The Kray Twins of East London

Image Making, Celebrity Gangsters, and Their *Legend*

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Abstract: This paper examines the legend of the Kray twins, who were criminals, gangsters, and celebrities in the London of the 1950s, and whose popularity has been marked by a growing number of filmic representations, such as the 2015 blockbuster, Legend. *I focus on interdisciplinary questions of how role models and their media representation, including photographs, biographies, memoirs by gang members, and film adaptations have created and maintained the image of gangsters, more specifically, of the two East London criminals, Reggie and Ronnie Kray, since the 1950s. I start with an overview of aspects of organised crime and mafias, providing a few examples of famous gangsters who were the role models of the Kray twins, from the American Al Capone and Frank Sinatra to the English gangster Billy Hill. As a case study, I examine the image-making methods and achievements of the Krays in the post-war era until they died in prison (Ronnie in 1995 and Reggie in 2000) and their strange ever-growing fame even 20 years after their death (Campbell,* Underworld *8–12). Finally, I demonstrate how the systematically built and promoted Kray brand and legend paved the way for the success of the 2015 film,* Legend, *which still resonates with the myths surrounding the Krays.*

Organised crime is usually associated with the provision of illegal goods and services. However, when the term, "organised crime," first came into use in the mid-1800s in colonial India, it referred primarily to gangs of highway robbers (Lampe 3). Likewise, in the US Prohibition Era in the 1920s, the first consistent use of the term was linked to theft and robbery (with the coordination of interlocking tasks), much

more than to illegal gambling or the illegal sale of alcohol (Hobbs 57).[1] Organised crime is generally associated with gangsters like Al Capone, who was respected because of his wealth and power accumulated from crime. Criminals like him are often connected with crime as a lifestyle, and less with crime as a profession (Hobbs 58).[2] In the terms of Lampe, "the underworld is an idealised criminal subculture with its own rules and slang, separated from mainstream society with many possible links to the upperworld" (4). According to scholars such as McIntosh, the underworld is closely linked to urbanisation and to the lower-class quarters of large cities; it materialises in the bars and clubs where criminals socialise and receive advice or recognition and find accomplices for their plots (24). A criminal is not automatically part of the underworld; one needs to be accepted as "capable" and "reliable" first. As Pyrooz and others put it, the underworld, in general, has no formal structure, just an informal status hierarchy (86). Hobbs emphasises that organised crime remains elusive: criminals tend to be way, or at least one step, ahead of the police and prosecutors (58).

There are also much more cohesive and formalised amalgamations of criminals: clannish criminal fraternities, like the Sicilian Mafia or the North American "La Cosa Nostra" with their own rituals, symbols, and ideologies constituting criminal elites (Lampe 4).[3] According to Lampe, being accepted into their ranks carries an enormous boost in prestige and power, but even so, criminals are not free to commit any crime: they need permission from the ruling criminal group (5). Certain crimes are not tolerated as they go against the moral convictions of the leaders or may attract unwanted police attention.[4]

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1 Cf. the seminal study by Frederick M. Thrasher, *The Gang*: *The 1313 Chicago Gangs*. I would like to thank Zsolt Gyõri for calling my attention to the book and to further relevant literature.

2 Densley quotes Schelling (1970) who even differentiates "crime that is organised" and "organised crime." The former refers to crime that involves cooperation, functional role division, planning, and specialisation. The latter refers to monopolistic control exerted by one criminal group over "the production and distribution of a given commodity or service" (518).

3 According to Densley, the mafia as industry of private protection thus represents the quintessential organised crime (518).

4 Zsolt Gyõri has called my attention to substantive scholarship in cultural criminology, which relies on perspectives that emerged out of the British/Birmingham School of cultural studies and the British "new criminology" of the 1970s (Ferrell 396). This approach explores "both historical and contemporary texts" while also "investigating local and national newspaper coverage of crime and crime control"; "filmic depictions of criminals, criminal violence, and criminal justice"; "television portrayals of crime and criminals"; "images of crime in popular music"; "comic books,

McIntosh argues that some criminals achieve more respect than others because of their personality, skills, or wealth, because of their notoriety in the media, or because of their connections to even more influential persons in the underworld or upperworld (3). Lower-status criminals tend to orbit around higher-status criminals for support and protection and to increase their own standing. A recurring theme in the debate on organised crime is how powerful criminal organisations and individual criminals are. Journalists and the media are quick to award the "most powerful" title, but still, as Bair points out, Al Capone stands out among all the glorified and mystified gangsters (2).

In 1920, Capone's mentor, Torrio, having recognised the opportunities of the manufacture and sale of alcohol created by Prohibition, enlisted Al Capone to be his right-hand man. They assumed control over legitimate breweries that supplied the black market with "beer" while officially only producing "near beer"; this led to the so-called "beer war," in which Capone assumed a key role commanding whole troops of gunmen (Lampe 6). However, their "prestige" and, thus, their power was also enhanced by media representation. Unlike earlier underworld figures, Capone courted the press and, according to his biographer, Laurence Bergreen, his dominant position had even been a media fabrication (McIntosh 4).[5] When examining the Kray twins in London, we see many similarities.

There have been records of gangs in Great Britain since the eighteenth century (Berry-Dee 14).[6] In post-war London, the exploits of notorious families like the Krays or the Richardsons were considered local urban issues, rather than coordinated national threats.[7] According to Hobbs, gangs often fought for hegemony

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crime, and juvenile delinquency"; "crime depictions in cyberspace"; "and the broader presence of crime and crime control imagery throughout popular culture texts" (400).

5 Referring to Joel Best, Ferrell argues that "cultural criminologists attempt to elaborate on the 'symbolic' in 'symbolic interaction' by highlighting the popular prevalence of mediated crime imagery, the interpersonal negotiation of style within criminal and deviant subcultures, and the emergence of larger symbolic universes within which crime takes on political meaning. These understandings of crime and crime control as social and political constructions, and this endeavour to unravel the mediated processes through which these constructions occur, also build on more recent constructionist perspectives in sociology" (398).

6 The Metropolitan Police Commissioner in his Annual Report of 1964, commenting on the 30% increase in robberies or assaults with intent to rob, explicitly stated that London had always been the scene of robberies from the days of highwaymen and footpads (Hall 5).

7 The gangster "is the man of the city; with the city's language and knowledge, with its queer and dishonest skills and its terrible daring, carrying his life in his hands like a placard, a club" (Warshow 228).

in certain territories and illicit markets, engaging in violent and bloody street wars (60). Sergi, in turn, argues that, in the 1950s, the Kray brothers grew accustomed to a fictional Italian/American mafioso model and based their own power self-consciously on the charisma of leaders, conducting their business through emotion rather than calculation (177).

The Kray Twins of East London

The story of the Krays is similar to Al Capone's, but less well-known. In the words of McCaffrey, they were "sharp-suited underworld icons, merciless murderers, robbers and racketeers" ("Kray"). Born in 1933, Ronnie and Reggie Kray ruled London's East End for almost two decades in the 1950s and 1960s, running their "Firm" (Gray). At the same time, they also lived the life of pop culture celebrities, spending their days with famous politicians and artists. Kim Peat, the twins' cousin, who grew up next door to them on Vallance Road, East London, and celebrated family milestones with them, reveals how much she loved their mother, Violet, but could not stand the father, Charlie, for being violent to her until Ronnie, aged 16, threatened him (McCaffrey).[8]

According to their biographer, John Pearson, the Krays began their criminal careers in 1952, at the age of 18, when both were called to do National Service in the British Army (42). They reported for duty but attempted to leave, and when a corporal tried to stop them, they beat him and went home, before they were arrested and returned to the army (Person 43). Several months later, they repeated their escape and were sent to prison in Canterbury (Gray). After being released, the Krays bought a pool hall and started running protection rackets in the East End (Garner-Purkis).[9] According to Pearson, they intimidated businesses into paying protection money, and if someone refused, he was threatened with violence and murder. The Krays were often assisted by corrupt police officers who turned a blind eye in exchange for cash, and by 1954, they had taken over the Regal billiard hall in the East End (48).

8 Sociological studies have shown marked correlations between poverty and delinquency. As for broken homes, the studies of Slawson in New York, and of Shaw and McKay in Chicago, have shown that the broken home in itself cannot be considered a very significant factor in explaining delinquency. It has been asserted that motion pictures are a major cause of delinquency (Thrasher, "The Comics and Delinquency" 198).

9 For postwar London society, see "Swinging London, Dangling Economy 1945–1975" (Porter 344ff.).

By 1957, they had their own club, the Double R, and their own gang called "the Firm," consisting of "London heavies, Scottish hard men, and bent businessmen" (Pearson 77). Then they moved westwards, taking over a gambling club, Ermeralda's Barn, which soon made them rich. Pearson describes it as a high-class nightclub, frequented by government officials and celebrities, that gave the Krays broader opportunities and covered for their criminal activities (78). Soon they became friendly with famous people like Frank Sinatra, Judy Garland, and Diana Dors (Pearson 65). Their celebrity status distinguished the Krays from other gangsters and helped obscure what was going on under the surface at Esmeralda's Barn (Gray). As emphasised in several later representations—including the 1990 feature film, *The Krays*, directed by Peter Medak—they adored their mother and tried to meet all her wishes. Among others, they took her to meet her favourite actress, Judy Garland, in one of their nightclubs (Flanagan).

Power and control play a major role in gangsters' lives, including that of the Kray brothers. Anyone who did not have their permission could get into trouble in East London, even celebrities or their mother's favourites. According to a new documentary, *Secrets of the Krays* (2021), their mother's favourite actress, Barbara Windsor, was once threatened to be killed while shooting scenes in the East End for her 1963 film, *Sparrows Can't Sing*. The assistant director of the film, Peter Medak, remembered that the Krays had shown up in black limousines on the first day of filming and threatened the cast. However, after the producers agreed to their control and struck a deal, the gangsters befriended the cast and even proved generous, giving them all free drinks (McCarthy).

Authenticity in heritage films is a highly debated issue, with historians and film scholars often taking different stands. In this paper, I am not concerned with the historical accuracy of the Kray films but still wish to cite a few examples that are relevant for my examination of how the Krays were transformed from East London gangsters into celebrities. Unlike in *Legend*, Reggie Kray in real life had dated Frances Shea for eight years before she married him in 1965, aged 22, and according to their biography, Frances often had tea and watched TV with their mother, Violet, and her local friends (Pearson 138). At her wedding, where David Bailey took the wedding photos, Francis's mother walked in dressed entirely in black as if she had gone to a funeral, in protest against the marriage. The rebellious act is described in their biography and is also shown in *Legend* (Pearson 139), where it is highlighted on purpose to create an atmosphere of scandals surrounding the Krays and thereby

enhance their celebrity status. The filmic portrayal of Ronnie's scandalous sexuality has also shifted with time: while he is depicted as a covert homosexual in *The Krays* (1990), in *Legend* (2015), he is represented as openly gay among his close family at a time when homosexuality was illegal in the UK (Pearson 136).[10]

Kim claims that the Krays' role model in England was a "dashing gangster" called Billy Hill, who modelled himself on Humphrey Bogart, and in the 1950s exercised control over Soho (McCaffrey). Hill was linked to smuggling, protection rackets, and extreme violence in London between the 1920s and the 1960s, and his gang managed cash robberies and defrauded London's high society of millions at card tables (Berry-Dee 61). During the Second World War, Billy Hill, who was later to become mentor to the Kray twins, specialised in food and petrol in the black market, supplied forged documents for deserting servicemen, and was involved in West End protection rackets with fellow gangster Jack Spot (Campbell, *Underworld* 61).

The Kray Twins: Celebrities and Show Business

According to Pearson, throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Krays were carving out their reputation to make money and win attention (140). David Bailey, a successful celebrity photographer at *Vogue,* took a portrait of the twins in 1965, when they were not yet notorious gangsters and celebrities, just former boxers who ran nightclubs and collected protection money (Campbell, *Underworld* 67). Campbell argues that the portrait was to serve as "gangland's Mona Lisa," which was central to their image and their brand, as they aspired to be as famous as Al Capone and were gratified when the picture appeared alongside the Beatles and the Rolling Stones in Bailey's *Box of Pin-Ups*, Bailey's documentation of 1960s celebrity culture (*Underworld* 159).

Bailey later revealed in his memoirs that, when he was about 13, his father got slashed by a knife, and according to a family secret, it was done by the twins, then aged 19, who got two months in jail as a consequence (206). Bailey did not know this fact when he befriended Reggie Kray through Francis Wyndham, who had been first asked to write the Krays' biography. Bailey was later invited to tea at the twins' mother's house in Bethnal Green, the Krays' headquarters (Bailey 208). In 1965, Reggie Kray asked Bailey to take his wedding pictures with Frances Shea; obviously,

10 According to their cousin, Kim, the Kray family was very open-minded, and Ronnie's boyfriend, Teddy Smith, used to stay overnight with the family (McCaffrey).

he could not refuse, because "people did not say no to the Krays" (Bailey 211). By 1965, the twins had money and as Ronnie loved glamour and celebrities, they brought over Joe Louis, the former American heavyweight world champion, and they would take him round the clubs and have him sign boxing gloves for people to popularise their celebrity status. Since it helped boost his ego and further enhance his celebrity image, Ronnie enjoyed being in the limelight and in the company of other celebrities like George Raft, the American actor and star of the 1932 film, *Scarface*, who was a director of the Colony Club, a West End casino (Pearson 118).

The cross-fertilisation between crime and show business, like Frank Sinatra's relationship with the mafia in the US, benefited both sides: it brought prestige for the gangsters and was "cool" for the stars. When in 1950 the Kefauver Committee investigated the growing problem of organised crime in the US, it was televised with more than 30 million viewers, showing growing interest in scandals and celebrities.[11] Sinatra narrowly escaped the public "grilling," as he admitted to having passing acquaintances with Lucky Luciano and Al Capone's cousins, the Fischetti Brothers, and due to possible mafia ties that stretch back to Sinatra's grandfather's youth in Sicily before he emigrated to New York in 1900 (Williams 63–64).

Organised crime often went hand-in-hand with the bar business and celebrities, and even after Prohibition ended in the USA, "the mob" remained "silent partners in many businesses," "involved in the music industry, controlling most of the jukeboxes nationwide, and therefore dictating what records would be successful" (Williams 65).[12] Under mafia pressure on the head of Columbia Studios, Harry Cohn, Sinatra played the role of Angelo Maggio in the 1953 film, *From Here to Eternity*, for which he won an Oscar for Best Supporting Actor (68). In return, when mafia fortunes were invested in making Las Vegas, the gambling capital of the world, Sinatra, who "dressed like a gangster, talked like a gangster, behaved like a gangster, grew up around gangsters and fraternised with gangsters," was to be a regular performer at the mob-run Sands Hotel and Casino until the late 1960s (68). Sinatra's "relationship with the mob was clearly beneficial to both sides: Sinatra got fame and fortune and the mob had a tame star who could be used to boost their coffers" (68).

11 See further details in Wilson (728).

12 According to Densley, "gangs start life as purely recreational groups but over time they attain different functions, thus, expanding the menu of goods and services they can offer. The four stages of recreation, crime, enterprise, and governance are not mutually exclusive, but rather each stage builds upon the previous" (524).

Like the relationship of Sinatra with the mafia, the relationship of the Kray twins with the press was also symbiotic. Both sides profited nicely from an affair that began when the front page of *The Sunday Mirror* on 12 July 1964 read, "Peer and a Gangster. Yard Inquiry." The unnamed peer was Lord Boothby, a Tory politician, who (when homosexuality was still illegal) liked to hang out with Ronnie Kray in private (Campbell, *Underworld* 67). This was followed by another story, which referred to "the picture we dare not print" of Ronnie and Boothby, which still did not name the latter (Pearson 273). Boothby then, according to Pearson, wrote a letter to *The Times*, denying it all, claiming that the whole affair was a lie, and by suing the *Sunday Mirror* for libel, he pocketed £50,000, from which he paid £5,000 to Ronnie to keep quiet (275). Some recently found British MI5 files also contain details of an investigation into the relationship between Ronnie Kray and Lord Boothby, and include an explanatory letter from Boothby to the Home Secretary about why there was a picture of him with Ronnie, who, when visiting him for the business of a Nigerian development company, was innocently only offered a "drink" (Garner-Purkis). From contemporary media and records, it seems that Ronnie Kray used his private life and the scandals surrounding his homosexuality for staying in the media's attention, which is accurately portrayed in *Legend*: when the American mafia boss offers Ronnie some nice Italian girls, Ronnie openly answers that he prefers boys.

Although it worked for scandals and fame to create a hype around the Krays, power-hunger and arrogance finally overwhelmed the twins and brought them down. When George Cornell, a gangster from south London, called Ronnie a homosexual, he went mad and shot him dead in front of shocked witnesses on 9 March 1966 in the Blind Beggar Pub (Pearson 150). Throughout the late 1960s, the Kray twins escalated their crimes from racketeering to murder. In 1966, their first murder was of a member of a rival gang at a Whitechapel pub (Gray). A year later, the twins killed one of their own associates, Jack "the Hat" McVitie: as he had failed to carry out the order to kill their own financial adviser, Reggie stabbed him to death in front of numerous witnesses (Pearson 193). According to Root, by 1968, when the twins were at the height of their fame, Scotland Yard had built up a file on them and their gang, while the Kray twins thought their reputation made them untouchable (220). However, the twins and several of their associates were arrested by a policeman nicknamed "Nipper" Read, who had a distinguished policing and boxing career (Dodd) and whose fallibility was mocked in *Legend* to illustrate the Krays' popularity

and upper hand to outshine the police wits. Their arrest was followed by long murder trials for 39 days with the press and public galleries both packed, which enabled them to boost their legend even further before they were sentenced to life in prison (Gray). Although the twins denied everything, the Blind Beggar barmaid gave evidence, and the renegade members of the Firm did the rest (Pearson 263). They were jailed for life and a minimum of thirty years by Justice Melford Stevenson, who told them that society "earned a rest from their activities" (Ezard).

The Kray Brand's Promotion from Prison

Despite being jailed, there was to be little rest from the twins, who continued to promote their image as England's number one gangsters from prison. Once jailed, according to Pearson, they devoted all their energies to their image as gangland stars; the Krays were always open to visitors from outside (279). According to Campbell, Reggie Kray wrote in 1991 that his eventual aim was to be recognised, first as a gangster, then as a man and eventually as an author, poet, and philosopher (*Underworld* 82). Therefore, publicity was of primary importance for the twins and was promoted all through their lives and beyond to support their narcissistic egos and their brand. Bailey's 1965 photo of the Krays represents the first stage in the construction of their enduring image (Bailey 207). Stage two came in 1967, when the Krays approached John Pearson (who had just written a well-regarded biography of Ian Fleming) to be their biographer, focusing on their clubs, celebrity status, and charitable works (Pearson 220). Pearson finally published three volumes, which are partly responsible for their enduring fame: *The Profession of Violence* (1972), *The Cult of Violence: The Untold Story of the Krays* (2001), and *Notorious: The Immortal Legend of the Kray Twins* (2010).

As Pearson recalls, Tony and Chris Lambrianou were also in the Kray Firm, and both were jailed for their parts in the McVitie murder. As the papers needed good gangster stories, the Kray connection meant money for anyone who could sell a story about them. Tony published a bestselling memoir, *Inside the Firm* in 1991 (269). Chris Lambrianou became a born-again Christian and also published a book, *Escape from the Kray Madness* (1996). This was negative publicity but still contributed to the Krays' fame. The same applies to "Nipper" Read, who also wrote two books on the pursuit of the Krays, enhancing the popularity of their legend (Dodd).

Film was another tool used for their image building. According to Bailey, Reggie himself experimented with writing script; he sent Bailey his film noir scripts from prison (mostly including a mother and a vicar with lots of violence and no romance), which reflected his unhappiness and mourning his wife, Frances (216). Reggie also wrote to his cousin Kim every day from prison to show off his artistic talent, sending her poems and recommending her books (McCaffrey).

Pearson highlights that, after Violet Kray's death in 1982, Mareen Flanagan, who used to be Violet's hairdresser, and who knew the twins when they were children, took on the role of prison visitor and go-between with the press (279). Flanagan claims that she also helped the twins in organising charity events in their name, which kept up their celebrity image even in prison. For example, she got footballer George Best to sign a Manchester United shirt, or the former world boxing champion, John H. Stracey, to sign boxing gloves, which would then be auctioned ("Behind the Legend").

In 1979, Ronnie Kray was certified insane with paranoid schizophrenia, and he was transferred to Broadmoor Hospital, where he remained until his death in 1995 (Pearson 277). Flanagan faithfully visited the twins in prison and dealt with Ronnie's luxury demands to show off from inside Broadmoor, a secure hospital rather than a prison. As she recalls, one of her roles was to cash in on the Krays' legend: she had to ring *The Daily Mirror,* as the paper would always pay for a story, which would be passed on to their brother, Charlie, to share it with the twins ("Behind the Legend"). Kim, who also visited the twins in jails, remembers that in Broadmoor, Ronnie's butler served tea from a silver pot, again underlining his celebrity status (McCaffrey).

When their older brother, Charlie, was released from prison in 1975, he was also expected to manage the Kray brand. According to Campbell, "[t]he brothers set up a company called Krayleigh Enterprises, which merchandised their name with everything from T-shirts—'Kray Twins on Tour'—to cigarette lighters" ("The selling of the Krays"). Pearson claims that the sale of their name to small security firms, who would pay a few thousand pounds to be able to tell clients that they had the Krays' backing, was equally lucrative. The Krays' business cards still described them as "personal aides to the Hollywood stars," and to prove this, they even provided bodyguards from prison for Sinatra when he visited Britain in 1985 (280).

Everything, including marriage, was meant to keep the Kray twins in the limelight and to bring in more money. In 1997, 30 years after the suicide of Reggie's first wife, Frances Shea, Reggie, at the age of 64, married 38-year-old Roberta Jones

in Maidstone prison for publicity. It was meant to benefit them all. Roberta was also aware that, by marrying a Kray, she entered the media spotlight. The name opened the publishing house doors for her eleven crime novels with titles such as *Bad Girl* and *No Mercy*: they appeared with the word "Kray" featuring on the cover (Pearson 284).

Pearson highlights that, despite being openly homosexual, Ronnie Kray also married twice in prison to stay in the focus of media attention. Besides seeking popularity and fame, Ronnie also liked to spend a lot, thus the Krays needed to capitalise on their name. They decided to sell media rights to Ronnie's two weddings (Pearson 280). When in 1985 he married Elaine Mildener, *The Sun* paid £10,000 for access to the wedding in the Broadmoor chapel. When Ronnie divorced her, he married Kate Howard in 1989 for publicity and its income (Pearson 281).

The Krays Twins' Legacy and *Legend*

The Krays were buried next to each other. Back in 1982, Violet Kray was also buried in the Kray corner of Chingford Mount Cemetery, for which occasion her twins were let out of prison (Pearson 279). As always, they took the chance to mourn and to enhance their fame at the same time. There were horses with black plumes, as the hearse drove from Violet's flat in Shoreditch with 60,000 people lining the streets, and celebrities like Barbara Windsor and Diana Dors were pressed to attend (Moreton). Their own graves were also meant to seek people's attention, including the ornate headstone erected in 1967 to mark the passing of Frances Shea. On the headstone, an angel looks down on the grave at a little white model of a Scottie dog in sorrow (Moreton). Next to Violet and Frances, the faces of Ronald and Reginald Kray appear on glistening black marble, as they were shot in the famous Bailey photograph with the inscription on their grave: "Grant them eternal peace, O Lord" (Pearson 321).

The twins thought glamour was a cover for grim reality, and they managed to create an exceptional image for themselves. Most criminals become famous when they get caught and go to jail, but the Krays achieved fame while still active. Pearson argues that Reggie would have been a very successful businessman on his own, but Ronnie was darker: he was very much into the gangster image and wanted to live the gangster lifestyle in a way that he thought Al Capone did (318). According to Campbell, the Krays were tough but had manners; they were good to their mother, "loved their dogs," and became twin symbols of the so-called Spirit of the Blitz: people

of the East End running their own lives, working together, keeping their own code without interference from officialdom in any form (*Underworld* 73).

Hollywood created iconic genres, for example, gangster movies about the mafia (Leggott 53); however, the British film industry worked differently with the social realist versus the heritage cinema tradition as its main divide. Still, the Krays have inspired several gangster dramas both in literature and film. Besides a number of recent documentaries including *The Krays: The Prison Years*, *The Krays: Kill Order,* the 2021 new documentary series, *Secrets of The Krays*, has exposed further intricate details. Two stylish American gangster biopics, *The Rise of the Krays* (2015) and *The Fall of the Krays* (2016), also appeared recently, but interestingly, the first British feature film on the Krays was made by Peter Medak, a Hungarian-born film director in 1990. Since then, there have been two American feature films on the era, *Legend* (Brian Helgoland, 2015) on the Krays and *Once Upon a Time in London* (2019) on Billy Hill ending with the brief introduction of the new era of the Krays.

If we briefly contrast the 1990 British film, *The Krays*, with the 2015 American one, *Legend*, we can see several differences in their representation, but most importantly, *Legend* proves the growing popularity of the Kray brand in the twenty-first century and indicates that the twins have kept enhancing their celebrity status even after their deaths with their afore-mentioned intentional brand-building methods. This popularity is, in the main, informed by a growing sense of nostalgia, as not only the large number of recent literary, intercultural, and transcultural studies testify, especially the ones inspired by Svetlana Boym's concepts of nostalgia,[13] but there also seems to be a nostalgia for nostalgia in recent years in the film industry as well; mostly in the heritage genre, in many films and TV series set in the interwar or postwar era, e.g. *The King's Speech* (Tom Hooper, 2010), *Made in Dagenham* (Nigel Cole, 2010), or *The Crown* (2016–2023)—just to mention a few.

While the opening and closing bird-eye view frames of *The Krays* show Violet Kray's 1982 funeral, setting her in the focus, *Legend* focuses much more on the celebrity and glamour aspect of the Kray story and on London itself, a spectacular twenty-first-century projection. *Legend*'s plot is also more dramatic, and it is narrated by a woman, Reggie Kray's first wife, Frances. It highlights the glamorous

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13 See e.g. Hargitai's "Restorative and Reflective Nostalgia in *Doctor Faustus*, *Macbeth*, and *The Tempest*" (2019), where she cites Boym, who describes "nostalgic desires" as trying "to obliterate history and turn it into private or collective mythology" (34), which can be identified in both the lives of the Kray twins and the film adaptations about them as well.

aspects of the life of the Kray twins more as celebrity figures than as gangsters, with Ronnie's homosexuality and his high life among homosexual politicians. In contrast, the 1990 film highlights the societal aspects of the Kray family, putting more emphasis on the role of their mother, rather than the brand itself.

Maureen Flanagan claimed she did not like the 1990 film, as the Spandau Ballet boys, despite doing their best, were not menacing enough; moreover, she resented that in the film, unlike in reality, Violet Kray was swearing. The twins in prison were also furious about their mother's defamation (Flanagan). But in *Legend*, according to Flanagan, Tom Hardy as Reggie got everything right: "the walk, the beautiful hands, the way he holds the cigarettes and that frown which was always quizzical as if he was just about to ask someone a question," while, on the other hand, playing Ronnie "he was menacing and he got the stare absolutely right" ("Behind the Legend"). Nevertheless, Violet Kray is missing from the 2015 film, despite having been the most important person in the twins' lives—partly because of the narrative structure which, through the recollections of Frances Shea, places in the film's centre glamour, Ronnie's homosexuality, and madness. In the 1990 version, in contrast, Violet represented the Kray family and their East End roots.

The Krays wanted to make sure by any means that everyone knew who they were. When they were sentenced to life in prison, at age 35, their brand was already a success. Due to their popularity, we might wonder if they could be considered modern Robin Hoods. However, unlike Robin Hood, they never gave back what they stole to the poor. Instead, they spent it on high life, clothes, drinks, holidays, and publicity, with only a few exceptions, such as a generous donation after the Aberfan disaster_of 21 October 1966 (Lewis). Pearson claimed the twins were generous donors as it generated a lot of sympathy and support for them, so they were successful both as criminals and celebrities creating and keeping up their image, their brand, and legend (281).

Ronnie died in Broadmoor in 1995, and according to Kim, the streets were lined at his funeral, and kids climbed lamp posts to get a better look (McCaffrey). Reggie outlived Ronnie by five years and was released from Wayland prison because of his cancer eight weeks before he died in 2000, but according to Pearson, the crowds were much smaller for Reggie's funeral, as their generation was dying off (14). However, their fame, brand, and celebrity status still survive. There is still a weekly tour of the Blind Beggar Pub in Whitechapel, where Ronnie murdered George Cornell in 1966. As Campbell points out, the pub has done well out of the Krays; one can

take a selfie in the place where Cornell was shot, and they sell DVDs on the Krays and a booklet, *Krays Walk* (*Underworld* 82). Around the corner from the Krays' old home, on Bethnal Green Road, there is Pellicci's Cafe, which used to make the twins' breakfast, and which still attracts Kray "pilgrims."

The Kray twins are long dead, but their legend continues to survive and even shows signs of growth, proving the long-lasting impact of their brand. Their systematic image making was so successful, and their celebrity status so well founded, that their legend is still alive 22 years after their death; thus, the 2015 American film, *Legend*, could easily build and cash in on this sentiment, on audiences' longing for glamour, for celebrities, and on feelings of growing nostalgia.

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Film & Culture

A Collection of Essays on Film, Literature, History, and Culture

MÁRTA HARGITAI & ANDREA VELICH

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The idea for the *Reel Eye* special issue of *The AnaChronisT* was prompted by a workshop and conference held at Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) in September 2021, as part of the ELTE Film and Culture BA Specialisation Programme of the School of English and American Studies (SEAS). The programme was launched in 2015 to improve BA education with the encouragement of the late Prof. Tibor Frank, director of SEAS back then, and of Prof. Ákos Farkas, head of the Department of English Studies (DES) back then. They were both highly dedicated to starting a new Film and Culture programme, which was co-hosted by ELTE SEAS and the Department of Film Studies. With this Reel Eye special issue, we would also like to pay tribute to the work and support of three colleagues: the late Prof. Tibor Frank, Prof. Ákos Farkas, and Prof. Marcell Gellért (now retired), who also participated both in the creation of the *Film and Culture 2016* textbook and in the *Reel Eye Conferences*.

By now, we have trained almost 100 students in the Film and Culture programme, who continued their MA studies at different film departments after graduation, finding their feet either in academia or in the film industry. Among our first-generation students, there were young talents who, since then, have proved to be important parts of the Hungarian and international film industries, either as theoreticians, scriptwriters, or filmmakers, of which we are all very proud.

As part of this team effort in 2019, we started a conference series called the Reel Eye Film Workshop and Festival, which we then continued biannually. The second workshop was held online in September 2021, including international scholars.

It is our honour that among the keynote speakers we could host Prof. Sue Harper from the Film Department of Southampton University, UK, who is known for her very well-received books and her BAFTA award, and Prof. Teréz Vincze, associate professor of the ELTE Department of Film Studies.

Besides the regular lecturers and seminar leaders of the Film and Culture Programme, there were other ELTE SEAS colleagues to present interdisciplinary papers on film and culture in three sections (Film and Literature, Shakespeare and Film, and Film and History) at the RE21 conference that this volume collected papers from.

This volume reflects and highlights all the inter- and transdisciplinary teamwork and collaborations during the last eight years. There were numerous people participating and supporting us in organising the RE21 conference and editing this volume, including all the colleagues on *The AnaChronisT* editing board and Éva Mészáros, a PhD student at ELTE SEAS, to whom we are very grateful.

It is the editors' hope that this assortment of scholarly essays also captures the interdisciplinary spirit of the event and that it provides a deeper insight into research carried out at ELTE SEAS as part of the Film and Culture programme.

Collected in this volume are extended versions of the papers presented at the conference.

Cecilia Gall (ELTE) discusses Justin Kurzel's 2019 film, *True History of the Kelly Gang,* investigating how and why this disturbing take on Peter Carey's 2001 Booker Prize-winning book deliberately breaks with the received notions of Kelly representations, in specific, how a beardless Ned Kelly succeeds in alienating rather than identifying the viewer with the main character, thus highlighting the artificial character of the Ned Kelly myth.

Márta Hargitai (ELTE) looks at chronotopes of hell in Welles's 1948 and Goold's 2010 film adaptations of *Macbeth,* focusing mainly on horizontal images and structures of evil space, suggesting that horizontal trespassing, in contrast with katabatic experiences, can happen so gradually that one almost does not notice that they have transgressed, underlining the basic theme of the drama: the gradual process of self-damnation.

Sue Harper (University of Portsmouth) explores the bumpy road from research to practice following the trajectory of an outstanding academic career taking new turns. Hitherto primarily concerned with hidden and repressed aspects of film history, such as working-class audiences and films for women, more recently she has decided to engage in some creative work of her own, which would nevertheless rise out of her academic work and be dynamically related to it. Thus, she started to write short stories, and in 2020, a book was published with Egaeus Press, *The Dark Nest*, which sold out immediately. In her present paper, she argues that researchers and creative writers are not as far away from each other as we might think, and the work of the latter can be seen as part of a continuum of thinking about gender and culture.

Dóra Janczer Csikós (ELTE) investigates the myth of the rape of Lucretia. Lucretia's inner turmoil after her violation has been the subject of countless poems, plays, paintings, and musical compositions, almost uniquely depicted from a male viewpoint. The focus of her paper, however, is the 2013 Glyndebourne performance of Benjamin Britten's opera, *The Rape of Lucretia* (libretto by Ronald Duncan), directed and adapted to the screen by Fiona Shaw. In particular, the paper examines how Shaw departs from Britten, and whether her staging revises the interpretive tradition of Lucrece's ethical and psychological stance.

Éva Péteri (ELTE) takes a closer look at two Victorian paintings: John Everett Millais's *The Knight Errant* (1870) and John Melhuish Strudwick's *Acrasia* (1888) in the context of Oliver Parker's 2002 film adaptation of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), where shots of Cecily's fictional diary feature the two above mentioned pictures. In her paper, she explores how these visual references contribute to the viewers' understanding of the plot and the characters, and what is suggested by their application about the director's view of the pictures themselves.

Natália Pikli (ELTE) explores the connection between Shakespeare and the popular film industry, in specific, how and why Shakespearean allusions and adaptations can contribute to box office success. Her paper includes case studies of *Romeo+Juliet* (dir. Baz Luhrmann, 1996), *Shakespeare in Love* (dir. John Madden, 1998), Joss Whedon's film noir-inspired *Much Ado About Nothing* (2012), and Richard Eyre's film of *King Lear* (2018), arguing that success relies on some form of crossover effect.

Eglantina Remport (ELTE) examines Ken Loach's *Jimmy's Hall* (2014), focusing on the motif of dancing, in specific the peculiar fusion of traditional Irish dancing with jazz dance, to make a case for dancing being an expression of freedom for many Irish people in the 1930s. The dancing scenes, she argues, create a magical,

musical journey of love, passion, and politics in the Ireland of the 1930s. On this journey, Irish history is re-invented for cinematic purposes to see the narrative reach its culmination: Jimmy's deportation, Oonagh's heartbreak, and the destruction of Jimmy's community hall in Effrinagh, Co. Leitrim.

Katalin Szlukovényi (ELTE) focuses on repetition in *Paterson*, and addresses issues of duality and identity. She highlights the relationship between life and its representation, how a book-length poem can be adapted to film. As the author claims, Jim Jarmusch's adaptation is a contemporary tribute not only to William Carlos Williams, *Paterson*'s author and a prominent figure of American modernity, but to the poetry of everyday life.

Andrea Velich (ELTE) discusses the differences between biography and film adaptations, showcasing two films on the Kray brothers: *The Krays* (Peter Medak, 1990) and *Legend* (Brian Helgoland, 2015). The fascinating real-life story of the Kray twins (East-London mafia leaders and bar owners in the 1960s) begged for the big screen, a wish hoped for and indeed promoted by the twins to come true. They entrusted John Pearson to write their biography, and eventually *Notorious: The Immortal Legend of the Kray Twins* was turned into films.

It is here that we wish to thank our ELTE SEAS colleague, Dr. Zsolt Bojti, for his tireless commitment to our project from the moment of the online conference to the final stages of copy-editing. Without his hard work, dedication, and expertise, this special issue would not have been possible.

We do hope that this special issue will prove engaging and worthy of interest for film students, academics, and the general public alike.

Ned Kelly Without a Beard

Unmasking and Truth-Telling in Justin Kurzel's *True History of the Kelly Gang*

CECILIA GALL

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Abstract: Before Justin Kurzel's 2019 adaptation of Peter Carey's 2001 Booker Prize-winning True History of the Kelly Gang *came out, almost a dozen films had already been made about the outlaw Ned Kelly. Raising money for a new film seemed like an impossible task. What untold aspects are there of this story? Kurzel, like Carey, was not interested in telling how it really was. Rather he became interested in how history can be "stolen" and turned into political agenda. The oft-told story of the Kelly Gang continues to define the way Australians think about themselves and their national identity. Kurzel's disturbing take on Carey's book is not likely to turn out to be a crowd-pleasing, popular film. This paper aims to examine how the film deliberately breaks with the received notions of Kelly representations. A beardless Ned Kelly succeeds in alienating rather than identifying the viewer with the main character, thus highlighting the artificial character of the Ned Kelly myth.*

Depending on how you count it, Justin Kurzel's 2019 adaptation of Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang* (2000) is either the 10th (Gaunson, "True History"), the 11th (Groves), or the 16th film (Quill and Phillips) made on the theme of the bushranger, Ned Kelly. The long row of films opened with the 1906 film, *The Story of the Kelly Gang*, Australia's first feature film. "Whether or not *The Story of the Kelly Gang* is the world's first narrative feature film is still debated," claims film critic Paul Byrnes, but we can certainly blame this film for "kick-starting" "the trend for bushranging films, many of which were made in the next seven years, until 1912, when

the police succeeded in getting a ban on bushranging films in the states of Victoria and New South Wales" (Byrnes).

The ban, however, did not affect the popularity of the genre. Lacking in formidable heroes or founding fathers, Irish-Australians especially viewed Ned Kelly as a figure who could personify the struggles and tribulations of a young nation in a strange land. In a podcast interview with Ramona Koval about *True History of the Kelly Gang* in November 2021, Carey insisted that it is impossible to describe Ned Kelly to Americans as someone like Jesse James or Billy the Kid. He explained that, in fact, the cultural significance of Ned Kelly or the space he occupies in Australian consciousness can only be understood by comparing him to Thomas Jefferson or George Washington (Koval). Whilst there is no denial of the crimes that Kelly committed, the symbolic space he occupies in Australian cultural history elevates him to a level higher than an ordinary bushranger, hence the comparison with the founding fathers. Pitting his struggle against the representatives of rich English landowners, Kelly quickly became a symbol of resistance to unjust and unfair colonial power, a symbol that could be endowed with characteristics that, in fact, were larger than the character itself.

There is no end to the various literary and visual representations of the Kelly story. It is the story that captivates Australian imagination perhaps more than anything else. In 2013, Stephen Gaunson published a book called *The Ned Kelly Films: A Cultural History of Kelly History*. In the book, he discusses nine feature films, three miniseries, and two TV films made until the date of publication, but he excludes the documentaries and short films. Kurzel's film is, thus, the 10th and latest addition to this list. No wonder that after the announcement of the first billed cast of *True History of the Kelly Gang*, the internet went into overdrive with reactions. Don Groves asked the question: "How many Ned Kelly movies are too many?". He surveyed industry players' reactions to the upcoming film ranging from "[p]lease not another one" (Sandra Alexander of Sandstar Films) to QED Productions' Roger Dunn's expectations: "If you've actually read Peter Carey's great book of the same title, you'll see how an adaptation of its angle on the Kelly saga will be like no other" (Groves). Indeed, Dunn is proved right. Kurzel's film might be the 10th feature film, but it is like no other. In this article, I take a look at the reception of both the book and the 2019 adaptation by Justin Kurzel, highlight some of the controversies, and finally outline the methods employed to transmute Carey's postmodern text into visual language.

Admittedly, adapting a Peter Carey text is no easy task. Theodore F. Sheckels argues that as film is primarily a visual and secondarily an auditory genre, the postmodern avoidance of the specificity of time and place becomes very hard to convey. In addition, cinema audiences' expectation of genre and heroism also presents a problem (Sheckels, "Difficulties" 85–86). In two of his articles (in 1999 and 2005), Shekels discusses specifically where the adaptations of Peter Carey's texts go wrong. He argues very convincingly that filmmakers are unable to "translate" the postmodern and satirical aspects of Carey's work. One of Sheckel's examples is Carey's short story, "Crabs," at the end of which the main character, obsessed with cars, turns into a car himself and (unsuccessfully) attempts to leave the confinements of his environment, the metaphor of which is the title of the adaptation, *Dead-end Drive-in*. In the film version, instead of the metamorphosis, Crabs literally speeds away like in a "classic 'escape' movie" (Sheckels, "Difficulties" 88). Sheckels argues that, whilst postmodern film is possible, the film adaptations under examination seem to "pull the work away from the postmodern aesthetic" and offer something "more modern, or realistic, thereby confusing or altering Carey's themes" (Sheckels, "The Difficulties" 83).

In what way is Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang* a postmodern text? First and foremost, through its re-working of history. By taking a historical figure who for various reasons is deeply entrenched in Australian national consciousness and attributing new and unusual characteristics to him. Australian readers are by and large familiar with the deeds of the Kelly Gang. These signpost events, like the Fitzpatrick incident or the shooting of Aaron Sheritt, are left the same in the novel. What is different is the "small print" of Kelly's life. It is his everyday life, the days spent with his family, friends and the authorities that are filled with new content, for example the discovery of his father in a dress, or a relationship with a prostitute, delivered in a radically new way. This new narrative that Carey invents both confirms and re-imagines the world of the hero and/or villain in focus.

In several interviews, Peter Carey talks about his inspirations to write a book about the Irish-Australian social bandit, Ned Kelly. Carey especially emphasises the impact that the reading of the so-called *Jerilderie letter* had on him. This is an 8000-word text of over 50 small handwritten pages that Ned Kelly composed in response to what he perceived as unfavourable media coverage, wishing to articulate his own point of view publicly (O'Reilly, "Mythology" 74). Thus, in this case, the "letter" is understood as public discourse; it was always meant for publication. However, Kelly's attempt to get the letter published was denied. The manifesto was

not printed in his lifetime and the text only surfaced many years after his death. Today, it is on display in the State Library of Victoria. Peter Carey vividly recalls his first encounter with this text, the "voice," as he terms it (Carey, "Imagining"). He typed it all up for himself and made long-term plans to return the authority to this speaking voice, "the character's DNA" (Carey, "Imagining"), which was denied an audience in his life by writing a novel which used the *Jerilderie letter* as a source, both for content and style.

Sidney Nolan's Ned Kelly series provided another source of inspiration for Carey. He recalls seeing Nolan's paintings at an exhibition (probably in 1962), the second major exhibition he ever attended (Carey, "Imagining"). Nolan's depiction of the two-dimensional Kelly, who is represented metaphorically by his famous armour, "blew Carey's socks off" (Carey, "Imagining"). In the 1946 painting entitled *Ned Kelly*, the outlaw is positioned in a way that the viewer is behind the figure, seeing through the armour and taking on whatever antagonists there are on the horizon. Another painting depicting Steve Hart in a dress refers to the known disguise the gang member adopted when wishing to avoid discovery. In his book, Carey uses this incident to create a private mythology of frocked fighters of an imaginary Irish rebellion and resistance to English colonial power.

In the novel, Carey's version of Ned Kelly writes his history to his daughter. Whilst many things are unclear about Ned Kelly's life, it seems fairly certain that he never had a daughter. By creating a fictional daughter (and not a son), and thus "confusing fiction and fact" (Kurzel 1:30), Carey made certain assumptions about his audience:

> And I always thought that if you call a book "True History," each word calls the other into question, and for a literary audience everyone is going to know what the game is, but for a less literary audience I also thought that having a daughter—well, there is no daughter in the story, so I thought that stabilised the "True" part of it. (O'Reilly, "The voice" 164)

The game is, of course, a postmodern understanding of history—hence the title, *True History of the Kelly Gang*. "Anyone who says 'true history' is obviously writing a novel… No historian would ever say that" (Carey qtd. in Eggert 123). And for this reason, Carey refused to insert a definite article before the adjective "true" in the title.

Kurzel's film opens with a clever addition to this polemic of the title. First, he displays the disclaimer: "[n]othing you're about to see is true." Then he keeps the sole word "true" lingering on the screen for a few moments just to be followed up with the rest of the words of the title: *True History of the Kelly Gang.* It is a fair warning, and again, a clear display of the rules of the "game," as Carey said above.

But this was not the last trick that was played on the reader. The book itself is organised around "parcels" and not chapters, and each "parcel" bears a description by an archivist (or historian). If this was not enough, in 2001, The University of Queensland Press published a softcover edition of the novel which resembled a manuscript, featuring uneven pages as though cut up by a knife. Carey invites the reader to play an elaborate literary game with him. However, deliberately or otherwise, not all readers picked up on the hints. Ignoring the obvious signpost of implanting a fake daughter, some readers felt cheated by Carey's postmodern handling of historical facts. "It felt so genuine" a reader called Louis Kaufman complained. "With the descriptions of the letters and the bindings of his work … really made it seem real to me." "I hadn't understood that this was a work of fiction" (Kaufman).

Kaufman's comment speaks of his reluctance to play the author's game and expresses his disappointment and annoyance at the gap between readerly expectation of the hunt for historical "truth" and the writer's refusal to provide this. He understands correctly the book's attempt to give a voice to Ned Kelly and "compensate" him for the publicity denied in his lifetime, but he does not buy Carey's postmodern articulation of the inner "truth" of the character.

Kaufman was not the only reader to refuse the postmodern understanding of history in the book. Kelly historian, Doug Morrissey, wrote a damning review of Carey's book and Kurzel's film adaptation in *The Sydney Morning Herald* entitled "Another hogwash film peddles fake history of the Kelly gang."

> Kurzel's movie is neither true nor history. Carey said of his acclaimed book "it's the most invented, made-up book I've ever written." He should have called it "An Imaginary History of the Kelly Gang."… The literary rubric of Carey's book and Kurzel's movie is don't let the truth or anything resembling the truth get in the way of eccentric storytelling. (Morrissey, "Another")

Morrissey went on to slam the film and its "sham muddle of truth and fiction" and "plethora of falsehoods" in a longer article in the monthly *Quadrant* entitled "The Silliest Ned Kelly Movie Yet." Despite acknowledging the film's grounding in Carey's re-imagining the Kelly story, the review is deeply offended by both the book's and the film's disregard for historical facts. It is clear that, in this "double adaptation" of Kelly's story, first, the distillation of the "voice" of Kelly by Carey from the *Jerilderie letter* and, then, by Kurzel's adaptation of Carey's adaptation, the "fidelity" demand of adaptations is replaced by a demand for historical accuracy—the "wagon wheels" that Kurzel talks about in this interview with *Deadline* magazine:

> I think that sometimes we get caught up in historical accuracy being the truth, when it sort of ignores the truth at times. I don't really care what the wagon wheel looks like. What I really care about is the inherent truth of the character, and how those times could have felt. When we made that decision, it was really liberating, and a lot of that was inspired by the spirit of the book. (Utichi)

But how successful is Kurzel's pursuit of the visualisation of the "spirit of the book" (Utichi)? How can a "voice" be adapted? Is the "voice" the "spirit"?

> "A faithful adaptation is a boring idea to me," says Carey. "If you are going to make a book into a film, you really have to break it. So, what I will say about this film is that they broke it—and I gave them permission and continue to give them permission to do so. Their politics are different to my politics. Theirs is about toxic masculinity perhaps, and a boy driven mad. Mine is about the convict stain and the convict seed who becomes the hero of the country. They are different things. Some of the things that they have done with the book are really thrilling and I like the degree to which it is reckless and transgressive. But it is not my book. And that's all right." (White)

Favourable reviews generally highlight the cinematography, the costumes, and the musical score as the cornerstones of the adaptation, as for example, Debbie Elias, Ella Taylor, or Fiona Underhill point out in their reviews. "The soundtrack,

by turns eerie and jangling, draws on the frantically nihilist canon of the 1970s," Ella Taylor writes. The punk association is not missed by many other critics either: "Ned is a damaged and unhinged violent, colonial, punk anarchist with an anti-authoritarian ethos, ready to unleash his wrath against those who cross his path or bring threat to his family, especially his mother Ellen" (Gaunson, "True"). George MacKay, who plays Ned Kelly in the film, recalls the following guidelines by Kurzel: "We are going to let go of history. We are going to use what is needed, but we are going to make it in the spirit of these men. … I've always seen these guys as a punk band, they are a bunch of angry, ambitious, confused young men" (Allen). In fact, in preparation for the film, MacKay was asked to form his own punk band with the rest of his on-screen mates and perform in a bar after only three weeks of rehearsing. The "gang" completed the assignment, came up with their own songs, two of which ended up in the film (Allen). Other cast members such as Russell Crowe, who plays the bushranger Harry Power, and Marlon Williams, playing George King, also sing a song they wrote for Kurzel's film. Fleshlight, the "pop-up" punk band (Melissa Fyfe's term) has quite a following on the internet. "Watching this film, it may be safe to say that Ned Kelly would have fit quite nicely in the punk world of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries" (Elias).

The aim of the punk band exercise was to make the cast understand the mood imagined for the film. Earl Cave, who played Dan Kelly, refers to his experience as "feral" in an interview given to *HeyUGuys*. Kurzel assigned compulsory film viewing and music listening tasks as well for the main character. The atmosphere was distilled from the aggression expressed in classic Australian films like *The Chopper, Romper Stomper* and *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* (Allen). Mackay, who was chosen for the role despite not having a beard like the real Ned Kelly, was expected to bring to life the raw physicality of Kelly's relationships and not the myth that he was beginning to become even in his life. "Without Ned's signature bushy beard, his youth (the real Kelly died aged 25) is emphasised and MacKay conveys the boy-desperate-to-be-a-man so well, expertly navigating a range of performative confidence and aggression while constantly being plagued by inner doubts and regrets" (Underhill, "True"). The actor's "transformation" into Ned Kelly was not done by way of make-up or hairdressing. In Kurzel's film, dress understood as a cultural tool takes central importance. In this context, Ned's beard is just another mask, just like dress in the film is understood "as war mask essentially" (Fyfe).

In keeping with the anachronistic treatment of history, the costumes used in the film were not trying to signpost the nineteenth century either. On the contrary, the 1980s 'I love Western' jumper, probably from Colorado (Hutton), worn by Joe Byrne, strengthens the idea of the parallel drawn with the modern age. Alice Babidge, costume designer, claimed that she "didn't care where [the clothes] were from in terms of period, location, being feminine or masculine" (Hutton). She describes working with Kurzel like "walking out into the abyss," "creating the rules of the world that we wanted to inhabit—and then deciding whether we break those rules. … It was more about evoking the right sensibility" (Hutton).

The dresses, worn by the gang members to scare "the f***ing bejesus out of the English" (Kurzel, 1:16:22), were worked into Carey's text to signify the gang's desire to connect with Irish resistance movements (Smyth). Whilst there were sightings of gang members in frocks (especially Steve Hart) that are documented and can be regarded as factual (Fyfe), the *Son's of Sieve* resistance movement is Peter Carey's ingenious invention. "Carey's cross-dressing theme was 'a huge part of what made me fall in love with the book' … The characters in the film are continually wrestling with what it is to be an Australian male" (Kurzel qtd. in Fyfe). The dresses helped Kurzel invert the traditional concept of an "alpha" (Fyfe) male. Whilst he made men wear dresses in the film, Ellen Kelly is shown wearing pants. In this context, Kelly's legendary armour is also part of this "dress-up" theme: the jeans-clad Kelly recruits have iron headpieces with drawings on them. The armour here is decorated with grafitti, reflecting the textual irony that is the prevailing mode of storytelling in Carey's novel. In some cases, a beard is painted on. It literally becomes part of the masquerade in a carnivalesque representation that can be put on or removed at will. This way the beard, which is an entrenched part of the Kelly mythology, has been physically removed from the person wearing it and is made part of the role-play, dress-up. Kurzel also gave an eye patch to Steve Hart, played by first-time actor Louis Hewison, which further enhances the carnivalesque vibe. The conscious choice of representing Kelly without his usual beard signifies an "unmasking," the attempt to divorce the man from the legend that he has turned into. This is the invention of the film, part of the adaptation, as Carey's text makes a number of references to Kelly having a beard: e.g. "I had grown the brave beginning of a beard" (Carey, *True* 164) or "I had a mighty beard and was a child no more" (Carey, *True* 169).

Cross-dressing is taken to a new level in the third part of the film, entitled "Monitor," documenting Kelly's obsession with the perceived indestructible armoured protection of American warships. "I am the monitor," he declares a number of times as he no longer sees himself as a vulnerable human being. The metaphorical (and physical) transformation of man into (killing) machine is complete. In the film, this is represented by the overdominance of metal. Kurzel houses the famous Glenrowan siege in a barren metallic shed, in the company of "hooded and kneeling captives deliberately invok[ing] an ISIS hostage video" (Sparrow). This association certainly does not contribute to the romanticisation of the Kelly saga at all; on the contrary, it evokes brutality. In fact, the viewer is reminded of an earlier scene which shows Ned cutting off the ear of a dead policeman.

The representation of the siege itself breakes with the realism that characterises the rest of the film. Fyfe suggests that this may be the result of the lack of budget for a "proper" police siege. Forced to find a creative solution, Kurzel decided to use an army of white stylised policemen descending upon the gang. Covered in excessive amounts of blood and gore, the gang's undoing is represented through throbbing, disturbing stroboscopic images that are conveyed through the increasingly limited point of view of the main character.

Kelly is shown to gradually unravel and "lose the plot" in the stroboscopic light. Yet, he cannot afford to lose control altogether. His empowerment comes directly from his writing. "Are we gonna re-write our own history?" (Kurzel 1:28:27), he asks his recruits in a motivational speech earlier. "Every man should be an author of his own history" (Kurzel 1:22:24). He now knows that history is narration itself. As well as narrating Kelly's autobiography, the film also uses multiple shots of Ned writing "his truth" to ask questions about mythologising, calling other representations into question. Which word is more reliable than the other? Thomas Curnow, the traitor, or hero from another point of view, who stops a trainload of policemen from meeting their certain death at the hand of the Kelly Gang, gives Ned "his word" that he will return if allowed to fetch some books on English parsing to help Ned perfect his narrative. He does not keep his word. Curnow's word is literally worth nothing.

Kurzel has another take on the schoolteacher and the final "word." At the end of the film, Curnow tells a packed hall his eyewitness account of Kelly's last words. Whilst we see a parallel story of Ellen Kelly warning Ned not to say anything on the gallows, Curnow tells the audience the famous last words since entrenched in popular mythology: "such is life." Kurzel refuses to confirm or strengthen this

legend. In an important difference from the ending of the 2003 Gregor Jordan *Ned Kelly* film, which cuts off before the hanging and ends with an image of Ned still being alive, Kurzel's final shot is a dead, silent figure, dangling from the end of the rope. We hear the voice of George MacKay reading the end of Kelly's autobiography advising his daughter to "write [her] own history" (1:59:11). Kelly is dead, but his voice, his version of the truth is preserved in his writings. There will always be competing stories, exemplified by Curnow's lies, but these need to be handled with a postmodern understanding of history: "[w]hatever they write about me, whatever names I am given or whatever falsehoods are attributed to me, know that much is true" (Kurzel 1:59).

Taking the above into consideration, it may be safe to conclude that Justin Kurzel's adaptation of Peter Carey's complex postmodern book accomplished the task successfully. The film magnified the use of crossdressing in Carey's text and created a visual context which unsettled the normative masculinity usually associated with Ned Kelly. This resistance to established discourses is symbolised by the lack of Kelly's beard in the film. In addition, Kurzel created a whole punk-rock metallic aesthetics for his film, complete with music from the 1970s, and tried to convey the feeling of the gang's subculture by relating it to the transgressions of punks. This aesthetics is the dominant mode of the depiction of violence, the murders, and the siege in which Kelly "turns into" an ironclad monitor represented by his armour and the metallic shed in which the gang is trapped. The film is deliberately provocative. The representation of gender roles and sexuality is fluid and pluralist. Whilst Carey wanted to give Kelly a voice he was denied, Kurzel unmasked the trappings of masculinity: the beard, historical dress, and compulsory heterosexuality, therefore, liberated Kelly from the straitjacket of mythology that he was forced into. Kurzel gave Kelly the last word and whilst his history may have been hijacked and distorted, he should also have, and should have always had a right to contest the stories and mythologies created about him. Many reviews and articles recognised the relevance of such a postmodern treatment of history in the film and responded well to it. However, the truth of the Kelly gang and Australian history itself is likely to remain a contentious battlefield for a long time to come.

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Chronotopes of Hell in Two Film Adaptations of *Macbeth*

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Abstract: Representations of Hell and the journey to and from it in literature and film tend to follow the katabatic scheme, i.e. they present narratives of a descent and return made by a living human being. In the present paper, I discuss another technique: the presentation of Hell on a horizontal plane. I focus on images and structures of evil space in two film adaptations of Macbeth *(Welles 1948 and Goold 2010) that both rely on juxtapositions of images of Heaven and Hell, light and dark, confined vs. open spaces, and vertical vs. horizontal crossings.*

My contention is that, similarly to the existential Hell in Marlowe's Doctor Faustus, *Hell in* Macbeth *(both in the play-text and in the selected film adaptations) is a state of mind: it is within us. Crossing the threshold on a horizontal plane is different from taking a deliberate downward turn, such as taking an elevator to the basement or wilfully sinking to the level of beasts. A horizontal trespass can materialise almost imperceptibly, "stealthily," so gradually that one almost does not notice that one has transgressed, as numerous examples from the films will testify. Using horizontal images of Hell in these adaptations is, therefore, a more refined, albeit perhaps less spectacular, means to underline the basic theme of the drama: the gradual process of self-damnation.*

Representations of Hell and the journey to and from it in literature and film tend to follow the katabatic scheme, i.e. they present narratives of a descent and return made by a living human being.[1] In the present paper, I discuss another technique:

1 Cf. Falconer's definition ("Shape-Changing in Hell" 1).

the presentation of Hell on a *horizontal* plane. I focus on images and structures of evil space in two film adaptations of *Macbeth* (Welles 1948 and Goold 2010) on the basis that they both rely on juxtapositions of images of Heaven and Hell, light and dark, confined vs. open spaces, and vertical vs. horizontal crossings. My contention is that, similarly to the existential Hell in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, Hell in *Macbeth* (both in the play-text and in the selected film adaptations) is a state of mind: it is within us. Crossing the threshold on a horizontal plane is different from taking a deliberate downward turn, such as taking an elevator to the basement or wilfully sinking to the level of beasts. A horizontal trespass can materialise almost imperceptibly, "stealthily,"[2] so gradually that one almost does not notice that one has transgressed, as numerous examples from the films will testify. Using horizontal images of Hell in these adaptations is, therefore, a more refined, albeit perhaps less spectacular, means to underline the basic theme of the drama: the gradual process of self-damnation.

In her seminal book, *Hell in Contemporary Literature,* Rachel Falconer refers to Bakthin, according to whom "literary genres are defined by their chronotopes, their distinctive representations of time and space and the human image within that timescape" (42). Although Bakhtin primarily focused on narrative genres when he formulated his idea, the concept of the chronotope can be useful not only in the study of other literary genres, such as drama, but in that of film as well, as testified by numerous recent studies. In *Bakhtin's Theory of the Literary Chronotope* (2010), Bart Kenuen calls attention to "the polysemic nature of the concept of the chronotope," but still defines it as "the elementary unit of literary imagination" (35). Falconer, in the same collection, observes that "recent extensions of Bakhtin's theory have sought to define the chronotopes of new and emergent genres such as the road film, the graphic novel, and hypertext fiction" ("Heterochronic Representations" 112).

In her book, Falconer proposed that "Hell" itself is a chronotope whose most familiar inherited temporal and spatial features include: narrow constraints on spatial movement, an absence of future orientation, experienced by an individual both separate and alienated from his or her environment and from other people, despite often being crowded into close proximity with others in an undifferentiated mass (*Hell* 42). She distinguishes as many as sixteen different images or motifs in any western katabatic narrative (*Hell* 43), adding a further one: the surprising rapidity and ease of the hero's return from Hell despite all warnings (if he/she does return).

2 Cf. Macbeth's dagger scene soliloquy (2.1.51–56).

Investigating Hell in two film adaptations of *Macbeth* with special attention to horizontal imagery, I find especially important Falconer's motif no. 5 (threshold-crossing), no. 14 (distortions of time), and no. 16 (distortions of space). To these, I will add another one: the distortion of space-time, because after Einstein and Bakhtin, the two cannot be efficiently separated from each other.

In the literary artistic chronotope, according to Bakhtin, "spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history" (84). This is undoubtedly applicable to film as well; one could simply replace *novel* with *film*, and the following description would still hold: "the chronotope, functioning as the primary means for materialising time in space, emerges as a centre for concretising representation, as a force giving body to the entire novel" (Bakhtin 250). Hell can be seen as one such concrete centre in the *Macbeth* adaptations; it materialises time in space and functions as a centre for concretising representation: a force giving body and shape to the entire film. It is represented in various ways but I will now focus on the horizontal images of Hell following the three categories introduced by Falconer above.

In Rupert Goold's *Macbeth*, threshold-crossing is mostly symbolised by the vertically mobile image of the lift. According to Víctor Huertas Martín, this infernal lift turns "*katabasis* into the production's defining feature." The image is indeed a captivating one, a well-chosen metaphor for the gradual damnation of the couple, perfectly in tune with their katabatic experience. Yet, it could appear as too literal a translation for moral sinking.[3] The scheme is complicated by images of horizontal threshold-crossing, including the long eery corridor taken first by Macbeth and then by the Porter,[4] suggesting a borderline between time before and after the murder, between the *here* and the *there* (of sinful thoughts and sinful deeds). Crossing the line, i.e. sliding from inertia to action, from imagining the deed or seeing visions to using an actual weapon to kill the king, is almost imperceptibly easy: Macbeth

3 The imaginary dagger might not be such an all too easy special effect as, for instance, a "transparent projection" (cf. Kliman 125) for the presentation of a ghost. The difficulty of creating the device can be seen in some Shakespeare adaptations, e.g. in Polanski's, the dagger looks as if the target audience of the film were teenage Disney-fans. (N.B. there is no such thing before Stewart in Goold's adaptation at 0:37:59).

4 The Porter is played by the same actor who also plays Seyton, his name unmistakably and emphatically pronounced /ˈseɪtn/ in this production (e.g. at 2:17:03).

smoothly walks over to the other side with an imaginary dagger materialising into a real murderous weapon in his hand in no time.

Another example of horizontal threshold-crossing can be seen in the sleepwalking scene. Set in the catacombs representing the deepest circles of Hell and the buried subconscious of both perpetrator and instigator, in this scene the lady repeatedly re-enacts the murder. She faces the doctor played by the same actor as Duncan, so the lady might indeed, for a second, believe that the deed can still be undone and that Duncan may come out of his grave.[5] Yet, the lady is not scared; she beckons to him trustingly, "Come, come, come, come, give me your hand" (2:10:11). This can again be seen as the horizontal translation of the previously seen vertical passage between the subnatural and the supernatural, the borderline between this world and the otherworld, between normality and madness, reality and illusion. The shoulder-level camera angle used in the scene confirms the horizontal connection.

Thus, it is by no means just the katabatic, vertical descent that marks the route to Hell, but horizontal images signifying various acts of transgression also abound in the 2010 film. My contention is that there is, in fact, a whole structure of horizontal images of threshold-crossing in both film adaptations. Two scenes from the play-text describing such a passage—whose filmic representations, therefore, offer themselves for such analysis—are the Porter scene and the scene where Banquo and Fleance leave the castle, but for want of space, only the first is to be analysed in this paper.

In film in general, but especially in *film noir*, settings are just as important as people.[6] As observed by both Cocteau and Bazin,[7] in Welles's 1948 adaptation of *Macbeth*, the Porter, a barbarous Scot, crosses a large, circular horizontal space to open the gate, surrounded by cardboard sets trickling with water. This depiction corresponds to Falconer's motif no. 10, a Lethean lake of forgetfulness paralleling the Porter's drunken stupor; or motif no. 6, a river crossing; or indeed no. 11, "regions of Hell/Hades subdivided into circles or compartments by different kinds

5 Cf. the lady's recollection in her somnambulist state of her own comforting words to her husband about Banquo: "he cannot come out on's grave" (5.1.53–54).

6 "*Film noir* is most easily identified in terms of its visual style and camera strategies: low key lighting, shadows and fog; a *mise-en-scène* that makes settings as important as people; canted camera angles (expressing subjectivity), tight framing (showing entrapment), and slow tracking shots (suggesting the unravelling of mystery). Conditions of entrapment and moral ambiguity abound in noir films; taboos are tested and broken; a sense of destiny reigns" (Keyishian 75).

7 See Cocteau in "Profile of Orson Welles" (26) and Bazin's chapter, "Around Europe: Obstinacy and Uncertainty," in *Orson Welles* (66–67).

of threshold boundaries" (Falconer, *Hell* 43). This last image is also recognisable in the semi-circular steps of a cave-like structure in Welles' film, which is all the more relevant as the Porter in this adaptation does not have a speech; thus, there is no mention of Hell's gate, Beelzebub, or the other devils; Hell is only presented visually.

In Goold's 2010 film, in contrast, the Porter does make his speech, visually and verbally dominating the two parts of the scene. First, as the murderous couple leave the catacombs in a lift holding each other's blood-stained hands, the camera cuts to the Porter sitting in his own closet holding an empty bottle in his hand delivering the first half of his speech (0:48:15–30). Then he gets up to approach the gate as the camera shows a car entering the gates (of Hell), with Macduff, Lady Macduff, and their children. In the meantime, the Porter is shown taking the same tunnel that Macbeth had taken earlier (0:48:39–45, 0:48:52–0:50:21) reiterating the idea and image of the borderline between time before and after the murder or, to appropriate De Quincey's words, the *awful parenthesis* (389ff.). Finally, at 0:51:38, Macbeth appears from around the kitchen, which is on the same floor, thereby confirming the horizontal idea of threshold-crossing.

It is not only space but time as well that is transgressed repeatedly in the play. Falconer lists the following types of distortions of time: accelerations, mythic arrests of time, regression to primal scenes, traumatic repetitions, schizophrenic split, or multiplied realities (*Hell* 43). Such distortions, I argue, start early in the play, with Lady Macbeth's "Thy letters have transported me beyond / This ignorant present, and I feel now / The future in the instant" (1.5.54–56). Braunmuller finds an arch, an overall frame in the play, constituted by this condensation of the future into the present, hinting "how time and human experience in time will be compressed and squeezed later in the play, so squeezed and compressed that the be-all will be the end-all, and time itself a syllable" in 5.5.18–20 (19).

For distortion of time, my chosen scene is the night of the murder when Duncan's horses eat each other and "darkness does the face of earth entomb / When living light should kiss it," which might be called, in Falconer's terms, a *mythic arrest* of time (*Hell* 43). The passage itself is about the strange alterations in the order of natural time. Ross and the Old Man converse: the former observes that "By th'clock 'tis day / And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp…," to which the other replies, "'Tis unnatural, / Even like the deed that's done." They both confirm how wild Duncan's horses turned, finally eating each other (2.4.6–18).

"By the clock it's day," says Lady Macduff in Welles's film, to which the Holy Father, a Wellesian invention,[8] replies, "it's unnatural even like the deed that's done." Duncan's horses are not even mentioned. Macduff stays in the background, not commenting upon the events, busy planning his flight, leaving behind his wife and children. The frame at 0:36:51 shows high-contrast lighting, with sharp and distinct shadows and lighting from the sides. As Bazin observes, "Welles preferred chiaroscuro lighting, that is, lighting that is harsh and subtle at the same time; he wanted large areas of semidarkness penetrated by rays of light with which he and the actors could skilfully play" (*At Work* 10). Rippy adds that Welles uses "an expressionist visual style in the film—what Rothwell calls a 'chiaroscuro lighting of German expressionism' (2004, 73)—as he attempts to convey the psychological state of the protagonist through extreme camera angles juxtaposed with light and sound" (Rippy 16). As this technique is used in all parts of the film, it cannot clearly separate this scene from the previous ones; therefore, day being night(like) does not seem a convincing point here. Another way of seeing it, however, is that this has been the case from the beginning, and it will not change even after Time is liberated by Malcom, either. Thus, it might be an example of a technical limitation taking on additional meaning.

As Bazin recalls, the film was shot in the studio of Republic Pictures—a small company specialising in third-rate Westerns—for the modest budget of $75,000 (Bazin, *Welles* 66).[9] Welles had promised to shoot *Macbeth* in twenty-one days, after four months of rehearsals on a converted stage (Bazin, *Welles* 66). Therefore, presenting an outdoor scene where two horses are shown eating each other would have been a problem. The verbal mention, however, would have been most useful to include as this powerful image is connected to one of the main themes of the play: the disorder of both the human and the natural world, the contrast between what is natural and unnatural. We are all familiar with the strong Shakespearean principle of chaos within—chaos without, or disorder in the human sphere replicated

8 A controversial figure, as can be seen in the short survey on this character's critical assessment by Jeff W. Marker. His character derived partly from Ross but developed during the filmmaking, and finally, he appears more a military man than a priest, hovering over the film as prevalently as the Weird Sisters. He was perhaps originally intended to embody a grotesque caricature of the Christian sanctity (cf. Marker citing Kliman, Mullin, and Anderegg, 120).

9 "For a budget of $700,000 (modest even at that time), Welles agreed to make the movie in three weeks" (France 34). The translators of Bazin's book note that Peter Noble reports the cost as £75,000; Charles Higham as $800,000; Joseph McBride writes that the film was finished in twenty-three days "for less than $200,000" (90).

in the macrocosm. According to this rule, when the rebel violates the natural order of time by killing the order figure, he upsets not only the human sphere but nature as well. This basic principle of the Renaissance world-view can clearly be seen in the above passage but by omitting one half, Welles, one fears, only presents a fraction of the full picture.

Goold's technique is more successful at producing diffused low lighting, blurred shadows, and a general greyness similar to what we experience at partial eclipses of the sun. I believe this is very much in tune with the Shakespearean atmosphere, present not only in *Macbeth* but in *King Lear* as well, for instance in Gloucester's line, "These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us" (1.2.91–92). In Goold, it is Ross and Seyton/Porter talking outside the castle about the dreadful and strange happenings of the night. The Porter in his characteristic diabolically menacing style concludes, "'Tis unnatural, / Even like the deed that's done." Even though the discussion ends here before they could converse about the unnatural happenings of the night in the animal kingdom, the point has been clearly made.

Another example of the distortions of time in the play, Macbeth's speech, "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow" (5.5.18–27), delivered upon hearing the news of his wife's death, might be cited to illustrate traumatic repetition, schizophrenic split, or multiplied realities listed by Falconer in this category (*Hell* 43). As this is one of the greatest soliloquies of the play, replete with abstract images and concepts, filmmakers must energise all their creativity to make it work on screen. Traumatic repetitions abound in the play in general, manifested in the actions and speeches of both Macbeth and his wife. As Braunmuller notes, "for Macbeth, repeated syllables ("Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow") represent time's slowing and, at "the last syllable," time's end" (19).

Welles presents a Macbeth who looks drunk from the time of the first murder, thereby suggesting that this is his way of coping. It is also shown how Macbeth's mind is fogged, how he is gradually falling into apathy, and how meaningful change promised to him at the beginning by the word, *hereafter*, collapses into mere repetition devoid of all meaning and purpose, deepening the split within himself. If only Welles had opted for a frame like the distorted mirror-image of himself used in his earlier revelation, "To be thus is nothing, / But to be safely thus" (0:42:29). But as usual, he frustrates his viewers' expectations and presents the greatest speeches

of the play as voiceovers,[10] often with the actor's face replaced by some inanimate scenery. Here we see fog and cloud formation during the speech, which visually demonstrates how Macbeth's perceptions are becoming increasingly dim.

Although Goold's Macbeth occasionally drinks too, in this scene he is far from being in a drunken stupor. A scream cuts through the hasty male world of preparation for war (2:20:22), in effect stopping time. Female space embraces this halt: it is the sisters who bring in the body of Lady Macbeth.[11] Macbeth here effectively carves out a chunk of time in an effort to pay due attention and respect to his partner in crime. Once again, he calls attention to the impossibility of any synchronisation between action and speech: "She should have died hereafter; / There would have been a time for such a word" (5.5.16–17) As Braunmuller comments, "Macbeth's last phrase, 'a time for such a word,' joins time with language, timing with speech, and directs us to the characters' recurrent failures to synchronise their words with events" (56). Seyton/Satan is onstage all through this scene, providing context for the evil surrounding the events. The corridor is an appropriate setting: its horizontal linearity suggests the passage of time, and when Macbeth stops the gurney here, we might be reminded of the earlier image of *the bank and shoal of time*, his momentary pause in the flow of events. This time, however, he is no longer hopeful to be able to jump over it and arrive in the future unscathed, as all days to come hereafter will be just leading to dusty death.[12]

As space is also recurringly manipulated in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, it is worth considering what Falconer's list includes under *distortions of space*: among others, compression and contraction (*Hell* 43). In the play-text, the murderers confess that Fleance has escaped, which triggers in Macbeth what he calls a fit:

> Then comes my fit again: I had else been perfect;
> Whole as the marble, founded as the rock,
> As broad and general as the casing air:
> But now I am cabined, cribbed, confined, bound in
> To saucy doubts and fears. (3.4.21–25)

10 According to Rippy, Welles "often plays with the audience expectation of conventional monologue delivery by having characters turn away from the camera, mumble or speak while in motion" (16).

11 An excellent recent study by Natália Pikli examines the weird sisters in the context of early modern witchcraft literature and dramaturgical traditions.

12 Note how this last image again presents the passage between life and death on a horizontal plane. In Welles, this was a matter of below and above.

The passage is replete with spatial references; therefore, it might be easier to translate for the screen—being too literal, however, as we have seen earlier, might backfire too.

Welles is closer to being literal and his setting is rather claustrophobic, in tune with the cabined, cribbed, chained images of the Shakespearean passage. Macbeth should be otherwise perfect, i.e. as hard as marble; as fixed (firm) as a rock; or as free as the air.[13] But he is *cribbed*, i.e. shut up, hampered; *bound in*, i.e. kept fast and chained to saucy doubts and fears; cabined and confined not only in words but visually too, inside the caverns of his strangely built castle. Braunmuller in his gloss calls attention to the alliteration of near-synonyms in line 24 (176), which makes Macbeth's words sound like witch-language. It is remarkable how Welles visually repeats this connection: the figure of Macbeth is hard to distinguish from the rocks behind and around him (0:54:15), just as it was hard to make out the sisters at the beginning of the film when they looked as if they were one with the "natural" scenery, i.e. the rocks and the fog and filthy air (0:02:55). Here, it confirms Macbeth's distorted vision of space, while also conveying his entrapment within a confined space, with his giant ambition and enormous hope and confidence in his future—all this is very well captured in Welles's frame which makes Macbeth look one with the rocky interior.

In Goold, there are no cramped cave-like interiors; therefore, spatial compression and contraction are less discernible in the scene of Macbeth's meeting with the murderers. In the spacious dining room (1:22:57–1:24:15), confinement is only hinted at metaphorically: the previous frame showed the weird sisters serving food and wine at the table (1:23:29). As Macbeth utters the words, "There comes my fit again," the witches can be seen passing in the background (1:23:40), virtually drawing a circle around Macbeth, thereby visually confining him and emphasising the limited nature of his free will. He is only free within limits.

If distortion of time and distortion of space can each characterise the chronotope of Hell, then the same should be true of a combination of the two. So, as a synthesis, distortion of time and space is to be discussed next through the image of the *bank and shoal of time* upon which Macbeth imagines to be momentarily standing and stranded in the great soliloquy at the beginning of 1.7. The metaphor itself is a literary chronotope, i.e. "a distinctive representation of time and space and the human image within that timescape" (Falconer, *Hell* 42). The speech is so complex and complicated in imagery, meaning and syntax that—as I have tried to show elsewhere—there

13 Note the much more unique phrasing of Shakespeare than the commonplace similes glossed by Braunmuller above (176).

are at least three markedly different contexts in which the passage and its leading metaphor can be understood: first, time as a river presenting Macbeth momentarily halting "time's flow by standing on a shoal or by grasping the bank"; second, meaning "bench and school," an educational metaphor for a "dusty classroom with Macbeth seated upon a 'bank' or bench"; and third, a legal reading where "bank" (bench) is the seat of justice (cf. glosses by Braunmuller 131). The question here is how the cameras suggest the rebel's violation of time, and what spatial context is provided to effectively replace or suggest the original idea of space-time, i.e. the image of the bank and shoal of time.

In Welles, the soliloquy is cut in two and is heavily truncated and in parts rephrased as well. What we witness here could be called another "Wellesian ballet, as the characters of Shakespeare's text merge into and separate from each other" (cf. Rippy 20, on condensing 1.4–1.5). The second half comes first: starting at 0:15:09 when Macbeth, in voiceover, contemplates that King Duncan is his kinsman, and how pity over his death would, like a naked babe, stride the blast, and how tears will drown the wind, closing at 0:15:40. All this is progressing in parallel with people listening to the mass delivered by the Holy Father, asking for St. Michael the archangel to be safeguard against the wickedness of the devil that seeks the ruin of souls. Finally, the whole congregation stands up to renounce Satan and all his work. The first half of the original soliloquy comes later: after the service is over, and after Duncan and Malcolm discuss the death of the traitor Cawdor—nicely displaying the dramatic irony in "There's no art / To find the mind's construction in the face" (1.4.11–12) and especially its immediate connection with "but where Macbeth the thane of Cawdor?" (not in the play-text) as Lady Macbeth is pouring the poison into the chamberlains' goblets—and even after Duncan and Malcolm enter the castle praising the delicate air (another famous instance of dramatic irony). Only after all of these comes "If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well It were done quickly" (1.7.1–2) between 1:18:30–1:19:15.

The delivery and framing of this part of the speech seems to be in line with my understanding of the soliloquy, where line 5 ends in "here," and line 6 starts with "But here," as if the two *heres* were not referring to the same space:

> that but this blow
> Might be the be-all and the end-all—*here,*

> *But here*, upon this bank and shoal of time,
> We'd jump the life to come. (1.7.4–7, emphases added)

In Welles' adaptation, as Macbeth delivers the first half of the soliloquy, we see the Lady descending the stairs to come face to face with her husband. The background image is that of a tower snapping the scene in two halves: the *here*—but *here*, the before and after, the undone deed and the one done. As this will be the background for their subsequent meeting after the murder as well, it holds the future in the instant: "that which is to come in the present moment, the here-and-now," at 0:18:52 (Braunmuller 19).

The justification for such a deconstruction and reconstruction of the original soliloquy is questionable, but the cutting in two—of the speech, of the screen (diagonally), and of the couple (horizontally) by the Porter who crosses the courtyard squeezing through the Macbeths—follows the logic of the split between the here and the there: Macbeth before and after the fall. Thus, Macbeth emerges as a split personality, a divided self, with the two halves drifting further and further apart. His double nature, his two selves are externalised in the play-text all along: first in the figure of Banquo (see the Captain's description of them in 1.2.35–41 where the lines can easily be interpreted as suggestive of their being each other's doubles), and then in the Lady's character. Both knots are broken by death (murder/suicide), and this untying, this breaking of union or divorce by death can perhaps also recall the Biblical definition of Hell: a place divided against itself.[14] This is very well captured by Welles, who cuts the soliloquy in two, splits the screen diagonally and unties the union of the couple by the Porter (of Hell's gate).

This hellish aspect of division is much less obvious in Goold's film where the soliloquy is delivered in an almost completely deserted kitchen. Preceding the scene, there are glimpses of the royals paying a visit (0:25:40). Then the camera slows down to linger more leisurely on the figure of Macbeth, entering the now almost completely deserted kitchen with two bottles of wine in hand (0:27:19), pausing for a second to choose between them. He makes his choice easily, opting for the one in his left (sinister) hand, symbolically siding with evil. Fumbling with the knife to cut the foil, he lifts the knife and starts his speech: "If it were done … here but here … ." There

14 "Every kingdom divided against itself, shall be brought to naught, and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand. So if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom endure?" (*The Geneva Bible*, Matt 12.25–26).

is nothing visually special to mark any fissure at the moment of uttering the phrase *here–but here*, only maybe his gun belt running diagonally across his shoulder, yet the brief hesitation over the bottles prefigures the choice Macbeth is soon to make. He holds up the knife as he utters, "If it was done when it is done," in a way not dissimilar to how he will soon hold up the imaginary dagger.

The ordinary kitchen utensil, the knife is used with such ease and comfort in this scene that we wonder if this is the same man who fights like hell on the battlefield. Our impressions and foreknowledge of Macbeth and his deeds confound us, just as when he makes sandwiches for the murderers in the same kitchen a bit later (1:06:00–1:11:17). The visual connection between the two scenes—the same setting, the knives, and Macbeth feeling very much at home in the kitchen—makes us aware of his different personalities, his two incompatible selves merged in one body. This twoness surfaces in his words of menace contradicted by his action of smoothly spreading butter on bread, or when he puts everything back in the fridge while casually dropping the name of Fleance, who should also be killed, which makes even the older, more experienced and more hard-hearted murderer wince. Macbeth strokes their cheeks and pretends to be choking them in one smooth movement. The viewer, like the two murderers, might feel that the bread knife could be transformed into a murderous weapon any moment, just as an imaginary dagger can become real in no time.

Domestic man can change into bloodthirsty murderer any minute because he is both, and the inner contradiction between his two selves will tear him apart. His Hell is this inner split, when one does not recognise his own self, as he himself diagnoses it right after the murder: "To know my deed, 'twere best not know my self" (2.2.76). This recognition will haunt him until the very end, and can be assumed to have started here, in the great soliloquy in 1.7.[15]

In the scene of delivering the "bank and shoal" soliloquy in Goold's film, the mathematical, horizontal progression of time is stopped, and takes on a shape as if the kitchen island—prefiguring the horizontal image of the dead body of the Lady on the gurney in the later scene—was indeed his *bank and shoal of time*,

15 Cf. Braunmuller's gloss 76: "To know... my self i.e. consciousness of murder could best be borne if I lost my identity (a quibble, perhaps, on Dent K175, 'Know thyself'). Upton (p. 177) paraphrases: 'To know my deed! No, rather than so, 'twere best not know myself.' The implicit claim is that Macbeth as he was and murder are psychologically incoherent; awareness of murder will require a new 'self.' DeFlores asserts that Beatrice-Joanna, having ordered a murder, is recreated by her action: 'Y'are the deed's creature' (*Changeling* 3.4.137)" (147).

where he can be by himself and his own self for a moment longer, still hopeful of being able to jump into the future.

In conclusion, having examined five selected moments of the play-text and their filmic counterparts, it can perhaps be safely stated that, although they use very different styles and techniques (black and white vs. colour; *film noir* and German expressionism vs. horror genre features; highly stylised sets vs. realistic or naturalistic images), both films are successful at providing a valid and consistent interpretation of the Shakespearean play, visually foregrounding numerous chronotopes of Hell. There are many memorable scenes in both films—how could one forget the titanic stature of Macbeth played by Orson Welles, "cabined, cribbed, confined, bound in / To saucy doubts and fears" in the cavern-like interior that can hardly contain him, or Stewart's flawless delivery of the *Tomorrow* soliloquy in the downstairs corridor, a perfect threshold-crossing between life and death, perpetuating Macbeth's living Hell after the death of his wife. It might appear futile to compare and measure one decision made by a director in the middle of the twentieth century with another one made 60 years later. Yet, it is clear that both made choices corresponding not only to vertical images of Hell but also to horizontal ones, and consequently, their interpretations seem to be in alignment with the thesis of this paper that crossing over to the other side is all too easy, and can be made most naturally and almost imperceptibly.

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The Path Less Trodden

From Research to Creative Practice[1]

SUE HARPER

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Abstract: This essay critically reviews my own academic career and creative practice, and argues that there can be a fruitful crossover between the methodologies of historical research and creative writing. I discuss the issue of artistic innovation and the cultural conditions most likely to foster it, analyse the notion of discursive density, and argue for the necessity of eclecticism in social and gender politics. The paper works with the themes of Adornment, Documents, Assimilations, and the Numinous, and argues for the existence of creative scholarship and grounded fiction.

When you get to a certain age as an academic, you need to make a critical assessment of your writing. If you want to remain intellectually fresh, you have to critique your own methodology, be prepared to make major shifts, and to be flexible. The imagination can flourish inside the academy as well as outside it, and it can do so in new ways if you give your creativity the right kind of encouragement. To avoid becoming an intellectual fossil, you need to put your old insights and methods to new uses, and to be prepared to take risks. When I reviewed my own published work, which was unorthodox in many ways, it was clear that it was fuelled by an interest in repressed aspects of film history: working-class audiences and films for women, for example (Harper, *Women in British Cinema*). I was concerned with visual style and the way in which cultural codes were imprinted into it (Harper and Smith, *British Film Culture in the 1970s*). I was also interested in the representation

1 The author would like to thank Oliver Gruner (University of Portsmouth) and Justin Smith (de Montfort University) for their valuable help with this paper.

of history and the way in which film texts could usher in contradictory interpretations of events, which had a profound effect on their social function (Harper, *Picturing the Past*). I was part of a group that argued for the establishment of "the new film history"—a type of analysis that was deductive in method, and relied on primary sources culled from archives, rather than on inductive theoretical models (Chapman, Glancy, and Harper, *The New Film History*). I wanted to find out more about the *armature* of film texts—that irreducible structure of meaning and myth which lies beneath the surface of a film or genre. And above all, I wanted to import into academic discourse a different kind of style: a moist, fruity, irreverent language.

I could continue along the same path: or I could take an adjacent one and continue my investigations in a different medium. I wished to work in another mode. So, after my Outstanding Achievement Award from the British Association of Film, Television and Theatre Studies in 2017, I started to write fictional short stories. My master is the Ovid of *The Metamorphoses* and *Ars Amatoria*, and so my stories are informed by the themes of transformation and surprise. They are in the Gothic mode. Their emotional temperature is febrile and the proportions are jagged. They have a playfulness about them, and they often combine the erotic with comic elements. I published 200 short stories on my website (www.sueharper.co.uk). It had many thousands of hits, and in 2020, Egaeus Press published *The Dark Nest*, which sold out immediately and had extremely good reviews (Harper, *The Dark Nest*). I am currently completing a second collection called *The Sarah Chronicles*.

In this paper, I want to examine the ways in which continuities can be forged between academic methods and creative writing, and to use my own stories as a sort of test-case. It is important to stress at the outset that a mechanical application of academic methodology to creative writing will be unproductive. They are different kinds of activity: but they can mutually illuminate one another and can stimulate new types of approach. Historical research is by its very nature less instinctive than creative work, and the latter often conceals its intellectual roots. But we need to be aware of them, and to feel free to challenge them. Both academic and creative writing are innovatory when they challenge taboos: but they do it in distinctive ways, since they each march to a different drum.

When thinking about the creative process, we need to have a working model of cultural innovation: that is to say, of the conditions that are conducive to new thinking, or to the transformation of old methods. It seems to me that there is a "tipping point" in cultural analysis as well as in creative work: a certain amount

of repetition needs to take place in the cultural sphere before exasperation or fatigue sets in. Practitioners will not innovate before the old models are exhausted. Cultural transformation takes place in an atmosphere of contradiction: between the security (and also staleness) of the old, and the excitement (and also danger) of the new. In analysing patterns of cultural production, therefore, it is crucial for the academic historian to identify which genres fulfil important cultural tasks, for how long a period, and for what reasons. The creative writer needs to identify their own relationship to dominant or emergent genres or modes of thought, and to present this process in an attractive way. Basically, the creative writer has to be able to locate themselves in a precise spot within the fictional pantheon, and to know why they are there. The issues of *rhythm* and *intensity* are crucial for both academic and creative writers, when they are trying to draw the map of cultural production and locate themselves within it: the rhythm of the artistic events, and the intensity with which they are delivered. Sometimes both academics and creative writers can have an instinct that their purpose is to fill a critical or cultural hiatus: and that instinct commands attention, always. In my own case, my twentieth-century literary influences (in terms of narrative structure) were Hemingway, Angela Carter, and John Kennedy Toole; in terms of style, they were E. F. Benson, A. E. Housman, and Philip Pullman. I had to decide what to do with my masters: where to imitate them, and when to abandon them. Like everyone else, I had to find out where the gaps were, and decide if I could fill them.

Cultural researchers have to select from a huge range of evidence and make orderly patterns from it. The production, distribution and (on occasion) exhibition of artefacts has to be taken into account, as well as material about the various types of authorship, response, and contextual writings. The academic writer has to categorise evidence and to rank it in order of significance. The creative writer has to do this too: to decide which are the most important determinants in the world which they describe, and to establish how the different spheres of influence operate in the text.

It is the researcher's task to pick their way through the forest of discourses in the material that they find, and to locate them historically. They need to deploy a high degree of self-awareness in the way they do this, and to show that they are self-critical too. The same holds good for the creative writer. They must be aware of their own discourse and its debts, and they must above all be aware of their own ideological freight: of the echoes, experiences and quotations which reside deep

within their own work. They may choose to display or conceal them: but they need to know that they are there.

I think that it is unhelpful to espouse a single theoretical model in academic work. A straightforwardly Marxist or feminist approach can reduce the richness of material selected for analysis, and it can usher in an inductive methodology. In 1980s Britain, for example, the work of Lacan became modish (if not *de rigeur*) in film studies in circles such as the influential journal, *Screen*. This gave rise to a narrow critical orthodoxy and a jargon-riddled *côterie* which dominated the discipline for a while. Rather, it is important to be catholic in the theoretical models we employ, and to use them eclectically. And creative writing needs to be a "broad church" too. An exclusively Marxist or feminist approach will inevitably produce fiction which is doctrinaire and dry. Reading it will bestow a sense of righteousness but little pleasure, since its business is to close down narrative options, rather than to open them up.

So far, I have rehearsed a number of ways in which academic and creative writing can enter into a productive relationship with each other. It is crucial to stress that *procedurally* the two types of work are quite distinct. Unless we admit that, we cannot really use them to illuminate each other. But if we operate in a mindful way, we can begin to work with the categories of creative scholarship and grounded fiction. The first is a fluid methodology which interprets what it finds, but always with self-awareness and the willingness to be surprised. The second is a type of writing which invents a world, but with a solid consciousness of the author's own intellectual heritage and narrative methods.

I will now go on to discuss my own fictional work and its academic hinterland. It needs to be stressed yet again that the relationship between the two is not mechanical or hierarchical, but dialectical and dynamic. That means it is often unpredictable. I shall structure the discussion under the headings of adornment, historical documents, assimilations, gender symbolism, and the Numinous. In each section, I will refer to stories on my website and will indicate which volume they are in.

Adornment

In my work on the visual languages of film, that of costume was of paramount importance, and I tried to look at the issue of its *agency*. I tried to analyse not only the production constraints on costume work in British cinema, but also the relative autonomy which the discourse could attain: that is to say, how the (usually female)

costume designers dealt with the studio hierarchies, and how they manufactured their own style (Harper 2000, 2012, 2019, 2021). I came to think that costume and adornment (including jewellery and hairstyles) were uniquely placed as cultural forms to carry subliminal messages about gender, class, and desire. This work, which was empirical in method (interviews, studio publicity material), was also based upon instinctive responses to textiles and visual texture.

A large number of my stories have the same preoccupation. But the academic concern with the historical agency of the costume designer gets transferred in the fictional stories onto the dresses or ensembles themselves, and they take on a life of their own and often act in a destructive manner. They consume those who create or wear them, and the female body becomes both the site and the instigator of innovation. In my academic work, I investigated the circumstances in which, in film texts, any one discourse can become dominant or autonomous: in the stories, that process has been completed, because I believe that you cannot, in fiction, show discursive struggle on the page without alienating your reader. What I wanted to do in the stories was to do something different: to interrogate the *means whereby* a visual style has become coherent, while still bearing traces of its own production conditions. And I needed to excavate, in full sight, the pleasures and pains conferred by the world of adornment. I wanted to recognise in print the possibility that flesh is never just an envelope, but rather a soft tissue which bears the imprint of social signs.

I have written some 20 stories in which costume is a major signifier. "The Frocks" (vol. 4) deals with a young designer who struggles to establish a new style: "the frocks she made were outrageously, mellifluously feminine. The layers, the peplums, the frills were dizzyingly excessive in a way that appealed to those who had unacknowledged hungers." Her creations devour her clients, welding themselves to their rib-cages. In "Fashion Hunger" (vol. 5), a doll develops an obsession with couture, and tortures its owner to make miniature models of Dior and Chanel dresses. And in "The Fascinator" (vol. 5), wedding hats take on a life of their own, and they manufacture adornments that are profoundly unsuitable for the occasion. In all the costume stories, both the makers and the wearers of the clothes are rendered utterly helpless in the face of the savage autonomy of the ensembles. They are gruesome little tales: but I hope they demonstrate that the field of fabric and the tactile pleasures of its consumption is fruitful for both researchers and creative writers, who are not as far removed from each other as one might think. It is possible that

the theme of dress and adornment might make the stories only attractive to female readers: but I hope not.

History and Documents

My first academic book, *Picturing the Past*, was about the representation of history in British cinema in the 30s and 40s and was based entirely on archival material. What I concluded was that every scrap of paper was something that had survived by accident and could be read in a number of ways. History is not a monolith, but a process, and it bears witness not only to presences (the agency of creators and thinkers) but also to absences (those who got ignored or edited out of the process). In my fiction, I tried to develop these ideas, but in a more implicit way. In “The Cave Painters” (vol. 5), the heroine Sarah scrambles through a slit in a rock to find unknown neolithic cave paintings, which deploy images that are profoundly challenging to a normative view of history: “whenever this dreamtime was, there was clearly no desire in it for hierarchy or control.” But she cannot find her way back to the cave next day: “These images would have revolutionised people’s views about the mental landscapes of the denizens of the past ... perhaps all that had happened was that a silly woman had simply imagined a teeming, sensuous playground ...That must have been it.”

In “The Vintage Suitcase” (vol. 4), Sarah finds a cache of lead soldiers, and restages some of the great battles of history. Somehow the original events get overturned, and Napoleon wins the Battle of Waterloo: “Did the vanquished always try to turn the tables? How could she live if the evidence of her own eyes contradicted that of the authorities?” Many of the stories invite the reader to interrogate received versions of the past and to take risks with the evidence which is habitually used. This is the case with “The Vindolanda Tablets” (vol. 5), which uses empathy as a means of picturing the historical as well as the personal past. The heroine receives mysterious missives on bark, just like those excavated from the Roman fort. They have been sent to her by her *alter ego*, “to test you, to tease you, to push you, to pinch you, to take away the muffle and the baffle, to life the veil.” In my most recent historical story, “The Heirloom” (vol. 6), I used the model of an aumbry (a type of cupboard) as a way of thinking about how innovation took place in the past. Some people are like a damaged aumbry: “men and women who were awkward and imperfect,

prickly and ramshackle, rebarbative and unorthodox. The misfits. It is the misfits who change the world, and who were her kin."

Every historical researcher has to present the reader with a sense of shock: that this was how things were, and this is how things changed. They have to foster an awareness of immediacy, and also process. They have to offer an explanation for the important transformations in consciousness. And that is what I tried to do in my stories too: to usher the reader into a bewildering world where you must question established evidence. There is always a sense of danger and risk in such an undertaking, and challenges, whether in the academic or fictional field, always engender discomfort. One way of making that bearable in fiction is to use humour, which you can rarely use in academic work.

Assimilations

It was part of my academic remit to think about the ways in which some films are culturally residual: that is to say, those which recycle well-known motifs of historical culture. This makes them ideologically central, but usually without status. When I wanted to think this through in fictional terms, it was clear that I had to allude to the central myths of the culture, but that I had to deal with them in an off-kilter way, if I wanted to avoid repetition and tedium. I had to use humour, extravagant allusiveness and surprise, in order to move my stories out of the "residual" category. Many of them revisit culturally secure motifs from folktales or fairy stories: "The Blue Shoes" (vol. 5) or "Rapunzel" (vol. 2), for example. There, the traditional themes are given an anarchic spin. "The Mysterious Lover" (vol. 1) deals with the familiar topic of the Demon Lover. But in this case, the heroine is not horrified: "actually, it felt quite comfortable ... As long as he didn't make her do anything too awful, all might yet be well. Perhaps the Prince of Darkness was a gentleman." And in "Autolycus" (vol. 5), the "picker-up of unconsidered trifles" gives the heroine a symbol which grants her access to the world of change. I wanted to use traditional residual motifs and breathe fresh life into them. And that means that you are *intervening* in the material of the culture, rather than mapping it.

All art is referential, and it is part of the researcher's task to map the networks of influence. Creative writers must do that too, but they also have to challenge the canon in a way that researchers are not required to do. In "The Suburbs" (vol. 4), I reinterpreted *Winterreise* for a modern audience, making it into a verbal riff

on ageing, death, and art. And in “The Voice” (vol. 3), I took the generally high-brow phenomenon of the counter-tenor repertoire. Christopher’s voice changes from a baritone to a counter-tenor: “suddenly it was as if his body was in a lift and had soared from the basement to the penthouse. A new voice came roaring out of his mouth ... high, piercing, female and strong.” Fearful of seeming effeminate, Christopher decides, in a moment of sublime camp, to perform the repertoire wearing full cowboy regalia.

Academic researchers have to make an explicit relationship with other writers in their field, and practising fiction writers have to come to a settlement with mainstream literary culture. In the stories, I tried to insert quotations from writers who have influenced me: Blake, Austen, and Shakespeare. But not just to quote them: to show where I came from. Conan Doyle is a dominant influence in mainstream and popular literature, and I have used him creatively as a source many times. But with an edge. In “Mrs Hudson’s Tale” (vol. 1), she realises that Holmes has syphilis, and treats a rash on his hand with her own tincture: “Every time I effect a minor cure in the long march of his illness, I’ll give my little triumph a name. This one will be called *The Speckled Hand*.” In “Irene Adler at the Reichenbach Falls” (vol. 2), I re-configured Professor Moriarty as Irene Adler in disguise: “‘Professor Moriarty, the day has come at last,’ said he. I took off my tall hat and laid it on the ground. I ruffled up my hair. I took off my jacket and the tight waistcoat. I pulled off my moustache. I undid my shirt and showed him my breasts. ‘Sherlock, it is I,’ I said. ‘I am Irene Adler.’ He came at me then. But whether it was out of fear or desire, I never knew.”

Gender Symbolism

Another theme that ran throughout my academic work was that of stylised gender representation. I analysed the way in which sexual symbolism is inscribed within film texts, often in the decor, costume or hairstyles. At one time, it was fashionable to hunt for (and even to celebrate, in a muddle-headed Freudian manner) phallic symbols in art. But I wanted to argue that, in cultural texts aimed at women, it was reasonable to seek and find vaginal or vulval symbols. When I turned to fiction, I wanted to examine the ways in which gender difference could be dealt with on a non-literal level. When I first performed some of the stories live, I well recall the gasps of shock from the audience. I had wanted to be iconoclastic, but I should

have been alert to the degree of challenge which the audience was prepared to accommodate. And of course, you do not want to give offence: or not too much. Sexuality (particularly the female kind) is a prime source of anxiety in cultural texts. What I wanted to do was to turn that anxiety into textual pleasure. Accordingly, in "Chocolate" (vol. 4), someone invents a chocolate bar that confers instant orgasm for women "without any stimulation by hand, tongue or penis ... you didn't have to be polite to the chocolate. But you certainly had to be grateful to it." The shop had long queues outside "with rather a lot of rosy women lolling against lamp-posts afterwards." "The Growler" (vol. 1) is about a talking vagina which is so voluble that its owner has to resort to wearing stout knickers to muffle its cries, and "Moby Dick" (vol. 3) has a heroine who finds a 30-foot penis washed up on a beach. She decided that "it was indeed sad. She had expected to feel afraid of it. But curiosity was what she felt." I tried to follow up this theme of sexual compassion with "The Viagra Chronicles" (vol. 6). In my most recent story on the topic, "Sheela-Na-Gig" (vol. 5), I wrote about the female gargoyles who display their own sexual parts, and I tried to lighten the tone by having the heroine give birth to something she wants for herself (a Pomeranian puppy) and to something that other people want from her (a Certificate of Total Emotional Commitment). These stories are more challenging than the interpretative writing on gender symbolism in the academic work, so I have tried to lighten the tone by humour and by avoiding descriptions of sexual trauma.

The Numinous

I have produced some more speculative stories which have not arisen directly from my own academic concerns. These work with the idea of an earthly Utopia and the Numinous, and while these have been a rich seam in visual and literary culture, I have never mined it until now. Some stories imagine the heroines passing through a cataclysmic change, and they experience a heightened mode of perception which cannot be accounted for by common sense and the world of empirically-based facts. "The Gathering" (vol. 3) deals with a huge crowd drawn to Glen Coe to sing and is inspired by *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (Stephen Spielberg, 1977). In "The Haar" (vol. 4), the heroine is engulfed by a life-changing fog at sea: this is taken from *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (Jack Arnold, 1957). She finds a route to a new world in "The Bridge" (vol. 5), which makes visual quotations from *Lost*

Horizon (Frank Capra, 1937). The same narrative structures "Beyond" (vol. 5), which takes images from Tenniell's illustrations to *Alice in Wonderland*. The imagined utopias in the stories present a society that has dissolved the boundaries of racial and gender difference. And the boundaries between life and death too. "Endings" (vol. 6) takes its inspiration from Stanley Spencer's painting, *Resurrection in Cookham* (1924–1927, Tate Gallery, London) and has the heroine devise a technique to arrest putrefaction: "And it worked. At first Sarah saw the fox draw breath, his red flanks rise and fall. The man and the woman stirred a little and struggled to sit up. The little birds, who had been reduced to bone and beak, began to sing. It had been a miracle, performed not by her but through her." It was not part of my academic intention to imagine a new world, whether on a social or imaginative level: I had to interpret what I found. Fictional speculation is a different order of activity.

Conclusion

I hope I have demonstrated that there can be a fruitful interchange between different creative methodologies, and that it can be an unpredictable and exciting one. But during that journey, what have I learned about what makes a good story? On the most simple level, it should involve change: of either the reader or the protagonist, and preferably both. It should have a clear structure: a beginning, a middle, and an end. It should issue from a secret though coherent mythology. It should be familiar enough not to alienate, and novel enough not to baffle.

Fictional work can transport the reader to a new world, whereas historical work can generate a new way of seeing. What I want to argue, with some passion, is that a movement into creative work should not always be seen as a *retreat* from the academic but can be a development of it. The mind maps are not necessarily different, and the cultural work required is just as hard. There is a role for the personal and the imaginative in academic writing and for an examination of the intersections between discursive frameworks in creative writing. Academic and fiction writers both require empathy, rigour, attention to detail, and the courage to address taboos. That is the highway to innovation, even if it is the road less travelled.

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Lucretia's Lines of Flight

Multimodal Representations of the Rape of Lucretia

DÓRA JANCZER CSIKÓS

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Abstract: Lucretia's rape and her inner turmoil after the violation has been the subject of countless poems, dramas, paintings, and musical compositions over the past two millennia. In my paper, I focus on how the myth of Lucretia appears Benjamin Britten's opera, The Rape of Lucretia *(1946). In particular, I would like to address the 2013 Glyndebourne performance directed by Fiona Shaw (and adapted to the screen by Francois Roussillon [2015]). I will examine how Shaw departs from Britten, and how her staging enters into discussion with long-standing interpretive traditions to re-create Lucretia's ethical and psychological stance.*

> *We must invent our lines of flight, if we are able, and the only way we can invent them is by effectively drawing them, in our lives. Aren't lines of flight the most difficult of all? Certain groups or people have none and never will.*
> *(Deleuze–Guattari,* A Thousand Plateaus*)*

Lucretia's rape and her inner turmoil after the violation has been the subject of countless poems, dramas, paintings and musical compositions over the past two millennia. Rembrandt's painting (1666, Minneapolis Institute of Art; fig. 1) condenses Lucretia's whole drama into one poignant image and is a representative example of the key elements of the legend: her chastity, violation, and her suicide. It is not simply a harrowing painting of a dying woman; the visual narrative subtly explains why Lucretia has taken her life. Her robe is open, displaying her

undergarment and exposed body. The slit in the top of her nightgown is interpreted by Mieke Bal as the "hymen of the innocently sleeping Lucretia," while the lower, bloody slit depicting the oblong wound may be seen as a displaced representation of her sexual violation (108). Lucretia's rape and suicide are visually conflated in the bright red of her soiled gown, this is what the dagger—pointing to the loin, the locus of her destruction—also suggests. Her fate is literally in her hands: her right hand holds the dagger; her left hand clutches on a cord with which she calls her father and husband to avenge her ordeal, or, more metaphorically, to draw open the curtain so that she/her story may become visible. The cord, towards which her gaze is directed, represents the future: Lucretia's call to be remembered.

Indeed, her call to be remembered has been heard (as can be seen in the numerous works which depict, discuss, and comment on her fate), but her voice has been mostly stifled. In the first part of my paper, I give a brief outline of the major interpretive traditions that appeared in the visual and written representations of her story over time. The diametrically opposed evaluations of Lucretia—saint versus sinner, martyr versus criminal—indicate that her violation and suicide was a controversial subject, which invited multiple retellings and reconsiderations. Lucretia as a trope did not evolve diachronically; the contrasting elements lived side by side, and just which interpretation had a greater currency at a given moment depended on the actual historical, political, social, and ethical questions of the day. Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome seems particularly apt to examine the multiplicities of Lucretias: the tendrils of the rhizome that grow in capricious directions correspond to the endless multimodal representations of her story.[1] These are interconnected, like the shoots of the underground horizontal root system: each in itself self-sufficient yet related. "[T]he rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs, and even nonsign states" (Deleuze and Guattari 21). A most defining feature of a rhizome is heterogeneity. The new ideas, Deleuze and Guattari argue, are born at the ruptures, or in our case, where the (multimodal) narratives respond to and depart from one another. Deleuze and Guattari call these "the lines of flight" (9), a creation of something new from an old stem and a tendency towards change (Adkins 24).[2] The title of the essay, "Lucretia's Lines

1 I am indebted to Márta Hargitai for calling my attention to the concept.

2 The idea of the lines of flight is central to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome, they use it over two hundred times in *A Thousand Plateaus.* Lines of flight construct "revolutionary

of Flight," simultaneously refers to Lucretia as a Roman matron and as a rhizome. It implies the lines (of literature, painting, or music) which circumscribe the woman and demarcate the ways she can escape her plight, and denotes the interactions between the different representations.[3]

In the second part of the paper, I proceed to explore how the multifarious elements appear in Benjamin Britten's opera, *The Rape of Lucretia* (1946). Besides being an exquisite multimodal representation of the story of Lucretia, it also showcases (some forty years before Deleuze and Guattari created the term) how rhizomes operate: rather than providing a homogenous—formalised, linear, hierarchised—narrative (called arborescent system by Deleuze and Guattari 327) it juxtaposes competing interpretations. Finally, through the example of the 2013 Glyndebourne performance of Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* (directed by Fiona Shaw and adapted to the screen by Francois Roussillon in 2015), I will examine how Shaw's staging departs from Britten and enters into discussion with long-standing assumptions about agency, responsibility, and suicide to re-create Lucretia's ethical and psychological stance. I would like to show that the Lucretia resurrected on the Glyndebourne stage is masterfully freed from "the 'seaweed' of trope" (Robertson and Rose 1–2) and finally arises as poignantly human.

The earliest extended account of Lucretia we are aware of is by historian Livy from around 25 BC. A group of Roman generals, while away from home, make a bet over the fidelity of their wives. Collatinus, the husband of Lucretia, boasts about the incomparable beauty and chastity of his wife, and proposes that they should settle the dispute by riding out at night to call on them unexpectedly. All the wives are found revelling except Lucretia, who is spinning with her servants. Collatinus is declared the winner, but Sextus Tarquinius, the king's son, is inflamed by Lucretia and a few days later returns to her house. During the night, he sneaks into Lucretia's chamber and implores her to yield to his desire. When she refuses, he threatens to kill her together with a slave whose naked body he will place next to her in the bed, so everybody will think that she was caught in adultery. With this menace, Tarquinius triumphs over her virtue. The next day, the disconsolate

connections" (473) "forming strange new becomings, new polyvocalities" (191) and "blaze their way for a new earth" (424).

3 Deleuze and Guattari themselves range across art, music, literature, science, and mathematics in *A Thousand Plateaus* "as these new connections branch out and make further connections" (Adkins 32).

Lucretia calls home her husband and father and their menfolk to reveal to them what happened. After taking their oath of vengeance, she stabs herself. Junius Brutus, Collatinus's kinsman, incites the men to expel the hated family of the Tarquins from Rome and never to tolerate Kings.

Livy's highly influential story (related in Book 1 of *The Early History of Rome—Ab Urbe Condita*) celebrated Lucretia's heroic death particularly for inspiring Junius Brutus to lead a revolt against the Roman monarchy and establish the Roman Republic. Soon, other narratives (or lines of flight) followed by Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Ovid, Plutarch, and Tertullian, each refashioning their versions to fit their own agenda.[4] What these early accounts share was that, through Lucretia's rape, they all formulated fundamental ideals about public/political behaviour, and about private/sexual behaviour. Paradoxically, Lucretia is hardly at all present in these stories, most of the time she does not have a voice and her only agency is to take her own life. She simply serves as a trope: an emblem of chastity and/or a gateway to political change. No wonder her story was revived at times of political turmoil: in Renaissance Italy, and notably, in seventeenth-century English and eighteenth-century French writings and paintings.[5] In these retellings, Lucretia's body ignites political action, but the limelight is on Junius Brutus.

In 1710, Leibniz, in the final part of *Théodicée*, recounts the story of Lucretia, or one should rather say the story of the rapist, Sextus Tarquinius, as Lucretia is not even mentioned by name but referred to as "the wife of [Sextus's] friend" (372). Leibniz sees Lucretia's rape as collateral damage to achieve the best and most perfect world, and concludes, "[t]he crime of Sextus serves for great things: it renders Rome free; thence will arise a great empire, which will show noble examples to mankind" (373). Two decades later, Montesquieu calls Lucretia a "little woman" with "a foolish little vanity," whose death was "merely the occasion of the revolution which occurred" (qtd. in Donaldson 105).

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4 Livy's account is highly focused on the political aspect of the story and can also be related to the increased interest in *moral restoration* under Emperor Augustus, which climaxed in his law on adultery in 18 BC. Ovid's narrative, on the other hand, almost entirely lacks the political perspective of Livy and reinvents a highly eroticised, elegiac Lucretia. Tertullian had yet another agenda: he used Lucretia's example to "shame what he viewed as his lax Christian audience into greater chastity" (Glendinning 69). More on this in Ian Donaldson's *The Rapes of Lucretia* (1982).

5 On the proliferation of visual and written interpretations of Lucretia's story, see Susan Wiseman's *Conspiracy and Virtue* (2006) and Louise Juliet Govier's *Re-viewing Women from the Ancient Past in Late Eighteenth-Century French Art* (1999).

In what is perhaps the best-known visual example, Botticelli's painting *The Tragedy of Lucretia* (ca. 1500, fig. 2), Lucretia in the central scene is a lifeless corpse over which Brutus is towering; he is raising his sword to call on the army to fight against tyranny. Painted at the time of political turmoil and the exile of the Medici, Botticelli conflates classical Rome and Renaissance Florence, with the statue of David on the column above (pagan) Lucretia, who is here transformed to an emblem of liberty. Similarly, in Gavin Hamilton's *The Death of Lucretia* (1763–1767) and Jean-Honoré Fragonard's *Mort de Lucrèce* (1797), Lucretia is reduced to a dead body while Brutus is the hero of the painting.[6] In the latter, Lucretia's dead body has a symbolic function: it represents the abused nation. Her self-sacrifice is depicted as martyrdom; the frieze above Lucretia's corpse, to which Brutus points, shows martyred bodies being placed on chariots (Govier 263–265).

In her critical commentary, Simone de Beauvoir contested exactly these features of the myth: she claimed that in the typically male renderings Lucretia was a mere pretext, and her rape and suicide "had no more than a symbolic value. Martyrdom remains allowed for the oppressed; during Christian persecutions and in the aftermath of social or national defeats, women played this role of witness; but a martyr has never changed the face of the world" (184). Indeed, de Beauvoir's parallel between the heathen Lucretia and Christian martyrs is apt: since Late Antiquity, Lucretia has been depicted in numerous treatises, literary works, and paintings as (or at least, like) a Christian martyr, even a saint. Of the early Church Fathers, Tertullian, in the early third century, celebrated Lucretia's fortitude to commit suicide (*Ad Martyres*) and made her an example of chastity and conjugal fidelity (*De exhortatione castitatis* and *De Monogamia*). Fourth-century theologian St. Jerome also praised Lucretia for refusing to survive after the loss of her chastity (*Adversus Jovinianum*). These writings launched an interpretive tradition in which Lucretia is a paragon of virtue, an exemplum for Christian women (as, for instance, in Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* or Gower's *Confessio Amantis*) and also left their mark on the iconographic tradition of the portrayal of Lucretia.

A notable example of portraying Lucretia as a Christian martyr can be found in the paintings of Guido Reni (1625, Rhode Island School of Design; fig. 3) and Artemisia Gentileschi (ca. 1627, Getty Museum; fig. 4). Lucretia is imploring the heavens; her inspired expression betrays unwavering determination to take her

6 Hamilton's Brutus greatly influenced the early artistic experiments of John Trumbull (1756–1843), visual chronicler of the newborn United States (Rosenblum 13).

life. The pearl earrings and coronets testify to her purity as does (in many paintings) the blue robe, colour of the Virgin Mary. What is interesting in the depictions of Lucretia's suicide is that in most cases we see no blood (Rembrandt's painting is one of the few exceptions) even where she has plunged the dagger into her breast. She is transported so the death of the body does not seem to affect her. This is not simply to be attributed to a pictorial convention, as can also be seen in the pictures of St. Sebastian, for instance. In the case of Lucretia, this passive resignation may be an attempt to distract the viewers' attention from the fact that Lucretia is actually taking her own life, which is a mortal sin in Christianity. In other words, these paintings focus on the uplifting nature of Lucretia's act (a painful but worthy self-sacrifice) and carefully efface any association with self-inflicted death. And for good reason. These painters consciously dissociated themselves from a distinctly different interpretation of Lucretia's death, which had grown parallel with the celebratory representations.

The first author to seriously reassess Lucretia's suicide in the light of Christianity was St. Augustine in the fifth century. In *The City of God* (*De Civitate Dei*), he proposes that rape is the violation of the female *will* to chastity rather than the violation of a woman's physical purity.[7] Consequently, St. Augustine argues, if Lucretia did not give *consent* to the rapist, she is guilty of homicide, for in herself she killed an innocent person. St. Augustine formulates the following dilemma: "if you extenuate the homicide, you confirm the adultery: if you acquit her of adultery, you make the charge of homicide heavier; … If she was adulterous, why praise her? If chaste, why slay her?" (29). The image of Lucretia extolled for her purity and for sacrificing her life to prevent moral pollution is profoundly challenged by St. Augustine's distinctly Christian notion of conscience. He did not believe that Lucretia took her life to protect her—and by implication, her family's—honour but assumed that she (subconsciously) must have been motivated by some secret guilt. "What if she was betrayed by the pleasure of the act, and gave some consent to Sextus [Tarquinius], though so violently abusing her, and then was so affected with remorse, that she thought death alone could expiate her sin?" (29). In St. Augustine's argument then, Lucretia's suicide was also a confession of her corruption.

7 On the historical and legal context see Jennifer Thomson's "'Accept this twofold consolation, you faint-hearted creatures': St. Augustine and Contemporary Definitions of Rape" and Diana C. Moses' "Livy's Lucretia and the Validity of Coerced Consent."

Post-Augustinian representations and refashionings of Lucretia's legend reflected on the dilemmas put forward in *De Civitate Dei* and took their stance in the "guilty or not guilty" debate. Clearly, painters like Reni and Gentileschi exempted Lucretia from all the charges. By depicting her in the tradition of Christian martyrs, they confirm her purity, and by making her suicide figurative—almost unconscious—in the paintings, the accusation of homicide is also effaced. Writers who wanted to make Lucretia an object of veneration had to contend with the notion of consent in their narratives. To eradicate any doubt about her purity, authors often introduced new elements into the text. In Gower and Chaucer, for instance, Lucretia swoons and lies in a deadly stupor, so clearly, she cannot be complicit in adultery.

But the legend of Lucretia also developed in a different direction. In these new lines of flight, especially in Northern European painting, Lucretia, once a paragon a virtue, "transformed into a semi-nude sex object" (Wolfthal 61). She was increasingly depicted as a seductress or temptress, whose physical beauty exerts influence over men. Lucas Cranach the Elder's Lucretias (painted in the 1520s–1540s, figs. 5–7) are a case in point.

Alone, set against a dark background, she attracts the viewer's undivided attention. Her suggestive pose, the flimsy veil, her smooth skin, the soft, fur-lined red velvet robe dropped from her shoulder, the rich jewellery adorning her are a feast to the eye and the touch. The exposed body and the coy facial expression are openly erotic and strangely at odds with the principal moral impulse of Livy's story. Lucretia does not appear to be adduced here as an example for Christian women to follow.[8]

Lucretia as a sensuous woman is the topic of many renderings of the myth. In Machiavelli's comedy, *La Mandragola* (ca. 1518), she is not raped but seduced and does not commit suicide but (probably) conceives at the end of the play. Cunning and sexually calculating, Machiavelli's Lucrezia is "the embodiment of dissimulation" (Matthes 261), who is consensually indulging in an adulterous affair. But Lucretia was not only refashioned in the comic mode; she also appeared in literature as a Woman of Sensibility, passionately in love with someone other than her husband. In Madeleine de Scudéry's romance, *Clélie* (1654–161), she is enamoured of Junius Brutus, while in Rousseau's unfinished play, *Mort de Lucrece* (first published

8 Carol M. Schuler compellingly argues that these representations are more than "simple voyeuristic fantasies" to gratify "unintellectual, sadoerotic tastes," but, through their formal language recalling Late Medieval devotional imagery, they depict Lucretia's atonement for her own seductively beautiful body (15).

in 1792), she is attracted to Tarquinius to whom she was once betrothed and whom she continues to love (Donaldson 84–85).

As can be seen from this brief survey, the myth of Lucretia evolved like a rhizome, "a destratified, proliferating network of disjunctive yet productive relations" (Lanier 36). The narratives and visual representations are cultural appropriations: they re-formulate and exploit the story to reflect on the pressing issues of their day. What is common in most of her depictions is that Lucretia represents an abstract idea(l): chastity, bravery, victimhood, martyrdom, seduction, vanity, as the case may be; while her materiality is neglected or altogether forgotten. Benjamin Britten's chamber opera, *The Rape of Lucretia* (1946, libretto by Ronald Duncan), sets out to revive her figure in many respects. Lucretia becomes three dimensional in more than one sense: through textual, musical, and visual representation. She is given voice (in the libretto as well as in the music), and a material presence (on stage, and subsequently on screen). The opera, in its handling of the story, reflects on both the narrative and the pictorial traditions outlined above.

The libretto was built on André Obey's play, *Le Viol De Lucrece* (1931; translated into English by Thornton Wilder in 1933), which used Livy, and Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece* as its major sources.[9] Shakespeare's narrative poem with its relatively limited dramatic action and long emotional speeches is particularly well suited to the genre of the opera (fitting the plot-driving recitative and the expressive arias, respectively). Notably, Shakespeare gives a nuanced psychological portrayal of Lucrece, who is entrapped between pagan and Christian ideals after the rape ("As the poor frighted deer, that stands at gaze / Wildly determining which way to fly" [ll. 1149–1150]). Her dilemma whether or not to commit suicide (the most poignant lines in the poem) clearly echoes the ideas of St. Augustine:

> "To kill myself," quoth she, 'alack, what were it,
> But with my body my poor soul's pollution?
> They that lose half with greater patience bear it
> Than they whose whole is swallow'd in confusion.
> That mother tries a merciless conclusion
> Who, having two sweet babes, when death takes one,
> Will slay the other and be nurse to none.

9 When discussing Shakespeare and Obey, I use the name Lucrece for Lucretia, as is done in their texts.

> "My body or my soul, which was the dearer,
> When the one pure, the other made divine?" (ll.1156–1164)

After an agonising mental struggle, Lucrece kills herself and it is left to the readers to resolve the Augustinian quandary. Obey follows Shakespeare in his focus on the psychology of his characters. His innovation is to introduce two modern narrators (La Récitant and Le Récitant, translated as First Narrator and Second Narrator by Wilder) who comment on the events, and on the thoughts and mental state of Lucrece and Tarquin respectively. While doing so, they (re-)evaluate the events by juxtaposing Roman and modern values. Importantly, the female narrator questions the need to commit suicide and implores the male narrator to change the course of His/story.

> You tire me out with your History. What can Death do? What kind of remedy is that? …
> You are going to tell me there is no choice; she must die. … Oh, let us permit her to live! She can go somewhere. …
> What advantage could her death afford? Of what use, what good, would it be? I put the question to you. [*She turns to the audience and raises her mask.*] Answer me! (Obey 85–86)

Obey directly implicates the audience to engage with the question. Interestingly, in the drama, Lucrece's suicide is textually suppressed. We only learn about her death from the stage directions,[10] and rather than a self-willed death, it is regarded as a murder committed by the rapist: "BRUTUS: She is dead. Tarquin has slain her" (Obey 107).

In both of these sources, Britten and Duncan had superb examples of handling the ubiquitous questions of the myth while providing a subtle portrayal of Lucrece. By relying on, yet unmooring from, Shakespeare and Duncan at the same time, the opera creates a unique, if controversial line of flight.

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10 Lucrece dies while her husband is interrogating her:

COLLATINE: Ah, wrethced! [*Changing his tone*] Tell me—tell me: to the fulfilment of his desire. Is that it? Is that it? To the fulfilment? …

BRUTUS: See her … look!
[*He leaps forward, but too late, LUCRECE sinks to the ground.*] (Obey 106–107)

Britten wrote *The Rape of Lucretia* in 1946, in the immediate aftermath of World War II, after a visit to the recently liberated Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. This would fit in with what has been said above about the re-surfacing of the story at times of political and historical turmoil and one would expect Lucretia to be representing all the victims of senseless violation (irrespective of gender). Yet (similarly to Shakespeare and Obey), the opera is not primarily concerned with the political side of the story (there is only a cursory reference to the changes—the banishment of the kings and the new rule by Junius Brutus—that Lucretia's death ignited), nor does it exploit the rich psychological potentials which characterise Shakespeare's poem and Obey's drama. As the librettist Ronald Duncan stated, Lucretia was intended to symbolise "spirit defiled by Fate" (Britten, *The Rape* 62), and later he explained that the story is a "dramatisation of the conflict between the Individual and Society, … [T]he individual is personified by Lucretia whose virtuous personality is persecuted, raped, by Tarquinius, who symbolises Society" (qtd. in Seymour 78). She is at once "spirit" and "individual" (or rather, "Individual"); the opera apparently intends to recreate her as the representation of moral rectitude. Britten's music also shows that the composer was interested in Lucretia as a "*site* for tension between desire and violence" (Seymour 76, emphasis added) rather than as an individual.[11] As one critic noted, *The Rape of Lucretia* reflects "the composer's creative obsession with the destruction of innocence" (Hall). These comments seem to align the opera with the interpretive tradition which depicts Lucretia as a martyr or saint. Indeed, "chaste Lucretia" is the *epitheton ornans* in the libretto, and this insistence on her chastity is also woven into Britten's musical language. As musicologist Peter Evans noted, the unifying force operating across the opera is the use of a "Lucretia motive" (132) which essentialises her as "chaste woman" (Harper-Scott 197, 206; Seymour 79). Unsurprisingly, in the highly acclaimed 1987 performance (directed by Graham Vick), Lucretia is strikingly similar to Pedro de Mena's poignant *Mater Dolorosa* (ca. 1670–1675, figs. 8–11).

The parallel is apt inasmuch as Duncan imposed on the story a Christian framework. Based on Obey's narrators, he added two modern characters, called the Male and Female Chorus, who comment on the action and give an insight into the characters' mind from a distinctly Christian viewpoint ("We'll view these human passions and these years / Through eyes which once have wept with Christ's own

11 On the subtleties of Britten's musical working-out of the themes, see White (148–154), Seymour (75–98), Brett (62–69), Evans 124–143, and Harper-Scott (194–213).

tears"). The (much-criticised) Christian epilogue, which concludes the opera, verifies Lucretia's suffering and death as redemptive and equates it with Christ's Crucifixion.

It is not only the Christian gloss that makes the libretto controversial. Despite the apparently high value it places on Lucretia (or rather, her chastity), Duncan's text is troublingly misogynistic. Lines such as "Women are all whores by nature" or "Women bring to every man / the same defection" are highly disconcerting, as is the portrayal of the rapist. Tarquinius's "strong maleness," his "panther agile and panther virile" masculinity is depicted as irresistible.[12] In his autobiographical writings Duncan frankly admitted that he identified with the rapist's potency, and even dreamt of emulating him (*All Men* 55; *How to* 146). The librettist's fascination with Tarquinius clearly affected the plot: the text intimates that Lucretia—even if unconsciously—is beguiled by the rapist ("In the forest of my dreams / You have always been the Tiger"). To hint at her possible compliance, the libretto at two crucial points departs from Livy's account and from all the other sources on which it was built. Tarquin's threat—if Lucretia refuses to yield to him, he will kill her and a slave to implicate her in adultery—is altogether left out from the opera. The omission of what was Lucretia's major consideration in the immediate sources (the protection of the honour of her family) discredits the notion of coerced consent and leaves her complicity open to speculations. To create further ambiguity, Lucretia in the scene just preceding the rape speaks clearly about her sexual frustration and desire for her absent husband:

> How cruel men are
> To teach us love!
> They wake us from
> The sleep of youth

12 These elements are altogether missing from either Shakespeare or Obey. Neither are women disparaged in their texts, nor is the rapist celebrated in any way. They both give voice to Tarquin to allow for a rich psychological portrayal of the violator, but neither would exempt him from the crime he had committed. Obey is particularly clear in this respect. Unlike in Shakespeare where Tarquin disappears from the poem after the rape, in Obey's drama, we are given a glimpse into his acts after he leaves Lucrece. Remorseful for a minute, he soon forgets about his ephemeral repentance. Sarcastic, hypocritical and debauched, he teases Collatinus ("You look very well to-day"), sentences a soldier to fifty strokes of the rod for taking advantage of country girls, and sleeps, eats, and drinks heartily ("I shall sleep for two hours. … Is there cool wine in my tent? … Let me be awaked at noon by my cook passing a portion of new-roasted kid before my nose" (*Lucrece* 64–65).

Into the dream of passion,
Then ride away
While we still yearn.

As we learn from the omniscient Chorus, when at night Tarquinius steals into Lucretia's chamber, she is dreaming about her husband. Tarquinius kisses the sleeping woman who mistakes him for Collatinus and responds to his kiss. But she soon wakes and realises that she kissed an intruder. She tries to break away from him in vain: Tarquinius construes her previous reaction as suppressed passion ("the cherries of your lips / Are wet with wanting. / Can you deny your blood's dumb pleading?") and presses on against her will. The original version of the libretto depicted the rape in no uncertain terms and—echoing St. Augustine's conjecture—left no doubt that Lucretia was betrayed by "an equal lust."[13] But the text was subjected to censorship and what remained is an ambiguous hint that Lucretia may have been complicit. The libretto from this point on is entirely convoluted: the semi-pornographic depiction of the rape is followed by the Chorus's hymn to the Virgin Mary. We know from the drafts of the libretto (Seymour 80–81) that the lines for the hymn were supplied by Britten himself to replace Duncan's profoundly problematic text, which practically formulated the preposterous notion that women always gladly yield to men:

MALE CHORUS: With his passion poised like a dart
At the heart of woman
Man becomes a god
…
FEMALE CHORUS: As an unending river
Woman flows for ever
Slaking the fierce thirst of man
With her love generous as water.

13 MALE CHORUS: He takes her hand
And places it upon his unsheathed sword.
FEMALE CHORUS: Thus wounding her with an equal lust
A wound only his sword can heal.

The Lord Chamberlain ordered these lines to be cut. He found the libretto only marginally less obscene than *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (Kildea 11).

…
Man the thirst, she the river
Flowing on and never
Being of herself, but always of the river
Flowing to the thirst of man she gives.

With Britten's lines, Duncan's prurient reflection on rape was replaced in the final libretto with a prayer to the Virgin Mary "most chaste and pure" to "Help us to find your love / Which is His Spirit." That the composer and the librettist thought discordantly about Lucretia's story is further evidenced by the fact that the dramaturgical climax of the opera does not coincide with its musical climax. The rape scene is musically subdued, "probably the score's least inspired section" (Whittall 99). The musical climax comes at a later point in the story: Lucretia's confession to her husband is exquisitely wrought and its harrowing intensity echoes Bach's Passions.

There appears to be an almost unresolvable tension between the libretto and the score. Duncan's interest in the more salacious side of the story and his insinuation that Lucretia was enticed by Tarquinius is incongruent with Britten's preoccupation to express the tensions in a Christian framework. So, what finally evolved is two coexisting accounts within one opera. Britten's is rooted in the tradition of Tertullian and St. Jerome, linking Lucretia with Christian martyrdom; Duncan's approach, on the other hand, goes back to the tradition which depicted her as a sensuous woman, an assumption originating in St. Augustine. Rather than unifying the "tortuous lines" (Deleuze and Guattary 11) within the opera, Britten and Duncan created a multiplicity praised so highly by Deleuze and Guattary. "'Long live the multiple,' difficult as it is to raise that cry. No typographical, lexical, or even syntactical cleverness is enough to make it heard. The multiple must be made, not by always adding a higher dimension, but rather in the simplest of ways, by dint of sobriety" (Deleuze and Guattary 6). The result is a "radicle-chaosmos" (6) which is inevitably taxing, because it invites us to "rethink abiding correlation[s]" (303).

Unsurprisingly, the odd dramaturgy made *The Rape of Lucretia* one of Britten's most problematic operas. Neglected for decades, the opera finally found its way to repertory as can be seen in the proliferation of recent performances (Glasgow 2020, Boston 2018, Sydney 2017, Oslo 2013, Amsterdam 2011, Budapest 2014 and 2018, to mention but a few). Enacting sexual violence on stage or screen has been a challenge to modern producers and the way Lucretia's rape is presented always reflects

the director's response to the opera's troubling sexual politics. David McVicar's 2001 Aldeburgh production is shockingly explicit. In the rape scene, the so-far black backdrop becomes a huge sloping mirror which allows the audience to see Lucretia's agony from all angles. The graphic portrayal of the enormity of rape multiplied in the mirror not only gives us a very uncomfortable sense of voyeurism, but it also effectively rules out any notion that Lucretia may be complicit. In an altogether different, but no less provocative staging (Sidney Chamber Opera, 2018), director Kip Williams reversed the roles of men and women in many scenes, including the rape scene. By switching these roles, the production could comment on the libretto without overtly disrupting it while inviting the audience to reconsider the text's (and their own) sexual assumptions. To enhance the horror, both productions employed very disturbing images (a body stripped half-naked during the rape in McVicar, and a stage left in a pool of blood after the suicide in Williams).

Fiona Shaw's subdued but still poignant Glyndebourne production (2015) is exceptional for many reasons, not least because this is one of the few instances when Lucretia's story is presented from a female point of view. Shaw adds two characters who are not present in the opera (or in any of its sources): a prostitute and a little girl, Lucretia's own daughter. With this addition, the original balance of the opera—four male and four female characters—is shifted towards women. Alternatively, this can also be seen as an attempt to *restore* the balance, as in the opera "the vocal lines suggest that men act as individuals," while women are depicted as passive types (Evans 128). Through the six females, Shaw builds bridges between generations (daughter, mother, old nurse), social classes (prostitute, maids, and the lady), and also across time: from pre-Christian, Roman times to the twenty-first century (Lucretia and her household and the Female Chorus). Indeed, female bonding is one of the major takeaways of this production.

Shaw reimagines the Male and Female Chorus as archaeologists from Britten's time who unearth a Roman villa and, with that, uncover Lucretia's story. This way, the libretto's highly improbable, detached Christian commentators become an intrinsic part of the production. The set is minimal, and there are few props; as befitting a dig, the floor is covered in dirt, Lucretia's Roman villa is represented by grey stone outlines. Most of the time the set is very dark with chiaroscuro effects of lighting. In the video version, there are close-ups rather than a dark blurry mess, which is what the audience would see in the theatre. This is very appropriate too, as Fiona Shaw's production wants to give an insight into the characters' mind; this

is, in fact, "an archaeology of the mind" (Shaw 6). Correspondingly, she explores the *human* side of Lucretia's story.

We get the first glimpse of Lucretia when the Male Chorus/archaeologist drags her out of the mud on a string (figs. 12–13). She is puppet-like, which may easily stand for the lifeless, fossilised image of Lucretia that had been created (in the almost exclusively male accounts) during the centuries. In Fiona Shaw's production, on the other hand, she slowly comes to life, disengages from the Male Chorus and develops close bonds with the Female Chorus. Shaw's directorial choice goes against the original specifications that neither the Male, nor the Female Chorus is to be involved with the action. The bond between Lucretia and the Female Chorus is particularly strong after the rape. As an act of solidarity, the Female Chorus gives her coat to the disconsolate Lucretia to help her cover her bruised body (fig. 14). The Female Chorus herself changes after Lucretia's rape. She discards the Bible she was holding to at the beginning (fig. 15), which subtly implies that Shaw's production probes the Christian moralising that was supposed to provide a closure to the opera.

But it is not just the religious gloss that Shaw takes issue with. Most productions which want to emphasise Lucretia's innocence depict her relationship with Tarquinius as cold and formal. In this production, on the other hand, there is chemistry between them when they meet. Furthermore, in most stagings, Lucretia *passively receives* the advances of the man she mistakes for her husband in her erotic dream (figs. 16–17). In the Glyndebourne production, she is very active and kisses back but soon wakes and her dream turns into a waking nightmare (fig.18).

Shaw's choice to create an initial resonance between Lucretia and Tarquinius and Lucretia's misdirected passionate response in her dream have profound repercussions. It recreates the incident to resemble what is now known as date rape. The question this production, more than the others, raises is compelling: is there a point of no return for Lucretia, or for any woman indeed after such a beginning? Tarquinius does not accept her "no" as "no," even though she frantically repeats it 26 times ("No," "I deny," "I refuse"). Fiona Shaw clearly shows his act as a vile crime and does not contemplate, like St. Augustine and many commentators before, whether or not Lucretia was guilty. The remorseless close-ups of the scene enhance her emotional nakedness and vulnerability. Her verdict, "not guilty," is seen in another important directorial choice about her suicide. In this production, Lucretia is figuratively dead *before* she takes her life. After the rape, she covers herself with a black blanket which looks like a shroud, and in the morning, she

is not using the corridors and doors anymore, like the living characters in the story, but crosses the walls, which only the Chorus—spirits beyond the drama—can do. By making Lucretia's death coincide with her rape, Shaw (like Obey before) relocates the blame of homicide to where it really belongs: the rapist. The Glyndebourne production does not depict Lucretia's eventual suicide as a violation of God's injunction. In contrast, Shaw introduces other pressing issues concerning responsibility by giving Lucretia a little daughter who is stirred by the shrieks during the rape and in whose presence Lucretia takes her life. In the most heart-rending scene before her suicide, Lucretia is not depicted as a Mater Dolorosa but as a real mother, clinging desperately to her daughter (fig. 19). Rather than the Christian Chorus in Duncan's libretto, it is the little girl's trauma (handed down from generation to generation), which resurrects Lucretia on the stage and on screen. The harrowing final image is a particularly provocative line of flight: the archaeological apparatus assumes a cruciform pattern and we see a woman on the cross (fig. 20)—a response to Obey's First Narrator's urge to finally complement His/story with Herstory.

Compelling and intelligent, the production takes issue with the ideologies which had attempted to fossilise Lucretia. The Glyndebourne production is a veritable contribution to Lucretia as a rhizome, but equally importantly, it brings Lucretia's story close to us as a very human predicament. Voted the new production of 2013 in the WhatsOnStage Opera Poll, Fiona Shaw's *Lucretia* is a timely tribute to all Lucretias of the past 2000 years.

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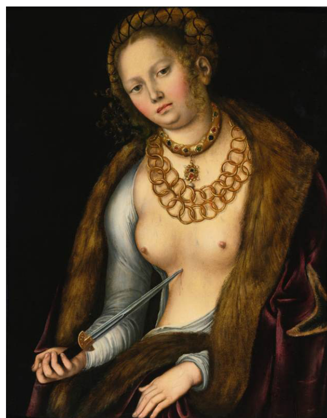

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Pre-Raphaelite Paintings in Oliver Parker's Film Adaptation of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*

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Abstract: In Oliver Parker's film adaptation (2002) of Oscar Wilde's The Importance of Being Earnest *(1895), Cecily's fictional diary features two Victorian paintings: John Everett Millais'* The Knight Errant *(1870) and John Melhuish Strudwick's* Acrasia *(1888). In my paper, I explore how these visual references contribute to the viewers' understanding of the plot and the characters, and what is suggested by their application about the director's view of the pictures themselves.*

Whereas Oliver Parker's adaptation of Oscar Wilde's *An Ideal Husband* "earn[ed] critical plaudits" (Hazelton) on its launch in 1999, his 2002 film version of Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* was given a less enthusiastic reception. Though some critics have found it "witty, charming [and] entertaining" (Nash), "a well-made rendition of [the] truly funny play" (Clifford), and a "worthy attempt at bringing Wilde's most brilliant comedy to the screen" (Hanke); others reacted with discontent, describing the film as "a frustrating, boring mess" (LaSalle), "unfunny" and "misbegotten" (Young), or "utterly miscalculated" (Koehler). As Dennis Schwartz claims, Wilde's play "is not easy to transfer to film, especially since it is so verbal and created for the stage." Parker took up the challenge with the definite aim to "tak[e] it away from the theatrical as much as [he] could" (Parker). He made spectacular and often stunning visual extensions, contriving

scenes like Algy's arrival in the country in a hot-air balloon, Gwendolen's visit to a tattoo-salon, or Cecily's daydreams about medieval knights in armour. Neil Young finds Parker's additions and amendments "idiotic," regarding the director's "attempts at opening out the material [as] little short of disastrous," while Mick LaSalle simply finds them "meaningless." Lisa Schwarzbaum is likewise critical of Parker's additions. She likens the production to "the efforts of a bluffing student who … rearranges pictures cut from magazines into interpretive collages for extra credit," and claims that "the clean geometry of Wilde's satire is broken by [such] incoherent, extraneous references [like] the dreamy nineteenth-century paintings of Edward Burne-Jones [sic]."

Parker's film does, indeed, give visual references to two Pre-Raphaelite pictures, though not to Burne-Jones: one of these is John Everett Millais's *The Knight Errant* (1870)[1] and the other one is John Melhuish Strudwick's *Acrasia* (1888).[2] They are related to the chivalric revival of the Victorian age, and both appear in the film as images in Cecily Cardew's diary, illustrating her fanciful, amorous desires concerning Ernest Worthing, the imaginary wicked brother of her guardian, Jack Worthing. Challenging Lisa Schwarzbaum's casual dismissal of these details, the present essay intends to show that Parker's treatment of the chivalric topic and the references to Millais' and Strudwick's pictures are neither "incoherent," nor "extraneous," but they fully fit the Wildean concept of art, of the age, the play, as well as its characters.

Oscar Wilde claimed that *The Importance of Being Earnest* "is exquisitely trivial, a delicate bubble of fancy, and it has its philosophy … [t]hat we should treat all the trivial things of life seriously, and all the serious things of life with sincere and studied triviality" (*Interviews* 250). Accordingly, the world presented in the play is absurd: the traditional values become meaningless and nothing functions as it should. Love is reduced to the mere fancy of marrying someone named Ernest, and the ceremony of christening is referred to as a simple act of "sprinkling" (*The Importance* 107). Even death is conferred about without due respect: receiving the news of the death of (the imaginary) Ernest, Miss Prism comments: "What a lesson for him! I trust

1 John Everett Millais (1829–1896) was one of the founders of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1848. Later, he left behind the meticulously realistic and often symbolic early Pre-Raphaelite style and started painting "increasingly sentimental and popular subjects" (Ash 293).

2 John Melhuish Strudwick (1849–1937) was a follower of Edward Burne-Jones. He worked for years as Burne-Jones' studio assistant, but he "also produced his own highly personal version of the Burne-Jones style." As Wood claims, "[h]is subjects are usually deliberately allegorical, and the compositions somewhat static, but they have a remarkable richness of decorative effect" (137–139).

he will profit by it" (105). Literature is not spared either. Miss Prism's "manuscript of a three-volume novel of more than usually revolting sentimentality" (139) is easily exchanged for baby Jack, and the meaning and function of the non-fictional literary form, the diary also become twisted. Whereas Gwendolen's diary functions as diaries should, that is, keeping an account of happenings, recording events and thoughts at a given time; Cecily's diary is, to a great extent, fictional, it records scenes that have never happened: her engagement to Ernest, then the breaking-off of the engagement, and finally their reconciliation. Though Cecily really believes that her guardian has a wicked brother, she is well-aware of the fact that her diary is nonsensical. To her governess Miss Prism's question why she keeps a diary at all, she answers: "I keep a diary in order to enter the wonderful secrets of my life" (98). And although she agrees with Miss Prism's opinion that "[m]emory is the diary that we all carry about with us," she adds that "it usually chronicles the things that have never happened and couldn't possibly have happened" (98).

Reading the play, or even watching a theatre performance of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, the readers or the spectators can only get verbal references concerning the content of Cecily's diary. But in a film adaptation there is the opportunity to make such details visible, and Parker takes this opportunity. Cecily has a big, fairy-tale book as her diary in the film—as opposed to Gwendolen's notebook-like, small diary—with illustrations overshadowing the text. Millais' and Strudwick's paintings appear amid these, as full-page illustrations. These are, as Parker explains, prints she might have got from London, images that influence her "very large and powerful fantasy life." Both paintings are first shown as images in the diary, then the viewers can see how Cecily is fantasising about them, imagining herself in the heroines' place and Ernest into that of the knights featuring in the paintings. In Robert Koehler's opinion "Parker ruins the effect [of Cecily's drifting off 'into romantic fantasies'] by archly depicting them on screen." Mick LaSalle goes even further, claiming that these have "nothing to do with Wilde or even Cecily's personality." A closer look at them, however, reveals that these painterly references are meaningful and are in a close correspondence with the overall concept of Wilde's play as well as with Cecily's character.

Millais' *The Knight Errant* is one of the numerous Victorian paintings representing an act of chivalry. As the painter wrote in the Royal Exhibition catalogue in 1870, when the picture was first shown to the public: "the order of Knights errant was instituted to protect widows and orphans, and to succour maidens in distress,"

adding that the picture shows "an act of medieval chivalry in which one such Knight errant … is on the point of freeing a woman who has been stripped and tied to a tree" (qtd. in "Sir John Everett Millais"). The woman's clothes are on the ground, and in the background, "her molesters, assumed to be robbers" ("Sir John Everett Millais"), can be seen fleeing. The knight's sword is stained with blood, and behind him, the torso of a dead body is visible, which might suggest that the knight has killed one of the woman's assailants. According to Paul Barlow, there is a "tension between 'desire' and 'chivalry'" in the painting (153), as the scene is both a chivalric one depicting the rescue of a damsel in distress, but it is also "one of exposure and of unrestrained violent desire" (151). As Barlow further argues, the attackers "have stripped and bound her, presumably as a prelude to rape" (151). Violence might also be suggested by the tree, a Silver Birch, to which she has been tied. This tree "was commonly identified with the female gender in the nineteenth century and was sometimes referred to as 'lady Birch' [and its] twigs were also traditionally used in flagellations" (qtd. in "Sir John Everett Millais").

The original version of the painting was even more concerned with the theme of lust than the one that can now be seen in the Tate Gallery and also in Parker's film. X-ray photographs have revealed that the woman was originally depicted facing the knight, "establishing eye contact" ("Sir John Everett Millais"). According to the painter's son, his father "came to the conclusion that the beautiful creature would look more modest if her head [was] turned away, so he … repainted it" (Millais 24, vol. 2). Millais' decision to make this alteration was probably also induced by the controversial critical reception of the painting and the consequent fact that it remained unsold after its 1870 exhibition at the Royal Academy. While the victimised naked woman appeared to some, like to the contemporary critic, Tom Taylor, as still "clothed in chastity" (qtd. in Smith 157), others made "assumptions about the woman's probable loose morals" ("Sir John Everett Millais"). In its present form—the woman turning away from the knight as well as from the spectators—the emphasis clearly falls on her sense of shame.

Cecily's fantasising envisioned by Parker definitely turns the chivalric story into an erotic fantasy, despite the fact that Cecily is fully dressed in the film. Cecily's face, shown frontally in the film, expresses desire and her longing for the knight. As Sarah Kerr critically comments, the scene is one of Parker's "hard-working, literal-minded attempts to get sex into the mix" (74). As the chivalric aspect becomes irrelevant, the robbers and the dead attacker are eliminated. There is, however, genuine

mockery in Cecily's dreaming about a knight rescuing her, as her fantasy world provides her an escape from her boring studies, from "Horrid Political Economy! Horrid Geography! Horrid, horrid German" (100). Correspondingly, her amorous longing is suddenly brought to an end by the call of her tutor, Miss Prism, making Cecily return to reality and her studies.

The second Pre-Raphaelite painterly reference appears a little later in the film. With the unexpected arrival of Algernon Moncrieff, Jack's friend, who pretends to be Ernest, Cecily's dreams suddenly come true: Algernon starts courting her. Again, the painting, in this case, Strudwick's *Acrasia*, first appears as an illustration in Cecily's diary, then it is related to the exact location and situation: the garden of Jack's manor house and the courtship of Cecily and Algernon, with the imaginary medieval accessories added to these by Cecily's fantasy. Strudwick's *Acrasia* itself is a controversial picture concerning its presentation of chivalry and lust. At first sight, it seems to depict an idyllic scene; a closer look, however, reveals its sinister character.

Unlike *The Knight Errant*, which is an imaginary chivalric scene, *Acrasia* is based on literature. It depicts the "false enchaunteresse" (Spenser 108) of the Bower of Bliss from Book 2 of Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1590–1596). Spenser's poem is an allegory, where Sir Guyon in Book 2 appears as the knight of Temperance, accompanied by a guide called the Palmer, usually thought to represent reason. Sir Guyon sets on a quest to destroy Acrasia's Bower of Bliss, a garden of alluring sensuous pleasure and delight, where Acrasia "makes her lovers dronken mad; / And then with words & weedes of wondrous might, / On them she workes her will to uses bad" (109). Approaching the bower, Sir Guyon and the Palmer hear "a most melodious sound" (192) of "Angelicall soft trembling voyces" accompanied by the sound of "instruments divine" (193). Then, they spot "the wanton Lady, with her lover lose, / Whose sleepie head she in her lap did soft dispose" (192). The young man, her latest victim seems to be of noble birth, a knight-at-arms, now inert and powerless against the witchcraft of Acrasia. Forgetting his duties, he has given himself up to the world of pleasures. Then, Sir Guyon takes Acrasia by surprise, captures her, and makes her victims, formerly transformed into beasts, human and free again. As Stephen Coote summarises, "[t]he Bower of Bliss itself is [an] example of Spenser's contriving a place … as an allegory of a state of mind. The Bower of Bliss indicates lascivious and somehow cloying eroticism that Spenser sees as a great danger threatening Guyon, his personification of Temperance and self-control" (79).

According to Andrea Rose, Strudwick's work usually shows "little real understanding of the significance of the myths and legends upon which it draws" (124). Nevertheless, his *Acrasia* follows Spenser's text quite closely: we can see the maidens singing and playing beautifully crafted musical instruments; and we can see Acrasia and her unconscious victim, his head resting in her lap, the cup of magic potion that has fallen out of his hand, and his sword resting idle next to it, as well as his "brave shield full of old moniments" hanging "upon a tree" (194). Acrasia is looking down on the knight with a sinister and triumphant smile.

As John Christian writes, Strudwick's art "rel[ies] for its effect on surface decoration and often evoke[s] a mood of cloying sweetness" (92). Both these features are apparent in this painting, too. The decorative quality is present in the lush foliage and the weighty, ripe fruits of the tree, the fading but still lush rose blossoms scattered around, and the delicate, exotic-looking musical instruments. The term, "cloying sweetness," is especially apt here, as it well-corresponds to the theme: Acrasia offers a sensual delight that becomes destructive.

Notwithstanding all these references, those spectators of Parker's film who are unaware of the painting's narrative background would hardly suspect that what they see is a scene of vicious seduction. Cecily, too, seems to be unaware of it. As in the case of Millais' *The Knight Errant*, she assumes the role of the painted heroine in her dreams, and imagines Algy into the role of the victimised knight. The parallel between Cecily and Acrasia is, however, more intriguing than it might seem. Though Cecily appears to be an innocent country girl, a ward dependent on her guardian, she does have the upper hand on many occasions. She makes, for example, her guardian Jack accept Algy's hand, gives Gwendolen tea with sugar and cakes instead of bread and butter despite Gwendolen's explicit request of the opposite, and defies Lady Bracknell's suggestion "to wait till [she] was thirty-five" (137) with getting married. And, most importantly, her behaviour with Algernon is openly seductive. She has the dominant role in all the scenes they have together: Algy's is reduced to perplexed questions and short answers concerning Cecily's invented story of their attachment. As Parker states in his audio commentary, Algy completely "subordinates his desires to those of Cecily, because of [her] extraordinary power."

Nevertheless, in Parker's film there is no sign of Cecily being a cruel enchantress. She looks genuinely happy in her Bower of Bliss and infatuated with Algy, rejoicing over having been at last united with her "knight." Algy, however, captivated in his suit of armour, is ridiculous, the musicians are showy, and the huge,

golden-red apples hanging upon a garden tree are artificial. The Bower of Bliss, as imagined by Cecily, is rather a mockery of Strudwick's picture with exaggerated, even nonsensical details. Cecily's misconception of Strudwick's *Acrasia* and Millais' *The Knight Errant* seems to parody the paintings as well as the chivalric ideal they are intended to represent.

Parker's mockery of chivalry culminates at the very end of the movie. All of a sudden, the drawing room of Jack's manor house is transformed into a place of absurd vision: one of Strudwick's musicians appears performing in between the mantelpiece and a bush, and Algy is shown standing as if paralysed in full armour, while Cecily is mounted on a huge horse. It is no longer the projection of Cecily's imagination: it is the director's hint to the spectators that nothing should be taken seriously. It is also a visual pun on Gwendolen and Jack's preceding conversation about Jack really being Ernest, and it is followed by the scene when Lady Bracknell looks into the military directory and finds that Jack lies: his name is not Ernest; therefore, he is not earnest either. By providing an insight into the book, Parker gives a funny and relevant twist to the resolution of the play. At the same time, the film has an ironic self-reflexive character. As Marianne Drugeon argues, Parker "constantly plays on spectators being present around the characters watching them," who are like "many mirrors held up to the spectators in the cinema." Even the characters step out of their roles at times, like Algy, for example, being "as surprised as the spectators" when, wooing Cecily, he "suddenly finds himself in knight's armour."

The theme of chivalry never comes up in Wilde's play: all these references are Parker's own inventions. Yet the film is in full agreement with Wilde's concept of *The Importance of Being Earnest* that ridicules basic Victorian moral and social values. The Victorians held chivalric values in high esteem. In one of his speeches, novelist and social writer Charles Kingsley (1819–1875) called on his listeners to be "a knight-errant or lady-errant," to be "just as chivalrous as if [they] lived in an old fairy land, such as Spenser talked of in his 'Faerie Queene'" (qtd. in Houghton 319). The much-respected art critic, John Ruskin (1819–1900) also expressed his wish in *Sesame and Lilies* (1865) that "there were a true order of chivalry instituted for [the] English youth … in which both boy and girl should receive [their] knighthood and ladyhood by true title; attainable only by certain probation and trial of both character and accomplishment" (99n*). When Oliver Parker makes fun of the Victorian chivalric ideal in his film adaptation of *The Importance of Being Earnest*,

he just imitates what Oscar Wilde has done in his play: he ridicules one of the ideals that the Victorians so much cherished.

Furthermore, with the insertion of the Pre-Raphaelite pictures and their enaction on screen, Parker cleverly hints at the famous paradox stated in Wilde's *The Decay of Lying*: "that Life imitates art far more than Art imitates life" (32). But the parallel between Parker's film and Wilde's paradox is even closer, as the playwright justifies his claim by describing how fashionable women in his contemporary England made efforts to have the mystic looks and the loveliness of the idealised female beauties depicted in the canvases of two Pre-Raphaelite painters, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Edward Burne-Jones (*The Decay of Lying* 32). Thus, Cecily's Pre-Raphaelite-inspired visions and desires in Parker's *The Importance of Being Earnest* are definitely meaningful and relevant cinematic additions to Wilde's play.

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Shakespeare and the Popular Film Industry

From Allusion and Adaptation to Successful Crossovers

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Abstract: Shakespeare's popularity on the big screen increased exponentially in the 1990s, largely thanks to Kenneth Branagh's and Baz Luhrmann's films and Shakespeare in Love *(1998), co-written by Marc Norman and Tom Stoppard, which became the highest grossing Shakespeare film. In the recent two decades, the popular film industry has also rediscovered the marketing value and crowd-tickling element in Shakespeare allusions, and several box office success genres, like superhero films, relied on "Easter egg" inclusion of well-known Shakespearean quotes or motifs. This paper offers a bird's eye view of several tendencies characterising the attitude of the popular film industry to Shakespeare in the last 30 years. Arguing that success relies on some form of a crossover effect, it also presents brief case studies with a focus on what makes or unmakes a "Shakespeare film" at the box office and in critical opinion. The films in focus are Baz Luhrmann's* Romeo+Juliet, Shakespeare in Love, *Joss Whedon's film noiresque* Much Ado About Nothing *(2012), and Richard Eyre's* King Lear *(2018).*

Questions of Popularity: From the 1990s to Our Days

The concept and measurement of popularity within the Western film industry, as well as what defines a product as a "Shakespeare film" are two questions not easily answered. This brief study cannot hope to give definite answers to either; however, pointing out some major tendencies in the last decades, then focusing

on two high-grossing films from the second half of the 1990s and two less popular ones from the 2010s, it attempts to offer some answers and comes to a tentative conclusion regarding the role of crossover elements in securing success. For the purposes of this study, the term, "Shakespeare film," is confined to those adaptations that are either based on a famous play and/or boast "Shakespeare" as a clearly recognisable brand.

As Douglas Lanier and others confirm, "Shakespeare" has served as a business brand since, at least, the nineteenth century and became a commodified product with high advertising value. "Shakespeare" signifies an identity myth masses of people recognise and measure themselves up to, and thus, according to Douglas B. Holt's definition of brands, it achieves an almost iconic status (qtd in Lanier, "Shakespeare™" 112). Even more importantly, "Shakespeare"—both the man and the works—became popular culture's favourite "Other," though their relationship has always been characterised by a certain ambivalence, appearing in differing forms of appreciation, anxiety, and appropriation:

> Behind the various re-brandings of Shakespeare in the last century lies a fundamental continuity—Shakespeare as pop's Other. Within pop culture Shakespeare's face remains the sign of that culture which pop proclaims it isn't, old-fashioned, elitist, artisanal, intellectual, moralistic "proper" art, promoted by official educational and cultural institutions, but it also remains the sign of pop's desire, its desire for the kind of cultural authority, quality, legitimacy, and upward mobility that Shakespeare continues to symbolise. (Lanier, "Shakespeare™" 99)

The 1990s, however, signalled a paradigm shift in the long and complicated relationship between popular culture and "Shakespeare" in modern times, fostering a more playful, relaxed, and less respectful or anxious approach. Kenneth Branagh's *Much Ado About Nothing* (1993) became the icebreaker in Hollywood since it proved that the previously opposing concepts of "Shakespeare film" and "box-office success" were no longer irreconcilable, which was re-affirmed by numerous other films following Branagh's in the 1990s. As John Blakely summarises, Hollywood cast off Shakespeare's "residual cultural superiority ... finally and unequivocally taking Shakespeare into its loving embrace," with films like Oliver Parker's *Othello*

(1995), Richard Loncraine's *Richard III* (1995), Al Pacino's *Looking for Richard* (1996), Branagh's *Hamlet* (1996), with the "biggest impact" made by Luhrmann's *William Shakespeare's Romeo+Juliet* in 1996 and *Shakespeare in Love* in 1998 (Blakely 251). Besides such easily recognisable Shakespeare films, looser adaptations of Shakespearean plays into a contemporary milieu and popular film genres also abounded and became commercial successes from *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999) to *Warm Bodies* (2013), as Kinga Földváry traces in the second part of her monograph, *Cowboy Hamlets and Zombie Romeos.* Shakespeare—at large and in part—became a possibility for success in the popular film industry.

Concerning the money-making capacity of Shakespeare films, Alicia Adamczyk's figures are quite informative. Even though her 2016 table may be severely criticised from a Shakespeare scholar's viewpoint, since she does not recognise *Romeo and Juliet* in *Shakespeare in Love* and does not distinguish between oblique and straight adaptations, the numbers make it quite clear: two of the highest-grossing Shakespeare films ever were made in the 1990s. If she had factored in the hugely successful musical theatrical afterlife of the film *Shakespeare in Love* (starting in 2014), as a clear sign of long-lasting popularity with audiences, the numbers may have been even bigger (see Table 1).

After this laudable upsurge of popular Shakespeare films in the 1990s, the following decades predominantly continued in the ambiguous, partly reverent, partly irreverent cinematographic attitude towards Shakespeare, which characterised both Baz Luhrmann's *William Shakespeare's Romeo+Juliet* and *Shakespeare in Love*. By now, we can safely say that the 1990s proved a golden decade for cinema in general, with many memorable films produced then which are still popular and re-watched today. However, it is impossible to prove objectively whether this larger context contributed to the popularity of these two Shakespeare films, or these two productions contributed to the long-lasting success of Hollywood cinema of the 1990s, even though I personally adhere to the latter view.

Nevertheless, it is evident that later products of the popular film industry have tended to allude to Shakespeare as a well-known myth, employing double-edged allusions to him or his works in upcoming hugely popular genres, like superhero films and networked TV series, such as *Westworld*. Since the beginning of the 2010s, Hollywood has been swamped by superhero films, and their attitude to Shakespeare illustrates pop culture's changing perspectives to a fault. One of the first great Marvel hits, *Avengers* (dir. Joss Whedon, 2012) has a scene when Thor (Chris Hemsworth)

arrives on Earth in shiny body armour and a red cape, landing in Central Park, New York, and the following witty banter ensues between Iron Man (Robert Downey Jr.) and Thor, the new superhero recruit:

> Thor: You have no idea what you're dealing with…
> Iron Man: Shakespeare in the Park? … Doth mother know thou weareth her drapes?

Although, purportedly, Iron Man's line was improvised by the actor, Robert Downey Jr., the director Joss Whedon, a Shakespeare enthusiast himself, did not cut it, and since then it has become one of the most quoted scenes of *Avengers*. The wittiness and comprehension of Iron Man's line relies on what I term "double cultural literacy" (Lanier calls it "dual cultural literacy" and Jostein Gripsrud "double access," see Lanier, "Shakespeare™" 97), and this concept goes back to Peter Burke's famous concept of "amphibious" consumers/producers, well-versed in both elite and popular cultures (Burke 9). Iron Man's line is a multi-layered allusion, juxtaposing *faux*-Elizabethan English as a Shakespearean signifier to an oblique reference to Thor as Hamlet (a prince with a troubled relationship to his mother) and the famous free Shakespeare theatrical productions at the open-air Delacorte Theater in Central Park, started by Joseph Papp in the 1950s. Another characteristic feature of this allusion is the playful mixture of English and American cultural traditions, blissfully free of the anxiety of Shakespeare's cultural superiority and its residual Englishness.[1] For these American superheroes, Shakespeare has become a household name. However, the question of how many spectators actually identify and understand all the layers and intertextual references remains an open one. The recognisability and the intended target audience of such fragmented and multi-layered allusions deserve to be discussed separately in each and every individual case, not disregarding other factors like genre, as Földváry emphasises throughout her monograph. This allusion also exemplifies new forms of adaptation, which are called "rhizomatic" in recent adaptation studies. Based on Deleuze's concept of the rhizome, Lanier suggests that such adaptations do not appear in an arboreal form (tree trunk/source and branches/adaptations), which prioritises fidelity

1 This anxiety is a central issue in Al Pacino's *Looking for Richard* (1996), a documentary (meta)film about the staging of *Richard III* by American theatre-makers, showing many different attitudes to Shakespeare from scholars to actors and even a homeless person.

or one source text ("the original Shakespearean") above others but rather work in a horizontally linked and decentralised fashion, connecting several "texts"/manifestations, many of which are already offshoots of the historical Shakespearean phenomenon (Lanier, "Afterword" 295, 297).

Other superhero films have variously more direct or indirect relationships with Shakespeare: when making the first *Thor* film (2011), Kenneth Branagh was happy to point out the Shakespearean roots of the story, referring to the similarity between Thor and Prince Hal/Henry V (Wilkins), and later, *Thor: Ragnarök* (2017), directed by Taika Waititi, included an open-air theatrical production within the film. This scene presents Thor and Loki's former struggles as a mock-Shakespearean play in performance, rewriting history from Loki's viewpoint. In an open-air, very nineteenth-century looking theatre, complete with red curtains and a picturesquely painted backcloth, "The Tragedy of Loki of Asgaard" is performed in traditional Shakespearean theatrical style, with Asgaardian "groundlings," and King Odin (Anthony Hopkins) watching (and enjoying) it from a dais. In the *finale* of the performance, we see the dying Loki being mourned by a repentant Thor and the stage-Odin breaks out in rhymed mock-Elizabethan lines in his epilogue, with a blue-skinned boy-Loki appearing as the future saviour of the people. Both the language and theatrical style, as well as stage-Loki's demand to "build a statue for me," and the play-within-the-play/film recall Shakespeare with a tongue-in-cheek attitude. Especially since it finally turns out that the performance has been conceived, directed and enjoyed by Loki (Tom Hiddleston) himself—in their father's, Odin's disguise.

The popularity of cheeky Shakespeare allusions in recent mainstream Hollywood films, however, does not help us in defining what popularity really means in filmic terms. The most important film database of our days, *The Internet Movie Database* (IMDb) shows several, often opposing factors for measuring popularity, which, unfortunately, offers more questions than answers. Table 2 is based on the IMDb data of the four films which are considered in the second part of this study. These four productions were chosen, as they signal (potential) trends and different (potential) reasons for popularity. Besides the widely distributed, internationally acclaimed, and undoubtedly popular 1990s mainstream films, Branagh's *Much Ado*, Luhrmann's *Romeo+Juliet*, and Madden's *Shakespeare in Love*, two Shakespeare films from the 2010s were selected as a counterpoint, which had a potential for popularity but failed to achieve it. In the 2010s, Joss Whedon was a rising star in Hollywood with a huge fan base, thanks to his several original TV series on the small screen,

and many hoped that his *Much Ado* might prove another success. Even if it was produced as an indie film, with limited distribution, this fact alone might not have hindered the film from becoming popular with audiences, thanks to the by then widespread practice of downloading films, which ensured easy (though illegal) access to any filmed product. By the 2010s, any filmed production could become hugely popular and successful disregarding its origins, be they small screen or big screen, mainstream or non-mainstream. Downloading films and emerging streaming platforms became the vogue and often a source of unexpected success and popularity (see Netflix's *Stranger Things*, or BBC's *Sherlock*). Therefore, when the acclaimed English theatre and film director Richard Eyre, who has also worked for the small screen since the 1980s, was invited by BBC and Amazon to produce a *King Lear* film of two hours with many actors of celebrity status, again many people hoped for success with large-scale audiences, besides critical attention.[2]

In one sense, measuring popularity remains as hopeless as measuring love in *King Lear.* Nevertheless, databases and their numbers might offer some useful information if treated critically. As seen in Table 2, based on IMDb, nominations and wins signal critical acclaim, which often stands in contrast to both IMDb ratings and users' reviews, rather representing mass acceptance and favour for the film. It appears that Branagh's *Much Ado* has been a little more popular with spectators than *Shakespeare in Love*, which otherwise excels in all numbers, including gross income (see Table 1), whereas the IMDb rating of Luhrmann's film is much lower than expected. Whedon's *Much Ado*, however, has a higher rating than would be normal, considering that its IMDb rating number is the same as that of *Shakespeare in Love*, which has had much higher visibility than Whedon's. In addition, Whedon's film was an absolute flop at the box office, and many reviews show a following that is fewer in number but very enthusiastic (quite typical in the case of Whedon's productions, see later). Eyre's *King Lear* fares the worst, however, which only partially might be chalked up to the fact that it appeared on Amazon Prime.

2 This study focuses on a narrow concept of "Shakespeare films," excluding animated cartoons, like *Gnomeo and Juliet* (dir. Kelly Asbury, 2011), and clear adaptations. In addition, we have too little time elapsed from the screening of very recent productions like Steven Spielberg's *West Side Story* (2021) or Joel Coen's *The Tragedy of Macbeth* (2021) to assess popularity with any certainty. In addition, this study cannot hope to cover all the Shakespeare films of the 2000s and 2010s, so, for instance, Justin Kurzel's *Macbeth* (2015) falls outside the scope of analysis—especially since it did not prove very popular with either audiences or critics despite the fact that it was a big-screen production and enjoyed international distribution.

In conclusion, the question remains an open one: what endows a Shakespeare film with lasting popularity?

Captivating Crowd-Ticklers of the Late 1990s and Partial Successes of the 2010s

The problem with contemporaneous cultural products is that we usually do not have sufficient temporal distance to make claims about long-lasting success with audiences. Nevertheless, the popularity of both *William Shakespeare's Romeo+Juliet* and *Shakespeare in Love* appears to have remained constant with spectators even in the early 2020s, whereas these films are also faithful mirrors to their specific temporal context of the later 1990s, as shown in the following analysis. Not only has *Shakespeare in Love* enjoyed a successful theatrical revival globally in the 2010s, starting with Declan Donellan's West End production in 2014, reaching even Hungary in 2017, but both films appear to enjoy an almost iconic status, spawning further Shakespearean offshoots and allusions, or, as Földváry emphasises, further genre-specific Shakespeare adaptations. For instance, Luhrmann's film is credited by many to have launched a series of Shakespeare teen films, even if they are more oblique adaptations of Shakespearean stories and motifs (Földváry 171). Nevertheless, my contention is that, in both films, a very fortunate multi-crossover effect contributes to lasting value, besides other potential triggers for success.

First, both films have a double-edged, both reverent and irreverent attitude to the Shakespeare phenomenon. They clearly indicate their indebtedness to Shakespeare in their titles, however, the full title of Luhrmann's film, *William Shakespeare's Romeo+Juliet* only appears after two and a half minutes of having heard and shown the Prologue in three different versions, and after the *faux*-opening credits, which introduce the main characters in character (e.g. "Ted Montague, Romeo's father"). Luhrmann deftly plays with the significance of Shakespeare's name, both upholding and refreshing its evocative power,[3] promising and teasing audiences at the same time. What Shakespeare's name calls forth in general (a reverent attitude to well-known, therefore, boring tradition) is counterbalanced by the aggressively

3 This corresponds to Lanier's claims about the significance of an iconic author's name: "attaching an author's name (and image) to a text (or product) predisposes us to interpret it in a certain manner, to classify it with certain texts (or products), and not with others, to expect it to have certain qualities, themes, ideas, or formal traits" ("The Shakespeare™" 93).

quick sequence of direct cuts, sped up zoom-ins from long shots to close-ups, and typical gangster film frames, like the distressed but elegant Montague parents shown in the open doors of a luxurious black limousine, or the police chopper hovering above a metropolitan city, and TV and newspaper headlines repeating the Prologue's words about the "ancient grudge." Although what the audience hears is Shakespeare's Elizabethan language, the visuals emphasise that we are thrown into a filmed world, from TV screens to the big screen. This establishing sequence defines the major characteristics of Luhrmann's Shakespeare film: its aggressively quick momentum (which only slows down in the intimate scenes between Romeo and Juliet), the jump-cuts and extreme close-ups (eyes, half-faces) that do not allow for maintaining an emotional distance from what is happening on screen, and the almost parodistic excess characterising religion and on-screen emotions. Luhrmann is able to keep a fine line between kitschy and expressive metaphors, translating into filmic devices what is poetry in Shakespeare.[4] The best example for this is the use of water imagery for the young lovers' pure love in their first meeting and the so-called balcony (or here: pool) scene. Luhrmann's *Romeo+Juliet* captivates and pulls in the spectator with its garish, over-the-top visuality, the strong musical core, and the many extreme close-ups of Romeo's and others' faces, and ensures that no one can remain neutral emotionally in the auditorium. Strong emotions are counter-balanced by highly comic moments, also expressed by filmic devices: the artificial speeding up of the Nurse's and Lady Capulet's movements before the ball recalls early film burlesques, while the Nurse's thick accent, her excessive facial expressions and gestures (sometimes shown as a shadow image) are solidly set in the mood of *opera buffa.* Even Romeo appears comic in the first part of the film: in his haste, he often stumbles, slips, and falls, adding to the physical comedy of the Nurse.

As a "teen pic," the role of music is extremely significant: Földváry and others emphasise that it is almost "carbon dating" the film as a 1990s film for an MTV generation (French qtd. in Földváry 155), well-versed in similar music videos (its soundtrack had a high selling rate as well). The music is often frantic and only switches to silence or hushed tones in the intimate scenes between Romeo and Juliet. However, this time-specific nature of the music does not exclude its strong emotional impact even after more than twenty years. Flawless editing ensures that

4 Marcell Gellért mourns the fact that almost one-third of the Shakespearean text is cut: "a 'movie' of action and visual design would not bear the burden of too many words" (Gellért 83); however, I would rather say that Shakespeare's words are translated into filmic devices and metaphors.

the rhythm and pacing of songs, music, and visuals are synchronous and work together to achieve the same pulling-in effect. *Romeo and Juliet* becoming a teen pic is based on its teenage main characters; however, the crime or gangster film element appears to be Luhrmann's own. Many critics have commented upon the mixture of popular genres in the film, from music videos to western, gangster, and teen films; however, they did not really comment upon this multi-crossover effect in detail.[5]

Besides easily recognisable references to westerns from boots to pistol duels, the film's strongest adherence is to American gangster films. The question whether the Capulet and Montague boys' appearances are based on Mexican or Italian-American gangster stereotypes is less relevant, although the latter is reaffirmed by Romeo being played by Leonardo di Caprio, himself an Italian-American actor. More importantly, typical gangster-film stylistic features are seen in the boys' rivalry and their attire: bare chests and Hawaii shirts for the Montagues, and leather jackets, western boots, and tattoos for the Capulets, with Tybalt visually also recalling James Dean in *Rebel Without A Cause* (1955), an older teen pic. Even the spiritual leader, Friar Lawrence boasts a huge, tattooed crucifix, emphasising the exaggerated and often kitschy religiousness of both Hispanic and Italian communities in the States. Guns and bleeding wounds abound everywhere as well as hearty meals. This mood is reaffirmed in the final scenes when Romeo, chased by police cars, takes an innocent bystander hostage (not Paris, which would be more faithful to the storyline of Shakespeare's play) before entering the Capulet's crypt with the words "Tempt not a desperate man," brandishing his pistol. Luhrmann's daring combination of seemingly irreconcilable genres (romantic teen pic and gangster film), boosted by references to other popular forms (western, music videos), created a winning mixture, which does not seem to lose its power even after more than twenty years.

The locales of the film point to another successfully popularising element present in both *Romeo+Juliet* and *Shakespeare in Love*: shot in Mexico City and Veracruz, Luhrmann's film creates a (pan-)American feeling,[6] similarly to the ending of *Shakespeare in Love*, when the "foreign shore" the Elizabethan heroine, Viola, arrives at (played by the American actress Gwyneth Paltrow), signals a new, American beginning for Shakespeare. In one of the discarded cuts, this long shot even showed

5 For instance, Loehlin's detailed analysis places Luhrmann's film securely in the category of "millennial teen films," even though he mentions other generic features as well (121ff.).

6 Gellért calls it "dystopian nowhereland" (84); however, I rather agree with Blakeley, since the visuals always remain identifiably metropolitan and American.

an obscured Manhattan skyline in the distance (Blakeley 250, Nadel 421). Since Hollywood film history has conditioned viewers throughout the world to think in terms of "global/us" when showing "American," this attitude signals a new, anxiety-free approach to Shakespeare: the familiarisation of the Swan of Stratford, the "Star of Poets" is shown as completed.[7]

Blakeley's article informatively maps out this Americanisation/decolonisation process in the film, from casting to other features. Interestingly, *Shakespeare in Love*, one of the highest-grossing Shakespeare films ever, had very uncertain beginnings and definitely no sure sign of success then. Ira Nadel discusses the many pre-production problems, from casting to several re-writings,[8] switching studios, producers and directors which characterised the process from 1991 on, when Tom Stoppard first became involved with the script, to review Marc Norman's version (416–422). Although Norman already had contacts with Stephen Greenblatt, the preeminent Shakespeare scholar of the day when writing his script, I argue that without Stoppard's own research and expertise in combining the Elizabethan and the postmodern, the film would not have become an international success. Besides the Anglo-American cast, also successfully used in Branagh's *Much Ado*, the authenticity of the film was partly ensured by moving principal photography to England and building a replica Elizabethan theatre for the Rose. This way a successful combination of different genres and approaches emerged: 1. heritage films, with historical authenticity supported by elaborate visuals, and by Greenblatt's and Stoppard's help; 2. Marc Norman's original romcom-biopic combination; and 3. the typical Stoppardian postmodern tongue-in-cheek play with authenticity, history, and with Roland Barthes's idea of the "death of the author." As Philip Henslowe (Geoffrey Rush) aptly comments about Will, when people barge in on a rehearsal in the Rose and inquire about everyone's role: "who is that?" the answer is: "Nobody. The author." As Nadel comments, without Stoppard's ingenious solution of the riddle of having a romcom without the boy and girl's final happy union, *Shakespeare in Love* could never have fared so well (421). Stoppard fused romantic passion for a lover and passion for writing

7 Al Pacino's *Looking for Richard* (1996) also elaborates on the ambiguity of such cultural appropriation of Shakespeare in America but rather presents it as an unresolved source of anxiety.

8 Before they chose Gwyneth Paltrow, the American actress with a distinctly English look, and by then already a star of a Jane Austen film, Julia Roberts, Winona Ryder, Jodie Foster, and Meg Ryan had also been considered. For "Will," a number of actors' names emerged as well, from Ralph Fiennes, Colin Firth, even Mel Gibson, and Ben Affleck had to be "written into" the script at Paltrow's request (Nadel 419–420).

successfully, and this was combined with the partly *faux*-Merry Old England feel of the film, deliberately shot not in historically accurate, that is, often dark and sombre lighting and gritty realistic detail, but, as Nadel sums up, director John Madden required a simple and movable, flexible camera combined with shots in widescreen "to capture the appropriate depth and yet maintain low light levels" (422). The film shows destitute people in period clothing, and mud and urine in the streets, however, only as a comic backdrop to Henslowe's hasty retreat to his playhouse, shaking mud off his boots. The visual details were historically accurate for the most part (thanks to Greenblatt), but never as realistic as to be offending, and often presented with a Stoppardian humorous-parodical twist. For instance, the playbill that we see in the establishing shot, lying on the sawdust-strewn floor of the Rose playhouse in the groundlings' area, shows an actual period woodcut and typesetting with the words "September 1st and 8th [numbers in handwriting] at noon / Mr EDWARD ALLEYN and the LORD ADMIRALL's MEN / in the Rose Theatre [empty space] Bankside / [woodcut] / The Lamentable Tragedie of the / MONEYLENDER REVENG'D." Although, unfortunately, we do not have an extant playbill from Elizabethan times, both the phrasing, the woodcut, and the partly damaged look of the bill imitates a real, historical one, as described in Tiffany Stern's *Documents of Performance* (36–62), and evokes a feeling of historical accuracy for a non-existent play, the title of which prepares the audience to the next scene in the tiring house, where the Lord Admiral's Men's theatrical producer Henslowe's boots are put on fire as part of Mr. Fennyman's, the moneylender's revenge. The same, simultaneously irreverent, subversive and historically authentic approach characterises the presentation of Will Shakespeare (Joseph Fiennes), the film both meeting and mocking the audience's expectation regarding a live "Shakespeare" on screen: we first see his ink-stained fingers in the opening credits, and as the film title is "being handwritten" in *faux*-Elizabethan ink and quill style (not the authentic secretarial hand, which would be unreadable for the general audience), we expect him to be penning one of his masterpieces. However, it turns out that Will is only practising his autograph, in the true fashion of a young, ambitious author hungry for success, so the joke is turned on him as well as on the audience: he is not yet *the* Shakespeare but a young, handsome man we instantly sympathise with, being "one of us." Nevertheless, the signatures are the actual historical signings of Shakespeare from his legal documents. With this witty combination of historically accurate and wittily inaccurate, as well as through the multi-crossover effect recalling several film genres, *Shakespeare in Love*

targets the widest possible audience, entertaining scholars and Shakespeare buffs as well as people simply loving romcoms or beautiful heritage settings and costumes.

This "postmodern bricolage," as Fedderson and Richardson call it, remains authentically Shakespearean both in treating the past not as a relic but a source of free play, besides combining the erotic with the poetic. As they argue in 2000, the film is firmly set in the late 1990s: "Fiennes's Will Shakespeare is very much a creature for our time—MTV-handsome, gender-conflicted, entrepreneurial, adolescent, obsessed with notoriety; Paltrow's Viola is similarly timely, she is a conflicted feminist, an impulsive disobedient child, an exhibitionistic and sentimental debutante" (Fedderson-Richardson). More than twenty years past, although this time-specific feature of the film appears more troubling for new viewers, who are well-versed in LGBTQI+ issues,[9] the popular appeal of the film itself does not seem to fade, and my contention is that this multi-crossover combination of heritage film, biopic, romcom and Stoppardian postmodern play with historical authenticity plays a significant role in its lasting success besides a certain "safe" nostalgia, the simplified and subtly beautified look of "Merry Old England" and "Good Queen Bess" (Judi Dench).[10] The allure of nostalgia is buttressed with the voyeuristic appeal of an "inside look" into the Bard's study and love life, so that the idea of the "genius" of Shakespeare and Elizabethan theatre is upheld even in parody.[11] The same refers to the cult of Elizabeth I and the Elizabethan "Golden Age," presenting her as a just ruler, at a time of triumphant colonisation, within a fantasy of culture at peace with power. Marc Norman's filmic clichés combined with Stoppard's theatrical expertise and John Madden's cinematic crossover attitude created a popular mixture that still calls out to many.

Although the 2010s were a very different cinematic era, it is still striking to see that this decade could not offer Shakespeare films straightforward popularity, even if several projects started out as promising, with a high potential for success. For

9 I have been teaching this film for several years now for BA students at the film specialisation track in the class, "Film Icons" (co-taught with Vera Benczik), and the reaction of students appears to remain constant: even if they do not all agree with the predominantly heteronormative representation of the gender play of Will and Viola (see Klett), they love the film in general.

10 I do not have time here to dilate on whether this rather belongs to Svetlana Boym's restorative or reflective nostalgia, for such an approach to early modern plays, see Hargitai. *Shakespeare in Love* has been a favourite with scholars, too, see Földváry (251–257), and many others.

11 Annamária Fábián emphasises the same significance of simultaneous deconstruction/reconstruction in present-day Hungarian theatrical adaptations of Shakespeare (85).

instance, American popular daredevil director Joss Whedon's Shakespeare film was a much-awaited project, and many expected famous theatre and film director Richard Eyre's *King Lear* to become an instant hit in 2018. In 2012, Joss Whedon scripted and filmed his version of *Much Ado About Nothing* as a personal pet project. The film was shot in black and white, at his own resort in Santa Monica in twelve days, with his favourite actors from previous Whedon projects. By that time his name had already become synonymous with a distinctive style and narration in TV series, which created a devout base of fans even though he did not always achieve commercial success. The so-called "Whedonverse" between 1997 and 2010 consisted of 7 seasons of *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer*, 5 seasons of its male vampire-focused spin-off, *Angel*, a broken season of the space western, *Firefly*, with 11 episodes, to which the full-length feature film, *Serenity*, was added later thanks to the devoted fanbase, and a full season of *Dollhouse*. In all these popular series, he sketched out his own mythologies in full, where imagery, music, and story aligned to create a recognisably Whedonesque mood, featuring relatable "misfits" and their emotional problems, action sequences mixed with moral questions of friendship, love, betrayal, courage, and responsibility, successfully targeting and captivating a teenage (and older) audience. Still, the film proved a commercial flop, both in the US and globally, and was never screened in cinemas in most countries. It received several independent film awards and some critical praise, but somehow Whedon's crossover of the Shakespearean play as a romcom in a *film-noiresque* atmosphere did not produce a widely palatable film.

Although the definition of *film noir* as a genre or only a set of convergent visual and narrative features is still a contested field (see Neale), Whedon's indebtedness to its cinematographic and other markers appears clearly: the sunshine glare of an American luxurious resort is shot in black and white, in clear opposition to Branagh's *Much Ado*, filmed in buoyant colours in an idyllic summer landscape in Tuscany, Italy. Whedon's interior shots often show the main characters in claustrophobic positions; for instance, Beatrice is hiding under the table of a kitchen island in a vulnerable position, knees and arms drawn up close to her body in protection, when overhearing Hero and Margaret's ruse concerning Benedick. Mirror images, typical of *noirs*, also abound, as well as *noirs'* frequent subversion of gender norms. The Shakespearean questioning of male and female social roles in Benedick and Beatrice's dialogue is reaffirmed by a gender switch: Don John's helper, Conrad becomes Conrade, his lover, who, in Riki Lindhome's representation, recalls

the *femme fatale* of *film noir*. The flashback to Benedick and Beatrice's previous, pre-action love affair in the opening shot, exposing their mutual vulnerability and despair, is another potentially *noiresque* addition by Whedon.

Even though both Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* and *film noir* thrive on anxiety regarding sexual and gender questions, and share a cynical attitude to love, this specific combination apparently lacked the persuasive energy to win over the general audience. Nevertheless, the question why the film never became popular remains open and only tentative answers may be offered. Present-day audiences seem to favour black-and-white films only when either the subject matter or a necessary emotional distance calls for it (see *The Artist* and *Schindler's List*), and only appear to appreciate *film noir* as a short insert (like in *Casino Royale*, launching a new, grittier Bond with Daniel Craig in 2006). In addition, a full-length black-and-white love comedy appears to many as a thing of the past, belonging to old Hollywood and, therefore, potentially obsolete. Finally, Whedon's distinctively individual approach to films might also account for the lack of general success: inhabiting someone else's, that is, Shakespeare's mythology instead of his own might have proven too foreign a territory for him, despite his personal appreciation for the Bard.

Richard Eyre's *King Lear* for BBC2 and Amazon Prime continued in the vein of celebrity casting, with Anthony Hopkins in the title role, supported by emerging young British talent (Florence Pugh as Cordelia), well-established actors (Emma Thompson as Goneril, Andrew Scott as Edgar), and a black actor playing Edmund (John Mcmillan). According to Eyre, the play is "the ultimate family drama: a monstrous, tragic tale of a family destroying itself" (Hogan), so his direction foregrounds close-ups and interiors, in a rather theatrical fashion. He found apt visual contexts for modernising the milieu as a twenty-first-century military dictatorship, with the Tower at its centre, the heath scenes set in a refugee camp and showing mad Lear as a deranged homeless man in the run-down parking lot of a superstore. Despite excellent acting and a thorough understanding of Shakespeare's play, Eyre's film appears to please only the connoisseur and highbrow audiences. Even if the running time had to be cut down to two hours at Amazon's request, the pace of the story is never rushed but remains even, and the film is firmly set in a solidly reverent attitude to the play and Shakespearean language, lacking any suggestion of being more than an intelligently conceived modern film for TV.

Besides a cleverly chosen and applied multi-crossover effect, the popularity of Shakespeare films also appears to rely on the language aspect: Luhrmann

deftly reflected on the use of early modern English and blank verse, "explaining" them to general audiences with different filmic devices (the guns carry the brand names "Sword 9mm" and "Longsword," visual triggers help to understand difficult Shakespearean phrasings, etc.). Stoppard, on the other hand, combined modern and Elizabethan language with a practised ease, keeping most of the dialogue in an easily graspable modern-day lingo, interspersed with early modern or Shakespearean phrasings, even wittily reflecting on this combined language use. However, neither Whedon's *Much Ado* nor Eyre's *King Lear* in the 2010s have tackled this problem directly, and—perhaps mostly out of reverence—they do nothing with the problem in filmic terms but rely on their actors' skills to transmit the general message of the Shakespearean text (similarly to traditional Shakespeare productions in English-speaking theatres). It appears that a more daring and less reverent take on the Shakespearean material results in potentially more popular Shakespeare films.

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Tables

Film	Starring	Shakespeare Play	Box Office Gross
The Lion King (1994)	Jonathan Taylor Thomas, James Earl Jones, Jeremy Irons	*Hamlet*	$987.5 million
Romeo+Juliet (1996)	Leonardo DiCaprio and Claire Danes	*Romeo and Juliet*	$147.6 million
Shakespeare in Love (1998)	Gwyneth Paltrow and Joseph Fiennes	*N/A*	$100.3 million
She's the Man (2006)	Amanda Bynes and Channing Tatum	*Twelfth Night*	$57 million
10 Things I Hate About You (1999)	Julia Stiles and Heath Ledger	*The Taming of the Shrew*	$53.5 million

Film	Starring	Shakespeare Play	Box Office Gross
West Side Story (1961)	Natalie Wood, Richard Beymer	*Romeo and Juliet*	$43.7 million
Romeo and Juliet (1968)	Leonard Whiting and Olivia Hussey	*Romeo and Juliet*	$38.9 million
Much Ado About Nothing (1993)	Emma Thompson, Kate Beckinsale, Denzel Washington, Keanu Reeves, Michael Keaton	*Much Ado About Nothing*	$36 million
Deliver Us from Eva (2003)	Gabrielle Union and LL Cool J	*The Taming of the Shrew*	$22.5 million
Hamlet (1990)	Mel Gibson, Glenn Close, Helena Bonham Carter	*Hamlet*	$22.3 million

Table 1. Alicia Adamczyk, "Shakespeare Has Pulled In Over $1 Billion at the Box Office."

	Directors (Scriptwriters)	Nominations/ Wins	Reviews (User/Critic)	Popularity Rate—IMDb Rating (Reliability?)
Much Ado About Nothing (1993)	Kenneth Branagh	11/5	191/46	7.3
Romeo+Juliet (1996)	Baz Luhrmann	29/15	584/84	6.7

	Directors (Scriptwriters)	Nominations/ Wins	Reviews (User/Critic)	Popularity Rate—IMDb Rating (Reliability?)
Shakespeare in Love (1998)	John Madden (Marc Norman, Tom Stoppard)	87/64	799/137	7.1
Much Ado About Nothing (2012)	Joss Whedon	8/1	101/230	7.1
King Lear (2018) Amazon Prime	Richard Eyre	17/1 (Emmy)	42/11	6.2

Table 2. IMDb data as of 17 Sept 2021.

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Dancing for Freedom in Ken Loach's *Jimmy's Hall* (2014)

EGLANTINA REMPORT

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Abstract: Ken Loach is best known for making films that address issues around poverty, social injustice, and the struggles of the powerless. Jimmy's Hall *is one such film, narrating the story of James Gralton. This paper discusses the ways in which Loach uses dancing as a metaphor for freedom from social, political, and religious oppression in the Ireland of the 1920s and 1930s.*

Ken Loach's *Jimmy's Hall* generated a new wave of interest in the life of Irish communist activist James Gralton, who ran a small community centre in Effrinagh, Co. Leitrim, and was deported from Ireland as "undesirable alien" in 1933. Fearghal McGarry, for instance, dedicated one of his most recent public lectures to the social, cultural, and political context in which "Jimmy's hall" came into being in the 1920s–1930s. As Burns Visiting Scholar in Irish Studies, he gave a public lecture at Boston College in March 2021, entitled "Communism, Sex, and All That Jazz: The Struggle against Modernity in Interwar Ireland," in which he situated Gralton's story within the context of the anti-communist movement and the anti-jazz campaign in Ireland during the 1920s and 1930s. McGarry argues that the fear of communism through agitation propaganda and of capitalist liberalism through the influence of foreign books, films, and jazz records shaped the story of James Gralton. These fears among the upper echelons of Irish society were worsened by what McGarry refers to as "reversed migration," the return of Irish emigrants from the United States of America, especially to Leitrim, a county that had

the "highest intensity of post-famine emigration" (00:16:46 and 00:16:52).[1] These returning Americanised Irishmen were seen as "agents of cultural change" who introduced ideas of American radicalism into Irish nationalist discourse, posing a social and cultural challenge to those who intended to maintain the socio-political *status quo* in Ireland and resist the foreign, modernising influences in the newly-established Irish Free State (00:16:56–58).

Ruth Barton's article from 2016, entitled "Jimmy's Hall, Irish Cinema, and the Telling of History," is a further example of the new-found interest in Gralton and the work of Ken Loach in general amongst Irish critics. She relates the narrative of *Jimmy's Hall* to real-life events, as detailed by two of Gralton's biographers, Pat Feeley and Des Guckian. Feeley would have interviewed local Irish people to connect the threads of Gralton's life in Ireland and in America, offering, as Barton argues, a fairly reliable account of the man's life (99).[2] Barton makes it clear that Loach's film version of Gralton's activities diverges significantly from real-life events. This, however, is not unusual in the director's approach towards a historical material: he has always been keen on fictionalising historical events and characters in order to "follow the rules of dramatic conflict" necessary for creating an engaging fictional storyline (Loach qtd. in Hill 219). Barton takes a detailed account of the real life of James Gralton, his conflict with parish priests Father Cosgrave and Father O'Dowd, with members of the Irish Republican Army (IRA), and with the Black and Tans, the new unit of British soldiers deployed in Ireland to defeat the IRA during the War of Independence of 1919–1921. She also discusses the founding of the Pearse-Connolly Hall in Co. Leitrim and the communist activities in "Gralton's Hall," as it was known at the time (94). Barton's account is exhaustive when it comes to Gralton's involvement with members of the local community, but it does not mention the chronological discrepancies in the storyline devised by Ken Loach and screenwriter Paul Laverty. The main historical events of the period are given in a somewhat random chronological order, presumably to suit those "rules of dramatic conflict." These events include the 31st International Eucharistic Congress (Dublin, 22–26 June 1932); the founding of the Army Comrades Association (Dublin,

1 David Fitzpatrick coined the term "reversed migration" to denote the emigrational trend during the interwar period, especially during the Great Depression following the crisis of 1928–1929. Fitzpatrick uses the expression frequently in *The Americanisation of Ireland* (2020).

2 Barton remarks that these interviews were used for a television documentary on James Gralton's life, aired in the late-1970s: Pat Feeley, "The Gralton Affair" (Dublin: RTÉ Radio One, 1977)(99).

July–August 1932); and most importantly, the burning down of Gralton's Hall by the IRA (winter 1932). Gralton's real-life deportation, which was a rather significant event back in the days, is downplayed by Ken Loach in *Jimmy's Hall*. By simplifying the complexity of the event, he can highlight more easily the three main themes of the film: the rebellion of youth against the authoritative power of church and state; the struggle of the poor and powerless against the existing political regime; and dancing as a metaphor for Irish men and women's desire for freedom.

Neither McGarry nor Barton discusses the actual storyline of *Jimmy's Hall*. The purpose of this article is to offer an analysis of this plotline, revealing the many different ways in which dancing is represented by Loach as a metaphor for freedom. First, the article discusses the main plot, that of the return of the hero, Jimmy Gralton, to Ireland, and the re-opening of the Pearse-Connolly Hall. This event opens the question of the meaning and value of communal dancing for the small group of friends who attend Jimmy's hall in the 1930s. Second, the article analyses the conflict that arises between Gralton and Father Sheridan with regard to jazz music and dance, and the social and religious implications of "forbidden dancing" in the life of the village community. Thirdly, the article examines the details of the conflict between Gralton and his arch-enemy Dennis O'Keefe, whose daughter, Marie, is one of the leaders of the "dancing revolution." First and foremost, the analysis of these three thematic threads is carried out in order to shed a new light on the multi-layered nature of the dancing metaphor in Loach's film. Beside this, it is done with a view to refuting claims that *Jimmy's Hall* is one of Loach's failed attempts at making another heritage film, particularly when the film is compared to *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* that had won the prestigious Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival in 2006. *Jimmy's Hall* is a worthy addition to the long list of heritage films about Ireland, including Neil Jordan's *Michael Collins* (1996) and Terry George's *Some Mother's Son* (1996), and a perfect fit into Ken Loach's extensive list of films that deal with the situation of the poor and the powerless, including *Carla's Song* (1996), *My Name is Joe* (1998), and *Bread and Roses* (2000).

"[T]o dance … as free human beings": Jimmy Gralton and the Pearse-Connolly Hall

Set in 1932, *Jimmy's Hall* tells the story of James (Jimmy) Gralton's return to Ireland after a long period of self-imposed exile in the United States of America following

the Irish Civil War of 1922–1923. As mentioned, the film is a historical sequel to Loach's *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* (2006), which narrated the events of the Irish War of Independence and the Irish Civil War that ensued after the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty on 6 December 1921. While it was hoped that the Anglo-Irish Treaty would bring bloodshed to a halt in Ireland, it only fuelled more violence as many could not accept that peace would come at the price of the partition of Ireland. According to the Treaty, the country was partitioned into the Irish Free State, which received dominion status within the British Empire, and Northern Ireland, which remained legislatively part of the United Kingdom. At the beginning of the film, Ken Loach takes us back to these times of war and revolution. He narrates the events that had led to Jimmy's exile in 1922, ones that will have consequences in 1932: Jimmy and his friends from the Pearse-Connolly Hall reinstate an evicted tenant, Rory McManus, on a landed estate in Co. Leitrim. Rory had fallen behind the payment of rent to the local landlord. During the reinstatement, Jimmy Gralton finds himself in violent confrontation with a powerful local man, Dennis O'Keeffe, and a strict parish priest, Father Sheridan. Following the confrontation, Jimmy is accused of agrarian agitation and is forced to leave Ireland. Jimmy would spend nearly ten years in exile in the United States, until his return in February–March 1932.

In Loach's film, Jimmy Gralton is imagined as a revolutionary character, someone who is always on the side of the homeless, the poor, and the dispossessed. Andrea Velich observes that it is a common trait in Loach's work as director to focus on "social pressures [arising] from unemployment, low wages, poverty, [and] homelessness" (126), and *Jimmy's Hall* seems to be following in these footsteps with its representation of the life of James Gralton and his comrades in Effrinagh. The Jimmy of Loach's imagination feels very strongly about his mission in the community, exclaiming in the speech that follows the reinstatement of the Milmoe family to Lord Kingston's estate in Co. Roscommon in 1932, that he has had personal experience of poverty in America: "I saw the bubble burst, the crash of '29 and misery in a land of plenty. Let's not forget how it's spread around the world from a system steeped in illusion, exploitation and avarice" (01:16:00–30). Gralton's criticism of capitalism is highlighted in these sentences, a critique that will impact on the way he will be treated by those in powerful social positions in Leitrim.[3] Jimmy's words

3 What is left unmentioned in the film is the fact that, partly out of sheer desperation and partly because of their communist convictions, the real-life James Gralton and his comrades carried out

from Roscommon correspond well to the black-and-white images that are shown at the very beginning of *Jimmy's Hall*. Contemporary jazz music is being played in the background, while images of post-1929 America are flashed across the screen, drawing attention to the dire situation of the poor in the "land of plenty." In these images, shops are closed, people are unemployed, men live homeless on the streets, and food is subject to rationing. Capitalism, of course, is not in full force in Ireland at the time, but the situation of the poor is not dissimilar to that of the socially deprived in America. Soon after his return from self-imposed exile, Jimmy first meets a bunch of local youth, and one of them confesses to him the following: "There is nothing 'round here for us. There is no work. There is nowhere for us to go. We can't go to America the same as yourself. The rules of emigration have changed. We are stuck here" (00:16:03–10). Jimmy meets these young Irish people when they are dancing on a dusty Irish road. One of them confesses about lack of work, the other asks him about the re-opening of the Pearse-Connolly Hall.[4] Jimmy has not given thought to opening it because the hall is in a derelict state, with the roof coming off and the walls crumbling. He is aware also that the query has come from none other than the daughter of his arch-enemy Dennis O'Keefe. Back in the 1930s, Fearghal McGarry and Diarmaid Ferriter explain, the Catholic Church would have had authority over educational, health and social welfare matters in rural townlands (McGarry 00:40:47–57; Ferriter 320). Opening commercial dance halls would have been instantly perceived by local clerics as provocative in nature. Intending to steer clear off any form of confrontation, Loach's Jimmy Gralton first turns down the offer to create an alternative space for the entertainment of village youth.

However, when Jimmy returns to the hall to inspect its current state, all his memories come flashing to him, and he is reminded of the educational work that was done within the walls during the hall's short existence in the 1920s. Alongside the traditional Irish dance classes, young men and women were tutored in the Irish language and were taught traditional Irish singing. Also, drawing classes were offered for girls and boxing training for young boys, to keep them out of mischief and nurture their competitive spirit. After some deliberation, he and his friends listen to the plea of the dancing youth who beg them to create an alternative space

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land seizures and cattle drives, igniting social unrest in Co. Limerick. See more on this in Ryan (22).

4 Gralton's hall in Effrinagh was named after Patrick Pearse and James Connolly, two of the seven signatories of the Proclamation of the Irish Republic and executed leaders of the Easter Rising in 1916.

for gathering:[5] "We want to dance, Jimmy. Somewhere, where we won't be getting a guard or a priest poking at us with a stick. Somewhere warm" (00:16:14–19). Amid anti-jazz agitations, the newly reopened hall becomes a place of cultivating Irish traditions in the form of *sean nós* and set dancing, as well as a place of revolutionary thought and movement.[6] Jimmy brings with himself from America a knowledge of Afro-American jazz music and dance. With its unique steps and distinctive dance moves, jazz immediately appeals to the "rebel" locals, who feel intrigued and liberated when dancing the new dance form. At first, the new music comes from the gramophone but soon the local Irish band learns the tunes, and joyful scenes of traditional Irish dancing and modern American jazz dancing combine in the first part of the film. These create a general air of fun and happiness about Jimmy's hall, even though, in real life, the local clergy would have looked upon the hall as a "place of sin," a "most dangerous source of corruption in the country" (qtd. in Ryan 22). This is the first instance of dancing representing real freedom in Ken Loach's film. Within the four walls of the hall, the "rebel" locals can dance and sing "as free human beings," as Jimmy puts it in his speech in Roscommon (01:17:31–35). They can dance without feeling the social restrictions or the political pressure of contemporary Ireland, described by McGarry as suffused in cultural nationalism and clerical conservatism. Couples can switch and new couples can form during an Irish jig or an American jazz number. Visually, Ken Loach connects the Irish youth dancing in Jimmy's hall to the poor in America whose lives are shown at the beginning of the film in the aforementioned black-and-white images. Loach seems to suggest that the situation in Ireland and that in America is not that dissimilar: while those living under the poverty line were struggling every day of their lives, they were still determined to make the most of the little they have and enjoy their lives as much as circumstances would allow in American city slums and in rural townlands around Ireland.

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5 Back in those days, many of the social gatherings would have taken place in Ireland in church halls, under the watchful eyes of the local clergy.

6 *Sean nós* (old style) and set dancing are forms of traditional Irish folk dance: the former is a solo dance, the latter is a group dance.

"[B]est damned dances in the whole country": Jimmy Gralton and Father Sheridan

Father Sheridan and Jimmy Gralton could never see eye to eye on the matter of the Pearse-Connolly Hall. Father Sheridan never liked the hall because of its association with post-1918 communist ideology. He is aware that the desperate times of the 1930s call for desperate measures, and he fears the spread of communism in his parish. He reads the *Irish Workers' Voice*, which reports of the re-opening of the hall on 5 May 1932, illustrated with the image of Jimmy Gralton. Historically, the *Irish Worker's Voice* would have been only a year old at the time, having been first published by the Revolutionary Workers' Group in April 1931. The left-wing newspaper would later become the official newspaper of the Communist Party of Ireland that would be established in June 1933. Pat Walsh notes that real-life James Gralton was member of a Revolutionary Workers' Group, and he used the Pearse-Connolly Hall for disseminating his radical political views (29). Stephen Ryan and Ruth Barton add to the debate about Gralton's radical political activities in Ireland that Gralton was member of the local Direct Action Committee and his hall was used as court of arbitration where he, as judge, settled land disputes, sometimes resulting in land seizures and cattle drives off larger estates (Ryan 23; Barton 98). Ken Loach shows little of these organised radical left-wing activities: most references that link Gralton to communist ideology are uttered by Father Sheridan in forms of accusations against the good work of Jimmy. When Jimmy visits Father Sheridan to ask him to become a trustee on the board of the hall, the priest refuses the offer until the title deeds of the hall were transferred to the Holy Mother Church. Jimmy argues that the hall "brings out the best" in his small community of volunteers and they respect "freedom of religion and conscience," as opposed to propagating far-left Soviet politics (00:58:40–41 and 00:57:21–23). Father Sheridan, however, is resolute in having the hall serve the broader needs of Catholic Ireland under the rules of the Holy Mother Church. At one point during the conversation, Father Sheridan mentions the issue of Stalin's secret prisons in the Soviet Union and the famine in parts of the eastern Soviet Union at the time, but Jimmy is unwilling to take on the challenge, saying "that is a long debate to be had" (00:57:31–33). As self-professed Marxist, Ken Loach is unwilling to have his main character entangled in a lengthy debate about Stalin's dictatorship in the Soviet Union. Instead, as gesture of goodwill towards a member of the clergy, Loach has Jimmy invite Father

Sheridan onto the board of trustees of the Pearse-Connolly Hall. Given the strongly anti-communist stance of the Catholic Church in Ireland at the time, a parish priest accepting the offer of a communist activist would have been a rather unlikely scenario. Lili Zách notes that during the interwar period "Irish nationalists adopted an uncompromisingly anti-Communist stance rooted in the strong Catholic traditions of the state" (14). By avoiding mention of Jimmy's radical political activities and having him extend a welcome towards the local clergy, Loach manages to paint the image of Jimmy as a local Irish hero, who only wants the best for his people. Adding a further twist to the narrative, the idea of welcoming the priest to the community had originally come from Oonagh, Jimmy's love interest, making it somewhat difficult to determine whether Jimmy himself had agreed with the proposal or had just acted on it because of his attraction to Oonagh.

Jimmy's gesture of comradeship is offered after one Sunday mass, during which Father Sheridan calls out the names of the young people who attend the dancing sessions in Jimmy's hall. Loach intercuts images of the poor Irish enjoying themselves while dancing in the hall with those of Father Sheridan ruthlessly lecturing them from the pulpit. Giving his weekly sermon, he is seen wearing the full priestly regalia of green and gold chasuble, a normal vesture for a priest during Ordinary Time. Green here carries a double meaning: first, it is the colour of hope in the Roman Catholic liturgy, associating hope and renewal with the Roman Catholic Church; second, it is the colour most associated with Ireland, also known as "the Emerald Island." Hence, in the image of Father Sheridan standing in full regalia on the pulpit, a visual connection is established between this idea of hope and renewal and the Roman Catholic Church. This connection is further underlined during the scene in which Jimmy visits Father Sheridan. There is a painting hanging on a wall in the priest's parochial home: Sir John Lavery's *The Blessing of the Colours* (1922).[7] The painting depicts a young Irish volunteer in green uniform kneeling before the Archbishop of Dublin, who is seen raising his right hand to bless the Irish tricolour of green-white-orange, which became the Irish national flag in 1922. Tony Canavan writes that the painting "encapsulates the Catholic ethos of the newly independent Irish state" in that it depicts the symbolic moment in which Irish

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7 Sir John Lavery himself was involved in the Irish War of Independence and the Irish Civil War. William Butler Yeats mentions this painting in his poem, "The Municipal Gallery Revisited" (1937). Lavery's painting bears the following, longer title on the back of its canvas: *The Blessing of the Colours of the Irish Free State*.

nationalism/the nationalist cause/the new Irish state is being blessed by the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church (55). Father Sheridan points to the painting that hangs on textured green wallpaper and remarks to Jimmy: "Democratic Irish State; true to its traditions; in harmony with its people and under the guidance of the one true universal Apostolic Church. That is the natural way" (00:56:56–00:57:07). When the priest delivers these lines, Jimmy Gralton is standing in front of him, in a posture that resonates strongly with the one of Father Sheridan at the Sunday sermon, mentioned previously. During the sermon, he makes it clear that his parishioners have a choice to make: they either accept the teaching of Jesus Christ and abide by the rules of the Catholic Church; or they follow Jimmy Gralton and assent to his communist ideology disseminated from the Pearse-Connolly Hall.

By way of diversifying clerical opinion on the matter of dance halls and the "evils of dancing," Ken Loach and Paul Laverty introduce the character of Father Seamus. He is a young curate, who holds opposing views to Father Sheridan. He understands the young people of Effrinagh and seems unbothered by either the "Los Angelisation" of their minds through music and dance, or by Jimmy Gralton's communist ideas. He disagrees with Father Sheridan when collecting the names of those who attend Jimmy's dancing sessions, grumpily remarking: "I think we're doing more harm than good" (00:40:26–27). For him, Jimmy Gralton is only a "lightweight maverick" (00:37:38), a harmless human being, and Jimmy's hall is no threat to the wider community. As he says, it is "just a tiny little hall, in a country bog" (00:38.03–05). His stance on matters of social justice and the rights of ordinary people do not seem to be that different from Ken Loach's own critical stance on these matters. Father Seamus understands that the small number of communists in Ireland are unlikely to change the *status quo* between the landless, homeless poor, and the wealthy, landed gentry of Ireland. He even exclaims in an emotionally charged monologue, defending Jimmy: "I suspect if Christ was here today, there'd be several members of this parish who would have Him crucified again! That's what I suspect!" (01:26:00–05). This comes after the burning down of the Pearse-Connolly Hall one evening. Immediately after this happens, Father Sheridan, Dennis O'Keefe, and the chief of the local Gardaí meet to discuss the future of the local community in Effrinagh. Father Seamus seems to be critical of the others in the room, who want Gralton gone from Ireland. Sheridan, O'Keefe and the Guard seem to be concerned about the possibility of Jimmy becoming an Irish martyr in the eyes of the followers. They fear that this would result in further political turmoil and possible agrarian

violence in the area. First and foremost, however, they are relieved that the dance hall, with its "foreign filth," is gone and that there would be no more unlawful gathering of people in Effrinagh. Father Sheridan would look forward to things returning to "normal," as he sees it, the community rejoicing in the blessings of the 31th International Eucharistic Congress, held in Dublin in June 1932.[8]

"[W]e won't stop dancing": Jimmy Gralton and Dennis O'Keefe

Father Sheridan is one of those priests for whom jazz represents "the gamut of anxieties of modernism," fearing "transnational culture influences" from the United States (McGarry 00:20:45–48 and 00:20:52–54). Throughout the film, Father Sheridan wants Gralton gone from his parish, and so does Dennis O'Keefe, father of Marie O'Keefe. Marie is the driving force behind the "dancing revolution," much against the will of her authoritative and violent father. She asks Jimmy to open the hall; she attends every dance at the hall; and when Jimmy is being escorted out of town by the police, she shouts out to him reassuringly: "We won't stop dancing, Jimmy" (01:41:43–45). Her words here take on an additional meaning: "dancing" becomes the synonym for "fighting." What she is hinting at here is that the community will not stop fighting against social injustices, prohibitive social rules, and authoritative social patterns. She has the last words of the film, and by allowing her to utter these last words, Ken Loach turns her into "the voice of whole community." She speaks for herself, but she speaks for the entire village community, who, in her view, are forced to live their lives according to the rules of the Catholic Church and the new Irish state. Diarmaid Ferriter remarks that, during the revolutionary period of the 1920s, the Roman Catholic Church "reasserted its moral authority in many areas" of Irish life (311), and the power of the church remained strong during the 1930s, with the Constitution of Ireland (1937) written on Catholic social and moral principles. Dennis O'Keefe is one such man who abides by the laws of the church and the state. He had supported the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, had fought on the side of Michael Collins during the Irish Civil War in defence of the Treaty, and had served in the Free State Army of the new Irish state after its

8 Over a million Irish Catholics attended the opening mass of Eucharistic Congress, held in Dublin's Phoenix Park. These included Prime Minister Éamon de Valera and members of the newly-elected Fianna Fáil government that came into power in February–March 1932.

establishment in 1922. As member of the Cumann na nGaedheal party,[9] he had supported the first Irish government in power between 1923 and 1932, prior to the election of Éamon de Valera and Fianna Fáil in February 1932. He had become member of the Army Comrades Association, or the "Blueshirts," to protect the Cumann na nGaedheal party, afraid of being attacked by old IRA prisoners released from jail by the new Fianna Fáil government. As Joseph Lee explains, clashes between the IRA and the ACA had been increasing since February 1932 (178). O'Keefe had married into land and wealth and is now a member of the Irish Catholic *bourgeoisie*. He might not agree with the political values of the new Fianna Fáil government but is still a violent defender of a system of patriarchal society, based on religious values. He despises everything that he would see as undermining these values, especially his authority as a father.

As mentioned, there was a strong concern among conservatives about the rapidly growing foreign influence on Irish culture, one that comes to the fore in Loach's movie. For traditionalists, anxieties around the emerging influence of American culture on traditional Irish society were intermingled with concerns about the changing behaviour of Irish people in the public space. One of the arguments of those conservatives who took part in the anti-jazz campaign of the late-1920s and early-1930s was that the growth in what they conceived as indecent public behaviour was a consequence of the influence of American culture, disseminated in books, films, and commercial dance halls. American jazz dance, as Eileen Hogan explains, was seen as "promoting physical movements and pleasures" (63). These new "pleasures" were "antithetical to the morally ordered bodies espoused for Irish men and women in the postcolonial reconstruction of national Irish purity" (64). As well as this, Hogan reminds readers that "because of its African-American origins 'jazz' was inextricably bound up in the question of 'race'" (65). Constructions of jazz music and dance were often sexualised and racialised, fuelling the anti-jazz campaign of the 1930s to the point that an anti-jazz march was held in Leitrim on New Year's Eve in 1934 (McGarry 00:17:53–00:18:23).[10] Only

9 Cumann na nGaedheal was the governing political party of the Irish Free State between 1923 and 1932. Fianna Fáil was the governing party in Ireland from 1932 until 1948.

10 Barbara O'Connor's article, "Sexing the Nation," provides further details on the radicalisation and sexualisation of the "dance revolution" in Ireland during the 1930s. The Carrigan Committee, originally set up by the Cumann na nGaedheal government in 1930, and its report that was published in 1931, significantly contributed to the further sexualisation of the social and political discourse with regards to the dance halls of Irish townlands (McGarry 00:29:00–00:34:10; Ferriter 321–325).

a year later, in 1935, the Public Dance Hall Act was passed in the Irish parliament to prohibit the use of commercial dance halls and the broadcasting of jazz music on national radio (Hogan 59).[11] The "Los Angelisation" of Irish culture was condemned from the altar around the country, witnessed in Loach's film in the scene of Father Sheridan's sermon to his parishioners. Condemnation of non-clerical dance halls and foreign music only created further feelings of resentment among those who felt their freedom of movement limited, or prohibited, by the new legislation and the increasingly hostile public discourse. Marie O'Keefe's relationship to her father needs to be understood in this context. As father and respectable member of the local community, Dennis O'Keefe would not tolerate what he regarded as the moral degeneration of his daughter in Jimmy's dance hall, and her coming under the foreign influence of Afro-American jazz music with its sexualised lyrics and syncopated rhythms. O'Keefe could not stand the public scrutiny of his family, hence his brutal punishment of his daughter and his aversion to anything related to Jimmy's hall. Marie O'Keefe, on the other hand, would not succumb to the prohibitive nature of social rules and regulations, and her father's increasingly violent conduct. Ken Loach seems to be emphasising in the film that domestic violence can be attributed both to individual personal behaviour and to prohibitive social rules and regulations, as was the case in Ireland in the 1930s.

Although generally steering clear from the sexual contexts of the anti-jazz campaign in Ireland at the time, Ken Loach does address the issue of the connection between dancing and sexuality in one of the scenes of the movie involving Jimmy and his love interest Oonagh. Gralton's deportation, following the reinstatement of the Milmoe family to Lord Kingston's estate in Roscommon mentioned earlier, finally puts an end to Jimmy's relationship with Oonagh. She is now married with two children and is settled in the local community. She and Jimmy were once childhood sweethearts, and she stands beside him in all decisions he makes—be it about the hall, his mother, or leaving Ireland. One evening Oonagh and Jimmy dance together in the darkness of the Pearse-Connolly Hall, reigniting their old love and affections for each other. This dance is the slowest of the film's dances, and is coloured in black and shady blue, with only one spotlight on the dancing couple. She is wearing a figure-hugging, see-through dress that Jimmy had brought for her from America. They both think back to the freedom they once experienced as a young

11 McGarry remarks that the Public Dance Hall Act of 1935 "shifted unlicensed dances into parochial halls, benefitting church and state in the form of ticket sales and taxes" (00:27:08–15).

couple, before politics started to play a serious role in their lives. This dance is their "dance of freedom," a special moment of emotional and sensual reunification. While clerical and political anxieties about dance halls are challenged in Ken Loach's film, this scene of dancing in the hall suggests that dance halls could be, or in fact were, used by couples to escape temporarily from the church and/or the state, as well as the couples' respective families. The scene represents Jimmy's hall as a "safe space," as Jimmy surreptitiously calls it, or a "utopian space," as Barton refers to it (104). Nonetheless, it also depicts the Irish dance hall as a place in which the risks of forbidden pleasure and sexual freedom are tested. Oonagh is not present when Jimmy is being deported by the Gardaí,[12] following the deportation order from Dublin. Marie O'Keefe and the "rebel youth," however, are there to see Jimmy escorted out of Effrinagh among heavy police presence. Cycling next to the car on which Jimmy is sitting, Marie O'Keefe exclaims: "We won't stop dancing, Jimmy!" (01:41:43–45). Jimmy Gralton and his comrades had sown the seeds of rebellion and the young people whose lives he has touched with his enthusiasm will continue to dance for their freedom, whether it be in defiance of the clerical or the political authorities in Ireland. After all, as Ken Loach himself has confessed about the role of dancing and music in *Jimmy's Hall*: ultimately, "[i]t is an expression of freedom," something that is "[a]lways dangerous to those who seek to exercise control" (18). Situating the dancing metaphor at the centre of his film, Loach successfully dissolves politics into art, and overcomes what Jacob Leigh referred to as "creative challenges" when depicting on screen the story of Irish communist James Gralton to audiences shaped by the values of present-day global capitalism (1).

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Poetic Repetition in *Paterson*

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Abstract: Paterson *is a poem and a film about a man and a town, both called Paterson. Jim Jarmusch's adaptation is a contemporary tribute not only to William Carlos Williams,* Paterson*'s author and a prominent figure of American modernity, but to the poetry of everyday life. Focusing on the repetition and transformation of scenes and gestures of daily routine as well as of characters, this analysis traces how poetry is adapted to the media of film, slowly revealing the beauty of ordinary existence, an essential theme in the work of Williams. Besides, questions of identity in the context of tradition are also discussed examining twins, a salient example of repetition in Jarmusch's film.*

Jim Jarmusch's *Paterson* seems to offer a plausible answer to the universal question about the meaning of life. The answer might not be easily accessible or widely popular—*Paterson* is far from being a blockbuster—still, it is consistent, full-fledged, and lucid, although presented in a complex way. Besides, it is very much in harmony with the legacy of William Carlos Williams, whose great epic, *Paterson*, serves as the basis of Jarmusch's film. Approaching the film from the perspective of its literary inspiration and focusing on the highly and deliberately prominent motif of repetitions, this paper attempts to decipher this answer and to follow its transformations through the film.

Repetitions and doublings already play a prominent role in Williams's book. The title, *Paterson*, recurs in the text repeatedly with a double denotation, referring both to the protagonist and the city where he lives, as the very first two occurrences of the name indicate. The final words of the "Preface" are: "to man, / to Paterson" (17), whereas the first part of Book 1, "The Delineament of the Giants," starts with the line: "Paterson lies in the valley under the Passaic falls" (18). The essential

and intricate relationship between the individual and locality is a central theme of *Paterson*, often discussed by critics; Margaret Glynne Lloyd, for instance, devotes an entire chapter to "The Man/City" in her essential monograph, *William Carlos Williams's Paterson: A Critical Reappraisal.*

Repetitions, doublings, and mirrorings, however, also point toward the question of unity versus multiplicity. Williams calls the reader's attention to this issue already in the first section of *Paterson*:

> A man like a city and a woman like a flower
> —who are in love. Two women. Three women.
> Innumerable women, each like a flower.
>
> But
>
> only one man—like a city. (19)

This often-quoted passage from *Paterson* highlights unity, the essential belonging together of a human being and his habitat, not only by repeating the phrase: "A man—like a city" but also by emphasising the determiner in the second occurrence of the phrase: "only one man—like a city." Yet, between the two occurrences of emphasised unity—which act like a poetic frame highlighting the encapsulated idea—multiplicity unfolds. On the one hand, man is defined on the basis of his relationships, both by being compared to the city and by being juxtaposed against the woman with whom they "are in love." Thus, these lines may remind the reader of an epistemological axiom central to structuralist thought since Ferdinand de Saussure; namely that to define any single element and to grasp its meaning, one needs to place it in the context of other elements. In other words, no unit can ever be understood on its own but only as part of a system that involves multiplicity. On the other hand, the woman in the quotation rapidly proliferates, evoking the image of not only numerous romantic relationships but possibly also their natural consequence, which is reproduction. By the end of the passage, where Williams returns to the concept of unity, the dynamic tension between unity and multiplicity is clearly drawn.

In Jarmusch's film, repetitions are not only frequent but become a leitmotif. The opening image shows Paterson with his wife, Laura—"who are in love"

(Williams, *Paterson* 19)—curled up in bed in a shape slightly reminiscent of a heart, and as the camera moves all over their room, numerous objects related to the leitmotif appear. On the nightstand, there is a glass of water, bearing a pattern of two identical circles (0:01:17). On a shelf, there are some knick-knacks, including two toy buses, a larger grey one and a smaller blue one on top of each other (0:01:38), which might playfully recall the image of sexual intimacy displayed just half a minute earlier. Then, one can see some family photos: a young Paterson in military uniform, two portraits of a couple in black and white, presumably his parents, and a dog (0:01:42). These carefully selected items show a great variety within the theme of repetition from simple, automatic duplication (pattern printed on the glass) through significant similarity with minor differences (toy buses) to people being connected in time by reproduction (family photos). The importance of the leitmotif is confirmed by the very first sentences of the film too, when right after waking up, Laura says: "I had a beautiful dream. We had two children. Twins" (0:01:51–0:02:00).

Accordingly, twins are the most spectacular manifestations of repetition in the film. While walking to work, Paterson says hello to the first pair of twins he meets: two middle-aged, white men in identical clothes sitting on a bench (0:04:30). In the evening, his acquaintance, Sam, a young black man, introduces him to his twin brother, Dave (0:14:12), with whom they are playing pool in a bar. From the bus that he is driving, Paterson notices a black woman crossing the street with her two similarly dressed little daughters (0:37:39). Later, he has two white, blond, teenager passengers, who also wear identical pink dresses and the same hairstyle (0:48:57). He engages in conversation with a young white girl with dark hair waiting for her family, and upon their arrival, his companion points at them: "That's my sister. We're twins" (0:57:12). Driving the bus again, he listens to the chatting of two grey-haired, elderly ladies, both wearing claret track suits (1:12:50). This huge variety of twins serves multiple purposes. First of all, they grab the attention simply due to the emphatic effect of repetition. One passes by a myriad of people every day; however, if the same face is seen twice next to each other—as in the case of twins appearing together—it immediately stands out from the crowd, just as one starts to pay more attention to a phenomenon that recurs over time. Thus, after the first few pairs of twins, the viewer of Jarmusch's film is looking forward to the next pair and is pleasantly surprised every time, because no two occurrences are the same. Each pair of twins is different, not only regarding their external traits (age, gender, skin and hair colour, clothes, or posture) but also the situation in which they

appear (work, leisure time, transportation) or what they do (sit, walk, play, talk), and in respect of their relationship with the protagonist (friends, casual acquaintances, total strangers) or with each other (same or different clothes and hairstyle, various types of interaction). Moreover, the theme of twins appears not only visually but sometimes verbally. As a result, one starts to recognise a pattern formed by the repetitions and instinctively seeks a symbolic meaning in it while also appreciating the differences between individual occurrences of the elements in the pattern, becoming more and more sensitive to nuances with each additional twin.

Jarmusch's intricate use of doublings and repetitions may remind the viewer of the mechanisms of poetry, in which repetition is an essential organising principle from the regularities of rhythm and rhyme to structures based on recurring or unfolding images. The increased intensity of sensory impressions, diminutive details that require careful attention, the importance of repetition in structure, meaning communicated through patterns and symbolic motifs rather than action or characters, a perception that is skilfully slowed down and provoked to proceed not in a linear way but to return repeatedly to former elements in order to integrate them into patterns that promise symbolic meanings—these are all features that tend to distinguish lyrical poetry from the narrative genres and also features characteristic of Jarmusch's *Paterson.*

As twins are the most spectacular manifestations of these repetitions, the question arises what they might stand for. As in the case of any good poem—or film employing poetic devices—the leitmotif or the central symbol cannot be translated into a simple "statement of its meaning" (181), as Cleanth Brooks warns in his classic essay, "The Heresy of Paraphrase"; yet, the semantic fields related to it can be mapped. In Jarmusch's film, twins undoubtedly make one aware of the question of identity, which is a central theme in Williams's *oeuvre* and especially in *Paterson,* an epic in which Williams creates "a provisional sense of an emerging 'American identity'" (White 20). Even identical twins are not completely identical, of course—but what are the differences between them, and what do they have in common? This latter question pertains to community as well: what holds different people together as a group? In other words, how is a person essentially connected to other people in the same family, city, or nation? The former question, in contrast, addresses the issue of individuality: how can one preserve one's uniqueness in the middle of a modern society characterised by automation, mass production, public transportation, and the monotony of everyday routine? Thus, the leitmotif of twins triggers

a series of acutely current questions regarding the relationship between the individual and the community in a modern society.

Modern society is an important subject both for Williams and for Jarmusch. From the publication of Williams's *Complete Collected Poems* in 1938, critics "praised its empathy for and acute perceptions of everyday people and life" (Cohen 77); and it is "common to view Williams's work ... for its speech-based embrace of the so-called 'American idiom'" (Forrest 66). In harmony with Williams's poetic approach, Jarmusch also explores the beauty of everyday life and speech in many of his films, from his minimalist masterpiece, *Stranger than Paradise* (1983), through the repetitive ritual of *Coffee and Cigarettes* (1986) to *Paterson* (2016).

In his discussion of cinema which "broke free from the iron nucleus of narrative" (25), Paul Schrader suggests three possible "anti-narrative directions" (25): "The Surveillance Camera," which focuses on "quotidian, day-to-day reality" (25), "The Art Gallery," which "escapes the nuclear glue of narrative" by moving "toward pure imagery: light and colour" (28), and "The Mandala," which Schrader understands as some sort of "meditative cinema" (30). Visualising this idea in a circular diagram and positioning notable film directors in one of the three segments of the circle, he places Jarmusch close to the nucleus, between "The Art Gallery" and "The Mandala" (32). I would argue, however, that in *Paterson,* Jarmusch moves much closer to the strategy of "The Surveillance Camera" as he systematically records "quotidian, day-to-day reality" (Schrader 25), reminiscent of Schader's definition.

In his adaptation of Williams's work, his protagonist Paterson is a bus driver, whose life is represented as the embodiment of urban monotony. The film consists of seven parts, each bearing the title of a day in the week, guiding the viewer from Monday morning to the next Monday through a series of shockingly repetitive daily routines. In each part, Paterson wakes up next to his wife, Laura, eats breakfast, and walks to work. While driving his bus No. 23, he observes his surroundings and listens to the passengers' conversations, integrating his experiences into poems that he usually records in his notebook next morning, right before starting his shift. After work, he returns home, sets the awry mailbox in front of his house right, and eats dinner with Laura. And in the evening, he walks his dog Marvin to a local bar where he has a beer with the bartender, Doc, and some other regulars. One workday can be summed up precisely like the other, which is emphasised by the fact that his job is to drive the same bus along the same route every single day. Yet no two days are precisely the same. The people around Paterson constantly change; Laura

waits for him every day with a different dinner and a different artistic surprise; and Paterson himself also proceeds with his poems, day by day.

Just as Williams was a master of revealing poetic beauty hidden in ordinary life, Jarmusch also succeeds in directing the viewer's attention to the immense beauty of familiar details. Watching Paterson walk and drive in the same streets again and again, one starts to notice the minor differences: the changing lights, the individual faces, and the stories they share. It seems as if it were exactly the monotony of the protagonist's work that allows him—and, through his focalisation, us viewers—to appreciate the details and discover their aesthetic depth and wealth.

Significance emerging through repetition and difference is an essential feature of Jarmusch's film. This feature is present in the leitmotif of twins, but it is far from being exclusive to it. It is not only daily habits that are repeated but practically everything: from characteristic sites like the bus yard to experiences visualised on screen and, then, verbally recorded in Paterson's poems. At least since *Modern Times* by Charlie Chaplin, it is common to conceive of repetitive acts as mechanical and dehumanising, but in *Paterson*, they become meaningful precisely due to iteration. Waking up next to the same woman every morning suggests intimacy. Driving a bus according to a reliable schedule allows people to commute, connecting distant parts of the city and thus contributing to the creation of an urban community. Having a beer with the same friends every night creates a warm atmosphere. Most of all: reproducing reality in poetry reveals the secret beauty of the ordinary world. As Williams puts it in his composition, "Spring and All," the mission of the artist is based on "things with which he is familiar, simple things—at the same time to detach them from ordinary experience to the imagination" (197).

The transformation of ordinary phenomena into art is a major theme of Jarmusch's *Paterson.* Not only does the protagonist write poems, but most of the other characters also pursue some artistic activity. Beyond fulfilling her duties as a housewife, Laura keeps herself busy decorating their home in black and white, learning to play the guitar, and baking beautifully ornamented cupcakes for the local fair. The bartender, Doc, keeps a "Wall of Fame"—reminiscent of Williams's intense use of local history in *Paterson,* including "THE GRRRREAT HISTORY of that old time Jersey patriot, N. F. Paterson" (30)—featuring photos, newspaper cut-outs, and other relics in memory of local celebrities, managing his collection with the care and pride of a museum curator. Paterson comes across a number of other people producing poetry too, from the young man who is practising slam poetry while waiting

for his laundry (from 0:55:40) through the teenager girl who shows her poem to him (from 0:55:40) to the Japanese poet (from 01:43:47), an admirer of Williams himself.

In that sense, it could be argued that Jarmusch's film is not so much an adaptation of Williams' particular book, *Paterson*—which would be difficult to adapt anyway, since it lacks such basic constituents as actual characters or a plot—but rather a tribute to his entire *oeuvre* by attempting to reproduce his artistic strategy in a different medium. This also sounds reasonable if one considers that Williams's work is part of the film's world: a copy of *Paterson* appears on Paterson's desk (0:24:22), he reads one of Williams's best-known poems, "This Is Just to Say," to Laura (1:27:23), and the poet's portrait hangs on the wall of the protagonist's study (0:24:26). Thus, the film *Paterson* does not even pretend to be another artistic manifestation of the same fictive reality that the book *Paterson* represents; in narrative terms, it is not a new *syuzhet* (plot) of the same *fabula* (story), as defined by Viktor Skhlovsky. It is an independent fiction openly asserting to be aware of its predecessor and building not simply on the same tenets the poet articulated but borrowing numerous elements—poetic procedures, themes, specific quotations—from William's *oeuvre* as well.

Jarmusch's approach can be viewed as a tribute not only to Williams's poetic legacy but to the movement of Imagism as well, of which Williams was a part at the beginning of his career. As Ezra Pound phrased it in the opening statement of his manifesto, "A Few Don'ts by an Imagiste": "An 'Image' is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time" (200). Accordingly, Jarmusch's film is not so much a visual narrative—although in the final twenty minutes, it turns out to have had a plot carefully but almost unnoticeably built up through the entire film, which provokes crucial questions about the significance of poetry—but rather a series of images, each of which is to be contemplated as a momentary "intellectual and emotional complex" (Pound 200). Similarly, Paterson himself follows the same practice in the film by recording some of these instants in his poems, in the true spirit of an Imagist poet.

This visual repetition and juxtaposition, which may invite spectators to explore the symbolic depth of individual images instead of rushing them through the film with the urge of a narrative, is a frequent feature in arthouse films. As Sarah Keller convincingly argues in her paper, "As Regarding Rhythm: Rhythm in Modern Poetry and Cinema," this kind of "pure cinema," which makes use of "the artistic and expressive capacities uniquely available to the medium that lie outside the zone of narrative concerns" was in fruitful interaction with Modernist poetry from

the beginnings—involving artists from both fields challenging and inspiring each other—although it was quickly overcome by "the eventual hegemony of the narrative integration" (130). Yet, she continues, "some of the most persistent theories of cinema have drawn upon models relative to poetry rather than narrative" (133). Based on her list of relevant film directors and theorists from the early twentieth century up to contemporary artists like Peter Greenaway, the intensely metaphoric use of visual language has remained a dominant trend in art film. In adaptations of literary works, however, it appears rarely, and even if it does—like in Sally Potter's *Orlando* (1992), a film version Woolf's novel—it still tends to remain subsidiary to the narrative. Jarmusch, however, organises his *Paterson* not on the basis of a chain of actions but on a delicately balanced structure of recurring images gradually achieving symbolic significance through repetition and contemplative reflection, which often takes the form of artistic representation within the world of the film. In that sense, his achievement of not only choosing a poetic work for adaptation but also maintaining its dominantly poetic mode of representation in the medium of the film is even more exceptional.

It is tempting to say that in the world of the film *Paterson,* the meaning of life is art, quite in the spirit of William Carlos Williams. Meaning starts to shine through the monotonous reality of Paterson's life as he is meticulously transforming it into poetry. Everyday objects gain significance as their symbolic dimensions are discovered and recorded. Life becomes meaningful only because meaning is attributed to it by poetry, which can be understood as a metonym for art in general. But that would be a misleading interpretation, as it would suggest that reality in itself is dull and that its meaning is to be sought on a different level: on the transcendental level of art.

Williams's probably most famous dictum, however, says the opposite: "no ideas but in things" (*Paterson* 18). In other words, art is not external to reality; art is implied in reality. Accordingly, Jarmusch destabilises the mimetic order or any other hierarchy between reality and representation in multiple ways. For example, the film shows the photo of Paterson's pet before the actual dog is introduced: representation precedes reality. Besides, everyday experiences are often interpreted in terms of literature, for instance, when the drama of a couple in the bar is described as the local Romeo and Juliet (1:03:24). Moreover, fact is freely mixed with fiction. One learns from Doc's "Wall of Fame" that the musicians, Dave Prater and Jimmy Vivino, as well as the actor, Lou Costello, were born in Paterson; but later the Japanese

poet claims that Williams Carlos Williams "lived and make [sic] his poems here in Paterson, New Jersey" (1:48:00). This is biographically untrue—Williams spent his life in Rutherford—but it is not a straightforward lie either, since Paterson is not just an actual place but a metaphorical hometown as well, and in that sense, it can be said that Williams—mentally—lived in it.

The most complex example of the simultaneous co-existence of reality and fiction is probably a visual reference to Allen Ginsberg. He is relevant to the film partly as he was mentored by Williams (Doyle 143), partly because he grew up in Paterson, so his photo rightfully hangs on the "Wall of Fame" too (0:31:32), and his name is also mentioned by the Japanese poet (1:48:14). Whenever Paterson walks to the bar in the evenings, he passes by a shop window displaying a very spectacular, key-shaped, red neon sign (0:13:11), which is easily understood as the physical manifestation of the most often cited line from Ginsberg's "Kaddish," his mother's final message: "The key is in the window" (31). Jarmusch's gesture of transforming the abstraction, the verbal key, into a neon sign and transferring it to the strikingly material environment of a shop window is playfully deconstructive in several respects. On the one hand, it looks like an argument supporting Oscar Wilde's ironic claim that "Life imitates art far more than Art imitates life" (21). On the other hand, both the maternal message and the bright advertisement are powerful, brief signs demanding attention, yet with a strong tension between the mundane, gaudy neon key and the desperate spiritual guidance of a suicide's farewell note to his son. Finally, allusions are usually poetic devices offering a deeper understanding; yet, the meaning of the message—the key to the meaning of life—remains just as enigmatic in Jarmusch's film as it was in Ginsberg's poem.

As the examples above illustrate, meaning is not to be sought on a level superior to reality in Jarmusch's *Paterson.* Phenomena become meaningful in the film because they are not single and isolated but either repeated or connected, or (mostly) both. "We have plenty of matches in our house" (0:04:08), starts Paterson's first poem reflecting on a simple box of matches he was fiddling with during breakfast, and by the end of the poem, the ambiguity of the word "matches"—thin wooden sticks to light a fire versus correspondences—is fully developed. "Matches" become important because they mean more than just themselves; they resonate on more than one level: both the material and the poetic, symbolising the spark of actual fire and of creativity as well as pointing to the physical and the abstract at the same time. As Elemér Hankiss explains, "an essential feature in the poetic representation

of reality is shifting between levels and a vibration between various layers of consciousness" (22, my translation). Hankiss's explanation is, of course, an elaboration of Empson's thesis that "the machinations of ambiguity are among the very roots of poetry" (3). I prefer using Hankiss's version, though, because he explicitly refers to the process going on in the reader's mind, which resonates with the dramatisation of the poetic process taking place in Jarmusch's film.

In Jarmusch's *Paterson,* life becomes meaningful through poetry—and poetry becomes meaningful through life. Paterson's life is not hopelessly boring, because he is able to reproduce it on another level by distilling poetry out of it. However, he is able to keep writing poems, because his one-person audience, his wife, sincerely appreciates his texts. So, poetry is not represented by Jarmusch as a self-sufficient achievement, as *l'art pour l'art*, but as something that becomes meaningful only as part of real-life communication within the fictive universe of the film. That pertains to all the other characters as well: none of them are professional artists but every one of them has people who find their artistic output valuable, from the customers buying unique cupcakes to the regulars at the bar who notice whenever a new portrait appears on the "Wall of Fame." Thus, significance is gained by phenomena repeated, and often repeated on both the level of life and of art; while repetitions and ambiguities all contribute to the unity that can only be experienced in meaningful communities. Apparently, Jarmusch draws a full circle from the single unit of the individual through repetition and multiplicity to the single unit of the community, very much in the spirit of William Carlos Williams. In Williams's words in "Spring and All": "In the imagination, we are from henceforth (so long as you read) locked in a fraternal embrace, the classic caress of author and reader. We are one. Whenever I say 'I,' I mean also 'you.' And so, together, as one, we shall begin" (178).

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