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MILLION REASONS

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HESMONDHALGH

MASCULINITY IN ADVERTISING

WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT KEVIN

EMC
MediaMagazine

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Making the Most of MediaMag

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Hunting for Hesmonhalgh

Two articles in this issue focus on the work of David Hesmondhalgh, who is one of the key thinkers you will need to reference when discussing the media industries. But as Nick Lacey's article argues, this is an enormous field, and best explored in relation to the set texts you are studying rather than as an abstract concept. And to do that you'll need some key terminology.

With a partner, take two or three of the terms listed below. For each one, write a sentence or two explaining how you understand the term on a post-it note.

> Globalisation
> Global distribution network
> Synergy
> Convergence
> Copyright
> Conglomeration
> Digitalisation

Now share your post-its with another pair, and compare your definitions. Still pretty abstract? To make things more concrete, for each definition find examples from familiar media products or institutions which you think help to illustrate. In some cases you may want to amend your definitions. Here are some suggestions – but better to come up with your own:

> The Simpsons
> Avengers: Age of Ultron
> Amazon Prime
> Google
> The Walking Dead
> Tidal
> PlayStation

Finally do some institutional research on the set texts covered in this issue of the magazine, which include a Lady Gaga video, a Hollywood melodrama, *House of Cards, The Bridge, Trainspotting,* etc. For each one, try and discuss which of the institutional factors you have defined have affected your personal experience of viewing.

All That Heaven Allows

In this article Roy Stafford provides the social, cultural and economic context for the rise of the 'woman's picture' and the family melodrama within the Hollywood studio system, through a case study of Douglas Sirk's *All That Heaven Allows* (1955). He also refers to the 2002 re-make of film by Todd Haynes, retitled as *Far From Heaven.*

On YouTube you can watch the opening sequence and trailers for both these films. At first sight, they appear very similar, although they are nearly 50 years apart.
• In your group, compare the two opening sequences in terms of their similarities, focusing on their media language: cinematography, sound, editing and mise-en-scene.
• Now watch again, and note what differences you can spot in the same features, bearing in mind the changes in technology, gender representation and visual style.
• Now compare the trailers for the two films. This time, focus on their institutional similarities and differences. Pay particular attention to
  - The way the themes and narratives of the films are represented in the voice-overs and selection of clips, and the appeals made to audiences
  - The information represented on screen – studio logos, graphics, credits, intertextual references etc. Do some online research to inform your comparison.

As a class share your findings. Consider why Todd Haynes, an LBGTQ director, might have wanted to remake Sirk's film, and the ways he has adapted the 'woman's picture' narrative and the conventions of the melodrama for the 21st Century.

The 2018 MediaMag
Production Competition

Every year, MediaMagazine hosts a video competition to showcase the creativity, passion talent and production skills of you students – and that means YOU sending us YOUR work!

It's genuinely the highlight of MediaMag's year, and a brilliant opportunity to share your talent and get your presence as a film-maker out into the world. Yes, you can enter your AS/A Level, BTEC or Cambridge Nationals coursework, as long as all members of the group are credited – but you can also submit your own personal projects, and work you've created at home, in the community or with friends.

If we shortlist your production, you'll be invited to an Awards screening, ceremony and networking reception at the prestigious NFT1 at BFI South Bank on Monday 2nd July.

We're delighted to announce that this year our Principal Judge will be Nik Powell OBE, who will really raise the bar for us! Nik has had a hugely distinguished career in the media industry, firstly in music as co-founder of Virgin Records, and subsequently as a producer of Oscar and BAFTA award-winning films including *Company of Wolves*, *Mona Lisa*, *Scandal*, *Crying Game* and *Ladies in Lavender*. He has been Director of the National Film and Television School for 14 years, and has continued to maintain his close links with industry leaders and also chaired the Film Committee of BAFTA – as well as giving the keynote speech at the 2017 MediaMagazine Student Conference. Who could be a better judge?

- Deadline for entries:
  Friday 20th April

- Shortlist published online:
  Friday 25th May

- Awards Ceremony at
  BFI Southbank:
  Monday 2nd July

To give you a taste of last year's competition, and to see the winners in each category, visit the webpage for the 2017 awards here and scroll to the bottom: www.englishandmedia.co.uk/media-magazine

Full details of the rules, formats and award categories are available via the MediaMag home page.

To submit your work, just download and complete the online entry form (capitals for your contact details – and please also write your email address as clearly as possible!) and show us what you can do. The details are on the form.

Unsplash

Reasons to believe

Giles Gough examines the responses to the 'text within a text' in *13 Reasons Why* and explains why the issues around sexual abuse and slut-shaming are all the more relevant today.

When *13 Reasons Why*, the Netflix series based on Jay Asher's novel, was released in spring 2017 it generated no shortage of column inches, primarily devoted to assessing its impact on teenagers. This article, however, will show how *13 Reasons Why* exemplifies a key media theory, and, by extension, how society at large deals with scandal, specifically the types of scandal involving sexual assault. It goes without saying that this article will have detailed spoilers concerning the plot of a TV show and it's also important to add that the narrative deals with a range of highly sensitive issues, which are not the focus of this article. The brief references to them are in no way meant to minimise their importance.

'Reception theory' is a concept first outlined by Stuart Hall in 1973. In his essay, 'Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse' he postulated that all media texts are loaded with values and messages that reflect the beliefs of the producer. The text is then decoded by the reader. Reactions to the text are dependent on lots of factors such as age, gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality or even mood at the time of viewing. Hall codified these reactions into three categories:

Dominant Reading – when an audience responds to the text in the way the producer intended.

Oppositional Reading – when the audience rejects the dominant reading, and creates their own meaning.

Why would a dead girl lie?

Negotiated Reading – a compromise between the dominant and oppositional readings, where the audience accepts parts of the producer's views, but has their own views on parts as well.

13 Reasons Why is many things to many people, but one specific way to see it is as **a text within a text**. Plot wise, it is a narrative where eleven people respond to a media text: Hannah's personally recorded cassettes. The narrative tension in the show comes from the different responses those eleven people have. It would be a lengthy process to examine each person's response in depth. This article aims to simply give examples of the characters' dominant, negotiated and oppositional readings of Hannah's tapes.

The central conceit of the show is that a girl commits suicide, and leaves behind a series of tapes for a select group to hear. Each person in this group is incrementally responsible for creating a confluence of events that leads to Hannah Baker's suicide. The question we have to ask ourselves is: what is Hannah's intended purpose for these tapes? What is the dominant reading she is hoping to create? There are multiple interpretations to that question. An argument could be made that she wants to make people accountable for their actions, but at best, this is a secondary motivator. If justice was her central reason, she would have sent her tapes to the authorities or released them to the public electronically. However, I think the most valid answer is: Hannah wants to create sense of guilt in the listener. She wants them to be fully aware of their negative impact on her life. If we accept this concept, we then have to ask, who takes a dominant reading of the tapes?

Dominant

Tony is a good example of dominant reading. Despite not being the focus of any of the tapes, he listens to all of them and passes them on in the way that Hannah intended him to. This could be seen as Tony honouring Hannah's memory by fulfilling her wishes without questioning them. Other characters have the guilty reaction that Hannah, we assume, intended to provoke. For Sheri, who knocked over a stop sign that contributed to the death of a student in a car crash, her guilt manifests itself in a comparatively healthy fashion. Despite not admitting her culpability until the end, she begins to help out with the elderly man who was involved in the car crash as a way to mitigate her guilt.

Alex compiles a list of all the girls in school who have the best attributes, deeming Hannah to have the 'best ass'. This list then gets circulated throughout the school. Hannah tells us that this made her a 'target'. Alex's guilt manifests as a gradually increasing drive towards self-destruction. In episode three, he throws himself into the pool fully clothed, in a stupor of despondent despair. By episode six, Alex is initiating a fight with one of the jocks,

> The question we have to ask ourselves is: what is Hannah's intended purpose for these tapes? What is the dominant reading she is hoping to create?

whose superior strength means that Alex gets thoroughly beaten for it. In the last episode, we are told that Alex has shot himself, although not fatally, in the head. Let's be clear, there's no reason for us to think that this is what Hannah intends to happen. Nonetheless, a vague purpose such as making someone feel guilty can manifest itself in a variety of ways.

Oppositional

An oppositional approach to Hannah's tapes is much easier to identify. The popular group in school come to a simple conclusion: 'Hannah's lying,' Jessica tells us. Courtney has a more prosaic way of stating it when she says, 'Hannah's truth is not my truth,' but it equates to the same thing. Marcus takes an oppositional reading of the tapes by telling Clay, 'Nothing anyone did to her was any different than what happens to every girl at every high school.' Marcus is clearly trying to minimise the negative experiences that Hannah went through, he believes that Hannah 'just wanted attention.' If we take Marcus at his word, that 'every girl in every high school' experiences slut-shaming, sexual harassment or assault to some degree or other, then we have to assume that every girl needs to be believed, and treated with care and empathy in order to prevent progressively worse things happening to her. If the recent #metoo trend is an indicator, Marcus is more right than he realises.

Negotiated

Clay would perhaps be the best example of a negotiated reading of a text. As Hannah says, Clay doesn't really belong on these tapes, the reason he is on them is because he left her and she didn't want him to, despite telling him to leave. Clay feels guilt intently, bringing him to nearly commit suicide himself in episode ten. However, Clay doesn't just do what Hannah asks. He knows that passing the tapes on to Bryce will mean their destruction, so he chooses not to do that. He seeks to verify Hannah's story and to seek justice for her as well as Jessica. Hannah could not have anticipated that Clay would respond in that fashion. At times, he also seems to be in direct conflict with Hannah about her interpretation of events, such as when he talks to her at the party:

HANNAH (voiceover)
I was so nervous that night. But
you made it seem so…

Cut to Tony's car, Clay takes off the headphones.

CLAY
Easy? Is she kidding me? I was sh**ing myself.

TONY
OK.

CLAY
But she's not telling the truth about
the way things happened.

TONY
She's telling her truth.
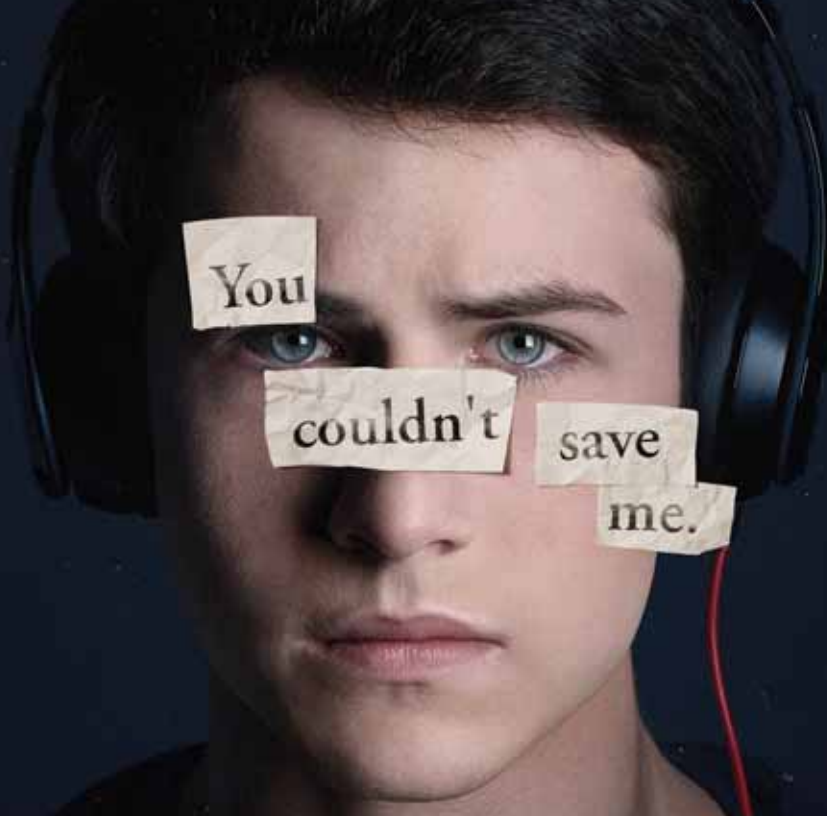
To an extent, this scene exemplifies the idea of a negotiation between the author and the reader and it serves as a microcosm of the negotiation many consumers of subjective media texts have with the producers. It's also important to note that these readings are not fixed; Jessica and other character's readings gradually shift from denial to belief in Hannah's account. This shows that a person can shift from oppositional to negotiated, to dominant, or the reverse.

13 Reasons Why gives us a clear understanding of why people may take a dominant or oppositional reading to a victim's account. The popular kids can't reveal the crimes committed by Bryce without exposing their own infractions, no matter how minor by comparison, without jeopardising their own future. In essence, we are seeing situations similar to this currently being played out in the Weinstein case, but on a much grander scale. The question of why victims weren't believed or why nobody spoke out is painfully easy to answer; the person hearing it had something to lose. There are lots of debates going on surrounding *13 Reasons Why* and its potential for harm against its potential for good. One thing all sides can agree on is that this show highlights why it's so important for survivors of sexual assault to seek help. It tells its audience in the most unflinching way possible, that vulnerable people need to be heard, and most importantly, believed.

Giles Gough teaches English and Media and leads participatory filmmaking workshops at www. daskfilms.com

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WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT
KEVIN

Lynne Ramsay's 2011 film is now a set text option for A level film. In this article, Andrew McCallum examines Ramsay's use of technical codes and elements of genre to create a compelling and complex narrative.

The blurb on the back of the DVD sleeve for *We Need to Talk About Kevin* (Lynne Ramsay 2011) presents potential viewers with a straightforward linear narrative:

Eva (Tilda Swinton) puts her ambitions and career aside to give birth to Kevin (Ezra Miller), but the relationship between mother and son is difficult from the very first years. When Kevin is 15, he does something irrational and unforgiveable in the eyes of the community, leaving Eva grappling with her own feelings of grief and responsibility. Did she ever love her son? And how much of what Kevin did was her fault?

The film itself, though, is anything but straightforward. Instead, it is told as a series of disjointed flashbacks, covering a timespan of over 18 years. This fragmented narrative strategy mirrors the intense emotional turmoil of Eva, which cannot fully be alluded to in the blurb without giving too much away: for Kevin is a mass killer,

Perhaps most striking of all the devices used to create narrative cohesion is the use of the colour red, to symbolise the blood of Kevin's victims and Eva's guilt.

Collection Christophel / Alamy Stock Photo

deliberately slaughtering a large number of students after locking them into his high school gymnasium.

The flashbacks are multiple and cover several different stages of Kevin's life, right up to the point when, aged 18, he is about to be transferred to an adult jail. Yet the film still possesses a real coherence and is relatively straightforward to follow, despite only being 107 minutes long. This, I would suggest, is for three main reasons. First, everything is told from Eva's perspective, so the flashbacks are, in effect, her memories of Kevin growing up; second, there is a strong linear component within the flashbacks, with Kevin played by different actors to clearly mark different stages in his life, and third because of multiple uses of various film poetics.

It is the latter that I will focus on here, exploring how the film exploits and combines a range of film conventions to create meaning for the audience. In doing so, I will build towards arguing that the film offers an interesting mix of narrative strategies that draw strongly on conventions of the horror genre, even as it resists classification as a genre film.

Signifying Flashbacks

Following the massacre Eva moves from a large suburban house, to a small rundown one. Two common film tropes are used to establish that much of the film is told in flashbacks, so helping us to establish that something highly disruptive has happened in her life which, we assume, resulted in the move from a comfortable home to a dilapidated one. First, we have a close up of her face immersed under water, which suggests that she is trying to cleanse herself of the past we are about to see; second, she looks

in a mirror, then the action fades to a moment in Kevin's troubled early life (in the comfortable home). This serves two purposes. Not only does it show that we are watching Eva's memories reflected back at her, but it also suggests that she is the architect of Kevin's disturbed personality: when she looks in the mirror she sees the psychopath that she created.

Fade to White

Transitions from one point in the chronology to another are often marked by fades to white. The colour itself is a deliberate narrative choice (fades are usually to black), with the white colour representing a memory seared into Eva's mind, something painful and intense. The use of fades also suggests memories all being blurred into one, with Eva struggling to locate exactly where Kevin's motivation came from and her role in it.

Diegetic Sound

The film has an intense soundscape that generates a sense of narrative unease. In the opening sequence, we hear the repetitive swish of lawn sprinklers, a significant motif returned to at the very end of the film. Other noises of suburban domesticity punctuate the narrative, such as a lawnmower, a hoover and an electric sander. Diegetic sound also signifies Eva's inner turmoil: her head is full of the noise of Kevin. This is shown most powerfully when she stands by a road worker operating a pneumatic drill so that she can drown out the sound of her baby's constant crying. Ironically, Kevin himself does not speak when, developmentally, he would be expected to. Instead he constantly mocks his mother by chanting 'na-na-na-na-na' whenever she tries to engage him in conversation. He becomes another unwelcome noise.

Non-diegetic Music

Non-diegetic music is used throughout the film in what might be described as ironic juxtaposition. In other words, the sentiments suggested by the music contrast with events. This makes it clear that there

Having a son like Kevin is akin to being trapped in a horror film. He seems to act out of a malevolent will, deliberately ruining Eva's life from the moment he is born.

Collection Christophel / Alamy Stock Photo

is something deeply off-kilter about the world we are seeing. Washington Philips' gospel blues song, 'Mother's Last Word to Her Son', is returned to several times, with lines like 'You always have been your mother's joy' signposting for the audience the gap between expectations of motherhood and Eva's own experience.

Use of Colour

Perhaps most striking of all the devices used to create narrative cohesion is the use of the colour red, to symbolise the blood of Kevin's victims and Eva's guilt. The first time we see Eva she is at the Spanish festival, La Tomatina, at which thousands of people jump around in ripe tomatoes. She is there as part of her job as a travel writer. Covered from head to foot in red tomato juice, she is carried over the crowd with her arms spread wide, redolent of a crucifixion. Narratively, she is carrying the sins of her son, even if this is not yet clear to viewers. She is guilty because she is away from home when she should be caring for him. In the next sequence, many years later, Eva finds that her house has been daubed in red paint, presumably by a resident blaming her for her son's actions. Throughout the rest of the film, we return to her trying to scrub the paint away to little effect, an indicator of her continuing guilt.

Intertextuality and Conventions of Horror

While the film might broadly be categorised as naturalist cinema (so it offers an exaggerated realism, focusing on significant, melodramatic moments in Kevin's life, that may themselves be distorted by Eva's traumatised memory), it also uses intertextual references to several films in the horror genre to generate narrative meaning. For example, Kevin's menacing gaze is reminiscent of *Damien: The Omen II* (Dan Taylor 1978), when to be looked at by the eponymous child is to be condemned to death. Eva's unhappy pregnancy with Kevin brings to mind *Rosemary's Baby* (Roman Polanski 1968), her blood-soaked dress after finding her

husband and daughter dead on the lawn references *Carrie* (Brian De Palma 1976), and the thin white curtains blowing in the breeze in the very first shot give a nod to the *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock 1960) shower scene. In addition, it is possible to see traces of *Halloween* in the large suburban family home, of *Deliverance* (John Boorman 1972) in the use of old-time blues and folk music, and of *The Shining* (Stanley Kubrick 1980) in the shots of Kevin's younger sister from behind.

Intertextuality is an important concept to consider when studying film narrative. It establishes for the audience that they are not just watching this film, but this film as it relates to a number of other films. It creates expectations that a narrative will proceed in a particular direction, and allows for pleasures when these expectations are met, and surprise and re-evaluation when they are not.

We Need to Talk About Kevin is not a conventional horror film, even as it borrows heavily from the tropes of that genre (as well as intertextuality, consider how the use of sound and colour, as described above, relate to horror). The use of horror, though, is a key method by which the film explores the psychological guilt of the mother figure. Having a son like Kevin is akin to being trapped in a horror film. He seems to act out of a malevolent will, deliberately ruining Eva's life from the moment he is born. She can find no reason for his actions no matter how hard she tries. Perhaps this itself is a narrative interpretation of the 'senseless' real-life killings upon which the film is loosely based, most notoriously the Columbine High School massacre of 1999, in which 15 students died (including the two perpetrators). It is, after all, seemingly impossible to understand what drives young people to carry out acts so outside the bounds of accepted behaviour.

We never find out what motivated Kevin. However, perhaps in an effort to guarantee that the film is viewed as an exploration in psychology (of Eva, more than Kevin), rather than as horror, the final scene inside the prison housing Kevin, provides an

element of narrative resolution from a psychological perspective. Eva asks Kevin to tell her why he carried out the murders; he replies 'I used to think I knew; now I'm not so sure.' They then embrace, offering some consolation for Eva at the end of her disjointed and traumatic narrative journey.

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Andrew McCallum is the Director of the English and Media Centre

[Intertextuality] creates expectations that a narrative will proceed in a particular direction, and allows for pleasures when these expectations are met, and surprise and re-evaluation when they are not.

Get what you've always wanted
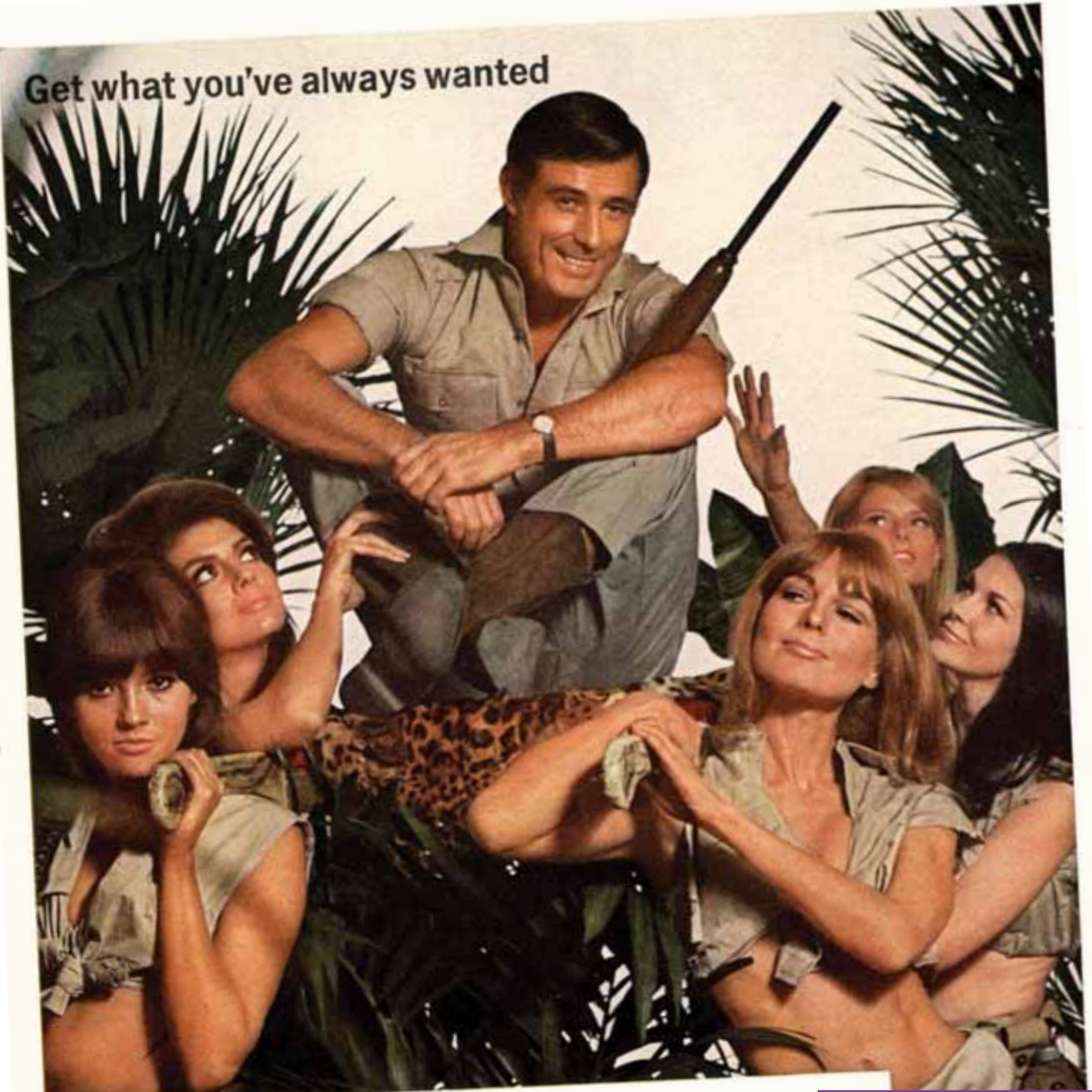
the great grooming action of a hair cream from a liquid.

If you haven't been getting all you want from a liquid hair groom, get new Score Liquid.
Gives you the great grooming action of a cream.
That's because new clear Score Liquid is made by the men who make clear Score Hair Cream.
So you get great grooming action.
And you also get Score's famous greaseless look, Score's famous masculine scent.

Score® Liquid Hair Groom

Score—Three Ways.™ Hair Cream. Spray Deodorant. Liquid Hair Groom.

©1967 Bristol-Myers Co.

Score
LIQUID HAIR GROOM
a clear liquid with the grooming action of a cream

An oppositional reading would be that the macho-laden ideas presented in this image are damaging to male self-esteem and present women as passive and merely decorative.

The Changing Face of Masculinity

1960s vs Modern Day Advertising

Over the generations the role of men has been well-documented and scrutinised in the media, from the days of the working man being waved off at the door by his dutiful wife in a soap powder advert to more modern narratives showing the hipster bearded stay-at-home dad juggling a baby and a business. In this analysis, Helen Dugdale examines how far the advertising industry has come.

The stereotypes of masculinity portrayed across all media platforms are, today, almost unrecognisable from those witnessed by 1960s audiences. The advertising creatives teams of the 1960s would have some interesting conversations with the media lovelies working in agencies in 2018. A glaring contrast that illustrates just how far things have come can be seen if you compare the characters in American period drama Mad Men to the BBC's satirical comedy W1A. Both programmes show the cultural, societal and historical changes that have taken place in the last five decades.

The Narrative: 'Score Liquid Hair Groom'

A print ad by Bristol Myers Co. dating back to 1967 for its 'Score Liquid Hair Groom' product is a great place to start when discussing the representation of masculinity in advertising.

In the 1960s, print advertisements tended to rely more on photography than illustration to achieve a more realistic look. The 'Score' ad uses a large image of a grinning man dressed like a hunter with a rifle nestled in the crook of his arm. He is held aloft on a tiger-skin platform by five women dressed in sexualised hunting costume: short skirts, tied-up shirts and ammunition belts. Four women look up at him adoringly (one reaches out longingly) while the fifth, with a sultry expression, looks directly at the consumer. The advert is using female sexuality to show men they can have power: you can conquer, you will be desired.

The Power of Copywriting

The strapline: 'Get what you've always wanted' is, like the image, a bold aspirational statement. The narrative is clear: the consumer can have everything they want in the world if they buy the hair product.

The tone of the copywriting continues to hammer home Score Hair Groom's masculine qualities describing its 'masculine scent' and

reassuring the target audience that it's 'made by men'. This might address any hesitation the average male might have about purchasing grooming products: no women were involved in the creation of this product, it is solely for men, it smells manly and using it will not feminise you in any way. The brand's personality and voice is all about masculine supremacy and self-belief, and is heavily reinforcing stereotypes of a patriarchal society.

Cultivating the Consumer

The advertising industry in the 60s, like today, spent millions of pounds on trying to convince consumers that products really could achieve everything they promise; and then, as now, many consumers believed to varying degrees what they were being told. The industry has long-since been criticised for underestimating the intelligence of consumers. The theorist Stuart Hall argued that audiences were not passive believers of the messages being fired at them, and that interpretation of mass media texts differed between different social groups. As part of his theory of Encoding /Decoding, he believed that the audience does not simply passively accept the messages they see; they derive their own meanings from media texts. These meanings can be dominant, negotiated or oppositional (see pages 6-7). A dominant reading of the 'Score' text would be that as a heterosexual male, one can achieve everything presented before them in the picture: power, control and sex appeal, with better hair. An oppositional reading or a critical interpretation would be that the macho-laden ideas presented in this image are damaging to male self-esteem and present women as passive and merely decorative (although they they're good for carrying your ammo).

In the 1960s, the advertising industry was really 'coming of age' and provided a platform to help to keep consumption at an all-time high. Simultaneously though consumers began to questions advertising ethics. Advertising was criticised for promoting materialism and for its exaggerated and sometimes dishonest practices. The advertisement for 'Score Liquid Hair Groom' is definitely a product if its time.

The Narrative: Maybelline 'That Boss Life Part 1'

Fast forward to 2017 and just a quick glance at the Maybelline advert for 'Big Shot Mascara' will show you how far society and the advertising industry have come in half a century.

For the campaign, entitled 'That Boss Life', Maybelline is working with its first male brand ambassador, Manny Gutierrez, a Mexican-Spanish-American beauty vlogger and Instagram sensation. The video ad touches on issues of gender representation, ethnicity and lifestyle.

The advertisement tells the story of two YouTubers, Manny Gutierrez and Shayla Mitchell checking into a New York hotel room with stunning views of the city. They open up a gold, glittery suitcase and out tumbles the product that everyone wants, the 'Big Shot' mascara. By simply applying the mascara, the wearer – female or male – is instantly transported to a more sophisticated cosmopolitan life surrounded by the finer things: a Manhattan hotel room, glamorous clothes and the promise of admission to the hottest clubs in the world's greatest city. The ad, like its 1960s counterpart, uses an aspirational image showing two friends who do not conform to masculine and feminine ideals but are nonetheless powerful: happy in their own skin, confident in their bodies and their sexuality.

> The brand's personality and voice is all about masculine supremacy and self-belief, and is heavily reinforcing stereotypes of a patriarchal society.

Tone of voice: Lash Like a Boss

The tone of the campaign is exciting, upbeat and of its time. It is easy to see why Maybelline New York chose the pair for the campaign. Manny and Shayla have strong, fun personalities; they have grown their own star image through vlogging beauty tutorials so have a clearly defined youth audience. Both emphasise how important it is to be comfortable with yourself and 'live like a boss', a positive mantra that is already well used and ingrained in everyday vernacular, especially with the younger generation.

The mode of address of the whole campaign is youthful and empowering. Slogans like 'let's get bossed out' suggest a positive and powerful mindset that can be achieved with just the flick of a mascara brush.

Challenging Societal Expectations

As a brand, Maybelline is challenging the expectation of who wears their product, and is showing their support for everyone and anyone who wants to reach for their mascara. It reflects a current trend of cosmetics companies to adopt diversity in their advertising (somewhat unsuccessfully) with L'Oréal and Dove.

Manny Gutierrez is quite rightly proud and delighted to be given the opportunity to work with Maybelline. Nicknamed 'Beauty Boy' by the media, Gutierrez speaks openly about wearing make up as a man, and says he is not performing as a woman. As he explained to *Marie Claire,* 'Make-up is an art form for me. I'm still confident as a boy and I will always be a boy. I can be confident with bare skin and with a full face.'

However, the Twitter trolls have been airing their views. Blogger Matt Walsh openly criticised Gutierrez, saying: 'Dads, this is why you need to be there to raise your sons' implying that strong masculine role models, perhaps like the guy in the 'Score' commercial, can steer their sons away from a damaging and emasculating interest in beauty and make-up. Manny retorted: 'Being a man isn't just about how tough or

masculine you are, it's about taking care of the ones you love.' He also commented: 'My dad actually works for me and is SO PROUD of me. '

Gutierrez is heading up the campaign to say that men don't have to be 'tough and strong.' They can be in charge of their lives without having to resort to carrying a gun or sitting on a tiger skin. The striking difference between the two advertisements is that 'Score' is celebrating everything believed to be great about a patriarchal society, while Maybelline is applauding the breakdown of hyper-masculine culture.

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Helen Dugdale is a freelance writer.
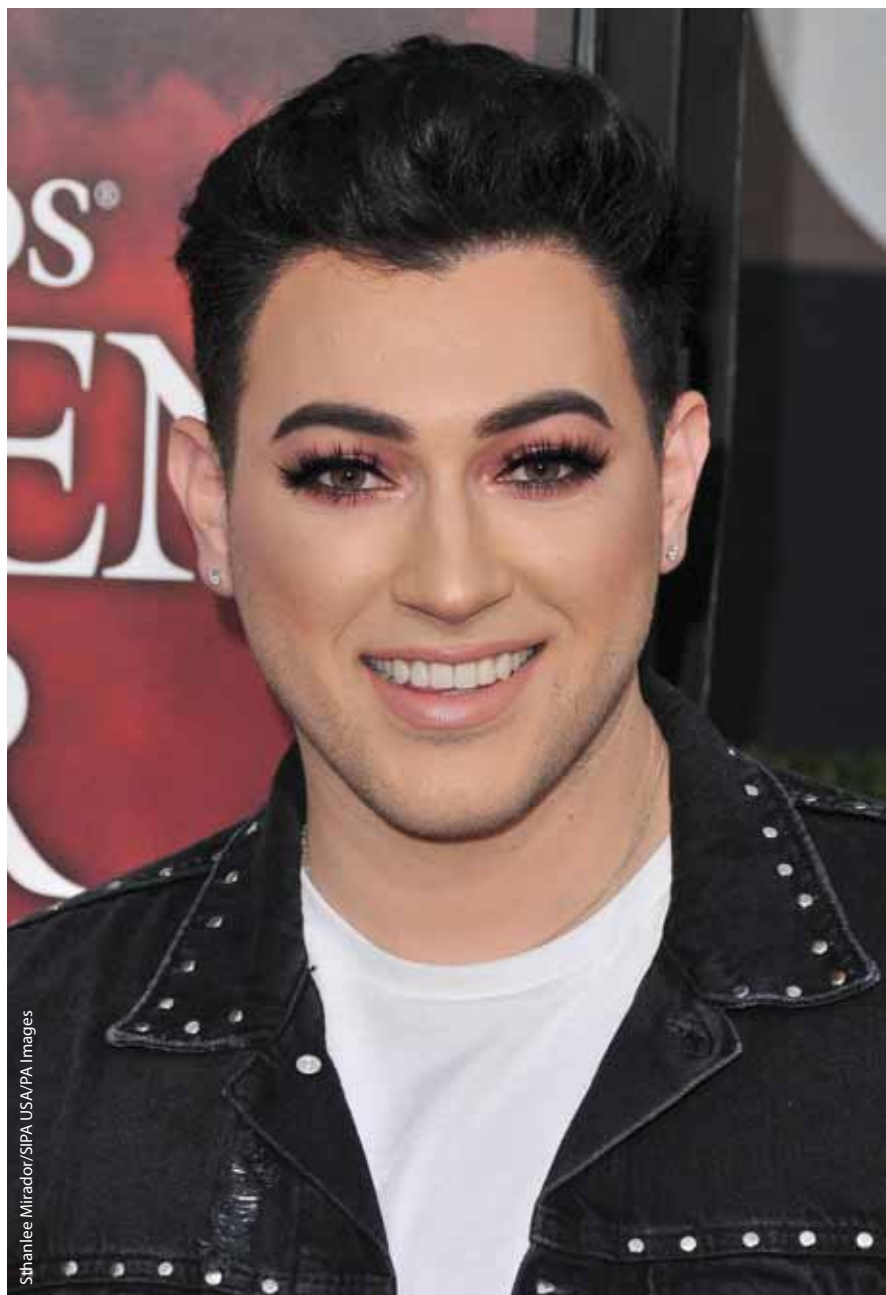
Sthanlee Mirador/SIPA USA/PA Images

Gutierrez speaks openly about wearing make up as a man, and says he is not performing as a woman.

All That Heaven...?

All That Heaven Allows is an OCR Film Studies text from the Hollywood studio era. It's a classic example of a studio picture, but also a snapshot of important Hollywood history, marking major changes in film theory in the 1970s and demonstrating the enduring appeal of Douglas Sirk, a unique film artist who inspired later filmmakers. Roy Stafford explains.

The Studio

All That Heaven Allows was made by Universal–International, in the early 1950s the oldest surviving Hollywood studio but not one of the richest. It was best known for its classic horror films from the 1930s, several series of mainly low-budget genre pictures, and the occasional prestige film made with borrowed A-list stars. It was also briefly the outlet for prestige films from the British studios of J. Arthur Rank.

1954-5 was the period in Hollywood which emphasized Technicolor and widescreen processes designed to wean audiences away from the competition of their new TV screens. Universal could only afford colour and widescreen for productions that attracted large audiences. Ross Hunter, a Universal producer in his early thirties who teamed up with an older German émigré director Douglas Sirk (Detlef Sierck) proved that he could find those audiences. Sirk had been a leading theatre and then film director in Germany, but fled the country in 1937 because his second wife was Jewish. He struggled in Hollywood, working on low-budget films for different studios before getting a Universal contract and meeting Hunter. Major films required stars, and Hunter and Sirk found two ways to acquire them. In the 1950s, some great female stars of the 1940s found their careers in decline when they turned 40 (such was the sexism at the time). Hunter and Sirk were able to cast Barbara Stanwyck, one of the biggest names of the 1940s, in two moderately successful melodramas – *All I Desire* (1953) and T*here's Always Tomorrow* (1955). These films were still in black and white, and Sirk was frustrated by the studio's refusal to sanction Technicolor. If he couldn't 'buy' a star he could create one; he had done this with Rock Hudson in two action genre films and in a third melodrama *Magnificent Obsession* (1954), co-starring Hudson and Jane Wyman. The studio allowed colour for this film, and it proved a big success.

Hollywood studios have always tried to repeat successes by either making sequels or similar films with the same key elements. Hunter and Sirk were able to re-team Wyman and Hudson for *All That Heaven Allows*, a second melodrama in colour and with a cheap form of widescreen (cropping and blowing up the standard frame). Again the film was successful, but this time several industry commentators noticed the great attention to colour and mise-en-scène offered by Sirk and his cinematographer Russell Metty. Sirk made a stream of melodramas in the 1950s, but it is this one film that has been picked out, especially by film scholars.

Melodrama and the 'Woman's Picture'

The 'woman's picture' was an important genre for Hollywood in the 1940s when, because their male partners were away in the armed forces, women became increasingly independent and more likely to attend films with girlfriends. The melodrama of high emotions expressed through extravagant and 'excessive' use of colour, sound and mise-en-scène was one of the most adaptable modes for the 'woman's picture' later in the 1950s. Many of the great melodrama directors were Europeans with experience of

theatre – Max Ophüls and Otto Preminger as well as Sirk – and they brought a European sensibility and a knowledge of music, art and literature to bear on American life. Sirk became known for the American 'family melodrama'.

The Family Melodrama

The melodrama has a long and convoluted history as a mode of theatre and then film, but a key element is the presentation of relationships in different dramatic settings with emotions expressed through mise-en-scène. Melodrama is a good vehicle to represent societal changes and new social issues. In particular, it can be used to explore the changes in women's lives and especially the changing relationships between women, their partners and their children, as well as with their concerns about careers and other forms of fulfilment. Melodramas can also be about men; one of the most successful melodramas of (relatively) recent times was *Brokeback Mountain* (Ang Lee 2005) – a Western romance between two men.

The family melodrama offers opportunities to explore a woman's place in the family – and the family's response to her. Barbara Stanwyck plays a similar character in her two Sirk melodramas, firstly as a mother who returns to her family several years after leaving them to become a theatre performer, then as a woman who meets the man she once loved but left to pursue her career. Now she discovers his new life with a wife and family. In both cases Stanwyck plays the woman who suffers from these encounters. The ideological thrust of this kind of 'woman's picture' was to explore 'independence and freedom' – but also to show that they must be paid for. Audiences exulted in the former and tried to ignore the latter.

> The melodrama of high emotions expressed through extravagant and 'excessive' use of colour, sound and mise-en-scène was one of the most adaptable modes for the woman's picture later in the 1950s.

AF archive / Alamy Stock Photo

Public Domain

Hollywood studios have always tried to repeat successes by either making sequels or similar films with the same key elements.

Why 'Heaven'?

Jane Wyman was only 37 when she played Cary Scott, a young widow in *All That Heaven Allows*. A recognised star since her teens, now she was playing older than her real age. Cary lives in a pleasant house in a New England town in New York's commuter belt. Her friends and grownup children first try to find her a new man, an older country club type who is 'safe' (and seemingly sexless). When this fails, her children buy her a TV set for Christmas – as if her life was over and she should just spend her days at home. But instead she falls for Ron, her gardener, played by Rock Hudson (a six-foot plus hunk). He actually owns a tree nursery but his friends are 'bohemian' with a love of nature and the environment. Cary's friends are horrified. Here is a potent mix of social class snobbery, sex and 'alternative lifestyles'. Things go well – and not so well – with Ron. This is, after all, a melodrama.

In one of the most quoted scenes in the film, the delivery of the TV set on Christmas Eve, Cary is shown reflected in the blank screen – as if she has been 'captured' by TV. At the same time she is being lectured by her psychology student daughter Kay, who is dressed all

in scarlet – the colour of desire, epitomized by her hat/ cap which features an upright 'nipple'. She is an aroused young woman confronting her sexless mother Cary who is dressed in dark colours and drained of vitality.

The full force of Sirk's mise-en-scène was undervalued until a renewed interest in melodrama, and particularly Sirk's work, in the 1970s. He was 're-discovered' by the Edinburgh film festival in 1972 with retrospective screenings and a new book of film scholarship. Then in 1974, in the new feminist magazine Spare Rib, Laura Mulvey, already well-known for her own films and her essay on the 'male gaze', reviewed *Fear Eats the Soul* (1974), a new film by a prolific German filmmaker Rainer Werner Fassbinder. In his first film to be properly distributed in the UK, Fassbinder had discovered Sirk's work, and made a contemporary melodrama using the basic outline of *All That Heaven Allows* except this time 'Cary' was a 60-year-old cleaner and 'Ron' was a Moroccan migrant or gastarbeiter (a 'guest worker'). Mulvey introduced Fassbinder to UK/US audiences, and thus helped resurrect Sirk. Twenty-eight years later, the American director Todd Haynes also consciously re-made Sirk's film as *Far From*

Melodrama is a good vehicle to represent societal changes and new social issues.

Heaven (2002 – see MM4), but this time focusing on (the renamed) Cathy's husband, who is not dead but having a fling with a man, forcing her into the arms of their African-American gardener. Haynes is a fan of both Sirk and Fassbinder, and would have been aware of Sirk's last great melodrama, *Imitation of Life* (1959), about a young mixed-race woman who 'passes' for white. Haynes recently made *Carol* (2015), the film that should have won an Oscar and which again glories in its subversive mise-en-scène.

Sirk and Mise-en-scène

So, what was the significance for film studies of Sirk's approach to melodrama? First, he helped to resurrect the melodrama from critical neglect and sometimes ridicule. Despite the popularity of the films in the 1950s (two of which were top ten box office winners), family melodramas like Sirk's were not taken seriously either as works of art or films about important issues. Feminist scholars argued that this was at least partly because they were films enjoyed by women, from novels by women, with leading female stars. When film scholars began to write about Sirk's films they discovered a rich body of work with consistent elements. Sirk was retrospectively hailed as an auteur; his new auteur status meant the films were more highly regarded, although by then the value of auteur theory had been challenged.

But it was Sirk's use of mise-en-scène that really mattered. Arguably he was able to present the 'peace and prosperity' of Eisenhower's America in these seemingly happy middle-class homes – and then to subvert that image through his 'excessive' colour and mise-en-scène which exposed the contradictions (including repressed sexuality). But this was a progressive approach largely coming from male scholars. Mulvey argued that the real progressive approach was to recognise that melodramas focused on female characters played by stars who gave the women in the audience opportunities to enjoy

'the dizzy satisfaction in witnessing the way that sexual difference under patriarchy is fraught, explosive and erupts dramatically into violence within its own private stamping ground, the family' (Mulvey 1978/87).

How relevant is that in Hollywood in 2018?

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Roy Stafford hosts The Case for Global Film, a blog discussing everything that isn't Hollywood (and a little bit that is). The blog lists 117 posts on Hollywood. Check them out at https://itpworld. wordpress.com/category/hollywood/

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The rise of K-pop

Korean music, film and TV are becoming enormously popular with young people in the UK. Melodie Karczewski examines this modern cultural phenomenon.

Korean pop music, or K-Pop, is an obsession for many Western teens. With bands such as BTS making it into the UK chart top 50 last year with 'Mic Drop' and reaching over 189 million views for their music video 'DNA' on YouTube, Korean pop is becoming a global phenomenon. The industry, reportedly worth upwards of $4.7 billion a year, is praised for being extravagant, mesmerising and creative but differs from the western music industry most notably in its approach to the LGBTIQ community. In fact, did you know that until 2015 Korea had no openly gay music artists?

Global Success

So why is K-Pop so celebrated in the west? First and foremost, the Korean music industry has conventions and structures that seem to ensure a band's success. Band members are numerous with each individual performer seemingly unique and loveable in their own way. When there are around 13 members per manufactured boy band with constructed and apparently diverse personalities, the group achieve a maximum audience. Fans are encouraged to pick a bias and stereotypes such as 'the shy one', 'the prankster' or 'the cute one' are typical in some of the most popular bands such as EXO. Structurally the bands usually have a leader who is wise, charismatic and caring, looking out for the other members. Then there are the leaders of the individual teams; rappers, dancers and vocalists. With so many characters to choose from, it seems they have discovered a recipe for success.

Then there are the structures and synergies within the media industry itself. Many K-Pop artists actually boost their careers, and sometimes debut, with a Korean TV show. In these shows, imaginative storylines abound such as *Dream Knight* featuring GOT7 where key chain toys of the band come to life to protect a lonely schoolgirl, or *You're Beautiful* which is about an orphaned twin training to be a nun who is suddenly called upon to pose as her brother in the pop band A.N.JELL.

Gender and Sexuality

K-drama gives us an interesting insight into Korea's social taboos. Watching shows such as *Playful Kiss*, *Boys Over Flowers* and *The Miracle* (all of which can be found on Netflix) you will see some peculiar behaviour and storylines. The storyline for *Boys Over Flowers* ends similarly to many other Korean shows: the girl protagonist ends up with both boys that have been fighting over her; one being her boyfriend and the other her 'soul mate' who remains in a chaste but loving relationship with her, and acts as her protector.

Weight and body shaming are also key themes in shows such as *The Miracle*, which follows an obese young girl and her pop-star twin sister. This *Freaky Friday*-style show, seems to be putting forward the message that you can't judge a book by its cover, but being overweight is constantly portrayed in a negative light and the characters are constantly judged on their beauty. In *Playful Kiss* the main girl is an idiotic but passionate schoolgirl stalking a highly academic, ill-mannered boy. Despite being completely incompatible she eventually

> When there are around 13 members per manufactured boy band with constructed and seemingly diverse personalities, the group achieve a maximum audience.

wears him down and he falls in love with her. These shows put women in the lead roles but then undermine them by offering an unrealistic interpretation of reality. Nevertheless the 'love conquers all' theme in many of these shows attracts a huge teenage audience.

Solo music artist MRSHLL spoke out recently about being K-Pop's first openly gay star in an article for Billboard. He states 'Most of my friends in Korea told me it was social suicide'. With not only a music, but often an acting career to maintain, rumours concerning any performer's sexuality can be damaging for not only the artist but for bands as a whole. MRSHLL never officially came out as gay but allowed it to be presumed and, unlike most artists in Korea, didn't deny it. He explains his experiences of prejudice in the industry and praises his label for ensuring he doesn't have to make the compromises that other labels would almost certainly ask of him. MRSHLL has recently released his EP 'FEELGHOOD', which contains two songs sung in English; 'Home' and 'Circle' tell stories of confusion and insecurity. BTS's latest album 'Love Yourself' has also been interpreted as supportive of LGBTIQ although it's not explicit. These feats might seem small to many Westerners but, for the Korean media, it's a big step towards breaking the social stigma surrounding the LGBTIQ community.

Why aren't more Korean artists coming forward to support the LGBTIQ? Gay characters are hard to come by in K- dramas and where they are present, they're often portrayed in a negative light. *Strong Girl Bong-soon,* about a girl superhero, bodyguard and aspiring games developer, is much more socially developed but even in this show one of the main characters is accused of being homosexual and this almost destroys his career and business.

Being a star in Korea isn't easy. Horror stories reporting the restrictions and pressures placed on many music artists are scattered all over the internet. Female actress from the popular Korean show *Boys over Flowers*, Jang Ja-yeon, committed suicide and wrote a detailed note shaming her agent, directors and media executives for regularly beating her and forcing her to perform sexual acts. Seven men were prosecuted including her agent who served just a year in prison.

Koreans aiming for a career in the industry must pass auditions for an agency in order to sign a binding contract and become a low-paid trainee, which, even then, doesn't guarantee a debut. Most of the time the trainees are still at school, therefore life can be very hectic and the training period can last for over 5 years. Quitting isn't really an option when you've signed a binding contract and the pressure

Instagram / @mrshllxyz

Solo music artist MRSHLL spoke out recently about being K-Pop's first openly gay star. He states 'Most of my friends in Korea told me it was social suicide'.

for these stars builds as they feel obliged to hone their talent and look incredible. In fact, South Korea is the plastic surgery capital of the world, eyelid surgery being the most popular. With over 980,000 recorded operations in 2014 appearance seems to be extremely important, even to the point where photos are included in resumes for most jobs. So, with immense pressure to be perfect, coming out or supporting LGBTIQ might just ruin your career in Korea.

Social Context

So why is sexuality such a taboo subject? Recent events suggest the Korean government could be to blame. South Korea has voted to support measures that aim to end discrimination against LGBTIQ at the United Nations, but it hasn't been able to replicate this for its own citizens. Seoul's mayor cancelled the enactment of a city human rights charter after religious groups opposed the inclusion of sexual orientation in a non-discrimination clause. The government also issued a new sex-education curriculum, which, in a bid to maintain 'value neutrality regarding society, culture and religion,' made no mention of homosexuality.

The military's reaction towards LGBTIQ has also been upsetting. Although it is not illegal to be gay in Korea, homosexual activity within the military is punishable to up to 2 years in prison. The military ran a harsh clampdown on suspected gay service members in April 2017. The South Korean military said it was, 'To keep the military community sound and given the special nature of military discipline, sexual relations with same sex soldiers are being punished as 'disgraceful conduct' under military law.' With government policies like these undermining soldiers in this way it is no wonder that Korean society, and their media stars, feel insecure about their sexuality.

EXO Courtesy of SM Entertainment

The Future

Despite this there has been some positive change. In 2017, South Korea's Supreme Court ordered the government to allow the Beyond the Rainbow Foundation, a LGBTIQ rights foundation, to legally register as a charity, affirming South Korea's obligations to respect freedom of assembly for all its citizens. It was established in January 2014 and is the first LGBTIQ foundation in Korea.

If K-drama and K-pop is so anti-LGBTIQ why is it developing in international support? This could be for many reasons: the storylines in K-drama are attractive to any hopeless romantic as love always prevails, even if that means an eternal love triangle, also because of the clever manufacturing of K-Pop personalities, there is a perfect guy for each fan. The music videos are extremely high budget and the actual talent and performances are immaculate. K-Pop is becoming more westernised itself which makes it appeal internationally. Furthermore, with artists such as MRSHLL making headlines for being the only openly gay artist in Korea Western fans are warming up to this exciting genre of music and TV. Hopefully, we will see further progress in the attitudes of the Korean media towards the LGBTIQ community.

Melodie Karczewski is an A level Media Studies student and screenwriter.

📚 *from the MM vaults*

Gangnam Style, Pete Turner, *MediaMag* 45

Koreans aiming for a career in the industry must pass auditions for an agency in order to sign a binding contract and become a low-paid trainee, which, even then, doesn't guarantee a debut.

CHOOSE TRAINSPOTTING…

Choose life. Choose your future. Choose getting a great 'A' level in Film. Choose *Trainspotting*. Mark Ramey explains why this film, and its sequel *T2*, reflect changes in British society.

The exam board, Eduqas, lists ten British films since 1995, from which two must be chosen, both with a focus on narrative and ideology. *Trainspotting* (Boyle, UK, 1996) is surely the stand-out choice on this list: the definitive UK film of the 1990s.

The film opens with a less than positive refrain: Mark Renton (Ewan McGregor) runs away from security guards, his footsteps echo through the streets of Edinburgh underscored by Iggy Pop's 'Lust for Life' and overlaid with his famous 'Choose Life' monologue that defined a generation. Renton's disillusionment perfectly captured the zeitgeist of Generation X anger and alienation, and its anthem call to disaffected youth continues to resonate today.

The monologue itself (see opposite) is worth a closer look, not least because it bookends the film, but also because it became (and still is) an iconic piece of youth-market merchandising: to this day the anti-establishment mantra, 'Choose Life' appears on clothing and posters. It was also given a loving upgrade in the film's 20th anniversary sequel, *T2 Trainspotting* (Boyle, 2017, UK), a move reflecting the monologue's

status as the defining credo of a lost generation.

The delivery of the *T2* monologue is more equivocal; no longer a voiceover to a montage but rather an edgy rant during a conversation with a young woman in a café. The angry rejection and lawlessness felt in the first film is now rooted in banal café culture and a weary acceptance of failure. In *T2* Renton is angry with himself. He is the failure, as much as the 'rip-off' culture in which he lives and draws his values. The punk mantra of youth alienation has become the vaguely moralistic rant of a cynical and exhausted middle-aged man:

> **Choose life. Choose Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and hope that someone, somewhere cares. Choose looking up old flames, wishing you'd done it all differently. And choose watching history repeat itself. Choose your future. Choose reality TV, slut shaming, revenge porn. Choose a zero-hour contract, a two-hour journey to work. And choose the same for your kids, only worse, and smother the pain with an unknown dose of an unknown drug made in somebody's kitchen. And then… take a deep breath. You're an addict, so be addicted. Just be addicted to something else. Choose the ones you love. Choose your future. Choose life.**

What is evident from both speeches is that *Trainspotting* and *T2* are both darkly comic satires of contemporary life. Their milieu is largely localised in terms of Scotland but they can both be read as parables of growing-up [or not] in destructive communities and cultures. In both films, our heavily mediated and materialistic world and the postmodern fracturing of grand narratives and stable identities has arguably led to a profound shift in our ability to establish meaning for our lives in anything

Choose life. Choose a job. Choose a career. Choose a family. Choose a f***ing big television, Choose washing machines, cars, compact disc players, and electrical tin openers. Choose good health, low cholesterol and dental insurance. Choose fixed-interest mortgage repayments. Choose a starter home. Choose your friends. Choose leisure wear and matching luggage. Choose a three piece suite on hire purchase in a range of f***ing fabrics. Choose DIY and wondering who the f*** you are on a Sunday morning. Choose sitting on that couch watching mind-numbing spirit-crushing game shows, stuffing f***ing junk food into your mouth. Choose rotting away at the end of it all, pishing your last in a miserable home, nothing more than an embarrassment to the selfish, f***ed-up brats you have spawned to replace yourselves. Choose your future. Choose life . . . But why would I want to do a thing like that? I chose not to choose life: I chose something else. And the reasons? There are no reasons. Who needs reasons when you've got heroin?

"HOLLYWOOD COME IN . . . YOUR TIME IS UP
TRAINSPOTTING IS HERE AND IT'S TOE-CURLINGLY GOOD" ★★★★★ EMPIRE

#1 BEGBIE   #2 DIANE   #3 SICK BOY   #4 SPUD   #5 RENTON
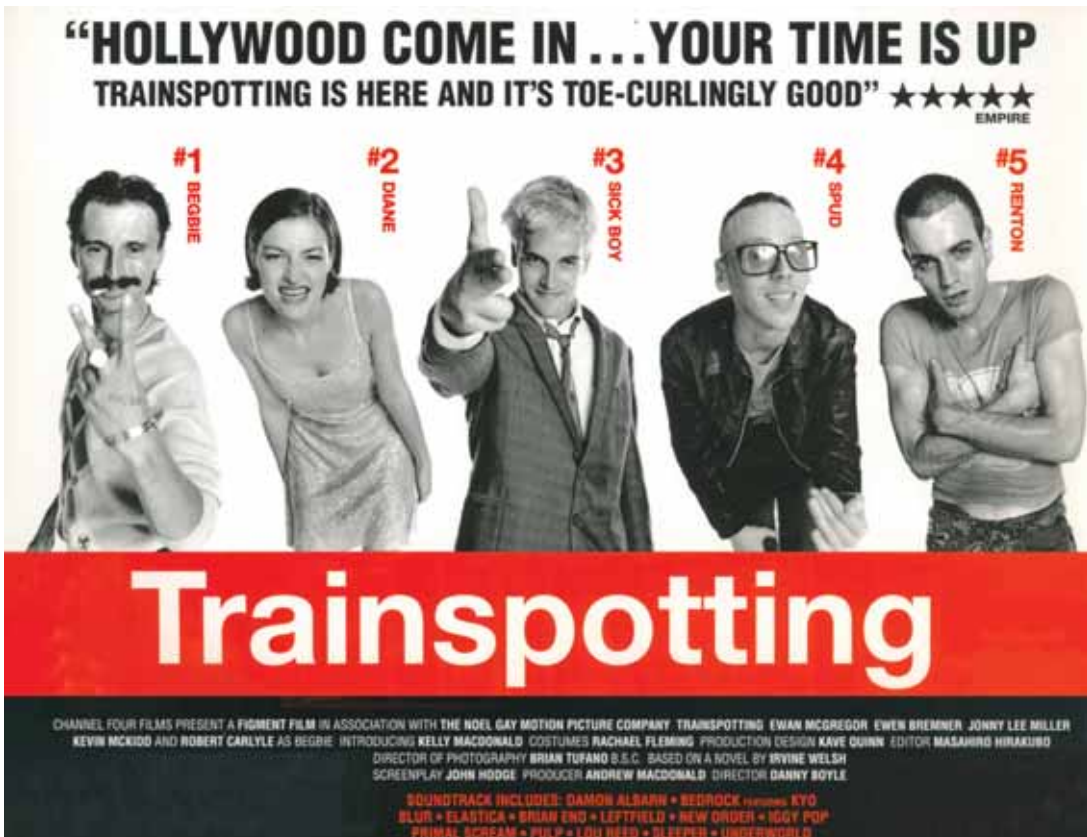
Trainspotting

other than a superficial way. In *Trainspotting* Renton chooses heroin. Indeed, his famous monologue continues with words usually missing from the merchandising:

'I chose not to choose life: I chose something else. And the reasons? There are no reasons. Who needs reasons when you've got heroin?'

The heroin addiction of 1990s *Trainspotting* has become the social media addiction of 21st century *T2*, but the issue of addiction is still the same. A need for a value system to fill the void is what is at stake, and Renton's glib and perhaps unconvincing moralising in *T2* suggests we 'Choose the ones you love.' Advice he is manifestly unable to follow in both films.

The Context: Cool Britannia

Trainspotting emerged from a powerful resurgence in British culture and British Film in the mid-1990s. The Conservative Party's divisive, near-20-year reign, was coming to an end and a re-energised, more inclusive Labour Party under Tony Blair was striking a chord with the electorate. Blair courted Britpop stars like Oasis, invoking memories of a previous Labour Party leader, Harold Wilson, who posed with the Beatles in the 1960s. Indeed, the mid-1990s and the mid-1960s started to be spoken of in the same breath: 'Cool Britannia' was one journalistic phrase coined to echo another from a previous era, 'the swinging 60s'. In 1997 Blair got the keys to No.10, by which time the whole world knew of The Spice Girls and would soon feel the force of *The Full Monty* (1997) the most successful

UK non-franchise film to date. Clothing designers like Alexander McQueen and a new breed of pop artists such as Damien Hirst and Tracey Emin were all further evidence of a cultural wave upon which *Trainspotting* had absolutely crested. Even football (spurred on by the UK-hosted Euro 96 tournament), evolved from a working-class hobby into a bourgeois lifestyle. This was given a Scottish inflected nod in *Trainspotting* when, post-coitus, Renton reflects, 'I haven't felt that good since Archie Gemmill scored against Holland in 1978.' (Gemmill was captain of the national team and his goal is one of Scottish football's greatest moments.)

The Marketing

The film's popular appeal is partly explained by its marketing: the stylish orange and white posters with the 'heroin chic' posturing of the young aspirational cast (even Spud and Begbie look 'cool'). The £850,000 distribution spend provided by US distributors Polygram (half again of the £1.5 million production budget – itself buoyed by Channel 4's involvement) employed a strategy focusing mainly on outdoor poster adverts, eschewing the conventional wisdom of TV spots for an urban street vibe. The highly visible campaign created a must-see experience reflected in positive box office takings worldwide: $72 million for *Trainspotting*. *T2* came in some way behind at $41 million and on a considerably higher budget of $18 million.

Another smart move was the choice to adapt the work of cult author Irvine Welsh, whose first novel *Trainspotting* was published in 1993, followed swiftly by a controversial stage adaptation with Ewan Bremner (Spud) as Renton.

Producer, Andrew MacDonald of Figment Films, also built on the success of *Shallow Grave* in 1995 by employing some of the same cast and crew. Thus, alongside production and distribution involvement from Channel 4 and Polygram, and MacDonald as producer, John Hodge wrote the screenplay for which he won an Academy Nomination, Ewan MacGregor took the lead role and Danny Boyle directed, just as they all had for *Shallow Grave*.

Danny Boyle by Martin Craft

T2 also aimed to maintain the core personnel from *Trainspotting* including using source material written by Welsh in his sequel to *Trainspotting*, *Porno* (2002).

The Debates

Despite its positive box office, critical acclaim and cult appeal there was inevitably controversy, largely prompted by the graphically comic depiction of heroin addiction, Begbie's aggression and the cast's foul-mouthed vernacular. 18 certificate was a certainty. Many critics also felt the Tarantino-esque 'cool' evident in the casting, soundtrack, screenplay and technical construction of the film was irresponsible. Mid-90s Scotland had a real problem with heroin addiction in working class areas; many felt that the film's anti-drugs message should have been stronger, and that a social realist, rather than a hyper-realist style, would have better suited the material. Thankfully the proposed misery-fest was never an option, and few wannabe junkies would be turned on by the dead babies, desperate parents, Aids and the self-immersion and greed of most of the main characters. Even being Scottish was travestied: 'Its' shite being Scottish,' Renton remarks.

Only in the film's euphoric conclusion (underscored by Underworld's 90s dance anthem, 'Born Slippy') do we sense that Renton has found peace – for the time being. However, Renton's eventual failure as a person in *T2* is also our collective failure for engaging in a materialistic, self-obsessed and superficial culture.

> **'I'm cleaning up and I'm moving on, going straight and choosing life. I'm looking forward to it already. I'm going to be just like you: the job, the family, the f***ing big television, the washing machine, the car, the compact disc and electrical tin opener, good health, low cholesterol, dental insurance, mortgage, starter home, leisurewear, luggage, three-piece suite, DIY, game shows, junk food, children, walks in the park, nine to five, good at golf, washing the car, choice of sweaters, family Christmas, indexed pension, tax exemption, clearing the gutters, getting by, looking ahead, to the day you die.'**

Mark Ramey is Head of Film Studies at Collyers College, Horsham

Trainspotting emerged from a powerful resurgence in British culture and British Film in the mid-1990s.

#1 SPUD

#2 RENTON

#3 BEGBIE

#4 SICK BOY

Renton's eventual failure as a person in T2 is also our collective failure for engaging in a materialistic, self-obsessed and superficial culture.

THE REAL / LADY GAGA?

The media landscape, saturated with celebrities and performers striving to achieve super star status, puts constant pressure on stars to frequently reinvent themselves in order to stay in the spotlight. Charlie Winward investigates how far Lady Gaga's 'Million Reasons' video is a product of this social, cultural and economic context.

In an ever-expanding liberal society, the new generation of music consumers embraces individuality, identity and self-discovery in a way that previous generations never did. There is a responsibility placed upon celebrities to perpetuate social change and encourage their fans to express themselves without inhibition. Gaga embodies this trend through constant reinvention and shocking innovation. As such, she has been a role model for unabashed self-expression throughout her career, becoming a huge ally in the LGBT community for example, and playing a role in inspiring women.

Lady Gaga's 'Million Reasons' music video exposed her in a new light to fans and viewers. She attempts to deconstruct her celebrity image by humanising herself and avoids features of traditional pop music videos such as dancers and choreography. Gaga performs more authentically: alone, simply singing with her guitar. This is in contrast to her previous, more outrageous videos in terms of mise-en-scene, production, genre and fashion. The decision to humanise Gaga was presumably to make her work appeal to mass audiences and to emphasise the emotional drive behind the song. It acts as another attempt to disestablish her elite status and even break the boundaries between Lady Gaga, the persona, and Stefani Germanotta, the 'real' woman behind the theatrics of show business.

Analysing Media Language

While the semiotics and codes in Lady Gaga's 'Million Reasons' music video convey the sense of emotional suffering upon which the song is based, they also introduce an underlying message of revaluating what is truly important: finding the strength to cope with loss and self-recovery.

The video opens in what seems to be the middle of nowhere with Gaga dressed in just a t-shirt and shorts presented as weak, vulnerable and broken – a side to her that the public rarely get to see. There is an obvious contrast to the opening of her previous video 'Perfect Illusion' which was the first of three

singles from the album Joanne ('Million Reasons' being the second) sharing a linked narrative.

'Perfect Illusion' revealed a manic Gaga losing control; this idea was established through several technical codes such as shaky camera, flashing strobe lights and fast cuts while fans swarm around her reaching out as though to take something from her. 'Million Reasons' on the other hand demonstrates a sense of recovery, with steady camerawork, sympathetic lighting and longer takes.

Discovering Gaga tumbling through the desert and left lying defeated on the ground suggests another enigma for audiences to decode. They will question why she is there be it by her own choice, or because she was abandoned. It could be interpreted as a metaphor for how she feels she has been treated; as if she has been chewed up and spat out. This could be by a love interest or even by the music industry, considering the pressure she felt to transition away from the eccentric, artistic decisions she has become iconic for.

Soon her friends and team come to rescue her revealing that they knew, or found out, where she was. This could be Gaga's way of telling viewers that friends will always be able to find you when you need them most. She shares her story of losing hope to remind those watching that it can be restored if you are surrounded by the right people. This idea is pressed upon audiences as she wants them to learn from her mistakes.

A gentle fade to black and white is used as she sits in front of the dressing room mirror. This presents a sense of ambiguity: it could be a symbolic code to represent the darkness and pain she feels in the lyrics – as if the colour of her life had been lost – or it could also act as homage to the starlets of the 1950s such as Marilyn Monroe. This would be showing respect to the greats that came before her, a concept Gaga often experiments with intertextually in her work, and in her own unique way, acknowledges their legacy, which once again presents a message of female empowerment dating back through the decades.

An important enigma code in the music video is the wrapped gift waiting for Gaga in her dressing room. Viewers are left wondering what the gift is but, ironically, do not question who the gift is from, assuming it is from a boyfriend/lover. When the gift is later revealed to be from her sister, the audience is faced with a new moral enigma code as they are left wondering why they would assume the gift is from a man. Viewers are forced to reflect on the heteroromanticism and gender roles that all women are expected to fulfill – and the standard that they internally hold women to. Lady Gaga also uses this as

It acts as another attempt to disestablish her elite status and even break the boundaries between Lady Gaga, the persona, and Stefani Germanotta, the 'real' woman behind the theatrics of show business.

an opportunity to express the importance of family. She seems to suggest that her sister empowers her more than a love interest could – or at least that a sister's support is of greater value at the time. The album from which the single comes is, in fact, named after her father's sister Joanne who died in her twenties.

An obvious symbolic code is the gift itself: a crucifix necklace. This is representative of the Christian faith and is presented as another saviour for Gaga, along with family and friends, through her dark moments. She cherishes it and holds it close to her heart, literally in the video and therefore figuratively in life. That said, this representation shows Gaga as thankful and spiritual rather than her forcing her beliefs upon viewers.

The Loneliness of Mega-Stardom

There is an obvious attempt to steer away from Lady Gaga's previous star persona with raw, real shots of her having her makeup done. She gives audiences an insight into what goes on behind the scenes, showing us a silent, reflective Gaga before she performs. The no-makeup dressing room shots may be considered an attempt to humanize her and make her seem normal, however, the choice to have her team doing her makeup for her rather than doing it herself implies that she still is a celebrity and perhaps wants to reveal there is a lonely, dark side to fame that is hidden from the public.

She further enforces this concept with the story behind the video presenting her as humble and gracious. She appears to be saved from the desert when she was left abandoned and alone by her friends and team. There is a powerful shot where she hugs her friends in great relief. It shows acknowledgement of needing be saved but also a discovering of what could save her: friendship and family. The theme of female empowerment is continued as they seem to transfer the strength to her that she so desperately needs – arguably

The Royal Variety Performance, 2009

A gentle fade to black and white is used. This presents a sense of ambiguity: it could be a symbolic code to represent the darkness and pain she feels – as if the colour of her life had been lost – or it could also act as homage to the starlets of the 1950s such as Marilyn Monroe.

the strength that was stolen from her by a man.

Gaga's costume in the performance section – a pink suit and hat – plays with gender roles. She builds a country cowboy aesthetic that carries connotations of masculinity and power but is juxtaposed with the feminine colour palette. Overall this symbolises Gaga not conforming to gender norms and not being afraid to challenge social constructs, a mind-set she has had throughout her whole career. Lady Gaga establishes herself as a feminist and a liberal celebrating her individuality and sexuality.

Economic context

Nowadays music videos are released on Vevo to be viewed and shared by a mass online audience. The economic revenue is dependent on the video and its advertisements receiving as many views as possible. Therefore, artists try their hardest to create controversial or ground-breaking video content to attract the most attention online. Lady Gaga did this by embracing a dramatic shift in genre.

However, in doing so she risked not being as successful as her past pop work (which it arguably was not) as audiences with contrasting expectations felt disappointed with this new direction.

So, does that make this video even more bold and powerful as she disregards what has worked in the past to present personal and unapologetic art, or is it just another marketing stunt? Vevo's platform allows all of an artist's work to be available at once which encourages the viewer to watch more and make comparisons across an artist's career. When considering Lady Gaga's oeuvre I think it demonstrates the growth of an artist in the middle of her career establishing herself as a new, mature, woman.

Charlie Winward is an A level Media Studies student at Highams Park School in London

Resources

The documentary *Gaga: Five Foot Two* is available on Netflix

from the MM vaults

Lady Gaga: Mistress of Convergence, Sean Richardson, *MediaMag* 36

IT'S A
SKAM

All across the country, media teachers who have spent the last five years or so binge-watching Scandinavian long-form dramas are now puzzling the same question: how do I get my students to see past the subtitles? Here Claire Pollard suggests the perfect show to ease you into foreign language TV.

Image courtesy of NRK

We all know young people have mastered multiple screen viewing but reading and watching at the same time might, for some, be a new and daunting experience. Fear not. *Skam* (translation: Shame) is your way in to subtitled content. The Norwegian teen drama, which came to an end in autumn, 2017, is set in Hartvig Nissen school in Oslo and centres around a group of students in the 18 months leading up to their 'Russe' – effectively a graduation but if you're going to watch the series, you'll need to Google it for a more detailed explanation. Each of the four seasons focuses on a different character from the same friendship group coming to terms with issues that affect teenagers globally: family, friendship, identity, isolation, cyber-bullying, eating disorders, sexuality, slut-shaming, mental health etc. In this case study, shaped around the media theoretical framework, I explain why *Skam* is a must-see for all media students and their teachers.

Representation

Mostly in *Skam* the characters and storylines defy convention. By that I mean they don't conform to the dominant images of teenagers and teen problems that we regularly see on British TV. Leading UK magazine

Attitude, aimed at the gay community, listed their top 5 TV 'coming out' scenes that were handled 'sensibly, with dignity.' If you watch them though, every one is a scene of heightened drama with characters coming out in the middle of a screaming match at a wedding or while the kids sleep next door. There are tears, appeals, hugs and slammed doors.

But not so in *Skam* where the drama develops in between the long pauses in sentences, in the phone-screen ellipsis as a character awaits a message, in long close-ups of characters' faces on which only the slightest reaction can be read. When Isaak comes out to his best friend Jonas over an after-school kebab, Jonas calmly takes a bite and asks, 'Is it that guy from Vilde's review group? He's a good-looking guy.' Later Isaak texts his parents to ask if he can bring a boyfriend to their Christmas Church service: there's a pause while they consider their reply (…), then a message: 'ok'. No hysterics, no melodrama just quietly gripping realism.

Season 4 focuses on Sana, a Muslim. I braced myself for the culture-clash narratives typical in British film and television: the traditional parent versus the Westernised teenager, the inner identity conflict of a character torn between two cultures (see *Bend It Like Beckham*, *Eastenders* and recently,

> Each scene is date-stamped, for example 'MONTAG 12:15,' and scenes were distributed online in real time. So, if you were following the show on social media, the scenes would be pushed in to your timeline as though they were happening in parallel to real life.

Ackley Bridge). *Skam* transcends these stereotypes. Sana's story provides us with a more nuanced portrayal of a Muslim girl in a non-Muslim friendship group. She's witty, wise and, like most teenage girls, protective of her friends. Sana goes to parties, dances but doesn't drink, nips into quiet rooms to pray and gets vomited on by her drunken pals as she holds their hair back. She's never pious, judgmental or naïve and when we first see her, she whizzes into shot, in a black hijab and a t-shirt bearing the slogan 'no hard feelings', coolly riding a Segway.

Audience

Skam knows its audience. Creator Julie Andem was tasked with writing a show aimed at the 60,000 16-year-old girls in Norway who largely reject terrestrial TV in favour of on-demand online content. With a small budget, Andem had to consider how best to reach out to her audience. She sketched out nine main characters, each with their own issues and narrative – all of whom go on an emotional journey between 16 and 19 years old. She then carried out hours and hours of interviews with real teenagers about their lives and experiences. Thus, *Skam* is as real as it gets. The characters words, reactions, feelings are farmed from those interviews so it's no wonder the teen audience in Norway and eventually all over the world, would connect with it.

It also speaks to the power of the teen experience globally. Andem argues that the show is rooted in Norwegian culture and yet teens in China, the USA and all over Europe identify with the character's experiences. Not only were audiences sharing scenes and episodes over the internet as they were released, they were translating them into different languages and posting transcripts for each other within hours of each broadcast. If you watch online in whatever language, many of the subtitles you will see will have been written by fans.

Media Language

Adults almost never appear on screen and when they are, they're often in the periphery of the frame. Sana and Isaak's science teacher is heard and seen wandering between the desks but the camera cuts her off at the neck; the students are sitting at desks, why would we need to see her face? The camera is down on the characters' level focusing the viewer on their lives and experiences.

The trick of building each season around a different member of the friendship group also adds to the realism of the show. For example, in season one, we are inside Eva's head, her troubles with the old friends who now blank and insult her and her attempts to build a new friendship group. Her relationships trouble her– she is thoughtful, depressed and spends a lot of time alone (her mum works away). As a viewer, we are immersed in her experiences and feelings.

In seasons two, three and four she's still a main character but we only see her from the perspective of

skamofficialpage
1,448 likes
skamofficialpage BOYS 💗

skamofficialpage
579 likes
skamofficialpage MY GIRLS 💜

Public Domain

whoever's narrative we are absorbed in. She's loud, even brash at times. Her relationship with Jonas has broken down and she's making up for it with booze and casual sex. She's the regular party girl. Yet we know that there is more to her than what the others see. We know her vulnerabilities and insecurities, but we don't ever see them again from the outside.

And isn't that what it's like being a teenager – projecting an image to the outside world that isn't reflective of the whole self? The person that others see is only one-dimensional, the inner life of each main character is so well captured, through close-ups, long takes and well written backstory that each one has incredible depth. The experience as a viewer of being jolted out of Eva's head and then seeing her through the eyes of Noora reminds us to look more closely at those around us and remember that most of us are performing most of the time.

Industry

The format of the show was highly innovative and managed to quickly build and maintain an audience both in Norway and, by the third season, internationally. It used an experimental distribution method to enable the show to connect with teenage audiences.

Each scene is date-stamped, for example 'MONTAG 12:15,' and scenes were distributed online in real time. So, if you were following the show on social media, the scenes would be pushed in to your timeline as though they were happening in parallel to real life. If, in the show, the characters were arriving at school on Monday morning discussing the dramatic events of the weekend the scene would ping on your phone as you, simultaneously, were heading into school after a presumably less dramatic weekend, thus taking Blumler and Katz's idea of social interaction and personal identification with the characters to another level. The collated scenes would then be aired as a full episode on Friday evenings.

The format has been so successful that it's being remade in America. The creators are adopting the same

Public Domain

audience interview process and unique distribution strategy. It will be aired on Facebook Watch.

Theory

The post-modern theorist Jean Baudrillard was concerned about audiences being too immersed in a 'simulacra' that they experience 'hyper-reality', a sense of not being able to distinguish between the real world and the imagined world of the media product. The methods of marketing and distribution of *Skam* drew the audiences deep into the imagined world or simulacra by giving the impression that the events in *Skam* were happening in parallel with the audience's real lives. Additionally, each character had a full social media presence that was active throughout each season. Fans of the show could therefore see in between the scenes as characters got ready for parties or posted selfies and updates about what they were doing.

Baudrillard, writing in the 1980s, would have considered this a dangerous blurring of the boundaries between life and the media – whereas Henry Jenkins, writing in 2006, would argue more positively that the convergence of technologies has resulted in audiences 'demanding the right to participate within the culture' of the media they consume. When the media is as real as *Skam* and the characters as moral and charming as Sana I can only see the blurring of those boundaries as a positive thing.

Claire Pollard is a teacher and editor of MediaMagazine

This is the start of season three, ticking all the boxes of classic noir: a flawed hero attempting to save their corner of a corrupt world from dark and twisted forces that threaten to overwhelm them; an implacable fighter for justice, yet one filled with human frailty.

OUT OF THE PAST

The Bridge and the Dark Heart of Nordic Noir

If your school/college is following the EDUQAS Media A level, you may be assessed on your understanding of the TV crime thriller *The Bridge* and its place within the wider genre of Nordic noir. Jonathan Nunns investigates.

Organised Crime

Where to start? *The Bridge* (2011 to present) is a Danish/Swedish TV co-production, commissioned by their two main public service broadcasters, Denmark's DR and Sweden's SVT. They co-funded the project, sharing the risks and commissioning the Swedish production company Filmlance, to make the show. Under the stewardship of CEO/Producer Lars Blomgren and writer Hans Rosenfeldt, the show became a sensation. With the assistance of Filmlance parent company Endemol/Shine, the project had powerful

support, enabling its successful export to 135 countries. Dutch based Endemol/Shine, the makers of international hits such as Big Brother and Broadchurch, were fully aware of the franchising possibilities of *The Bridge*, enabling the production of two remake shows, one American/Mexican made by the US cable channel FX and a British/French version (*The Tunnel*) co-produced by Sky Atlantic/Canal Plus.

Watching the Detectives

What of the British experience of *The Bridge*? As a subtitled foreign language product, it was unlikely to become the mainstream hit it was in its home market. It was this factor that opened the possibility for the English language remake. *The Bridge* in its original form was a good choice for the demographic of the digital niche channel BBC4. Narrowcasting to an educated and up-market audience, *The Bridge* was an ideal follow up to other foreign language Nordic hits such as *The Killing* and *Borgen*, which

had initiated the demographic to the idea of enjoying subtitled TV.

The Bridge was an ideal fit for BBC4. The British might be stereotypically averse to subtitles but the middle class/middle aged BBC4 core demographic is perhaps open to more exotic fare. Whilst Swedish/Danish might be unfamiliar as languages, the genre certainly wasn't to audiences weaned on a diet of crime dramas from T*he Sweeney* to *Life on Mars*. Delivering an exotic spin on the familiar made *The Bridge* a limited risk import. *The Bridge* screened in back-to-back double bills in a Saturday evening slot that had proven successful for earlier imports such as *The Killing*. With screenings acting like a mini box set binge, the public service BBC was also developing the income streams for the subsequent DVD and streaming releases of the show in the U.K. *The Bridge* drew audiences of over a million to a channel accustomed to much smaller numbers, making the import a very sharp investment indeed. Not least

AF archive / Alamy Stock Photo

Frowning and intensely focused, she makes major social gaffes due to her inability to understand and empathise with the emotions of others. However, she is also an excellent detective, focused – to an almost superhuman level of intensity – on the job in hand. Long hours and a trail of failed relationships mean nothing to her in the quest to find and punish the guilty.

It proves her greatest test when, from Martin's past, comes a vengeful killer who murders his son. Martin, acting outside the law, dispatches his son's killer in turn and Saga, in following her iron code, sends her only friend to face justice.

The scene is set for episode one of season three, the focus text for this unit.

Season 3, Episode 1

Another crime is committed. This time, an elaborate tableau is found in an abandoned warehouse. Several dressed mannequins are seated at a table, except one is not a dummy it's the body of a liberal feminist campaigner for transsexual rights. The victim's heart has been removed and a theatrical smile has been drawn on her face, like that of Batman's nemesis, The Joker. Potential suspects soon swirl through the murky plot lines.

Saga is assigned, but because the victim is a Dane, found in Sweden, she must once again work with the people from over the bridge. Knowing Martin's fate, unsurprisingly, no Danish cop wants to partner with her. Except one, Henrik, a handsome young detective with an apparently enviable young family, who for reasons undisclosed, just can't hold things together. Constantly pill-popping the narcotics he keeps in his car, drugs and casual sex are insufficient for him to survive the horrors of his past. He needs something more.

So, what of Saga? She is alone and more dependent than ever on her rules, routines and obsessions to keep her afloat. At this moment of vulnerability, her past returns. A relative unseen for years appears with the key to unlock Saga's own agonising secrets.

for a broadcaster seeking to defend itself from ongoing BBC cutbacks following the government's TV License fee freeze from 2010 onwards.

Out of the Past

So much for the industry and the audience, what about the show? *The Bridge* is named after the Øresund Bridge, a massive architectural land mark that links the Danish capital, Copenhagen, to the Swedish mainland. The narratives across the first three seasons of the show used the bridge as a metaphor for the differences and misunderstandings between the neighboring Swedes and Danes and for their differing national characteristics. The season one opener featured a body found split in two, at the mid-point of the bridge, one half in Sweden, the other in Denmark. Since then the focus has been the pairing of two very mismatched cops, one an uptight, socially awkward, by-the-book Swede, the other a warm-hearted and casual, rule-breaking Dane. For the first two seasons this pairing was of the Swede, Saga Noren, and the Dane, Martin Rohde. The background to the sleuthing was the growing respect between the pair, different as they were. Unfaithful family man Martin, came to be the only one to understand the emotionally buttoned up Swede; Saga is characterised as having a non-specified form of autism.

Heart of Darkness

Thus the start of season three ticks all the boxes of classic noir: a flawed hero attempting to save their corner of a corrupt world from dark and twisted forces that threaten to overwhelm them; an implacable fighter for justice, yet one filled with human frailty. To paraphrase the American noir novelist Raymond Chandler, 'Down these mean streets a [wo]man must go, who is not [her]self mean, who is neither tarnished nor afraid.' (*The Simple Art of Murder*, 1950)

When Chandler wrote, he was reflecting his time, the context of 1940s and 50s America, a country convulsed by social upheaval and the long shadow of world war two. In that world, it was the private detectives of Chandler (and others) who could reach out, beyond law and society, to right any wrong. On screen, low key/high contrast, chiaroscuro lighting (an effect of contrasted light and shadow) reflected the metaphorical binary opposite of light and shade, good and evil, an effect exaggerated by the stark black and white cinematography of the age.

In Saga's modern-day Scandinavia, the chiaroscuro is present and correct, within a steely, de-saturated blue and grey colour palette which itself seems almost monochrome. At times, the darkness is lifted with flashes of humour, sometimes stemming from Saga's lack of self-awareness. At one point, Saga, freshening up after long hours at work, strips off her t-shirt in front of her colleagues, replacing it with another and innocently unaware of the consternation around her. With Saga, practicality and function is everything. From her leather trousers to her boots, army coat and grimy, mud green Porsche, her possessions exist for their function and utility, not their aesthetic appeal.

1940s noir resonated with a time that felt deranged, dangerous and unmoored. When, as Chandler observed, 'The streets were dark with something more than night' (1950). This was a time when a simple mistake could have devastating consequences.

The current era of Trump and Brexit, Isis and Kim Jong Un, often feels similarly corrosive, frightening and out of control. The times bring forth the heroes they require, once that might have been a shabby knight in a trench-coat and fedora. Today, perhaps it is a blunt and idiosyncratic Swedish cop. Human? Flawed? certainly, but also a champion, a warrior for truth and justice, when those values most need defending. As a movie tagline once had it 'A hero will rise'.

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AF archive / Alamy Stock Photo

The narratives across the first three seasons of the show used the bridge as a metaphor for the differences and misunderstandings between the neighbouring Swedes and Danes and for their differing national characteristics.

Photo 12 / Alamy Stock Photo

NETFLIX AND THE CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

Hesmondhalgh has skillfully outlined current trends and offers a comprehensive examination of institutional and industry aspects relevant to Media Studies.

Nick Lacey explores how the arguments outlined in Hesmondhalgh's *The Cultural Industries* apply to Netflix and the growth of on-demand viewing

David Hesmondhalgh (pronounced 'Hez-mun-dalch') is one of the key theorists that all A level Media Studies students are expected to study and his book – *The Cultural Industries* – covers the 'industry' key concept. This tends to be the most neglected area of Media Studies, probably because text-based study isn't the best approach to understanding institutional influence on the media. The 'industry' concept refers to the companies that create and distribute media texts, the standard practices of media production, as well as the regulatory and legal frameworks in which the companies operate. Hesmondhalgh, broadly speaking, argues that since the 1980s there's been a significant shift in cultural production.
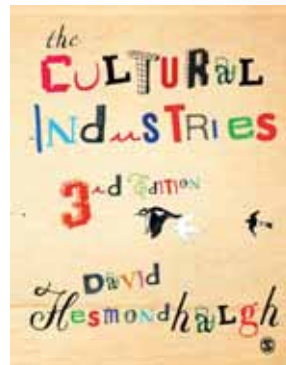
His book (now in its third edition) inevitably covers a wide range of topics and some of his main points are:

- Cultural industries have moved closer to the centre of economic action
- There has been an increase in media corporations owning companies in different sectors of the industry
- Globalisation has meant media texts can circulate more easily across borders reducing North American dominance
- Deregulation has reduced public ownership
- Advertising 'dollars' have significantly increased as has cross promotion within texts
- Digitisation has allowed the technology sector to compete directly with traditional media companies
- Niche audiences are increasingly targeted.

The Impact of Digitalisation

The trend for the first two bullet points started in the 1980s and the Internet has facilitated the last two, particularly through the broadband connections that became ubiquitous in the 21st century. In the 1980s media companies began to see the benefit of synergy (see 'Synergy rules OK?', MM 14) at the same time that governments in the west, because of the decline of manufacturing industries, came to appreciate the economic benefits of having a strong 'cultural' sector (particularly the film, television and music industries). Although digitisation's first major impact was on the music industry, with the creation of CDs in the early 1980s, it was the growth of home computing and the creation of the World Wide Web, which led to increased technological convergence; digitisation of media meant every media form could be accessed on computers. It was this that eventually enabled tech companies to compete directly with media companies and, arguably, even *become* media companies.

Recently the chair of Ofcom suggested that Google and Facebook should be regulated as publishers and not, as they wish to be, considered simply as Internet platforms that take no responsibility for what is hosted on their sites. Her intervention was

primarily in response to the problem of 'fake news' (see 'What's the Truth in a Post-Fact World?', MM 59).

Alphabet (Google's parent company) and Facebook have become two of the biggest media companies in the world on the back of advertising revenues (see 'Power without Responsibility? Selling Your Soul to Social Media', MM 61). Because they can micro-target niche audiences (another of Hesmondhalgh's points), advertisers can be confident that their message is getting to their desired audience. At the same time, the global reach of the Internet can maximise their audience.

Being funded by advertising revenue is a standard model for commercial television and print media (both magazines and newspapers) but because Google and Facebook originally started as technology companies, they've avoided being regulated as media companies. For example, Google's YouTube hosts extremist content but if traditional broadcasters aired similar content they would be fined or possibly even lose their license.

New Broadcasting Models

Digitisation, and the ability to distribute texts via the Internet, meant that technology companies could challenge traditional broadcasters. For example, Amazon (originally an online book seller) is now producing its own 'television' programmes. In doing this it followed Netflix, which began as a postal DVD service, in 'liberating' television programmes from broadcasters' schedules with on-demand viewing. Netflix understood their business was distributing audiovisual texts and so realised that it needed to create its own online subscription service. Traditional distributors of DVDs, like the shop Blockbuster, went bust after broadband connections facilitated video streaming. Even more cannily Netflix also understood that it would need to produce its own content because the traditional media companies would eventually realise that they could set up their own Internet distribution networks. Disney, for example, has withdrawn all its content from Netflix

> Although globalisation has been a trend since the 1980s, with Hollywood for example changing its worldwide distribution of films, the Internet is the perfect global distribution network.

for distribution on its own channel.

Next year Netflix plans to spend $8bn on original material; Amazon's budget is estimated at $4.5bn. Apple has recently joined the fray with a $1bn spend.

In the face of this traditional media, television and print in particular, have had to contend with declining audiences and advertising revenues. Because of the Internet (which was created with taxpayer's money) technology companies haven't had to invest vast amounts of money in a distribution network, such as cable or satellite. Using the Internet as a platform means that the whole of the wired world is able to access their content via the World Wide Web (donated free by its creator Tim Berners-Lee). Although globalisation has been a trend since the 1980s, with Hollywood, for example, changing its worldwide distribution of films, the Internet is the perfect global distribution network. In 2016 Netflix simultaneously launched its service in 130 new countries, bringing its total to 190, and Amazon opened in 200. Going global means they have to pay for the license to broadcast individual shows in different countries so another advantage of creating their own content is that Netflix or Amazon automatically own the copyright for the programmes and don't have to purchase additional distrbution permissions.

Netflix

Lost in Translation?

That may seem simple; however, in order to address such diverse audiences with the same programmes producers have to take great care to ensure their productions can be understood widely. Although it's true to say that in many countries American culture is, after their own, most people's second culture and so understanding US-produced texts is relatively easy, that doesn't mean producers can assume everything will be understood globally.

For example, take the monster in *Stranger Things* named (by the kids) the 'Demogorgon' after a Dungeons & Dragons demon prince. To ensure that connection transcended language barriers, Netflix's team dug into old D&D materials to nail down how various cultures translated 'Demogorgon' in the mid-1970s. (Barrett 2017)

Consequently the Demogorgon was renamed in some parts of the world based on what the demon prince of Dungeons & Dragons was called. In addition, they try to use the actors that regularly voice particular performers in foreign language versions. So, the actors who dubbed Winona Rider (Joyce Byers) in *Beetlejuice* and *Bram Stoker's Dracula* are used for *Stranger Things*.

Netflix has become ubiquitous; even the phrase 'Netflix and chill' has become an internet meme and entered the vernacular in many places. The company is, however, highly indebted (maybe up to $20bn) and does not have, like traditional media companies, other sources of revenue. Amazon, of course, as the all-encompassing retailer, does not rely on subscriptions to its Prime service for its profitability.

The Growth of Cultural Industries

In 2017 Facebook launched Watch, which hosted original 'reality TV' programming. While distinct from users' timelines, this has blurred the line between being a platform and a broadcaster. Google has yet to make the same move, obviously satisfied with the amount of money it makes from serving up other people's material, which is what a search engine and its YouTube platform does. However, shareholders' inexhaustible appetite for growth may lead it to expand its offerings once it has vacuumed up as much advertising revenue as it can.

There's no doubt that Hesmondhalgh has skillfully outlined current trends and offers a comprehensive examination of institutional and industry aspects relevant to Media Studies as well as topics that, wrongly, are often neglected such as copyright, internationalisation and social justice. So broad is his focus that examiners will not be able to shoehorn everything into one exam question and so the best approach to his work is to ensure the institutional context of the set texts studied is examined carefully using the material in his book. It's always worth bearing in mind that the 45 minutes you have to answer a question is very little time so 'swallowing' *The Cultural Industries* whole is not necessary. On the plus side, you should remember that when you are watching Netflix you are doing your homework.

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Nick Lacey is a Film and Media Studies teacher, textbook author and regular contributor to MediaMagazine.

Netflix

The Japanese poster for *Stranger Things*

Resources

Brian Barrett (2017) 'How Netflix Made Stranger Things a Global Phenomenon', Wired, available at: https://www.wired.com/story/netflix-stranger-things-global/, accessed October 2017

from the MM vaults

Power Without Responsibility: Selling Your Soul to Social Media, Nick Lacey, *MediaMag* 61

DAVID HESMONDALGH and **THE CULTURAL INDUSTRIES**

by Goom

Pronounced 'Hez-mun-dalch' with the stress on the first syllable.

DAVID HESMONDALGH IS A PROFESSOR OF MEDIA, MUSIC AND CULTURE AT LEEDS UNIVERSITY.
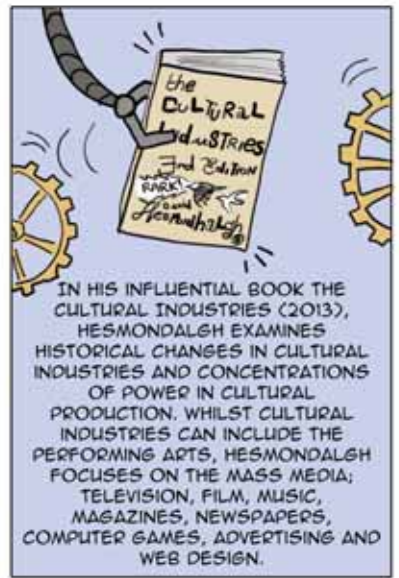
IN HIS INFLUENTIAL BOOK THE CULTURAL INDUSTRIES (2013), HESMONDALGH EXAMINES HISTORICAL CHANGES IN CULTURAL INDUSTRIES AND CONCENTRATIONS OF POWER IN CULTURAL PRODUCTION. WHILST CULTURAL INDUSTRIES CAN INCLUDE THE PERFORMING ARTS, HESMONDALGH FOCUSES ON THE MASS MEDIA; TELEVISION, FILM, MUSIC, MAGAZINES, NEWSPAPERS, COMPUTER GAMES, ADVERTISING AND WEB DESIGN.

FOR HESMONDALGH MEDIA INDUSTRIES ARE (AS CULTURAL INDUSTRIES), "CENTRALLY CONCERNED WITH THE PRODUCTION OF SOCIAL MEANING" AND "DEAL PRIMARILY WITH THE INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION AND CIRCULATION OF TEXTS."

Print Circulation
2017
I don't think it's a 'blip' any more...
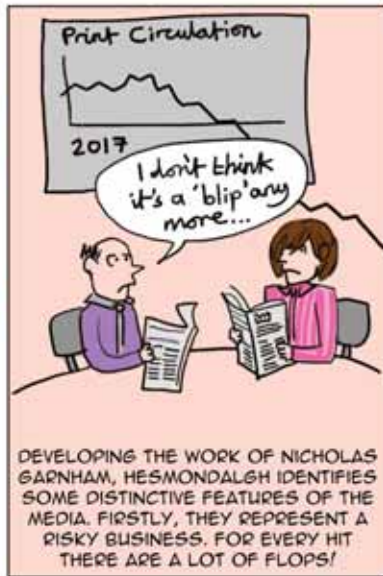
DEVELOPING THE WORK OF NICHOLAS GARNHAM, HESMONDALGH IDENTIFIES SOME DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF THE MEDIA. FIRSTLY, THEY REPRESENT A RISKY BUSINESS. FOR EVERY HIT THERE ARE A LOT OF FLOPS!

BUY! BUY!
SELL!
BUY!

DESPITE THE RISKS THERE ARE PROFITS TO BE MADE, WHICH CAN BE MAXIMISED THROUGH HORIZONTAL INTEGRATION (BUYING UP COMPETING COMPANIES), AND VERTICAL INTEGRATION (BUYING COMPANIES 'UPSTREAM' OR 'DOWNSTREAM' IN THE PRODUCTION CHAIN).

ED SHEERAN MUESLI

HESMONDALGH USES RYAN'S (1992) CONCEPT OF 'FORMATTING' TO EXPLAIN HOW THE MEDIA USE STARS, GENRES, OR SERIALS TO REACH LARGER AUDIENCES AND MAXIMISE PROFITS.

I've used it so now I want to exchange it!
That's not how this works!
CUSTOMER SERVICES

IN ORDER TO EVALUATE CHANGES IN MEDIA INDUSTRIES, HESMONDALGH DESCRIBES THEIR COMMODIFICATION, WHICH INVOLVES "PRODUCING THINGS NOT ONLY FOR USE BUT ALSO FOR EXCHANGE."

AND THIS IS OUR CREATIVE TEAM AT WORK...
ZZZZ

FOR HESMONDALGH, THE "COMBINATION OF LOOSE CONTROL OF CREATIVE INPUT AND TIGHTER CONTROL OF REPRODUCTION AND CIRCULATION" DEFINES THE WAY THIS WAS DONE IN THE LAST CENTURY.

HE CHARTS ECONOMIC, REGULATORY, SOCIOCULTURAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGES TO EXPLAIN THE INCREASED INTERNATIONALISATION OF THE MEDIA IN RECENT DECADES.

HESMONDALGH POINTS TO FOUR OVERLAPPING WAVES OF MARKETIZATION WHICH HAVE DIMINISHED PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING GLOBALLY: IN THE USA (1980–90), IN OTHER RICH WESTERN COUNTRIES (1985–95), THEN (1989 ONWARDS) IN EMERGING ECONOMIES INCLUDING CHINA AND INDIA.

IS THE VR WORKING?

NO! MY EYES HURT!

FINALLY, AND MOST RECENTLY (1992 ONWARDS), CONVERGENCE (THE MERGING OF TELECOMS, COMPUTERS AND MEDIA) AS, INTERNATIONALLY, DIGITALISATION OFFERED "NEW 'PLATFORMS' AND APPLICATIONS SUCH AS VIDEO-SHARING SITES AND SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES."

So, everyone who uses the copyright symbol pays me...

FOR HESMONDGALGH, "DIGITAL CONVERGENCE AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF INFORMATION AS PROPERTY CAME TOGETHER." THE KEY TO THIS IS COPYRIGHT: SUCCESSFUL LOBBYING BY MEDIA INDUSTRIES HAS LED TO EXPANSION IN "NOT JUST THE DURATION OF RIGHTS ... BUT ALSO THEIR SCOPE."

What do you mean I can't record it? I wrote it!

THIS HAS MEANT THAT, FOR INSTANCE, MEDIA CORPORATIONS CAN OWN COPYRIGHTS ON WORKS PRODUCED BY INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS.

So, for tax efficiency, we will rename our country Appleland!

HESMONDGALGH ALSO EXPLAINS HOW MERGERS HAVE FORMED MEGA-CORPORATIONS, AND HOW SYNERGY (DIFFERENT BUSINESS ELEMENTS WORKING TOGETHER FOR GREATER PROFIT) HAS GIVEN WAY TO CONVERGENCE, INCREASING CULTURAL INDUSTRY CONCENTRATION AND CONGLOMERATION.

MEGA CORP™ BUSKERS

CONGLOMERATION IS THE PROCESS BY WHICH AN INDUSTRY, SECTOR OR ECONOMY BECOMES MORE MARKED BY THE PRESENCE OF CONGLOMERATES (CORPORATIONS CONSISTING OF GROUPS OF BUSINESSES, DEALING WITH DIFFERENT PRODUCTS OR SERVICES).

The 'Big Six'...

HESMONDALGH FOCUSES ON THE USA'S MAJOR CONGLOMERATES, BUT WARNS THAT UNTIL RESEARCHERS GATHER INTERNATIONAL STATISTICS WE MUST USE "SOME NOW RATHER OUTDATED FIGURES." CHECK OUT MEMEPOLICEMAN.COM ON 'CORPORATE-MEDIA-CONTROL' FOR AN EXAMPLE OF HOW GLOBAL MEDIA OWNERSHIP IS OFTEN MISREPRESENTED.

ULTIMATELY, HESMONDGALGH DOES NOT JUDGE THE CULTURAL INDUSTRIES, BUT GIVES US A CRITICAL METHOD WE CAN USE TO EVALUATE THEIR IMPACT ON OUR CULTURE.

Samira Ahmed by Jeff Overs

Adam Buxton courtesy of PJB Management

MediaMagazine Student Conference 2017

The truth in storytelling, news, and film production

Last December's MediaMag line-up of charismatic media creatives was a great inspiration. It was a fascinating and stimulating day, complete with timeless advice about film and media. Student Joanna Bailey summarises what she learned.

1. When in doubt, do something unusual to provoke a story

The impressive day began with Nik Powell's comically sarcastic talk on 'A Producer's Life'. The Director of the National Film and Television School and co-founder of Virgin Records advised us to depend on 'people, not institutions'. Thus, we can fervently strive for independence, will-power and confidently grasp how 'good manners and respect for other people is fundamental' to succeed in the competitive media industry.

2. Knowing bad things means we can potentially change it.

'Media Studies' time has come.'

Samira Ahmed, the assertive and passionate award-winning BBC *Newswatch* broadcaster and writer, urged us to take a strong interest in the intersection of culture, morality and social and political change. With an inspiring history in journalism, writing for newspapers like *The Guardian* and *The Big Issue*, she discussed ideas on news coverage, 'fake' and 'missing' news, and social media reactions. She spoke about what viewers notice in the mediated 'realities' of news broadcasts: the vague use of language; the doubtful assumptions; misleading statistics and missing news. This led to an audience discussion about the prioritisation of reporting

Students queuing for advice from Adam Buxton

stories about 'white Brits over poor black people' and how we could attempt to combat this with moral outrage and holding media institutions to account. Ahmed asked us to consider whether we need fewer experts and more personal and 'relatable' experiences in the news and media.

3. Media hoaxes and dramatic appeal in the horror genre

'The quest was to be original.'

Lesley Manning, British director, was interviewed by MediaMag Editor, Claire Pollard, about her 1992 shock-inducing *Ghostwatch* mockumentary, which claimed to broadcast live from one of the most haunted houses in Britain. Rather than being approached as a television hoax, the mystery-horror hybrid provoked chaos by fabricating dramatic truth. It was a manipulation of modes of address and a subversion of dramatic codes and conventions, playfully blurring boundaries between 'apparent reality' and 'alarming fiction' (Daily Express, 1991), to form a new dramatic language. In turn, it was a satirical comment on television and its formidable power in the 90s. The television drama, shot as a live studio broadcast, was recognised for its handheld camera style, manipulation of the language of TV and its sense of realism. The massively exciting project successfully transcended the artifice of television drama with an ambitious mock-documentary format, arguably the first of its kind.

4. Truth and fiction - differentiating reality and fabrication in the media

'We need to transition from the recipient of a story to the storyteller'

Arguably, the most interesting talk came from Tom Edge, BAFTA-nominated screenwriter and producer for the Netflix Original sitcom, *Lovesick*, and screenwriter for *The Crown*. He spoke about universal narrative arcs, exploration and storytelling in film and TV. It is a fact that 'audiences need the truth' and an effective way of portraying reality is through drama. In drama characters seek an urgent goal and their dealings with others, their trials reveal their moral code and identity. It is Edge's job to establish the characters' truth and communicate it through fiction. He quoted Tennesse Williams' The Glass Menagerie:

'I give you truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion.'

While 'truth' in drama is often fiction based on factual events, it can of course never be an accurate depiction of reality; 'real life is boring' on screen.

In the time he has worked on both seasons of the acclaimed Netflix series of *The Crown*, Tom Edge takes the most pride in Season 1, episode 8: *Pride & Joy*. His screenplay portrayed Queen Elizabeth's emotional journey with the use of established facts, historical accounts and drama: 'Telling hard truths is hard'. Edge discovered from news archives that photographs had been taken,

and subsequentky destroyed, of Elizabeth hurling a pair of tennis shoes at her husband. Although the events in this episode were fabricated – there is no written account of exactly what they argued about – the narrative was still true to the drama's themes and tone. Ultimately, the episode was mediated, re-interpreted and scored for effect. We all have truth and lies at our disposal. Edge exposed to us how, in reality, every story on TV is a moral lesson addressed through an illusion.

5. 'If you don't write an idea down, it'll be like you never had it'

The weird and hilarious Adam Buxton finished the conference with a presentation of low-tech parodic videos about popular culture, and a number of 'Creativitips'. Recognised for his comedic podcasts and entertaining sketches on Channel 4's *The Adam and Joe Show*, as well as long-term collaborations with Joe Cornish and Edgar Wright (including cameo film roles) he talked about how different media forms have impacted his work. Consuming TV on a regular basis whilst studying sculpture at art school, he learnt how to make DIY/spoof videos and encouraged us to make use of our resources, record our ideas and experiment.

6. What did we learn?

As aspiring programme-makers, journalists or otherwise, we were open to some valuable career advice and methods of gaining brilliant inside contacts. The media practitioners who presented at the conference illuminated our minds with limitless tips and inspiration helping us to grasp the importance of patience, teamwork and experimentation.

Joanna Bailey studies A level Media, Literature and Art at Wilmington Grammar School.

Samira Ahmed: Everyone should be studying media studies and studying it the right way.

The MediaMag editors and Adam Buxton

WATCH THE SKIES!

More than 40 years after it was first released, Will Rimmer looks at the significance of Spielberg's *Close Encounters of a Third Kind*

In the summer of 1975, the unprecedented success of Steven Spielberg's blockbuster behemoth *Jaws*, which grossed $260m in North America alone, ensured the Wunderkind 29-year-old director could bask in the glory and, crucially, cherry pick his next project. Spielberg was part of a film making group, part friends, part rivals, that the press had already dubbed 'the movie brats.' His contemporaries included George Lucas, Brian De Palma, Francis Ford Coppola and Martin Scorsese. These hungry young cinephiles, obsessed with both film making and film history in equal measure, emerged from the ashes of the once powerful studio system (or 'old Hollywood') and would go on to make the key films of the decade. New Hollywood had taken over.

Jaws earned Spielberg both critical and commercial kudos. He was riding high, and so the choice of a risky science fiction project, requiring both a huge budget for special effects, and a huge leap of faith for the studio willing to fund Spielberg's flight of fancy, seemed to many observers one gamble too far. Yet the risk worked for Columbia pictures, with box-office receipts topping $300m from a budget eventually ballooning to $20m.

Ironically, *Close Encounters* was not Spielberg's first attempt at Science Fiction. Aged just 16, he attempted a homemade movie entitled *Firelight* which was the genesis of *Close Encounters* a decade later. Prior to the 1977 release of *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters*, the genre had effectively lain dormant since the 1950s. The few film's that did tackle the genre, generally received mixed reviews, and pitiful box office returns.

However, Columbia trusted him to deliver on a promise to make an epic film. Indeed, they had rolled the dice on *Close Encounters* as the studio by the mid 1970s ran into severe financial trouble. If it flopped, Columbia was likely to go out of business altogether.

The central protagonist of *Close Encounters* is Roy Neary, an electrical worker from Muncie, Indiana. If both job and location represent the stereotypically drab environment for a blue-collar worker (Neary even rhymes with the word dreary) then the character of Roy has parallels with Spielberg's own father, Arnold, who worked as a computer electrical technician/salesman who was as obsessive about electronics as his son was about film. If Spielberg senior is, perhaps, the alter ego for Neary, then it is not an affectionate portrait. He is a workaholic who, after his first encounter with aliens, slowly becomes unhinged, and obsessed with locating Devil's Tower, where the first communication between humans and aliens will eventually take place. Single mum Jillian is, like Roy, a believer. Alongside a handful of other Muncie residents, they start to have visions, feeling compelled to draw images, create paintings and, in Roy's case, build a papier-mâché replica of Devil's Tower, despite having no previous knowledge of it. Like a magnet drawing him in, Roy is compelled to find this strange locale, regardless of the consequences. With his family life crumbling all around him, the tower finally presents itself via a television news report warning of a chemical leak, meaning a full evacuation of the area is necessary.

Roy smells a government cover up, and drives with Jillian to Wyoming, aiming to find out the real truth. Their journey mirrors the trip made by Dorothy and co from the drab flatlands of Kansas to the mysterious, colourful world of Oz. Both seek a place of illuminations, a brighter world where questions have answers, where purity replaces cynicism. Roy's journey to Devil's Tower has huge challenges. Intercepted by the U.S. government keen on keeping civilians out of the loop, UFOlogist Claude Lacombe (played by legendary French New Wave filmmaker Francois Truffaut) interrogates

Neary on his recent strange experiences. Lacombe is intuitively aware that Barry is the one chosen to be the conduit between the humans and the visitors.

Neary is an amalgam of countless other Spielberg male protagonists, the classic 'everyman' who rises above their ordinary existence to do something heroic or extraordinary. In this context, he joins the likes of Chief Brody (*Jaws*) Indiana Jones, Dr Alan Grant (*Jurassic Park*) Captain Miller (*Saving Private Ryan*) and Ray Ferrier (*War of the Worlds*) who become reluctant heroes, ready to answer the call when needed.

Speilberg is credited as the screenwriter for *Close Encounters* so perhaps the themes of dysfunctional families also point towards a connection between Roy Neary and Arnold Spielberg. The first treatment and screenplay had been written by *Taxi Driver* scribe, Paul Schrader, however, Spielberg gradually moved away from his drafts, and wrote his own version of the script. Arguments of authorship rankled with Schrader for some time afterwards, with Spielberg conversely feeling Schrader was attempting to steal credit for something he never did. Regardless of authorship issues, the signature touches are evident, right down to the recurring Spielberg visual motif of a star shooting across the sky, as the alien craft hovers above the skies of Devil's Tower.

With Neary now effectively estranged from his own wife and children, he and Jillian scramble over the mountain, evading helicopters and security to make it down to the landing site. In the closing scenes of the film we see government officials prepare for the first communication.

People who had previously been 'abducted' over the course of several decades, are finally returned to Earth. Jillian's abducted son Barry also returns, innocently none the wiser for his brief trip to the heavens! In the final scene, Neary himself suits up, ready to take his own interstellar journey to the stars. He becomes the ultimate star man, surrounded by tiny, benign alien beings who offer peace and friendship in abundance. Set against a 1970s cold war context, it has overtones of what could be possible, if the U.S. and U.S.S.R. chose to be allies, not enemies. Spielberg himself envisaged *Close Encounters* as a post-Watergate conspiracy thriller, where secrets and lies, government paranoia and military control harked back to the days of the famous Roswell alien spacecraft crash of July 1947. To find the truth, you had to be a believer. Roy Neary became the ultimate believer, and is rewarded for his faith.

Overall, the twin themes of 'illumination' and 'communication' resonate heavily in *Close Encounters*. Illumination does not simply mean a reference to bright lights in the sky, but rather a human awareness of deeper level understanding. In the final scene of another Spielberg film, *Indiana Jones and The Last Crusade* (1989) after their epic adventure is finally over, Indy turns to ask his father Henry:

'So, what did you find Dad?'

From *Close Encounters of a Third Kind*

Netflix

The Spielberg Effect

Although sometimes overlooked as an auteur director, Spielberg's style has influenced some of the greatest film and television.

- *Stranger Things*. The Duffer Brothers owe a lot to Spielberg. A quick search for 'intertextuality in *Stranger Things*' will throw up numerous frame-for-frame homages to *E.T.* and *Close Encounters*. Not only are the visuals incredibly similar but the plots – the search for a missing child, the slightly loser-ish everyman character who reluctantly answers the call to adventure, the strange creature with powers hiding in the kids' den from the sinister government researchers – all call to mind Spielberg's classics.

- J.J. Abrams. Like Spielberg, J.J. Abrams started out making 8mm films as a kid. Abram's 2011 movie Super 8 pays homage to Spielberg (who also produced it) and nods towards their

Neil Grabowsky / Montclair Film Festival

shared early obsession with making home movies. As a master of the action adventure buddy movie, Abrams also charmed old and new viewers with *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* in 2015 reinvigorating the fading franchise.

- The Summer Blockbuster. Spielberg is often credited for inventing the summer blockbuster. When *Jaws* was released in June 1975 it went into profit in just 3 weeks which was no fluke. Set mostly on a beach, based on an established 'beach read' novel the film was perfectly pitched for its release slot. It was also the first film to make use of TV advertising with an advert running in 23 of the biggest shows at the time including *Happy Days* and *The Rockford Files*. The same marketing and distribution strategy was applied to *Star Wars* two years later with similar success. The summer blockbuster was born.

'Me? Illumination…'

Henry may have just lost the Holy Grail, which he searched for his whole life, yet he gained something else entirely. Justification of the power of faith. Knowledge on an elevated level. In Spielberg's cinematic world, the metaphysical transcends everyday reality. Neary achieved the same thing. The unspoken communication theme functions as way to encourage peace among people. Among nations of the world. Harmony between West and East.

As the post-production period was rushed by Columbia, determined to hit cinemas before Christmas 1977, Spielberg frustratingly described his film later as 'a work in progress.' However, he gained the chance to return, and make several changes for the 1980 special edition release. Some scenes were re-edited, others removed and, most controversially, a new scene shot. It visualised the interior of the mothership, which Neary entered in the final moments.

Overall, *Close Encounters* remains one of Spielberg's finest achievements and alongside *E.T.* one of his most personal.

Will Rimmer is a Film and Media Studies examiner.

THE FRAGILITY OF POWER

Netflix

Representation in *House of Cards*

Emma Rafferty explores the opening episode of Netflix's *House of Cards*

The Premise

House of Cards is an American 2013 Netflix political thriller created by Beau Willimon. It is loosely based on the English drama series which first aired in the 1990s and in turn was adapted by legendary screenwriter Andrew Davies from the novel of the same name by Michael Dobbs, a very British Conservative politician and best-selling novelist. While the British version was set in Westminster and based on the post-Thatcher Conservative government of the early '90s, the Netflix version is based in Washington.

The title suggests the fragility of politicians status: a house of cards is fragile, it can topple at any point. It also cleverly refers to the game-playing central to

Netflix

politics – a theme central to episode one Season one, on which we will focus in this synoptic case study, and indeed to the series as a whole.

The series opens with the diegetic sounds of the screech of brakes and a dog howling even before we see the establishing shot. Congressman Frank Underwood, played by Kevin Spacey, leaves his front door and comforts the wounded dog, before looking directly into the camera saying, 'Moments like this require someone who will act, who will do the unpleasant thing, the necessary thing.' He calmly proceeds to strangle the dog. This immediately introduces both his habit of breaking the fourth wall to narrate, and his cold and vicious nature. The word 'act' here has dual meaning: an act can mean an action but also a pretence; it also links to the theatre, a medium on which this version of *House of Cards* draws extensively. Frank and Claire are at their lowest ebb when they have no plan, when Frank can't act. Like Macbeth, Frank's inertia in episode one is translated as weakness by Claire: 'My husband doesn't apologise; even to me.'

Gender

House of Cards features strong female characters, despite its Washington setting, where white, male politicians and journalists dominate the political sphere. Nevertheless, this institutional sexism is still portrayed, with men dominating the most senior positions in President Garett Walker's government.

Claire (Robyn Wright) is very much Francis' equal. Her influence is considerable; they plot and meddle together in their scheme to further Francis' position ('I've backed the right man.') and then, when it backfires, to remove Walker and gain power for Francis himself. His victory is her victory; their power struggle is very much a joint enterprise, a collective chess game in deception.

Meanwhile, Zoe Barnes, a young idealistic reporter on the Washington Herald, is also ambitious and hungry in her pursuit of the truth. She is confident in her sexual prowess and has no problem in engaging in sex with Francis in return for information which he feeds her in the interests of discrediting his rivals and the president. But while she shares some qualities with the Underwoods, ultimately, she is too moral for the insidious political underworld that she now inhabits. Her naivety ends up being as great an enemy as the political heavyweights she attempts to take on.

Marriage and relationships

Claire and Frank's relationship is complex. In episode one he zips up her dress and tells her she looks 'stunning' as they both gaze into the mirror looking at each other and themselves (this

happens a lot). This is the first time we see them together, and suggests that appearances and self-representation are fundamental to them.

When Frank has formulated a plan, he tells her 'We'll have a lot of nights like these – making plans, very little sleep,' as they indulge in their nightly ritual of sharing a cigarette. This is symbolic of them sharing something they care about more even than sex (which we hardly ever see them have): power. They are married to their pursuit of gaining and retaining power – at any cost. As Frank says, 'I love that woman… I love her more than sharks love blood' – an early indication that their love is also predatory. The theme of hunger, devouring, wiping out one's enemies is central to this first episode. As we see both of them increasingly disregarding friends and acquaintances as the drama proceeds, we start to ask ourselves: will they really stay truly loyal to one another?

Class and Race

Class is a very significant theme in *House of Cards*. Frank's love of computer games and painting war figurines suggest that on one level he has never really grown up. Yet on another level he is refined: he listens to classical music and moves in elite circles. He comes from humble beginnings: born and raised in South Carolina, like Bill Clinton, we see he that is a self-made

man who both reveres and despises his past.

Class is also addressed through Frank's frequent visits to Freddie's BBQ Joint. Here, arguably, is where we get to see Frank at his most real, free from artifice, as with the scenes where he addresses us directly. Here there is no pretence, no need to dance the dance of the political world; here he is Frank – not Francis (a deliberate device to show that he has two sides). [Spoiler alert: When Frank finally destroys Freddie in season two we see that he is loyal to nobody, even those we thought were his good friends.]

The narrative primarily follows Francis, the male protagonist, through whose eyes we see Washington and the world, further emphasised by the breaking down of the fourth wall. Washington politics is represented as male-dominated and mostly white, with explicit tokenism in the hiring of a Latina Chief of Staff. Freddie, in stark contrast, represents the poor, black, hard-working American, trying hard to make a decent honest living.

At the end of the first episode Frank tells Freddie 'Set me up outside… A bit of cold never hurt anyone' showing that he thinks he is no better than anyone else. Is he playing yet another role, or are we seeing the real Frank? 'Where I come from in South Carolina… a rack of ribs was a luxury.' He devours those ribs and orders a second: 'You know what, Freddie? Yes,

Netflix

I will – I'm feeling hungry today.' As he looks at camera he sits back, triumphant, like a cat that has destroyed its prey. His plan to leak an important Education Bill has worked. Checkmate.

Audiences and Institutions

House of Cards marks a significant shift away from the ways TV has traditionally been viewed. Netflix's streaming monthly-subscription service (founded in 1997) allows viewers to 'binge' on as many episodes as they wish in one sitting. No longer do audiences have to wait a week until the next episode, meaning that the episodes are jam-packed and fast-paced to keep viewers transfixed. Kevin Spacey supported the decision to release all of the episodes at once, believing that this type of release pattern would be increasingly common with TV shows. He said, 'When I ask my friends what they did with their weekend, they say, 'Oh, I stayed in and watched three seasons of *Breaking Bad* or two seasons of *Game of Thrones*'.

House of Cards was pitched to several networks including HBO, AMC and Showtime. Netflix, interested in launching their own original programming, outbid the networks, picking the series up for 26 episodes, totalling two seasons. Netflix was the only bidder that was committed to purchasing the rights without seeing a completed pilot. Thus, the show was not forced into manipulative story arcs introduced in the pilot to create artificial cliff hangers, refreshing for audiences and arguably, a key component of its success.

Messages and Values

I would argue that *House of Cards* takes the trope of the American Dream and completely deconstructs it. The honest self-made man (Freddie) going out and winning against the odds is a common theme in Hollywood and TV. Yet here Francis Underwood's deception and pathology is ultimately rewarded. He will destroy anything or anyone who gets in his way and we, the viewers, grudgingly admire him for it. This forces us to look at ourselves, our own values and the world that we inhabit. Frank Underwood is one of TV's most successful antiheroes and explains, partly, *House of Cards'* huge success.

Emma Rafferty is a freelance journalist.

SAVE THE DATE

Summer blockbusters in April? Oscar winners in July? As box office hits can come from anywhere in an increasingly crowded cinema calendar, Benedict Seal investigates the new rules of release dates.

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JANUARY

■ While it's a month largely ignored by Hollywood, January is a different story in UK cinemas. While December sees a late flurry of big awards contenders released in the United States (to qualify for the Oscars and Golden Globes etc.), many of those films only reach UK screens in January or February. This means that, while British audiences may be behind when it comes to seeing them, films like *La La Land* (Chazelle, 2016), *The Revenant* (Iñárritu, 2015) or *The Post* (Spielberg, 2017) are still the talk of the water cooler come the Oscars in late February/early March.

■ The crowd of awards contenders pushes many of the mainstream American January hits to February in the UK. Stateside January releases like *Cloverfield* (Reeves, 2008) and *Ride Along* (Story, 2014) have seen similar success in the UK weeks, or even months, later.

FEBRUARY

■ Holidays become a key factor in film scheduling from February onwards.

■ Valentine's Day has proven to be a big weekend in recent years, and not always for romances. *Deadpool* (Miller, T., 2016) embraced the surprising release date by creating joke rom-com posters and trailers. This unusual marketing approach perfectly matched the film's self-aware postmodern sense of humour and the financial results were huge. The film scored a £13.7m opening weekend (all figures are for the UK unless otherwise stated), making it one of the biggest films of 2016.

■ February also brings the first school holiday of the calendar year. Family-friendly films are usually scheduled to match up with when most children are off school. After a very successful opening weekend of £8.1m, *The Lego Movie* (Lord and Miller, C., 2014) continued to play well throughout February half-term and beyond, ending the year as the highest grossing film of 2014 in the UK.

The New Rules of Film Scheduling

MARCH

■ March is where the early signs of 'summer' blockbuster season begin.

■ Disney's live action *Beauty and the Beast* remake ended the year as the highest grossing film of 2017 (it was surpassed by *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* in the first few weeks of 2018). With a total take of £72.4m, it even managed to break into the top 10 grossing films of all time in the UK.
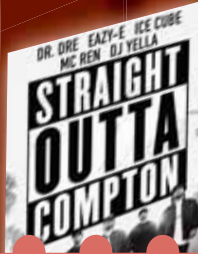
APRIL

■ The concept of all-year-round blockbusters is becoming increasingly important and April is often another display of Disney's dominance. Thanks to the ownership of successful studios and franchises such as *Star Wars*, Marvel and Pixar, the 'Mouse House' has been the most profitable Hollywood studio for the past three years and has led a trend of moving their biggest releases away from the normal summer months.

■ The Marvel Cinematic Universe has gotten so big that they now release films throughout the year, but the April slot of their first film, *Iron Man* (Favreau, 2008), was deemed to be so successful that it is still favoured release date for their most important films such as *Avengers* (Whedon, 2012) and *Captain America: Civil War* (Russo and Russo, 2016).

MAY

■ Even though the summer holidays are still a month and a half away for most, May marks the start of summer proper.

■ This is particularly apparent in the US because the late April Marvel films are held back a week for release in North America. Marvel Studios President Kevin Feige has explained that the earlier international releases began in order to account for the Easter holidays, but this strategy also has the effect of building buzz around the world.

JUNE

■ Prior to 1975, big movies were usually focused on awards season in the winter. It was *Jaws* (1975), Steven Spielberg's massively successful breakthrough that popularised the summer blockbuster. Universal, *Jaws*' distributor, pioneered a new approach: releasing the film in a vast number of cinemas at once, and with extensive (and expensive) marketing, including lots of television adverts and merchandising deals. That's the way summer blockbusters are still marketed and released today and June remains prime real estate.

■ At that time, films would often have staggered releases across the world. *Jaws* didn't make it over to the UK until Boxing Day that year, but it still set the summer blockbuster trend internationally. The UK and US calendars are now relatively similar for high-profile films.

JULY

■ The final big summer month.

■ Studios target the summer holidays with family-friendly films. Animation studio Pixar is a particularly big player. While their (near) annual big summer offering usually releases in June in the US, they are held back until mid-July in the UK to coincide with the summer holidays. While delays such as this may damage the box office of more teen and adult-targeted films due to audiences pirating the films online rather than waiting for their local release, the family-focused nature of Pixar films still encourages cinema outings.

■ In 2017's uncertain film awards race, it's a July release that stands out as an early frontrunner. Christopher Nolan's World War 2 film *Dunkirk* was very successful across the world, but was a particular hit on home soil, making it into the top 20 highest grossing films of all time in the UK.

AUGUST

■ August offers the chance for a final big film or two to see out the summer in style.

■ Despite going against conventional wisdom about what kind of films make the big money (and when) at the box office, N.W.A. hip-hop biopic *Straight Outta Compton* (Gray, 2015) was one of the major successes of August 2015. It's not a family-friendly fantasy or sci-fi escapism with a white hero; instead it's a 15 age-rated historical biopic, featuring black characters, that deals with real-world social issues. However, by thinking outside the box and spotting a gap in the August schedule, studio Universal turned a mid-budget drama into a top-level event film.

SEPT

■ In 2017, August was a particularly weak field, allowing glossy Stephen King horror adaptation *It* to come in and rule the roost in early September with a huge £10m in the opening weekend. The film broke the record for the most trailer views in a single day and was well reviewed by critics, but nobody anticipated just how financially successful the film would be. It offered yet more evidence that blockbusters can come from anywhere in the calendar.

OCTOBER

■ Even in the UK, October sees the first wave of awards contenders. *I, Daniel Blake* (Loach, 2016), for example, went on to win 2016's Outstanding British Film at the BAFTAs (the British equivalent to the Oscars) after a successful autumn launch.

■ There is also Halloween to consider. Since 2000, there have been two horror franchises that have dominated the spooky season. From 2004 to 2010 (and again in 2017), there were new *Saw* films released every Halloween. But, as the torture series started to wind down, the *Paranormal Activity* films took charge of that slot with annual October releases between 2010 and 2012. This marked a turn away from the gory horror of the 2000s to the haunted house-type films of the 2010s: *The Conjuring* (Wan, 2013); *Insidious* (Wan, 2010).

NOVEMBER

■ Aside from independent, adult-targeted films and Halloween horrors, October and November can still sustain a few top-tier blockbusters. The James Bond franchise, for example, has laid claim to the autumn season over the course of the Pierce Brosnan and Daniel Craig eras and the unconventional release dates have done nothing to hold the franchise back. The two most recent instalments, *Skyfall* (2012) and *Spectre* (2015), are the second and third highest grossing films ever in the UK with £103.2m and £95.2m respectively.

■ As soon as Halloween costumes leave supermarket shelves, Christmas stocking fillers pop up in their place. The same can be said for the film calendar. While even successful horror films will leave cinemas quite quickly, the end of year period can support themed films for weeks on end. This means that lots of Christmas favourites come out in November rather than December (*The Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993), *Bad Santa* (2003), *Elf* (2013), etc.).

DECEMBER

■ December also offers very long 'legs', which is the industry term for continued business in cinemas. This is usually measured by the amount of money the film makes in its opening weekend relative to its final box office total. So, the greater the percentage of the final total made after the film's opening weekend, the longer the legs.

■ Both *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* and *Rogue One* made summer blockbuster money on opening weekend and yet also benefitted from winter legs. It's no surprise then that the former is far and away the highest grossing film of all time at the UK box office, with a £123.2m total. These films, as well as *Avatar* back in 2009 and all *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* films, have cemented the pre-Christmas slot as one of the best release dates of the year.

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THE EIGHTH GENERATION

The eighth generation of video game consoles is finally enjoying a renaissance, having sold more than 70 million units worldwide. But how long can it last? Laurence Russell investigates.

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When the PlayStation 4 and Xbox One launched way back in 2013, the content created for the systems was still very new. The consoles arrived alongside a deluge of unfortunate games like *Ryse: Son of Rome* and *Knack*. These bewildering titles were liberally bolstered with more recognisable franchise offerings like *Call of Duty: Ghosts* and *Assassin's Creed 4: Black Flag* that had been developed for the previous console generation and merely ported to the new one, which made buying the new console rather pointless at the time.

The birth of the eighth-generation console is considered adequate by many in the awkward history of gaming console launch cycles, which says a lot about them. However, it's often the case that consoles experience a resurgence in popularity during their twilight years with increased sales, and the emergence of new games that best exploit the console's capabilities. It seems that this renaissance period is happening now. Five years ago, when the PlayStation 4 launched, it sold 4.2 million consoles across October and December 2013, but over the last two Christmases the console has exceeded these numbers. In the lead up to Christmas 2017, the PlayStation 4 sold over 7 million consoles to reach a total of over 70 million worldwide.

So why is the current generation of gaming consoles suddenly selling more units even though it's essentially old technology?

2017 was a banner year for the video games industry with the release of a staggering series of innovative console titles. Critically acclaimed epics like *Resident Evil 7*, *Horizon Zero Dawn*, *For Honor*, and *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild* surpassed expectations and raised the benchmark for what to expect from modern triple-A video games. The renaissance period has begun.

The game *Overwatch* is a particularly interesting specimen for measuring the success of the eighth generation renaissance. Released back in May 2016 the game has presented an incredible degree of staying power. Whilst rampantly successful multiplayer only and MMO-type games have existed in the past, they are also notorious for their downfalls. It has become the norm for franchise games such as *Call of Duty* to release

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Since 2010 alone, there has been a 68% increase in video game developing companies in the UK as we move to accommodate the growth in global demand.

Pexels

new titles almost every year to avoid dwindling sales. So far, *Overwatch* has managed to maintain its popularity and relevance, enjoying an incrementally rising player-base even now, almost two years after its release. The game passed its 35 million player milestone last October and the continuous rise shows no sign of dwindling.

Succeeding where *Destiny* failed, *Overwatch* represents a significant phenomenon of modern technology and media, as if it were becoming more relevant as it ages, unlike almost all entertainment products. One of the only parallels is *World of Warcraft*, developed by Blizzard Entertainment (the same company as *Overwatch)* which saw a meteoric rise in popularity during its golden age of 2006-2010. The game is a paragon of its time, exemplifying the incredible feats of innovation and marketing for traditional technology in modern times.

The eighth generation of video gaming is joined by new figures revealing an unprecedented popularity of video games among our youth. The National Purchase Diary (NPD) group has recently discovered that 91% of people between the ages of 2-17 in the US play video games, and the Internet Advertising Bureau (IAB) of the UK tells us that 99% of people aged 8-15 play video games in Britain. Whilst gender divides in video game demographics persist amongst older age groups, this suggests a different picture for modern children and teenagers, putting greater pressure on developers to create inclusive narratives for their progressively inclusive markets.

Looking at these figures and considering the

rise in more emotive, critically acclaimed titles and 'art games', it is certain that video games are fast approaching a status of complete normalisation as a media platform, parallel in public recognition to television or film. In fact, as cinema attendance and television consumption wane, it is becoming possible that emergent media like video gaming could one day overtake more traditional media.

As video games increase in popularity and artistic recognition, so do the revenues. In 2017 the UK had the fifth highest revenue for video games in the world, making £4.2 billion in that year. We were overtaken to the fourth spot by Germany and only just beat South Korea. The top 3 spots are held by gaming giants Japan, America, and China which all continue to make over four times what we do.

Traditionally, the UK has tended to be the home of more developers than publishers, creating games instead of marketing and distributing them, which we often outsource to the US. Since 2010 alone, there has been a 68% increase in video game developing companies in the UK as we move to accommodate the growth in global demand. Video game revenue is set to increase worldwide as it has for decades making it possible for the UK's video gaming industry to thrive in the years ahead, climbing the global ladder.

Another interesting phenomenon of the eighth generation renaissance is the emergence of commercially available virtual reality. Immersive, fully implemented VR headsets have become widely available to gamers, but at present their use remains a niche subset of gaming largely

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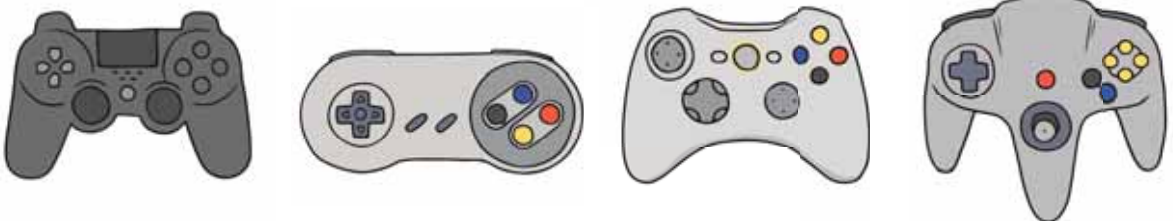
unsupported by most titles (see MM 62). So far, there has not been a landmark, must-play title created solely to support the hardware, although several promising products are in development.

Technology like this could result in video gaming entering a paradigm shift. Investors are notoriously eager to back the most innovative supplier with the most cutting edge technologies, and whilst always-online persistent worlds, and augmented reality support are remarkable breakthroughs that developers love to experiment with, VR is undoubtedly the hot button feature. Lately, we are seeing a wave of indie games with virtual reality support as different creators throw ideas at the proverbial wall to see what sticks, knowing any one of them could hit the mark and become the next Minecraft-style success story. *Blood and Truth*, *Echo Combat*, and *The Impatient* are titles of particular interest set for release in 2018.

However, like most new technologies, VR will take time to iron out its flaws, and at present it is a far from perfect format. Several titles aim to turn this weakness into success through comedy, exaggerating the confusing, abrupt, and uncertain nature of your limited control and perception in modern virtual reality experience. Justin Roiland's indescribable game *Accounting*, features cartoonish, surreal gameplay that makes the technology's limitations charming and funny, distracting you from how basic the game actually is. Whilst remarkable, this approach can only disguise the limitations of virtual reality for so long before it becomes tiring. In 2006, Nintendo famously gambled the future of their company on the popularity of motion controls with the release of the Wii, and whilst the console enjoyed some of the highest selling video games of all time, they generated precious little staying power and endangered the company for years, resulting in significant changes in the company to avoid bankruptcy. This abrupt change shook the loyalty of their fan base and affected legacy franchises like *Zelda*, *Metroid*, and *Starfox*, which went into an almost decade long slump, which is only now subsiding.

Investment in VR is currently moderate, with many consumers unconvinced of the platform's

Overwatch courtesy of Blizzard Entertainment

value when compared to its high price. It is unclear how long this tentative era continues before enough VR exclusive breakthrough successes incur the ninth console generation. As new consoles are rushed through development to better integrate the technology, many developers are forced to conquer new challenges, thus destabilising our current gaming golden age.

Whether video gaming's most recent renaissance sees a setback in the near future or not, modern gaming has come far since the dawn of the eighth generation in 2013 and is sure to reach new heights of excellence over 2018. The best could be yet to come with hotly anticipated release dates looming in the months ahead, capable of achieving historic significance as some of the greatest games of our time.

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▯▯▯ *from the MM vaults*

Virtual Reality, Damien Hendry, *MediaMag* 51

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