing this through the "machine imagery" of Western visual ontology. The active image physical components, or "animation", that Kao Chung-Li employs is comprised of such items as old cassettes, audio tape, 8 mm film, slide projectors, small flower pots, and sketches. Using the physical properties and structures of art creation tools, he establishes an anti-film methodology. If one were to use the notion of "tracing the source of an object" to understand such a methodology, this would actually lead to many misunderstandings, as well as an "I am non-western" categorization over the course of this tracing. Kao Chung-Li provides a response to this point. The artist states that this methodology was not comprised of handmade, weak images and low-resolution objects intentionally produced due to the vacancy of Western image machines. Rather, the "perception" we have towards "image machines" is exactly the "ideology" that needs to be reversed. According to Kao, the camera consciousness, the image production process, and the re-assembly of object functions actually form the starting point from which to re-transform image reality; that is, the conditions under which the spirit of an image can be produced. As a result, the remaking, reading, zooming, frame speed, cycle and other technical operations of "image machine image" stack onto the production, modification, reproduction, and other experimentation of machine image, redeeming the film narrative desired by Kao Chung-Li.

Body-Montage

For *Bypassing the Camera*, we not only transcended the delivery side of the image machine, but also bypassed Workers Leaving the Factory of the Lumiere brothers. From the visual persistence of film negative to naked eye, Kao Chung-Li provides a new type of path comprised of videos of inquiry and montage. "Bypassing the Body" enables us to enter and drive a type of "body montage" body image, requiring viewers to undergo a visual experience in which they decide for themselves on whether to "watch - not watch" and "connect - not connect". This connects the initiative of the body with the passivity of the image. In the works *Dark Alley* and *Official Ambiguity* by artist Ni Hsiang, this "unintentional" splicing method became a type of body scenery that rejects machine image splicing.



Figure 1: Ni Hsiang, *Dark Alley*, 2013.

Numerous four by six inch photos with the same subject without any particular order are posted to a wall within the same diameter. Due to the photos' dimensions and their positions on the wall, viewers are required to move, changing their own positions and movements and composing a "review, read" image. On one end, the works by Ni Hsiang align with the visual persistence of images, as well as personal differences in conditions of physical movement. Whether it be acceleration, forward motion, backward motion, deceleration, jumps, or other movements, they all proceed with the two conditions of "forming animation" and "reading frames" for images in the midst of physical movement. On another end, *Dark Alley* and *Officially Ambiguous* compose a "montage within the lens" - the artist's subjectivity constitutes an image order; as well as forms a "montage outside of the lens" - a management of the scene by the viewer's own body. This forms the link between the initiative of the body with the passivity of the image. In the 1923 article of *Kinoks: A Revolution*, Dziga Vertov declares: "Now and forever, I free myself from human immobility, I am in constant motion... Now I, a camera, flying myself along their resultant, maneuvering in the chaos of movement, recording movement.... Freed from the rule of sixteen-seventeen frames per second." (Vertov, 1985:17). As Vertov said, the lens consciousness, image sequence, and image physicality within Vertov's works are like a machine that produces body animations, while attempting to restore the body sensations abolished in the course of observing images.

From living newspaper to cameraless film

The "526 Incident" referred to in Ni Hsiang's *Officially Ambiguous* was a bloody conflict in 1992 sparked by issues regarding pollution and relocation in the Dalinpu Community of Kaohsiung's Xiaogang District. The content of the image serves as the artist's attempt to reenact and "correct history". Similar to a timely living newspaper with current affairs as the main theme, every image of *Officially Ambiguous* comes from an "imitative reproduction of life" following the artist's reading of the historical event. What it reproduces is not just a personal depiction of

historical events, but also a description of “an event that in itself is not reproducible”. Through the “paranoid lens” the artist uses to look at events, it corresponds to the “cold lens” used for news reports.



Figure 2: Ni Hsiang, *Officially Ambiguous*, 2016.

Living newspapers originated in Russia after the Russian Revolution of 1917. The new government at that time used these “living newspapers” to conduct a form of popular education that focused on social events, while taking on a theatrical format that combined physical performances. They also had strong political propaganda functions. The body intervention in living newspapers was much like a montage of events with clear intentions. Today, the transmission of “news” in machine images expresses several image realities: the scene of the event, the scene that is spoken, the scene of the body, and the scene of the event’s extension. Or, it could be said that it is an image reality and ideology constituted by machine images. If the news produced

by machine images are a type of a cold image (cancels the image itself) that hides a political consciousness, then the “news” generated by “news material splicing” in living newspapers are a type of image politics (restoring the political nature of images). The purpose is not to restore a particular news event, but to establish a strong link with people and cancel the political reproduction of machine images through theatrical conditions with a world index and participatory body inclination. Viewing the theatrical conditions in *Official Ambiguity*, in addition to the artist’s “live frame splicing”, there is also the symbol of a hand-drawn “public signs”. The arrangement of these scenes invites viewers to pass through a historical scene that “imitates life” but is not reproduction of it. Due to the physical intervention of viewers, what is mapped across our retinas is not only a historical event, but also a theatrical-style montage.

Bypassing the camera, Kao Chung-Li re-examines the the possibilities produced by images through the simple image of body movements. “Animation” serves as this possibility (rewriting the position and history of the camera). In addition to suggesting how image production models determine our perception, another possibility is borne regarding a sensory construct for image machines: a type of body-oriented montage with “body animation” that is non-intentionally spliced. This type of experimental image extends upon Kao Chung-Li’s methodology. Furthermore, this article attempts to examine image consciousness from the “physical properties” of machine images and image machines before finally returning to the body as the carrier of “image machine image”. In fact, this type of approach is a contemplation of the future image reality described in the conclusion of Kao Chung-Li’s article “Experiment - My Film History”. Kao states frankly that the images within the cloud economy are a type of homogenous future generated by capitalistic methods of production. “In the ultimate image machines and machine images of the cloud, no identity exists even without people.” According to Kao, cloud technology mixes the toxins of “globalization”. There, image machine images have a firm hold over the perceptive modes of artistic subjects. More importantly, this perceptive model is always mixed together with the potential functions of “the West”. If the physical work of artistic subjects continuously becomes immersed into these homogenous models of image production, then the result will only be the machine images of “Hollywood’s strange relatives”. Therefore, through the reversal and reconstruction of the delivery and recipient sides, as well as a reorganization of image production tools, a new context can be created.

Conclusion

This kind of “animation” that bypasses the camera approaches a certain “cameraless film” or “Drawn-on-film-animation” - an image production rendered by reality and hand drawn techniques. The difference is that when we initiate a body manipulation of frame rate, non-intentional splicing or “image development”, we further take the montage operation to an exercise of a non-lens unit, non-linear splicing, and non-direct narration outside of the director’s will. Returning to image elements and physical images, what is important is not the “ability to move”, but the “how to move”. If we say that the animation emphasized by Norman McLaren is actually not the art of “drawings-that-move”, but rather “movements-that-are-drawn”, and in which the body is used as basic coordinates that simultaneously appropriate “frame

interval movements” and other parameters for understanding, then active images are no longer just the distance set (frame rate) between two consecutive images. Instead, they are how contact is established between continuous images and bodies, as well as how the arrangement of a collective activity is arbitrarily shuttled. It can also be easier to understand the vibrations possibly influencing sub-lens units in the cline of molecular images. Perhaps, in an identity that does not exist even without people, mixed into the cloud image collective of homogenous toxins, and bypassing the camera with the body as the objective, an active image group of Gan Qi dance can move flesh, light, and shadow in the screen of the mind.

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***The Representation of History in the Feature Film
“The Chronicle of Yerevan Days”***

Shmavon Azatyan, La Trobe University, Australia

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Abstract

The film “The Chronicle of Yerevan Days” is unique in the way it uses city ambience as a narrative technique. Set in the capital of Soviet Armenia, Yerevan, in 1972, it features a peculiar spatial narrative through location shooting and portrayal of historical buildings. As a result, history materializes and overbears humans. In this paper, I draw on the ideas and theories of Mallet-Stevens, Pratt and San Juan, Ockman, Schwarzer and Vaz da Costa about architecture and film and suggest there is an interactive dynamics between history and narrative in the film – each shaping the other. I argue that the narrative constructs story using a particular historically charged iconography. History is manifested in form of urban space and architecture and mutely tells about the past and narrates the present and the actual moment. Figuring as a narrative, history is a fact, and the protagonist’s attempts to obliterate historical facts are futile, because the solid stone buildings and the non-embraceable urban environment are beyond him. Yerevan maintains history and “writes” history – buildings “guard” facts that shape people’s destinies, while streets and squares control the characters’ movement and determine accidents and happenstances. The building of the National Archive of Armenia, built in 1901, is the inanimate antagonist. A mixture of styles - ancient Armenian and European / Russian classicism – it reinforces the presence of history as an invincible force, as well as it safeguards citizens’ “identities and biographies,” which traumatize them and ruin their lives, though the archives reveal the truth.

Keywords: history, cinema, narrative, architecture, urban space, Yerevan city

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The Story

Set in Yerevan, in 1972, the feature film The Chronicle of Yerevan Days (1972) surveys an episode from the busy routine of Yerevan, the capital of Soviet Armenia. The events in the film tell the last days of Armen's life. Armen is a forty year old clerk working at the National Archives of Armenia (NAA). On the thematic level, the film explores the idea of recorded history in relation to human memory and shows how human destiny depends on both. Armen seeks justice in both senses, local and global, but the powers he fights are beyond him. He is tormented by the way the factual data he deals with on regular basis inflicts miseries and hardships on the citizens of Yerevan. He wants to destroy the documents that contain information that may break up families, assign false identities and confirm non-existence of facts that could help people lead fulfilled lives. Armen reaches out to the citizens and guides them, through self-sacrifice, to solving their personal issues.

Through Armen as the protagonist, the film concerns itself with the lives of Yerevanites and how their present situations are insurmountably linked with the 50 years' history of Soviet Armenia. NAA plays a significant role in the film. This is where documents and records concerning social, political, cultural walks of life in Armenia and the biographic data of the citizens are kept. The political upheavals in Transcaucasia¹ wreaked a devastation on the lives of Armenians, the cruelest of which were the Armenian Genocide and the WWII. In the film, Yerevanites suffer from lost or unknown identities and seek restoration and completion of their biological and biographical data. Half a century later, NAA should be the institution where an individual can piece their identity together and legitimately claim their civic rights. Ironically, the truth safeguarded by the government within the walls of NAA building is cruel.

In a broader sense, the film is about the capital of Armenia - Yerevan. The narrative discourse employs the actual city space in real time. City spaces open the narrative and then they reappear consistently, in the end city spaces close the film. This consistency invites a claim that this ongoing narrative device has a specific intention. Parallel to unfolding the story, the narrative systematically points the viewer's attention to the setting. There are scenes and sequences, where the action could have been set in the interior, but the specific choices call for a reading of the story about Armen with specific references to the physical Yerevan city in 1972.

The Narrative Strategy

The film deploys a narrative system that constructs the diegetic world via images that consist of two layers – realist and aesthetic, based on two modes of perception – pragmatic and aesthetic. The realist layer is the raw material that is unmediated, whereas the other one is the aestheticizing implication conveyed by particular techniques of cinematography and mise-en-scene. The first one familiarizes the viewer with the city and locates the viewer in historically real time and space, while the other provides

¹ A geopolitical region in the vicinity of the southern Caucasus Mountains on the border of Eastern Europe and Western Asia.

aesthetic commentary by means of an interplay between character and environment. Several cinematic narrative techniques are repeatedly employed and suggest the double-track narrative system.

1. The establishing shots articulate buildings – that of NAA, the Genocide Memorial, and the Republican Clinical Hospital. The closing shots, too, show buildings with no characters.
2. The long shots and framing are deployed to focus the narrative on the buildings. The characters are either small against the buildings' vast backdrop, or they are on the background of a building detail, in which case the details are "narrated" closely.
3. The tracking and following shots imbue the narrative with naturalism. In some instances, the camera's view of Anahit is obstructed by traffic and passersby; in two cases the cuts to another street are determined by the casual traffic's blocking the spectator's view; in the sequence where Armen spots Anahit, random pedestrians crowd the street, the camera, doesn't focus on Armen, and as a result he gets lost in the crowd (as if the camera spies on him). The shifting of locations distracts the viewer, and the attention isn't fully drawn to Armen, rather it is drawn to passersby, lookers-on, the real time sounds and speech, specific stretches of the given streets (with their buildings).
4. The intense naturalistic bend in the outdoor location shooting prompts the spectator (especially the local) to think of off-screen space. Because of a deep sense of familiarity, the viewer tends to pay more than usual attention to the locale, out of curiosity and, perhaps, has fun in virtually being with the characters at the given locations across Yerevan.
5. In two instances, the lingering static shots close the scenes with no characters present. In these shots, the city represented by buildings and streets is brought to the foreground.

Robert Alter puts forth the ideas of "mythographer" and "realist witness" in "Imagined Cities" (2005) discussing the representation of city in fiction. He claims Flaubert's representation of city is executed via the consciousness of a particular character, not just a disinterested spectator, through which the link between protagonist's consciousness and the nature of the city is shown. The narrative strategy in the film allows Armen to be the central consciousness through which the viewer interprets the images. The subtlety in the film narrative lies in the fact that the viewer can also see the city spaces independent of Armen's point of view. In another instant, Alter discusses "the voice of Paris awakening" as a representation of the city in Flaubert's *Sentimental Education*, a feature that is rampant in the film's narrative, e.g. the viewer can hear the real-time traffic noise, honks, pedestrian's chatter and in the backyard scene the tenant woman's crying "Arturik" in a Russianized accent.

The interaction between city space and character is key to understanding the film. Exacerbating buildings amounts to a unique spatial narrative voice. With the successive shots of the buildings in Yerevan, varying in length and angle, the discourse establishes an historical truthfulness and associates the actual buildings with human characters in the

narrative. The framing guides reading of the characters' situations in a close interplay with the buildings. The buildings demonstrate their role in recording history, locking in memory, and operate as artifacts, in which the past and the present coexist. The building details – decors, pillars, arcs and facades - become markers of a particular history and present the diegetic world of the film as Armenia. As a social and spatial reality Yerevan assumes the shape of a grand awe-inspiring artifact of ancient civilization (Yerevan is 2799 years old, (“Yerevan,” n.d.) that imposes itself on the humans by virtue of articulating the unique historical-cultural heritage. As James Chapman in his book “Film and History” says, according to the model of New History film, a film is “a two-sided mirror through which we can see how American identity is shaped in the movies, at the same time, how the movies are shaped by it” (2013, p. 94). Likewise, The Chronicle of Yerevan Days implies the notion of the mechanism of man building a city and the city shaping man's destiny, which is at the heart of the process of creating culture.

History as Narrative: Culture and Society

It's noteworthy to mention that the architecture of modern Yerevan is a mixture of various styles – ancient, medieval and classical. The plan of the present day city was designed by Alexander Tamayan who revived the ancient Armenian architecture by composing the plan of Yerevan based on the city plans of medieval era (streets and squares) and designed the first buildings in the spirit of medieval Armenian architecture with elements of Russian classicism (Azatyan, 2013). The architecture of Yerevan combines these styles in a modernist way that validates Armen's function (he fills the missing gaps) as a nexus between the past and the present. Throughout The Chronicle of Yerevan Days, the city fragments, buildings, facades, entrance doors, windows, streets and squares constantly build up the character of Yerevan parallel to the developing action. Maria Da Costa thinks that using the locations, city spaces and city's topography is a way of creating the urban environment as mise-en-scene. This strategy articulates movement, which allows the viewer to visualize the cityscape (2015). By staging the action in the streets, squares and courts, using shots that emphasize the city spaces, the film maker conveys the idea that the story about Armen is indispensably linked with the history of Yerevan.

The action is set in and near historically accurate buildings of the time - the National Archives of Armenia (1901) and the Republican Clinical Hospital (1965-70), which are represented as such. Other buildings that appear in the narrative ranging from public to residential are the memorial of the Armenian Genocide (1965-67), the Government Residence of Republic of Armenia (1940s), the Nalbandyan Street apartment block (1930s), the Baghramyan Avenue apartment block (1960s), the Academy of Sciences of Armenia (1940-50s), the Hovhannes Tumanyan Museum (1950s). They all have been important landmarks in Yerevan. The themes of being trapped by the past, the recorded history, and memory emerge from the interaction between edifice and man. Humans seek salvation from the shackles imposed on them by the authorities, whose physical representation is the NAA building. The buildings and streets appear to be indispensable parts of humans' lives, however they don't figure as shelters or places of social functions in the traditional sense. Instead, they are presented as places where the characters realize

their self-assertions (the café, Nalbandyan Street, the stranger's apartment), seek their identities (the NAA building, the Genocide Memorial), make sense of their world (Spring Street), look for a place to get hooked and stop being adrift (montage of streets during the drive to Spring Street). Da Costa claims that representation in its essence is an interpretation, and the images of edifice in the film speak a lot about the reality of a given city (2015).

Chapman (2013) discusses the idea of feature film as a source of history. He quotes Marc Ferro saying that film could also be an 'agent of history.' Ferro distinguishes between films "inscribed in the flow of dominant currents and those that propose an independent or innovative view of societies" (85). Chapman also presents Robert Rosenstone's 'New History film' – a film that questions the traditionally accepted narrative techniques, which shape knowledge of history, as well as "smaller historical truths, received wisdoms, conventional images" (p. 86). Addressing the view of Nouvelle Vague criticism about the formal properties and representational conventions of films, Chapman stresses the importance of the style of filmic narration in representing reality. In his words, Jacques Segond asserts that 'explicit content of film is only part of the form that expresses the implicit meaning' (93). "The Chronicle of Yerevan Days" narrationally does contest the larger discourse of telling history, especially given the Soviet strict censorship, under which it was made, but at the same time the film provides, indirectly, evidence of a historical moment articulated by documenting the social reality of Yerevan in 1972.

Buildings

The National Archives of Armenia

The building of NAA is situated on Sakharov Square. It was built in 1901 as a Provincial Treasury, when Armenia was part of the Russian Empire (Gasparyan, 2008). In the film, the building of NAA figures as a complex representation of history - an agglomerate of the past and present political regimes and situations, the social structures, as well as the historical roots of ethnic architecture and the evolution of national culture. The building is a significant locus for the action. It is where Armen works, commits an offence, meets Anahit and falls in love with her, organizes the confrontation with the wrongful attorney. In addition, the windowless, dungeon-like archive storage disturbs his mental state. In Rome, Open City, the Palace of Italian civilization is the building that is a distinctive feature for recognizing the location. The Universal Exposition of Rome (EUR), built in 1942, is designed to imitate the structure of Coliseum. It is a sign of fascism, but also a marker of post-war internal assessment of responsibility and cooperation with fascism. The site where EUR is located gains significance through "the most charged ruins of the war in the film" (Pratt and San Juan, 2014).

Somewhat as an antagonist, the state organization - National Archives of Armenia (embodied in the building) - interferes with the lives of the residents. NAA stores a document written 16 years ago, which entitles the teenager boy's biological father to take over the custody of his son from the old couple who adopted the boy and raised him. As a cultural artifact, the NAA building tells about the cultural heritage of Armenia. The decor

on the building “narrate” the story of Yerevan by describing the characteristics of the city – modernity through medieval forms. The classical style and the black tufa (a stone endemic to Armenia) emanate the inconvenient irreversible truth safeguarded inside.

As an introduction, the building of NAA appears in a long shot. The shot describes the general appearance of the building - a pattern of arc windows on the first level and rectangular ones on the ground level. As the camera zooms in on Armen’s car coming to a stop, the façade details emerge: the second level balcony and linear ornaments on the Yerevan black tufa. In another scene, the establishing and closing shots don’t focus on the characters, but on the NAA building. Armen and two co-workers who watch and supervise the hanging of a poster, are mute, small and insignificant. The camera moves upward across the façade and pauses on the poster - a still shot showing the windows – those on the upper level have arcs, those on the lower level are rectangular. The still shot also shows the portal – all these details are in the spirit of Russian classicism (Gasparyan, 2008). In the sequence where Armen helps the old woman, the semi-basement level windows and sectional ornamentation of the façade are revealed. Within an hour and half of the film (which spans over most of the narrative time), the narrative describes Yerevan through episodic views of the typical routine in the National Archives and the building from various angles. Humans come and go – in a historical sense, they’re passersby, but Yerevan is firm and unshakable. It outlives Armen and Anahit’s relationship. In da Costa’s words, Walter Benjamin shows the cinema’s ability to “narrate” in a way other mediums cannot. “Different dimensions and angles of the same object” allow the audience a peculiar way to make sense of the object, otherwise impossible (104).

Apartment Blocks and Public Buildings

The theme of history as narrative surfaces in many scenes, where the architecture of Yerevan is especially marked as a significant part of the action. In one scene it comes through quite forcefully, when the narrative visits the Nalbandyan Street apartment block and the adjacent building of the Department of Architecture of Yerevan City Council (built in 1940-50s). In the beginning sequence, from Armen’s point of view the viewer is introduced to the Nalbandyan Street and the buildings that line the street up to the Republic Square. The images of the buildings that are made of local tufa and built in the style of Armenian national romanticism charge the shot heavily with historical significance. A sense of upward movement of the elevation of the office buildings, with pillars and palace-like appearance, resonates with an implication that Yerevan possesses a kind of durability that is hard to obliterate, because over millennia the city has maintained its status and in 1972 is continuing its mission of “layering” history. The man, in misery because he has to give up his adopted son, is a fragile black silhouette, standing humpbacked in the background of grandly rising spectacular buildings lit by the morning sun rays. Similar to how buildings carry history, Armen is in grips with the historical truth contained in the certifying letter, which proves tragic and painful, because even if the artifact can be destroyed, its truth will remain in memory. At this crucial moment of his life, the old man has no choice, but to face a childless future. Through a particular framing, the Armenian national romantic architecture is given a monumental character. This image together with the implication drawn from the impregnable “chronicles”

housed by and articulated in the buildings' structures contextualize the old man's tragedy, reinforcing the theme that a human being is powerless against recorded history.

History resurfaces in a much hushed way in the sequence set at the Republican Clinical Hospital. The hospital building is a huge construction stretching from right to left and beyond the shot. The massive building of the hospital, on the background of which we see Armen's tiny car is a listless and frigid rock. The hospital should be the hope, the place where the life of a man who's been in an accident can be saved, Alas! Though the doctor struggles to force the man's heart back to beating, he dies. The scene implies how fragile and vulnerable Yerevanites are in contrast to the city, represented in architecture.

In another episode, the film shows how the camera narrates the historically accurate current moment. The viewer has a detailed view of the apartment block on Nalbandyan Street, while Anahit and her boyfriend quarrel. The windows and the entrance door of the apartment block are open. The shot reveals that the ground level windows are barred and the panes replaced by carton, which tells about burglary as a possibility and informs that the semi-basement levels in the apartment blocks in Yerevan weren't used for residential purposes. An interesting characteristic image of Yerevan is also described - the façade of the apartment block is made up of basalt in the lower section and of Ani tufa in the section above the ground level windows.

The theme of the past determining human destiny is reinforced by the configuration of Anahit's apartment in the tenement located on Sayat-Nova and Nalbandyan crossroads as a historical-cultural artifact rather than home. When Armen calls on Anahit to make a proposal, the five-level building fills most of the frame, the rest being occupied by Ani Hotel next to it. The presence of the tenement is articulated, while Anahit's apartment's interior audience is never shown. In terms of comfort and safety, Anahit's apartment is non-existent, which suggests that Anahit's home is not a haven for her and Armen. Instead, the tenement, where her apartment is, appears in its full size, as an accumulation of history - culture, politics, and social activity. The lingering of the camera after Armen's car stops and the composition of the photography where Armen's car is small and Armen and Anahit are absent, insinuate the controlling force of the residential building, which is not different from the public building (NAA). The massive structure belittles humans' issues and deeds.

Another configuration of such a metaphysical interaction, which reveals how the past imposes itself on the vulnerable human characters is implied in the scenes set in the Republic Square and at the Genocide Memorial. When Armen drives the widow home, the Republic Square appears with a monumental arcade and tall pillars, typical of ancient architecture, as an awe-inspiring grandeur, which under the bells of the tower clock imposes discipline, order and divinity. The buildings reflect historical, political, national and cultural values. A fragment of the Government Residence is framed by the car windshield when Armen drives into the square - the viewer can see the pillars and arcs on the upper sections of the façade. As the widow drinks water, the buildings surround the empty square and create an illusion of a royal court with the arcade and the bulky domed

structure of the Museum of National History of Armenia (built in 1970) standing grandly above the bereft woman.

The scene at the Genocide Memorial is a special moment, when Anahit tells Armen how she has survived WW II. The first two shots tell the viewer about the memorial before the viewer sees Armen and Anahit. The memory of the Armenians massacred at the end of 19 and beginning of 20 centuries still wounds Armenians in the same way as Anahit's memories of her parents who perished in the WWII don't leave her alone. In the dark night, the usual lighting at the monument validates the sinister and mischievous force lurking behind an individual's destiny, as Armen stands tiny against the huge massive stone blocks, his hands stretched in the manner of crucified Christ.

The film ends in a sequence of shots of buildings with no human character. The montage of window shots starts with a close-up shot of a window, moving to increasingly lengthening shots that contain rows of windows. The final shot displays the whole façade of Tumanyan Museum where the windows are difficult to see because three arcs obstruct the view. As an allusion to escape, the windows with their serene and unshakable majesty finalize the undercurrent motif of the incapability of humans to obliterate the past. In connection with denial of escape, the images of windows mean that buildings contain history humans have to deal with, also that history can reveal inconvenient truths for humans.

At the end, Yerevan comes in rather aggressively to finish Armen's story and to show its might perpetrated in stone. At the same time, the buildings are a silent testimony to the human history. Also, perhaps a victorious silent declaration that cities as structures built by humans outlive them because they are superior.

City Spaces

The streets and squares that appear in the narrative have been well-known for their historically functional significance. The Khanjyan, Nalbandyan (15 century A.D.), Baghramyan, Sayat Nova (1860s) streets, as well as Sakharov Square and Republic Square (1930s) exist today and have always been the major commuting and commercial venues and cultural landmarks of Yerevan (Gasparyan, 2008). These streets and squares are invested in a lot of history, and once built, these structures have been shaping, on their part, the lives of Yerevanites over decades up until our days. The physical environment in the diegesis of the film is largely organized by streets and squares of at least half a century old. This historical knowledge, visually emphasized, defines the spatial narrative in the film thanks to the particular use of the city spaces. The extraordinary image of Yerevan contributes to this, as architect Tamanyan's vision and his successors' views and practices have already shaped a unique text of Yerevan. T.J. Barnes and J.S. Duncan believe that meaning is produced via intertextuality, a theory in which reality can be an image, a concept and so on, that defines physical elements. And within this context, they conclude that creating a film is constitutive, namely the old world is the basis of a new world (Costa).

In the film, the streets navigate the viewer in real time movement and reveal the many sides of Yerevan, in terms of culture and social life in 1972. The opening scene on the Khanjyan Street, with probably the first tram out on its route, is a long shot composed of the city spaces and Mount Ararat rising over Yerevan in the far. The shot describes the spaces of the city, with the high-rise apartment blocks, the tall wide lamp posts, the tram tracks in the middle, occasional traffic on the right side. The shots of Sakharov Square, a place revisited a few times for the dramatic action, describe the public life, simultaneously capturing the kvass tanker and the phone booth in front of the parking space outside the NAA building (locals can recall how they bought kvass and used the phone in the past). In the sequence where Armen approaches Anahit and asks her to go on a date, he walks in Tumanyan Street with the casual traffic interfering with the view of the camera. When he spots Anahit and tries to cross the street – his point of view of her is blocked by trolley-buses and passers-by. Another street scene where the viewer can see a typical afternoon on Nalbandyan Street in 1972 is the one where Anahit slaps her fiancée – the shots have captured two women talking, a man chatting up a woman, another man probably looking on the action going on between Anahit and her fiancée.

A strong sense of truthfulness arises, when the taxi driver is having problems with finding Spring Street. As we navigate through the city with Armen and Anahit in the taxi, first, we are on Azatoutyun Avenue, then Baghramyan Avenue, then at the ropeway on Koryun Street, finally at an unrecognizable construction site. The taxi driver enumerates all the existing street names and then he stops by a police station to inquire after a street named Spring. They end up in a street that's under construction. Here, the narrative discloses the ugly side of Yerevan, equipping it with yet another dimension, implying the "ruins" of Anahit's identity.

The film ends in a 4-minute sequence, where Armen walks to the shop beneath the real time sounds of Yerevan. By virtue of its urban plan and communal life Yerevan helps expand the narrative to include along with Armen's action details of the authentic setting of the story. The camera tracks Armen's movement, then in a reverse shot shows the widow, following her now. As the woman crosses Sayat Nova, she and Armen exchange glances. The camera starts tracking the woman in shots gradually moving from medium to close-ups and then from her moves on to Rshtuni's (soldier who saved Anahit's life) picture in a newspaper posted on the bulletin board. Then in an aerial shot Armen approaches the Mashtots Avenue and Isahakyan Street intersection: here, he decides to walk down Mashtots Avenue on the left side, past the grocery shop and the phone box (familiar to the viewer), being still confused and indecisive. This is where he suddenly has a heart attack and drops dead in the midst of a crowd. The scene, even if staged, is presented in a very naturalistic style through following close-up shots of on-lookers' faces, crane shots shifting to close-ups narrating the incident – we see the crowd that has surrounded Armen, one man rubbing his chest, a glass of water passing hands, a doctor arriving and checking Armen's pulse and eyes and a voice from the crowd asking "Dead?" followed by a grunting "Yeah."

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Contact email: shazzai@yahoo.com

Cinematic Representations of Girls Who Participate in African Political Conflicts

Norita Mdege, University of Cape Town, South Africa

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Abstract

Fictional films which mainly focus on the experiences of girls who participate in African political conflicts are often caught up in the politics and dominant ideologies of their times. In films about wars that are widely perceived as just, such as the anti-colonial wars, girls who participate in the conflicts are often represented as brave and heroic. But in films about African postcolonial wars, girls are largely represented as innocent and sometimes helpless victims of these “unjust wars.” This paper considers the cinematic representations of the participation of girls in both African anti-colonial conflicts and postcolonial wars. It focuses on *Sarafina!* (Roodt, 1992), which is set within the context of South Africa’s anti-apartheid struggle, and *Heart of Fire* (Falorni, 2008), which focuses on the conflict between the Eritrean Liberation Front and the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front in Eritrea during the early 1980s. The paper argues that the representations in these two films are heavily influenced by both local and global political, economic, social, and other interests that may suppress the voices of the girls that these films represent. The paper does not attempt to determine what the authentic voices of the girls are because authenticity depends on perspective. Rather, it explores the many interests, including those of the girls themselves, which inhibit access to some of the narratives about girls’ experiences in African political conflicts. Studying these fictional films is important because they are closely linked to real historical experiences, and can therefore influence the imagined identities of African girls.

Keywords: Girl soldiers, African, conflicts, anti-colonial, postcolonial, identity.

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Introduction

Documentaries such as *Grace, Milly, Lucy: Child Soldiers* (Provencher, 2010) and stories such as that from Senait Mehari's memoir, *Heart of fire: From child soldier to soul singer* (2006), demonstrate the necessity for girl soldiers to tell their own stories. These narratives offer particularly gendered perspectives that go beyond the idea that girls are simply helpless victims of irregular soldiers.ⁱ The documentary *Grace, Milly, Lucy: Child Soldiers* focuses on Grace, Milly and Lucy's experiences as child soldiers in the Ugandan civil war. It presents some nuanced dynamics among the former girl soldiers. For example, Milly pushes Lucy to accept responsibility for physically and emotionally abusing her during their time as child soldiers. She strongly believes that some of the things Lucy did were not because she was forced. She mentions that their husband did not approve of some of Lucy's abuses on the abductees.ⁱⁱ But Lucy keeps insisting that it was not her fault, she had to do it. In Mehari's memoir, the writer provides insights into the Eritrean war during the early 1980s through an exploration of her own experiences as a young girl who fought for the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF). These stories indicate that there is so much more to the stories of girl soldiers than what the dominant narratives on child soldiers offer. Fictional stories about child soldiers mostly focus on boys, and the narratives are often what Catarina Martins (2011) has labelled 'the single story' (p. 434).

Martins' (2011) use of the phrase "the single story" is inspired by the Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Adichie (2009), speaking at a conference, warns that only hearing a single story about a community, person or country may result in stereotypes and incomplete and potentially damaging views about other people. Regarding the single story about child soldiers, Martins (2011) points out that the contemporary general characterisation of child soldiers includes forced recruitment, mostly through abductions, being forced to kill, drug use, sexual and other forms of abuse (p. 437). Additionally, the warlords turn the children into monsters with no conscience. We see such stories in fictional films such as *Blood Diamond* (Zwick, 2006) and *Johnny Mad Dog* (Sauvaire, 2008), and these are reinforced in documentaries such as *Chain of Tears* (Strasburg, 1988), *Bling: A Planet Rock* (Cepeda, 2007), *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* (Reticker, 2008), and *Return to Freetown* (McCullagh, 2001). Many researchers have concluded that these representations are largely based on the humanitarian discourse about children, which relies on how others see them, rather than how they see themselves (Edmondson, 2005; S. M. Rosen & D. M. Rosen, 2012).

The humanitarian discourse 'hinges on the assumption that images of suffering can invoke compassion in viewers, and that this compassion can become a catalyst for positive change' (Bleiker & Kay, 2007, p. 139). But emphasis on pain and suffering has also affected the way African political conflicts as well as the roles and experiences of those affected by them are understood. Many people are still unfamiliar with Africa and its complex histories. As a way of understanding the continent, they often rely on representations in the media (Tully, 2010). These representations are however not value free; they reflect the power dynamics within global politics. Cheryl Sterling (2010) argues that 'representations of African conflicts generate a discourse of self-deception or perversion as it is rarely about Africa but rather about the subjectivity and subconscious of the Western interpellator' (p. 196). Within this context, African child soldiers are often 'portrayed with qualities which

children ought not to have, and as products of societies with qualities that societies ought not to have' (Utas, 2011, p. 213). Kate Taylor-Jones (2016) argues that films about child soldiers are a significant tool in global politics (p. 189). She states that these films are often 'aimed at a specific globalised, Westernised audience that is seeking to have its own world position ratified and consolidated via this viewing experience' (p. 180). To that end, filmmakers and journalists have been known to request 'to talk to ... children with "more traumatic" stories' when they approach humanitarian organisations (Machel as cited in Denov, 2010, p. 8).

However, the representations we see on film of child soldiers as helpless victims should not necessarily be seen as a simple case of identities being imposed on child soldiers by filmmakers. Honwana (2006) states that within the humanitarian discourse, 'the victims quickly understand that their status as victims is crucial to obtaining aid' (p. 15). That is, some child soldiers use victimcy as a tool for social navigation. As Utas (2011) states, victimcy, or 'the agency of presenting oneself as a victim' is 'a key tool in the toolbox of a former child soldier' (p. 215). For instance, in the story about Grace, Milly and Lucy mentioned above, Lucy may indeed be what Erin K. Baines (2009) refers to as a 'complex political perpetrator,' occupying the 'ambiguous status as victim and perpetrator' (p. 164).ⁱⁱⁱ But Lucy clearly realises that she now has to use a different approach since she is no longer a child soldier as she says to Milly, 'some things from the past should remain in the past, let's not bring them up right now.' As such, when filmmakers include speaking to former child soldiers as part of their research, as was the case with Jean-Stéphane Sauvaire and Kim Nguyen, the children may simply tell the filmmakers what they want to hear.^{iv} But child soldiers remain at a disadvantage as they are often not in a position to determine the way they are represented on film.

Children involved in African political conflicts have to rely on others to represent them on film. As a result, filmmakers who make films about these children are often outsiders looking in. They are outsiders in terms of age, class, cultural background and experiences. Graeme Turner (2009) argues that filmic communication happens within specific cultural contexts. Turner (2009) defines culture as 'a dynamic process which produces the behaviours, the practices, the institutions, and the meanings which constitute our social existence' (p. 66). He adds that 'the language system of a culture carries that culture's system of priorities, its specific set of values, its specific composition of the physical and social world' (p. 67). Because girl soldiers are largely not in a position to "present" themselves in fictional films, they have to rely on others to represent them and give meaning to their experiences. Therefore, their representations often depend on meaning-making processes external to their own. It is for this reason that Myriam Denov (2010) argues for the need 'to develop alternative visions of child soldiers that are grounded in the perspectives of the children themselves' (p. 17).

Filmmakers such as Luigi Falorni, with *Heart of Fire* (2008), and Kim Nguyen, with *War Witch* (2013), give the impression of representing girl soldiers from the perspectives of the girls themselves. In these films, it is the girl soldier characters who narrate the stories. This approach enables the films to present girl soldiers as 'rational human actors ... [who have a] mature understanding of their predicament,' to use Peters' and Richards' words (as cited in Denov, 2010, p. 20). The use of the "I" in the narration also point to an insistence on the particular rather than the general. But

sometimes the nature of presentation can simply provide the guise of an added measure of “authenticity” that hides the power relations between filmmakers and those represented, or the ideologies the films seek to perpetuate.

Although most films about African political conflicts reflect local and global power dynamics, there is a marked difference between the representations of girls who participated in African anti-colonial wars and those who participate in postcolonial wars. In films about wars that are widely perceived as just, such as the anti-colonial wars, girls who participate in the conflicts are often represented as brave and heroic. In these cases, ‘the child fighter represent[s] “the people” in their struggle for democracy [...and] serve[s] as a collective representation of all that [is] good, striking to break out of an encrusted social order’ (S. M. Rosen & D. M. Rosen, 2012, p. 306). Examples of such representations are Sarafina in Darrell Roodt’s *Sarafina!* (1992) and Flame in Ingrid Sinclair *Flame* (1996). Unlike films about anti-colonial wars, in films about the African postcolonial wars girls are largely represented as innocent and sometimes helpless victims of these “unjust wars.” Examples of such representations are Awet in *Heart of Fire* (Falorni, 2008) and Komona in *War Witch* (Nguyen, 2012). It can then be said that judgements about the wars and the societies in which the wars are waged are reflected through the way girl soldiers are represented.

This paper uses a sociological approach to consider the cinematic representations of the participation of girls in both African anti-colonial conflicts and postcolonial wars by looking at two films, *Sarafina!* and *Heart of Fire*. A sociological approach ‘assumes that films can be studied as social indicators of the society from which they have emerged’ (Tomaselli, 2015, p. 11). The paper argues that although fictional films about girls who participate in African political conflicts sometimes provide the girls with some agency and express some of their interests, they often subordinate the girls’ voices to both local and global political, economic, social, and other interests. The paper does not seek to determine what the authentic voices of the girls are because authenticity is dependent on perspective. Rather, it explores the many interests, including those of the girls themselves, which inhibit access to some of the narratives about girls’ experiences in African political conflicts. Studying these fictional films is important because the films often blur the boundary between fact and fiction.^v Thus, they can influence the imagined identities of these girls.

Sarafina!

Sarafina! is based on Mbongeni Ngema’s play of the same title. The film depicts the experiences of township youths in apartheid South Africa during the late 1970s and the 1980s by mainly following the experiences of a high school girl, Sarafina. Sarafina is represented as politically conscious and participating in anti-apartheid protests because of her awareness of the injustices of the system.

Unlike the play which was written and performed in the mid to late 1980s, during the apartheid era, the film was released in 1992, after the unbanning of political organisations and the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990, but before the first democratic elections were held in 1994. As a result, the film deals with the subject of the youth uprising at a time when the dominant African nationalist discourse was now framing violence as a hindrance to political negotiations that aimed at establishing a democratic South Africa. In that environment, rather than explore the multiple voices

and subject positions of girls during the youth uprising, the film uses “the girl” symbolically to express the nation building values of the early 1990s.

The girl is suited for this because, as Tanya Lyons (2004) notes, females are often stereotyped as nurturers who should ‘only be involved in life-supporting rather than life-destroying activities’ (p. 21). Where Ngema’s Sarafina is consistently militant, Roodt’s Sarafina is more interested in the peaceful resolution of conflicts. We see that, for example, in an incident in which a group of students, including Sarafina, confronts their schoolmate, Guitar, who is an informer for the apartheid police. Sarafina saves Guitar from the potentially violent punishment that he might have received from the other boys. She investigates the context of Guitar’s betrayal rather than simply consider it as separate from Guitar’s conditions of existence. She helps the other students to understand that Guitar only betrayed them out of desperation; a police officer, Sabela, had threatened his crippled father. Guitar is then forgiven and reintegrated into the group. This is in line with the reconciliatory message that was being promoted in South Africa in the 1990s. The message culminated in the setting up of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) ‘in terms of the *Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act*, No 34 of 1995.’ The TRC set up hearings in which ‘perpetrators of violence [during apartheid] could ... give testimony and request amnesty from prosecution’ (*South African History Online*, 2011). Thus, in the film Sarafina becomes less of the militant girl in Ngema’s play to enable the film to serve the political needs of the 1990s.

Additionally, Sarafina breaks out of the traditional female roles without necessarily challenging the patriarchal order because her adventures are represented as only temporary. In that sense, Sarafina’s representation is linked to the stereotypical representation of adult females. As Eileen MacDonald argues, ‘in times of war ... women are permitted to enter the arena of violence – up to a point ... But as soon as the war [is] over they [a]re glad, we are led to believe, to go back to their “natural” roles’ (as cited in Lyons, 2004, p. 19). The impermanence of girlhood plays right into the presumed flexible relationship between women and the nation. Women are not given as much significance as men when imagining a post-apartheid South Africa. The film ends with Sarafina performing as Mandela in a play about the day Mandela is released from prison. In this scene, Sarafina becomes the go-between who communicates the desires of the fathers to their sons and daughters. The return of the fathers is supposed to signal a return to normal. Perhaps somewhere in there are the voices of the girls who participated in the youth uprising, but they are under so many layers of other interests.

Heart of Fire

Heart of Fire is inspired by Senait Mehari’s memoir, *Heart of Fire: From Child Soldier to Soul Singer* (2006). The film is set in Eritrea during the country’s war of independence from Ethiopia, and focuses on the young girl Awet’s rather turbulent childhood. Awet becomes a child soldier after her father gives her over to one of Eritrea’s liberation armies, the Jebha. This paper is not interested in the veracity of Mehari’s story. The story is viewed as representing the way Mehari chooses to construct her history.^{vi} In that sense, *Heart of Fire* provides for an illuminating exploration of the silencing of girl soldiers through examining the differences between the memoir and the film. These differences are explored through looking at

how the war is framed, the relationship between children and adults and the solution that the film suggests.

How the war is framed

Heart of Fire is set within the context of Eritrea's War of Independence against Ethiopia, but its main focus is the conflict between two Eritrean liberation groups, the Jebha and Shabia. The war is waged in the liberated section of Eritrea, which has a negative implication on what independence entails for African nations.

The film's representation of liberated zones as areas of "fanatical" infighting seems to take its cue from the neo-colonial archive which holds the sanctity of colonial borders and decontextualizes African postcolonial wars. Such a representation has negative implications for understanding the postcolonial experiences of African countries. It seems that for a war to be defined as justified, then there should be a common goal across all groups within artificially determined borders. In cases where the groups have different views, as was the case in Eritrea, which is made up of a diversity of people, the war then becomes aimless.^{vii}

In a fight between Awet's father and an ELF supporter, the film emphasises ego as the reason behind the war. It seems the main motive for the conflict is to claim full credit for bringing independence to Eritrea. Awet's father says to the man 'We were fighting for Eritrea before you or your father were born!,' thus suggesting that the conflict may have been just about egos. This scene is particularly interesting because it is the filmmaker's construction and not from Mehari's book. In her book, Mehari (2006) states that after the demise of the ELF, her father could just 'not accept that the ELF had lost the war' (p. 191), but she does not suggest that egos were to blame for the war. Bereketiab (2016) argues that the ELF's loss of control to the EPLF was 'bitter medicine to swallow' since they had begun the struggle (p. xvi). But in explaining the reasons for the war he proposes a 'synthetic model' that combines factors such as ideology, foreign policy orientation, 'geo-religious and geo-linguistic, personal difference and elite competition' (p. 236). The film's focus on egos makes the conflict truly aimless.

The film sets up Awet, the girl, as an eyewitness to adult interactions that only serve to show the aimlessness of the war. On the other hand, Senait, in Mehari's book, seeks to find out why they are fighting the EPLF but fails to find a satisfactory answer. Although her failure to find an answer may be an answer in itself, it becomes more a personal observation rather than a general one. Additionally, the film also represents Eritrean adults as largely incapable of looking after children.

The relationship between children and adults

Singer and Dovey (2012) note that in portrayals of African civil wars, adults are often represented as 'alternately brutal, devoid of agency, or quite simply absent' (p. 153). In *Heart of Fire* the film, Awet is abandoned by her mother as a baby and placed in the care of an orphanage run by the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church ends up having the most positive influence in her life. It is the place where she is given the "heart of fire," which becomes a symbol of strength, resilience and survival. The Catholic orphanage is represented within the colonial discourse of the civilizing

mission. This is despite the fact that in her memoir, Mehari (2006) indicates that her experience at the Catholic orphanage was characterized by institutional racism. She explains that black children were not allowed to use the playground, which she describes as a 'paradise' (p. 13). Black children also ate at a small table in a tiny room while the white children ate in a 'large dining room, with a ceiling so high that you could barely see it' (p. 13). What Mehari describes as a form of institutional racism is transformed into bullying perpetrated by one of the children at the home. In a symbolic representation of the deterioration of Awet's condition after living the orphanage, for the rest of the film she wears the same dress she is wearing when she lives the home, and the dress gets more torn and dirty as the film progresses.

In the bar fight mentioned above, Awet's father declares that he will fight to his death for his village, but ends up sending his daughters to fight instead. The book explains the desperation that leads the father to sending her daughters to the war: he is poor and cannot afford to look after them. The war had reduced the family into nomads who were constantly on the move and had to scavenge for food. In the film, according to Freweyni, Awet's sister, the father simply volunteers her daughters because his friends were doing the same. If Freweyni is to be believed, the father is all about keeping up appearances. For example, in the bar fight mentioned earlier, the father shows the EPLF supporter a scar from a wound that he claims he obtained in the war. However, Freweyni later informs Awet that the wound was not from the war; he got injured in a bar fight.

Mehari (2006) also indicates that European adults can also neglect their children. One of the ELF soldiers in the book, Mike'ele, was abandoned by his Italian father. Mehari (2006, p. 91-92) indicates that she thought Mike'ele's father was not any different from an African father like hers:

Mike'ele said his father must be dead, for otherwise he would have been there with Mike'ele. I did not dare to contradict him but merely thought to myself that it was possible for fathers to be alive but not be there, as was the case with mine.

What is perhaps more interesting is that in the book, before Senait Mehari is sent to live with her father, she goes to live with her grandparents. But this episode, which she describes as the happiest time of her life because she felt loved and nurtured, is completely eliminated from the film. When introducing her book, Mehari (2006) writes that:

Now that I have written everything down, I am free.
This book will give me peace.
The story I have to tell is a terrible one.
But I do not want those who read it
to see only the darkness.
I want a door to open as they read it.
So light comes through – and hope.

Thus, it seems Mehari does not wish to adopt a humanitarian discourse, which, according to Laura Edmondson (2005), demands that the traumatic past be represented 'as a time of unrelenting terror and suffering' (p. 469). As the title of her

book, *Heart of Fire: From Child Soldier to Soul Singer*, indicates, Mehari writes an inspiring story that may potentially empower other former girl soldiers to work towards creating a more meaningful life for themselves. Regardless, Falorni tailors Awet's experience in line with the humanitarian discourse by focusing only on the unhappy and/or distressful moments.

However, Falorni complicates the image of the helpless child by characterising Awet with 'agency and inner strength,' an approach which Edmondson (2005) argues 'run[s] a considerable risk of diminishing the emotional response that theoretically generates charitable contributions' to the cause (p. 469). But it is possible that Falorni's strategy may not reduce viewers' emotional response because Awet's agency only serves to emphasise the incompetence or absence of adults. For example, Awet is the one who ensures that she, her sister and her friend leave the military group. Her decision to leave the camp indicates that she has finally come to terms with the fact that she cannot rely on adults or expect them to do the right thing. That is, she decides to write them off. This is unlike in the book in where Mehari and her sisters are saved from the military by their father's brother, Haile.

Suggested Solutions

After establishing that African adults have neglected the responsibility to look after their children, and the issue of racism is eliminated, the film suggests an escape to Europe as the solution for Awet. Mayer (2009) argues that the film 'offers the neo-imperialist dream of globalisation in place of both the reality of Italy's current mistreatment of African migrants and the possibility of a functioning, independent African democracy' (p. 64). It should be noted that Senait Mehari does indeed leave Eritrea, then Sudan, and ends up in Germany where she lives with her father for a while. But in her book, she does not present an escape to Europe as the ideal solution. She describes the neighbourhood she lived in after moving to Germany as a "foreigners' ghetto" which, for the most part, 'looked not unlike Africa' (2006, p. 179). Thus, although she no longer had to deal with war or extreme poverty, she had to deal with the racism and discrimination that Africans faced in that country. But she also notes that, at the time of her move, if she had a choice on the matter, she would have stayed with her uncle, Haile, in Sudan rather than go and live with her abusive father in Germany (p. 168-173).

Taylor-Jones (2016) argues that in films about girl soldiers the girl often becomes representative of 'a series of complex and negative connotations' (p. 183). She also adds that girl soldiers are mostly 'used to uphold the narratives of development, gender, and politics that the global North expects' (p. 188). It seems that Falorni adopts this approach in his film.

Conclusion

Girl soldiers have very little control over how their histories and stories are constructed on film. Their representations are heavily influenced by perceptions about the societies within which they exist. The result is that they are imagined as stuck in certain situations, whether it is traditional gender roles or failed states, and it becomes difficult to envisage that social change might happen from within. Sarafina, the girl in Darrell Roodt's *Sarafina!*, shows so much potential, but she is still unable to

effectively challenge the patriarchal system. Awet, the girl in *Heart of Fire* finds herself stuck in a hopeless situation in which the only solution is to leave.

The perspective from which narratives about girl soldiers are told matters. Stories from the perspectives of girl soldiers have greater potential to broaden our understanding of their experiences. The girls' voices might help to foster meaningful engagement between them and the wider society and thus create a space where change might just be possible.

Notes

¹ The phrase “gendered perspective” is used to refer to a perspective that reflects the differences in experiences as influenced by a person's gender. Gender refers to ‘the socially constructed differences between men and women, and boys and girls’ (Mazurana, McKay, Carlson & Kasper, 2002, p. 98). These constructed differences influence the determination of the ‘social roles of men, women, boys, and girls, and [the] relationships between and among them’ (ibid.).

¹ Milly and Lucy were co-wives.

¹ Baines (2009) uses the term ‘complex political perpetrators’ to ‘describe a generation of victims in settings of chronic crisis who not only adapt to violence to survive, but thrive’ (p. 180).

¹ Jean-Stéphane Sauvaire who directed *Johnny Mad Dog* (2008) spent a year with former child soldiers who acted in his film (Utas, 2011, p. 213), and Kim Nguyen, who directed *War Witch*, met ex-child soldiers in Burundi in addition to reading about Angola and Sierra Leone (Morales, 2012).

¹ In many fictional films about child soldiers, filmmakers often reflect a desire to situate their fictional narratives within recognisable historical experiences through, for instance, the use of filmic realism. For example, *Heart of Fire* is inspired by a former girl soldier's memoir and is shot on location using non-professional actors.

¹ The idea of choice is not without limitations. Mehari still needed to consider her readers when writing the book. She also needed to write a book that publishers would be interested in.

¹ Eritrea is ‘half-Christian and half-Moslem and home to nine ethno-linguistic groups’ (Bereketeab, 2016, p. 146).

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Contact email: nmdege@yahoo.com

***From Greatcoats to Gym Tunics:
Reading History through Images of Women Playing Netball***

Margaret Henley, University of Auckland, New Zealand

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Abstract

Visual representations of women playing sport have always struggled to gain a consistent foothold in the visual history of sport. The most significant period of visual scarcity was in the pre-television era when few had the funds or the ability to record and distribute moving images. Cinema newsreels and locally produced and distributed films which showcase women in action are therefore historical, cultural and ideological treasure troves which offer different points of entry through which to explore women's sporting 'herstory'. This paper explores the significance of two pieces of early film capturing women playing netball in very culturally different circumstances and recorded with very different intent. The earliest, produced by the British Ministry of Information in 1918, is of WAACs stationed at the Western Front celebrating their one afternoon off a fortnight by engaging in a robust game of 'basket-ball' (netball) dressed in their army greatcoats. This is primarily a propaganda film screened in British cinemas to help change the puritanical view of the public towards women in uniform who served in France. The second is a very recently re-discovered and restored film of the 1932 Dominion Basketball [netball] Tournament in Aotearoa New Zealand. For the next 20 years this cherished fragment was shared around the often isolated provincial basketball associations in the country. It provided the only accessible source of moving images for local women to glimpse their game being played at a representative level and tells a story more vivid than just a snapshot of healthy settler society New Zealand women at play.

Keywords: netball, women, sport history, cinema newsreels

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Introduction

As a women-only sport largely confined to Britain and the reaches of its historical Dominions, netball (previously known as basketball, outdoor basketball or women's basketball) does not have a wealth of visual images or moving pictures through which to reveal its early history (Henley, 2012). The term netball will be used predominantly throughout this article to provide clarity for the modern reader but essentially women's netball and basketball are the same game and as with any sport evolved with structural and regional differences. After the introduction of the game to England in 1895 (developed out of James Naismith's 1891 invention of indoor basketball) it went through a series of rule changes designed to create a style of play deemed more suitable for the recreational pursuits of young women (Treagus 2011, Andrew 1997, Taylor 2001, Nauright & Broomhall 1994, Marfell 2012). By 1905 an English Rule Book had gone out to international basketball playing associations. Another in the 1920s included Australia and New Zealand (Jobling & Barham, 1991). Despite these attempts at regulation various iterations of the game were still being played through to the end of the 1950s when the modern 7 a-side game and the universal name of netball became the international standard.

The very early version of netball played by the WAAC in the 1918 cinema newsreel, 'The Women's Army in France' (IWM 405) is conducted according to the physical and social space available for these women in the army base camp in wartime France and in all likelihood the game was mocked up hurriedly for the camera. In contrast, the games in the 1932 New Zealand 9 a-side tournament film ('NZBA Tournament film 1932') are being played in a very serious, competitive mode and are being keenly umpired. These two pieces of archival film offer a rich source of contrast: one as a cinema newsreel made for domestic propaganda purposes during the First World War and the other made fourteen years later by the rapidly growing national sport for New Zealand women desperate to gather and preserve images of the elite level of their competition to share with their often isolated provincial unions. However these two pieces of film also offer a point of historical sports commonality rarely documented – that of young women playing their chosen game whenever and where ever they can and through which they reflect their cultural identity and vital physicality.

Literature review and Methodology

This article draws on very distinct areas of critical literature and primary resources in order to analyse the production of these two pieces of early film produced and distributed in very different geographic locations, historical situations and industry circumstance. The work of Krisztina Robert (1997, 2008), Angela Wollacott (1994), Janet Watson (2004), Lucy Noakes (2006) and Susan Grayzel (1977), provide a valuable social and political context for the wartime role of the WAACs profiled in the 1918 newsreel. Philip M. Taylor's *The Foreign Office and British Propaganda during the First World War* (1980) and David Monger's 2014 study of the influence of the National War Aims Committee propaganda on women's roles and paid employment both provide a wider political context.

The New Zealand film is also produced at a time of considerable economic hardship and social change - that of The Great Depression which hit severely affected rural areas of the country in 1932. Local historian Tony Simpson's *The Slump* 1990, and

the oral histories contained in *The Sugarbag Years* (1974) provide a snapshot of the impact of the Depression on New Zealand. In contrast to the 1918 British state controlled production of a domestic propaganda film, the New Zealand Basketball Association's (NZBA) record of the 1932 tournament was made with a very different intent and with significantly fewer resources. The only record of the production and distribution of this rare piece of film is gleaned through brief entries in the archived minutes of the NZBA Executive 1925 -1960. The paucity of primary and secondary sources about women playing netball in New Zealand during this period is a considerable limitation in contrast to the wealth of documentation and scholarship focused on the activities of the WAACs serving in France.

British cultural historian Mike Huggins scholarship of the visual representation of sport (2007, 2008, 2011, 2015) and the representation of gender in cinema newsreels also informs my theoretical approach. His 2007 article, 'And Now, Something for the Ladies' focused on images of women playing sport in cinema newsreels and is particularly pertinent to this discussion, as is the work of Nicholas Hiley and Luke McKernan on the British Universities Newsreel Project (2001) and McKernan's ongoing scholarship of cinema newsreels and news documentary (1992, 2000, 2002, 2009). McKernan's regularly updated 'Witnessing the Past': Researcher's Guide to British Newsreels, London BUFVC' (1983) provides some key reminders as to how to research and view archival footage:

It is the expectations or experience that we bring to it that makes it communicate with us (para 3).

...We need to be informed as was the original audience before viewing the film ...it brings it back to life (para 5).

Drawing on the above scholarship and using a conventional film analysis approach of considering aspects of pre-production, production and post production this article seeks to bring these two pieces of film profiling women playing netball "back to life" (McKernan, 1983, para.5) and in doing so contribute to the under researched gaps in women's sporting history.

Factors influencing pre-production, production, and post production

Although the 1918 newsreel footage was planned, shot and edited by experienced production personnel for the time in comparison to the less sophisticated 1932 New Zealand production, the same methodological approach can be used for both films to analyse the significance of the footage. Firstly, following McKernan's guide (1983) it is necessary to understand the context in which the film was made: who filmed it; for what purpose; for whom; under what constraints; and the skill level of the production crew. There are also very practical considerations which impact on the visual content of the film such as access to and quality of the production gear, the weather, the amount of time available, budget, location access and limitations and importantly the viewpoint of the client as well as the director in the field. The final cut in a newsreel, as Huggins (2007) notes has the capacity to convey some of the feel and atmosphere of the age in which it was made and the current social attitudes of the time. In the case of the WAAC newsreel it is also a window on the propaganda strategies of the British War Office at a time when they perceived the need for a rapid change in public opinion towards the women serving behind the lines.

‘The girl behind the man behind the gun’

The National War Aims Committee (NWAC) was established in 1917 to raise civilian morale in a climate of growing war-weariness. There was a separate propaganda focus on women to increase their efforts to maintain the home front and increase the number of women in the work force. (Badsey, 2014). By late 1917 there was a change in both the aim and delivery of domestic propaganda which was heavily influenced by the advertising and popular journalism backgrounds of Alfred Harmsworth, Lord Northcliffe (*The Times*, *Daily Mail*) and Canadian newspaper men Max Atkin, Lord Beaverbrook (*Daily Express*) and the Cinema Division of the Ministry of Information reflected this change in focus and style. As the war ground inexorably onwards, service to the nation became out of necessity expected of both men and women (Grazel, 1997, p.156). By 1917 the rising death toll resulted in women taking over the essential non-combat services in order to free able bodied men for front line fighting. The creation of the WAAC in 1917 sanctioned women to wear khaki in non-combatant roles which were no longer confined to nursing or nurse aiding such as ambulance drivers, signallers, clerical assistants, gardeners, cooks, waitresses and maintenance engineers. This perceived threat to gender boundaries was construed by many as unfeminine as it challenged the central emotive thrust of domestic propaganda which reinforced the heroism of men fighting to protect ‘womankind and home’ (Grazel, 1997, p.153).

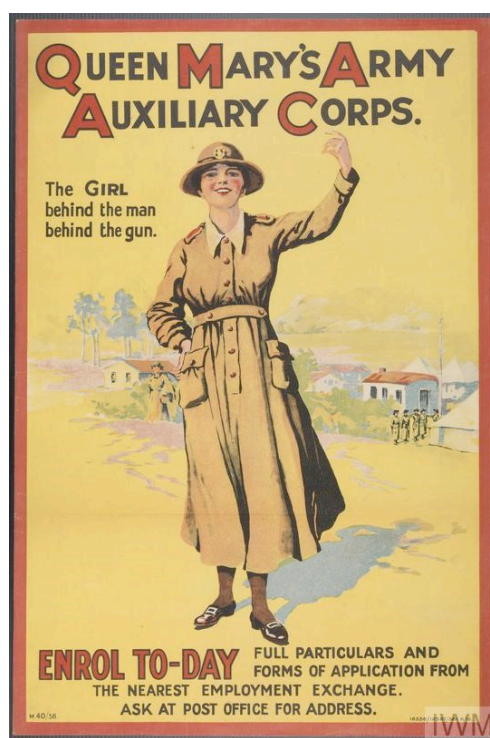


Figure 1: QMAAC recruitment poster (© IWM Art.IWM PST 13167)

By late 1917 a public backlash began to build which was fuelled by rumours of immorality and ill discipline amongst the WAAC (Nokes 2006, Robert 1997, Grazel 1997). This reached a peak in early 1918 and was expressed openly in the popular press and in public life. The military authorities acted quickly to counter these claims in order to stem a worrying drop in recruitment for the WAAC. A Commission of Inquiry was sent to France and this resulted in a “complete vindication” (Marlow,

1998, p.312) of the WAAC. Following the release of the Commission's findings a Royal endorsement was granted with the renaming of the WAAC to the Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps. A huge publicity campaign focused on the Auxiliary travelled the country, often accompanied by royalty which gained "massive press coverage" (Robert, 2008, p.115). It was in this context that a series of newsreels was conceived by the Ministry of Information and screened in British cinemas.

'The Woman's Army in France' (IWM 405)

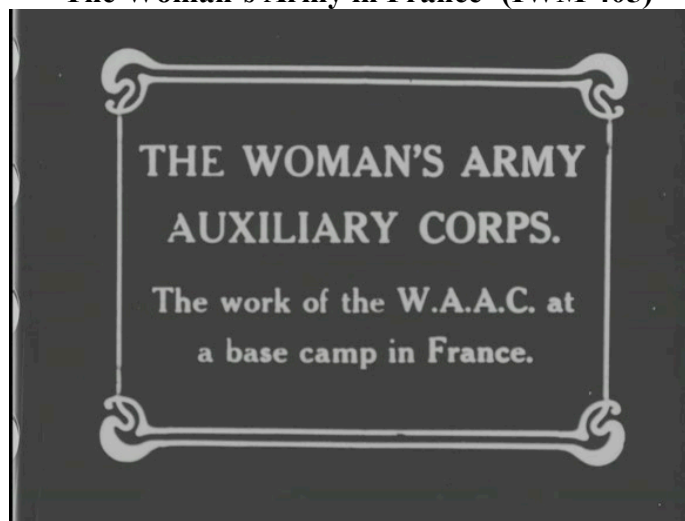


Figure 2: Title card 'The Women's Army in France' (© IWM 405)

This 7.48 minute silent newsreel, shot on 35mm black and white film stock is dated by the Imperial War Museum (IMW) Archives as 1918 which is likely to be in the summer months of the final year of the war before the November armistice. The newsreel footage, shot and edited by the Topical Film Company for British Ministry of Information, documents a 'day in the life of' WAACs serving in a rear base camp. There are seven segments shot in five different locations on the base; the cook house, officers' dining and reading rooms, exterior shots of buildings, the netball and drill area and the cemetery. The first is of WAACs preparing food and serving on the food line for the lower ranks. The next two segments are of WAACs dressed as waitresses serving the officers in their dining area and club reading room. This is followed by two short segments of a game of early basketball, a drill session then a longer scene to conclude the newsreel of WAACs tending the war graves in an extensive cemetery then marching back to the camp.

In order to present the dedicated work of the WAACs serving in France to the public in the best light, a number of practical decisions were made by the Cinema Division of the Ministry of Information. Most significantly the footage was gathered in summer devoid of the cloying mud which blighted the lives and deaths of all who served at the front and behind the lines in the Great War. The reality is that the WAACs laboured in often appalling conditions, twelve hours a day with half day off during the week and every alternative Sunday. They suffered stringent personal restrictions as the recollections of WAAC private Olive May Taylor reveal:

The barracks were very spartan & food poor & there was very little of it. We were subject to all of a soldier's discipline, but had none of the privelidges (*sic*) of a soldier. (cited in Jesse, 1919, p.305)

Most of the segments are based on everyday routine such as preparing and serving meals, but others would have been staged for the camera crew such as the drilling and basketball sequences and the strong pitch to public emotion of the women tending the war graves. In the majority of the segments the women are shown to be in selfless service catering to the needs of the fighting men and often overseen by men of rank. However, there are two short moments in the newsreel where the women, supervised by their own female officers, step out of rank and are just themselves; the segment when they are playing basketball and the other as they break ranks on the order to dismiss after drill training and run with youthful exuberance towards the camera. Here the personality of these women breaks through the careful control of the strategies of domestic propaganda and speaks across the generations.



Figure 3: 'Dismiss!' (© IWM 405)

WAACs playing 'basket-ball'

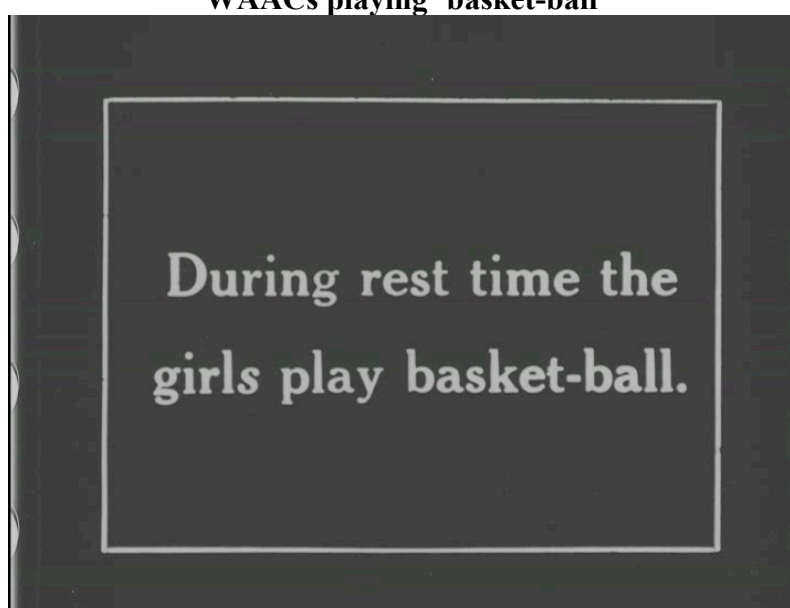


Figure 4: Basketball intertitle (© IWM 405)

The grassed drill area outside the barracks becomes a women-only space for the informal Sunday afternoon basketball game as evidenced by the all female onlookers. A roughly painted line marks the perimeter and possibly an outline of a goal circle at each end. However, there are no other in-court territory zones or restriction on player movement. The bounced ball restart and the running dribble indicates the shared indoor basketball heritage but the netted goal post without a backboard proves that this is a game of very early netball and not an informal game of indoor basketball played outdoors. An awareness of field position is indicated with the 'jumping centres' waiting to compete for the bounced restart and others standing in loose offensive and defensive pairings in the centre of the field. The ranked WAAC officer acting as umpire whistles the restart and then hurries off the field and behind the view of the camera which appears to be her only adjudicating function in the game. The lack of rules which are applicable or desirable in this recreational circumstance allow the game to flow at random up and down the field and wherever the ball is, so are a horde of energetic great-coated and stoutly shod young women.



Figure 5: The heavily favoured use of the long pass (© IWM 405)

In this 52 second segment the camera remains in the same position and pans slowly to cover the game although this is strangely compromised by the goal post area closest to the camera appearing to be out of the panning range or inclination of the cameraman. As the main action of the game is driving towards this goal area it is even more curious that this is not included by the camera setup or panning movement of the camera head. There are four cuts in this sequence. The first one appears to be film damage but the other three are a very early example of cutting highlights sequence from raw sports footage. Although there are no close-ups of any of the women throughout the whole newsreel, the last cut indicates the cameraman changed the lens to obtain a slightly tighter wide shot. This closes the last 12 minutes of this sequence and offers more visual engagement for the viewer.



Figure 6: Change of lens for closer wide shot (© IWM 405)

The significance of this 1918 basketball segment

This film is one of a number of newsreels made in 1918 by the Ministry of Information which profile the WAAC for propaganda purposes. ‘The Life of a WAAC’ (IWM 412) was shot in various locations in England using a mix of actuality and acting setups directly aimed at recruiting more young women into the service. The ‘Women’s Army in France’ (IWM 405) poses a more demanding production schedule in terms of location, time and level of difficulty. A comparison of these two newsreels reveals significant differences in the quality of shot coverage available from which to refine the final edit. This is hardly surprising if one considers the constraints under which the production crew would have been operating while on location in France. Nevertheless there is an understanding of how to talk to a female audience rather than talk at them.

The greatest significance is that this is the earliest recording of women playing netball in a European cinema newsreel and predates any New Zealand newsreel record of women playing netball by fifteen years. Its worth lies in the series of shots which capture how the game was played in that era. The majority of early archival footage from the 1920s only provide short shots of women playing the game as part of a montage or snapshot of daily life in Britain or her Dominions. It is rare therefore to get such a sustained moving image record of women playing the game.

The English Public School system reinforced the Edwardian belief that team sport was the perfect training ground to prepare young men for war. Whereas WWI reinforced the military value of sport training and competition to raise the fitness levels, morale and foster *esprit de corps* for the male troops (Manson and Riedi, 2010) but there is scant recorded evidence in British official or oral histories of the sport that women played during their active service in France. It was not that they did not play sport but questions around this topic were rarely if ever addressed to women participants in oral history projects where the focus was on their work life, physical conditions, social relationships, entertainment and friendships. In short, very few

researchers thought to ask these women what sport they played, how they organised such activities and what did it mean to them.

The women who volunteered for the WAAC were fit and strong with adventurous natures as well as motivated by a deep sense of patriotic duty. This newsreel demonstrates their exuberant physicality and proves they did play sport in the most unlikely and makeshift circumstances as did their male counterparts. The value of watching moving images of women playing an early version of the game is inestimable. Low resolution photographic stills or a reading of the 1905 or the 1920's English basketball rule book cannot compare. These women are out there playing their game which is like football or rugby for men – all that is required is a patch of land, a ball, a couple of goals, a few rudimentary rules and a heap of good cheer.

The 'lost' National Tournament film, Invercargill, New Zealand, 1932

The New Zealand Basketball Association (NZBA) had been officially formed in 1924. From the outset the women administering the sport were well aware of the importance of jockeying for space in print media reporting and being part of any new developments in broadcast technology (Henley, 2012). As hard as the NZBA and their provincial associations worked to gain access to print media and radio coverage what was missing was access to moving images of women playing the game. Silent newsreels were produced in New Zealand from 1929 and the first talkies in 1930 (Price, 1996). Their high percentage of male sport content was a reflection of perceived populist appeal by the content producers and theatrical entrepreneurs of the time. There were occasional glimpses of women playing netball in cinema newsreels from 1933 onwards but they were very fleeting and not suitable or obtainable for coaching or archival purposes (Henley, 2012). In reality, there was almost no amateur or professionally generated moving image of women playing netball in an era of moving image scarcity.

It was an act of significant determination, during the toughest years of The Depression that the NZBA decided to invest £20 in the production of a "moving picture of teams in play for Publicity Purposes" (NZBA Minutes, 30 September 1932) at the Invercargill National Tournament. This was a considerable investment for the NZBA at the time and well beyond the financial reach of any of their regional associations (Henley, 2012). There is no record of who was commissioned to shoot and edit this silent, 16mm, black and white tournament film of 25 minutes duration. When the film was completed it became obvious that associations in the poorer and sparsely populated areas of the country could not afford the expense of projection. Therefore the NZBA had to purchase a film projector to travel with the film. For the next twenty years, entries in the NZBA minutes (1925-1960) make brief mention of the film, constantly in need of repair, doing the rounds of the grateful minor associations. For many players, school teachers and coaches in these areas this film was the only way they could see, in action, how the game was played at the representative level.

Once New Zealand adopted the international 7 a-side game and with the introduction of television the 1932 film was no longer relevant. As with most amateur sports organisations there was no policy or even physical space dedicated for archiving material and the Invercargill tournament film quietly slipped out of view. For decades it was assumed to be lost or at best misplaced until it was re-discovered in 2016 in a

dusty cardboard box at the back of a garage, still in its original metal canister. The joy of re-discovery was tinged also with fear as a powerful smell of vinegar was leaking from the canister; a sign of badly decomposing film stock. Miraculously the dark arts of the film preservationist salvaged just over 25 minutes of the original film, with minimal damage to a few frames and loss of the opening title. To place the importance of the 1932 film in perspective it was not until 1958 that the NZBA tried to commission another film for “record” and “publicity” purposes (NZBA minutes, 19 April 1958) but this film was never made. Therefore the 1932 film, with the exception of a few fleeting glimpses of the game in an occasional cinema newsreel, became the major piece of archival footage recording New Zealand’s unique version of 9 a-side women’s basketball.

Social and economic context

It was quite a big ask for the Southland Basketball Association to host the annual tournament in 1932 and only 9 of 15 possible regional teams could afford the travel costs. This was the toughest year of The Depression in New Zealand with unemployment riots in the main streets of Auckland, Wellington and Dunedin. At this time, the total population of Southland was only 69,200 (NZ Official Year-Book 1933) with the majority spread across rural sheep farming holdings. The largest centre, Invercargill, with a population of 24,300 (ibid) was therefore very reactive to the economic fortunes of its farming population and by 1932 there was widespread hardship in the rural sector. Although impoverished New Zealand farmers were rarely forced off their land by the banks their almost complete loss of income impacted on shopkeepers in the small rural towns and city centres who “went bankrupt in droves” (Simpson, 1974, p.6). For women in particular it was a time that demanded desperately creative skills of self sufficiency but it also fostered a ‘get on with the job’ mentality no matter what the circumstances. This is illustrated by an article in the local newspaper as the Southland Basketball Association used the press to put out a very determined call for billets only two weeks from the start of the event:

A very poor response for homes for our visitors during their stay here has been made to the executive. We need 120 billets and with only a fortnight left, we have 30 billets. It took much persuasion on the part of your delegates last year to have this tournament allocated to Southland. Your delegates asked for it in your name, and now your (sic) are repudiating your responsibilities in the matter. Times are hard – yes we have heard that a great deal - but they are hard for us all. Many of you have no room available in your own home. We know that too, but all of you have friends, and it is necessary that you ask everyone.

... You are not asked to entertain the visitors, only to offer hospitality. So see what you can do for the honour of our province, and if any wellwishers of the game and ex-players read this, will they come forward and help? We will be most grateful. (Defence, *The Southland Daily News*, 6 August 1932)

The Tournament film

In contrast to the level of film making skill evident in the Ministry of Information's newsreel, this film could appear relatively amateur in execution. Although displaying understandably lower production values due to budget, access to production equipment and resources, there is evidence of meticulous planning and a competent level of technical production and post production skills. As can be seen by the main sections of the film listed below, a great deal of raw footage was required in order to craft such a cohesive and content rich overall structure in the edit:

1. Introduction of key administrators directly to the camera
2. Slow pan of assembled officials
3. Slow pan of spectators
4. Highlight sequences of five opening round games
5. Introduction of referees directly to camera
6. Introduction of team captains directly to camera
7. Highlight edit of final game: Southland v Hawkes Bay
8. The Winton Farewell: pan of Otago team all players and visitors, cars leaving town.

The edited highlights of the game footage dominate just over one third of the finished film which is why it was such a sought after resource throughout the country. There is even coverage of mid court and circle play to provide a record of the skills on display in all player positions.



Figure 7: fast and physical court play (courtesy NNZ)

The other third of the film is devoted to direct-to-camera presentations of key national and Southland officials, referees, team captains, a 360 degree pan of the mixed gender crowd at the games and the final 4.26 minute section of the farewell to the teams by the Winton sub-association on the final day. In contrast to the recording of games and constructing the competition aspect of the tournament it is this footage which provides

such a strong visual link with the participants which, as McKernan (1983) asserts, brings the people and the time when making this film “back to life” (para 5).



Figure 8: Miss E.B. Pay, Southland President. Direct address to camera at start of film. (Courtesy of NNZ)

One's first reaction on viewing the film is that it must have originally had a soundtrack that has been lost over the decades because of the number of the segments which employ direct address to the camera. However, there is no record of this ever being a sound film although experimental sound technology did exist in New Zealand in 1932. Sections such as the visual introduction of the umpires, indicates strong directorial control over the movement and presentation of each official who steps into the camera frame, smiles, then exits. Mr N.R. Hamilton, in Figure 7 below, was more than up to the occasion in contrast to the giggling self-consciousness of many of the young women unused to the process of filming. However, their presentations add a naive charm to the film as well as providing an archival record of the rarely seen or recorded contribution made to society by New Zealand sportswomen.



Figure 9: Mr N.R. Hamilton, Hawkes Bay Referee who clearly enjoyed his cameo presentation to the camera. (Courtesy of NNZ)

The farewell at Winton

Of particular significance is the final section of the film which covers the farewell to the teams and delegates following an afternoon tea hosted by the small rural service town of Winton. All the visitors and hosts are assembled in the main street for the cameraman to record their images before those with cars depart which would have been a major social event for a small town of less than 1,000 people (NZ Year Book 1933). What is notable about this sequence is the care taken to record the faces of the participants. The mixed gender crowd is an indication of the importance of the women's game within local society and there is no indication of the hardship of the times. The women and men in the footage appear to be well dressed and convey an air of prosperity. In all likelihood this was not the case for many at the tournament or for the hosts. The film is therefore also a record of the determination for the underfunded and often marginalised recreational pursuits of women to be maintained despite the hardship of The Depression.



Fig 10: The assembled visitors in the main street of Winton before departure.
(Courtesy of NNZ).

He tangata, he tangata, he tangata

Eight years later in the early years of WWII, John Grierson, founder of the British documentary movement and head of British GPO Film Unit was brought to New Zealand to help establish a similar government film production unit. Grierson's presentation to a group of politicians and filmmakers exhorted them not to dwell on the superficial when making documentary film but to "put in something about the real things you do" (as cited in Dennis 1981, p. 22). He advised that such government

directed films be about people “..so we can see their faces and remember that New Zealand is not just a couple of spots on a distant map but a real place with a flash of the future in its eyes and a beat in its heart” (ibid). This is reinforced by McKernan (1983) who believed the major appeal of the newsreel was “the human face, looking at the camera” (para 13).

One of the most loved and frequently used Māori whakataukī or proverb in New Zealand poses the question: ‘He aha te mea nui o te ao?’ - what is the most important thing in the world? The traditional reply, ‘He tangata, he tangata, he tangata’, acknowledges the universal truth that ‘it is people, it is people, it is people’. Although detailing the political, institutional and cultural context surrounding these two films is important, what reaches out the most from these grainy images is the vitality and determination of these women, engaged in an activity that reveals much more than just the game that they chose to play. Netball is of course not the most important thing in the world but these two pieces of film contribute to making “the complex cultural landscape of women’s sporting lives more visible” (Huggins, 2007, p. 682) by documenting women playing their own game during two distinctly testing times in world history.

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Contact email: m.henley@auckland.ac.nz

The Uses of Instagram for Self-Presentation and Self-Promotion of Thai celebrities

Pan Chatchaiyan, Ramkhamhaeng University, Thailand

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Abstract

When browsing celebrities' photos on their Instagram accounts, their life stories and lifestyles are reflected. Presentation of self is a common practice for social media users around the world. People engage in social media not only for information and communication, but also for social connections with others. The focus of this article is to discuss celebrities' uses of Instagram as an alternative tool for self-presentation and self-promotion. The data is drawn from qualitative research conducted with nine celebrities who are either actors/actresses, or singers or MCs in Thailand. The research methods include in-depth interviews with the celebrities and a content analyses of their Instagram photos. This article argues that there are two purposes for the celebrities' uses of Instagram. Firstly, celebrities' uses of Instagram for self-presentation are found to be in accordance with Erving Goffman's approach. It was found that celebrities strategically and selectively choose their photos to present their 'ideal' rather than 'authentic' selves. Secondly, the uses of Instagram for self-promotion and brand endorsements are found to reflect David P. Marshall's notion of 'presentational media'. It was found that celebrities use Instagram as an alternative tool for sharing their personal lives and creating public selves beyond traditional media. Celebrities' public displays of their online selves help them to promote themselves as well as the products they want to sell to their fans and general public.

Keywords: online self-presentation, self-promotion, social media, celebrities, Instagram, Thailand

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Introduction

In today's mediatized world, the experiences of our everyday lives are surrounded by modern technologies and communication devices. Mobile communication becomes a vital part of human connections. For many of us, it is almost impossible to leave home without a mobile phone, or to go out without seeing many other people with their faces turned down to engage with their mobile phones. It is reported that more than half of the world's population now uses the Internet. The number of global internet users is 3.77 billion, and the number of global social media users is 2.80 billion (We Are Social, 2017).

Research on Instagram seems to receive less attention from academics than other social media platforms (Hu, Manikonda, and Khambhampati, 2014). Since its launch in October 2010, the Instagram community has grown to more than 700 million users worldwide (Instagram, 2017). In Thailand, 60 per cent (41 million) of the country's population are internet users. Facebook is the most popular social media in Thailand, with 41 million subscribers. Instagram is also on a rising trend with 11.2 million users in Thailand (internet world stats, 2017).

The phenomenon of mobile communication brings about changes in the culture of human communication, including changes to people's everyday conversation and interaction, public and private communication and self-communication (Rich Ling, 2004). Without the limitations of time and space, online communication becomes the method of choice for many individuals. People's everyday conversation can sometime be replaced with online communication. According to the Hyperpersonal Model, online communication offers better relationship management for social relationships with others (Walther, 1996, 2007).

Daily uses of social media by billions of people around the world can be understood in the terms of *mass self-communication* that were introduced by Manuel Castell (2009). *Mass self-communication* brings about challenges in self-presentation for global users who are now empowered to be senders and to be globally interactive with global audiences. The traditional model of mass media, stating that is a direct communication from the media to receivers, is altered. New media spaces as well as new social spaces have emerged because of the development of online social media technologies.

Within the new social spaces, social media create new venues for self-presentation, self-disclosure and impression management (Rui and Stefanone, 2013). The exchanging of texts and pictures are the main communication formats for social media users. Online self-communication via selfie pictures is a global phenomenon that attracts both interest and criticism from the media and academics (Senft and Baym, 2015; Diefenbach and Christoforakos, 2017). Currently, there are also emerging trends of sharing real-time locations and recording live video via social media.

Within the modern social context discussed above, the present paper discusses two purposes of celebrities' uses of Instagram: self-presentation and self-promotion. In the following, the theoretical background is discussed with the focus on a discussion of online self-presentation by individuals and celebrities. Then, an empirical study that

explores the uses of Instagram by Thai celebrities is presented in more detail, followed by a general discussion of the implications for future research.

Background

The early concept of online communication as a ‘virtual’ world or ‘cyberspace’ made online communication seem like an illusion and not part of the ‘real’ world. However, today’s discussion moves away from whether online space is virtual or real (Silver, 2000, p.20; Haythornthwaite and Wellman, 2002, p.31). The advancement of communication technologies brings about our ability to always connect. The distinction between the online and offline worlds is therefore blurred, or does not even exist, because people can always log in or go online easily.

Self-presentation before the age of the Internet required human interaction via face-to-face communication. Both verbal and nonverbal communications were used to present one’s self. However, the current phenomenon of online self-presentation, how we communicate about ourselves on social media, increasingly becomes our reputations and how we are known. It has been pointed out that although we may not always log in, the fact is that we leave the trace of our identities all over the Internet. Several social networking sites are seen as contributing to elements of people’s identities. It is common to get to know people professionally or personally from their social-networking profiles (Cover, 2016, p.x).

When using social media such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, etc., users must construct a public or semi-public profile within the limits of the system (Boy and Ellison, 2008). It has been stated that Instagram users create “their own personal cyber documentary through a variety of fancy photos” (Lee, Lee, Moon, & Sung, 2015, p.555). Facebook users are compared to being their own paparazzi, which means they take pictures of themselves and present themselves in different activities with the aim to make celebrities/heroes of themselves (Cirucci, 2013, p.47). Social media profiles are built intentionally and often strategically. It was found that people present and manage their online identities strategically across different social media platforms (Dijck, 2013).

Many previous studies have discussed methods of online self-presentation. A study on motivations for using Instagram found that self-expression, by ways such as updating photos expressing the actual self and the sharing of personal information, is an important motivation for Instagram users (Lee, Lee, Moon, & Sung, 2015, p.555). The types of photos and videos that people post are categorized into eight types based on their content, which are self-portraits, friends, activities, captioned photos, food, gadgets, fashion and pets. It has also been found that the number of followers shows no relationship with the type of users based on the nature of their shared photos (Hu, Manikonda, and Khambhampati, 2014).

Apart from identifying themselves via pictures, verbal descriptions of the self can also become explicit identity presentations by social media users by representing who they are and what are their interests. Besides, cultural preferences or cultural tastes such as interests, activities, quotes, movies, and music are recognized as a way of expressing one’s ‘cultural self,’ which can be a part of how people present themselves online (Zhao, Grasmuck & Martin, 2008).

Celebrities are the group of people who have the most followers among Instagram users. Public interest in celebrities' personal lives heighten celebrities' culture and power. When celebrities use Instagram to broadcast their personal lives, it allows public access to their personal lives and becomes their exclusive life story, offered for their fans and followers. Celebrities' self-disclosure by sharing both their professional and personal lives is found to positively affect intimacy and to create a strong *parasocial relationship* among fans (Kim and Song, 2016).

David P. Marshall (2010) defines the term *presentational media* as describing the new media culture that involves the presentation and promotion of the self via social media. Specifically, it is pointed out that celebrities' status and impact is seen as a pedagogical tool that helps in teaching people how to consume. On one hand, celebrity culture involves the production of the self being produced by variety forms of consumption, expression and representation. On the other hand, the self-presentation of celebrities is surrounded by celebrity news and gossip appearing in the media. It is added that the individualization of the consumption of items such as consumer products of the celebrity's choice becomes an expression of the self of the celebrity (Marshall, 2014).

Furthermore, celebrities' use of social media for self-promotion is related to the economic constraints of consumer culture and the self-branding of celebrities. It is suggested that celebrities re-present and re-construct themselves to achieve benefits within consumer culture (Marshall, 2010). It is common to find celebrities being part of a marketing communications strategy by endorsing certain products or brands (Erdogan, 1999). Celebrities' endorsements of products are found to receive significant attention from consumers (Wei and Lu, 2012). It has also been found that celebrities on Instagram are influential in the purchasing behaviour of young female users (aged 18-30). It is worth noting that not only celebrities need to promote themselves and their products. It has also been found that there are 'entrepreneurial and self-promotional demands for academics on Academia.edu,' social network sites for researchers. Despite the university's knowledge-making ideals, the pressures for academics to promote themselves 'as brands' are now in effect (Duffy and Pooley, 2017).

Research methods

In this paper, the data is drawn from qualitative research in 'Online Identity Presentation of Thai Celebrities via Instagram: Why and How' conducted during 2014-2015. The focus of the research at that time was to discover the reasons for online identity presentation via Instagram by the celebrities and the types and methods of online identities presentation by the celebrities (see Chatchaiyan, 2016). Following the research results, this paper is developed further by asking a new question on the purposes of the use of Instagram by the Thai celebrities. The literature review was conducted with the focus on self-presentation and self-promotion via social media and the data analysis from the research was drawn to match the literature review frameworks. Therefore, this paper explains and discusses the uses of Instagram for self-presentation and self-promotion by Thai celebrities from a new perspective that is different from the previous research questions mentioned above. The data collected from the research conducted with the celebrities helps by adding in-depth value to the

paper by reflecting the implications and thoughts behind the uses of Instagram among celebrities. The following discusses the research methods conducted with the Thai celebrities.

The research methods include in-depth interviews with the celebrities and a content analyses of their Instagram photos. The data was collected from nine celebrities who are actors/actresses, singers, or MCs in Thailand. The selected celebrities have open access Instagram accounts, are active Instagram users, have at least 70,000 followers and agreed to be interviewed. The celebrities selected were 6 females and 3 males, aged between 22-41 years old. The selected celebrity who has the most followers on their Instagram account has 2.8 million followers. The selected celebrity who has the least followers has 74,300 followers. The average 22 minute, informal and non-structured interviews were conducted in Bangkok, Thailand.

Apart from this, a content analysis of the celebrities' photos and video clips that were posted for one month were collected and analysed. There were 858 pictures and twenty-seven video clips that were thematically coded and analysed. Different types of pictures such as self-portrait photos, photos with friends and other people, and photos of other things such as food, scenery, pets, and personal objects were categorized by frequency. Photo captions and profile descriptions were also collected and analysed. The data collected from the interviews and the content analysis was methodological triangulated with the literature review to ensure the validity of the research answers.

Self-presentation of Thai celebrities via Instagram

The result of the research conducted with the celebrities in Thailand suggested that Instagram is used by the celebrities as an alternative tool for self-presentation apart from other mass media channels. Photos on the celebrities' Instagram accounts display the celebrities' lifestyles as well as their life stories. Every celebrity reported that all the photos are posted by themselves from their own mobile phones. By using Instagram as a tool for self-presentation, celebrities are empowered to take a role in producing their own life stories, expressing their own selves and being able to tell their side of their stories to the general public.

According to the interview data, Instagram is different from other traditional media in that it is a direct communication from the celebrities to their fans and the public. The celebrities feel that they can present their true selves directly, where as in television series or *lakorn*, they have to act and appear only as certain characters. The celebrities expressed that Instagram was an open opportunity for them to present themselves and help others to be able to recognize and remember who they are, what are their own characters, their lifestyles, and their interests. For them, the performances that they give on television seem unreal, whereas Instagram allows them to express their real selves. In general, a positive experience of using Instagram to express oneself is found among celebrities.

A content analysis of the celebrities' photos found that celebrities not only present themselves by their own self-portrait photos, but also by the photos that display their social relationships, such as photos of the celebrities with their friends and photos of their friends alone. Among all types of photos shared by celebrities, self-portrait

photos are found the most (69.38%), followed by pictures of other personal items such as scenery, clothing, food, etc. (22.71%) and pictures of their friends and other people (7.91%). However, when looking closer at the self-portrait photos category, it was found that their portrait or selfie photos are found the most (48.86%), but photos of them with friends are shared nearly as frequently (46.09%). Apart from this, celebrities also present themselves via cultural consumption. From a total of 885 pictures and video clips, there are 187 pictures and video clips (21.2%) that appear to belong to the cultural consumption category. Celebrities are found to express their cultural self by posting scenery pictures (68 times), personal objects such as bags and clothes (41 times), food (35 times), quotes (33 times) and pets (16 times).

Although the celebrities expressed that Instagram is a tool for them to present who they really are to the general public, it is a common practice for all of the celebrities to present themselves positively. Positive self-presentation behaviour among celebrities includes selecting only good looking photos and using beauty applications in their mobile phones to edit their photos before posting. Celebrities are always concerned about their image and appearance. Celebrities are also concerned with the number of likes they receive after each photo, and photos that received fewer likes will cause some concern for them. The celebrities pointed out that being celebrities they have to think carefully before they post photos, because once the photos are posted they become public, and deleting certain pictures may cause criticisms of them.

Furthermore, when looking at the photo captions under the celebrities' Instagram photos, there are no deep expressions, only superficial levels of expression are displayed. From the 810 photos with captions, general comments such as hello, or descriptions of what is happening in the photos are found the most (615 photos or 75.93%). There are also captions mentioning brands or products (98 photos or 12.10%); captions with general feeling expression such as love, miss, loneliness, and hunger (64 photos or 7.90%); and life quotes (33 photos or 4.07%).

Moreover, the celebrities are found to present themselves to what Manuel Castells (2009) called 'multi-layered audiences'. This is because the social networks can connect different groups of people, and for the celebrities it is difficult for them to distinguish between public and private life, especially within the online context. When using Instagram, the celebrities are sometimes required to choose between sharing their personal life stories with only friends/families or sharing with the larger group that includes fans. They expressed mixed feelings about wanting to share something exclusively with their close friends and yet wanting to communicate and maintain relationships with their fans. After all, they cannot separate their audiences and an important goal is that Instagram is effective channel to communicate with their fans.

Apart from this, photos that are shared on the celebrities' Instagram are found to be used for personal memory for themselves as well as for sharing with others. For the celebrities, Instagram can be seen as an online album or an online diary, which is kept for themselves as well as for sharing with others. The celebrities expressed the feeling that they can use Instagram to look back at their life stories and recall the emotions that they experienced at different times.

The above discussion concerns the self-presentation of Thai celebrities on Instagram. Instagram has advantages for celebrities in letting the public know who they are apart from other traditional mass media channels. However, it was found that positive self-presentation and a superficial level of self-expressions are present. Instagram is also used for personal memories as well as sharing with both their friends and their fans. In the following, the uses of Instagram for self-promotion of Thai celebrities are discussed.

Self-promotion of Thai celebrities via Instagram

The use of Instagram by celebrities not only helps them to present themselves in a good light, it also helps them to promote themselves to their fans and general public. What follows is a discussion of how the celebrities promote themselves on Instagram.

When looking at the profile descriptions of the celebrities, it was found that in their profile descriptions the celebrities were trying to promote themselves and/or the products that they wanted to sell, and/or their works in the mass media that were currently on the air. The profile descriptions written on their Instagram's profile page include 1) information about themselves such as their real names, their agencies, and telephone number of their managers for work contacts; 2) their media works such as their current television programs or television series; and 3) the products that are their brands or for which they are presenters, such as the names of brands, websites, or Facebook pages. It can be seen that the celebrities use Instagram strategically with a focus to promote themselves, their media works, and/or their products.

Since Instagram is a good communication tool between the celebrities and their fans, the celebrities use this tool intentionally and well recognize the power of this channel of communication. According to the interviews, the celebrities admitted that they try to update their photos every day in order to communicate with their fans and general public. Although they sometime post pictures for fun according to their need for self-expression, they also noted that Instagram is a tool for public relations that enables them to always be interacting with fans, creating public interest as well as promoting their work.

Apart from promoting themselves, celebrities' use of Instagram as a tool for brand endorsements, to promote certain brands of products or services, is repeatedly found. The displays of brand-supporting photos, frequently using hashtags for mentioning the brands and descriptions of the products or services, were found 303 times. Other methods include posting photo captions with full product descriptions (98 times), and photos of the celebrities holding the products (35 times). These results show that the use of Instagram for commercial purposes is often found to be associated with the celebrities' personal photos on Instagram. The use of hashtags mentioning brands is considered to be a popular and discrete way to promote certain brands.

The interviews with the celebrities helped to clarify this point. Some celebrities admitted that they are paid to promote certain brands or products on their Instagram. According to them, tie-ins to products or services with their Instagram photos are comparable to the presenter's jobs they normally have. For them, it is their job to be hired by brands. However, it was found that they carefully selected certain products or services for which they are satisfied that the quality is good, and which matched their

lifestyles, as they feel that Instagram is closely linked with their identities. To be precise, the celebrities do not want to appear like they are trying to hard-sell the products. The celebrities are also concerned about their followers' attitudes towards them trying to sell or advertise certain products on their Instagram. Some celebrities said that they do not accept jobs being paid for product endorsements on their Instagram. Yet, it was found that their Instagram accounts are constantly posting photos to promote certain products or services. In their opinion, the celebrities do it for personal favor in order to keep relationships with their friends or with the brands whose endorsement is already a part of their presenter's contracts.

Discussion and future research

The celebrities' use of Instagram for self-presentation and self-promotion discussed above reflects the nature of social media communication. Firstly, social media is about connecting with people within complex networking boundaries. Social media technologies allow us to be more connected, and the social connection with others is an important factor for people communicating online (Wellman and Gulia, 1999, p.173). The Thai celebrities use Instagram to present themselves to both their friends/families and their fans. While struggling with what Castells (2009) called 'multi-layered audiences,' the celebrities' open display of their social relationships with others on their Instagram accounts is an important part of their self-communication. This implies that the celebrities define who they are by their relationships with others (Zhao et al., 2008). Nancy. K. Baym and Danah Boyd (2012) also pointed out the challenges in dealing with socially mediated publicness, where there is confusion in differentiating between 'audiences' and the public. For social media users to enter into such blurred boundaries, new skills and strategic management are required.

Secondly, social media communication is also about communicating life stories about ourselves and sharing them with others in the social networks. The term mass self-communication is useful here in understanding the online self-presentation of social media users (Castells, 2009). By the sharing of personal stories and lifestyles in the public space, the celebrities are able to present themselves and express who they are to their fans and the general public. Nevertheless, only positive self-presentation and a superficial level of expression are found in their Instagram photos.

To explain the celebrities' use of social media for self-presentation, Erving Goffman's (1959) perspectives on self-presentation are useful here. In everyday life situations, people are social actors. Depending on which stages we are on, we are performing impression management in order to receive positive feedback and meet the expectations of others. Celebrities' online self-presentation is found to be not so different from real life situations in which we all perform impression management. However, such performances are easier to manage in online contexts, because the celebrities are able to select the most attractive photos to present themselves in a good light. This selective self-presentation behaviour corresponds to many studies that found similar 'ideal self' identities online (Cirucci, 2012; Attrail and Jalil, 2011, Zhao et al., 2008; Whitty, 2008; Walther, 2007). Previous research also found that while people are more likely to self-disclose information online, they tend to disclose only superficial levels of self-information relating to personal matters and interests

(Attrill and Jalil, 2011). This research result found a similar result in the case of the Thai celebrities.

The use of Instagram among celebrities is part of their direct communication with their fans in order to maintain relationships with them. For celebrities, it is important to keep up with building their social media profiles and promoting their social presence within a very competitive industry. As discussed earlier in the case of the Thai celebrities, it was found that celebrities admit that they must post their pictures every day on Instagram as they see the benefits of doing so in communicating and maintaining the relationships with their fans. This practice is not different from other groups of social media users, such as the academics who found that they also need to cultivate and maintain a personal brand by crafting social media profiles and interacting with fans (Duffy and Pooley, 2017, p.2).

Social media is a demanding area that requires constant engagement and status updates from its users. As was pointed out by Nancy K. Baym (2014, p.4) about the 'relational labour' of social media connection, the term relational labour means "ongoing communication with audiences over time to build social relationships that foster paid work." Social media demands such 'relational labour' from its users to produce social contents and the sharing of personal information. From this perspective, the Thai celebrities are performing and negotiating their identities by producing themselves and their 'brand' and engaging in ongoing connections with their audiences.

In addition, celebrities' use of social media for self-promotion and product endorsements is found to correspond with the term presentational media (Marshall, 2010; 2014). Celebrity culture is always related to consumer culture and marketing communication (Erdogan, 1999; Wei and Lu, 2013).

This paper has already discussed the uses of Instagram for self-promotion and self-presentation by the Thai celebrities. No differently from the celebrities' practices, we can see popular trends where general social media users perform the task of self-presentation and self-promotion according to the demands of different social media platforms. Suggestions for further research should compare the results of this study with general users on different social networking sites. In addition, fame within the online context can be created by users of social media who are empowered by the experience. We have already seen the phenomenon of YouTube stars and influencers in different social media creating their own fame. It will be interesting to find out how these self-made celebrities represent and re-invent themselves within the arena of social media.

Conclusion

This paper discussed the two main purposes of the Thai Celebrities who use Instagram. Firstly, Instagram is used as an alternative tool for self-presentation among the Thai celebrities. Instagram empowers the celebrities to express their identities without the limitations of their roles and performances as displayed in the traditional mass media channels. The celebrities' public display of photos and video clips is for their own memories as well as for sharing with their friends and fans to maintain their

relationships. However, selective self-presentation behavior only a superficial level of self-expressions is found.

Secondly, Celebrities use Instagram as a tool for self-promotion. Instagram is recognized as a great tool for the celebrities' publicity and the celebrities use this tool strategically and purposefully. They display not only their personal lives, but also their work-related lives. It was found that they also use Instagram to endorse certain brands. However, the celebrities were careful to select products that matched their lifestyles.

The use of Instagram by celebrities reflects the nature of social media communication as well as the culture of celebrities in a modern, connected society. The insights gained from this study are useful in understanding the use of Instagram among Thai celebrities and can be a reference for future studies investigating the use of social media by celebrities in other countries.

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Contact email: pan@ru.ac.th

Queer Approach to Homosexuality in Indian Culture

Anuja Pandey, Pearl Academy, India

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Abstract

Today homosexuality and queer identity is acceptable in more Indian youths than before, but still when it comes topics families, home or even school, acceptance to their sexuality and also freedom to express it openly is of constant struggle. To a society which is bound by strict and rigid norms culturally and socially, especially which dictates the terms and conditions of careers, education, marriage and even the family after, it becomes really difficult to not follow the main stream. Despite the symbol given for progressive acceptance of homosexuality rights in India, it is really difficult to understand and watch the reaction of society when it comes to accepting it culturally. In recent research, it is observed that, major stagnation to the acceptance of the rights are due to the ignorance of families altogether. Lack of support from family can be depressing and may effect mental and physical health. Theoretically, most educated people seems to accept and support alternate sexuality and gender identities, when it comes to day to day behaviour, but there is an urgent need to change the reality when it comes to a larger picture. This research paper analysis the Indian families and Indian culture all together in homosexual context which is an important layer of family and society but are kept under cover successfully. A queer approach to homosexuality in India is required to bring it near to main stream and uncover it.

Keywords: Critical and Culture Studies, Gender, LGBT, Indian Society, Communication

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Introduction

India is one of the world's oldest civilisations and also one of the most populated countries. India being a vast country refers collectively to thousand of distinct and unique cultures when it comes to different religion and communities. India's language, religion, dance, beliefs, music, architecture and even food differs from place to place. Sometime even a small distance covered can make a vast difference in how people live and interact. Indian culture is actually several millennium years old is labelled as amalgamation of several cultures and is spread across the Indian subcontinent. Indian culture being so diverse has got different cuisine, different philosophy and so has made an impact across the world in many different ways.

Throughout the history of India, culture seems to be heavily influenced by the Dharmic religion. They are mostly credited with shaping the philosophy, literature, architecture, art and music of the culture of country. India is one of the most religious and ethnically diverse country in the world, but along with it India has also got deep religious society and cultural values. Here, religion plays an important role in life of an individual. Even being secular, Hinduism is found at majority of the places. Hindu people dominates the population of the country as a whole.

Entering the English language in 16th, the meaning of queer was "strange", "odd", "peculiar", or "eccentric". The word referred to something which is suspicious or "not quite right", or to a person with mild derangement or who exhibits socially inappropriate behaviour. A Northern English expression, "There's no so queer as folk," meaning, "There is nothing as strange as people", employs this meaning. (Urban Dictionary. (2017). Urban Dictionary: queer. [online] Available at: <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=queer> [Accessed 27 Apr. 2017]).

Relating meaning to queer includes unwell feelings or something which can be questioned or can be suspicious. "Queer Street" was a term used to denote financial problems in United Kingdom.

Homosexuality is usually described as a persistent and predominant sexual attraction to a persons of one's own gender - men attracted towards men and women being attracted towards women. But many a times, not every person who experience same sex attraction are read to be identified themselves as gay or a lesbian. Sexual orientation is a way of referring to the direction of a person's predominant sexual attraction over time. We usually call a person homosexual if they seem to have attraction towards the same sex and the person who is attracted towards opposite are said to be heterosexual person. Different aspects are affected when we talk about homosexuality as a whole. There feelings, Behaviour, Identity, way of living especially their choice of living is different which is sometimes a problem for people.

(exodusglobalalliance.org. (2017). What is Homosexuality?. [online] Available at: <http://www.exodusglobalalliance.org/whatishomosexualityp95.php> [Accessed 27 Apr. 2017].)

Indian Society is hierarchical in nature. Whether you shift to any part of country or try to learn the society after dividing it into caste, culture, creed, nature, people or social group, India has ranked every person based on some essential qualities that an individual possesses. Although India is politically a democratic nation which talks about complete equality but still talks about societal hierarchy when it comes to caste groups, individuals. Caste are primarily associated with Hinduism, but there are other caste which also exist here like Muslims, Indian Christians and other religion communities. Within every religion or area people do know their relative ranking and how they individually represent their caste and behaviour constantly based on it.

(Asia Society. (2017). *Indian Society and Ways of Living*. [online] Available at: <http://asiasociety.org/education/indian-society-and-ways-living> [Accessed 29 Apr. 2017].)

Brief about the project:

The research started with a broad topics like Critical Culture, Gender and Communication, which led to various discussion points. Eventually, the research reached to a point on sensitising Indian society on LGBT.

There are many problems in the country which are general and are faced by everyone around. But as the society is divided into caste and religion, we also happened to divide the society and people in the society by their sexuality. This is where the problem arises. Just because there is categorisation in people based on their sexual choices we decide to judge them, and so we decide to deal with the similar problems in a very different way.

Research Statement:

Sensitising people to treat LGBT equally for the similar problems they face like straight people.

Creating an awareness on the general and common problems that are faced by everyone but are ignored or dealt very differently just because of categorisation.

Research Method:

Many people are found guilty for the discrimination that is usually done against LGBT youths, whether intentionally or unintentionally. LGBT youths are already facing quite many problems in their life and then discrimination from the others make their sufferings unbearable at times. They face daily discrimination from society, peers, family and even their friends, school teachers and administration. The statistics sometimes are overwhelming which shows how LGBT youth lack support and guidance on every step when they need and this also proves how much they are clearly affected in other ways too. The affected ways even include the rate at which they are abused, neglected or discriminated. Majorly research indicates that more parents want their kids to be straight or behave and live a life of straight even if they are identified as gays and even schools prefer straight above gays and this is why they get affected to the core. There are major roles which

could be players by parents or teachers and in turn can help LGBT youth live a normal life.

(York College / The City University of New York. (2017). How Are LGBT Youths Affected by Discrimination and What Can Schools Do to Help?. [online] Available at: <https://www.york.cuny.edu/academics/writing-program/the-york-scholar-1/volume-5-fall-2008/how-are-lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender-lgbt-youths-affected-by-discrimination-and> [Accessed 29 Apr. 2017].)

1. Definition to Indian society

India as a land of various religion lets you explore various aspects of social life. Diversity is found every where whether be ethnic, linguistic, regional , economic, religious, class and caste groups but still we always talk about unity in diversity. Difference between north India and south India are pretty significant, especially in systems of marriage and kinship. India being a country of royals, it has a rich family structure with a Patrilineal background. This helps people understand the family members in a better way and also how to treat them. The best way to understand this is by understanding a structure of a joint family.

In India, the family structure which has been followed since times of Patrilineal family and this is the major reason that the culture and traditions of India is still rich. Mostly a joint family has three or four matrilineally related generation. They all cooperate and live together under one roof. This is actually a good thing in a way, it helps family to grow strong mentally, physically or economically, and majorly the children are also able to learn the traditions and values from their grandparents and elders. This is the best way to make children learn about bonding and respect. Indian families have always given importance to the structure, even after urbanisation or modernisation and even influence of westernisation on India, the basic structure of Indian families are still the same and they value keeping those traditions forward and forever.

2. Indian philosophy

Indian or Hindu Philosophy is classified into 9 schools, which are classified into 2 schools majorly. 6 orthodox schools (astika) and 3 heterodox schools (nastika). This difference between these two branches is all based on Vedas. Orthodox schools recognise the authority of Vedas while heterodox schools do not believe in it. Out of these nine, eight are atheistic as there is no place for God. Only Uttara Mimamsa, which is also called Vendanta, has a place for God in it.

Six Orthodox Schools(Classical Schools)

Sankhya Philosophy
Yoga Philosophy
Nyaya Philosophy
Vaisheshik Philosophy
Purva mimamsa (mimamsa)
Uttara Mimamsa (Vedanda)

Three Heterodox Schools of Indian Philosophy

Carvaka

Buddhist Philosophy

Jain Philosophy

Ajivika Philosophy

These are the different but all together forms a solid Indian philosophy structure and we Indians live upto it.

(York College / The City University of New York. (2017). How Are LGBT Youths Affected by Discrimination and What Can Schools Do to Help?. [online] Available at: <https://www.york.cuny.edu/academics/writing-program/the-york-scholar-1/volume-5-fall-2008/how-are-lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender-lgbt-youths-affected-by-discrimination-and> [Accessed 29 Apr. 2017].)

3. LGBT in India

LGBT people in India i.e Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender face legal and social difficult to another level as compared to non-LGBT people in India. In India, sexual activity between people of same gender is considered illegal and also this is the major reason that same-sex couples are not acceptable in India and so are not allowed to be legally married or obtain civil partnership. India, do recognise Hinjras or transgender as the third gender, which are said to be separate from men or women. Indians finally came forward in the year of 2009 with there first ever Pride Parade in Delhi, Bangalore and Kolkata.

Same sex marriages are not legal in India and so are not recognised by Indian government. Same sex couples are offered more limited rights such as civil union or a domestic partnership in India final in 2011 after which both the couples started receiving life threats from their friends and families which became a major issue and that made Indian government think again about the decision taken.

The state of Tamil Nadu and Kerala are the first ever states to introduce Hinjras or transgender welfare policy. According to this policy the transgender are allowed to use the sex reassigned Surgery program, housing facility, various citizenship documents and also admissions to various government colleges and schools and can go through normal education system without discrimination. They are entitled for full scholarship program like any other straight person and can live a normal life or take help through formation self-help groups for saving and initiative there income generation programs.

Homosexual intercourse was made a criminal offence under Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860. This made offence to people from the community which made them start a foundation Naz Foundation which helps the LGBT fight against government against private, adult, consensual, and non commercial same sex conduct to be in a direct violation of fundamental rights provided by Indian Constitution.

4. Happenings at Schools

Suicide is the leading cause of death among gay and lesbian youths. Gay and lesbian youths are 2 to 6 times more likely to attempt suicide than heterosexual youth. Over 30% of all reported teen suicides each year are committed by gay and lesbian youths. . . . Gays and lesbians are at much higher risk than the heterosexual population for alcohol and drug abuse. Approximately 30% of both the lesbian and gay male populations have problems with alcohol. Gay and lesbian youth are at greater risk for school failure than heterosexual children.

(U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1989, as cited in "Today's Gay Youth," n.d., n.p. [Accessed 29 Apr. 2017])

Substantially higher proportions of homosexual people use alcohol, marijuana or cocaine than is the case in the general population. (McKirnan & Peterson, 1989, as cited in "Today's Gay Youth," n.d., n.p. [Accessed 29 Apr. 2017])

Approximately 28% of gay and lesbian youths drop out of high school because of discomfort (due to verbal and physical abuse) in the school environment. (Remafedi, 1987, as cited in "Today's Gay Youth," n.d., n.p. [Accessed 29 Apr. 2017])

Gay and lesbian youths' discomfort stems from fear of name calling and physical harm. (Eversole, n.d, as cited in "Today's Gay Youth," n.d., n.p. [Accessed 29 Apr. 2017])

5. Types of Discrimination

Major comments that LGBT youth face on a daily basis follows : "I hate gays and they should be actually banned form the country." "Get way from me, you faggot, I can not stand the sight of you." "These queers make my stomach turn." These are just few examples of what goes in the life of an LGBT community person on day to day life. "Faggot" is often a word used by antigay peers to terrorise LGBT youth. These words are used usually in a negative sense to express something which is either stupid or uncool (Human Rights Watch, 2001, p.35 [Accessed 29 Apr. 2017]). When this occurs, it shows an even greater discrimination sign towards LGBT youths. LGBT youth are neglected by their parents on a major basis which should have been the first every touch point for them and approximately quarter of them are forced to leave there homes and move out to live separately. This in turn creates a state of loneliness and isolation and discomfort in their lives and they are not easy at trusting others. Some of the LGBT youth are are verbally and physically abused by there parents, which is not helping them in any way. Needless to say, parents, families, teachers at school play a major part in actually making this discrimination start and making them feel that loneliness in life.

The inmates at school are other major part of discrimination happening against the LGBT youth. Are schools actually able to understand the situation? Are they ready to take actions which are required? In common words, Are they ready to teach humanity to every kind of students coming to that place? These are various question which arrises when we talk about LGBT community attending schools and college.

These are major reasons on why these LGBT community has got a major high rates of depression or suicide or even suicide attempts because, it's not easy for people to accept them and when they are not accepted they feel the loneliness and also the need to revolt against or take actions which sometimes give them a minute away from reality or even sometimes cost them there lives.

6. Effects of discrimination

LGBT youth endure hostile verbal and physical harassment that can be excruciating for them (Human Rights Watch, 2001,p. 35 [Accessed 29 Apr. 2017]). People who were interviewed during the survey held by Human Rights Watch said, even when we are scared of physical and sexual abuse, the words like “faggot”, “queer”, or “dyke”, daily are still destructive to major level.

Even a young gay person happened to say and informed the reason of him dropping out of the program and he said “Just because I am gay that does not mean I am stupid”. I hear “that's so gay” as you say “that's so stupid” which I am not. Over 25% of LGBT youth are school dropouts because they feel they don't belong there and that's the major part of there failure and this is because they are not ready for the discrimination at the that early age and the the discrimination that happens there make school atmosphere unbearable for them. The studies have shown that LGBT youth have got greater failure at academic than heterosexual students. Moreover they don't involve in much of student activity and have got very little dedication to school agendas because isn't a place they feel safe, healthy or productive. Therefore, they live there school life with more fear of physical, emotional or sexual abuse which reduces there productivity and normal bringing up.

Physical abuse against LGBT usually is because of the negligence mainly from school. Human Rights Watch reports that physical assault are reported after interviewing many of the LGBT youth, which had an enormous psychological impact on them, mainly because of these physical abuse was the result of mainly avoiding or neglecting the constant verbal and non physical harassment. For example, a lesbian student from school was reported saying that the verbal comments or harassment went on for seven months which finally became the reason that the person got the guts to abuse her physically. There are cases where a seventh grade was beaten up by anti-gay guys and then again hit by a beer bottle in tenth grade when he had to crawl to near by friend's place to get help. These people are so used to these kinds of harassment that they did not even turn back to see who did that, because they are accustomed to what is happening around and with them. Many of the LGBT people are reported with problems like depression, sleeplessness, excessive sleep, lots of appetite, or the the feel of hopelessness, or everything all together which has played with there physical and mental health in a very bad manner. There are cases when kids are to that stage that they decide to not it anymore and decide to skip school or avoid any contact with the world to avoid the harassment. It is mentally and physically exhausting to attend school and go through the same torture regularly. LGBT youth have more chances of alcohol or substance abuse than that of heterosexual youth. Roughly, one third of the LGBT people go through alcohol problem or drugs. It has become a habit of drinking to the point of passing out or just to feel normal is what they do. The lack of support

from people around special the people who mean a lot like parents or teachers at school get them to the level that they loose all hopes and thats when they are in search of alter-nate methods to feel happy or even normal.

FINAL:

Final Poetry for the video:

We are the people of the world
the member of a family
We are the part of a family
the collective the masses
WE are YOU

We are ready for a tragedy
We are ready for an action
We stand in queues with no proper reaction

We want grand movies
But have no time to live a normal life
We enjoy good drama
But run away from others trauma

We fight for causes
stand up in the street
We fight for clauses
but walk by the false decrees

We want to be nameless
to be blameless
to be honest, we are just shameless

we talk about love
Yet eye a perfect figure
We know our spirits are naked and free
yet judge flesh and bones like figurine

We talk about modernisation about education
Yet blame our disgusting actions on the clothes worn

Debates, chat shows, running in herds
No opinion of our own
Like, copy, copy, paste, pasted, shared
with online indulgence of our own

We talk about freedom of expression

& yet can not support a simple cause of action
 We like, we love, but still don't obstruct
 & decide to stand by when someone weak is thrashed

We talk about modern values, change of thoughts
 but still follow patriarchy where woman have no chance at all
 Our movies, our life, say love is holier than thou
 yet label some sex to be out of natural limits or so

WE the effervescent WE
 WE are YOU

Prototyping and testing: (Accept/Reject/Change)

(Change)

The prototype is made with a narration and a video with abstract montage shots. The video started with the narration defined below where I am talking about the general problems that an LGBT problem face. So the video was made in a way that the narration only was talking about the general problems which everyone faces but the shoot was done in a way that I tried showing gender fluidity as in a case showing that a person is at the end a HUMAN BEING rather than categorising the person it is better to deal with the same problem in a same manner.

Analysis

The video couldn't convert my message as the audio was not that clear and also the montage created at times were going out of the context in a very different way and so it was required to make the video to start making sense in itself and so the video needs

Conclusion

A campaign which will work to sensitise Indian society for equal rights for LGBT. This campaign has got different phases and each phase is targeting different section of the society.

1. At the time of the launch, a video with common problems is launched which targets the society as a whole and just after the launch a CHALLENGE is launched on Facebook to get the campaign viral.
2. 5 days after the first video, is the time when we launch second video which targets the YOUTH, while targeting the youth we can use the digital media since youth is usually exposed more to digital media and that is actually the major part where we target the masses from the same age group. The same time as youth are more open to use merchandising, we launch the merchandise which stands for LGBT.

3. 5 days after the second step of the campaign, we add another target audience to the list where we target family and teachers because education is major part of everyone's life. And getting equal education is each citizen's right. The target audience here are more into the generation which prefer reading news papers and listen to radio. Best way to target the audience is by radio and news paper.

4. 5 days after the third step of the campaign, we add another target audience to the list where we target medical representatives and doctors because health is everything that you have and which will help you achieve something in life. And getting proper health service is everyone's rights and hindrance to it should be taken care of. The target audience here are more into the generation which prefer reading news papers and listen to radio. Best way to target the audience is by radio and news paper.

5. 5 days after the fourth step of the campaign, we add another target audience to the list where we target police officials and legal results because for a proper rights we need to be treated equally. The target audience here are more into the generation which prefer reading news papers and listen to radio. Best way to target the audience is by radio and news paper.

Plan

1. Common Problems video - Launching challenge

5 days after that

2. Video launch

- Target Audience - Friends/Colleague

- Merchandising

- **5 days after that**

3. Radio Jingle / Posters

- Target Audience - Family/Teacher - Radio Jingle

- Poster

- **5 days after that**

4. Radio Jingle / Poster

- Target Audience - Family/Teacher - Radio Jingle

- Poster

- **5 days after that**

5. Radio Jingle / Poster

- Target Audience - Family/Teacher - Radio Jingle

- Poster

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I credit my family and friends for their immense patience and constant feedback and support which made this project happen with great smoothness.

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4. White Girls, Hilton Als
5. Angels in America, Tony Kushner
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8. Conundrum, Jan Morris
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10. Leaves of grass, Walt Whitman

Re-Thinking Politics in Film: Thai Independent Cinema After the Coup d'état 2014

Sopawan Boonnimitra, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand

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Abstract

During the period of political instability that led to the coups d'état of 2006 and 2014, the independent cinema flourished both domestically and internationally. The political conflicts of the past decade have become an important backdrop for independent filmmakers to explore various issues. With a certain degree of freedom, their films created a discourse on independent films that offered both an alternative mode of filmmaking and an alternative discourse to mainstream cinema during the coup d'état periods. For this paper, I would like to take a closer look at some of the recent independent films that were made and internationally shown after the 2014 coup d'état, particularly the most recent films, including *Motel Mist* (Prabda Yoon, 2016), *The Island Funeral* (Pimpaka Towira, 2016), and *By the Time It Gets Dark* (Anocha Suwichakornpong, 2016), and how each of them offers an alternative vision of the country following the coups d'état and made it possible for us to rethink the subject of politics in Thai cinema, particularly at a time when political subjects are under the microscope of the authoritarian government.

Keywords: Thai independent cinema, politics, coup d'état

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Introduction

Since the coup d'état of 2006, followed by political conflicts and another coup in 2014, international audiences have paid much attention to Thai cinema and attempted to look at what these events have meant for the people living in the country, as evidenced by the visibility of Thai cinema at international film festivals. Although it was no isolated occurrence that Thai cinema, particularly the independent section, became the centre of attention at many international film festivals, it has happened concurrently with the rise of Southeast Asian independent cinema since the late 1990s and continuing into the 2000s. At the forefront are figures like Apichatpong Weerasethakul, with his feature-length debut *Mysterious Object at Noon* (1997), who paved the way for the second generation of independent filmmakers in Thailand and Southeast Asia, particularly after the coup d'état of 2006. The second generation of independent filmmakers, including Aditya Assarat, Anocha Suwichakornpong and Tanwarin Sukkhapisit, among others, all launched their careers after 2006. Assarat's first feature, *Wonderful Town* (2007), and Suwichakornpong's first feature, *Mundane History* (2009), were nominated for Tiger Awards at the International Film Festival of Rotterdam and shown at many other film festivals. Both films, as well as other independent films, have in one way or another discreetly conveyed a political context. The independent cinema has, then, become an alternative space for many filmmakers to voice their concern over political issues while mainstream cinema continues to churn out escapist films in the form of teen and horror films. These independent films made it possible for us to rethink the subject of politics in Thai cinema, particularly at a time when political subjects have been under the microscope of the authoritarian government following the coup d'état of 2014. Therefore, for this paper, I intend to examine the three films made after the 2014 coup d'état, particularly the most recent films, including *By the Time It Gets Dark* (Anocha Suwichakornpong, 2016), *The Island Funeral* (Pimpaka Towira, 2016), and *Motel Mist* (Prabda Yoon, 2016), how the political subjects have been explored during the time of the authoritarian government, and how they offer an alternative vision of the country following the coups d'état which differs from the notion of 'political film' in the 1970s.

Given the complexity of the political conflicts in Thailand, and the space allowed here, I intend to limit myself to a contextual background in order to explore the political implications of the contents represented in Thai cinema from the 1970s until today, and how political subjects have been at the centre of independent cinema amidst the political instability of the past ten years or so. In the final section I will look into the three films released after the 2014 coup d'état and during the authoritarian regime, and how they engage with politics to construct a new narrative enabling the traumatic past, memory, and previously excluded voices to be integrated.

Politics and Thai Cinema: political films of the 1970s to independent cinema

Politics and cinema have not mixed very well throughout the course of Thai history. They are two separate domains on which the authorities have long attempted to keep a border patrol. Despite the lack of overtly political films, it is still possible to identify some films as political in Thailand, as shown by Patsorn Sungsi's (2004) attempt to categorise Thai political films over different periods. Tracing Sungsi's categorisation through to recent independent cinema also shows that the term 'politics' can take on different meanings and forms at different times as Thailand

switched between authoritarian and democratic governments. I will demonstrate below how films changed during the 1970s-1990s and through to the more recent coup d'état, and how international factors have increasingly influenced the Thai film industry and the ways in which the filmmakers express themselves.

Sungsri uses significant political events to divide the political influences on cinema into three decades: the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. The 1970s were marked by the events known as 'October 14', which took place in 1973 and set in motion political conflicts that have lasted to this day. Given the complexity of the political conflicts of the 1970s, and the space allowed here, I intend to limit myself to a contextual background in order to explore the political implications of the contents represented in Thai cinema from that period until today.

The 'October 14' incident resulted from a series of confrontations between university students and the government, which finally led to a mass student demonstration demanding democracy from General Marshall Thanom Kittikachorn. Eventually, the demonstration led to a bloodshed at Thammasat University on 14th October 1973, during which many protesters, mostly university students, died. The incident caused General Marshall Thanom Kittikajorn to flee the country. In the wake of these events, under the interim government, a period of much desired freedom and political consciousness followed and spread among the new generations, prompting an outburst of political activities from different groups of people ranging from labourers and farmers to student movements. However, the freedom was short-lived as the two sides gathered momentum while witnessing the collapse of the monarchy in Laos and Cambodia. General Marshall Thanom Kittikajorn was readmitted to the country amidst the anger of relatives of those killed in 1973. The protest gathered pace to demand the expulsion of General Marshall Thanom Kittikajorn, eventually leading to the mobilisation of both groups and ending in the massacre of 6th October 1976, known as the '6th October' incident in which a number of students at Thammasat University were killed.

These two incidents, '14th October' 1973 and '6th October' 1976, and the political climate of the 1970s, marked the birth of the so-called political films in Thailand, with the new generation's political consciousness being raised to a new awareness both in the period leading up to and in the aftermath of the 1973 incident. Within this context emerged a kind of socially engaged film, known as '*nang sathorn sangkhom*' (literally translated as social reflection films) or by some called '*nang pua chiwit*' (literally translated as film of life), among many young filmmakers wishing to portray the social problems faced by ordinary people, particularly farmers, labourers and urban migrants, and especially on the subject of injustice and inequality in Thai society. This was evident during the years 1973-1976, with creative freedom at its peak despite the coup d'état of 1976 to take over the government that had committed the atrocities at Thammasat University, and with the harsh censorship once again in place. During this period, as suggested by William J. Klausner (1993), the new group of filmmakers had made a departure from the films of the past, not only in terms of content but also in terms of form (p. 337). The filmmakers of this generation, many of whom had grown up during the authoritarian government and political upheavals, '*sought new faces and treated contemporary themes with frankness; avoided complicated and irrelevant subplots; discarded comedy and violence when not*

relevant to the storyline and used improved editing and photographic techniques' (Klausner, 1993, p. 337).

While the period of freedom between 1973-1976 created a new direction in mainstream cinema, the coup d'état of 1976 changed the situation by driving political subjects underground. Such films as *Tong Pan (Isan Group)*, 1976), *Prachachon Nok (On the Fringe of Society)*, Manop Udomdej, 1978) and *Karn Torsu Khong Kammakorn Ying Rong-ngan Hara (The Hara Women Labourers' Struggle)*, produced by Joh Eungparkorn, 1976) are not commercially mainstream films as the post-1976 political atmosphere and the censorship forced films that directly engaged with politics to be made independently and in the underground. These films were seen among left-wing university students and activists instead of being shown on mainstream cinema screens. For Example, *Prachachon Nok* is also about farmers and the injustices they were subjected to, whether by corrupt officials or middlemen. These underground films are also close to Sungsi's (2004) definition of 'Third Cinema'. According to Mike Wayne (2001), Third Cinema aims to explore the process "whereby people who have been oppressed and exploited become conscious of that condition and determine to do something about it" (p.1). It is this quality which made the three films different from previous social realist films.

From the end of the 1970s, there was a period of gradual democratization of Thai politics, uninterrupted by coups as the two attempted in 1981 and 1985 failed (Tamada, 1995, p. 1). It was therefore 1980s a period in which Thailand steadily progressed in economic terms. Yet another successful coup d'état was staged in 1991 by General Sujinda Kraprayoon, who took over power from the elected government of Chatchai Choonhavan (1988-1991), leading to a pause in the democratic development of the country. According to Ubonrat Siriyuvasak (2000), in 1992 the rising middle classes joined with the workers and other lower classes to protest against the non-elected Prime Minister General Sujinda Kraprayoon (p.100). The protest turned into what is known as *Pruspa Tamin* or *Black May Incident*, which ended in another bloodshed. This once again drove any political film subjects underground. This time, the political films no longer circulated among the left wing but among the middle classes instead. In the aftermath of Black May 1992, there have been many films relating to the incident, particularly in short form. However, it was not until Apichatpong Weerasethakul's *Mysterious Objects at Noon* that the possibility opened up for independent films to emerge. *Mysterious Objects at Noon* was funded mainly by the International Film Festival of Rotterdam's Hubert Bals Fund and was screened at international film festivals.

The platform of political subjects has then moved from the underground to international venues. The international film festival has offered a space for independent films, particularly during times of coups d'état, and allowed them to rethink the subject of politics. After the last coup d'état of 1992, the country's economy changed with the continuous rise of the middle classes in the global financial markets, which led to their political power in the 2000s. Boosted by the first civilian businessman to become Prime Minister, Thaksin Shinawatra (2001-2006), the middle classes have become even more active participants in politics. With its base in the northeast areas known for the lowest incomes, "the pluto-populist regime of Thaksin overreached itself politically, alienated and antagonised the middle class and other elite groups" (Prasertsuk, 2007, p. 893). Many allegations, ranging from

corruption to lèse-majesté, culminated in the last straw of a conflict of interest and abuse of power when Shinawatra's company failed to pay tax on the sale of his business to a Singapore company, and led to a mass protest which eventually resulted in a peaceful coup d'état in 2006. The period afterwards was filled with political conflicts between Shinawatra's supporters and the royalist middle-class. After several governments took turn to run the country, amidst the continued political conflicts, another coup d'état would soon take place to end the conflict in 2014.

Re-Defining Thai Political Films in the Context of Transnational Cinema after the Coup d'état

In rethinking the subject of politics in film, philosophers such as Alain Badiou and Jacques Rancière provide productive ways of understanding the new Thai cinema after the coups d'état of 2006 and 2014, as well as the trends evident at international film festivals. Rancière attempts to demonstrate that 'art' and 'politics' cannot be in different spheres, as politics inherently incorporates an aesthetic dimension, and vice versa. He suggests the term 'aesthetic regime of the arts'. In the aesthetic regime of the arts, "artworks can produce effects of dissensus precisely because they neither give lessons nor have any destination". Rancière (2010) argues that "art and politics each define a form of dissensus, a dissensual re-configuration of the common experience of the sensible" which is at the heart of the 'aesthetic regime of the arts' (p. 140). As further suggested by Martin O'Shaughnessy (2007), Rancière's work plays a central role in understanding that:

The radical cinema cannot simply seek to represent contemporary reality, to be 'realist,' no matter how dark the tones that it employs. It must bring disagreement over the order of things to the surface, defining the dominated not by their subordination but by their capacity to challenge it while pushing its audience back towards a politics (p.4).

In a way, the aesthetic regime of the arts opened up the possibility of new forms of political subjectivation that are not confined only within the fictional story but extend to the audience's sensory perceptions (Lerma, 2013, p. 100). For Badiou (2004), as he writes in 'Fifteen Theses on Contemporary Art':

...the question of art today is a question of political emancipation, there is something political in art itself. There is not only a question of art's political orientation, like it was the case yesterday, today it is a question in itself. Because art is a real possibility to create something new against the abstract universality that is globalization (p. 107).

Moreover, Badiou (2008) argues that 'ideas in art do not so much carry a judgement upon the world as they indicate the point from which the world could be transfigured' (p. 7). Alex Ling (2011) further suggests that:

This transfiguration is, however, accomplished in a very particular way. Not, as we have seen, through a process of identification – this being the common failure of many ostensible 'political' films, where the supposedly political idea at work ultimately rests on some trite variation of 'respect for the other' – but rather through a subtle, quasi-Mallarmean process of revelation, a process less

political than ‘pre-political,’ involving the ‘bringing to light’ of a site of political possibility, a space in which politics might come to be (181).

In response to the above discussion of the relationship between ‘art’ and ‘politics’, which sheds some light on the relationship between ‘art cinema’ and political subjects, I will take a closer look at the three films in question here: *By the Time It Gets Dark* (Anocha Suwichakornpong, 2016), *The Island Funeral* (Pimpaka Towira, 2016), and *Motel Mist* (Prabda Yoon, 2016). The films after the 2014 coup d’état can be said to have more directly engaged with political subjects - for instance, the three films in question here. These films were mainly made with international audiences in mind, and they were produced at the height of a period of crisis, when a coup d’état was looming large. Most of the independent films needed at least two or three more years to complete. The three films I look at here have one thing in common, as they chose to make reference to the discourse of ‘power’ and how to ‘resist’ that power in different ways. Starting with *By the Time It Gets Dark* - in Thai entitled *Dao Khanong* (literally “shooting stars” but here referring to a Bangkok suburb) - the film engages with the political incidents of 6th October 1976, which still traumatises the nation to this day, in particular the generation who witnessed and participated in the incidents. Few mainstream films have inquired into the events because of the censorship, but one film that did directly engage with the incidents of 14th October was *Moonhunter* (*14 Tula Songkhram Prachachon*, Bhandit Rittakol, 2001), a mainstream film made by Five Stars Studio. The film tells the story of a student uprising in October 1973 and the journey of Seksan Prasertkul, a well-known student leader, from the site of the 14th October incidents to the jungle in order to join the communists. Prasertkul himself wrote the screenplay for the film. However, the film focuses on the characters of Seksan and his then girlfriend rather than on the incidents themselves.

By the Time it Gets Dark is Suwichakornpong’s second film. His debut film, *Mundane History*, won the Tiger Award at the International Film Festival of Rotterdam, known to prefer films with an experimental edge, as also favoured by critics (Valck, 2005, p. 100). Along the same lines as *Mundane History*, *By the Time it Gets Dark* was experimentally handled in a complicated and cryptic narrative, starting with a staged scene of protesters being captured while we hear a woman’s voice shouting ‘Be more brutal,’ ‘Kick them if you want.’ The scene ends with a staged photograph of a soldier standing over victims perhaps as a reminder of the only evidence left from the 6th October incidents that people remember. It is perhaps the only evidence, film footage and photographs, besides the people who were involved, that Thai people need to connect the dots for themselves of what happened at the site of the incidents, as the incidents were not allowed to be included in textbooks or freely discussed in the media.



Figure 1: By the Time it Gets Dark

The film then centres on the filmmaker, Ann, who is on the process of writing a script about the incidents in October 1976. Ann conducts interviews with a former leader of the student movement, Taew, in a country house, trying to grasp the reality of those past incidents, while we also see events such as a visit to a mushroom farm, walking in the woods and possible hallucinations. The film then moves to another character, Peter, supposedly a worker on a tobacco farm, and we are shown the tobacco-making process. We then realise that Peter is an actor and that the previous scene on the tobacco farm was a fiction within a fiction. The film then fuses other actor characters with Ann and Taew in a repeated scene where she is showing him around the country house. Another young university student appears in scenes of past events leading up to 6th October, and we are not certain whether these are scenes from Taew's memories, or something unrelated. What is clear is that the director's intention is to question the boundaries between fiction and what is real, particularly in relation to the past, in this case the incidents of 6th October. The narrative cannot be connected smoothly but instead unfolds in Mallarmean style, leaving cracks open to a variety of interpretations by the audience. Along the lines of thought of Rancière and Badiou, the film becomes a space of possibility and of dissent, where logic has dissolved and scenes do not add up. The political incidents of 1976 have become one big jigsaw of various characters, of facts and fictions, of different generations of the past and the present. According to Bo Stråth (2007), "*history is thus not free evolution but the creative ordering of the past, or in the language of today, construction*" (p. 28). Stråth further writes:

In the processes of history construction, the idea of a collective memory and a specific history is a tool that bridges the gap between high political and intellectual levels and the levels of everyday life. What constitutes collective memory and what is consigned to collective oblivion, that is, taboos and what we do not talk about, is a highly disputed question, reflecting power relations in the definition of social problems (p. 28-29).

It is this creative ordering that Suwichakornpong handles in relation to the traumatic incidents of 6th October as a way of bringing to light what she considers 'collective oblivion' and what could be seen as trivial or unimportant, such as the growing mould

in the bread and fungi in the mushrooms. History is often considered an instrument for propagating ideology through a meaningful narration of the past, and Suwichakornpong wants to call into question this very idea. As Ann tells Taew, “You’re living history,” “Your life is meaningful, whereas me, I appropriate someone else’s life and turn it into a film”. Taew responds, “I’m not living history. I’m a survivor.” It is not only history that is being called into question but also memory, truth, politics and, more importantly, the power inherent in the construction of all these elements.



Figure 2: Island Funeral

By the Time it Gets Dark deals with the politics of time, the fragments of time portrayed by each character, who can also be seen as political agents or, in the words of a character in the film, a ‘living history’, each competing with the others to occupy a meaningful space in the history. The past, present and future compete in the narrative to construct their own story. *Island Funeral*, (Thai title: *Mahasamut Lae Sasaan* literally meaning The Ocean and the Cemetery), on the other hand, deals with geopolitics. It depicts a current situation of conflict in three provinces in the southernmost part of Thailand where Muslim separatists and the military often clash. The film is a road journey undertaken by Laila, her brother Zugood, and her brother’s friend to Pattani, one of the Muslim-dominated provinces involved in separatist insurgence. Their aim is to visit Laila’s aunt whom she has not seen since childhood. They get lost along the way, with much time spent on finding the location of her aunt’s small village. At the beginning of the film, in the dark of night, the news on the radio reports on the protests in Bangkok and the violence in the south. Laila suddenly stops the car, thinking she has seen a naked woman in chains. She decides to get out of the car despite the protests of the two men inside as fear sets in. Laila is not certain of what she saw, and neither is the audience. The mood of the film acquires mysterious/mystical overtones as it increasingly moves into unknown territory. No clues are provided as to where the locations are to avoid creating a feeling of familiarity in the audience. Most of the film is spent on trying to find a village that is increasingly felt as non-existent. The characters are guided by a stranger who finally seems to find the place, but there is no village left except for a battered signpost and a boat waiting by the shore to take them further. In the last part of the

film, after a long boat trip, they finally reach an island set in the deep jungle by night. With its own traditions and a mixture of people of different races and classes, the island becomes symbolic of a utopia. Michel Foucault (1986), in *Of Other Spaces*, suggests that our society comprises two kinds of spaces: utopia and heterotopia. For him, utopia is a site with no real space as “they present society itself in a perfected form, or else society turned upside down, but in any case these utopias are fundamentally unreal spaces” (p.27). He uses a mirror as an example of utopia, since it is a placeless place:

In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent: such is the utopia of the mirror (p. 27).

While heterotopias can be located in reality, Foucault describes them as spaces that “suspend, neutralise, or invert the set of relationships that they designate” (p. 27). The island is more or less a utopia where Laila was hoping to rediscover her roots, despite barely remembering anything about it and the possibility that it is actually no longer there. The island, in its perfection of beautiful houses filled with music, arts, idealism and freedom is in fact on the verge of collapse, as young boys are continuously dying and funerals have become a common occurrence. The film urges the audience to rethink the politics of space in various dimensions, not only as places defined by the borders of nation-states, but in terms of religions, classes, and the ideological space where the polarisation between people has been ever present in Thai society, as in the case of the Yellow Shirts and Red Shirts over the past decade or so.

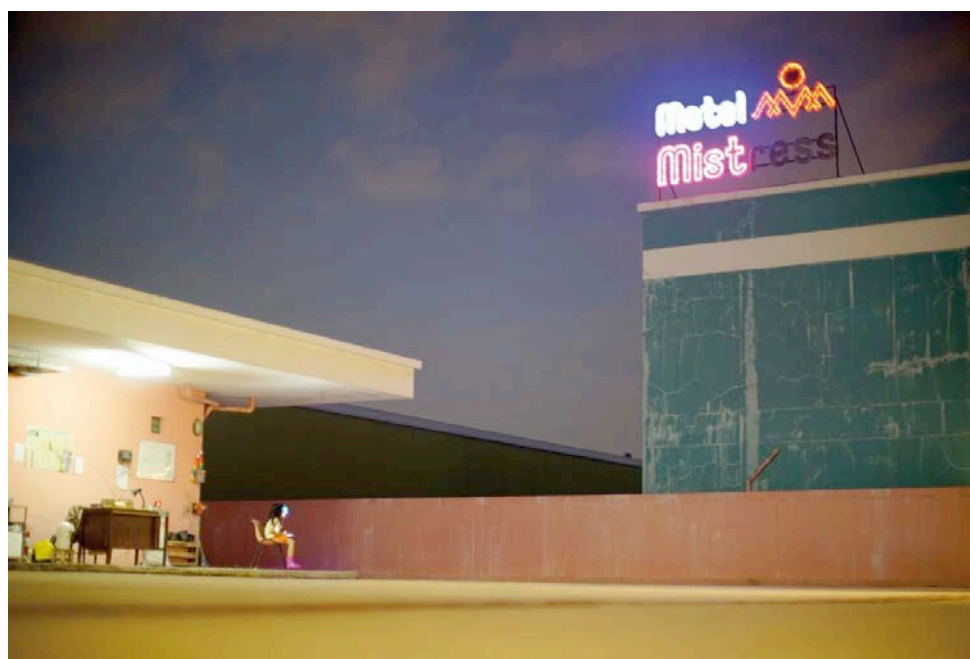


Figure 3: Motel Mist

Last but not least, *Motel Mist* (Thai title: *Rongram Tang Dao*, literally meaning ‘alien hotel’) is a film that directly addresses the abuse of power over the powerless, echoing the relationship between authorities and citizens. *Motel Mist* is rather different stylistically from the above two films as it uses style to the point of fantasy instead of

a more realistic mode of representation. The film centres on a love motel in which we find five characters: Tul, an ex-star who believes he can communicate with aliens; Sopol, an older man who comes with Laila, a young student; Laila's friend; and the motel caretaker. The abuse of power is obvious and exerted to the point of absurdity in the case of Sopol and Laila. Laila's body, in her student uniform, has become a space of invasion by various tools that Sopol, who represents a figure of authority, uses on it.

In the scenes between Sopol and Laila, he orders her to wear various uniforms, after which he goes back to her student uniform, ties her up and orders her to do as he pleases, such as holding a glass of whiskey on her chest and going through various acts of eroticised violence in exchange for money. In submitting to Sopol's sexual fantasies, Laila could be seen as cooperating with the dominant ideology. Moreover, Elizabeth Cowie (1997) argues that "*fantasy as a mise en scene of desire is more a setting out of lack, of what is absent, than a presentation of a having, a being present*" (p. 133). Fantasy is then a setting of desire, according to Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis□

By the excessive use of power on Laila's body, Sopol can be seen as acting out of lack, out of insecurity. If the Sopol character represents an authoritarian figure, with his choice of uniform bearing a similarity to those in authority, it could be seen as a fear of losing their hold over power, as the country was undergoing a transitional crisis with an unknown future ahead at the time of the filming and release of the film, and using their power to excess, particularly on the docile bodies of women. The film successfully links patriarchal authority to sexual frustration.

Conclusion

This paper attempts to demonstrate the ways in which the independent cinema has reappropriated political subjects after the coup d'état of 2014, through films such as *By the Time It Gets Dark* (Anocha Suwichakornpong, 2016), *The Island Funeral* (Pimpaka Towira, 2016), and *Motel Mist* (Prabda Yoon, 2016). In the first part I have tried to contextualize the way in which politics, particularly coups d'état, have related to filmic representation from the 1970s, when political awareness was at its height, through to the present time, with independent cinema emerging in a transnational era where film festivals function as an alternative source of funding and exhibiting. Since the 2006 coup d'état, Thai politics has been beset by constant conflict, leading to violence and ultimately the coup d'état in 2014. After the 2014 coup and the ensuing authoritarian military government, independent films have become an alternative space for filmmakers to voice their concerns. Instead of going underground like the 'political films' of the 1970s, independent films have found their main audience abroad through international film festivals. The three films examined here were made at a time of political crisis and released after the 2014 coup d'état. These films contain direct political messages that differ from those of the 1970s, when underground political films predominated on the subject of inequality among farmers and workers, as well as social realist films. The three films I have looked at combine the form and styles of art cinema with political subjects that are no longer concerned with inequality, as in the 1970s, but focus instead on middle-class interests. The three films urge us to rethink political subjects in different ways. *By the Time It Gets Dark* gives a new treatment to the nation's traumatic political incidents of 6th October 1976

while questioning various aspects of the political events themselves, whether their construction of history, memory or truth. *The Island Funeral* implies the larger-scale geopolitics of the nation, borders and identity. And in *Motel Mist*, authoritative figures are directly presented in the game of sexual desire and body politics. All in all, these three films are preoccupied with middle-class issues such as identity, in an attempt to understand one's own history and roots, which make *By the Time It Gets Dark* and *The Island Funeral* distinctly depart from the political and social realist films of the 1970s.

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The Dependence on International Film Festivals of Thai Independent Cinema

Peerachai Kerdsint, Bangkok University, Thailand

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Abstract

The essay explores and critically looks at the process of independent filmmaking in Thailand, examines various factors affecting the subject matter and aesthetic choices of Thai independent filmmakers, and how this plays an important part in the whole process of independent filmmaking. The paper explores the various strategies employed by Thai independent filmmakers to achieve an 'independent' or alternative/minority status for films targeted at a new audience, the emergent urban middle class who look to the West and aspire to change their own cultural environment, and place the film in the context of international film festivals. The strategies include the use of de-dramatisation, experiments with structure, the use of fragmented and non-linear stories are among the various tools employed in these films. The strategy known as 'slow cinema' has been evident in many films, as well as the Western thinking which supports this concept

Keywords: Thai Cinema, Independent Cinema, Film Festival

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Introduction

During the last ten years, films from Southeast Asia have increased their presence at major international film festivals. Filmmakers such as Apichatpong Weerasethakul (Thailand), Lav Diaz and Raya Martin (The Philippines), Tan Chui Mui (Malaysia), Martyn See (Singapore), Nia Diata and Riri Riza (Indonesia) have all raised their profiles in the same way that many East Asian filmmakers did in the 1990s. Many of these films and filmmakers are being associated with the term 'independent cinema', a usage that has gained popularity since the late 1990s and describes a new tendency in mode of production and distribution that has proliferated across the globe.

Over recent years, there have been many contributing factors to the increase in independent filmmakers and the growing popularity of independent cinema among urban socialites in Thailand. In the 1990s, the first wave of Thai films that highlighted Thai filmmaking in international venues included films by Nonzee Nimitbutr, Pen-ake Rattanaarueng, and Wisit Satsanatieng. Interestingly, their first breaks came just a few months before Thailand, along with the rest of Asia, experienced an economic breakdown in 1997. They are known as the so called Thai New Wave. All three filmmakers have similar backgrounds in commercial work and they brought this sensibility to the film industry, which at the time was being overwhelmed by formula-driven Thai teen flicks and horror films. Though many have argued that the Thai New Wave marked the beginning of independent Thai filmmaking, there was also another group of filmmakers who worked outside the studio system. In the same year, 1997, Ing Kanchanawanich made *My Teacher Eats Biscuits*, a feature film using 16 mm. The film was entirely self-funded. Another important director's debut film, Weerasethakul's *Mysterious Object at Noon* (2000) was partially made with his own money and also received funding from the Hubert Bals Fund from the Rotterdam Film Festival. Weerasethakul works exclusively as an independent filmmaker. *Mysterious Objects at Noon*, with its experimental nature, immediately set him apart from the rest of his colleagues at the time. His unique and alternative approach to filmmaking, along with his successful debut in the international film festival circuit, also influenced many filmmakers of the younger generation to follow in his footsteps and carve out careers outside the world of the film studios. His follow-up film, *Blissfully Yours* (2002), won the Un Certain Regard prize at the Cannes Film Festival and was also a great inspiration for many.

Over the last few years, new directors such as Aditya Assarat and Anocha Suwichakornpong have made their feature debuts. Their film projects were partially self-funded as well as receiving funding from sources outside the industry and the country. Both features, *Wonderful Town* (2006) and *Mundane History* (2009), were successful in the international film festival circuit. The mode of production of Thai independent filmmaking has gradually changed since 1997, due significantly to the new group of directors. Filmmakers' backgrounds have influenced the way in which they approach filmmaking. The first group of filmmakers came largely from backgrounds in commercial work. Their films leaned towards genre film and marketability. The later generation of filmmakers, Weerasethakul, Assarat and Suwichakornpong included, with a background of foreign education, are focusing more on world cinema trends and aesthetics as they depend largely on foreign support and success to sustain their careers. Given the limited resource of foreign funding, the films have to specifically match the taste of foreign investors. The film then needs

to conform to the microscopic vision of each film festival and its attached funding schemes. In general, festival films are different from those in general distribution and tend to be non-studio-produced, lower budget, serious films or in a way similar to those with the label 'art house' or 'art cinema' (Wong, 2011, p.5).

According to Marijke de Valck (2007), the festivals are appropriated the notions of auteur and new waves as a strategic discourse (p.175). In order to differentiate themselves, their main task became to present the contemporary condition of world cinema to the world and become institutions of discovery. With the increasing number of new film festivals, the pressure to make new discoveries, once generated by the archetypal French New Wave, was also growing (Valck, 2007, p.175). The 1980s brought about the second set of new waves from, among others, Taiwan, West Africa, Spain, Ireland, New Zealand, Iran and China. However, the excitement for the 'new' or 'discoveries' for the audience, as Rosaline Galt and Karl Schoonover (2010) suggest, is not located in director, star or nationality, but is constructed as a similar pleasure to that of previous 'new' art cinemas. The question of which national cinemas are brought into the film festival, and at what historical juncture, has also been raised by Galt and Schoonover (2010), where they suggest that it correlates to structures of uneven development and postcolonial power (p.13).

In turn, the 'discovery' films and filmmakers started to differentiate film festivals from each other as many began to search further in the developing countries. Most of the time, the two primary processes of finding a source of funding and securing distribution for a film are closely linked, particularly in today's situation where many film festivals have created their own funding schemes. Film festivals are often involved in both production and distribution of the film. From financial schemes to film market, film festivals are eager to compete in the discovery of new talent. With its own CineMart launched in 1984, followed by the Hubert Bals Funds (HBF) in 1988, Rotterdam has become one of the primary funding sources for many Asian filmmakers. Additionally, the Busan Film Festival set up currently known as the Asian Cinema Fund – has also been focusing on Asian projects. Therefore, many Southeast Asian filmmakers have relied on these funding schemes and indirectly the film festivals have become involved in the process of production through to distribution. Once a film project receives funding from a given festival, the usual requirement is that the film is screened at the festival as well.

A film festival such as the International Film Festival Rotterdam, with a strong reputation for bringing in new films from Asia to Europe, has become a platform for many new filmmakers from Asia, and Southeast Asia in particular. The Rotterdam Film Festival and its Hubert Bals Fund (HBF) and CineMart have become major sources of funding for a few independent Thai filmmakers in the past few years. The objective of its Hubert Bals Fund is rather clear, as it is designed to support *"filmmakers from developing countries whose films are formally innovative, shed new light on their countries of origin, and/or contribute to the improvement of the local film industries"* (Valck, 2007, p.180). This is the case for many Thai independent films/filmmakers, where the Rotterdam Film Festival has been used as a platform to carve out their careers in both international and national venues. Many filmmakers are dependent on both the funding for a chance to get their films made, and on the International Film Festival screening their films to have a further chance of international distribution.

The Rotterdam Film Festival has been a landmark for Thai independent cinema. With the recent win by Nilthamrong's *Vanishing Point* (2015) of the Hivos Tiger Award at the 44th International Film Festival Rotterdam — the fourth win by Thai filmmakers — it is undeniable that a 'certain' kind of films favoured by the Rotterdam Film Festival has set the tone for Thai independent cinema. Starting with the first Hivos Tiger Award winners, including Aditya Assarat's *Wonderful Town* in 2008, followed by Anocha Suwichakornpong's *Mundane History* in 2010, Sivaroj Kongsakul's *Eternity* in 2011, and the Fipresci Award for Urupong Raksasad's *Songs of Rice* in 2014, the Rotterdam Film Festival has become well-known among Thai art cinema goers. Weerasethkul's first experimental feature film, *Mysterious Object at Noon*, was a recipient of the Hubert Bals Fund in 2000. This was the first opportunity for a Thai film to receive funding from the Hubert Bals Fund and opened the door to other new Thai directors. With its experimental edge and innovative storytelling, *Mysterious Object at Noon* set the standard for the kind of films that would be given attention by European funders. With the film festival's influence over Thai independent filmmakers, 'independent' cinema — or 'indie' cinema, as it is called by Thais — it is undeniable that a certain kind of films, favouring a personal point of view and often experimental in style, which relating to the International Film Festival Rotterdam are preferred by the filmmakers.

To trace a certain trend, the statements issued each year for the winners of the Hivos Tiger Award have made it clear what kind of films are desired and cherished by film festivals. With the recent win by Nilthamrong's *Vanishing Point*, the International Film Festival of Rotterdam issued the statement:

Vanishing Point (Jakrawal Nilthamrong) combines and juxtaposes image and sound to create a powerful style. It grapples with ideas and story-telling in a provoking and different way, making it a visceral cinematic experience (www.iffir.com/professionals/press/press-releases-2014-2015/iffir-2015-awards-announced2/).

Assarat's *Wonderful Town* was commended for its 'amazing imaging through the film and a fresh perspective on the disaster of the Tsunami'. While the statement for Suwichakornpong's *Mundane History* was as follows:

For us this film appeals to both intelligence and spirituality. We are impressed with the accomplished interplay of abstract ideas and harrowing reality in this film (www.iffir.com/professionals/the_festival/news-archive/tiger_award_winner_2008/).

Last but not least, Sivaroj Kongsakul's *Eternity*, produced by Aditya Assarat and Soros Sukhum, and supported by the Hubert Bals Fund, received the following statement:

With a great sense of cinematic duration, this film builds its own universe, finding its own pacing, so consistently, to tell its particular story. A film that seems on the surface to be about death but which is really about love, a beautiful and delicate love story (www.iffir.com/en/films/tee-rak/).

From the above statements, it becomes clear that a certain trend of experimenting with cinematic space and time, such as the slow pacing of the film, visual style and abstract ideas in order to create a new cinematic experience, has been preferred by the festival. This trend has been forged among Thai filmmakers following the path set by the International Film Festival Rotterdam. Valck (2007) points out that from the start, the International Film Festival Rotterdam, or in 1972 known as Film International Rotterdam, was already being described as 'super experimental' (p.163). The characteristics of the festival emerged as a consequence of the preferences of its founder, Huub Bals, whose taste lay in art cinema and experimental works.

There are also other funding schemes, mainly in Europe, that Thai filmmakers received the funding, for example, Fonds Sud, supported by France, the Swiss fund *visions sud est*, launched by the Foundation *trigon-film* Baden and the Fribourg Film Festival, in collaboration with Nyon's *Visions du Reel* and the support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. It supports film productions from Asia, Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe. Although the funds provided by these different funding schemes are not large sums of money compared to the money needed to complete a film in Europe, it is quite a large sum for the recipients' countries. While the amount may not be sufficient to complete the film, it could make a difference to many filmmakers. The aim of lending support to developing countries and countries with emerging economies is well-intentioned, but there is also a questionable side. As noted by Hing-Yuk Wong (2011), in 2007 the World Cinema Fund awarded a total sum of 230,000 euros to five projects from Argentina, Angola, Colombia, Israel, and Iran, countries in the midst of critical international affairs as well as at the centre of cinematic politics (p.150). It could be said that in a way it is the festival, with the official support of each European government, intentionally making a statement in an international arena, taking a special interest in internal affairs, and in some cases opposing the official discourse of each country. In the case of Iran, for example, the filmmaker Jafar Panahi was sentenced to six years in prison in 2010 and banned from making films for 20 years for making 'anti-government propaganda', while many others have been placed under house arrest. Many of these Iranian filmmakers are funded from the UK, France or Germany. In many cases, films supported by the funding schemes are being banned, and in some cases, by deliberately focusing on certain subjects or images, have fueled the interest of the international press and international film festivals. As suggested by Hing-Yuk Wong (2011), in the case of the People's Republic of China, a certain imagery pointing to the repressive regime is favoured by the festivals; or in Malaysia, certain films made by ethnic Chinese can be looked upon as festival favourites because of their anti-mainstream Malay and anti-Muslim cultural stances (p.157). The evidence can be seen in the films of Tan Chui Mui, a Chinese ethnic filmmaker whose films have been funded by the Hubert Bals Fund and *visions sud est* and have been successfully shown in film festivals. The film festivals, in a way, could be seen as an alternative space or counter-space to national politics.

Therefore, Thai independent cinema, due to its dependence on Western patrons in terms of sources of funding, has more relevance in an international/transnational context rather than the local Thai film industry when it comes to exhibiting and distributing. Although the films are based on local elements, they are part of the international aesthetic of 'art cinema', which is often favoured by film festivals, as demonstrated above, through the selection of Thai films by the International Film

Festival of Rotterdam. They are affirmatively forming part of the ‘transnational institution of art’ where film festivals have taken a key role in indicating the choice of aesthetics, form and stories.

Further Notes on Subject Matter and Aesthetics in Thai Independent Cinema:

A highly regarded Thai film scholar, points out that Weerasethakul’s *Blissfully Yours* (2002) became the foundation for a truly underground cinema emerging alongside the many changes in Thai society and the globalisation that has crept into it. Besides the fact that the film was funded by foreign sources and co-produced by a foreign company there are also factors which make *Blissfully Yours* significantly different. Apart from the film’s minimal narrative style and long static shots, the subject is also important as it is about marginal people: in this case, the main characters are a Burmese illegal immigrant and a factory girl living along the border. the film features an ambiguous sexual identity in relation to the characters, which might be interpreted as bisexuality, and that female characters are portrayed as ‘predators’ rather than ‘victims’ in terms of the sexual desires explicitly shown in the film.

The issue of sexuality has formed part of public discourse over the past decade or so. The subject of sexuality, particularly those aspects previously relegated to the margins, such as homosexuality, never before seen in Thai cinema, has become one of the important features of Thai independent films. It makes a departure from the Thai New Wave and directors such as Nonzee Nimitbutr, Pen-ake Rattanaeng, and Wisit Satsanatieng. Referring to Nimitbutr’s *Nang Nak*, Fuhrmann (2009) suggests:

In the context of contemporary Buddhist-inflected efforts to reinvigorate Thainess, femininity bears some of the burden of organizing claims to coherent national identity. In contemporary cinema, I argue, the ghost, a distressed version of Thai femininity, emerges precisely at the moment when the heretofore dominant form of femininity - that of selectively westernized, globalized, and economically startlingly productive femininity - had partially “exhausted” its effectiveness.

Instead of conforming to the view of Thai femininity as the fulfilment of wifely duties or women appearing as ‘ghosts’ or a ‘distressed version of femininity’, independent cinema attempted to represent a multiplicity of sexualities. The previously oppressed desire has found its way into this group of films to emerge not as a distressed version but rather, as Fuhrmann writes in regard to Weerasethakul’s film *Tropical Malady* (2004), featuring a homosexual relationship: “homosexuality ambivalently haunts the political and aesthetic present in Thailand, on the surface primarily as a trope of diminution – as a thing that uniquely instantiates either cultural loss or minoritarian injury – but ultimately also as a figure of creative talent, potential economic productivity, and affective abundance” (p.142).

In addition to sexuality, ethnic minorities have also seen increased representation in Thai cinema, particularly after 1997. Films such as Weerasethakul’s *Blissfully Yours* (2002), as discussed previously, are certainly part of the new trope of representation found in other contemporary independent cinema. Since *Blissfully Yours*, films with the subject of sexual minorities have increased, including Weerasethakul’s *Tropical Malady*, and have been at the centre of attention, in particular the films of Tawarin

Sukkhapisit, a well-known transgender filmmaker. Sukkhapisit made his name with many short films before making his feature debut with *Insect in the Backyard* in 2010, about a transvestite father raising two children who are unable to accept their father as he is. It then became the first film to be censored by the Censorship Board under the new Motion Pictures and Video Act B.E. 2008, which uses a rating system for films. It seems that the law allows for a degree of flexibility in terms of some films being able to screen with a higher age rating, but there is the 'banned' category whereby a film can easily be banned and forbidden from being shown anywhere in the kingdom if deemed offensive to the monarchy or constitute a threat to national security or religion. Despite appeals from Sukhapisit, *Insect in the Backyard* has still been unable to be released in Thailand. The film sparked a renewed debate about homosexuality as well as about the new Censorship law.

The majority of independent films in Southeast Asia that have been shown at international film festivals have used the aesthetics that belong to the trend of world cinema at large. According to Tiago de Luca (2012), films such as those by Abbas Kiarostami (Iran), Apichatpong Weerasethkul (Thailand), Carlos Reygadas (Mexico), Bela Tarr (Hungary), Pedro Costa (Portugal), Lisandro Alonso (Argentina), Nuri Bilge Ceylan (Turkey), Tsai Ming-Liang (Taiwan), and Jia Zhangke (China) display a similar tendency towards a 'new realist aesthetics' (p.183). Luca suggests that they are "steeped in the hyperbolic application of the long take, which promotes a contemplative viewing experience anchored in materiality and duration" (Luca, 2012, p.8). Their extended focus is on material phenomena that can be translated into a phenomenological film experience (Luca, 2012, p.2). Luca proposes that semiotic systems alone are insufficient to justify cinema's impact and significance, and therefore it also needs to be somatically experienced. The above group of films of the so-called 'new realist aesthetics', Luca argues, produce a particular kind of sensory audiovisual experience, in which he believes the use of the long take is key to the sensory effect (Luca, 2012, p.9). He adds that "these cinemas whose contemplative-sensory mode of address is strictly premised on the viewing conditions of the theatrical experience" in a way constitute a response to the revolution in the technological development of the digital era, which often replaces the viewing experience restricted only to the private sphere of the home (Luca, 2011, p.24). It is also why these films go hand in hand with international film festivals, where the fact of being in the cinema, as well as possibly participating in a public discussion, is central to the film festival experience, unlike watching the small screen at home.

It is also in tune with what Ira Jaffe writes in his book *Slow Movies: Countering the Cinema of Action*. Jaffe (2014) argues that in the last three decades, what he calls 'slow movies' represent a style that has been embraced by cinephiles around the world (p.2). These movies, as Jaffe suggests, "are slow by virtue of their visual style, narrative structure and thematic content and the demeanour of their characters" (p.3). Jaffe gives a good description of certain traits in these films. He writes:

With respect to visual style, the camera often remains unusually still in these films, and when it moves, as it does persistently in Bela Tarr's work, it generally moves quite slowly. Curtailed as well is physical motion *in front of* the camera. Furthermore, editing or cutting in slow movies tends to be infrequent, which inhibits spatio-temporal leaps and disruptions. Not only do long takes predominate, but long shots frequently prevail over close-ups.

Consistent with these stylistic elements, which may distance and irritate the viewer, is the austere mise-en-scène: slow movies shun elaborate and dynamic décor, lighting and colour. Moreover, the main characters in these movies usually lack emotional, or at least expressive, range and mobility. Further, a bit like slow-movie characters, the plot and dialogue in the slow movies often gravitate towards stillness and death, and tend, in any case, to be minimal, indeterminate and unresolved (p.3)

In these films, slowness is an important element, as Song Hwee Lim (2012) further points out. With reference to Tsai Ming Liang's films, he elaborates on the 'aesthetics of slowness', as also seen in the aforementioned films. For Lim, the two important elements of slowness are 'stillness', where he refers to the use of static and long takes for shots that also feature stillness of diegetic action, and 'silence', which means the sparse use of sonic elements (p.90).

Blissfully Yours influenced many independent filmmakers of Weerasethakul's generation in a variety of ways, as it opened up new territory for filmic representation of marginality and the new political aesthetics, and enabled filmmakers to challenge the relationship between form and content. Both Weerasethkul's films and other independent films have certainly been influenced by transnational art cinema since the post-war European art cinema. Following the recent trend, as also seen in the above discussion, this group of independent films is substituting the classical narrative with the use of sensory exploration, opening up a space for marginality and making possible a variety of interpretations and questions. With Western academics supporting the new direction of cinema by talking and writing about it, Western tastes are firmly legitimised through international film festivals and the expansion of transnational art cinema.

Film festivals such as Cannes are particularly known for their controversial subject matter, including sex and violence, as well as pressing issues of current interest to the international media. According to Wong (2011), festival films are more often than not 'political' and embrace more controversial subject matter as they see the festival as a space of art, and art as freedom (p.89-90). Another characteristic of festival films are those "personal journeys in which the subject matters are quite devoid of any direct political or social contexts" (p.89). This seems to be one of the qualities of European art cinema. Many Thai independent films shown at European film festivals are fitted into these moulds in one way or another. In terms of subject matter, the independent filmmakers' concerns are focused on the subject of minorities on various levels, whether sexual, ethnic or political, as well as on the subject of personal memory and trauma.

Popular memory revolves around the private sphere of ordinary people and often counter the official history. The subject of personal memory is commonly used by the new generation of filmmakers. For example, Thamrongrattanarit's *36*, which captures the memory of a relationship in 36 shots, reminiscent of the 36 shots in a roll of film; Kongsakul's *Eternity*, about the memory of his parents' love story, told in three parts; Suwichakornpong's *Mundane History*, about the inner life of a paralysed boy trapped in his home; Somunjarn's *In April the Following Year, There was a Fire* (2012), a mixture of documentary and experimental film about the director's memory of his family; and *Cemetery of Splendour* (2015), which premiered in the competition

section at the 2015 Cannes Film Festival, about the director's memory of his hometown. These personal stories form a kind of 'look back to the future', which Gabriel (1989) suggests is necessarily dissident and partisan, wedded to constant change (p.54). It is a reassertion of the past where marginality and oppression find their rightful place.

Through the marginality of independent cinema, both in terms of subject matter and aesthetic choices, as well as their international sources of funding and exhibiting, an alternative version of 'Thainess' is offered, composed of personal memory and an unorthodox version of the nation, instead of the nationalistic viewpoint of a middle-class group with cultural-national aspirations to place itself on the global stage, and capture international attention. In particular, the majority of independent filmmakers who are educated in the West aim to attract Western audiences in order to escape the limited opportunities in their own countries, where commercialisation and Hollywoodisation are one and the same. Art cinema here is being used as a strategy, both for the filmmakers' survival in their own country and for a brand that will differentiate them from mainstream cinema and mass audiences.

Conclusion

In terms of subject matter, these films represent minority issues in various dimensions, including ethnicity, sexuality and political agendas. The personal themes of memory, death, dreams and internal conflicts serve to explore the larger context of society. As for their formal strategy, the filmmakers attempt to find a new form of storytelling, in line with European art films and transnational cinema. The use of de-dramatisation, experiments with structure, the use of fragmented and non-linear stories are among the various tools employed in these films. The strategy known as 'slow cinema' has been evident in many films, as well as the Western thinking which supports the concept. By using 'slow cinema', these films choose to distinguish themselves from the mass. They function on the periphery of the Thai film industry as far as revenue and distribution are concerned, and are mostly only available to a particular middle-class audience.

Independent cinema opens up a space for an emerging urban middle class who look to the West and aspire to change their own cultural environment. This is also the case of the new generation growing up alongside the expansion of international film festivals, which have sprung up in every major city in the world over the past two decades or so. Film festivals have become an ideal alternative space for the capitalist world, where films from all over the world are presented in such a way that they also offer an outlet for local audiences to participate in what is a global middle-class phenomenon. For these particular audiences, the films of international film festivals are needed in a world where liberalism clashes with the ideology of the nation state, and there is no real independence from capitalism.

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Lesbians (On Screen) Were not Meant to Survive

Federica Fabbiani, Independent Scholar, Italy

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Abstract

My paper focuses on the evolution of the image of the lesbian on the screen. We all well know what can be the role of cinema in the structuring of the personal and collective imaginary and hence the importance of visual communication tools to share and spread lesbian stories "even" with a happy ending. If, in the first filmic productions, lesbians inevitably made a bad end, lately they are also able to live 'happily ever after'. I do too believe that "cinema is the ultimate pervert art. It doesn't give you what you desire - it tells you how to desire" (Slavoy Žižek, 2006), that is to say that the lesbian spectator had for too long to operate a semantic reversal to overcome a performance deficit and to desire in the first instance only to be someone else, normal and normalized. And here it comes during the 2000s a commercial lesbian cinematography, addressed at a wider audience, which well interpret the actual trend, that most pleases the young audience (considering reliable likes and tweets on social networks) towards normality. It is still difficult to define precisely these trends: what would queer scholars say about this linear path toward a way of life that dares only to return to normality? No more eccentric, not abject, perhaps not even more lesbians, but 'only' women. Is this pseudo-normality (with fewer rights, protections, privileges) the new invisibility?

Keywords: Lesbianism, Lesbian cinema, Queer cinema, LGBT, Lesbian

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Introduction

I would try to trace how the representation of lesbians on screen has developed over time. We all know – and know all too well – just how cinema can structure both personal and collective consciousness, and so it becomes quite evident the vital importance of visual communication in sharing and distributing stories about lesbians. Even those with a happy ending. While lesbians in the early movies inevitably met a bad end (the grave or the hospital bed), they have recently been allowed to live happily ever after. As Slavoy Žižek (2006) justly observes, “cinema is the ultimate pervert art. It doesn’t give you what you desire. It tells you how to desire”, that is to say, for too long the lesbian viewer had to affect a kind of semantic reversal to overcome a performance deficit, just hoping, first and foremost, to be someone else, to be normal and normalized.

Clearly, a personal viewpoint emerges when any history of lesbian representation on film is given. To keep track of a lesbian themed filmography, in 2009 I made a website – *Leztrailer.it* – whose visual archive provide a useful indication of the changes that have occurred in the representation of lesbians on film from 1931 to the present day. *LezTrailer* accounts for this desirable feminine subjectivity by showing trailer and publishing synopses of films, documentaries, short films, TV series, yuri, web series: more than 400 titles to underline the richness of lesbian cinema. Search options (by title, gender, category, year or country of production, recurring keywords, etc) are multiple to allow nonlinear personal paths to add to the pleasure of unexpected and random discovery. From the website to a digital publication: at the beginning of 2017, I published also the e-book *Lesbian Visions* (Amazon, 2017), an original itinerary to understanding an unusual and profound imagination from the point of view of lesbian movie theory.

My own point of view has been shaped and informed by the growing number of lesbian movies, above all North American productions, which range from the tragic invert of the early years to the beautiful desirable woman of the 21st century. The latter represents a commercial lesbian cinema, aimed at an increasingly wide audience that is popular with younger audiences and reflects the current trend towards normalization. It is still difficult, however, to define such trends precisely: what would queer theorists say about this well-marked route towards a way of life that seems based on recouping a certain normality? No longer eccentric, no longer abject, and perhaps no longer lesbian, but simply a *woman*. Is this pseudo-normality (though with fewer rights, protection and privileges) a new invisibility?

The representation of ‘winning’ contemporary lesbian characters have emerged from a long history of negative ‘malestream’ lesbian portrayals. Until a few decades ago, lesbianism was either banned from the general film production/distribution or it was portrayed as a deplorable behavior out of pathological and mental disorder. Framed in this kind of unseemly setting, lesbianism, and homosexuality in general, was used as a way to strengthen the supremacy of heterosexuality, which, consequently, was not even challenged.

“While male homosexuality has been used in movies from the very beginning to elicit the spectators’ hilarity, the celluloid lesbian has been designed to cause revulsion and contempt, with a clear intent to keep women in their place” (Massa, 2007, 217). The

issue at stake is defining what is ‘masculine’ and what is not. For men, the ‘sissy’ has that characteristic weakness that belittles the traditional dominant male role and is the essence of a deviant sexuality; likewise, the ‘butch’ woman also reinforces the myth of male superiority, albeit in a gross way, as a poor imitation. The heterosexual matrix remains dominant and, as such, coercive, even though this can be presented in an indirect way, above all at the cinema: traditional power lines are drawn by pathologizing the deviant through an unequivocal process of reducing any possibility of otherness.

And it is this witch-hunt-type atmosphere that can be perceived when watching the first lesbian movie, *Girls in Uniform*, directed by Leontine Sagan in 1931. Adapted from the play *Yesterday and Today* by Christa Winsloe, who also wrote the screenplay, the movie tells of a girl who falls in love with her teacher at a German all-girls boarding school in Potsdam in the 1930s. Written, directed, produced and performed by women, the film attracted controversy both in Germany, where the Nazis tried to burn all copies, and in the USA, where it was heavily censored until Eleanor Roosevelt herself intervened. Although totally ignored by mainstream cinema audiences, Sagan’s film enjoyed a greater success than many later, equally worthy, films, winning a prize at the 1932 Venice Film Festival. However, it then disappeared into the Nazi darkness, until Géza I. von Radanyi’s 1958 remake starring Romy Schneider and Lilli Palmer. It was then freely adapted by Katherine Brooks in her 2006 movie *Annabelle*. In contrast to what happens in Winsloe’s play (written during the Weimar Republic when Winsloe herself had left her husband and was living openly as a lesbian), the Manuela of *Girls in Uniform* does not commit suicide. In fact she manages to avoid that particular death sentence – the traditional fate of the lesbian in the early years of cinema. At least this is true as far as the German version is concerned, before all copies of the movie were burnt and its Jewish director Leontine Sagan was forced to escape Nazi Germany along with Erika Mann and others in the same group of artists. In contrast, the two distributors in the United States that had bought the film, changed the ending for American audiences in accordance with the Hays Office. Following the Hays Code, the well-known moral guidelines set down for American movies, it was forbidden to mention homosexuality, whether male or female. And thus Manuela in the American version is made to commit suicide, just to make sure that a more acceptable political message is proffered.

Indeed, love between women could not be depicted as a conscious choice as far as sex and sentiment were concerned. It was an aberration, and therefore required a sacrifice, the two ultimate options being to kill oneself or kill the desire (which, after all, is another, no less grievous, form of suicide). *Olivia*, by Jacqueline Audry, is a 1952 French melodrama that deals openly with lesbianism. Also known as *The Pit of Loneliness*, this title was chosen by American distributors as it echoed the name of Radclyffe Hall’s depressing novel, *The Well of Loneliness*, which equated homosexuality with having a miserable lonely life. As Vito Russo (1987, p. 75-67) vividly describes, *Olivia*, “scripted by Colette, [...] offered hothouse lesbian passion in an upper class French girls’ school [...] The end of the film finds the older teacher renouncing her love for her student in order to save the girl from the disgrace of abnormal love. ‘All my life,’ she says, ‘I have had to fight these feelings within me.’ Her noble sacrifice on behalf of Olivia is seen as an act of civilized behavior, lesbian longings being freakish by any standards”.

The grave also provides a fitting end for Shirley MacLaine, another suicide motivated by lesbian ignominy, in *The Children's Hour*, a 1961 American movie directed by William Wyler and interpreted by MacLaine and Audrey Hepburn. Based on Lillian Hellman's play, Wyler had already adapted a version of it for the screen in 1936 as *These Three*, although, given the aforementioned Hays Code restrictions, the plot was changed considerably to make it a story based on a more conventional love triangle. By 1961, however, the grip of the Hays Code was weakening, allowing a hint of lesbianism, although it could not yet be stated explicitly. The film tells the story of two women teachers at a private girls' school, unjustly accused by a pupil of having a lesbian relationship. The thing is that the accusation is unfounded; the girl is simply being vindictive, but the seeds of suspicion have been sown and so the fear of that unacceptable shame is allowed to flourish. Although the accusation is false, one of the teacher (Shirley MacLaine) actually discovers that she is a lesbian. And this is a fault that needs to be emended.

These three films are situated in a context typical of lesbian movies: girls' school and prisons are environment where there is no male presence, almost as if there is a need to eradicate an otherwise impossible competition. In a certain sense, however, lesbians in these early films had not yet assumed those features that would characterize them both on and off screen for many years to come: the lesbian who is not a woman (Wittig, 1992) and the 'abject' lesbian with her subversive potential to question the dominant heterosexual paradigm (Butler, 2006). The figure that I am referring to here is that creation of American cinema, the very masculine butch woman (in contrast to the feminine lesbian or 'femme'), a stereotype that had currency for a long time.

This is the case with June Buckridge (Beryl Reid), the openly lesbian central character in Robert Aldrich's 1968 film, *The Killing of Sister George*. The film was criticized on its release, being considered "vicious, petty, repugnant". It is a film that has always divided the lesbian community into fans and detractors: it marks a point of no return in the representation of a lesbian character and confronts us with the abnormal Sister George. June Buckridge has been playing the nurse, Sister George, in a BBC soap opera for many years, but her character's fate is sealed: television executives have decided to axe her character because of June's off-screen behavior. As Vito Russo (1987, p. 120) writes, the inner conflict in *The Killing of Sister George* is between acceptable and offending gay lifestyles. The "killing" of Sister George is the process by which George's overt lesbianism is punished, forcing her into invisibility. George is a loud aggressive dyke, and the "killing" in the film is not the death of the homosexual or homosexuality but the death of its visibility. Although lesbianism has become a way of living one's life, stating it publicly remains a serious infringement of the social code.

By the end of the 1960s, concurrent with the Stonewall riots and the birth of the gay liberation movement, the film industry tried to go beyond the excessively stereotyped representation of gay men and lesbians. It only partially succeeded, but after years of repression cinema began to take account of a gay identity that had led to a growing LGBT community intent on fighting for its rights. As we learn from Michel Foucault (1976), the criminalization and pathologizing of the homosexual constructs his/her identity, while his/her existence is given legitimization through discourse, albeit negative, regarding him/herself. And it was from a negative image that an awareness

emerged which would eventually lead to affirming the dignity of homosexual desire and demanding social acceptance. These were years of struggles (of students, workers, women and ethnic minorities) and the LGBT movement played its part in liberating people from a coercive, gender-based symbolic order which forced them into mutually exclusive/excluding roles: homosexual/heterosexual, female/male. It became important to stand up, to come out of the closet, and to affect a real social transformation by claiming one's right to exist.

These were also the years when feminist film critic Laura Mulvey (1975) condemned the dominance of the male look in the cinema, which relegated women to passive roles as mere objects of desire. During the early 1970s, the feminist director Chantal Akerman fostered the creation of a female look, intended to dismantle established male codes of voyeurism and heteronormative dominance. In her first feature film, *Je, tu, il, elle* (1974), the protagonist Julie, played by the director herself, shuts herself away in a room; forced to go out for an unexpected reason, she meets a truck driver, with whom she stays until she gets to meet up with her old friend. It is in the final scene of lesbian sex that Akerman's 'other' look emerges. The scene is clearly erotic and potentially voyeuristic, but it never veers towards the pornographic: it is almost as if the representation of sex does not actually need to evoke it in reality.

This overturning has also been made by Ulrike Ottinger, director and iconic figure in German counterculture, who appropriated a typically male genre – movies about pirates – to create a lesbian-feminist allegory: *Madame X - An Absolute Ruler*. This was in 1978, and the director brings androgynes and other strange creatures to the screen in order to tell the story of the cruel and sadistic captain of the ship Orlando, who promises 'gold, love and adventure' to all women willing to abandon their boring lives. A large and varied group of women – an insignificant housewife, a glamorous diva, a psychologist, an artist and a pilot – yield to the temptation, but their hopes for transformation are dashed. *Madame X* is a film directed, produced and performed only by women, where the journey undertaken becomes a powerful means to destroy bourgeois values and discard all sexual and binary limitations in an extraordinary quest for emotion.

In a similar spirit of liberation, 1983 saw the release of *Lianna*, a film that is not quite as bold in its representation of lesbians. Married with children, Lianna falls head over heels in love with her psychologist, Ruth, who is openly lesbian. Abandoned first by her husband, who kicks her out of the house when he discovers the relationship, and later by Ruth, who is attracted to another woman, Lianna begins a difficult path towards emancipation and self-awareness. This is undoubtedly sad and painful, and it is difficult to see Lianna as a model for a young lesbian seeking affirmation and/or acceptance. However, this was one of the first attempts to show coming out in a mainstream movie. While the spectator can have no illusions that being a lesbian is fun and joyful, the movie does at least show that life as a lesbian is possible. It is still a burden, but it is becoming a sustainable burden: shoulders will be weighed down and tears will be shed, but it *can* be done.

The real breakthrough occurred in 1985 with *Desert Hearts*, a movie directed by a lesbian director (Donna Deitch) and made entirely by women. This was a real anthropological revolution, since for the first time a lesbian couple was 'authorized' to have a relationship. It affirmed, albeit with various ups and downs, that the lesbian

‘menace’ could potentially call into question the sexual values of the majority. Obviously, as Vito Russo (1987, p. 203) says, this “would not ‘create’ more gay people: it would simply allow that portion of the population that is gay to live life more openly.” *Desert Hearts*, based on Jane Rule’s novel of the same name, tells the story of Vivien Bell, a university professor getting a divorce, and the young Cay Riwers, a dowdy lesbian awaiting a great life-changing moment (perhaps love?). The catalyst for this change appears to be the beautiful mature Vivien, who first resists, then gives in to her passion for Cay. Almost the entire world of *Desert Hearts* is female, a place where men and their respective ‘heterosexual’ look are irrelevant. A purely lesbian look of desire prevails and the love scenes are explicit and evocative. Such scenes invite the spectator to discover unexpected visions of the desiring/desirable self, the deconstruction and substitution of the male look creating space for a possible utopia. Indeed, hitherto unexplored rituals and opportunities for visibility and recognition, set alongside new expressive and aesthetic codes, are able to grow through the cracks that open up in dominant thought. We have still not arrived at multi-faceted ways of being and thinking, but the paths towards an exhilarating otherness have begun to emerge. And after all the suicides and other tragedies, we finally have a story with a happy ending.

So is everyone happy with this evolution of the representation of the lesbian on screen? Can we really talk about an emerging cinema where the lesbian is finally meant to survive? Well, no, not everyone is happy if we take into consideration Barbara Hammer, whose films discuss lesbian sexuality, feminism and the pursuit of freedom. Hammer is a director and a lesbofeminist theorist, and what I want to underline is her idea of the lesbian spectator. The latter, she argues, never finds herself on the screen, not even in lesbian movies: “It is my belief that a conventional cinema, such as classical narrative, is unable to address the experiences or issues of lesbian and gay perceptions, concerns and concepts ... Even if the characters are lesbian, the script projects lesbian characters within a heterosexual world of role-playing, lovemaking and professional and domestic life. The numerous films that purport to be ‘lesbian films’ have failed to address me as a lesbian spectator ... How could this be, in an age where we have films like *Desert Hearts*, *Lianna* and *Personal Best*? These are films where the on-screen space is filled with seeming ‘lesbian representation’. But my reading of these films is that there is no lesbian to deconstruct, as the discourse of the gendered subject is within a heterosexist authority system. The lesbians act out heterosexual gender roles and positions rather than claiming any difference, and even sexual practices are situated within heterosexuality ...” (Hammer, 1993, p. 70). The imperative is thus to make the invisible visible, aware that there is not one lesbian cinema, but various lesbian cinemas, i.e., multiple visions of a multiple reality.

And it is in the ‘90’s that something really changes. These were years of positive change for gay and lesbian cinema: new figures emerged who were no longer, or at least not only, flat characters based on parody or, even worse, offhand medical classification. These characters reflected a growing tendency to re-appropriate and to subvert cultural and artistic norms, and they ushered in a multilayered scenario. In 1992 critic and feminist journalist B. Ruby Rich wrote about Queer Cinema, an expression she coined in an article for *The Village Voice*. In the piece, Rich analyzed the movies that had come out in that period and which included a particularly large number of high quality films on homosexual themes. And this is what characterizes

New Queer Cinema: it does not have set stylistic features and does not identify with a specific genre, but experiments with new languages, and reevaluates traditional genres in order to represent homosexuality, eschew taboos and project a positive image of gays and lesbians. The LGBT community can thus declare its existence on the big screen, while distancing itself from the slick, rigidly classified Hollywood product. The aim of such movies, as James J. Dean (2007, p. 374) explains, is to develop a critical awareness of identity politics and of everything that a heteronormative society considers standard ... these films call into question the flat one-dimensional images of the 'homosexual subject', replacing them with more complex, fluid and dynamic representations. New Queer Cinema thus deals with anti-essentialist approaches, for which homosexuality is not, and cannot be, a single, social identity in the same way as heterosexuality.

From a lesbian perspective, typical films of New Queer Cinema, also known as New Dyke Cinema (from the name of a lesbian community in Chicago) include *Go Fish*, *The Incredible true adventures of two girls in love* and *The Watermelon Woman*. *Go Fish* is (the film dates from 1994) the manifesto of the new lesbian cinema. It is the story of a group of lesbians and we just watch an amusing romantic comedy where being a lesbian is natural. No drama is linked to diversity: there is simply a sexuality that is lived out joyously and freely.

A fundamental concept linked to the queer identity is that homosexuality, like other markings of identity, is not something that is uniform, and is always in a state of flux. It is an identity without essence and is impossible to define; indeed, any attempt to define it becomes instrumental to a certain ideology and therefore potentially reactionary. This opens up possibilities for producing movies as a response to exceptional requirements that arise from the common need to try out unexplored routes, and to look at, and interpret, reality from different viewpoints. What changes is the *look*, imbuing new perceptions of sexuality with a different sensitivity, creating a space for physicality and real, physical bodies. This is a 'cinema of desire', which, with its lesbian look and lesbian drive, puts forward a new erotic language.

The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love (1995) was director Maria Maggenti's debut film, and it tells the story of two girls who, first friends then lovers, soon have to face up to opposition from their families. The film marks a period when young girls start to have a preeminent role in lesbian cinema, a trend that gained strength in the following years, with the depiction of teenagers whose heartstrings are regularly tugged by their female friends. By the early years of the present century, these films were thus exploring issues of internalized lesbophobia and family conflicts. Maggenti, however, uses a delicate touch, while not shying away from tackling the rampant hypocrisy of the world at large. This all falls within the queer agenda of representing a confused sexuality, perhaps due to the young age of the characters, but also thanks to Maggenti's agility in sidestepping the various dichotomies and binary traps – lesbian/straight, rich/poor, white/black – which the film touches upon. As there is no ultimate fixed identity, all limitations fade away and disappear.

The Watermelon Woman (1996) is by director Cheryl Dunye, who in the film also plays Cheryl, a young black lesbian who is making a documentary about Fae Richards, a 1930s black actress known as 'The Watermelon Woman', who had a

white lesbian lover. Cheryl is also in a loving relationship with a white girl, and for this reason is on the receiving end of the irony and sarcasm of her best friend, who does not miss a chance of criticizing Cheryl's rapport with the black lesbian community. Many axes of identity therefore overlap and intersect: each of them counts and has its own particular importance, and this is what makes the film very different to *The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love*. Dunye's film questions the centrality and intransigence of white people, albeit in a joyful, comic and satirical way. As Dunye states, to a large extent her character is autobiographical, though all the historical references in the film are invented: "The Watermelon Woman came from the real lack of any information about the lesbian and film history of African-American women. Since it wasn't happening, I invented it." (Downing, 2016)

Overall, however, making movies on lesbian themes in the early 21st century now seems conditioned by "the tyranny of the happy ending". Just think at *The L Word*, broadcasted in the United States between 2004 and 2009: the series tells of the events, and the loves in the lives of a group of lesbians: all beautiful and desirable, always fashionable, always well dressed, and all with interesting jobs and no real money problems. However, perhaps the problem is thinking that this type of cinema always has to have some social or political use, or contain some kind of practical or therapeutic subtext. It is true, in fact, that lesbian cinema has become extremely rich and varied. And even if the image that Hollywood presents is that of a sweetened, normalized lesbian, the fact is that now she is visible, unsilenced and positive. No longer limited to negative stereotypes, there are varied portrayals of lesbians seen on screens throughout the world. Today it would be difficult for an adolescent lesbian to feel that she was destined for a life of solitude and misery. Although some representations of lesbians can be criticized because they give the idea of some kind of oversexed, artificial woman, it is also true that she is seen to love, to give birth and to get old just like anyone else. And everyone is un/happy in their own way, whatever their sexual orientation. Therefore, the question remains: is 'normality' a worthwhile goal?

And this trend to normality comes out also from two movies that deals with gay parenting (*The Kids Are Alright*, 2010) and civil rights (*Freeheld*, 2015). For what it regards *The Kids Are Alright* directed by Lisa Cholodenko, there have been mixed reviews from queer and lesbian critics. For the queer theorist Jack Halberstam (2012), the problem is not with the two children of the lesbian couple who are doing fine (and why shouldn't they be?), but with the two lesbians. They are stuck in a tired stale relationship that is showing all the signs of a falling off of sexual desire. Indeed, it now seems based on a kind of bourgeois self-satisfaction in which family stability has become the main goal. According to Halberstam, the family might be 'alright', or rather, its idiosyncrasies and dysfunctional aspects make it absolutely normal; it is the couple that has broken down and which is probably destined to fall into the various traps that marriage, whether straight or gay, involves.

And about *Freeheld*, instead, I'd like to remember that the screenwriter, Ron Nyswaner, the Oscar-nominated screenwriter of *Philadelphia*, denounced that the film was "degayed" by producers against his wishes. We must be careful, he said, as we become mainstream – that we don't forget we're the descendants of outlaws and rebels. *Freeheld* had a lot of potential. But the producers became fearful. The lesbian characters were idealized and turned into lesbians with a lower case 'l'. Because God

forbid someone might think we were making a movie about a couple of dykes. Out of fear, they were normalised. We must remember our history. We are the inheritors of a culture that was created from pain and invisibility. From being different” (Child, 2015).

Conclusion

So advocating a simplistic “positive images approach” to lesbian and gay representation which suppresses contradiction and results in unrealistic, static, one-dimensional portrayals seems might not be the answer for a more complex representation of the lesbian on screen.

I just want to conclude my short essay in a positive way comparing two way of looking at each other of the main characters and at the same time the way the spectator might look at this two different couples of women. These two movie are *The Children's Hours*, which I already mentioned, and *Carol*, a 2015 British-American romantic drama film directed by Todd Haynes. The screenplay, written by Phyllis Nagy, is based on the 1952 romance novel *The Price of Salt* (also known as *Carol*) by Patricia Highsmith. Set in New York City during the early 1950s, *Carol* tells the story of a forbidden affair between an aspiring female photographer and an older woman going through a difficult divorce.

The two movies show a radical shift that has occurred from 1961 to 2015 and that is well represented by the difference in the look. As Teresa de Lauretis (1994) has well analysed the subversive potential of the lesbian couple on screen resides in its evocation of the lesbian look and in the investment of this look in two desiring women, the coupled lesbian protagonists of the film, each of whom is simultaneously both subject and object of the look and consequently of female desire. And this lesbian look involves also the film's female spectator, who is thereby offered empowerment as an active desiring female subject.

All in all, it is a fitting way to project this kind of cinema towards an expressive maturity with renewed vigor, embarking on new paths, perhaps occasionally unmarked or unclear, but always interesting.

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- Contact email:** ffabbiani@gmail.com



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Naka Ward, Nagoya, Aichi
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