THE DOCTOR IS OUT
EXPECTING THE WORST
IDENTITY CRISIS
SUBVERSIVE SUE
PRIVATE EYES

A Queer Analysis of Doctor Who
Maternity and the Horror Genre
The Presence of the Foreign in Mexican Cinema
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When asked what qualified him to be a film critic, Harlan Jacobson’s reply was simply, “I got the job.” As film students, we spend a lot of time thinking about movies and television, and we’re all hoping that someday the classes and readings and discussions will turn us into degree-wielding experts. But with or without a Bachelor’s in film theory, everyone who consumes media, everyone who has ever cried in a movie or marathoned a show is an expert in some way. Some of us revel in Oscar predictions, some of us have Audrey Hepburn’s filmography committed to memory. Some of us have seen every season of Grey’s Anatomy, some of us actually understood the last season of LOST. Whether it’s your favorite Godard film or your favorite Firefly episode, whether its what you think was in the Pulp Fiction briefcase or what you think of auteur theory, everyone has something to say about film and television.

Through Eyecandy, we as film students and, more broadly, as passionate consumers of media, have taken the time to share some of our thoughts with you. Our intention with these essays is not to draw a line between those who think critically about film and those who do not. Rather, we hope to inspire you to see film and television in a new light. It doesn’t matter if you are a film professor or a film student or a film buff, or even just someone who saw a movie once. Somewhere in Eyecandy or in Film Quarterly or in the San Francisco Chronicle, there is a sentence that will change the way you think about movies.

We are proud of our efforts, proud of our writers and our designers and our business team, proud of this incredible magazine that we worked so hard to get published. We hope you learn as much reading it as we learned making it.
The Spider-Man franchise has come a long way since the character’s first appearance in *Amazing Fantasy #15* in 1962. The hero, who was initially groundbreaking in the comic world for refocusing comics on a teen-aged protagonist, is now the subject of two Hollywood movie franchises with films budgeted at over $100 million apiece. Between the humble origins in comics and a low-budget kooky ‘60s cartoon — with an anatomically incorrect six-legged spider symbol — and today’s Hollywood blockbusters, over half a century of history has been created. Throughout all this time, the Peter Parker character has remained an archetypal nerd. How did he morph from the rakish, wise-cracking science geek in the 1960s cartoon *Spider-Man* to the troubled, immature nerd in Sam Raimi’s *Spider-Man* (2002), to the romanticized loner-geek in Mark Webb’s film reboot *The Amazing Spider-Man* (2012)? The answer can be found in changes in cultural attitudes toward nerds.

The birth of modern capitalism in the ‘60s, the space race, the rampant economic success of Dot-com nerds and the need for communal cooperation and spirit post-9/11 have all impacted the evolution of Peter Parker and our conceptions of nerdiness. Part of Peter’s legend is indicative of the American dream — that every citizen has great power, that with enough effort anyone can achieve success and use it responsibly. The thread that ties together all of the Spider-Man stories is the theme of growth because audiences love watching an awkward pariah become a self-sacrificing hero.

From his inception, Peter Parker was meant to be an immature superhero. Stan Lee wrote in his autobiography that before he envisioned the hero, he was planning to leave Marvel because he wanted to write stories with “more realistic fantasy” than the traditional, infallible superhero. Joseph Sommers argues in “The Traumatic Revision of Marvel’s *Spider-Man*” that the “more realistic fantasy”...
Stan Lee sought involved making comics that explore science fiction, target older audiences and have younger heroes who can actually make mistakes and grow over time. Thus, at his inception Peter Parker was intended to be different from every other superhero up to that time. Spider-Man is not a knockoff of the static, infallible Superman — at heart Spider-Man is just a boyish and immature Peter Parker who has risen to the task of public service.

Christina Adamou argues that superheroes have split identities so that their “everyday identity” is relatable to readers who feel disempowered, but their “superhero identity” reflects yearnings for power and agency. The story of Peter Parker is about the conflict between his two identities — how can an inexperienced socially awkward outcast handle the responsibilities of superpowers? Ryan Katon proposes that the once scorned nerd archetype started rising to popularity in the ’70s and ’80s when Woody Allen and Spike Lee popularized minority protagonists in films. During the ’80s and ’90s the media made the computer nerd-turned-celebrity into a popular figure as computer geeks gained wealth and influence from the high-tech boom. Katon thinks that the traditional hero of American cinema is a “white gentile because he or she mirrors the appearance and virtues of the masses.” The nerd, on the other hand “is an outsider. Otherness must be clearly identifiable in the character’s appearance.”

In Peter Parker the tropes of the hero and the nerd are reconciled — he is the everyman American hero because he reflects the white gentile majority, but he is also marked as an outsider by his nerdy appearance and hobbies. Peter’s thick glasses are a dated marker of his otherness. But as in every Spider-Man adaptation, physical transformation plays a prominent role in contrasting Peter Parker’s undesirable physique with Spider-Man’s masculine hero look. Sam Raimi’s Spider-Man, in particular, plays up the physical transformation of the nerd. The film features scenes of Mary Jane commenting on Peter’s height, fast reflexes and eyes after he gains a more muscular body from his new powers and is also able to see without his glasses.

The 1960s cartoon series Spider-Man ran during the height of the highly publicized space race with the Soviet Union. To compete with the U.S.S.R., the U.S. government tried to foster a love of science in its youth. In the cartoon, Peter’s peers ridicule him for his interest in science, but the show still promotes a positive image because his knowledge leads to the acquisition of his powers. In the opening scene of his origin story, Peter rejects an offer to go out with some girls so he can watch a demonstration of radioactivity instead. His colleagues gawk and call him a “bona fide and true to life bookworm.” Then a radioactive spider at the demonstration serendipitously bites him and gives him his powers, which makes up for the social loss. His interest in science plays a further role in the formation of his powers when he utilizes his intellect to design web-shooters.

Sam Raimi’s 2002 Spider-Man measures Peter’s social status through his standing with his love interest, Mary Jane. This Spider-Man (played by Tobey Maguire) receives his powers through a spider bite while he photographs Mary Jane, as though his infatuation is what puts him in the right place at the right time. Tobey Maguire plays a Peter Parker who
wants to fit in but doesn't know how. While he's on a class field trip he tells his friend Harry a fact about spiders, but gets dismissed for knowing something that nobody would care about. Later on in the scene, Harry tries using the fact to impress Mary Jane. Raimi's film is located in a time when attitudes have changed, allowing the nerd to move up in the world. Peter's knowledge could have helped him gain Mary Jane's attention, but he wasn't assertive enough to try. Tobey Maguire's scientific prowess also impresses Harry's father and gets him a job offer. His version of Peter Parker fits into the nerd archetype more because he is an outsider at his high school than because he is adept at science. Sam Raimi's Spider-Man opens with Tobey Maguire's voiceover telling the audience, “this story, like any story worth telling, is all about a girl.” The narrative of Raimi's film is framed between the opening scene when Peter fantasizes about being the guy sitting next to Mary Jane and the end where she asks him if he can offer her more than just platonic friendship. The growth in this story is marked by Peter gaining Mary Jane's acceptance.

Marc Webb's 2012 The Amazing Spider-Man casts Peter Parker (played by Andrew Garfield) as more of an outcast because of free will rather than by social order. He is less of a pushover and is more of a strong-willed entrepreneur. Like Tobey Maguire, Andrew Garfield plays a Peter Parker who is unpopular at his high school — we first see him getting smacked by Flash Thompson's basketball, and then when he thinks he is finally being asked out, he is only asked if he will photograph a girl's boyfriend's car. Andrew Garfield's Peter Parker lacks the naiveté and innocence of Tobey Maguire and he has a penchant for breaking the rules that Maguire's Parker never had. He is independent and willing to break the rules — he gets hassled by teachers for skateboarding in the hallway, he uses his camera to spy on his love interest and keeps her photo on his computer instead of simply photographing her for the school paper. He also receives his powers while he's sneaking around Oscorp against Gwen's orders, rather than on a mandatory field trip like in Raimi's film. Somewhere in the 10 years between Sam Raimi's Spider-Man and Marc Webb's Spider-Man, the connotation of nerds being submissive and spineless has weakened. That's why Maguire fights his high school bully Flash Thompson out of self-defense, but Garfield actively challenges Flash to steal a basketball from him with the intention of embarrassing Flash in front of his peers.

Sam Raimi's Spider-Man emphasizes Peter's physical transformation and quest to
win a girl. The audience doesn’t even see Peter until they’ve had a good look at his love interest. Tobey Maguire broods over Mary Jane (MJ) — he watches her getting ready for the day through his window, and rehearses conversation starters as he sees her waiting to get picked up. The classic camera Peter Parker carries becomes a cinematic tool that Raimi uses to place MJ tantalizingly close to Peter in a point of view shot. The camera shows the audience a gilded vision of his fantasy, only to have the effect diminished by the disrupting cross-hair on the camera. When Maguire first realizes he has gained new powers, his first idea is to imitate his bully Flash Thompson by obtaining a new car to impress MJ with. Trying to impress MJ with his material wealth is hopelessly shortsighted and immature. Peter is not just isolated from his peers because he likes science and he takes photos — he does not understand depth of character. When Peter finally gets the chance to talk to MJ alone, he tells her that he “cried like a baby” when she played Cinderella in a play. She reminds him that it was only first grade and he says, “Well even so — sometimes you just know people,” as the soft romantic musical theme plays. Here, Raimi romanticized Peter’s nerdy naiveté to the fullest. For him nerds make the most humble heroes because, despite all their tormentors, they still help people, and despite all their foolish ideas of how other people think, they still like them. Peter’s innocence was probably influenced by the bursting of the Dot-com bubble, at a time when the media was flooded with stories of brilliant founders who had been swindled from their company’s profits by investors.

Peter’s nerdy naiveté finds an evil opposite in the madness of his enemy. The villain in the film, the Green Goblin, is a scientist who gets voted off the board of the company he started and murders his rival board members in a killing spree. In contrast to Peter, who is always looking for a way into Mary Jane’s heart, the Goblin tells his son that MJ is just pretending to love him until she will “come snarling after [his] trust fund like a pack of ravening wolves.” The Goblin’s villainy reflects an undercurrent of fear toward nerds, who are threatening because their alienated position allows their intellectual prowess to go unchecked by society.

The Peter Parker of Sam Raimi’s Spider-Man is an antiquated kind of nerd, but Marc Webb’s film updates his character in light of cultural changes in attitudes toward comic books and geeks. Raimi’s Spider-Man was only the second attempt to make a serious blockbuster franchise out of a superhero comic since the early 1990s (the first attempt being X-Men in 2000). After Raimi’s film grossed over $800 million worldwide and a rash of superhero franchises followed, superheroes had truly made it mainstream for the first time — the comic book nerd of yore disappeared.

Marc Webb’s Spider-Man did not have to try pandering to old comic book nerds to make its money, because it had a decade of successful superhero blockbusters behind it. Webb cast Andrew Garfield, a more highly-demanded heartthrob than Tobey Maguire as Spider-Man, because nerds were cooler and more desirable characters than they had been a decade before. Gwen Stacy, the love interest in Marc Webb’s film, embarrasses Flash Thompson by making it public knowledge that she tutors him. In Sam Raimi’s film, the love interest is an actress, but 10 years later the love interest is a scientist — the recent popularization of the “geek chic” style trend made it more acceptable for girls to have interests in the sciences. In light of this trend, the signature thick-framed glasses Peter Parker used to wear became more of a fashion statement than a fashion faux pas. Where Raimi’s hero gains his power and then loses the nerd glasses, as though they are an impediment, Webb’s Spider-Man dons them by choice when he finds them in his father’s bag. The other classic Peter Parker prop, his film camera, has a much different meaning in 2012 when Webb’s film came out than it did in 2002, before a decade of mass-conversion
to digital cameras. Today, shooting film pictures is a relatively uncommon artistic choice, associated with both the geek-chic trend and ruthlessly individualist hipsters. Furthermore, Andrew Garfield successfully tries out his powers on a skateboard, a symbol of youthful energy and rebellion, as opposed to Tobey Maguire laughably crashing into a building the first time he tests his web-slinging. In Marc Webb’s film and in the traditional cartoon, Peter Parker develops his own mechanical webs. Peter’s nerdiness gets defined by his scientific pursuits in these adaptations, but in Raimi’s film the organically grown web-shooters emphasize a nerdiness that has more to do with physical “otherness” than with mental pursuits. The gawky reject Raimi created and the anti-social pariah of the 1960s cartoon have been replaced with a self-possessed prodigy in Webb’s adaptation.

In Sam Raimi’s Spider-Man, the isolation that Peter Parker feels in high school disappears when he becomes Spider-Man and deals with adults. True, some critics see him as an “all-around pariah” or “nerd’s nerd”4 but even though Spider-Man gets vilified by the police in The Amazing Spider-Man, and by The Daily Bugle in Raimi’s Spider-Man, he manages to find support from the general public. Joseph Sommers argues that after the trauma of 9/11, Spider-Man became a more serious hero. It seems certain that 9/11 did impact the way superheroes were portrayed — an early teaser for Sam Raimi’s Spider-Man shows bank robbers in a helicopter getting caught by a web that spans the gap between the Twin Towers.1 The Towers got removed from the final film after 9/11 happened and it is hard to imagine the citizens who shout, “You mess with Spidey, you mess with New York! You mess with one of us, you mess with all of us!” were not influenced by the surge of patriotic feelings post-9/11. Christina Adamou notes that Peter Parker’s heroic status becomes “less ‘concrete’ and more symbolic”2 because he is distanced from the nuclear family. Peter is a boy without a father who tries to refuse his love interests to protect them from villains. This achievement of ascetic heroism is evident in the final shot of Raimi’s film when Spider-Man is seen triumphantly poised on top of a skyscraper gripping the pole of an American flag — the ultimate reaction to the fallen heroes and towers of post-9/11 New York.2

In the 1960s cartoon, there are no moments of community effort in unison with the hero. In the show, Peter thinks of the classic mantra about power and responsibility himself — it is not bequeathed to him on Uncle Ben’s death bed. He is a fierce-willed individualist, not longing to comprehend the nuclear family he has lost or win a girl’s heart as in the post-9/11 Spider-Man movies. Before the trauma of 9/11, Spider-Man was more of a two-dimensional character whose call to public duty was not motivated by the same kind of melancholy present in Raimi and Webb’s adaptations. Raimi’s film is marked by 9/11 during the scenes when Spider-Man leaps out of a burning building and returns a woman’s baby amid a crowd of firemen and New York City police officers. In Marc Webb’s film, Spider-Man gets help from the community when construction workers line up cranes for the hero to swing between, so he can stop a biological weapon from exploding over New York City. It could be argued that the importance Webb places on Peter’s parents’ disappearance as a call to action

“Where Raimi’s hero gains his power and then loses the nerd glasses, as though they are an impediment, Webb’s Spider-Man dons them by choice when he finds them in his father’s bag.”
is also a mark of 9/11.

At the end of Raimi’s first film, Peter leaves Mary Jane behind in order to protect her from his enemies, and as she appears to realize his true identity he tells the audience what he has grown to learn, “I will never forget these words: ‘With great power comes great responsibility.’ This is my gift, my curse. Who am I? I’m Spider-Man.” There is a sense of triumphant growth in Peter’s transition from an alienated dweeb to a selfless hero. In an eerie reference to Raimi’s film and all Spider-Man stories, Webb ends his story with Peter coming to class late and the teacher telling them there is only one plot in all of fiction: “Who am I?” From its inception with Stan Lee’s innovative decision to create a comic book hero who was not invincible, to its groundbreaking reimagining of serious superhero cinema in the early 2000s — Spider-Man has always been about coming-of-age, to discover an identity that is beneficial to society. There is profound hope in the idea that a nerdy boy without parents who is outcast by his peers can rise to the occasion and become a public hero, rather than a public menace. Because of his nerdiness, Peter Parker is an underdog hero, the classic icon of the American dream.

Notes


I have a love of old things, an inherent nostalgia for the objects of the past. I'm not certain if it comes from a place of rebellion against the disposable nature of consumer culture or if I've simply spent too much time with my grandmother. I think that it's most likely the latter.

Two years ago my grandmother gave me an 8mm camera with a projector and screen that originally belonged to my great-grandmother. I never met my great-grandmother and hadn't spent much time with my grandmother growing up, so my original desire for exploring these objects was to try to piece together the past that I did not know. A year and a half later, my grandmother gave me the 8mm films that her mother had taken from the mid 1930s to the early 1940s.

The information contained in these images was not infinite, as much as I hoped it could be, and I realized that they would only be able to show me so much. My great-grandmother used the camera to document many occasions — home life, multiple Christmases, a road trip across the country from Ross (a small town north of San Francisco) to Vermont and the 1939 World's Fair at Treasure Island. These films held what I thought was the essence of people I had never met and places I had never been. I began to wonder about home movies beyond my own experience with them and what they might suggest about culture, memory and history.

Home movies can be evaluated as a people's history. They are an overt example of patriarchal structure, the nature of the private sphere/leisure time, how control was exerted over people to document their past in a standardized way and, today, how a nostalgically affective aesthetic is being summoned for the purposes of Hollywood entertainment and consumer culture. They carry a specific meaning, in a similar way, as baby books or other photographs and objects from the past, but
home movies are place holders for the past in the way that only photographic images can be. The element of realism presents a sort of truth and authenticity in an easily digestible way. In most people, home movies create an idealization or nostalgia for something that we cannot quite remember, and sometimes never knew. Simultaneously, these objects challenge our memories and give us new ways to interpret or imagine the past.

As objects of the past, home movies contain a ubiquitous essence or aura, in the same way other memory-based objects do. There is something within them that brings on or encourages a nostalgic affect when they are watched. They are moving scrapbooks that trigger memories of things we have forgotten and inform us of things that we never knew. This nostalgic affect comes from a dissatisfaction with the “present” and an over-idealization of what these objects present as the true past and is accompanied by an overvaluation of the authenticity or validity of these objects. The basis for the feelings created by home movies is rooted in nostalgia, sentimentality and longing. What is needed is a further exploration into the way that this nostalgia might be affecting our relationships with these objects and the images that they contain, “Nostalgia appears to be a longing for a place, but it is actually a yearning for a different time — the time of our childhood, the slower rhythms of our dreams. In a broader sense, nostalgia is a rebellion against the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress. The nostalgic desires to turn history into private or collective mythology, to revisit time like space, refusing to surrender to the irreversibility of time that plagues the human condition.”

These objects allow their viewer to sit in these moments, arguably sitting in the past. If we can be transported to the past through these objects and the images they contain then maybe, just maybe, can we avoid the inevitable for just a while longer. At the same time, if we long to exist in a different historical moment, then home movies can be considered our portal, our time machine. The success of these reactions, drawn from historical objects that give insight or bring on nostalgia, has much to do with the interpreted authenticity of them. This interpreted authenticity comes from the way they present the past, with an assumed honesty and candidness, both of which are taken at face value. It is within this exchange and ensuing reaction where the affect is born.

When I first began watching the films of my great-grandmother, they began as just another of the many family heirlooms that my grandmother had given me. As time went on, they became more than that and my investment in them grew to something that was helping me to better understand myself. Through multiple viewings, I have had rather contradictory reactions to the films — first being amazement, second being tears and the most recent being indifference. The indifference I felt — a total lack of emotional response to the images — frustrated me, as I thought they no longer carried any meaning for me, or that I had taken all that I could from them and their power was now gone. This emotional response (or lack thereof) came prior to a deeper inquiry into the history and progression of home movies. As I learned the history of home movies as both personal and historical objects, I began to question my own feelings toward my home movies and toward home movies in general.

Home movies are often assumed to be wholly private objects — though they truly exist suspended between the public and private realms — and this private affiliation is what
alters their eventual understanding. As objects we have experienced or created for primarily personal reasons in personal spaces, they indicate home, comfort and memory — all of which converge to define them. This connection to the private sphere, giving way to the aforementioned interpretation of authenticity, is what I believe to be the origin of the nostalgic affect. Without the supposition of these objects existing within a wholly private framework, the assumed authenticity could not exist. Acknowledging that home movies are not exclusively private will allow us to get to the core of their culturally constructed implications.

Home movies are public because of how and with what they are created, but they are private because of why they are created. The private “why” stems from the association with amateurism as the source of motivation for creating these objects. Home movies are amateur objects in the sense that they are economically unproductive. Amateurism is aligned with an assumed lack of skill, and a love for the activity being practiced, as opposed to professionalism where there is an economic drive behind the activity. “In amateurism as a social and historical phenomenon, work and free time are not locked into simple binary oppositions; rather, the absence of one defines and imbricates the other.” While they may be separate entities, they are not mutually exclusive experiences. Thus, amateurism is associated with the private sphere and leisure time. If we assume home movies to exist solely within the private sphere, we negate everything that their existence within the public sphere might say about them. Humans have a tendency towards romanticizing the past, and once it is acknowledged that these objects exist beyond the private sphere, we can understand some greater truth about the nostalgia they contain for us. Simultaneously, this knowledge will reveal quite a bit about memory, how we interpret the past and aid in reforming a larger collective memory through the potential redefining of these historical documents.

The 1950s were a time when home movies took hold — World War II had ended, the baby boom was underway and the prevalence of movie cameras in homes was growing. There was an overt sentiment that home movies had to be a certain way to be “good,” which contradicts and challenges the very idea of what home movies are considered to be — candid family moments that are captured guilelessly and remain that way on the film with no alteration. In this context “good” appears to be something closer to Hollywood continuity, with a similar narrative structure but a lower production value. Travel films and holiday celebrations were written about at length in terms of how they could be more successfully documented and photographed. What most often creates the value in these objects is their associated amateurism and candidness, which incites a certain interpretation of them and the moments that they are “saving” for us. More value or authenticity is placed on them as historical facsimile because the images move. They appear more realistic and thus more honest and valuable as a kind of mirror of the past; this is how people danced, this is how they swam.

The moments that were and still are typically captured do not seem to have a linear structure beyond the passage of time. To learn that these objects may have been thought out, preplanned and constructed challenges their meaning and ultimately the nostalgia created by them. A shooting script offered in Kodak’s *How to Make Good Movies* exemplified this obsession with continuity for travel films. The following directives published in a *Better Homes and Gardens* article, “Shooting Script for Christmas Time Home Movies,” chart the techniques of this controlled realism.

1. Shine the lights in the direction of the subject for several seconds before actually beginning to shoot the scene. 2. Don’t encourage your subjects to look at the camera. They will look much more natural if they simply contin-
ue to do what they were doing before you start to shoot. 3. Grown-ups will be much less self-conscious if they are engaged in some activity with a child while you are shooting. These readings challenge home movies’ authenticity, because they call into question the qualities in which we assume the authenticity is founded — candid and organic, not preplanned or staged.

An investigation deeper into the cause of my nostalgia and the basic elements of its construction shifted my feeling toward my grandmother’s films and home movies more generally. I began to wonder if the apparatus itself produces the nostalgia. The camera, the projector, the screen, the smell and the sounds together create the essence of the signifier that is the home movie. Are there inherently nostalgic objects? If so, what does that say about their historical value? Will home movies always contain and draw out this nostalgic affect, or is there something about the way that they are made that produces nostalgia and traps it within them? Home movies present the past in a way that other objects cannot. Their portrayal of the human likeness is pseudo-realism, interpreted as realism. With that, it becomes more difficult to distance oneself from the ‘realism’ as it is, with the hopes of finding a more profound understanding of this nostalgia and
its production. The personal relationship to these images creates a bias within us, as evaluation of them becomes the objective.

As I began to look at home movies from a scholarly and historical point of view — feeling less and less connected to my grandmother’s movies — I started volunteering at the Prelinger Archives in San Francisco on Saturdays. Here, though I realized it after the fact, there was a distance between myself and the possible nostalgia I could feel toward the objects and specifically toward what they photographically held. In the most basic sense, I had no connection to the people or places in the images. Constantly viewing and handling other families’ home movies created a disconnect between me and these objects. As the relationship I had with my personal images shifted, my scope of interest grew beyond my own images and what they meant to me.Viewing other families’ films created an awareness of my personal nostalgia, and my perspective on it began to shift even more.

As I learned more about the history of amateur film and the constructed nature of home movies, I began to question the meaning of these objects. My grandmother’s images hold something for me beyond all other moving images in their coloring, their assumed candidness and their somewhat magical representation of the past. While they may not be technically perfect or narratively-structured, they provide me with something that I was unaware of until recently. At first, they made me confront the mortality of my grandmother, someone who means the world to me. Now I have realized that they have been my pause button. My grandmother’s images keep her frozen in time, ideally forever.

Notes
3. Ibid., 1-11.
4. Ibid., 112-135.
5. Ibid., 64-89 and 112-135.
6. Ibid., 112-135.
7. Ibid., 124.
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In the year between the filming of Lena Dunham’s half-hour HBO comedy *Girls* and its SXSW premiere in 2010, a number of female showrunners emerged in the world of network television, which let the series make its debut “without the pressure of representing Everygirl.” There are more women in charge of television programs now than ever before, and as a result, television — both the low-brow and the higher-brow — is becoming more and more a space for women’s stories. From the much-maligned *2 Broke Girls* to the critically-acclaimed *Parks and Recreation*, which was named the best TV series of 2012 by *Time*, lighthearted lady comedies are an increasingly standard feature of network lineups, bringing the tropes of the romantic comedy genre to primetime.

*Girls*, by contrast, is a much less feminine show, despite its name. It doesn’t fall as easily into the tropes of romantic comedy, and its tone is darker and more cynical. *Girls* often does address traditionally “feminine” topics such as dating, fashion and emotions, but it does so in a self-reflexive way that draws attention to the disparities between real women’s lives and the lives of characters in romantic comedies. The stories of Shoshonna, the least developed of the titular girls, essentially consist of her relationships with men — losing...
her virginity, entering a relationship, cheating on her boyfriend — and her desire to fit into a very shallow, media-defined concept of the “modern woman.” But Girls treats Shoshonna with a certain amount of irony. (Hopefully after breaking up with her boyfriend in the season two finale, she will become more of a character and stop being the two-dimensional butt of our jokes.) Her desperation to become sexually active, her reading of self-help books, her over-analysis of what she’s wearing — these characteristics are not being endorsed by Girls. Rather, Girls is trying to distance its other three characters from this clinginess, this obsession with the male gaze, this traditional role of the boy-crazy, empowerment-hungry girl in a millenial rom-com.

And the other three characters are very different. Although many of the episodes focus partially on heteronormative coupling, these “girls” have “boy problems” that are a bit more complicated than finding Mr. Right. Hannah approaches romance like it’s research for her personal essays, constantly torn between her yearning for a healthy relationship and her quest for a good story. Marnie’s post-breakup spiral is just self-aware enough that it becomes a storyline about trying to see herself as more than someone’s girlfriend. Jessa’s love interests, although at first merely an emblem of her cool bohemian sexual liberation, are eventually reframed as a crutch that she uses to feel interesting and unique when she is still searching for an identity. In Girls, heteronormative coupling isn’t the narrative climax, it’s a tool used to explore the influence of relationships on women’s complicated, multi-faceted lives. The men on Girls are almost as two-dimensional as the girls in most movies — always someone’s boyfriend, rarely developed outside of their relationships to the main characters.

The woman behind Girls, Lena Dunham, is also different from the female show-runners on network sitcoms. Lena Dunham is more than the showrunner, the star, the creator and an executive producer. Between her complete creative control over Girls and her previous feature film Tiny Furniture, Lena Dunham is a budding auteuse. Her show, like her film, is sleekly cinematic, emotional, funny, autobiographical and ceaselessly, unapologetically complicated. In an article for the Boston Globe, Matthew Gilbert writes that Girls is “a small-sized, uneven, raw series that refuses to be what viewers want it to be,” and that despite a veritable tsunami of criticism, Girls’ second season made it clear “that Dunham would steadfastly continue to pursue her own tough vision of a young woman and her friends mired in narcissism, identity confusion, and awkwardness.” The critical response to Girls, one of the most divisive shows on TV right now, brings attention to Dunham’s auteurist consistency. She is mocked — affectionately in an Emmy skit, less affectionately in blog posts and tweets — for her apropos-of-nothing nudity, her propensity to snack on screen, her equally relatable and despicable 20-something female characters. Like most auteurs, Lena Dunham is a polarizing figure, but the controversy has secured her a spot in the limelight. Girls is such an over-analyzed, over-praised, over-criticized series that I’ve been hesitant to even confess that I’m writing about it.

HBO, cautious that Girls not get pigeonholed as a girls-only program, has tried to highlight executive producer Judd Apatow’s involvement, as well as emphasizing Dunham’s auteurism over her emotionally-charged writ-

“Like most auteurs, Lena Dunham is a polarizing figure, but the controversy has secured her a spot in the limelight.”

ing. Apatow’s reputation for raunchy masculinity “makes it okay for male viewers to tune
into a show that focuses on four young female characters,” and instead of promoting *Girls* as a millenial *Sex and the City* (a comparison that has been made many times by bloggers and TV critics), HBO tried to present *Girls* as something less feminine and more serious. The promotional campaign “emphasized her similarity to masculine comic auteurs like Larry David, Woody Allen and Louis K.C. [sic], known for writing, directing, and starring in their own work.” Lena Dunham is undeniably the driving force behind the show, but although Judd Apatow’s involvement was over-hyped by HBO, *Girls* has more collaboration behind the scenes than, for example, Louis C.K.’s half-hour Comedy Central series *Louie*, every episode of which was written by C.K. himself.

*Girls* actually has more in common with *Louie* than it does with lighthearted lady comedies. Like *Girls*, *Louie* is the brainchild of showrunner and star Louis C.K. Both shows have developed an abrasive, uncomfortable brand of comedy, and regularly deviate from the sitcom format, exploring more serious subjects instead — abortion, suicide, intimacy issues, professional stress. Furthermore, both *Louie* (C.K.’s fictionalized version of himself) and Hannah (Lena Dunham’s somewhat autobiographical character) are abrasive, not conventionally attractive and full of wasted potential. The comedy in these two shows is based on an almost tangible cringe factor — we laugh *at* these characters, not with them, whether they are sabotaging relationships, failing job interviews or just being sad and petty.

Both shows are pointedly self-aware, and they approach race in a similarly reflexive way. In the third episode of *Louie*, Louie scolds a white waitress for saying that black people don’t tip, before a black waitress walks up and tells him that black people do not, in
The show pokes fun at white guilt and Louie’s obsession with political correctness, but Louis C.K. himself certainly doesn’t share that obsession — his stand-up is anything but inoffensive.

“The men on Girls are almost as two-dimensional as the girls in most movies.”

In season two of Girls, Lena Dunham responded to the ubiquitous criticisms that her show featured no people of color in an equally self-aware way. Hannah begins the season dating Sandy, a black Republican played by Donald Glover, but in the second episode Sandy accuses her of dating him because he’s black. Hannah informs him that she “never thought about the fact that he was black once.” Dunham, who said in an interview with NPR that tokenism in casting was something that she wanted to avoid, instead wrote Sandy as the “token black guy” in Hannah’s life.

Both Dunham and C.K. use their bodies for comedic effect — Dunham through her frequent and brazenly overweight nudity, C.K. with graphic references to the side effects of aging. Furthermore, while Louie talks more about his weight than Hannah — which is refreshing after years of yogurt ads and “does this make me look fat” jokes on TV — the media couldn’t care less about Louis C.K.’s BMI, but seems very concerned with Lena Dunham’s. In addition to tweets and blog posts taking unnecessary jabs at Dunham’s body, actual newspapers have also weighed in on her figure. A review in the NY Post questioned whether “blobbies who are willing to take their clothes off in public constantly” could really nab the guys Hannah has slept with. Louie, on the other hand, dates women like Chloe Sevigny and Parker Posey and elicits hardly a murmur.¹

Lena Dunham has more in common with Louis C.K. than with other female showrunners, but the criticism and praise of Girls has been strangely overzealous. Despite the fact that shows by girls about girls are increasingly common, women on TV are still rare enough that serious female characters are, to some extent, expected to represent “Everygirl.” (Which is probably exacerbated by giving the show a name as presumptuously inclusive as “Girls.”) Girls is an incredibly original show that, like Louie, eschews the traditions of television and takes risks, but it also takes the risk of being about women. No matter how many female showrunners are working in television right now, women’s shows, and by extension women themselves, are still undervalued. A lot of things about Lena Dunham make people uncomfortable, from her privileged upbringing to her “blobby” body, but mostly it’s that she’s a girl who’s more successful than most of the boy’s club.

Notes

Both programs, the M.A. in Social Documentation and Ph.D. in Film + Digital Media, take advantage of the strength of the renowned Film + Digital Media faculty and the expertise of faculty in the Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences divisions at UC Santa Cruz. After identifying which program best suits their interests, potential students should consult the program websites for guidelines and deadlines before applying.

The Ph.D in Film and Digital Media offers a rigorous, critically grounded program that challenges traditionally conceived borders between critical and creative practice.

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The distance between Tel-Aviv and Baghdad is approximately 565.98 miles. For Israeli documentarist and professor Duki Dror (pronounced doo-kai drawer, meaning “freedom” in Hebrew), the distance is nothing. Teaching at UCSC for winter quarter, Dror is one of the most prolific filmmakers in Israel today, known for his powerful documentaries dealing with migration, identity and cultural/ethnic dilemmas in Israeli society. I stumbled upon his work when researching documentaries on the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Dror is as much Iraqi as he is Jewish — his family changed their Arabic last names when they escaped Baghdad and made their way to Tel-Aviv. He is a visionary filmmaker who walks a path in search of identities in crisis, which helps bridge the gap between his own cultural backgrounds.

His dual identity very much impacts his work and view of the world, but it wasn’t always that way. Dror found himself running from one cultural identity to the other. Retracing his family’s footsteps is a big part of his early filmography. Dror’s family fled Baghdad in the 1950s and immigrated to Israel due to the shifting political climate and his father’s struggles with the government. This uprooting was his first taste of the tension between Arab and Jewish cultures. One of Dror’s more personal films, titled My Fantasia, primarily focused on his father’s struggles in Iraq. When questioned about this project, he said, “I did this film when I was studying [at UCLA] in the United States and I thought this film was the must-do father film project or student film project.” Despite the clichés he sees, the film was a resounding success, using Dror’s original documentary style to reveal the painful story of his family’s migration from Iraq to Israel. The story follows his father’s menorah factory, which is closing down because business is going
south. The background of the factory serves as an interesting metaphor — this menorah factory, called “Fantasia,” is slowly disappearing, like the Jewish Iraqis who once made up a significant percentage of the population. Today fewer than 100 Jews reside in Iraq.

“Dror and his family never returned to Baghdad, but he still tries to reconnect with his Iraqi roots.”

The idea for the film came to Dror from a memorable event in our history. “At that time one of the things that sparked my interest was Iraq during the first Gulf War in 1991.” Dror recalled the image of seeing Iraq getting bombed on the news. He was conflicted about his reactions, seeing a country he knew he was connected to but didn’t understand. He continued, “seeing the image of [Tel-Aviv] where I was born and raised in, and the other image of this old country that I just knew a little about but still a part of my life in a way...it gave me the idea that this is something I need to know and learn about.” It was a film he felt obligated to make, not only because of his family background, but also for his own reasons. The film would help navigate the process of uncovering the Iraqi side of his identity that he knew very little about, and help take that first step to toward understanding the Iraqi culture. The story weaves memories from Iraq and Israel — two homelands, two languages, two identities and also two enemies. Dror is trying to reconstruct the narrative of his family, a narrative that has disappeared in the silence and shame that followed the family’s move to Israel. The father’s silence is finally broken by Dror’s relentless inquiries, which reveal a story about his father’s five lost years in an Iraqi prison.

Dror and his family never returned to Baghdad, but he still tries to reconnect with his Iraqi roots and keep that connection strong. “I’m actually doing this new film, called Shadow in Baghdad,” he says, “and I try to return in a cinematic way through two characters.” Those two characters are an Israeli journalist, who was born in Baghdad and escaped when her father was kidnapped, and an Iraqi journalist who writes about the Jewish community of Baghdad (which was about 25 percent of the population during the 1940s). Dror sees this film as a dialogue between the two characters, exploring what Baghdad was and is, and how a new generation of Iraqis are trying to find and reach out to the city’s history. The film retraces the steps of Dror’s own family experience, when his father was imprisoned in Iraq for his ideology. “He always tried to tell me not to fight on anything related to ideology because you just lose. And that motivated me to try and find ideology and have ideas and go all the way to achieve these ideas. But in a way, when I reflect back on the world and life, I see there is a point to what he said.”

Dror spent eight years in the United States before he returned to Israel. One of the first films he made once he got back was titled Cafe Noah, a documentary about musicians who immigrated from Iraq to Egypt in the 1950s. It was a rather specific subject matter for a director. “It wasn’t my very first film once I got back, but my second. But it was something I really wanted to do because the Iraqi identity was something I tried to hide and put behind, and when I lived here in the United States was when I felt it very strongly that it had been put behind me. Once I got back, all I wanted to know and do was to learn about it and present it.

“So this film for me started from this memory when I had a Bar Mitzvah with all these friends who were of European descent. I had this trauma that this band, an Arabic music playing band at my Bar Mitzvah, [laughing] and it was such a humiliating moment for
me. Because of course my parents didn't know anything about what I felt or how complex it would be for me with my friends hearing Arabic music. They had never heard it before. So this memory just started the idea of Cafe Noah.” Dror’s honesty about his conflicting heritage is one of the trademarks that materialize throughout his films. It is also a relatable feeling for a generation of first-generation Americans, like myself, with ethnically diverse backgrounds and the culture clash that comes with that kind of background. Dror’s films, like Cafe Noah, are an examination of identity within the context of society, culture, and in this case, music. After re-examining his own cultural backgrounds, he searched for similar identities in crisis. His best films often deal with the larger regional conflicts and its impact on self-image.

In 1998, he collaborated with Palestinian director Rashid Masharawi on the film Stress. It is an experimental documentary that focuses on the inner emotions of Israeli/Palestinian conflict. It is an innovative and enthralling juxtaposition of two different yet similar societies. The directors, Dror and Masharawi, decided to break it up into two parts. The idea of using this type of impressionistic look on the screen was credited to Rashid. But, as Dror puts it, “We both agreed from the start that the project was going to be split in two, because each one of us see reality in a very different way, not just with the reality of the situation but also as a filmmaker.”

It began as an initiative by a production company in Tel-Aviv trying to form a cooperation with a Palestinian production company on a film about the inner feelings
of Israeli/Palestinian relations. They eventually chose Dror and Masharawi to film the project. In Dror’s part of the film, he uses a taxi driver with a hidden camera to capture Tel-Aviv citizens in real moments with real discussions. The citizens discuss their opinions on the Israeli/Palestinian situation and local conflicts when prompted by the driver. Why use this style and what drew him to that idea? “Well it actually comes from Candid Camera [laughing]. Of course, this is a universal idea, of putting a camera where people are unaware of it and less inhibited when they are speaking. So you get a much more truthful conversation. You get a more truthful reaction. But I’m not sure where I got the idea to incorporate the taxi, I just hadn’t seen anything like it before.”

In the humble taxicab, Dror saw a filmic space perfect for this film and its subjects. “I’ve always enjoyed cab rides. I can talk with the driver and it’s like a short session of psychology because you’ll never see this cab driver again once you get out. So I thought it could be very interesting to examine what happens inside [the taxicab]. To view these fragments of Israeli society who are locked in with this cab driver. There’s this feeling that this ‘confession cab’ holds you in and outside is this surrounding that could always be intimidating and dangerous. So I created that space where people would feel comfortable to speak in and to express what they feel.” It’s interesting to note that Rashid Masharawi went on to make a fiction film centered around a taxicab driver titled Laila’s Birthday. As for Dror, he continued to receive plenty of critical acclaim for other film projects including Raging Dove, Paradise Lost and Mr. Cortisone, Happy Days.

One of his more recent films, Incessant Visions, was recently screened at the UCSC Media Theater on Feb. 28. The film details the real life story of architect Eric Mendelsohn and his influence on the architecture of the Third Reich all the way to the early formative years of Tel-Aviv. The film is probably the best example of Dror’s style and storytelling ability. Again the protagonist is in conflict with his identity and the society around him. “Well, first of all I wanted to do a film about a protagonist who was dead. I felt and still feel documentary is changing. The way the camera is changing the behavior of people. People are more aware of the language of documentary and they sometimes act for you and to get what you really want, and not what they want to be, is getting very difficult. And the value of documentary is degrading because of this.”

Dror wanted to avoid what he usually did, which in his words was, “project myself into the protagonist’s life when he is alive.” In the end, he thought it would be better and easier with fewer moral questions for himself to do a film with a character who is not alive. A film like Incessant Visions is predicated largely on two things — the context and the character. The story of Mendelsohn starts with him drawing small sketches in a World War I trench and sending them to a young cellist in Germany. He eventually becomes a household name in architecture only to flee the country when the Nazis come to power. The film is a cinematic meditation about the untold story of Mendelsohn, whose life and career were as enigmatic and tragic as the path of the 20th century. Yet his influence can still be felt all over the world.

“The story of Mendelsohn came to me because one day I heard in the news Tel-Aviv has been selected to be a world heritage site. And I never understood that, because being someone who was born in Tel-Aviv I always thought it was a very ugly place and nothing interesting about it. But then I learned and I asked questions of my architect friends, and they said, ‘You have to know that Tel-Aviv is the product of one mind, an architect mind, Eric Mendelsohn.’ And I said, ‘show me some buildings of his,’ and he said, ‘No, there is no building in Tel-Aviv by Mendelsohn. He’s the inspiration for this city, especially the old parts of Tel-Aviv.’ I found it so interesting how a person can leave such a great influence with-
out even being there, and it sparked my interest in art and what defines art. And the film was born.”

When the interview ended, we shook hands and departed for the bus stop. As fate would have it, we both lived on the same bus route, so I was given a chance for an extended interview. Sitting on the 16 bus, I took the opportunity to ask him more about himself — his favorite films, how to raise money for a project, and has it gotten any easier? Just small talk from aspiring amateur to established pro. I squeezed in one last interview question — would he define himself as an observational filmmaker? “Well, I don’t believe there is observational filmmaking,” he said, “You can be observing to a certain point. I don’t see myself as that. All the time I have to contextualize it with what I want to say. Everything I film is being used to say something about a story.” He pushed the stop request button and made his way to the exit, but not before asking me to send him my own video projects. He wanted to know what my identity was. Sitting there, now alone on the bus, I thought about my own cultural backgrounds. I guess I’ve always favored one cultural identity over the other — the distance between my homes is a lot larger than I thought. For Duki Dror, the distance is nothing.
A distinction often bestowed upon an auteur is that of a pioneer, working in and against the industry to create a unique vision and voice. The purpose of this article, like so many others dedicated to an auteur, is to aid somewhat in the continuing importance placed on remembering the filmmaker’s contributions. This paper will look at the prolific and sometimes forgotten partnership of Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, known to many as “The Archers.”

For those unfamiliar with these auteurs, the best introduction would be to provide some context about the climate of filmmaking in Great Britain, where The Archers began their career. British cinema has had the unfortunate task of representing their national identity to an American audience while sharing a language. As the global cinema continues its path of relevancy and open discourse, the British screen is often left as a footnote. This is at least true for the British film of today, no matter how much money the U.K. Film Council contributes to the cinematic endeavors of this new generation of British filmmakers. The anglophiles have spoken and have come to appreciate a Britain of tomorrow, palatable to an American (or Hollywood) gaze. This is not a condemnation of the last 30 years of British cinema — the “Americanization” was inevitable as the two nations synchronized in so many ways. It makes sense that this absorption of culture and practice would take place. It is also important to note that this mining of British talent occurred quickly, as the great thespians of the British stage and screen often garnered wide acclaim as they began their Hollywood careers.

While British actors have had the tendency to depart for warmer, more prosperous climates, British directors have also followed suit. Ridley Scott, Christopher Nolan, Adrian Lynne, Peter Yates, John Schlesinger and Paul Greengrass all found their start and their
success in America. Often these directors are known for making quintessential “American” movies that capture the social issues of the time.

Michael Powell started his career in the late 1920s, just after a very low point in the British film industry. The output and exhibition of national-made films in the 1920s was so low — it is estimated that 90 percent of films playing in U.K. movie theaters were originating from America¹ — that in 1927 the Cinematograph Films Act was brought in to stimulate domestic film production. The act was also an opportunity for Britain to reconstruct and redefine a national identity in preparation for significant changes to the political infrastructure (It is worth noting that it was passed a year after the term “commonwealth” replaced “empire”).² The act stipulated that a certain percentage of films in the exhibition circuit must be made in Britain. There was not, however, a statement defining that the company funding the project had to be British. As a result, U.S. distributors set up a number of small production companies to work under the “punishing conditions of time and budget”³ that loomed over many quota productions. This led to a surplus of product intended to meet the measure. These “quota quickies” were in a sense the beginning of the British B-movie — a field where many notable directors got their start but also one that has “long been held in contempt by critics and scholars as both unwatchable in themselves, and detrimental to the reputation of British cinema overall.”⁴

The nature of the “quota quickie” was very similar to the American B-movie. These were films made “at minimum cost with maximum speed for U.S. distributors who needed cheap British product to fulfill their legal obligations.”⁵ Like the Roger Corman circuit and the Hollywood studio system of the ’30s, these were often films made in short periods of time, and they also produced a great number of filmmakers who had to learn their craft quickly. It allowed for original and previously unexplored narratives and themes, emblematic of a nation underrepresented on screen. It is here where Michael Powell started his career.

Alfred Hitchcock’s 1929 film Blackmail was his first sound feature and also Michael Powell’s first job on set, where he was the production photographer. The rest of the decade Powell worked his way up directing a string of “quickies.” Hitchcock’s emerging popularity in America led to his departure from Great Britain in 1939 after he secured a lucrative production deal with David O. Selznick, and Britain lost one of its most acclaimed filmmakers. That same year Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger worked together for the first time on a “quota” film called The Spy in Black, and the dynamic partnership of The Archers began.

The first instance of The Archers’ daringness occurred during their first few films together; The Spy in Black, (1939), Contra-band (1940), 49th Parallel (1941), Our Aircraft is Missing (1942) and the Life and Death of Colonel Blimp (1943). As much as many scholars and critics denigrate the “quota” movies, through time we are able to see their value. These films were all made and produced in the thick of World War II and deal with some of the most controversial aspects relevant to the time — a lot of these were also propaganda pieces made for national morale and financed by the Ministry of Information. The Archers’ regular Conrad Veidt starred in both Contra-band and The Spy in Black.⁶ These are both incredibly generic pieces, although I do not necessarily think that this is a detriment. Veidt is
the protagonist of both films portraying ship captains of German and Danish roots, always meeting opposition from British forces. This is an interesting stance to take for an alleged British propaganda film (the Archers had a partnership with the Royal Air Force making short films and features). It is strange to think that these two films were well received. They feature foreign heroes that are associated with the opposition, they show English servicemen as aloof and slightly incompetent and they feature very little wartime battle. These films are mostly concerned with espionage and evasion. These are also very isolated tales — they do not concern an entire naval fleet moving in on the enemy. They seem like stories made to evoke great paranoia. *The Spy in Black* features Veidt as a World War I German submarine commander who is trying to invade a British fleet from the side and decides to infiltrate a small village off the Orkney Islands. What is interesting is that Veidt is portrayed and filmed as a classic protagonist, a strange choice while the wartime tension was already growing in Europe. *Contraband* stars Veidt as a Danish captain, who has had hidden shore passes stolen by a couple of German spies; if he doesn’t find them he is going to be held directly responsible. He is unwillingly caught in an adventure where he must travel far and wide to find the dangerous people and clear his name in the process. Underneath both of these films are the underlying effects of the imminent war — the suspicion and fear of the people at the front line and also the representation of civilians and how they are being affected by the war effort.

The representations of Germans on-screen as fully developed human characters was a bold choice — most likely the input of Powell’s Hungarian born partner Emeric Pressburger, who fled from Berlin, where he was a very successful screenwriter before the Nazi occupation. During a pitch they made to the studios for their production *49th Parallel*, Powell said, “this is a propaganda picture in which the only good Nazi is a dead Nazi,” then added “but as that kind of propaganda can be self-defeating, we have started out by making them human beings. There are all kind of Nazis and there are all kinds of human beings.” Distinguishing this dichotomy of identity was a rogue concept for the time, but their ability to humanize even the most evil of characters so that we can see their uncanny human traits is crucial to why these characters and films are so memorable.

The Archers also quickly became known for a very high production quality and attention to detail. In his essay on the films of the Archers, Robert Murphy notes that the scope of these films was limited by the budgets of the productions. The uncompromising attention to quality that the Archers became known for began when they received financial backing from J. Arthur Rank. This period is also when they began collaborating with legendary cinematographer Jack Cardiff, who worked with them on *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946), *Black Narcissus* (1947) and *The Red Shoes* (1948). This financial and creative freedom allowed them to continue to make daring commercial films, dealing with original topics and themes that were often met with disdain by the general public and the government — so much so that Winston Churchill infamously tried to ban *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* due to the films confrontational attitude about the British army. The films of the Archers often tackled difficult and cumbersome issues for the nation, specifically the view of the former empire by the rest of the world. *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946) features David Niven as a fallen World War II pilot navigating the afterlife and his interactions with Americans and Germans, their different sensibilities and how sometimes these can clash. *Black Narcissus* (1947) displays the post empire generation dealing with how the rest of the world sees them after their rule. Concerning a group of British nuns on a mission
in India, the film was released mere months before the country gained independence from Great Britain. In his essay for the release of the film by The Criterion Collection, David Kehr writes that “British audiences in 1947 may well have seen Black Narcissus as a last farewell to their fading empire,” that “these are not images of defeat, but of a respectful, rational retreat from something that England never owned and never understood.” Anton Wolbrook’s distinctive portrayal of the imperious Boris Lermontov in The Red Shoes (1948) shows a view of Britain from the outside, a difficult one to grasp for many countrymen. His first thoughts of Britons are always judgmental and dismissive. His initial interaction with Moira Shearer’s Vicky Page shows how little he thinks of her. His assumption while being surrounded by her family’s opulence and wealth at their party is that this young Miss Page possesses no skill or talent. He assumes Marius Goring’s Julian to not be the brilliant young
composer. Yet he ultimately changes his views while still controlling their creative expression and careers. The theme of national identity and a need to display “Britishness” was a continuous motif in their work, yet as Powell once wrote, “the love of England which nurtured his work was never reciprocated.”

After the amicable dissolution of their partnership Michael Powell directed Peeping Tom (1960). To put it simply, the film ended his career. It concerned an obsessive, lonely and sexually repressed filmmaker who uses the camera as his weapon, both to kill and capture the moment. Peeping Tom was heavily criticized for its use of first-person perspectives from behind the camera’s eye as it shows the murders of these women. This point of view shot is now commonplace — some films even specifically structure themselves as being found footage from a hand-held video camera. The images of the killer’s perspective stalking his victims are a direct correlation to the usage of the device in the Italian Giallo horror film.

Powell’s widow, Thelma Schoonmaker commented that “the film hit at the wrong time, it was ahead of the curve and arrived too late in Powell’s career when he didn’t have allies to bring him back from the failure.” The film also had the unfortunate luck of being released the same year as Alfred Hitchcock’s successful slasher film Psycho. Peeping Tom carries with it an interesting and confrontational part of filmmaking for the creator and the audience, a notion Powell supported. As Vincent Canby writes, “the act of photographing something can be an act of aggression, a violation of the object photographed.” In Canby’s article, 10 years removed from the initial release of the film, he notes the film’s continuing themes brought about by other filmmakers, such as those in Hitchcock’s Rear Window (1954), and continued in Jim Mcbride’s David Holzman’s Diary (1967).

One of the last tasks in this ersatz retrospective would be to tackle the notion of the auteur. Powell himself found the term rather superfluous, commenting that “it is very difficult for the general public and even for the informed public to realize that making a film is an industrial process. It is perfectly possible to edit, alter, present and have a resounding success, without the director having anything more to do with the film from the moment he stops shouting at the actors.” If we disregard the many critiques of auteur theory (such as Timothy Corrigan’s “The Commerce of Auteurism,” which asserts that the theory has manifested over the years to become a simple marketing ploy), and overlook Michael Powell’s statement of modesty, looking at a filmmaker as an auteur allows us to simply appreciate and recognize their contribution to the medium. Beyond the logo of the bulls-eye in the archery targets at the beginning of their films, the Archers are remembered today as auteurs existing outside of the production norms: “Their flamboyance, their willingness to transgress realist boundaries to flirt with melodrama and excess, their interest in the composed film, their openness to European influences, and their adventurousness with narrative form and visual style set them against contemporary critical norms and aroused suspicion of their artistic judgment.”

The distinctions normally awarded to the members of a film crew were always a superfluous notion to the Archers; their films were passionate collaborative enterprises. The best person to sum up and reflect on why their films were so brave is Emeric Pressburger himself, who outlined the fundamentals to their success to Michael Powell in their last encounter before his death:

“You know Michael how people are always trying to explain: Written, Produced and Directed by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger? They think it’s some secret, I’ll tell you what it is, Michael. The only secret is that we are amateurs. When films were silent, films were an art. But when they learned to talk, people tried to turn them into a business. Telling a story, Michael, is not a business, it
is an art, and we are different from other artists because we were left alone by Arthur Rank for nearly ten years to go our own sweet way, thinking we were professionals, but we were amateurs and that’s why our films were different.”

This article as contribution to the celebration of the Archers could in no way compete with the efforts of Martin Scorsese, a massive fan of their work who cites the Archers’ films as one of his greatest influences. Scorsese met Michael Powell in the mid-1970s after Powell had directed two films in Australia — *They’re a Weird Mob Aren’t They* (1966) and *The Age of Consent* (1969). Both pictures had poor box office and critical returns, putting Powell at the lowest point in his career — “He was living in a trailer, trying to work and was in dire financial circumstances.” Scorsese told him of the appreciation of his films in America and took him to the United States to meet his fans. Francis Ford Coppola made him a director in residence at Zoetrope studios. Powell became a distinguished professor, while retrospectives of his work popped up across the country. Powell adopted a mentor role to Scorsese and the two became very good friends. Scorsese took an active part in trying to get the finest restorations of the Archers’ work possible, and Powell often contributed his advice to Scorsese’s productions and was a regular on set. Powell even married Scorsese’s personal editor Thelma Schoonmaker and stayed with her until his death. As the Criterion collection is about to release a brand-new restoration of *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp*, overseen by Scorsese and Schoonmaker, it would seem like the perfect time for those unfamiliar to acquaint themselves with the work of these rogue auteurs.
1. We owe allegiance to nobody except the financial interests which provide our money; and, to them, the sole responsibility of ensuring a profit, not a loss.

2. Every single foot in our films is our own responsibility and nobody else’s. We refuse to be guided or coerced by any influence but our own judgment.

3. When we start work on a new idea, we must be a year ahead, not only of our competitors, but also of the times. A real film, from idea to universal release, takes a year. Or more.

4. No artist believes in escapism. And we secretly believe that no audience does. We have proved, at any rate, that they will pay to see the truth, for no other reason than her nakedness.

5. At any time, the self-respect of all collaborators, from star to prop-man, is sustained, or diminished, by the theme and purpose of the film they are working on. They will fight to work on a subject they feel is urgent or contemporary, and fight equally hard to avoid working on a trivial or pointless subject.

Notes


4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. These two films were actually completed before the beginning of the war but were released during the war.


This November will mark the 50th anniversary of the British television series *Doctor Who*, which has remained consistently popular. Since the series was resurrected in 2005 after a nine-year hiatus, *Doctor Who* has achieved widespread, international success, with a devoted fan base even greater than is typical of sci-fi shows. While the show and its successes have been much discussed, particularly with regard to the show’s philosophical underpinnings, what has been generally ignored is the show’s queer attitude — wherein the term “queer” refers not to LGBT people in general, but rather to the discipline of queer theory.¹ *Doctor Who* embodies this view not only in its representations of gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender characters, but also in its overarching themes, which are often in contradiction to heteronormative paradigms.

In terms of representation, the issue of normalcy is particularly interesting in relation to the recent abundance of other shows featuring gay characters such as *Modern Family*, *Glee* or *The New Normal*. There is a trend in television of presenting gay characters in a highly normalized light, offering images of
gays who are not threatening to heteronormative cultural values, allowing straights to feel progressive without actually having their assumptions challenged. This apparent need for “safe” gays indicates a kind of heterosexual panic. *The New Normal* is based on the premise of a gay couple who wishes to have a baby. The very fact that this situation is considered a premise worth building a show around emphasizes the perceived strangeness of it. Yet ironically, as the title makes obvious, this show self-consciously promotes a highly conventional and normalized image of its gay characters — they are in essence no different from any straight couple. In Episode 10 of the series, there is a brief sequence showing a main character’s childhood fantasy of his adult life with his wife, complete with frilly apron and a tray of lemonade. The scene is then immediately repeated in “real life” with the only difference being the gender of his spouse. In its literal superimposition of straight values onto gay characters in order to make them socially acceptable, *The New Normal* might be a very nice gay show, but it is not by any means a queer show.

In contrast, *Doctor Who* takes a certain delight in its transgression of straight norms. Though the show has a premise unrelated to homosexuality, its world is densely populated by LGBT characters, whose presence is treated matter-of-factly. The effect is that gay characters are not singled out and thus, are in a sense, normalized. However, even more interestingly, the creators of *Doctor Who* do not seem to feel a need to make any of its characters appear normal at all. In fact, the gay characters on *Doctor Who* are usually celebrated for being gay, just as all the characters on the show are loved more for what makes them unique than for how well they fit in. This affection is demonstrated in the jubilant ways that characters are “outed” on the show, which has led to some of the show’s most memorable lines. The elderly ladies in the episode “Gridlock” announce defiantly,
“we’re not sisters, we’re married!” and the 2012 Christmas special includes the pronouncement, “Hello. I am a lizard woman from the dawn of time, and this is my wife.”

*Doctor Who* celebrates the diversity, uniqueness and quirkiness of all its characters, gay or not. LGBT people presented on the show are found in all walks of life, all corners of the universe, and even within every conceivable species — thus simultaneously emphasizing them as natural, normal and unique. The show should not be misconstrued as dehumanizing gay characters by at times portraying them as aliens, though historically, that has been done — in this case it is merely in keeping with the style of a science fiction show and with the particular quirkiness of *Doctor Who*. In fact, this very quirkiness furthers the show’s queer themes, by reflecting what Jack Babuscio calls a “gay sensibility,” or camp, which he defines as “a creative energy reflecting a consciousness that is different from the mainstream,” with four main features: “irony, aestheticism, theatricality and humor.”

*Doctor Who* clearly exhibits the qualities of aestheticism and theatricality in its overall visual style. The less tangible qualities of irony and humor are also present — as in the moment in “The Vampires of Venice” when the Doctor manages to queer the image of a typical heteronormative ritual, the bachelor party, by bursting out of a cake in place of a stripper. Babuscio states that campy humor is often characterized by “a basic contradiction or incongruity, coupled with a real or pretended innocence.” In “The Vampires of Venice” humor arises from an ironic contrast of masculine/feminine imagery, but also from the innocence Babuscio indicates when, upon seeing the shocked expressions of the party-goers, the Doctor asks “did I burst out of the wrong cake, again?” Thus even in small ways, *Doctor Who* has a “gay sensibility” and a queer aesthetic.

*Doctor Who* is also queer in its lack of strictly defined sexual identities and stereotypical roles for its characters. The most obvious example of this is, of course, the notorious Captain Jack Harkness. Captain Jack’s sexual identity is nearly impossible to pin down as gay, straight or bisexual — he seems to be attracted to people of any gender, sex, or in fact, humanoid species. He was once described as omnisexual by show creator (or re-creator) Russell T. Davies. Significantly, this label is not used on the show and Jack’s sexuality remains undefined. Not only is Jack’s sexual ambiguity met without discomfort, it is essential to his character and it is one of the many subjects of adoration from his fans.

It is equally impossible to fit Captain Jack into any traditional gay male stereotypes of “effeminate” or “butch.” Not that the character is without a certain flamboyance, but this is only partially feminine in nature, and overall masculine and feminine tropes combine easily in Jack. He is known for his stylish wardrobe, particularly his rather fabulous overcoat, which is indicative of an interest in fashion more commonly associated with women. Yet he is also a swashbuckling adventure-seeker, which is a much more typically masculine description. Even in his role as a notorious flirt, Jack mixes gender signals — he displays an assertiveness that may be associated with masculinity, along with a kind of coy sassiness that may be seen as feminine (sometimes even in the same line, as when he addresses a soldier in the episode “The Empty Child” with, “Hey tiger, how’s it hangin?’”).

Furthermore, given the long history of gay characters dying at the end of their stories, it is worth noting that not only has Jack not died yet, but he cannot die. In the episode
“Utopia,” it is revealed that Jack has become “a fixed point in time and space,” meaning that he will not die, no matter what happens to him. Immortality does not necessarily ensure a clear-cut blissful existence for Jack — he can feel pain, and in the Doctor Who spinoff Torchwood the theoretical problems of living forever are frequently examined. However, the trend of gay characters’ deaths in fiction has been well documented, especially in feature films. In The Celluloid Closet, Vito Russo notes that “… the very first gay man to be presented on film ended in the obligatory suicide that would mark the fate of screen gays for years to come.” Whether it be through suicide, murder or some tragic accident, death has been the traditional form of closure for queer narratives. This has been the fate of LGBT characters from classic films such as Rebel Without a Cause (1955), to more contemporary films celebrated for positive representations, such as Boys Don’t Cry (1999). Given the prevalence of this disturbing trend, the introduction of a literally indestructible queer character represents a radical change of direction for media representations of LGBT people, however complicated his unending life may be.

Working within an arguably heterosexist formula of male doctor/female companion, the show manages to queer traditional gender narratives, thereby exhibiting an ideology inconsistent with heteronormativity. It is worth noting that the original 1960s show was specifically designed to appeal to a mass audience based on heterosexist stereotypes. Yet as the show’s reboot has evolved, it has taken this pre-established format and turned it on its head. The Doctor’s female companions are one aspect of this queering, exhibiting a lack of adherence to heteronormative gender roles. For example, a very common gendered script in traditional fiction involves a female character faced with a choice between love and adventure, with the assumption that devotion to a husband will mean an end to her independent life. The entire story-arc of Doctor Who’s fifth season meditates heavily on this question, as Amy Pond is apparently faced with a choice between the Doctor and her fiancé Rory Williams — between adventure and marriage. However, after teasing the audience all season with the question, the show ultimately reveals this choice to be arbitrary — in the final episode Amy marries Rory and simply takes him along on her continuing adventures with the Doctor.

The Amy-Rory-Doctor triad suggests a new direction for the show in several ways, indicating that it is evolving even further from its original structure. The trio represents a break from the show’s formulaic sexual tension between the Doctor and his female companions. While this tension is present when Amy and the Doctor first begin traveling together, that changes fairly quickly. When Amy tries to kiss the Doctor he, in something of a panic, immediately tells Rory and insists on bringing him on one of their adventures in order to rekindle their relationship. The effect of this redirection of the “love interest” is that the show moves away from being centered on heterosexual coupling to the adventures of three friends. The “will-they-or-won’t-they” of heterosexual pursuit put aside, straight love becomes more of a subplot or backstory rather than the driving force of the narrative.

Rory and Amy as a couple can also be said to queer the image of heterosexuality in subtle ways. This may seem an odd idea considering that they are, at least at face value, a straight married couple. However, in discussing queer audience reception, Alexander Doty states that a queer reading of a text involves “aspects of cultural identification as well as of sexual desire” and that one of the benefits of such a reading is its “positive gender-and sexuality-destabilizing effects.” It is in this way that the two may be seen as slightly queer. Rory for example is a nurse, an occupation typically considered feminine, and Amy works as a writer, leaving the role of “breadwinner” unclear. It is also quite telling that after their marriage,
the Doctor repeatedly calls Rory “Mr. Pond” or refers to the two collectively as “the Ponds.” Given the significance accorded to the practice of adopting surnames by feminist theory, this apparently small gesture on the part of the Doctor carries weight. The Doctor is hardly unaware of human cultural practices and therefore should know that traditionally it is the woman who assumes the man’s name in heterosexual marriage, yet he does not adhere to this tradition. The Doctor sees no reason for Amy’s identity to be absorbed into Rory’s merely because she is a woman, thus disregarding an important norm of heterosexually structured society.

At the center of the show, always, is the character of the Doctor, with his distinct personal philosophy that can be said to queer “the hero” as a figure of ideal masculinity. In traditional narratives, from Hercules to John McClane, the hero is typically a warrior figure who reinforces the association of physical strength and violence with a masculine identity. Martin M. Winkler, in his analysis of the connections between the hero mythologies of old and American Westerns — which, he notes, carry over into post-frontier stories as well — points out that in both “the principal concept is that of the warrior hero.” (It goes without saying that these heroes are almost exclusively male.) Winkler further asserts that “it is the hero’s special affinity with his weapons which makes him a hero in the first place.” Thus, it is highly significant that the Doctor is known for his affinity not with a weapon but a tool, his sonic screwdriver. In fact, it is emphasized that the Doctor always avoids weapons and violence. This avoidance is indicative of the chief values represented by the Doctor such as compassion, forgiveness, intelligence and specifically an emphasis on strength through intelligence rather than through violence. Because values of compassion and forgiveness are more typically associated with femininity, the Doctor breaks rather dramatically from the androcentric ideology on which heteronormative society is largely based.

Doctor Who’s many themes, representations and humorous asides add up to a show that is, jubilantly and good-naturedly, queering familiar archetypal narratives at every turn. While the Doctor is still a superhuman male savior, he is one who is obstinately not a warrior, who encourages 1950s housewives to leave their controlling husbands and who is more than happy to ride off into the horizon on a transgender horse called Susan. Because the show takes such delight not only in queer characters, but the very idea of queerness, and despite having generally escaped the attention of academia in this regard, Doctor Who deserves recognition as one of the most radically queer shows on television today.
Notes


3. Ibid., 47.


9. Ibid., 519-520.
The horror genre has a gruesome history of reinforcing stereotypes. Horror films created their own narrative tropes and played by their own rules, through which only the pure could survive. Sexuality and drug use lead to the death of teenagers at the hands of knife-wielding psychopaths. Archetypes were formed - the Final Girl, the Victim - and young actresses became icons known as Scream Queens. There is an ideology, especially around these female character tropes, that eventually permeated into other areas of the horror genre. Even in situations outside the slasher sub-genre, these tropes could be seen. The mothers in *Rosemary's Baby* and *Grace* align with the tradition of the slasher's Final Girl simply because their fates, however bleak, are ultimately determined by their own choices.

Carol J. Clover, a scholar famous for her analysis of gender and slasher films, writes extensively on the subject of female characters in horror films in *Men, Women and Chainsaws*. She argues that “the image of the distressed female most likely to linger in memory is the image of the one who did not die: the survivor, or Final Girl.”

She also writes extensively on another important female character, the antithesis of the Final Girl known as the Victim. Through this dichotomy that arose from the golden age of slasher films, the years of *Halloween* and *Friday The 13th*, it became clear that these two characters suffer very different fates. The Victim is typically
depicted as a young, attractive and sexually available female. Her desire for sexual gratification is what leads to her eventual murder. When the beautiful blonde Lynda of Halloween (1978, John Carpenter) bares her breasts for the man she thinks is her boyfriend, she is soon strangled by the killer. As Carol J. Clover states, “the genre is studded with couples trying to find a place beyond purview of parents and employers where they can have sex, and are immediately afterwards (or during) murdered.” Because sexuality is treated as a teenage transgression, they must sneak around in secluded locations to commit the act. They become easy targets who are punished for their sin. When discussing the formula of the genre, Clover writes, “the only thing better than one beautiful woman being gruesomely murdered was a whole series of beautiful women being gruesomely murdered.” It is a formula that worked for the studios and for the predominantly male audience. These victims are meant to titillate, and to provide gruesome fodder for the audience’s blood lust.

While the Victims are destined to die, the Final Girl, by contrast, is destined to live and eventually defeat the killer. As opposed to following what those around her are doing, she is allowed more autonomy in her actions. Her unwillingness to follow the crowd allows her to notice the rising body count, and she is eventually spurred to action. Clover notes that the Final Girl is the character who “perceives the full extent of the preceding horror and of her own peril; who is chased, cornered, wounded.” While the Victim is killed, the Final Girl suffers as she defends herself. The Victim is not given a chance, but the Final Girl, after great hardship, can come out victorious. The Victim-Final Girl dichotomy mirrors Freud’s concept of the Madonna-Whore complex, in which men place women in one of two categories: the mother and the whore. The male villain of a slasher film loathes the women he is sexually attracted to, placing the sexually available female victims in the whore category and punishing them for it. Final Girls, chaste and practical, are closer to the Madonna category, and they have the support of the audience. The promiscuous teenagers are deserving of punishment, which comes with death. Only the “good girl” deserves salvation and life. One way the Final Girl relates to the Madonna is her sexual unavailability. Clover writes about the Final Girl as “the girl scout, the bookworm, the mechanic. Unlike her friends...she is not sexually active.” Compared to the Victim, her sexuality is more repressed. Her intelligence is what sets her apart from her victim counterparts. This intelligence allows her to recognize the danger around her, and eventually leads her to victory. One girl survives the onslaught and the other dies.

These notions can also be seen in other areas of the horror genre. The female protagonists in most non-slasher horror movies have similar traits to the Final Girl. Their intuitive nature allows them to notice the dangers while making their own choices, which allows for their survival. The mother protagonists of Rosemary’s Baby and Grace, while in different sub-genres of horror, exhibit these Final Girl-esque characteristics. But the stakes here are not as black and white as those in slashers, where it is literally life or death. Here the situation is more complex, and the love of the mother for her baby leads her to make different choices. They are not thinking only of their own survival, but also of the survival of their children. The situations of these horror films, exaggerated and twisted, are allegories for the anxieties of a real-life pregnancy, and the decision that the mother makes to fight for her child is a catalyst for her suffering, just as the Final Girl’s decision to fight for her life prolongs her struggle.
comes to haunt Rosemary as her pregnancy moves forward. Yet it is the gruesome physical aspects of her pregnancy that could strike a chord with mothers who yearn for a child. After a surreal nightmare in which she is defiled by a monster, she wakes covered in scratches that her husband Guy claims he caused during a romantic evening. She soon discovers that she is pregnant, and at first she is thrilled, but gradually her unborn child becomes a terrible burden to her health. Her pregnancy becomes unbearably painful, and drains the color from her face. While the supernatural element is ambiguous at the beginning of the film, Rosemary’s Baby relates its otherworldly terrors to a very real scenario: pregnancy complications that put both mother and child in danger. But Rosemary’s desire for a child forces her to ignore the pain. As her friends try to help, she tearfully declares she will not have an abortion (although none of them has explicitly mentioned it as a possible solution). She chooses to suffer, refusing to lose the child she was so excited to have.

In Grace (2009, Paul Solet), the mother, Madeline, fears the possibility of infertility. Madeline mentions early on that she and her husband lost two children, and that she has been taking fertility drugs. Her attempts to conceive a child have finally been successful, and she is doing everything she can to ensure its safety, but suddenly a car crash robs her of her husband and her child. Robbed of her miracle child, Madeline makes an unusual choice, to carry her deceased child to term. The Final Girl formula is transplanted into the realm of body horror, where Madeline chooses to carry the dead child in her womb. She suffers knowing that a child has once again been taken away, and suffers even more as she carries the thing of which she was robbed inside of her.

In slasher films (especially multi-film franchises), when the Victims are dead and buried, the Final Girl must live with the aftermath of the rampages, in fear of the next attack. Her autonomy is both a blessing and a curse: she survives, but her life, traumatized as she is, is a punishment of its own. In Rosemary’s Baby and Grace they experience similar circumstances, their own agency sentencing them to a life running from horrors. The Final Girls have their fates placed on their own shoulders; these mothers have to choose what lives they will lead with their horrifying offspring. It becomes a matter of how badly they
want to be with their children, and what sacrifices they are willing to make.

As the delivery date approaches, Rosemary grows increasingly paranoid about her baby's safety. With the satanic cult lurking around her, she begins searching for ways to save herself and her child. It is not until the end that she realizes how involved the cult truly was. After delivering her child, she is told it has died, but when she investigates a baby's cries echoing through the building, she finds it with the cult itself. The child is never revealed; it is Rosemary's horrified expression that hints at the monster in the cradle. It represents the underlying fear of her pain during pregnancy, the possibility that something really was wrong with her child. However, Rosemary is given a choice in regards to her demonic son. She is told that she could still be a mother to her child and would not be forced to join the cult. After considering it, she goes and rocks her baby's cradle, accepting the offer of being the mother to Satan's son. As the cult gathers around her while she rocks her son to sleep, it is clear that her fate will not quite be one of maternal bliss with her newborn.

"Rosemary's Baby relates its otherworldly terrors to a very real scenario: pregnancy complications that put both mother and child in danger."

around her while she rocks her son to sleep, it is clear that her fate will not quite be one of maternal bliss with her newborn.

Grace takes a radically different look at the welcoming of a child into a new mother's life. Here, it is a baby that sucks the life out of the woman who cares for it. When Madeline delivers her baby, she somehow wills it back to life, and she is thrilled to fill her role as mother. However, she quickly realizes there is something wrong with the baby, Grace. This particular bundle of joy has an appetite for blood — blood she gets from painful breast-feeding sessions that wear away at Madeline. Madeline's suffering continues when her daughter is brought back to life. She is exhausted and her daughter's taste for blood leaves her anemic. She quickly realizes that she is in over her head, something single mothers are often afraid of. She is faced with the choice of whether or not to keep this horrific baby. However, her desire for this child forces her to sacrifice her own body. As the body count rises, it becomes clear that she made her choice, and it is one she will be forced to live with. An especially bleak future lies ahead when Madeline reveals that Grace is starting to teethe and needs more blood.

In Rosemary's Baby and Grace, the trope of the Final Girl is reinterpreted to apply to other sub-genres of horror. Just like the Final Girl of slasher films, both women suffer for their agency (albeit with more complex circumstances), unlike the Victims, whose main purpose is to provide sex appeal and bloodshed. However, the fates of these characters are different, as that of the Final Girl is forced on her, and these mothers choose their own fates for the sake of their children. These mothers become new variations on the old horror tropes: not entirely Victims, and not entirely Final Girls. The prospect of losing their children leads them to choose a life destroyed by their monstrous offspring: one doomed to serve Satan, one a feeding ground of flesh and blood.

Notes

Mexico has always had a long-standing battle with national identity. After the Mexican Revolution in 1910, the ruling elite saw unification as a method to prevent another uprising. Under the failed policies and dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz, Mexico adopted a heavy opposition toward any foreign influence. In 1917, the nation adopted a new constitution and began to formulate a new cultural identity. However, in 1992 the enactment of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) reopened the gates to foreign investment, which impacted Mexican culture and fractured the sovereign identity that Mexico had been trying to build. Accompanied by an influx of foreign goods and culture that introduced American culture into both urban and rural communities, NAFTA significantly impacted Mexican sovereignty.

Immediately, Mexican cinema began to reflect the frustration with the new policy.

Guadalajaran filmmaker Guillermo del Toro wrote and directed *Cronos* (1993), an allegorical text of Mexico’s absorption through NAFTA, which addressed “pollution of cultural frontiers expressed in terms of the pollution of the boundaries of the body.”

Seven years later, Alejandro González Inárritu’s complex narrative *Amores Perros* (2000) offered another strong critique of a Mexican...
society overrun by foreign influences. *Cronos* and *Amores Perros* were early precursors to a new wave of Mexican cinema and the filmic articulation of discontent with NAFTA. Their success allowed other films to engage deeper social critiques, such as *Y Tú Mama También* (Alfonso Cuarón, 2001) and *Rudo y Cursi* (Carlos Cuarón, 2008), both of which serve as analogous texts to a specific time, mirroring the transition of the political and social landscape within Mexico.

*Y Tú Mama También* is the account of two best friends, Julio and T enoch, who travel the Mexican countryside in search of a beach known as Boca del Cielo (“Heaven’s Mouth”), accompanied by an exotic Spaniard, Luisa, and an anonymous narrator. Set against major political transformation and class tension within the nation, the film also addresses male friendship and sexuality. Julio and T enoch represent two different sides of Mexican society: T enoch comes from the bourgeoisie and Julio from the working class. *Y Tú Mama También* mostly functions as a Mexican buddy film, but is unconventional in terms of the two best friends’ completely opposite backgrounds and their underlying prejudices against each others’ respective social status. During a pivotal moment of their cross-country trip, the friends argue over the revelation that each has slept with the other’s girlfriend and they exchange class-based insults: *pinche nacote* (commoner), *arrabista* (social climber) and *pírruri de mierda* (shitty petty bourgeois).

Despite the jealousy that ends their friendship, Julio and T enoch discover their concealed homosexual desire after engaging in an ménage-a-trois with Luisa. Afterwards, both men realize their true feelings, but ignore them. Each goes his separate way after the trip’s conclusion, neither happy, until they meet one last time for coffee. Their final meeting ends on a grim political note; the anonymous narrator unveils the ruling political party has lost the elections and the shift in power has begun, echoing the central relationship between Julio and T enoch, and reflecting the end of the PRI’s 70-year reign and the PAN’s approaching years in power. The friends make small talk over coffee and in the end the working-class Julio is left with the check for coffee as the elite T enoch marches off into the distance, signaling what lies ahead for the working class living in Mexico.

Considered an unofficial sequel to *Y Tú Mama También*, *Rudo Y Cursi* is another buddy film, set against the Mexican Drug War, that explores the life of the working class. It follows two half-brothers Beto (Rudo) and Tato (Cursi) Verdusco — banana plantation workers and talented soccer players who are both recruited by a talent scout. The talent scout leads them down a path of fame, fortune and eventual failure. Unlike the previous film in which their friendship was challenged by class differences and hidden sexual desires, the central tension in *Rudo y Cursi* is sibling rivalry, as the brothers compete for fame and financial success. The brothers’ dreams of wealth are fulfilled for a brief moment, only to be shattered due to each man’s envy and personal flaws. By the film’s end, Tato, Beto, and their family are presented with only one option: invest in the newly developed drug culture. As the brothers become Mexico’s biggest soccer phenoms and are seduced by fame and fortune, their home and their family are

“Working-class Julio is left with the check for coffee as the elite T enoch marches off into the distance, signaling what lies ahead for the working class living in Mexico.”
engulfed by the Mexican Drug War. Throughout the entire film, Tato and Beto are constantly fighting to build their mother a house on the beach with their earnings. The dream is almost possible, but neither completes the task due to their own vices, namely Beto’s addiction to gambling and drugs and Tato’s devotion to his mediocre pop star career and trophy girlfriend. Instead their sister’s new husband, a drug kingpin, announces to both brothers at their sister’s wedding that he will pay for the beach house himself.

The tragic spiral of both characters reflects Mexico’s broken promises to its citizens. In the midst of their follies and corruptions, the drug cartels take over the land and they return to a house on the beach, as promised, but one that is not of their own doing. Portrayed as paradise in Y Tu Mama También, the beaches of Mexico no longer represent something idyllic. They have become instead a place where drug lords control the land and its inhabitants. The brothers are left in misery — Beto has lost his leg as payment for his gambling debts, and will never play soccer again, while Tato remains a has-been soccer sensation and failed pop star. As the brothers trot on the beach in the final scenes, Tato gleefully plays his rendition of Cheap Trick’s “I Want You To Want Me” (one of his few hit singles). This scene indicates that their dreams are not dead, but come at an extreme cost.6 They are alone in their own miserable world, surrounded by drug lords, and left to adapt to the only culture that now provides the means to survive.

Both Alfonso and Cuaro use their films to express strong opinions against the policies and cultural changes that have reconfigured their entire nation. Both films entertain and engage, but are also though-provoking. Y Tu Mama También, a captivating erotic drama placed against a very important political transformation, describes the nation at an impasse with no satisfactory way out.7 It emphasizes the failures of NAFTA and suggests a return to the national-developmental state.

Rudo Y Cursi functions as heavy-handed satire, conveying frustration at the new political climate through the analogous brothers from the poorest parts of Mexico. The most important element that these two films have to offer is their deeper insight into Mexican society, particularly NAFTA’s creation of a more difficult life for those still living in Mexico. The pressures of globalization on a nation still trying to find its identity in the world have a serious impact on both those who remain and those who have left in search of a better life.

The writer would like to thank Miguel Oswaldo Vernis for help on revisions, and would like to dedicate this article to the memory of his two grandfathers, Gonzalo Martinez Ortiz and Alberto Gabriel Rubio.
Notes


5. Ernesto R. Acevedo-Muñoz, “Sex, Class, and Mexico”, p.47. *The PRI is the Institutional Revolutionary Party, which ruled Mexico for 71 years until the PAN, or National Action Party, under Vicente Fox won the presidency in 2000 (though as of 2012, the PRI had regained the presidency).*


A Frosted Flakes commercial gave Jane Lynch her start. Mockumentarist Christopher Guest kept her in mind for future projects after directing the ad in the 1990s. Standing six feet tall, a “great redwood of a [woman],” and deaf in one ear, Lynch has always managed to queer her roles in the most subliminal of ways. What is significant about Lynch’s characters, regardless of the orientation or identity of her characters, is that Lynch possesses a subversive element which allows her to queer the narrative. Queer, as defined by Alexander Doty, is “a flexible space for the expression of all aspects of non- (anti-, contra-) straight cultural production and reception.” A film or television text can contain material that deviates from hegemonic ideals while not necessarily being explicitly gay, lesbian, bisexual, asexual, pansexual or other identity-defining sexual orientations. Queering the narrative disrupts binary systems and Jane Lynch’s nonconforming subversiveness has enabled her to queer traditional binaries of sex, gender and sexuality. Starting with Guest’s anthology of films that furnished her early career, Lynch was cast in ensemble works that paved the way for her future supporting roles. From Best of Show to A Mighty Wind and later with The 40-Year-Old Virgin and Glee, Lynch has drawn from her own life to queer the narratives of her films over the years. Jane Lynch’s own life has pointed to frustration with identification that attests to Butler’s theory of performativity, especially within drag performances. To Butler, “drag is subversive to the extent that it reflects on the imitative structure by which hegemonic gender is itself produced and disputes heterosexuality’s claim on naturalness and originality.” Butler is claiming that gender is an imitation itself and only occurs because we perform it and then expect it. This expectation is the hegemonic ideal of gender that creates binaries: men as masculine and women as feminine.
Therefore, drag performances can only further deviate from the ideas of gender as rigid and binary because the act challenges these expectations. Paraphrasing Lynch’s memoir Happy Accidents, a New York Times interviewer says that Lynch “wished her father would take her to sports events; ‘I’ll be your boy,’ she thought to herself,” also finding that Lynch favored wearing her father’s clothes. By expressing a desire to dress in drag, normative ideals that create hegemonic dichotomies are questioned, so that Lynch’s telling of this story promotes an evaluation of socially constructed binaries. Based on these stories about her personal life, we can see how this frustration manifests in her performances in her work.

In Christopher Guest’s Best of Show (2000), sexualities are questioned when Lynch’s character is found kissing an employer, Sherri Ann (Jennifer Coolidge). Lynch, as Christy Cummings, had been training Sherri Ann’s dog for the competition. After they win, a television camera exposes their kiss. The two women’s romantic desire for each other becomes evident, even while Sherri Ann had been claiming to love her much older, wrinkled husband. Actively rearranging desires, Jane Lynch’s character enables Sherri Ann to explore her sexuality. Sherri Ann is able to express desire for Christy Cummings while still maintaining a heterosexual relationship. Lynch’s character allows Sherri Ann to explore a more fluid identity that does not conform to traditional sexual categories.

Three years later, in A Mighty Wind (2003, Christopher Guest), Jane Lynch plays a married folk singer with a porn star past. The character’s vibrant history makes her husband uneasy, but they find solace in WINC (Witches in Nature’s Colors), a coven that worships...
colors. To show her devotion to the group she dons a rainbow-striped guitar strap at a television broadcasted benefit concert. She towers over her husband, and her tall, lanky build gives her a masculine characteristic. Through her ambiguous past (What kind of porn did she do? Why does it make her husband uneasy?) Lynch finds a way to subvert a normally heterosexual relationship and deviates from constrictive hegemonic ideologies to make the character more complex. In this performance, although Lynch is not seen as a visible queer character, she still undermines her marriage with doubt.

Jane Lynch exposes herself in *Happy Accidents*, when she describes Christopher Guest’s films as shot with “no script, just scene plot points [they] had to hit in each scene to tell the story.” Her films with Guest are extraordinarily improvisational, created by the actors themselves. This style of filmmaking allowed Lynch to queer the characters and insert personal frustrations with sexuality and gender into her acts.

An audition for *The 40 Year Old Virgin* two years later (2005) provided Lynch with the same opportunity to reveal her ideologies through her character. Again, in her memoir, she details the audition process of *The 40 Year Old Virgin* as an improvisation she performed opposite Steve Carell, which was then written into the script, verbatim. Her character became Paula, who tries to convince Andy Stitzer (Carell) to sleep with her with the promise that she “will haunt [his] dreams” if he does. Lynch challenges the typical associations of heterosexual relationships by imposing unromantic activities and sardonic comments onto the situation. While the character may be read as hyper-heterosexual for her strong desire to sleep with Andy, as she is forcefully pushing herself upon him, it comes across as farcical and as a mockery of a heterosexual coupling. Lynch is still able to undermine cultural assumptions stemming from hegemonic ideals to allow a contra-straight reading when she declares that she will sadistically remain in his thoughts. Through these works, Lynch offers alternate images of women that work to queer the narrative and are not informed by hegemonic gender roles.

After years of character work in mocumentaries, Lynch was given an opportunity with *Glee* to expand her platform into television. Lynch plays the coach of an Ohio high school cheer team, and is cast among an ensemble of teenagers, which includes the reserved and differently-abled Artie Abrams (Kevin McHale), the bossy black woman Mercedes Jones (Amber Riley), punk-Jew Noah Puckerman (Mark Salling), white football quarterback Finn Hudson (Corey Monteith), feminine gay Kurt Hummel (Chris Colfer) and stuttering Asian Tina Cohen-Chang (Jenna Ushkowitz), to name a few. While admirable for undertaking a wide array of characters from different backgrounds, *Glee* presents their identities as mere stereotypes and oversimplifies the characters. The show uses categorizations like Paula Dean uses butter. The large cast is kept manageable by abridging the implications and discourse around their respective identities. The most significant for the purpose of this essay would be the characters whose coming out and emphasis on queer visibility become the defining moments for them. Being explicit with sexuality becomes a requirement. Lynch stands out because she does not assimilate into any of these one-dimensionally-defining characteristics that the show uses to categorize the ensemble cast. Instead, her persona allows her to question the stereotypes that stem from the show’s social assumptions.

The most common defining characteristic of queerness requires a character to focus on labels and identity, rather than describing acts and feelings. This enforces binaries of gay/lesbian or queer/straight, and declines any examination of alternate sexualities that do not fit into the aforementioned categories. Portraying sexualities as clear-cut categories
creates a hierarchal system that privileges some people over others, especially those who can neatly fit into those roles. What is interesting, then, is exploring how underlying features of some characters deliver more of an impact, creating a complex and diverse relationship for the viewer. Brittany Pierce (Heather Morris) and Santana Lopez (Naya Rivera) have a coming-out trajectory that proves to have more substance. Before their romantic relationship, the couple showed strong lesbian undertones — frequently in the same shot, holding hands, singing to each other, comforting each other. In an early episode, “Britney/Brittany,” Santana tells John Stamos’s character that he is the hottest doctor that she has ever seen, but while performing the song “Me Against the Music” in an anesthesia-induced fantasy, Brittany and Santana enter homoerotic space when they dance seductively with each other. There is a dichotomy present with Brittany and Santana: they maintain heterosexual relationships but also can transcend from a homosocial space into a homoerotic one. According to Alexander Doty, the female bonding and intimacy that does not have to do with sexual intimacy may still be considered lesbian because of the strength the women have together. However, because their trajectory leads to an explicit sexual relationship between the two women, this narrative simplifies the character’s relationship to an easily identifiable object. Their relationship is condensed into a coming-out narrative that renders the two characters as visibly queer, and by doing so, they lose their subversiveness that would have allowed them to undermine social conventions. So what is particularly fascinating about Glee is not the coming out narrative these characters have to encounter, with the bravado of moving from invisibly to explicitly queer and earning a label like a badge. It is the curious case of Sue Sylvester’s subversive, undermining and understated queer position that triggers an interest here. Her personal life remains, for the most part, undisclosed — she is a strong, independent woman with a penchant for blackmail. Looking past the orientation of actor Jane Lynch, Sue Sylvester represents a queer character without being explicitly homosexual, or lesbian. Her frequent mishaps with love, her perceived asexual state and more recently her situation with her new baby serve to queer this character in unexpected, non-coded or invisible ways.

In the first season’s episode “Mash Up,” Sue Sylvester quickly finds herself dating a boozy news anchor — an egotistical plastic-faced man with whom she plans on going to “The Second Annual Allen County Sickle Cell Anemia Dance-a-thon.” As she proclaims to Will Schuster that “Sue Sylvester is in love,” the shot jumps to her playing battleship with the man. This non-sexual and masculine activity starkly deviates from what a mainstream audience might assume happened on this date, but queer readings of the shot can detect Sue as not conforming to hegemonic gender roles. Sue seeks dance lessons from Schuster for the event, and one night she decides to surprise the news anchor, Ron, by showing off her new Zoot suit for the event. She walks boldly in wearing the hefty deep red outfit to find Ron making out with another news anchor. He remarks that only men wear the suits, which Sue seems to not have realized. In fact, her obliviousness to gender roles in these particular clothing choices reflects her ambivalence about gender.

Jane Lynch’s Sue Sylvester does not believe in socially constructed gender roles, similar to Judith Butler’s theories on the performativity of gender. Butler believes that gender involves a “paradoxical process of performativ-
“You see, that’s the problem with your generation. You’re obsessed with labels. So you like show tunes? Doesn’t mean you’re gay, it just means you’re awful.”

while her embodiment points to gender as a construct. Sue’s matching tracksuit collection, her hasty personality, every choice and every mundane action Lynch utilizes for Sue Sylvester works against the status quo by subverting hegemonic social conditions.

The episode “Bad Reputation” of season one leaves Sue Sylvester embarrassed by a viral video of her performing Olivia Newton John’s “Physical.” A commenter posted that the “man in the video looks like a male Sue Sylvester,” which Sue finds to be the most hurtful comment. Again, hovering on the border of binary gender, Sue Sylvester is the pinnacle of sexuality and gender deviance. A member of glee club cites the original music video as “pretty groundbreaking subject matter at the time, considering its depiction of fluid sexuality” which can be translated onto the new version as well because of Sue Sylvester’s attitude toward Olivia Newton John and the male dancers.

In homage to the original, Olivia Newton John and Sue Sylvester perform “Physical” together after Sue’s video goes viral. Upon entering the realm of the performance, Sue and Olivia are dressed in matching blue sweat suits and sing together in a sea of hunky exotic looking men. However, their presence does not faze the men as they work out. As the two women maneuver around them and glance at their biceps, they are primarily concentrated on their own workout. Instead, the women share intimate moments and glances throughout the number while they sing “I took you to an intimate restaurant/Then to a suggestive movie/There’s nothing left to talk about/Unless it’s horizontally.” In a close up of the two, Sue glances at Olivia, bites her lips as she looks away and then smiles as she turns to stare again at the pop star. Where the men appear as objects, only Olivia Newton John is the subject of desire for Sue. This performance echoes an analysis of Alexander Doty’s in which he says that there is a queer pleasure in seeing two women perform in a “tender and boisterous rapport,” even without becoming romantically intimate. To further explain this relationship between the viewer and on-screen identification, Doty believes that “queer” represents the contra- or anti-, so that even straight viewers can find forms of queer pleasure.

To watch these two women bonding while being ignored by men may also suggest a butch/femme relationship. Butler argues that the imitation of gender creates as well as destabilizes gender. If gender is an act of performance, it cannot exist without both imitation and societal expectations of that imitation. In the number, Sue Sylvester aggressively grabs a towel from one of the men, borrowing with it his masculine attributes. Olivia Newton John is allowed to be lifted by the men like a light toy, fulfilling feminine and female roles that then align two women as masculine and feminine. As the men exit the faux gym space, there are close ups of their spandexed asses, and the women while tempted are the last two left in the room when the males leave. The two women share a moment before they exit together — this is concrete imagery for a queer reading and solidifies the bond between the two women.
Sue Sylvester transcends borders and binaries and makes a profound statement about how visibility is pertinent to contemporary youth, particularly in America, suggesting that it may not always be the most viable option. When Kurt Hummel mentions his sexuality to Sylvester, she responds, “You see, that’s the problem with your generation. You’re obsessed with labels. So you like show tunes? Doesn’t mean you’re gay, it just means you’re awful.” In this one sentence she debunks the stereotype of outed gay character Kurt and spurs the audience to dig for something a little deeper. This statement calls for a better portrayal of queer characters, because not all queer characters or queered readings will derive from visibility. This statement also reflects on Jane Lynch’s personal, vested interests in the portrayal of queers. She actively calls for a wider queer representation on-screen while maintaining that identity politics are not always sufficient. In an interview Lynch says that, “As a gay person, I don’t want to be separate from the rest of the world. […] I want to be in the human community.” While Lynch is open about her orientation, labeling herself as “gay,” she is still able to express how categorization is problematic, and she can translate her frustrations with hegemonic standards through her characters, allowing for a wider discussion on gender and sexuality.

Notes
5. Butler, Ibid.
6. Doty, “There’s Something Queer Here.,” Ibid.
Throughout film history in the United States, the detective archetype has remained a character staple, despite the ever-changing values of American society. Rather than becoming an archaic set of tropes, the detective has evolved over the course of the last century. The detective is one of the most relatable character tropes in fiction — he’s curious, he’s cynical, he hates his job. But most importantly, he’s a victim to the greater mechanisms of society, and ultimately, his goal is to triumph over those that try to push him down.

The “detective flick” as an American generic mainstay is most typically associated with the hard-boiled film noirs of the 1940s. However, the definition of the detective as a character can be ambiguous depending on context. Films like David Lynch’s Blue Velvet feature characters that function as detectives without holding the title, for example. The detective character has evolved over time, and his place as a representative of American society has changed as well.

The most paradigmatic detective films come from the Hollywood era — John Huston’s The Maltese Falcon (1941) and Howard Hawks’ The Big Sleep (1946). It’s interesting to note that both films are based on novels by the most famous American crime writers, feature two of the most iconic private eyes and both star Humphrey Bogart. Both films fall under the category of film noir, which C. Jerry Kutner defines as “rooted in the art and literature of anxiety.” Both detectives live in a society of “anxiety,” against the backdrop of World War II era and post-World War II America.

The Maltese Falcon, an adaptation of Dashiell Hammett’s novel, stars Bogart as private detective Sam Spade. Spade is credited as the prototype of the hard-boiled detective character, paving the way for other iconic detectives throughout the years. He is cool, calculated, cunning. He’s the tough guy detective who is always in control, or tries to be. The Maltese Falcon was released in October 1941, just a few months before the attack on Pearl Harbor and the United State’s official entry into World War II, when the thought of entering the war sent ripples of anxiety through American society. The attitude possessed by Spade is very much indicative of the U.S. worldview at the time, that of taking control.
and feeling obligated to allocate justice.

Spade is filled with the macho charisma rampant in the leading men of the period. He has a sense of morality he'll uphold, even through blunt means; he's not afraid of conflict or to stand up for himself. When Joel Cairo pays Spade a visit, pointing a gun in his face and demanding to search his office, Spade apprehends him head-on rather than acquiescing and waiting for a more opportune moment. He's the prototypical wartime male — masculine, capable, entitled. In his attitude toward women, he feels deserving and gets offended when the female lead doesn't throw herself at him. “What have you ever given me besides money?” he demands of his client before forcing a kiss on her.

Philip Marlowe, Raymond Chandler's iconic detective character, was inspired by Hammett's Spade. Marlowe, protagonist and private eye of The Big Sleep, is similar to Spade in a few respects — he's a smart aleck and a tough guy — but the similarities end there. Whereas Spade is representative of the pre-war and wartime American man — the one who feels the need to get involved — Bogart's portrayal of Marlowe in the post-war film adaptation is less aggressive. He'd rather throw out a smart remark than a punch. Marlowe, like Spade, isn't afraid to get his hands dirty, however he prefers not to resort to violence if possible — taking the guns away from everyone in the scene multiple times or tricking Eddie Mars. He's sarcastic and cynical, but dons the tough guy façade when the situation requires it.

Bogart's portrayal of Marlowe is a bit of a contradiction, though. When it comes to women, the novel's Marlowe is more chivalrous than Spade. He thinks they're trouble and he tries not to entangle himself with them, but he can't resist saving the damsel in distress. In the film however, Marlowe is more of a lady-killer — flirting with and seducing multiple women — and the romance with Lauren Bacall's character was given more precedence in order to bolster the screen time of the film's stars. Marlowe is portrayed as a “modern knight who in order to be a knight rejects, inverts, then remakes chivalric 'knightliness'” through his associations with symbolic knights (the stained glass, the chess piece), and through his chivalric attitude. Philip Marlowe, however begrudgingly, always takes it upon himself to rescue the ladies. This is indicative of gender roles during the American postwar period — men were supposed to be gentlemanly and “chivalrous” in order to court women.

Bogart's Marlowe is exemplary of the pantheon of protagonists contained in Hawk's filmography, The Hawksian Hero. “Hawks' heroes are [...] habituated to danger and living apart from society.” This illustrates an important facet of the detective character — that of the outsider. He is almost always at once both separated from and directly involved with whatever conflict is occurring. This is what makes the detective so relatable. He allows spectators to become involved with the action of the film while keeping them separate from it. Marlowe's client in The Big Sleep, General Sternwood, is a sickly, decrepit old man, confined to a wheelchair. He offers Marlowe a glass of brandy, which he is physically unable to enjoy himself. He tells Marlowe, “You may smoke, too. I can still enjoy the smell of it. Hum, nice state of affairs when a man has to indulge his vices by proxy.” Sternwood must use Marlowe in order to enjoy life's pleasures,
must live vicariously through him. Similarly, viewers cannot enjoy the thrills of crime and mystery in the real world, but must experience it through the adventures of private investigators like Philip Marlowe. The detective is our proxy to a romantic world where the underdog can expose a corrupt society for what it really is. We can experience the danger without any of the risk.

Marlowe’s adventures have been adapted for the screen a plethora of times. An interesting example is Robert Altman’s 1973 adaptation of another Chandler novel, *The Long Goodbye*. This film places Marlowe’s adventures in the 1970s, rather than the 1950s of the novel. While Bogart’s portrayal of Marlowe emphasizes the tough-guy aspects of his personality, Elliot Gould’s turn in the role goes in the other direction. Gould’s Marlowe is the ultimate smart aleck, cracking sarcastic jokes in every scene. But he nixes the confrontational aspect, turning away from all possible fights presented to him.

He’s an almost entirely different character than Bogart, but the demeanor of the performance achieves the same effect. Gould’s Marlowe is a much more sympathetic character — instead of wanting to solve the case because of his job, the mystery is personal. His goal is to prove his friend Terry Lennox’s innocence. But when he discovers his friend isn’t innocent, he tracks him down and kills him. Marlowe is manipulated and taken advantage of throughout the film. He grows weary of being a pawn in everyone else’s schemes. This is what leads to his decision to eliminate the trouble at its source and murder his friend. This ending differs from the novel. The detective, here exemplified by Marlowe, is no longer living in a world of black-and-white morals.

Allen H. Redmon points out in his essay on the film, “*The Long Goodbye* offers spectators a long anticipated evolution of the detective genre rather than the goodbye Altman intended or critics have suspected.” That Marlowe kills his friend — an ending which differs from Chandler’s novel — gives spectators a satisfaction that they could not achieve with earlier detective films. Once again, the detective is both an insider and an outsider.
He begins the story uninvolved in whichever crime is presented, but is soon entangled in its sticky web, even directly influencing its outcome. *The Long Goodbye* puts a new spin on this. “Philip Marlowe’s decision to kill his friend gives victory to the detective in the only way it can: by having the detective perform the film’s final crime.”

The following year saw the release of Roman Polanski’s *Chinatown* (1974), a New Hollywood rendition of film noir and the detective film. Jack Nicholson’s Jake Gittes is an original character, but he falls in line with the detectives seen throughout cinematic history. He’s wisecracking, he’s cynical and he wants to be the hero. Ultimately, Gittes falls victim to the corrupt society he tries so desperately to rise above.

The “Chinatown” of the film is only a setting in the film’s final act. Before that, it is an attitude, a marker of the corruption and shady dealings running rampant throughout the police force. Gittes’ past is never certain. All that’s revealed is that he once worked for the district attorney in Chinatown, but due to said corruption leading to multiples deaths, he was taken off the force. *Chinatown*, though it takes place in the 1930s, is a film about American society during the early 1970s. This sort of corrupt climate is allegorical to the political climate of the United States in the years of the Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal, with Gittes’ and Evelyn’s anxieties paralleling the public anxiety of the time.

Gittes is surrounded by corruption everywhere he goes. While investigating the scandal in the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, he is confronted by the film’s primary antagonist, Noah Cross. Gittes discovers that Cross “owns the water department” in question, and that he also “owns the police.” How is Gittes supposed to triumph over a foe that runs entire branches of government? He’s cloistered in a society pitted against him. Unlike the private eyes of early film noir, Gittes is not an impervious superhero. His mission of heroism fails. He is left with nothing to show for his work except an injured nose, evidence of his vulnerability.

In “Neo-Noir on Laser,” Joe McElhaney points out the visual and narrative claustrophobia of *Chinatown*, but said, “The film’s claustrophobia has been widely noted, but this alone would hardly qualify it for any sort of revisionist honors. Claustrophobia is a hallmark of any classic film noir.” The claustrophobic quality of *Chinatown* and its detective is a significant trope of the genre. From Bogart in black-and-white noir, to *The Long Goodbye* and *Chinatown*, the detective is confined by a strangling society and its corruption.

Over the next few decades, different kinds of detectives began to emerge in film. Ridley Scott’s *Blade Runner* (1982) sees the detective, Rick Deckard, hunting down replicants — uncanny humanoid robots — in the dystopian cyberpunk Los Angeles of the future. *Blade Runner* takes the noir style and transplants it into a science fiction universe while retaining the thematic elements of the detective story. The detective, transplanted into a futuristic setting, exemplifies disillusionment with a world of rapidly advancing technology. David Lynch’s *Blue Velvet* (1986), rather than featuring an official “detective,” uses an average-joe character investigating strange happenings in a facsimile of suburban 1950s middle-town America. The town possesses a seedy underbelly, creating a stark contrast between the realistic and gothic aspects of American society. Despite protagonist Jeffrey Beaumont’s desire to lead a normal life, his curiosity gets the best of him. He further and further investigates the dark underworld of his sleepy town and the corruption that surrounds him.

The detective archetype in American cinema evolved over the course of the 20th century, but each incarnation represents a manifestation of American society at the time — wartime anxiety, frustration with corrupt bureaucracy, disillusionment with the powers that be. Why is the detective such a timeless
character? The detective is both insider and outsider. Like the detective, we witness the mystery without putting ourselves in harm’s way. He is a proxy for the spectator. Through him we indulge our appetite for mystery, but more importantly, he is our vehicle for expressing our own frustrations with society.

Notes

1. C. Jerry Kutner, “Film Noir Since the ’50s.” *Bright Lights Film Journal*.


