



## Crossing Crossing Conceptual Boundaries III

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School of Law and Social Sciences

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## Editorial Introduction

### Making connections and new beginnings

#### Maria Tamboukou

Writing an introduction for the third volume of Crossing Conceptual Boundaries (CCB3) has become a difficult and moving endeavour: difficult because there are many people and institutional settings that we need to say farewell to and moving since this volume marks the end of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences within which this publication was initially conceived as an idea and realized and developed as a project of our PhD community in the last six years. But to follow Hannah Arendt (1998) what is exciting about life and the human condition is indeed the possibilities and hope for new beginnings. In this light, this volume marks the end of an era but also the beginning of a new one, where we hope that its core idea, namely the attempt to cross conceptual boundaries, will also become an experiment in crossing institutional boundaries within the new structures of the University of East London. Not accidentally, given the interdisciplinary character of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences the papers and book reviews in this volume most strongly carry this idea of making interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary connections in a most vivid and intellectually rigorous way as I will further discuss.

The volume opens with two papers exemplary demonstrating the rich practice-based research culture of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences. What these papers most persuasively show is that the art/research encounter can be both beautiful and rigorous and that aesthetic sensibility and theoretical depth and complexity can co-exist and make exciting connections.

Matthew Hawkins' contribution takes up the idea of cinema as philosophy and develops it through a thoughtful and illuminating reflection on the making of a short documentary film, BULLSEY, which becomes the focal point of his paper. In challenging the idea of the sequential imperative of the narratological tradition (see Hyvärinen et al, 2010) Hawkins filmwork forces and indeed encourages the viewer to be seduced by the 'affective tonality' of the film, its colours, the force of its sounds and the speed of its movements rather than its plotless storyline and 'the banality' of its context. Hawkins actually challenges and reverses the notion of 'the banal' transposing into one of the constituting elements of his artwork. Although drawing on complex and notoriously opaque philosophical concepts from Deleuze and Guattari's theories, Hawkins discussion and analysis is clear and illuminating, successfully intertwining theory and film practice. Hawkins' original contribution is complemented in the volume by a book review of the book *Filmosophy* by Daniel Frampton. It is indeed the central idea of this book, interfaces between films and philosophy that Hawkins not only reviews but also develops and materializes through his contribution to the volume.

Following on the line of theoretically informed and beautifully elaborated art-research practice Kate Sicchio's paper delves into multi-levelled notions of space emerging in the interface between choreograph and real-time video interventions. Topology as an interesting buzzword very much at the heart of current sociological and cultural

studies research<sup>1</sup> becomes a point of reference, a theme for reflection and an interesting theoretical question in Sicchio's analysis and discussion. Here again Deleuze and Guattari's philosophies underpin the theoretical direction of the paper and guide its artistic experimentation through dance-practice led research. As its title indicates, Sicchio's original proposition is a conceptualization of space in terms of interrelated and intersecting planes of frames. Her analysis further considers differentiated levels and kinds of space generated through actual and virtual connections. In this light, four space forms are discussed, what Sicchio delineates as 'physical space, camera space, projection space and compositional space'. In putting forward the argument of conceptualizing choreographic practice and digital video technologies as a topology, Sicchio beautifully and persuasively complements her analysis with 'the nuts and bolts of her recorded performances', so that the reader can have a tangible idea of the plausibility of the artist/researcher's original proposition.

On a different note and emerging from 'more traditional' social sciences theoretical problems and empirical concerns we include two papers that discuss intersections between gender, social class and race, as well as questions, strategies and tactics around poverty and development. These papers highlight a key research orientation of the University of East London in general and the School of Social Sciences and Humanities in particular: our theoretical and empirical interest in questions of social equality and justice and our commitment to working for social change.

Mastoureh Fathis's paper explores connections between gender, social class, race and the idea of home and belonging in the formation of intersectional identities of Iranian women doctors and dentists living in the UK. Her paper emerges from a narrative-led empirical research that draws on the research expertise, culture and tradition of two major research centres of the University of East London, the Centre for Research on Migration, Refugees and Belonging (CMRB, <http://www.uel.ac.uk/cmrb/>) and the Centre for Narrative Research (CNR, <http://www.uel.ac.uk/cnr/>). In analyzing 14 life histories interviews, Fathi looks into the content but also the context of her stories, namely contemporary Iranian society and the discourses around its constitution and formation in modernity. Taking an intersectional approach in the way we perceive contemporary identities (See Yuval-Davis 2010), Fathi looks into the fluidity of classical sociological axes of difference such as class, gender and race amongst others, without downplaying their role in generating, sustaining and prolonging acute regimes of domination and social inequalities in women's lives. Further working in between Iran and the UK, Fathi has the opportunity to trace transpositions of western sociological concepts as they migrate from one geographical context to another. It is therefore real life as well as intellectual migration trails that Fathi follows, ultimately raising crucial questions around women, home and belonging.

In looking into the economic hardships of rural households in Bangladesh, Mohammad Sadiqunnabi Choudhury considers the role and multi-levelled functions of what in his paper presents and discusses as Microfinance Institutions (MFIs). Bracketing macro-economic concerns, practices and strategies, Choudhury adopts a pragmatic approach to the everyday needs and crises of poor rural households. There are two main advantages that Choudhury presents and discusses: a) the importance of supporting immediately and on the ground vulnerable rural households and b) informal finance strategies and tactics can become effective when there is planning and efficient management. This is not to deny or refute the importance of macro-finances in

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<sup>1</sup> See for example details of a major interdisciplinary UK led, EU project on 'Understanding Cultural Dynamics' at: [http://cordis.europa.eu/search/index.cfm?fuseaction=news.document&N\\_RCN=29542](http://cordis.europa.eu/search/index.cfm?fuseaction=news.document&N_RCN=29542)

developing countries, it is rather a way to work in the interstices, gaps and inevitable ruptures of macro-economic planning particularly within geographical, physical, social and political contexts where unforeseen circumstances tend to be recurring. This approach that attends to the importance of the 'micro' has of course a long and rich tradition in the fields of sociology, economics and politics: it is on these rich fields of scholarship and research that Choudhury's analysis draws. It is therefore not accidental that Choudhury's contribution to the books review section of this module discusses and present a relevant book, with a provocative and politically suggestive title: *Just Give Money to the Poor: The Development Revolution from the Global South* (Hanlon et al., 2010). Here again the central idea that the book puts forward is that poor people need money and they will know what to do with them. Whether you agree or not you should read the book to check the plausibility of the argument and Choudhury's review offers an excellent introduction to it.

The final paper of the volume oscillates between artistic, cultural and socio-political concerns, questions and themes, artfully keeping a fine balance between the range of diverse areas in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences. In 'The Comedy of the Spectacle' Ray Campbell explores differences between contemporary British comedy culture and the 'alternative comedy' of the 1980s. Campbell's interest and analysis emerges from his own involvement in the 1980's alternative scene: here again the author is both a researcher and a comedian, both an outsider and an insider of the research problem that he presents, dissects and analyzes. Drawing on Guy Debord's (1983) famous work, *Society of the Spectacle*, Campbell scrutinizes and interrogates both the notions of the comedy and that of the spectacle. Looking into the causes of what he describes as 'the decline and demise of alternative comedy' Campbell charts a dynamic diagram of power relations between the pragmatic conditions within which comedy is produced, hegemonic cultural discourses and audience dynamics. But is it all bleak in Campbell's analysis? You should read the paper to find out how in the midst of 'the demise and the decline' the author/comedian finds a way to discern alternative possibilities for the future. So, no worries: you can still read the article and enjoy your next stand-up comedy show. Alternative comedians will always be waiting for you.

Having already discussed two contributions to the book reviews section of the volume, we are pleased to include a review of a wonderful book on *The Cultural Politics of Female Sexuality in South Africa*. The author is our alumna, Henri Gunkel and the book very much draws on her PhD thesis here at the University of East London. The book was published by Routledge as a hard back last year, it sold out within six months and is now been re-issued as a paper back. What an achievement for Henri, and what a privilege for us to be able to include a review of the book here.

The books review section finally includes a review for a book from Spain: *El déficit mediático: donde España no converge con Europa* [Media deficit; points where Spain does not converge with Europe]. The review comes from Jesús Peña Moya, a visiting PhD student at our school last year from the University of Malaga. Apart from presenting and discussing a very interesting book on media politics in Europe, Peña's contribution is a tangible reminder in the volume of our lively international PhD community. As he has lively put it in our communication about the volume: 'I was one semester at the University of East London, as visiting student, coursing a PhD program, and the experience was fantastic thanks to excellent professors, who taught me new ways of building my research. In addition, I met great students; some of them are now friends, with whom to develop in the future international networks of knowledge.'



Peña's optimistic leap into future possibilities is indeed important as a farewell to the School of Humanities and Social Sciences. Many things will change in the way we work and communicate this coming academic year while the editorial board will be reconstituted and reconvened to include academics and PhD students from more than one school. In his influential book on *The Idea of the University*, Karl Jaspers has pointed out the importance of the human factor in university life: 'All of university life depends upon the nature of the people participating in it [...] The truest idea of the university is all in vain if the people who could realize it are not available'. Jaspers pithily notes. (1960, 112) Well, our editorial board might be losing some of its founding figures this year, while our PhD community has already been relocated in a number of different schools across the university. Let us then hope that despite the changes, *Crossing Conceptual Boundaries* will not lose the spirit and the vital forces that have made it such a successful intellectual project in the last six years.

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## Articles



# The concept of affective tonality and its manifestation as narrative experience in the short film *Bullseye* (Hawkins, 2010).

Matthew Hawkins

## Abstract

*This paper will explore the concept of affective tonality as a method of understanding narrative, as expressed through my own film practice as research. 'Bullseye' (Hawkins, 2010) is a short narrative film that encapsulates the narrative modes of Aristotelian linearity through simple 'plotting' that centers on the British pub game of darts and a protagonist's attempts to achieve his goal of throwing a 'bullseye'.*

*However, this paper will argue that the spectator experiences this narrative through the affective rhythm created by the movement within the frame, the variations of light and colour on screen and the measure of the diegetic sound heard, and that this experience is as important to understanding the narrative as character identification and linearity. The film is an expression of the banal and the everyday, which does not lend itself to grand historical events. I will argue that the banal in 'Bullseye' is not a signifying, representational reproduction of banality, the banal is embodied in the film itself, and through the affective tone of the film it becomes embodied in the spectator. Drawing on concepts of affect and sensation developed by Gilles Deleuze, as well as his concept of the rhizome and minor-literature developed with Felix Guattari this paper shall map out the concept of affective tonality as a tool for understanding the holistic cinematic experience and how this can be then used to understand the physical mechanisms of narrative cinema*

*Bullseye* (Hawkins, 2010) is my introduction to the concept of affective tonality, and its manifestation as narrative experience, as expressed through my film and video practice. My research revolves around the concept of affective tonality in relation to narrative cinema. By affective tonality I refer to the mood and the rhythm of a film, or how narrative can be understood through embodied experience, rather than cognition alone.

Through my research I try and create and maintain a symbiotic relationship between my practice work (that of making films) and my theory work (that of thinking and writing about film). In this sense my practice influences my theory, which in turn influences my practice and so on and so forth. This paper and the accompanying film work as a way into understanding my broader interest in narrative cinema and how film can be experienced and understood through affective tonality.

*Bullseye* is a short, experimental-narrative film. The term experimental here serves two purposes. Firstly, the term expresses my desire to test and explore the theoretical concept of affective tonality, and how it can be pushed to the foreground in a moving image work. Secondly, it positions the formal characteristics of the film outside of

what can be termed classical narrative cinema<sup>2</sup>, which presents a drama told through a series of juxtaposed images and dialogues in which narrative is privileged over formal construction and style. In the classical mode of filmmaking the drama is often played out over ninety minutes, and the dramatic structure originates from Greek antiquity, specifically the work of Aristotle in *The Poetics*. Through the dominance of Hollywood cinema in contemporary film culture this form of filmmaking has become to be considered the norm. By terming *Bullseye* experimental I mark the film as a deviation from the practice of classical narrative cinema. However, I do argue that *Bullseye* is a work of narrative cinema, only one that privileges affect, mood and tone over drama, conflict, character development and resolution.

*Bullseye* is a film captured in a single take. The spatial co-ordinates of the frame do not change, and the angle of the shot remains the same. It is one shot held for a duration of eight minutes and twenty-seven seconds. The film depicts a man playing darts, alone in a pub, and his attempt to throw a 'bullseye'. The narrative follows a simple line of linear action, but it also can be experienced through an affective rhythm created by the movement within the frame, the variations of light and colour on screen and the measure of the diegetic<sup>3</sup> sound heard. This experience is as important to understanding the film as character identification and linearity.

I will be draw theoretically from the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. I will also be referring to concepts developed by Henri Bergson in *Matter and Memory*. Deleuze published two books on cinema in the 1980s, *Cinema 1: the Movement Image I* (1983), *Cinema 2: the Time Image* (1985). These two books were as much works of philosophy as works on cinema itself. In the following twenty years the books have slowly gained more and more prominence within the field of film studies. Although I draw on Deleuze's work on cinema in some of my other research on affect and the cinema I do not concentrate on these books in this paper. Instead I will be focusing on concepts Deleuze developed with Guattari in their work on *Franz Kafka*, (towards a minor literature), in particular their notion of minoritarian, of which I will go into more detail shortly.

For much of this paper I will be discussing the banal nature of *Bullseye*'s narrative, how this is experienced by the spectator through embodiment, and how through this embodiment affect becomes political. I will also discuss my ideas around different levels or categories of affect at work within the film.

The film can be seen here<sup>4</sup>: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wQrTogn-3ds>

The experience of the affective tone determines our understanding of the work through experience, rather than representation, cognitivism or character identification. Seymour Chatman reminds us that for Italian film director, Michelangelo Antonioni, the form [of the film] cannot be separated from the content (2008 p 11). The content or narrative of the film is experienced through the form that that the film takes. In *Bullseye* the formal elements of the film embody the narrative. The form becomes content, and the content is expressed *in* rather than *by* the formal elements.

*Bullseye* can be considered as a film with a linear narrative. The protagonist of the film has a goal, which is to throw a bullseye. He has to use his skill to achieve this goal.

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<sup>2</sup> The most thorough overview of this mode of filmmaking can be found in *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (Bordwell, Staiger, Thompson, 1985).

<sup>3</sup> Diegetic sound: sound that emanates from the world of the film. The sound of footsteps as a character can be seen walking through the frame, in opposition to a musical soundtrack, for example.

<sup>4</sup> Ideally viewed full screen, 1080p resolution.

The rules of the game of darts act as an obstacle to be overcome, and with the last dart thrown the protagonist achieves his goal. He throws a bullseye! In this respect the film follows the structure of classical Hollywood cinema, albeit reduced to the base and banal elements. However, the protagonist's 'goal' is an insignificant one in terms of understanding the nature of the film. The film ends with the freezing of action or movement, and thus the freezing of time. The goal has been achieved, but nothing has changed in the socio-cultural conditions of the protagonist's life, or in the conceptualisation (cogito) of the world of the protagonist by the spectators that have experienced the film. At the end of the film, when time stops, the question that may be asked is; *what is next?* What is next for the protagonist of *Bullseye*? As I see it, there are two options, stop playing or continue to play; finish with the darts, stop throwing, stop playing, or begin again, return to the game and try once more to throw a bullseye. The two options that face the protagonist are reductive; for to stop playing is to cease to exist, yet to play again is to simply resume a cycle that can never end.

In effect, *Bullseye* is a film that resists resolution, as resolution is not possible for a film that is concerned with the banal. The banal is constant and unchanging; it resists the Aristotelian tropes of linear narrative or character transcendence and revelation. The banal is an event that exists outside of specificities of historicized space and time. Steven Shavero mobilizes Alfred Whitehead's example of Cleopatra's Needle in order to explain how a seemingly solid object is a series of events or a multiplicity (2009 p 17 - 20). An event in these terms is not fixed, not a beginning or an end but something in the middle. It is the meeting of two or more forces, which produce something new. An event is an act of happening, an act of becoming. For Whitehead and Shavero, Cleopatra's Needle is more than an object to which grand historical events occur, such as the creation of the monument in Egypt, the moving of the monument to London in 1877 and the eventual, future destruction or disintegration of the monument. Cleopatra's Needle is a constant site of events, from the movement of molecules and electrons within the construction to collecting dirt from the city surroundings and being cleaned by Westminster council employees, the monument is ever changing, constantly happening (ibid). *Bullseye* is an expression of the event of the banal, which does not lend itself to grand historical events. It is an event that does not 'stand for', reflect or represent bigger political, social, and cultural concerns outside of itself, although the image is open to interpretation or analysis using a socio-historical framework. The event of the banal exists within the image itself, it is embodied within the frame and through the experience of the affective tone generated by the image it becomes embodied in the spectator. Whilst the borders of the frame are static, within the borders there is constant movement, and there is constant change. No two frames are the same. The character of the dart player is always moving through the frame, both picture grain and digital picture noise are a constant and ever changing presence, darts dissect the frame and holes are created in the dartboard, all of which are events and moments of becoming. These events are not however, ones to which major ideological or symbolic value can be ascribed. If there is a major event in the film it is the throwing of the bullseye, although as I have stated above, achieving a bullseye does not result in any ontological shift for the protagonist. The event does not occur in any competition, and no *prize* is at stake. For the protagonist there is no change in the nature of his existence. This is the banal in *Bullseye*, and it is manifest in the rhythm and tone of the film.

In this respect the film can be seen as an example of what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari describe as minoritarian (1987), both in its form and its content. Minoritarian in this sense is open to becoming, not fixed in nature, whereas the Major is a homogenous form without the creative potential to become. Minoritarian forms do not represent, rather they anticipate a change in form or being. *Bullseye* eschews the

style of Hollywood cinema, as identified by Bordwell et al (1985), whilst retaining some of its features. For Deleuze and Guattari “a determination different from that of the constant will therefore be considered minoritarian, by nature and regardless of number (1987 p 117). Rather than expressing hegemonic ideals *Bullseye* is a film that is open to becoming, eschewing standards and Ideas. In other words, the film rejects cognitive interpretations in favour of affect and tone. As Deleuze and Guattari state; “That is why we must distinguish between: the majoritarian as a constant and homogenous system; minorities as subsystems; and the minoritarian as a potential, creative and created, becoming” (ibid). *Bullseye* does not reinforce dominant ideas of power, race, gender or class, it alters perception through the affective tone generated by the film, which leads to a becoming in the spectator, and a new way of existing in the world. The affective tone is not power, but force. To quote Brian Massumi, “Force in its wild state arrives from outside to break constraints and open new vistas. Power builds walls” (1992 p 6). Affect does not represent, it exist prior to representation. It is the physical/bodily sensation experienced by the spectator whilst watching the film. The affective tone of the film is the culmination of all of the affective elements of the film itself, be it sound, colour, movement and so on. The spectator, affected by the rhythm and tone of the film, is faced with a different way of seeing and being once the film is finished, the nature of which is not fixed. An ontological shift is experienced by the spectator, which has the potential to become again something new.

*Bullseye* could draw comparisons with a mode of filmmaking that has been described as contemplative cinema in which the purpose is to “paint a state of mind” rather than tell a story,<sup>5</sup> a cyclical film that captures a moment in a never-ending cycle. John Updike notes that the ‘unfinished’ is a characteristic of the literature of Franz Kafka. For Updike,

Kafka was obsessed with building, with work that is never done, that can never be done, that must always fall short of perfection... Incompletion is a quality of his work (1983 p 3).

In this sense, to avoid completion and resolution is to open up to affect, and a bodily way of experiencing cinema that can be taken in many different directions. Perfection is a closed, concrete state that, like the order word in Deleuze and Guattari’s *Plateaus* (1987), results in death. There is constant movement, change and speed in *Bullseye*, but there is no evolution or development, only becoming. The character does not transcend or reach a new state of peace or a Todorovian ‘new equilibrium’ in which fresh majoritarian regimes are implemented. The film, through rhythm and duration, presents a deterritorialisation of the male body, of notions of sport, success, class, and achievement. Deterritorialisation, here can be understood as a coming undone, or a deconstruction, to borrow a concept from Derrida. It is to move from Majoritarian ideas of masculinity to a more open system in which the body can be reassessed.

In *Kafka, Toward a Minor Literature* (1986) Deleuze and Guattari reconceptualise the literature of Franz Kafka in order to express their concept of a minor literature in which dominant power structures can be subverted from within. Language is not used metaphorically or to signify in minor literature, language has an intensity of its own that is freed from major signifying practices.

It is no longer a question of a resemblance between the comportment of an animal and that of a man; it is even less a question of a simple wordplay. There

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<sup>5</sup> Definition of Contemporary Contemplative Cinema on the blog, *Unspoken Cinema*, accessed on 10/11/10, at 17:44, <http://unspokencinema.blogspot.com/2007/01/minimum-profile.html>



is no longer man or animal, since each deterritorializes the other, in a conjunction of flux, in a continuum of reversible intensities. Instead, it is now a question of a becoming that includes the maximum of difference as a difference of intensity, the crossing of a barrier, a rising or a falling, a bending or an erecting, an accent on the word. The animal does not speak "like" a man but pulls from the language tonalities lacking in signification; the words themselves are not "like" the animals but in their own way climb about, bark and roam around, being properly linguistic dogs, insects, or mice. To make the sequences vibrate, to open the word onto unexpected internal intensities in short, an asignifying *intensive utilization* of language (1986: 22).

The banal in *Bullseye* is not a signifying, representational mimetic reproduction of banality, the banal is embodied in the film itself, and through the affective tone of the film it becomes embodied in the spectator. Jon Beasley-Murray discusses Italian neorealism's ability to render extraordinary what Hollywood normally considers boring, thus saving the cinema from the "death schemes of closure premised upon action" (1997 p 49). Murray references David Overbey's realisation that the most important characteristic of neorealism is the directors' discovery that the need to use story was just a way to mask defeat in the face of reality (Overbey, 1979 p 67). For Murray, resisting cinematic closure opens up new possibilities for exploring reality through what Michael Taussig describes as a contact-sensuosity (1993 p 27). This is accentuated through the use of the long take, in which the bodily sensation of time is prioritised over narrative decoding (Murray, 1997 p 49). It is through duration and rhythm that *Bullseye* is experienced, and this duration and rhythm is interpreted through an embodied encounter with the banal. It is a becoming-minor of the banal and by its very nature it is political. As Reda Bensmaia states in his forward to Deleuze and Guattari's book on Kafka, an author's style is a total and energetic investment of his/her political being-in-the-world (1986 p xxiii). However, *Bullseye* is not political, because it speaks the political, or represents political ideas, it is political in its becoming, its anonymising and its shedding of majoritarian forms, as will be discussed further later.

*Bullseye's* narrative encapsulates the banal nature of everyday life, which finds its reflection in the modern construction of the factory assembly line, the houses built on building sites, the structure of the week and the activities of the weekend. In *Bullseye*, the repetition of the action of throwing the dart is pacifying, both for the thrower and the spectator. The process of watching the film is nullifying, and a feeling of inertia is manifest in the bodies of the spectator as the film draws to a close. This is the practice of everyday life, the anonymous repetition of inconsequential action. All of this is expressed through the affective tone of the film, which, I argue, is developed on three planes, the micro, the macro and the reverbatory.

The first plane consists of aspects of the film in which affect is most dominant, or noticeable (and thus most likely to be cognitavised or noticed). This plane consists of what I have termed *macro-affective elements*. I include in this category the elements of; *composition* (the position of people and objects within the frame), editing or lack thereof, which relates to shot length, which in turn has a direct relationship with the spectators' experience of time and rhythm, montage (in an Eisensteinian sense, and Deleuze's Movement Image) and continuity editing. The final element in this category would be sound, mainly the musical sound track if used, but any sound that would dominate the soundtrack.

The second plane comprises of affective markers that have a direct link to the first plane. The affective elements of the second plane emanate from the affective

elements of the first plane. These affective elements emerge from the screen like ripples in a pond. The affective elements of the first plane take the role of the stone in this imaginary water feature. The affective elements of the second plane behave like the circles that flow out, or move away from the stone that is dropped into water. I have termed the second plane Reverberatory-Affective Elements. They consist of major, localised movements within the frame, colours or lack thereof, and diagetic sound. Major localised movement within the frame often stems from the movement of the characters, but can consist of any movement of objects within the frame, or the parallax that occurs through camera movement. The colour or lack thereof, relates in the initial stages to whether the film is in colour or black and white, although there can be a mix of the two modes, *The Wizard of Oz* (Fleming, 1939) providing a famous example of a film that switches from the state of black and white to a state of colour (with the moment of changing from one state to the other producing a large ontological shift in the film and the spectator), whilst Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1993) provides another well documented example of a film that deploys both black and white and colour photography in the same frame. Dominant colours within a single frame would also come under the category of Reverberatory-Affective Elements. Striking examples of this feature can be found in Jean-Luc Godard's use of red and blue within compositions in *Pierrot Le Fou* (1965) or Michalangelo Antonioni's use of red within the frames of *il Deserto Rosso* (1964) for example. I would also consider diagetic sound and dialogue to belong to the second plane.





The third plane of affective elements operates on an unconscious level, affecting the body in ways that the spectator does not often recognise. Here, I write of what I call Micro-Affective Elements. I am referring to formal aspects, such as contrast within a given shot or scene, the change in light and shade, broad movement that encompasses the whole frame, changes in exposure levels, colour hue often deriving from lighting, colour correction/timing or film stock, and what I term elemental traces. I define elemental traces as formal elements that arise from the mode of production that have left their mark on the film, such as flicker produced by watching the frames pass through the projection gate, scratches on the film, sudden changes in exposure that occur at the end of reels, digital picture noise or film grain.

### **Category One – Macro-Affective Elements:**

Composition.  
Editing.  
Sound.

### **Category Two – Reverberatory-Affective Elements:**

Major, localised movement within specific parts of the frame (usually stemming from the character).  
Diagetic sound.  
Colour, or lack thereof.

### **Category Three – Micro-Affective Elements:**

Light and Shade.  
Colour Hue.  
Broad movement, encompassing the whole frame.  
Changes in exposure levels.  
Elemental Traces.

Thus, if stage three comprises of Micro-Affective Elements, stage one comprises of Macro-Affective Elements, with stage two bridging these two extremes it can be perceived that at any given time during the duration of a film a complex composition of affective elements are working on the spectator's bodily and conscious experience of the film. It is the combination of these affective elements that culminate in the production of the affective tone of the film. Understanding the affective tone of a film is key to understanding the creative mechanisms of cinema, and the way in which a spectator experiences narrative.

*Bullseye* is a film that consists of one shot only. It is the duration of the shot, linked to the number of edits in relation to the overall running time of the film, that is one of the key factors in determining the affective tone of this film. The choice to hold the same shot for a long period of time foregrounds the internal rhythm of the shot, created by the movement within the frame and the continuous monotony of the soundtrack. The film begins with a shot of a man in his twenties throwing darts at a dartboard, in a setting that looks like a pub. It is an image that is accompanied by many socio-cultural connotations relating to class and to gender and to sexuality and so forth. The sound of the darts hitting the board and the repetitions of movement are quite phallic, and are open to psychoanalytical interpretations. It is a representational image, but only to begin with. Over the duration of the shot it moves

from representation to affect, and from the figurative to the figural<sup>6</sup>. Following Bergson it is important to note that affect and representation (or perception) exist along the same plane of experience. Between the two states is a difference in degree rather than in kind. Bergson gives the example of contact with the pin. For Bergson,

There is hardly any perception which may not, by the increase of the action of its object upon our body, become an affection, and, more particularly, pain. Thus we pass insensibly from the contact with a pin to its prick. Inversely the decreasing of pain coincides with the lessening perception of its cause, and exteriorises itself, so to speak, into a representation, (2004 [1912]: 53).

When the affective properties of perception and representation are increased they will inevitably reach the point in which pain is experienced. At this point representation ceases to be perceived and what is experienced is pure affect. For example, a red traffic light at a certain brightness would be perceived and cognitivated as a traffic light, also a sign to stop in a Western paradigm, but if the brightness or intensity of this traffic light increased it would shift away from the concept of a traffic light and become at first a bright red light, no longer a cognitivable percept, but more an experience of redness to one that looks upon it, before reaching an intensity that would cause pain to those that looked upon it, forcing one to look away or risk permanent damage to the retina. To follow again Bergson's example, the process of increasing intensity could be reversed and the bright red light would move from a site of pure affect to one of representation, an object that becomes represented so to speak. The same example could be applied to sound. The threshold for pain caused by sound is 120db, and prolonged exposure to sound at this level causes permanent damage to hearing. If a certain sound increases in volume it will over time cease to be a sound that can be linked to an image or representation, and become pure affect and vice-versa. This is why I say that affect and representation are different in degree, not in kind. Any percept can become a represented image (in the Bergsonian sense) or a site of pure affect depending on intensity. The nature of the thing is not fixed. It is possible to witness the changing of state from representation to pure affect by correlating intensity with duration. To quote Bergson, "external perception is formed by projecting into space a perception that has become harmless" (ibid). Narrative signs in the cinema act as facilitators through which affect can emerge. To return to *Bullseye*, over the duration of the film the image of the man throwing darts moves from one in which representation is dominant to an image that privileges affect.

The major social and cultural signs that are attributed to the image dissolve over the duration of the film. The film becomes about the rhythm and the movement, about the banal. It is a becoming-minor of the image, in which majoritarian norms are shed. In effect it becomes about affect, and through the affective tone of the film it is possible for the spectator to experience the banal and the everyday, rather than have it represented to them.

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<sup>6</sup> A figurative image is one that maintains a sense of fidelity with its source. In the case of *Bullseye* the source is a man playing darts. A figurative image is a representational image. The figural however, is an abstract image. It bares a resemblance to the form of a representational image, but it rejects representation in favor of affect and sensation. Deleuze writes of these concepts in more detail in relation to the painting of Francis Bacon, in the first two chapters of *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (2003 [1981]).

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# Frames within Frames within Frames: Compositional Space in Choreography with Real-time Video

Kate Sicchio

## Abstract

*This paper focuses on topologies of space within choreography that utilizes real-time video projections in live performance and also reflects on a two-week creative residency undertaken by the author and the resulting performance that investigates these spaces. When exploring the construction of choreography, it can be said that choreography includes four strands – space, movement, performers, and sound (Sanchez-Colberg, 1992). When including real-time video projections in a dance performance these strands become more complex as new definitions and approaches to these strands appear, including within the strand of space. One of the main devices used to create this discussion is the concept of space as a frame and how the use of video systems introduces new frames in which choreography is placed. This framing of space and emerging types of space, such as physical space, camera space, projection space and compositional space became the basis for a practice-based inquiry led by the author and have provided a topology by which the body of this text will be presented.*

*Dance with real-time video projection<sup>7</sup> creates various spaces for choreography. These spaces range from the physical space of the black box theatre to the lens of the camera, however they are all related via movement. This research will focus on these spaces, exploring them as frames for movement and how the discussion of these frames as topological spaces may be used as a conceptual framework for examining performance work created by the author.*

*In this research, topology is defined as sets of space that continuously transform movement. These spaces are not measured as in Euclidian geometry but instead form relationships with other spaces through movement. This research draws on definitions such as Masumi (2002) and Rotman (2009) and reflects geometric concepts from this field. This interdisciplinary approach to dance works begins to reveal the complex space within choreography with real-time video and how frames for movement interrelate.*

## Space as Frames

When one begins to think of space in terms of frames, one can begin to consider Deleuze's definition of the frame within cinema as a closed system set with many elements. "The frame therefore forms a set which has a great number of parts, that is of elements, which themselves form sub-sets... Obviously these parts are themselves in image [en image]" (Deleuze, 1986, p12). Dance also has many elements, such as

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<sup>7</sup> Real-time video refers to the processing of video by a computer, so it has as little latency as possible when pixels are captured. This then may be utilized by software to transform pixels using a range of techniques such as background subtraction or visual effects. Real-time video may be live footage or footage used within video tracking systems, but it has as little delay as possible (to the point where it may not be recognisable by the human eye). In this work, the real-time video creates projections, which are then incorporated into a black box performance space during a live dance performance.



the strands of choreography, discussed by Sanchez-Colberg (1992), that create an image within the frame of the stage. When the addition of real-time video becomes part of the choreography, there are new sets and sub-sets, which create frames for movement.

For most dance performances this frame is the physical location, which creates a “sense of intimacy or extensiveness, the feelings of familiarity or majesty that a space may convey” (Foster, 1986, p60). Many performances are presented in a proscenium stage space or a black box theatre space, and this physical space communicates to its audience a specific framing of the dance as a set of elements such as movement, performers, or in performance with real-time video projections. The performance by the author discussed later in this research was performed within a black box theatre space.

But unlike the cinema frame, the dance frame may consist of different interpretations. “The typical proscenium stage creates a theatre of illusion whereas smaller, more informal spaces lend themselves to performances in which events are to be seen as happening in a quotidian time and place...non-proscenium spaces communicate the proximity of life to art” (ibid). Placing dance in a physical space creates the first frame for the choreography that is considered by dance makers. Within this work the black box theatre because the first frame.

Dixon (2007) states, “in live multimedia theatre, projection screens or video monitors frame additional spaces, this time in two dimensions...Yet despite the flatness of the screen frame, projected media can in one important sense offer far more spatial possibilities than three-dimensional theatre space” (p335). These spatial possibilities are produced by the new frames for the dance created by the real-time video, which include combinations of camera lens, computer manipulation of images, projection screens, and live performers within a performance space. This is explored in the work of practitioners such as Troika Ranch, Chunky Move, Carol Brown and many others who produced work that also involve real-time video projections within theatre spaces.

When one adds real-time video systems, which consist of digital cameras and projections, more types of space and frames need to be considered in both the performance and the choreographic process of presenting movement within these spaces. As Gieseckam (2007) highlights, “onstage action may be reframed through live relay, multiplying or magnifying performer's [movement] onscreen, showing them in microscopic close-up, fragmented or shot from different angles – rhetorical effects that affect how spectators interpret character and action” (p11). Brown (2006) echoes this discussion by suggesting that “through dancing space unfolds. In the refolded space of data dance we discover a haunting virtuality and a new biodiversity of material-informational figures” (p86).

The framing goes beyond the camera angle and placement as new software allows for manipulation of video images in real-time through software such as Isadora<sup>8</sup>. The software may change not only the viewpoint but also the time duration, or the aesthetic of the visual being captured. This is illustrated in Chunky Move's work *Glow* created by choreographer Gideon Obarzanek and engineer in the arts Frieder Weiss (2005). A single CCTV camera is placed above a performer and using Weiss's beta software Kalypso, the real-time video image is transformed in various ways through

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<sup>8</sup> Isadora is software designed for use in live performances by Mark Coniglio. It is a visual programming environment, including pre-programmed modules or nodes, (called actors in Isadora) and linking them together within a patch to create effects on media.

abstracting the outline of the performer's body into geometric lines and shapes or figures with soft edges that leave video trails behind. It is not just the point of view of the camera that changes the live image, but also what software can do to this live image. This means the software is also part of the framing of the performer.

Another example of a piece, which explores the use of performance, live video and space, is Trisha Brown's *It's a Draw/Live Feed*, performed at The Fabric Workshop in Philadelphia, PA, USA (2003). The piece, which is a voyeuristic view of Brown as she dances to draw across a giant sheet of paper placed on the floor, was performed in a gallery space with the audience placed outside of the space, watching the performance live on monitors and projection screens.

Several layers of abstracted space and Brown has not even started dancing-drawing. The first layer derives from the room's participation in the visual-ideological economy of the art museum. The second layer derives from Brown's performance being televised, thus further placing her dancing-drawing into the virtual. Third layer: the perspective framing and its inevitable disembodiment of vision. Fourth layer, particularly relevant for dance studies, and brought by the specificity of white space: the abstract space Brown walks in echoes historically with one particular foundational abstraction that initiated modern choreography (Lepecki, 2006, p69).

Within dance work by the author, the layers become derived from the "visual-ideological economy" of the dance studio or the black box theatre, the layer of the performance being televised becomes replaced with those being projected, and the layer of the camera lens remains. However, what does shift is the placement of all of these layers within an overall composition. Although Brown's work does not present the real-time video and the live performance in the same physical space, it demonstrates choreographic decisions about topology of space within work that has movement being framed by physical space, cameras, and projections. A choreographer working with video and live performance must consider "...frames within frames within frames: the still frame of the video screen, the still frame of the camera lens, the still frame of the gallery walls [performance space]" (ibid). In dance pieces with real-time video projections, the work is also framed by the video projection, the video camera, and the frame of the theatre space or rehearsal space, again creating the "frames within frames within frames".

The frame of the camera is within the frame of the projection space in work that interweaves live dancers and real-time video. This is where the video is then presented within the physical space usually via a video projector. The projection space is a combination of physical space (i.e. - a screen, a cyclorama, the floor, a performer) and the results of the camera space. It is a frame and a location resulting in the movement being placed in the overall composition in a new space, perhaps with a different view point as suggested by Dixon or Giesekeam. "In these matrixial spaces the stage metamorphoses from a physical location - grounded, fixed, actual - to a relational space - incorporating the ungrounded, the fluid, and the virtual" (Brown, 2006, p85). The projection frame is complex when it is incorporated in a real-time system for choreography, because it reveals new imagery of the live performance created by the camera, while being located within the physical space of the live performance.

This use of the space as frames within these choreographies also reflects definitions of topology as it is considered a "set-based" mathematics. "This means that topological properties and relations between spaces are imaged by algebraic properties and relations between groups" (Rotman, 2009, p2). Further definitions also explain

“topology is the science of self-varying deformation” (Massumi, 2002, p134), reflecting on how topological forms can have “connections between them are not merely continuous but differentiable in the sense of calculus, making them the natural arena for the concept of change -- change of structure, form, properties -- understood as motion in time” (Rotman, 2009, p12). This is demonstrated in the camera creating new imagery of the live performance – while both are happening as movement at the same time they are presented in different forms and within different structures such as physical space and projection space and the “metamorphoses from physical” as discussed by Brown (2006).

Within “frames within frames within frames” there is reminder of how frames in moving image create a “dovetailing of frames that the parts of the set of the closed system are separated, but also converge and are reunited” (Deleuze, 1986, p14), creating a form of topology that reflects both the “set-based” nature as well as the continuous change of structure and properties of movement are changed when presented through the frames of the performance.

Another choreographer dealing with these frames of space is Helen Bailey (2008) in the AHRC *e-Dance* research project. Bailey suggests five categories of space within a telematic dance<sup>9</sup> performance environment, which include compositional space, physical space, camera space, video space, and performative space. She describes each space in the *eDance* blog in reference to a week log intensive using the access grid to create a performance in which these categories are used to describe the choreographic approaches to using video, projection, live performance, and physical location. While Bailey’s system is designed to be translocal and involve multiple physical sites of performance, the relationships presented by the spaces still could be considered for real-time video systems that do not use telematic technologies and occur within one single setting, such as a theatre space or dance studio.

According to Bailey, the compositional space contains the movement and begins with tasks for devising movement and a choreographic structure. The physical space is the location of the live performers. In the case of Bailey’s research there was also a construction of a ‘z-shaped’ set that defined the physical space and where the performers, movement, and video projection could occur. The camera space in Bailey’s work refers to the placement of the cameras for the Access Grid system and while there is much consideration to where the cameras are in the physical space, there is no discussion of what kind of view/shot they are capturing or how this frames the space. The video space refers to multiple aspects of the video projections used within this telematic work as Bailey placed three small projections on the set. Bailey also writes of a performative space, but without much explanation of whether this term is referring to space created by performer’s bodies or if it relates to live activity in the physical space.

Despite the vagueness of the terminology on Bailey’s blog, the concepts of physical space, camera space, video space, and compositional space seem to have useful relevance when describing the types of space or frames in work with camera based real-time systems, regardless of them being telematic or not. There is no longer just the physical performance space to choreograph, but also the camera and the video projection. The overall stage picture must include consideration to all of these elements and constructing these spaces as frames called for “the frame conceived as a

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<sup>9</sup> Telematic performance is usually created via the streaming video over the internet and is commonly across many locations. Bailey’s work uses video from various locations, broadcast via the internet and projected into a live performance in a black box theatre space.

dynamic construction in act [en acte], which is closely linked to the scene, the image, the characters and the objects which fill it" (Deleuze, 1986, p13) or more importantly in the case of choreography, the movement which fills it. This overall image is also constructed by the relationships of the spaces in the choreography and the movement continuously through these spaces.

To apply this research to practice, four categories or frames of space have been created that reflect the research of practitioners working with real-time video and dance, such as Bailey and Brown, and theory of frames, performance and topology as presented by Deleuze, Lepecki, and Rotman. The terms physical space, camera space, projection space, and compositional space were used by the author to discuss the creation of a new dance piece and reflect on the topology created when real-time video technology is used within choreography.

### **Yorkshire Dance Residency, October 2008**

The creation of a new performance piece for six dancers over a two-week residency period at Yorkshire Dance in Leeds, UK in October 2008<sup>10</sup> became the basis of an exploration in emerging types of space within dance work, which includes real-time video projections. The main aim of the residency was to explore types of spaces, such as physical, camera, projection, and compositional, as Bailey, Brown, Dixon and Giesekeam have suggested the addition of video systems will create new spaces.

The piece was designed as an abstract dance work that utilized real-time images from a camera source and then processed these images with various effects and time delays to create relationships between the live dancers and the projected images. The technology being used to facilitate this work was a combination of a single live feed video camera, a MacBook laptop running Isadora real-time media manipulation software, and a single video projector. The simple set up was important as the technology needed to be portable, travel with the choreographer, and need to be deconstructed several times a day, as the studio space was not solely dedicated to the project.

The terms compositional space, physical space, camera space, and projection space were used as the starting points in which space would be researched throughout the creative investigation. These spaces also became the frames in which the choreographer made choices to display movement.

### **Physical Space**

One important realization about physical space was that it did not just frame the piece by presenting the limitations of walls, ceilings, and seating arrangement for the showing of the piece. The physical space for the creation of the new work also impacted on the process. For example, throughout the first week of the choreographic process there was a lot of changing dance studios from one room to another. This changing of physical space greatly impacted the material that could be created and ultimately may have affected the dancers within the performance of the work.

The physical spaces impacted technologies in unexpected ways by providing unwanted elements such as natural lighting and mirrors, which are usually what one wants in a

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<sup>10</sup>Week one of the residency was work on choreography and the real-time system by Kate Sicchio. Week two included an additional six dance students from University Centre Doncaster who later performed the piece.

studio space. One studio, in which the creative process was taking place, had two mirrored walls, and two walls that were entirely made of windows. The dance agency sponsoring the residency provided a projection screen that was intended for meetings to use for power point presentations and therefore the projection space was extremely limited, measuring about one meter wide and similar in height. The other studio space did have a wall that was useful for projection, however, the only place to put the projector so that the technical set up was portable, was the floor, facing the projection surface, creating feedback loops. Although at times this could be solved with a series of video background subtractions within the real-time system, it was frequently an issue. The studio spaces were also not possible to completely black out so lighting conditions would change and effect the real-time system, or light would spill across the projection space, making it impossible to see. Not only does the technology effect how one engages with space compositionally but it also has a huge effect on how one engages with space in the choreographic process. The physical surroundings were dictating the working methods and order of process of creation, producing a “visual-ideological economy” as Lepecki proposes in his analysis of *It's a Draw/Live Feed*, but with hindering results.

Despite these problematic occurrences with physical space, choreographic tasks were set to explore the physical space, in terms of floor patterns and locations of dancers in the physical space. A movement phrase, containing smaller footwork elements such as *dégagés* and larger dynamic changes such as dropping the upper body over the leg, was created based on theme and variation. The variations were tiny changes, such as the order of the movements, or performing the movement with the right leg instead of the left, or the facing of the body during the phrase.

The different variations were performed in different quadrants within the physical space with travelling steps in between as a solo at first. The floor pattern was repeated four times with different paths for travelling during the last two repetitions. The system set up was the camera in front of the performers, directed straight into the physical space where the movement was occurring and the projection space was on a wall behind the dancers. When the dancers joined in the process, this floor pattern was reconsidered and it was decided two dancers would perform this phrase but one was facing the audience and the other was facing the projection. Merce Cunningham's work also allowed for multiple facings for dancers in the space as “no single point in the space is in any way privileged and thus guide the observers' vision and perception – not even the framed stage as such” (Boenisch, 2006, p 106).

Not only did this give the performers a relationship to the physical space and to the projection space without one being more dominate because of the ultimate placement of the audience, but because they were always in opposite corners of the space as they performed, this meant that they will be picked up by the camera in different ways at different times. This one initial choreographic device of creating a floor pattern in the physical space, immediately demonstrated how the movement in one type of space (physical) impacts all the other spaces (camera and projection) within the composition.

The floor pattern using quadrants also led to wanting to develop the projection space with a quadrant design as well, using live feed video and delays on various sections. This was not a successful set up however, as the size of each quadrant of the projection space was too limited and created a very small frame. The video was hard to see when it was presented this way and it also created a very busy projection space, which did not fit well into the overall compositional frame, as it demanded attention away from the live movement. This disrupted the “dovetailing of frames” as discussed by Deleuze with the continual changes of video due to the real-time nature of

synchronous movement in all the frames. "Here it is by degrees of mixing that the parts become distinct or confused in a continual transformation of values" (Deleuze, 1986, p15).

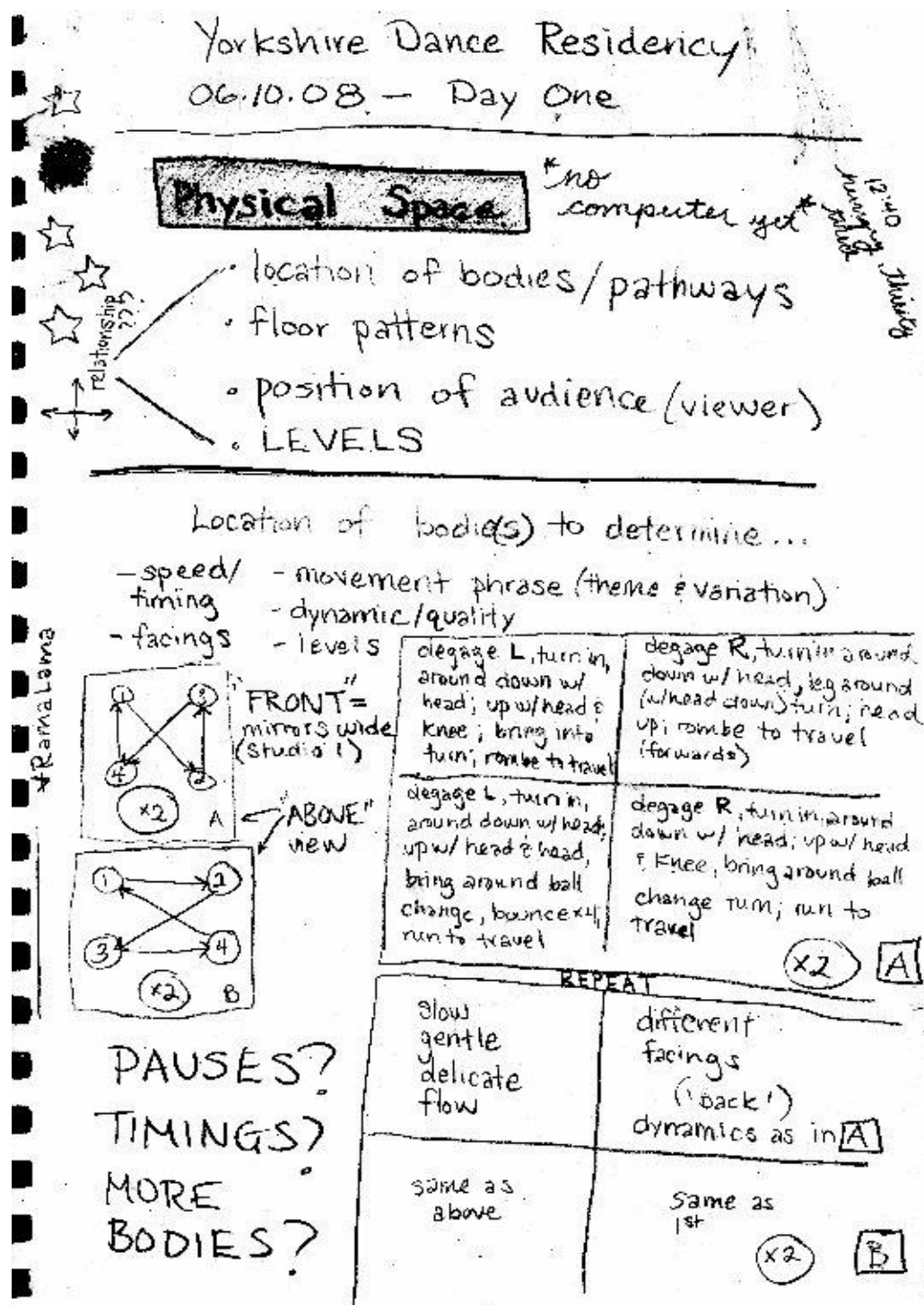


Figure 1 - Diagrams of floor pattern and choreography to be performed in each quadrant from choreographer's notebook

A similar use of physical space, which translated to choreographing the camera and projection space, was a section of the work that focused on movement travelling on a diagonal from one corner of the physical space to the other. It was originally created with the concept of a solo live performer performing with her digital dance double. The movement is mirrored in the projection space and therefore the two travelling paths cross. It is intended to create a hybrid image for the audience and show the same movement in two types of spaces and also demonstrate the self-varying nature of topology. However, during rehearsals this section was developed into a duet and due to technical problems with the lighting in the physical space during rehearsals, never fully accomplished its goal of being a hybrid image.

Other sections of the piece were also created based on inspiration and choreographic tasks that looked at the location in the physical space, but attention of the choreographer during the creative process also had to be shared with the other constructs of space as topology is about connections and “deformation” from one space to the next.

### **Camera Space**

Choreographing in camera space meant multiple things. It meant designing movement that was in view of the camera, so the camera could then use that image to create the projection. It also meant being very aware of when movement was close to the camera and certain gestures or parts of a movement were enlarged and abstracted and aware of when movement was far away from the camera and the image created for the projection was made much smaller. This choreography reflects ideas of topology as the movement is constantly being transformed and shows the interrelationships of the frames within the dance.

Towards the end of the piece there is a moment when the dancers start to walk in a circle in the space, and slowly develop this into a run and then back into a walk, before travelling to the centre of the stage and lying down on top of each other. This circle was purposely chosen as the pattern of movement in the physical space because of the way it would play with close up and long shots ranges with the stationary camera. This reflects Dixon's comment that “screen media facilitates multiple viewpoints on the same subject through the variation of camera angles; and perspective and spatiality can be transformed from a vast panorama to a huge close-up” (2007, p335).

Another import factor in the camera space is the manipulation of the image with the laptop and the real-time effects and filters added to the live video feed. A few different filters within Isadora and the VJ free-frame package Pete's Plug-ins were used to create a different visual aesthetic and different timings to the projection, and to divide the projection space. The main filter used for aesthetic purposes simply subtracts the background from the camera image so only bodies are seen against a black background. The images were also made monochromic mostly whites and greys but some sections of the piece used some pinks or blues as well. The final treatment was a slight blur given to the video to produce a softer look to the movement. The filters used to create delays also affected the choreography by allowing the choice of when performers and movement would happen within the projection space. The longer the delay the longer the time before the movement phrase would be seen again in the work. Delay was used within the piece to create more hybrid moments by incorporating the projection into choreographic devices such as a cannon of movement between live dancers and the video images in the projection space. When considering the use of these filters, it can be said that the software choices are also

choreographic as they change the dynamics and timings of the movements, help create choreographic devices such as cannons, as well as allow the choreography for the camera space to be reframed for the projection space, again creating “frames within frames within frames.”

## **Projection Space**

Projection space is a complex frame, which is a physical space but also a two-dimensional digital video. This meeting creates this frame for movement, which finds both pragmatic attributes such as the location of the projector as well as artistic choices such as the visual aesthetic used to present the movement.

The projection space was limited due to the technical set up of the projector during the creative process and knowing the piece would be performed in a black box space with a single large projection across the back of the physical space, it was felt the projection could be explored more by dividing it into columns containing the live video processed in different ways. At first, being inspired by the floor patterns for the first phrase that was created, the projection space was also going to have four sections. However, this approach in this projection space was not successful as the projections became too small to see detail such as perspective or depth, and just resulted in a very busy array of tiny versions of the same image, with some delayed video. The concern was this projection would dominate the compositional space when live movement is paired with it in physical space because more was happening on screen than on stage.

Rather than change the way the dance moves in the physical space to make the projection space work with the choreography, the projection/real-time system was changed to make the projection space less dominant and was rearranged to create a triptych. One third of the projection space was cropped to show one third of the live feed video with a delay (stage left), the centre third was empty, and the other third was another third of the cropped live video feed. The creation of a triptych, rather than the quarter, led to many ideas for the rest of the piece in the projection and physical spaces, including the use of delays and the use of entering and exiting the sections made by the triptych.

One key decision in the triptych was to leave the centre bare for three of the four sections of the piece. This had two reasons, to create an empty compositional space where just movement in the physical space could be viewed and perhaps suggest when “a dancer enters the space it becomes an arena of tensions” (Preston-Dunlap, 1998, p122). This worked compositionally by having sections in the projection space, where digital bodies could exit and enter. The entering and exiting became key in choreographing projection space. “Space is an empty, amorphous void until given boundaries, until objects are placed in it, until people enter it. Then it begins to have properties like height and depth, like walls and openings, like foreground and background” (ibid). The depth that was lost in the quadrant set up returns in a sense in this set up. Because of the size of digital bodies, the change in how close the movement is to the camera, or its location in camera space is noticeable and there is a change in size of the bodies in projection space, creating a sense of perspective.





Figure 2 – Choreographer with triptych projections (video still)

### **Compositional Space**

By devising the real-time video system early, it became easy to choreograph the overall composition as one could see the visuals with the movement. There could be interplay between live and digital and this could be choreographed via delays and which space the dancer is in (physical and projection). By looking at all the relationships being created, one could say this is the choreography of the topology.

One side of the stage is the live feed and there is unison between live and digital movement in this space. The middle projection space is designed to be empty and leaves a space for the live dancer to exist by them selves. The other side of the physical and projection space is a call and response between the live and digital movement. Between the three spaces various choreographic choices can be made such as cannons, unison movements, or mirrored movements.

One moment in the choreography towards the end of the first section has the live dancers in various parts of the stage performing duets. Two dancers have their image behind them live, another two have no image, and the other two have a delayed image. The two with the delayed image travel towards the other duets, but a lingering image is left as they move on. All the dancers again travel and this time no image is created as the centre of the projection space is programmed to be empty. The live and digital dancers all appear as they come together on the other side of the stage with live projections. This appearance and disappearance of the movement in the projection space directs the audience's attention to the live performers in certain moments and allows for a certain space, physical or projection, to be the focus.

Throughout the choreographic process, the motives were not just to observe these types of spaces as research, but also to create a new work, which focused on using space, as it's initial inspiration.

## Progress08!, Yorkshire Dance, November 08

The piece *4ocus*, created during the October residency, was performed at Yorkshire Dance, Leeds, UK in November 2008<sup>11</sup>. The piece was part of a programme of dance performance, which was meant to be a “work-in-progress” showing for professional choreographers and part of the show was to receive feedback from members of the audience, other choreographers, and a creative advisor. By investigating the use of physical space, camera space, projection space and how they created the overall composition, one can begin to see where the choreography was affected by the use of real-time video systems in ways that may be unsuccessful in a box black performance setting.

### Physical Space in Performance

The physical space, in which the piece was performed, was set up as most traditional black box spaces and had a small amount of bleachers for seating at one end, a very large dance space with no wings, and a white cyclorama stretched across the back. This backdrop became the projection space.

What was unusual for the physical space compared to previous presentations of work by this author, was the size of the dance space. The creative advisor provided by Yorkshire Dance said after the performance that she thought the space was too big and that the overall composition was lost because the dancers were perhaps trying too hard to fill the space, specifically the movement which required travelling to different areas of the space. Because of the previous issues with rehearsal spaces, it could be that the dancers got used to the dance being in a narrow space and struggled to perform within a wider physical location. This is not uncommon in choreography, as “one dance can seem quite good in a studio, looked at close. Put it on stage and it appears lost...Space speaks” (Preston-Dunlap, 1998, p 175). This space was speaking loudly and drowning out the dancers.

Another choreographer, who watched the performance, commented that the piece might be more successful in a gallery space, rather than a black box theatre. Previous work by the author, with similar real-time video projections, has been shown in places such as Sylvester Space Gallery in Sheffield, UK and smaller performance spaces such as the drama studio at York St. John's University in York, UK. Both of these spaces were more intimate and had much smaller physical dimensions.

In the performance of *4ocus* there were many instances where the use of inexperienced dancers contributed to the unsuccessful element of the use of physical space, which in turn affected the camera and projection space. The dancers were all students and had some performing experience, but had not previously performed in a professional showcase. Their faces appeared very nervous and their movements were not finished with confidence. The dancers were inaccurate in how they located themselves within the physical space, which impacted the camera space as well as the projection space, and ultimately the composition.

The piece begins with all the dancers at the centre of the back of the stage in a clustered group. As the piece begins the dancers slowly progress forwards with small steps and eventually one dancer leaves the group with a simple few steps out to the side, and then immediately returns to the group. With these few steps, the dancer

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<sup>11</sup>Performed by Nicci Evans, Francesca Newman, Lyndsey Hunt, Anna Pryah, Lisa Edwards, and Amy Dixon in Progress08, November 7, 2008 at Yorkshire Dance, Leeds, UK.

becomes visible to the camera and her “digital double” (Dixon, 2007) appears within the projection space. The dancers then slowly walk backwards and return to the beginning location.

However, the dancers were nervous throughout the piece and it appeared as if they were trying to move as far away from the audience in space as possible. This led to a very odd spatial relationship within the choreography. Instead of returning to the first location, as the piece was set, the dancers walked backwards too far and the group appeared smashed up against the backdrop. The following movement phrases all happened in this location and consisted of mainly gestures with the arms and legs. The dancers were crowded and not able to perform the movement as rehearsed, often hitting each other as they tried to extend their arms, or at one point looking at each other to try to avoid kicking the dancers immediately around them.

Another issue with this wrong location of the performers was the lighting in the physical space was specific to work with the projection on the cyclorama across the back of the stage. The back portion of the dance floor was not lit as brightly so that the light would not interfere with the projections. The dancers had travelled so far towards the back that they were within the dark for most of the first section of the piece. The lack of light also impacted the technology and the camera did not pick up the dancers' presence as clearly as it could have, resulting in the lack of attention to physical space creating problems with camera, projection and compositional space.

### **Camera Space in Performance**

In addition to the issues in the performance with the physical space, the performers' relationship to the camera space contained many problematic elements. Within the author's previous work, the creator and the performer were the same, therefore an awareness of the camera placement and camera space was understood, such as the limits in the physical space where the performer can dance and be seen by the camera. Being seen by the camera in turn produces the visuals within the projection space. Although there was a full week of rehearsals with the camera system, the rehearsals were never in the actual performance space, which changes the limitations of the physical space, the placement of the camera, and what the camera space is.



Figure 3 – Performer out of the frame of the camera and lighting disrupting projection (video still)

There is also another issue with camera space and physical space when performing, which is the audience. The performers must be aware of both the audience and camera in order to successfully perform in the physical space, camera space, and then projection space. This is common in performance work that utilizes live video feeds and is discussed by Marianne Weems of the Builder's Association in terms of her performers who "...although they're facing a camera, they're playing to an audience beyond the camera, out there and that they pace things and use the camera to create different expressions under different circumstance" (Weems in Gieseckam, 2007, p147).

As in acting there maybe a difference in performance for camera and audience in dance but instead of pace and expression, perhaps it is a different kind of movement quality or dynamic that needs to be considered and dancers need to play between these elements to successfully perform in physical space, camera space, and projection space. Peer-choreographer feedback from the performance of *4ocus* reflected this as they felt that the bigger movements with stronger dynamics, such as the end section with the dancers running around in a circle, were more successful in terms of being seen by the camera.

Another suggestion of use of the camera space highlights Lepecki's discussion of the lens within the lens. Perhaps it is not the dancers were in the wrong physical space or they were not performing to the camera, but the dance was not framed correctly. The camera was placed in one location, between the audience and the performers and was facing the projection screen. There were no changes of angles, zooms, or movement of the camera. The video system had been designed in a different studio space and the projections were designed to the dimensions of that physical space. Very little technical time before the showing meant that the camera placement was chosen quickly and perhaps hastily and more consideration of the distance between dancers and camera, the width of the camera lens, and the camera angle may have yielded quite different results and in turn had a great affect on the projection space.

### **Projection Space in Performance**

While the projection space within the performance had the least issues, it was questionable whether or not it really became a space for choreography. With the use of the triptych to create two images on the right and left and a blank middle, there was an aesthetic consideration that had not been taken into account until viewing the performance. While the aim was to create spaces for exits and entrances, the sharp, straight edge of the boxes conflicts with the blurred, pastel images that passed through. The softening of edges would have been an easy video effect to create with some simple masking techniques within the software, but had not occurred as a potential visual idea until watching the piece.

### **Compositional Space in Performance**

Considering the composition, there were some moments when the uses of space came together to create one overall image. However, for the most part there was an awkward balance between physical space, camera space, and projection space within this performance and the use of projection felt detached from the live performance. Because of these disruptions the topological relationships of movement continuously occurring throughout all the frames of the performance were not always apparent.

Each element of space being slightly askew from the original concept contributed to the compositional space being unbalanced and not directing attention to certain

spaces at certain times, such as watching the live dancers in the physical space or the digital dancers in the projection space. The physical location of the dancers being incorrect through most of the beginning really changed when the video appeared and produced a timing that was not true to the original choreographed piece. This meant that some digital dancers did not appear in the projection space at certain times or that the dancers were adjusting to the physical space and not performing the movement in the appropriate location for camera space.

The topology of spaces was disturbed by the location of bodies out of the frame and the movement was not able to transform from one space to another. The interrelations of the spaces became disparate and the movement in the physical space was not translated by the camera space to create a relation with the projection space.

## Summary

Overall, from the dance maker's perspective, the use of space as frames including physical, camera, projection, and compositional space, was integrated into the work and choreographic decisions to arrange these aspects were made. However, despite the promise of new spaces emerging through the use of real-time video systems, such as discussed by Dixon and Gieseckam, there are issues with these spaces that needed further consideration.

When choreographing these spaces, it seems that the frames produced by the camera and the projection become dominate and that physical space maybe problematic as it can have effects on the technologies such as with placement of the camera or lighting disrupting a projection. The use of the software Isadora allowed for dividing the projection space, and creating video delays, which become part of choreographic tools and helped define the projection space by creating exits and entrances.

Although much consideration was given to the balance of space within the making of the work, the performance itself was weak due to the performers, the movement not fitting the performance space, and perhaps the location of the camera and projections. Other issues of performing in multiple spaces (i.e. – for the camera and the audience) were also not resolved. Overall the use of space as a topology with sets of space that had continuous relationships of camera, projection and physical space was demonstrated in the process of choreographing work with real-time video.

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# The Comedy of the Spectacle (and its alternative)

## Ray Campbell

### Abstract

*In this paper I examine the essential differences between contemporary British comedy culture and the alternative comedy of the 1980's. I define alternative comedy as that comedy which eschewed the normative traditions and motifs of stand-up comedy. Contemporary stand-up comedy has returned to the traditions of joke-telling and disengaged itself from the lived experiences of performer and audience. I am interested in the way in which comedy can either become absorbed into what Guy Debord referred to as the "spectacle" or how, in the case of alternative comedy, it managed to disrupt the spectacle for a moment in time.*

*The decline and demise of alternative comedy has been variously attributed to a number of factors ranging from a change in audience tastes to an excess of 'political correctness' to the sanitising influence of television. The paper considers the possible causes for the demise of alternative comedy as well as its legacy. I intend to focus on the power relations between the production of comedy, the dominant culture and the audience. I will investigate the effect of historical materialism upon comedy by drawing from past and present examples.*

*Double has argued that comedy is not a static form and that it changes over time (1991, 1994). Comedy reflects the historical narratives of the period in which it was written. But comedy can also be a dynamic rather than reflective; it can inform and entertain at the same time. There are always tensions between the old and new guards within any cultural form. The old guard accuses the new of 'selling out'. The new accuses the old of 'living in the past'. I will consider the dynamic tensions between alternative and post-alternative comedy and discuss the possibilities for a new alternative.*

### Introduction

I worked as an alternative comedian from 1987 to 2000. I always preferred to see myself as an artist rather than someone who told a string of jokes. By the time that I started, alternative comedy (alt-com) had been around for eight years. As with punk rock before it, television producers (music producers in the case of punk), were eager to capture the latest craze and within two years of its birth, alt-com had been partly recuperated by television. When I began working in comedy in 1987, I was aware of comedy's potential for social and political comment. My comedy hero was Alexei Sayle and in the first few years, I modelled my routine on his. The purpose of this paper is to identify and examine what made alt-com alternative in relation to the prevailing form of comedy in the period before 1979.

There are two questions to ask: what is comedy and what is the spectacle? The first question, for the purposes of this argument, will be framed within the context of stand-up or comedy-cabaret. The second question relates to the Debordian concept of the spectacle, how this informs my analysis of comedy-cabaret as a cultural form and how this form positions itself in relation to society. To illustrate the comedy orthodoxy of the 1970's, I will use, as examples, Bernard Manning and Colin Crompton of *The Comedians* (Granada, n.d) and *The Wheeltappers and Shunters Social Club* (Granada, n.d.) I will contrast these two performers to Alexei Sayle and The Dangerous Brothers,

who appeared on *Boom Boom...Out Go the Lights* (BBC) and Central Television's short lived alternative cabaret programme, *OTT*. I will also draw from Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* (2000) for two reasons: to analyse alt-com's aesthetic and to examine how it opposed the comedy of Manning et al.

## Comedy and joking

Double (1991) tells us that stand-up comedy involves one or two persons telling a stream of jokes or funny stories before an audience. The staging is low-tech: it requires only a microphone and some form of lighting (Double, 2005). Most people are familiar with the contemporary form of stand-up comedy, which is the descendant of the alternative comedy/cabaret movement of the 1980's. This stand-up form has moved some distance from its earlier radical roots and has become a mainly cheap schedule-filler for television. The comedy circuit is huge and is often full of comedians telling the same jokes on the same narrow range of subjects. Unlike alt-com, today's comedians are largely politically and philosophically disengaged from the world. Alt-com of the 1980's could involve more than a person or persons telling jokes: it also included music, improvisation, character comedy and physical comedy. Such things were noticeably absent from the stand-up comedy of the working mens' and social clubs (CIU)<sup>12</sup>. This form of stand-up is best illustrated by Granada Television's long-running and highly popular stand-up show, *The Comedians*. This form of stand-up comedy relied heavily on pre-packaged jokes and [negative] ethnic stereotyping (Double, 1991; 1997). Because alt-com was more than stand-up comedy, I shall refer to it and the stand-up comedy of the CIU clubs together as comedy-cabaret.

At this juncture it is necessary to explain what is meant by a joke. A joke is a highly condensed story with a humorous twist (Cohen, 1999). Common joking forms tend to adhere to the following constructions:

1. One-liners exist without set-ups and are a single gag.
2. Two-liners are made up of a set-up and a punchline.
3. Three-liners are perhaps the most common form of jokes. The format of these jokes is set-up, gag and punchline

Below is the anatomy of a typical Irish joke according to the 'Rule of Three' (<http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/RuleOfThree>).

- Set-up: this is the opening line of the joke. It establishes a premise. A traditional joke set-up may go something like: "An Englishman, a Scotsman and an Irishman go into a pub..."
- Gag: this is main part of the joke: "the landlord says to the Englishman, the Scotsman, the Irishman..."
- Punchline: also known as the 'pay-off', it is the line that gets the laugh. "The Englishman says; the Scotsman says; Paddy says..." In this instance the Irishman, who is assigned the derogatory "Paddy" will say something absurd in response

CIU comedians, in particular, adhered to these rules but in art, rules can and often are, broken.

## The spectacle

In this paper I utilise the words 'spectacle' and 'spectacular' as a means of describing the prevailing cultural norms that were typified by the CIU comedians but what do

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<sup>12</sup> The CIU is the Clubs and Institutes Union to which almost all social and working mens' clubs are affiliated.



these words mean in this context? Debord (2006) argues that the spectacle seems to exist in perpetuity and can only be disrupted for a moment in time before the force that ruptured it is either recuperated or expelled from the system. Debord says, "The success in these moments can reside in nothing other than their fleeting effect" (2006: 53:1). The first wave of alt-com (1979 to 1981) was a fleeting moment that could never be repeated. In that time, it shook the foundations of the established showbusiness order and changed forever the way in which we saw comedy.

The spectacle commodifies, reifies and alienates human beings. It is the mask the covers the face of human degradation. The spectacle is a universal: it offers an illusion of unification and normality. It is the *panem et circenses* of the Roman Empire that have been reconstituted as diversions in advanced industrial and post-Fordist societies. Eric Midwinter's (1979) observation of stand-up comedy of the Seventies is most revealing. He suggests that the comedian "defuses the angry responses of people" by converting these energies into laughter. In this way, he argues, "comedians are the sophistication of bread and circuses" (1979:14). He goes on to note that "the anti-system comedian is rare indeed" (1979:15). The CIU comedians were very much part of the 'system': they accepted normative social conditions as universal and expressed this through the medium of humour. It is not difficult to understand why this way of thinking became one of the focal points of alt-com's resistance.

We can regard the representations of women and minority groups within the jokes told by CIU comedians as the mediated images of the spectacle. Hall (2003) reminds us that representation "connects meaning and language to culture" (2003: 15) and that the use of stereotypes can help us make sense of the world (Hall, 2003) but the ethnic comedy stereotype is taken from a real group of people and has been distorted out of all recognition for the purposes of humour. In this way it becomes a means by which the dominant cultural discourse, articulated by spectacular comedians, marginalises and dehumanises minority groups for the sake of ridicule.

In order to understand how alt-com disrupted the spectacle we must look, not at just at the texts, but also at the performance attitudes and the sartorial styles worn by the performers. The themes of non-racism and non-sexism that are so closely associated with alt-com cannot be viewed in isolation, because this will not give us a complete picture of alt-com as a cultural event and how it both resisted and challenged the comedy doxa of the 1970's. The Situationist International (SI)<sup>13</sup>, of which Debord was a leading member, was a political-aesthetic movement of the 1960's and early 1970's that rejected all art that did not have a political function. In order to disrupt the spectacle, one needed to create what Debord called "situations" (1988; 2006). To achieve these situations, certain techniques were employed by SI: these were *détournement* and *dérive*. *Détournement* is the act of standing things on their head<sup>14</sup>; or the appropriation, utilisation and subversion of ordinary everyday objects, which are rendered into something extraordinary or unusual. Like any everyday object, a joke can also be subverted. Therefore we can regard *détournement* as the means by which bourgeois art is appropriated and deployed as a tool to create revolutionary art-forms. *Dérive*, on the other hand, started as a tool for gaining a critical insight into psychogeography<sup>15</sup>. It became a game that involved unplanned journeys or drifting

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<sup>13</sup> Situationist International was formed from the ashes of the earlier Lettrist movement of which Debord was also a member

<sup>14</sup> Debord (2000) actually described *détournement* as "plagiarism".

<sup>15</sup> Psychogeography is best described as a strategy for understanding the urban environment. Situationist International Online describes it as "The study of the specific effects of the geographical environment

through an urban landscape. This related to the earlier concept of the *flâneur*, the urban stroller who would walk the streets for no other purpose than pleasure. One could argue that comedy improvisation is a form of *textual* *dérive*, the landscape, in this case, being an imaginary one. In contrast to alt-com, the comedy of the CIU clubs was formulaic and conservative; adventurism was frowned upon and the comedians' sets were never improvised. The CIU comedian wanted to be liked and worked hard for it. The alt-comedian did not care whether you liked them or not.

### **“It’s the way I tell ‘em”: the club comedy of the 1970’s**

Social club comedy made few, if any, efforts to address social issues and, instead, reinforced social divisions and tensions. In *The Comedians*, for example, a common motif among the performers was the idea of difference; this was often expressed through the ridicule of minority groups – the Irish, for instance. In the 1970’s, there was an acceptance of what was considered the natural order that centred on a largely white Britain and its power relationships with its former colonies. The subjects of the jokes – the Irish, Blacks, Asians (referred to as Pakis or Pakistanis) and Jews – are fossilised and exist outside of time and are thus removed from their own histories. Thus they are rendered at once into spectacular yet mythological creatures. The contribution of the Irish, for instance, to the building of Britain’s transport infrastructure is conveniently overlooked for the sake of humour. Bernard Manning is representative of the kind of stand-up comedian who played the northern CIU clubs as well as his own Embassy Club.

The Irish have just invented a new parachute...  
It opens on impact

Bernard Manning (*The Comedians*, 1972)

This joke is a two-liner and is thematically typical of the spectacular Irish joke. Irish (or Paddy) jokes are very real in the sense that they are, at the same time, *unreal*. Such jokes are not based on the reality of Ireland, its people or the history of the British occupation of the country. This joke relies on the notional stupidity and technological ignorance of the Irish, based on a particular reading of Ireland’s agriculturally reliant economy. This joke by Colin Crompton also uses the Irish as its theme; the humour is based on the literal meaning of words as well as Irish stupidity (Cohen, 1999; Kravitz, 1977).

The outpatients department is the best...in hospital... An Irish fella went into the outpatients department and his legs were covered in blisters... blisters all over his legs... He said “how did you do that”? “It was opening a tin of soup...it says stand in boiling water for ten minutes”.

Colin Crompton (*The Comedians*, 1972)

Tins of soup are quite often prepared, not by immersing the tin in boiling water, but by pouring the contents of the tin into a saucepan and heating gently until piping hot. Normally, it is tinned sponge puddings that are immersed in boiling water. Like cartoon animation, this scenario is not real: it bends the rules but only inasmuch that it reinforces the Irish stereotype. There were self-heating tins but these were only available as part of a soldier’s ration pack during the Second World War and not available to the general public.

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(whether consciously organized or not) on the emotions and behaviour of individuals”.  
(<http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/definitions.html>)

Club comedians believed that quantity was better than quality and many jokes were told in a quick and seamless succession. The jokes were commodities that were fetishised by the comedians; they were not *auteurs* nor were they expected to become their own writers. Certain jokes would be favoured over others because they either matched the style of the comedian or they would be used for specific gigs, where they would produce a certain effect in the audience. A good store of jokes, a good memory and a persona were all that were required to deliver the products that Double refers to as “pre-packaged jokes” (1991, 1994). The jokes themselves last no more than seconds; some may last a minute. These jokes are industrially produced by teams of writers and individual jokesmiths and like secondhand clothing they are passed from comedian to comedian (Double, 1994). Such jokes could be found in compendium form and were sold in the back pages of *The Stage* (Double, 1991). Even though some CIU comedians avoided the telling of racist or sexist jokes, the jokes they told followed a traditional formula of set-up, gag and punchline. At any rate, many such comedians avoided any contact with what they saw as ‘politics’ and would often declare themselves ‘apolitical’<sup>16</sup>. It is arguable that they did not feel qualified to comment on politics – partisan, racial, sexual or otherwise – unless it was to mock or deride the Other.

A revealing feature of social club comedy was the presentational style of the performer. This applies to the choice of stage wear as well as the often aloof-but-amiable ‘bloke-in-the pub’ persona, whose delivery of the jokes resembles that of the production line; all of jokes formed in the same fashion: set up, gag and punchline. In the social clubs, the comedian would dress in a suit, often with a bow tie and frilly shirt. This is a sartorial device that is intended to lend the performer a slight air of superiority; it is indicative of the power relationship between the comic and the audience. The suited comedian stands before the audience as a figure of humorous authority yet, at the same time, he appears as their best friend. However his sartorial choice distinguishes him from the common man in the audience, whose best clothes probably consist of a ‘demob’ suit or something ‘off-the-peg’ from Burtons.



**Figure 1 Colin Crompton, *The Wheeltappers and Shunters Social Club***

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<sup>16</sup> This is not uniformly true because the comedian, Jimmy Edwards, actually stood as the Conservative Parliamentary candidate for Paddington North in 1964. Ken Dodd and Jimmy Tarbuck are also high-profile comedians who support the Conservative Party. The latter was a proud supporter of Margaret Thatcher. Their comedy was arguably apolitical but their lives off stage were not.



**Figure 2 (right) Colin Crompton on *The Comedians***

**Figure 2 (left) Bernard Manning - *Wheeltappers and Shunters Social Club***

A look at *The Comedians* and *The Wheeltappers and Shunters Social Club* (both Granada Television) brings the sartorial style and manner of the CIU comedian more into focus. In the first clip from *The Comedians*, the acts wear suits but not all of the suits that are worn are of the same type. Bernard Manning always wears a dinner suit, shirt and bow-tie and his manner is one of cheeriness. He does not move much and he does not use his body other than to point; he is literally a man with a microphone telling jokes. On the other hand, Colin Crompton (Fig 2) appears in a grey suit, tie, patterned shirt and wears his hair combed over from the back of his head. He is the only comedian who smokes in the studio and his aura is one of seediness; his style is friendly in a sick sort of way but again, he moves very little save for the occasional drag from his cigarette. In *The Wheeltappers and Shunters Social Club*, Crompton (Fig 1) wears a tweed suit and a flat cap; he looks and sounds like a traditional northern stereotype. In *Wheeltappers*, Granada produced a televisual re-creation of a northern CIU social club. The audience in this programme is casually dressed and does not upstage the comedian in sartorial terms. In *Wheeltappers*, Crompton appears as the club chairman, this is a role that was common in pre-1890's Music Hall (Kift, 1994), while Manning is the compere who introduces the acts. This juxtaposition of roles suggests a connection between contemporaneity and tradition; it is an impression of an unbroken showbusiness continuum. There is banter between Manning and Crompton; though most of the time, Crompton acts as the seemingly unwitting butt of Manning's jokes. *Wheeltappers* is interesting for the fact that in most of the shows, Manning sings. In some respects this is a return to his days as a big band singer. This is in contrast to *The Comedians*, in which the jokes are short and sharp; there is no time for songs. The comedians are there to deliver jokes and no more.

### **Alexei Sayle and The Dangerous Brothers: punk comedy?**

Marcus (1989) reminds us that SI's cultural praxis was principally mediated within the punk subculture through the acts of Malcolm McLaren and the Sex Pistols. Alt-com, like punk, was largely youth-led and urban; they each subverted the popular form. It would also be fair to say that punk served as the sole mediator of SI's cultural praxis. Comedy-cabaret was dismembered and reassembled; there were no sexist or racist

gags – this included the near ubiquitous Irish joke, a mainstay of the British comedian’s repertoire. In alt-com the Irish joke, not the Irish people, became the butt of an alt-com joke. In contrast to CIU comedians, the alt-com performers wrote and performed their own material. In a purely aesthetical sense, their role as auteurs was marked them out as artists rather than technicians of their performance crafts. Their material and their styles were drawn from symbolic forms of capital and were deployed as weapons of humour.

Alt-com was closely associated with punk because its chief protagonists had been influenced by punk’s music and attitude. Alt-com and punk had a common ancestry that was outwardly manifested in its use of swearing and argot. I would also argue that the punk spirit of DIY<sup>17</sup> was also evident in alt-com: anyone could do it; this was not the case with CIU comedy where one had to serve a very long apprenticeship in the clubs before achieving any real success<sup>18</sup>. Just as punk had come as a surprise to the cultural industries, so too did alt-com. In many respects the alt-com of the early period (1979 to 1982) was really *punk* comedy. As if to prove their avant-garde credentials, alt-comedians openly derided and mocked CIU comedians and television comedians like Benny Hill in the same way that punks had mocked rock bands like Yes and Emerson, Lake and Palmer as ‘dinosaurs’ and “fretboard wankers”. To the punks hippies were boring and to alt-com’s performers *Monty Python’s Flying Circus* was held in a similar regard.

The first wave of acts came from left-wing political theatre or had been punks or had been actively involved in left-wing political parties (Ritchie, 1997). For example, Alexei Sayle’s parents had been members of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) (Cook, 2001). His art school education<sup>19</sup> and the political capital that he had acquired from the CPGB had given him a different set of tools with which to shape his comedy. By contrast, Manning had come from a petit-bourgeois background (his father was a greengrocer) and he had begun his career as a singer with a big band. Sayle had worked in political street theatre, where physical skills were employed as a matter of course. In his appearance in the first episode of *OTT* in 1981, we see how Sayle used his physicality to deliver his comedy.



Figure 3 Alexei Sayle on OTT, January 1981

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<sup>17</sup> Do it yourself

<sup>18</sup> The example of the punk fanzine *Sniffin’ Glue* is instructive: one edition of the fanzine had a page that simply said “Here are three chords, now go out and start a band”. This same attitude existed in alt-com where anyone could get up and do an open spot provided they had the guts and could make people laugh.

<sup>19</sup> This is common motif among the rock performers of the 1960’s and 1970’s.



Perhaps one of the most innovative features of alt-com was its embrace of surrealism, which appeared in forms ranging from whimsical flights of fancy to outright absurdity. Sayle combined surrealism and absurdism with left-wing politics to create a comedy political-aesthetic. His persona was that of an angry streetwise man and his delivery was vociferous and uncompromising. Figure 3 is a screen grab of his performance on *OTT* and is typical of his use of physicality. The CIU comedian stood still, smiled, and told jokes; Sayle writhes about in agony and strikes numerous poses. In a clip from *OTT* (Central Television, 1981), he opens by saying

“I’m the trendy correspondent on this show. I’ve actually been travelling around the country trying to find out what’s trendy for you. I’ve been up to Liverpool... I don’t know if you know it but there’s been a big Sixties revival going on up in Liverpool... (pause)... whole families trying to live on eight quid a week (sucks the air through his teeth in disgust)! There’s a thirties thing going on... (in a character voice) you’re no one unless you’ve got rickets” (strikes a pose).

Alexei Sayle (*OTT*, 1982)

At the time this was performed, the numbers of those unemployed in Liverpool and the rest of Merseyside were very high. The recession of the Seventies had hit the city hard and many of the traditional industries like shipbuilding were in terminal decline. Unemployment benefit was the only lifeline that many people had and it was and always has been paid at a very basic rate. Through this introduction, Sayle also acknowledges that he is appearing on a television programme that is aimed at eighteen to twenty-five year olds; an ostensibly ‘trendy’ audience. “I’m the trendy correspondent”, he says. His line of “Eight quid a week” recognises the fact that some things, like poverty and social deprivation, never change. Poverty will never be fashionable, but it can be reified and commodified as, for example, a sartorial style.

Here, Sayle *détourns* the joke form,

There’s obviously no Albanians in tonight. Good!

This Albanian goes for a job on a building site – right?

(Dementedly) Excuse me, I’d like a job as a racial stereotype, please!

Alexei Sayle (*OTT*, 1982)

The subject of this joke is unusual and unexpected because there were no visible Albanians in Britain in 1982 but, moreover, no one knew for certain what an Albanian looked or spoke like. The set up of this joke relies on the standard approach of the CIU comedian’s gag in whose lexicon the word “Albanian” could easily be substituted for “Paddy”. The joke is located on a building site, the thematic location for many Irish jokes. Sayle’s punchline suddenly breaks from the absurdity of an Albanian looking for a job on a British building site and makes a political statement. The punchline is indicative of the core political-aesthetic that was contained in alt-com’s unwritten manifesto: “We will not tolerate racial stereotypes”! The joke, as a whole, is a comment on the comedy ethnic stereotype. Moreover, the ethnic joke becomes Sayle’s unwitting butt. Depending upon one’s point of view, the punchline, though political, is funny. It is made funnier by the way in which Sayle delivers the line; he looks as though he is ready to lash out at any time. This impression is reinforced by his oddly tight suit and unfashionably close-cut hair. In Figure 4 his hair is a little longer than usual and is the same length as someone who was part of the 2-Tone movement. Indeed his suit is similar to that worn by members of 2-Tone bands like The Specials. In this way, Sayle

could make a subcultural connection to his audience, who were often of the same age and social demographic. It is worth mentioning that 2-Tone, of which The Specials and bands like Madness and The Selector were a part, was a sonic fusion of Jamaican ska and punk. Their sartorial style was derived from the earlier West Indian rude boy and mod styles of the 1960's. The attitude and socio-political consciousness of bands like The Specials came directly from the same lived experiences that were often expressed in punk songs: alienation, unemployment, urban decay and so forth.



**Figure 4 The Dangerous Brothers circa 1982**



**Figure 5 The Dangerous Brothers circa 1981**

I have chosen Mayall and Edmondson's knockabout double act The Dangerous Brothers (Figs. 5 and 6) as the second exemplar because they are atypical of the popular memory of alt-com as an aggressively political form of comedy-cabaret. Nonetheless, the Brothers' routines appropriated the punk characteristics of rudeness, frequent swearing, anger and confrontational physicality. This attitude makes them the negation of spectacular double acts like Cannon and Ball and Little and Large. The traditional dynamic of such double acts rests is supplied by the tension between the

straight man and funny man; in terms of status these roles are self-explanatory. Generally speaking, the straight man is always a high status character and the funny man is always low status and this has been the case since the early days of variety. The Dangerous Brothers - and the double acts that followed them - rejected the straight man/funny man dynamic; both alternately played the straight and funny man.

In Figure 5, The Brothers wear red velvet dinner suits, frilly shirts and bow-ties but Edmondson's suit is usually stained and he wears it badly. Mayall has the single tuft of hair on the front of his head slicked back, while Edmondson spikes his hair in a punk style. In *Boom Boom...Out Go the Lights*, Mayall, who is performing solo as a poet, has a confrontational manner that is accompanied by a wild-eyed stare; he hectors the audience, if they laugh, he tells them to shut up. CIU comedians would never tell their audience to shut up; they do all they can to encourage laughter but, in his own way, so does Mayall. In fact, the more he tells the audience to shut up, the more they laugh. Within the double act, Edmondson does not address the audience; that is Mayall's responsibility. In a rare clip from a performance at The Comic Strip, they wear velvet suits and coloured satin shirts without ties. In Figure 6, Mayall sports a pencil moustache and resembles a spiv<sup>20</sup>. Edmondson looks gormless but does not spike his hair (Fig. 6). Unusually, they have to share a single microphone. Their set consists of very public disagreements on how to perform the set. At the beginning of the set, they perform their détourned rendition of a 'Knock Knock' joke

Edmondson: Knock Knock

Mayall: Who's there?

Edmondson: Open the door

Mayall: Open the door who?

Edmondson: Open the door, please, I want to come in!

Mayall: Open the door, please, I want to come in *who?* (stares wildly at Edmondson) Eh?

Edmondson: (shouts) Look, just open the fucking door!

Mayall: Just open the fucking door *who?*

Edmondson: (half-whispered) What?

Mayall: (looking completely lost) Look, I'll just tell the gooseberry joke...

At this point there is a serious disagreement about the ontologically surreal situation of a gooseberry in a lift. It is a crude and puerile routine. Their facial expressions and mannerisms are punk; there is sneering and swearing. Mayall pretends to squeeze Edmondson's testicles whenever he oversteps the mark. It is hard to imagine Syd Little squeezing Eddie Large's testicles. Without the level of comic aggression between Mayall and Edmondson, the routine would not work. The 'Knock Knock' joke is a common form of joke told in workplaces and in schools. In this instance a simple joke is employed as a gateway to their juvenile banter.

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<sup>20</sup> A spiv is the archetypal Second World War black market trader and petty criminal. This type of character was immortalised by James Beck's "Private Walker" character in the BBC sitcom *Dad's Army* and George Cole's "Flash Harry" character in the *St Trinian's* series of comedy films. The word "spiv" is still used to describe someone who is involved in sharp business practices.



## Conclusion

Alt-com challenged the prevailing comedy orthodoxy by subverting the joke-form and the unwritten showbusiness codes that determine spectacular sartorial styles and modes of comedic delivery. Although the left-wing politics of the individual performers may appear to be overstated by those CIU comedians who saw alt-com as a threat to 'natural order', alt-com did more than sloganise: it established its own comedy aesthetic. Though The Dangerous Brothers were not a political act *per se*, Mayall and Edmondson would often include satirical barbs at the expense of Margaret Thatcher and the Tories. Their punk-comedy aesthetic related directly to the subcultural knowledge and experiences of their audiences. Their comedy was more immediate; that is to say, that it acknowledged contemporary events and the struggles and trials of everyday life. CIU comedy shunned everyday life and presented distortions and exaggerations, not as real life but as a substitute for it.

On one level we can read alt-com as a form of youthful resistance and on another, we can regard it as part of an avant-garde continuum. I use the term "avant-garde" to signify alt-com's artistic innovations, its social and political conscience and its attitude to the preceding comedy-form. Performers like Sayle used comedy to serve a political function, in this sense alone, his comedy and that of others can be considered avant-garde. SI's technique of *détournement* is evident in the way in which jokes are deconstructed and reconstructed. The traditional butt disappears and in its stead is the ethnic joke, which becomes the focus of attack. The old styles of delivery are rejected in favour of a more confrontational approach; the performers did not want you to like them. Alexei Sayle did not want to be anyone's friend (Cook, 2000). The use of textual *dérive* is not evident in the exemplars that I have chosen. This is because improvisation did not make much of an appearance until the second wave of acts. In all cases, these were double acts like the Vicious Boys. Eddie Izzard is probably the best known exponent of improvisational comedy but he did not arrive on the scene until the third wave (1987 to 1990).

By contrast the comedy delivery of Manning and Crompton was traditional; each joke was neatly packaged and told without much emotion. Manning and Crompton were technically gifted comedians but they were also dispassionate and politically disinterested; their objective was to make people laugh at the words they used rather than their personalities or what they did with their bodies. CIU comedians, on the whole, did not use physical comedy and the only exception to this rule was Norman Collier, whose best known routines were the broken microphone and the chicken walk but even so, Collier was not a traditional stand-up comedian and was more of a 'spesh' or speciality act from the traditional school of variety. The comedy of the CIU comedians projected an aura of timelessness and presented a universalised image of a world of normality, conformity and reliability that was at odds with the lived experience of Britain's youth. It is not essential that comedians have a social or political conscience but it is important to allow all forms of discourse in comedy. The mainstream comics of the CIU clubs disagreed; for them, alt-com was not funny. CIU comedians were fond of saying how no subject should be sacred as far as comedy is concerned but it is clear that they were not being entirely honest. Comedy-cabaret is only spectacular if it takes the conscious decision to avoid socio-political discourses and rejects innovation and experimentation. The CIU comics avoided discourses that were 'political' because they believed that 'politics' had no place in comedy. Even though it is possible to argue that negative ethnic stereotypes were, in themselves, caricatures that had been crafted from a particular political discourse. Their sartorial styles also placed them at a distance from the average club-goer. They avoided experimentation and held fast to conventionality because it was safer to do so.

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The Dangerous Brothers (Fig. 5)

[http://images.wikia.com/comicstrippresents/images/4/43/Dang\\_bro.jpg](http://images.wikia.com/comicstrippresents/images/4/43/Dang_bro.jpg)  
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The Dangerous Brothers (Fig. 6)

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# Becoming Iranian women doctors: class pathways of womanhood

**Mastoureh Fathi**

## **Abstract**

*This paper looks at complicated issues around identity in the lives of 14 Iranian women doctors and dentists who live and work in Britain. It specifically problematises their understanding of what the concept of class identity means to them and how such a concept is racialised.*

*The paper consists of three parts. In the first section, I discuss how the life stories of these women are shaped within the highly classed society of Iran. This is contrary to the construction of Islamic Iran as a classless society after the 1979 revolution.*

*The second section focuses on the issue of 'migration of class' and how these women's positions in British society as middle class, do not translate easily in the new diasporic context.*

*My final discussion in this paper is to show how class identities in fact manifest through an understanding of the concept of 'home' in diaspora. Usually home is referred to as a place of safety and security. However, I would argue the concept of 'home' and a desire to make a home are tightly connected to the notion of diasporic class. Lastly I consider how home and class constitute each other.*

## **Introduction:**

Based on interview extracts from women's life stories, this paper shows how the pathways for entering medicine are influenced by educational aspirations and choices which are dominated by systems of power relations in families and state. In this paper, I identify three different systems in which class pathways are constructed amongst these women doctors in Britain: 1. Surveilling, 2, Normalising, 3. Moralising.

I argue that women within sex-segregated social spaces struggle to create classed spaces in families, and by doing this the women in this research challenge the pre-defined Islamic female subjects and take on new classed identities in the supposedly 'classless' Iranian society.

## **Iranian women doctors: a background**

Discourses about empowering women and studying medicine were advertised widely for women as part of the agenda for sex-segregation (e.g. women doctors for women patients) in Iran after the 1979 Islamic revolution (Khosrokhavar and Ghaneirad, 2010; Mehran, 1991, 1992, 2003a, 2003b). Political Islamic discourses assigned new meanings to the concepts of gender, class, race, citizenship, etc. for Iranians and particularly for women. Since the revolution, staying in Higher Education (HE) has been presented as normal because of the dim prospect of securing a job after finishing HE.

Families are very concerned about their children's wellbeing and studying medicine became a socially 'accepted' or 'allowed' subject area for women who were counted as second-class citizens. For women, becoming '*khanoom doctor*' (lady doctor)<sup>21</sup>, represented an ultimate goal in the lives of many young people who were born after the revolution.

Being a doctor or a dentist in Iran means working (partly or fully) for the state. As the Iranian economy is maintained through exporting oil, the state's power holds strong in creating stratification and distinction between classes. This oil-dependent economy as a super structure affects the formation of classes in two major ways. Firstly, it has been argued that 85 percent of middle classes in Iran are state employees (Nomani and Behdad, 2006: 209)<sup>22</sup>. So the relationship between the state and class formations is an important aspect of how individuals position themselves in the class structure in Iran. Secondly, the state holds a governing and surveillance system in which women are the main objects of its scrutiny (I will come back to this point later).

The Iranian middle class in Iran is vastly fragmented. It ranges from highly skilled, well-paid professionals, managers and administrators in the urban centres of large cities, to the low-skilled, low-paid personnel such as educators and paramedical workers (Nomani and Behdad, 2006: 209-210). There are two characteristics of the Iranian middle classes that are worth mentioning here and which relate to physicians:

1. The middle classes are mainly employees of the state. Thus they enjoy job security, a pension, some health care and, because of the oil revenue, their wages are paid in full and on time. This has made state employment attractive since the formation of the modern state in Iran during the 1920s-1930s.
2. The Iranian middle class, in both the private and state sectors, is not professionally organized. With certain exceptions (mainly physicians, lawyers, accountants and journalists), members of the middle class are not engaged in their professional associations in an effort to promote their professional interests. (Nomani and Behdad, 2006: 209-210).

In this picture of social classes outlined above, Nomani and Behdad do not include women as an autonomous class group in Iran. This is typical of the studies of this type (except Poya, 1999; Bahramitash, 2004). Entering the medical profession was both classed and gendered for Iranian women. It helped create a gendered self which was intended for the Iranian woman; a modern and traditional subject who could earn an income and at the same time comply with the gendered duties at home (Mehran, 1991, 1992, 2003a, 2003b). Although not of the first generation of women doctors, my interviewees are the first generation of doctors in their own families (except Batool). Studying medicine was not possible for these women's mothers and usually those mothers who were educated, were teachers. Hence, the social positioning of a doctor has always been 'exotic' for the parents of these women. Parents' hopes for their children becoming doctors, was firstly because the parents did not have the opportunities to become doctors in the way their children could, and secondly, by becoming doctors, children could be assured of a privileged middle classed life in Iranian society. The latter reason was more important for girls as the medical

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<sup>21</sup> Using the word *Khanoom* can be translated as either lady or woman in English, but in Farsi when used before doctor, it should read lady as it connotes a classed title.

<sup>22</sup> These women's sense of loss when they left that context can be related to this issue of legitimacy of positionings within a specific context. Because their positionings within that society were legitimated by the state, their movement out of that context eradicated the legitimacy of their practices as doctors.

profession could protect girls from different gendered discriminations in Iran's patriarchal society.

So in a nutshell, medicine was portrayed as a suitable job which was 'self-contained' as both a gendered and classed profession. Within this frame of thought, I argue that the generational class and the creation of the ambitious self did not work on an optional level. I argue how an ambitious self is used as a strategic tool for securing a classed life for the next generation by parents who were themselves governed by systems of power in Iranian society. The possibilities and opportunities for women to become educated since the revolution are set within a classificatory system. Despite the fact that, within a national discourse, a system of equality is advertised, these stories are highly indicative of inequalities and women's attempt to push away the discriminatory boundaries placed against them. However, these stories are filled with classed attributions, which placed these women in privileged positionings for which they did not have to work hard. In other words, although official pedagogy in Iran seems egalitarian and success is advertised as viable for everyone, in actual fact only a certain group of people are able to pave successful or as argued here, classed pathways. Acknowledgment of their privileges is *absent* from these stories.

## **Methodology and key concepts**

My research is based on fourteen semi-structured interviews with Iranian women doctors and dentists who work in Britain. All except three of these women studied and worked in Iran as doctors and dentists before migrating to Britain in the last 30 years, after the Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979. One studied in Britain and another two in Scandinavia. The aim of my study was to present an understanding of the notion of social class among this group of skilled migrant women. Hence I used 'dialogic narrative analysis' for understanding how class was in fact intersectionally produced in these narratives. This approach focuses on how meanings are produced within a conversation context (dialogue) and are formed on the basis of the presence of an audience both in terms of the listener and the reader of written texts (Bakhtin, 1981; Riessman, 2008). Dialogic narrative allows for a co-construction of meanings. I believe that 'I' as the researcher, have had a significant effect on how meanings are produced, interpreted and read.

Throughout this paper, I use 'classed' in the form of an adjective. By this, I do not mean to attribute a passive process to the meaning of class. In fact I define 'classed' as a term which attributes special meanings to performance for specific people (audience) throughout time and in different places. Using the term classed also means that these meanings are constructed and are assigned to certain performances which are contextually and historically based. As a result, acts can lose meanings and gain new ones when they are out of that 'context' or 'region' as Goffman argues (1959). In other words, I believe class is a set of constructed meanings which a person or a group of people believe to be true in a certain context (Goffman, 1959) and ones which are recognised by other people as having symbolic values (Skeggs, 1997). This is very much related to notions of 'recognition' and 'misrecognition' as Bourdieu (1984) has discussed (see also Skeggs, 2004). I argue that recognition of class is constructed and guarded within a surveillance system. In the next section, I start with the first stage of the formation of classed pathways.

### **1. Surveilling the pathways**

Surveilling for me means watching with an aim of correcting, 'disciplining' and 'governing'. Foucault (1984) argues that surveillance has had a great impact on the

making of a subject. I am using the concept of surveillance here to understand the creation of pathways which led to classed lives of these women. Women in Iran are subjected to surveillance by the state, religion and culture more than men (Shahidian, 2002; Moallem, 2005). However here, I am using the concept of surveillance and governing in a pedagogical and classed sense. I argue that although it seems unproblematic, these women's ambitions and aspirations for future jobs are surveilled, governed and controlled by families, schools and the state.

In 'The Means of Correct Training', Foucault argues that 'discipline "makes" individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise' (Foucault, 1984, 188 emphasis in original). Foucault argues that the success of disciplinary power derives from the use of instruments: 'hierarchical observation, normalizing judgement, and their combination in a procedure that is specific to it - the examination' (Foucault, 1984, 188). Common to almost all the interviews I collected, the surveilling process initiates within families. This starts by creating 'a desire to becoming' a certain subject, by thinking in a 'right' or 'correct' way. As Foucault argues, the way a form of training can be successful is in it being supervised in the desired way. I argue that one main aspect of class formation lies in 'generative surveillance' of cultural capital. As Johnson argues, for Bourdieu, cultural capital refers to a form of knowledge which:

[...] is accumulated through a long process of acquisition or inculcation which includes the pedagogical action of the family or groups members (family education), educated members of the social formation (diffuse education) and social institutions (institutionalised education) (Johnson, 1993, 7).

Children inherit cultural capital through familial and institutional education, but this form of knowledge needs to be organised and disciplined. As cultural capital is context based, its organisation and correction can draw boundaries between different classes. My argument here is that certain ambitions in these life stories represent a form of 'correct' knowledge which is passed on to the next generation from parents, so ambitions by themselves are a form of capital which parents knowingly supervise and guard. In this way, the ambition to study medicine (not just any HE degree) in a specific form is cultivated and developed in generations of Iranian children in the hope of creating *a future classed life*.

### **Mothers and Class surveillance**

Mothers, it has been argued, have a central role in transmitting the cultural capital (Lawler, 2000; May, 2008; Reay, 1998; Silva, 2005). What constructs a 'good' mother and a 'bad' mother, is intertwined with class identities as Lawler (2000) argues. Outlining the right pathways are thus seen as the right or correct ways of bringing up daughters. Roxana, whose parents have university degrees in social sciences and law, discusses in detail, how her mother used to cultivate an ambitious self in her and her sisters to become doctors. In the following quotation, Roxana draws attention to the role her mother played in 'disciplining' her early life:

Roxana: My mother was the most important person in looking after our academic life. In Iranian families, you know, mothers have the most important role. And my mother, errr, because she was a teacher herself, education was very important for her. Erm,... We were really scared of her. I was scared of my mother regarding studying and I was embarrassed in front of my father when I had a bad result. I mean, whenever I got a bad result I was afraid that my mother would tell me off,



and I would rather die than show the bad mark to my father; that I was the sort of bad child who got a bad mark. It was something that I internalised for me.

The mother's surveillance and her poignant role in Roxana's life as a guardian and as the one who was hierarchically observing Roxana's wellbeing, made her internalise an inner self (*habitus*). This is what I am going to discuss in the second part of this chapter in terms of normalisation which refers to Foucault's second instrument of discipline.

Governing and control of educational achievements as perpetuated (and sometimes forced) by the families of these women, are the governing tools which made the mothers as 'good mothers', whose daughters would become doctors later on. For families to see their daughters becoming doctors was not only a financial guarantee of their future life but it could create a classed life. Creating ambitions of this type (as forms of cultural capital) not only places children on a different class, or providing social mobility, but also creates and gives a sense of identity to mothers in relation to morality (I will return to this issue at the end of this paper).

Roxana's mother's governing role, in the above extract, shows a genealogical account of how ambitions in a young woman are cultivated, guarded, and formed. Roxana refers to detailed characteristics of a middle class childhood where there are attempts to create a knowledge-based atmosphere. The above quotation is formulated by Roxana to suit her positioning now as a doctor and to justify her approach in bringing up her own children:

Roxana: [...] education is my top priority. And the fact that I am still doing my training in medicine proves it. I mean, I think it is the most important thing. Even in my family, [I say to] my children ... that 'your education is the most important thing. Nothing is more important than your education'.

In this quote Roxana shows how as a middle class mother now, she *recognises* the rights things, *knows* the right things, *wants* the right things and *values* the right things (Lawler, 2000). In common with most of the women in this study, Roxana lives a life formed as part of such ambitious thinking of becoming a doctor for herself and her children. There is an indication of a plan in Roxana's life as well as others who described their childhood as determined, and different to other children's. By drawing in the next generation, she is in fact reiterating the importance of *habitus* of a doctor to raise children in the 'right' way by indicating that she should have the same 'disciplining' role her mother used to have although in a modern way. For example, Khorshid believes that her son is not forced to be a good academic, but that he himself 'wants' to be a doctor in the future:

Khorshid: [...] my kids like my job. Although there have been lots of challenges in my life, Ali [her son] has experienced the challenges himself. Now that he has decided to become a doctor. Not because 'I' have told him to, because I never talk to him about what job he should have. But Ali thinks the best satisfaction one could get in this world is to make other people happy or save them or help them. I am sure it is true.

As I argued before, these women state how they understood from very early age that they wanted to become doctors. For example, Khorshid argues about the same 'plan' for her own life right at the very beginning of her childhood:

Mastoureh: What was the reason you think that you became a doctor?

Khorshid: I do not know what the reason was.... erm, I remember when I was going to school, I was very young, I was in my first or second year in primary school and my dad had one of those [old] film cameras and he asked: 'Khorshid, what do you want to be in the future?' 'A doctor'. 'What sort of a doctor?' 'A gynaecologist'. [silence]. This film is evidence. I was probably not even six years old.

Mastoureh: [silence], Hmm, you mean you felt as child that you would become a doctor?

Khorshid: Yes, I have always wanted that.

It is important to note that generational surveillance has changed in its forms, not in content. The ambitions in this context, are not only about the importance of learning but also are part of an evaluation process where these women understand the symbolic values attached to these childhood activities and how these would stabilise as a classed narrative. Becoming a doctor is an idea that is planted and is expected to affect the child's understanding of class at an early stage. Monir for example, complained to me that her daughter is choosing humanities instead of something more 'practical'. And Roya told me a story in which she played an advisor's role in guiding a friend to study medical sciences rather than continuing a career in social sciences.

In the examples above, there is an underlying indication of a type of choice and decision that these women had to make as young children. Roxana, Khorshid and Monir are presenting trajectories which start off with a 'planned life'. Here, taking the right route means to have a plan for becoming a doctor. The understanding of a 'plan' in itself is not represented as only entering into higher education, but also 'accessing' a social world and certain subjects like medicine and dentistry which needs a degree of observation by parents. Foucault (1984) argues how disciplining got its power through observation.

In the cases above, and in almost all of these women's lives, there is a form of governance which attempts to coerce a certain form of identity on individuals, different from 'other' groupings of people. Walkerdine and Lucy (1989, 30) argue that working classes are:

'produced and reproduced as necessary, different and disgusting, Other - constantly told they are different in an order which ultimately depends on their acceptance of oppression, exploitation and inequality as normal'.

Evans (2009) similarly argues about the process of distinction among working class girls in Britain and how institutional regulations of education are indicative of having certain cultural values or getting things 'right'. In this fashion, the creation of ambition and aspiration of becoming a doctor is not merely about the importance of learning but is part of an evaluation process where these women understand the symbolic values attached to theirs and their children's activities and also that these would stabilise a classed narrative in construction of a classed identity.

I would argue that medicine for these women is firstly seen, accepted and valued as a classed act, not just as a subject area for attaining a profession. It requires classed backgrounds, although education (in Iran and Britain), and particularly medicine, is represented as available for everyone equally. Secondly, medicine and dentistry are represented as a destiny not available for everyone. Finally, this is used as a point of differentiation and distinction between doctors and non-doctors.

These three points are generally absent from women's narratives. This ignorance or reluctance in speaking about class is related to the next section on normalisation. It is equally interesting that these women's agendas in becoming women doctors were different from the state's agenda in women's education in Iran. Women's aims and desires of becoming a doctor are seen more as an apolitical, *class-based* plan which seemed right to their families. While the state's agenda is more towards the creation of a fundamentally religious society with the sexes segregated in the public sphere.

## 2. Normalisation of the pathways

As argued in the above section, through value systems, families recognise, create and control the 'right' ambitions. It is mostly mothers who direct their children on the right pathway. The distinction created between good mothers and bad mothers, then is then the distinction between those who know the right decisions or not. This section discusses the normalisation of these pathways. Studying medicine is seen as an 'ambition' but not as a form of envy or desire. Narratives of envy as discussed in Steedman (1986), Walkerdine (1990) and Lawler (1999a, 1999b, 2000) are mainly attributed to working class subjects who are hierarchically positioned in relation to middle class subjects. By not discussing the right pathways would be, it is clear that the decisions were justified within a naturalised culture of family context and the social milieu they inhabited, which were mainly middle class (Barone, 2006).

My argument is that by presenting the ambition of becoming medical doctors or dentists as a form of envy, may have suggested they came from a working class background and this would mark their narratives with a sense of 'lack'. Nina is quite characteristic of this form of narrative. She is the only woman who worked as a lab technician before becoming a doctor. This issue was reflected in her narrative repeatedly:

Mastoureh: Can you remember anything before becoming a medical student? –

Nina: - Yes, I had a feeling, regretting when I was seeing doctors, especially female doctors. The medical students, when I was seeing them I was getting really upset. I was saying to myself that: 'What did they have that I didn't have?' I was feeling that they were exceptional people.

I ask how and why this ambitious thinking represents as natural and normal in Iranian culture? What is the framework that naturalises the ambition to become a doctor for certain groups of people in Iran? The answer probably would be that ambitions flourish not as a form of possibility but as a destined pathway. These should not be mistaken as a form of envy narrative, but as a form of narrative of a normalised character which is exclusive to certain groupings and to the children of certain families as Bourdieu argues (1984). Middle class culture (cultural capital) is used as a tool to cultivate this way of thinking.

This part draws on the narratives that justify the value of medicine in Iranian culture in the formation of a middle class self. Culture becomes a loaded term which refers firstly to the value of medicine and dentistry in the value exchange system in Iran and in the West. Secondly, culture refers to the distinctions made throughout the life time struggles of becoming knowledgeable and respectable subjects in a country where women are gaining rights very gradually. This form of naturalising or normalising and relating it to specific characters or cultures is relevant to the notion of autochthony developed by Yuval-Davis (2011). She argues that the rights of people who are indigenous or autochthones of a certain geographical land are understood only in

relation to those who are considered to be foreigners or allochthones. In the same that Yuval-Davis argues about belonging is naturalised in certain places to give rights to groups, I argue that normalising certain pathways indicate that this route is not possible for everyone. I argue that these destined pathways bring to mind a form of belonging, which naturalises certain identities and membership to groupings of people. In the following extract, for example, this form of naturalising is manifested in the language of fate or destiny. Maryam argues how her career was destined for her from the very beginning:

Mastoureh: Can you tell me what led you to study medicine?

Maryam: Since my childhood, I *was destined to study medicine*. In our house there was no other discussion. [Everyone knew that] ‘Maryam’s going to become a doctor’. So from childhood, I was practising injecting because I was *destined* to become a doctor... [she laughs]. And then there was the university entrance exam and I became the 57th student [a high ranking] in the country... (emphasis mine)

It is important to see how these ambitions are naturalised in these narratives. These narratives are told in a ‘privilege-neutral sense’, as ordinary incidents of life and as if no effort was made in order to ‘achieve’ them. In the above extract, one gets the feeling that the events of Maryam’s life are happening without herself knowing, nor deciding actively over them. They are shown as family traditions or destiny, as if a priori. Maryam, in the aforementioned quotation, argues about how she was ‘destined to’ study medicine to assert an important point of distinction. Medicine for her was part of the process of growing up.

Finally there is also an indication in the above stories of the way things should have been and the unquestionability of these pathways. I believe how the naturalising and normalising of the medical profession happens through making the process not open to dispute or in a form of common sense. Naturalisation and normalisation of class requires a form of embarrassment in discussing class (Savage et al, 2001; see also Skeggs, 1997, 2004). Normalisation is defined with the existence of the other as I discussed above. In the following section, I discuss how a different character is used to define the normal trajectories.

### **Lack of ambition as deviant**

Archer et al (2003) argue how ambitions for HE in Britain are normalised within political discourse. My argument however, goes beyond a general discussion of HE. I pinpoint the importance of power relations which regulate the institutions, as well as institutions which legitimise that power. There is a class-based valuation in HE, which revolves around medicine and dentistry and to a less extent to pharmacy and PhD degrees (all of these carry a doctor title). These subject areas merit further attention not least because they speak about the persistence of a form of inequality. I am arguing that in the process of normalising certain pathways, some pathways need to be pathologised, showing as not worthy and ‘incorrect’.

I am arguing here that in the absence of having such an ambition, a person is pathologised and represented as deviant. The value system within which these Iranian women narrated their life trajectories in relation to others, recognises medicine and dentistry as a form of capital and differentiates between doctors and others. These women usually compare themselves to their friends who were non-doctors to show this differentiation and also as evidence of their claims to modernity, westernisation and normality.

In the following extract, Farnaz is comparing herself to one of her friends who was married at an early age and got divorced with two children after 21 years.

Farnaz: [...] Erm, I have a friend, we have been friends since the age of 7. Our basis [family background] was the same, erm... the same school, the same neighbourhood. The only difference was that she got married at the age of 20, she has 2 children now, and after 21 years [of marriage] she got divorced a few months ago. She went to Azad University [private-not prestigious] and studied biomedical sciences. And I did medicine... I don't know why I am telling you this... But our lives really changed. When you asked me about the ways of living, ... with some of my friends, when I got into medicine, I developed worse relationships, because I got accepted in medicine [and they did not]. I am sure that was the reason. It can't be anything else. and then suddenly, she had two children and had to look after them as well as her parents. Then I had my car and was going to different places, and had fun. And she disassociated herself from me. We were very good friends, but this complicated things between us. That I do whatever I want, but she is badly stuck. I have studied medicine, and she has not. In Iran, it is a big thing. I don't care what other people want to think, but this [distinction] exists. It was really bad, and one of the reasons that she got divorced was that she couldn't get whatever she wanted to in some ways, because she was under family pressure to marry.

The distinctions that Farnaz discusses above, are very important in understanding how Farnaz sees herself, in the eyes of others, her friends (growing weak, broken relationships with non-doctor friends) and the public (people in Iran). Farnaz believes that although the basis of their lives was the same, there still remains a hierarchical level of understanding between good education and bad education and between success and failure. In this context, not every form of education is seen as a success and divorce is seen as a failure for a woman in Iran. Success is portrayed in terms of all the different capitals that Bourdieu (1984) discusses. Success is a form of knowledge which can be counted strongly as cultural, economic and social capital. Farnaz makes this differentiation between herself and her friend in order to support the way that their pathways determine which lifestyle each person will lead later on in life. Similar normalisation can be seen in Roya's following narrative:

Roya: [...] If you enter a group of people, and someone is behaving in some weird and as we say, without class [in Farsi this means working class], if he or she is an ordinary person, maybe other people don't say anything. But imagine that if this person, is a doctor. Then everyone says, 'why is *this person* doing this?' Because you have a different expectation from a doctor. But the same behaviour is seen from a teenager or from a secretary in an office, maybe nobody even talks about it. You unconsciously have different expectations from educated people.

In the above quote, by 'ordinary person', Roya means someone other than a doctor. Although at the end of the quote, Roya talks generally about educated people, earlier she specifies that a doctor's behaviour is expected to be different. The point she is making in the above quote lies in the fact that normalisation of doctors needs to be juxtaposed with doctors and others.

Pathologising others' trajectories is a hegemonic formation of a hierarchical positioning for doctors. For example, Monir pathologises other immigrants' impact on society juxtaposed with her own impact:

Monir: Doctors are *more* educated people. They understand me *more*. I am more comfortable in the company of other doctors. You see, if I were a housewife, and had *any kind of a degree* other than a doctor, or imagine, I had that degree but had to work in SAFEWAYS, or as a cleaner, or many other such things, like working in a nursery, and things like that. Although I had a degree, and I was from an educational point of view above an *English cleaner*, I would have to work with him or her. I do not want to humiliate someone, like, sort of humiliate sort of thing, -

Mastoureh: - No, No.

Monir: But I had to deal with the working classes or the BENEFIT-receiving class here. [My emphasis, words in capitals were spoken in English]

In the above quote as I have emphasised, there is a clear indication that other kinds of education ('a kind of a degree') or other jobs are hierarchically low in value, hence there is a suggestion as deviance and certainly not good enough. What is important to note in all the above examples, is the level of distinction that the labour market as well as the normative and symbolic value systems create in the formation of classes. This brings me to the third system of formation of classed self that I want to discuss, which is that of moralising.

### 3. Moralising the self

These Iranian women, in their quest to establish an independent identity from their husbands and fathers, portray a respectable way of life. Hence, respectability manifests as a major form of making the self. In this section, the focus is on how respectability and morality constitute class identity. Beverley Skeggs (1997) in her research with working class women, argues how making a respectable self is a core aspect of making class in their lives and how they achieve this by studying courses in caring field. As Skeggs (1997) argues, respectability has always been one of 'the most ubiquitous signifiers of class' (Skeggs, 1997, 1). In later works (2004, 2005b, 2011), she pinpoints in Britain the notion of respectability through affect and the ways in which classed selves are portrayed through body language and behaviour to create distinctive boundaries between self and others.

I argue that making a respectable self has also always been part of the pathways of becoming a doctor in Iran and it has been a major driving force in the creation not only of a knowledgeable person, but also one who is respectable. The basis of becoming respectable is not only about moralising the self but also about being established financially.

I argued in the previous section about the pathologisation of the person who lacks the ambition and trajectory to become a doctor, and this form of pathologisation is formed within a child from the very beginning, as in the cases of Maryam and Khorshid. I believe that these processes of self-formation are normalised within a system of power relations which also define what 'respectability' is.

My argument is that: Firstly it is within a recognised system of values that these normalisations take place and become meaningful. Hence, these women make sense of their selves when they normalise their own life trajectories but pathologise others. This is mainly because by doing so, they create a powerful positioning on class for themselves and one which is not shared by others. Secondly they create a guilt-free middle class self, which is not discussed and hence is made invisible. By doing this, they become respectable subjects who are, although embarrassed to discuss their

privileges, know very well how to perform those privileged lives (see Savage et al, 2001).

Respect was a word that was referred to repeatedly in relation to the medical profession in these interviews. These women argue that medicine has always been a respectable subject and profession in Iranian society. I differentiate between two types of respect. The first one is usually narrated by these women while the latter is performed. Western life styles in the form of consumerism are important parts of living a respectable life as a performing aspect of respect. While the narrated form of respect is not the consumerist culture of goods and commodities, it is related to a set of values that prefers science to consumerism. For example, the following extract from Setareh shows respect in its former meaning. I asked Setareh why she chose medicine, she answered:

Setareh: In Iranian society, it is valued, for example, when you tell someone that you are a doctor, people respect you... well,... everywhere it has value: to be a doctor.

Respect here is orientalised. It is put in the context of Iran and is treated as different in the West. This point is made by other women as well, that doctors are different in Iran, because medicine is valued in Iran and so are doctors.

Mastoureh: What is it in Iranian society which encourages people to study medicine?

Roxana: That the situation of doctors is better than others. Both socially, they have some *respect*, I don't know how it is now. And financially. So they can have a better life.

Orientalising the notion of respect is developed through narratives which portrays medicine as equal to a moral subject. It is about people, it is about 'cure' and good will. Monir for example clearly explains what she means by respect and moral aspects of her job. She says:

Monir: [By becoming a doctor] you feel that you become very close to people's lives, their honour, their money, and all these would change you in terms of personality and it gives growth to you as a doctor. You see, medicine is really [about] when someone comes to you and leaves her or his body in your hands. Whether you are in the psychiatrist ward, or wherever you are, the person comes and leaves you with all her feelings. It means that you are really near to him or her.

These women related respect and value of medicine to Iranian or Eastern culture and some even related it to dictatorships. For example Farnaz elaborated about why she thinks medicine is represented in Iran as a respectable subject area:

Farnaz: I think it is related to our society, because we always have had dictatorship in Iran.

In this context the notion of cultural capital provides an important means to understanding this subject. They use narratives which are marked by culture, history and politics to explain their professions. However, values, and especially the value of medicine, did not form a clear concept for these women. Some of them did not know why medicine was so important for Iranian society while some others explained the

values in terms of sensitive nature of the subject, and its relationship to the health and life of a person like Monir. A repeated theme, which came up in almost all interviews was, how through medicine they could serve society and people and be useful.

All these women discussed value and respect in relation to medicine and dentistry and argued about a form of capital which it gave them. This form of capital (cultural capital in this context) was passed on to them by their parents and was formed within particular family contexts (Barone, 2006). However, my argument is that it is not the form of capital they inherit which makes them think of medicine as a respectable subject, but they learn how the medical profession is perceived and recognised as a legitimate and respectable profession both in Iran and in Britain. As the formation of a respectable self in Iran is different to Britain, they apply this tool differently in the two contexts in order to make respectable and moral subjects in the both countries. The main difference is that in Iran, they use being a doctor to be seen as equal to men although have fewer rights as a citizen. But in Britain, they use the profession to show they are respectable immigrants, in what appears to be an anti-immigrant context. So respects works within the power relations in which these women are located, feel and narrate their lives.

The making of respectable subjects happens within normalising discourses of who is in and who is out of the medical profession. The main reason that such a discourse can be successful is that these women are people who have been accepted as institutionally legitimate doctors in Britain<sup>23</sup>. This is how the orientalised respect makes sense because they use medicine as a means of attaining the respect they want as women in Iranian society and at the same time use the same tool as migrants in Britain.

## Conclusion

In this paper, I have presented three main systems on the making of classed selves among Iranian women doctors who work in Britain. I argue that a form of governmentality is used for controlling ambitions of higher education and the creation of normalised selves. This governing process includes governmental programmes for both individuals and families, each having a different agenda for higher education. The government restricts women to a gendered segregated population. And the family maintains control of women's lives to ensure a future a classed life.

As I discussed, women's regulation happens in forms which may seem emancipatory. Iranian women, while acknowledging that in many aspects of social life they do not exercise freedom, they nonetheless see themselves progressing only in 'allowed' pathways. These pathways are constantly monitored and safeguarded by institutions. This form of regulation and surveillance is passed on to families and especially mothers who create and govern ambition in their children's lives. I argue that these pathways are constructed as natural and destined for these women's lives. Medicine is represented within the context of forming a family plan rather than a choice. Even for those who were coming from working class backgrounds, or those who had another job before becoming a doctor, medicine was a destined fact. It was not a form of higher education achievement. It was represented as part of the pathways of becoming who they are.

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<sup>23</sup> They are recognised as fit and suitable for work by the General Medical Council (GMC). Passing the exams and having an accreditation of medical qualifications is not a guarantee of a job offer. (See [http://www.gmc-uk.org/doctors/before\\_you\\_apply/imgs.asp](http://www.gmc-uk.org/doctors/before_you_apply/imgs.asp))



I argue that the pathways of these women as doctors are normalised because becoming doctors gives them an institutional power, a regulatory one, both in Iran and in Britain, which to them legitimises their gendered and raced identities as autonomous. Normalisation also gives them a powerful stance within the gendered understanding of professions in Iranian society.

In addition, similar to Savage (2000), Savage et al (2001) and Archer et al (2011), I argue that being embarrassed to discuss class is a way of presentation of a middle class self. The absence of self as a privileged subject in the narratives is indicative of the formation of hierarchies of power or hegemonic understanding of professions. Being embarrassed to discuss class means that a form of class-consciousness is present in the narratives. Embarrassment is a form of maintaining a classed self as well as a moral self.

In the last section I focused on the formation of a moral self as a classed self. I argued that respectability and the formation of a moral self is another major function of the making of the classed self. As was discussed before, for these women, respectability is set differently in Iran and Britain as these women's social positions and the symbolic power attached to these different locations changed from one context to the other. Becoming doctors meant that they could become respectable women in Iran or respectable migrants in the West.

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# Rural People Facing Crisis: How Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) in Bangladesh Ensure Safety Net?

Mohammad Sadiqunnabi Choudhury<sup>24</sup>

## Abstract

*Most of the rural households in Bangladesh deal with economic hardships using both informal and formal insurance mechanisms. Informal insurance mechanism such as draw on household savings or sell off assets is often weak in nature. Microfinance Institutions (MFIs) help reducing vulnerability of poor households encouraging formal coping mechanisms while discouraging less effective informal strategies. They provide safe saving opportunities, access to credit, health insurance, and social security services. This paper focuses on the crisis management capacity of the rural households and facilities provided by MFIs for combating such crisis.*

## Introduction

Exposure to crises is one of the major poverty experience that carry shock potentials for the affected households in rural Bangladesh. Crisis events are unexpected from the standpoint of individual household although they are routine events for the society as a whole. Such shock potentials are economic in nature as they keep pressure on the resource base of the households by destabilizing welfare. Crisis coping capacity of the rural households is one of the indicators that measure the strength of the household in poverty scale. Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs) in rural Bangladesh, commonly known as Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), organize the rural people, provide development inputs such as microfinance support, health and nutrition facilities, education and training programs and help the weaker rural households to be able to cope with any crises (Hussain et al, 1998). In the literature of poverty there are two main approaches of poverty measurements: Quantitative and Qualitative. Quantitative approach uses household survey to measure severity and depth of poverty by drawing a poverty line separating headcount of poor and non-poor. Alternatively, qualitative approach focuses on the probability of being poor in future measured by vulnerability and powerlessness (Morduch 1999, Dercon, 2006). Following qualitative approach this paper focuses on the crisis management facilities of the MFIs provided to the rural households rather than focusing on the success or failure of their programs targeting for poverty reduction.

## Vulnerability and Voice: New approach to poverty measurement

Conventional measures of poverty depends heavily on the quantitative information contained in household survey that draw an arbitrary line separating poor and non-poor based on expenditure or income of households. Alternative measurement, on the other hand, is qualitative assessment of vulnerability to poverty using Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA) which allow poor to define poverty themselves. Quantitative poverty measurement is generally fixed in time and thus a static concept. By contrast,

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vulnerability is more dynamic as it incorporates expected poverty i.e. probability of moving in and out of poverty (Lipton and Maxwell, 1992). There are two aspects of poverty emerged from the participatory assessments that were not covered in the conventional surveys. First, a concern about risk and volatility of income i.e. feeling of vulnerability and the second, lack of voice and sociopolitical rights i.e. sense of powerlessness (Kanbur and Squire, 2001). Robert Chambers has argued that vulnerability "has two sides: the external side of exposure to shocks, stress, and risk; and the internal side of defenselessness, meaning a lack of means to cope without damaging loss" (Chambers 1989, p 1). Outside sources of risk range from natural disasters and epidemics to crime and violence, financial insecurity, and civil conflicts. Moser (1998) prefers using the term 'resilience' (or capacity to resist or recover) instead of Chambers' 'defenselessness'. Resilience refers to using assets and entitlements as means of resistance against shocks. More ownership and control over assets means less vulnerable the households or individuals are (savings etc in assets based approach). On the other hand defenselessness has implicit meaning of seeking help from external sources (loans etc in liability approach) which may end up with indebtedness or higher degree of insecurity. Morduch (1999) and Dercon (2006) argue that coping mechanism is central part of rural people's livelihood. They recommend some ex-ante and ex-post measures to be taken by government and NGOs for reducing vulnerability and supporting household's capacity building. *Ex-ante* measures are precautionary measures taken before the occurrence of the shocks such as microcredit and microinsurance. *Ex-post* measures are for those who are already affected and uninsured e.g. targeted or conditional transfers to the poor.

## **Types of Crises in Rural Bangladesh**

Various economic and non-economic crises or negative shocks are reported in the literature on participatory poverty assessment. Many of them are routinely confronted by the rural households in Bangladesh. Rahman (1996) and Hussain et al (1998) classified them into four broad categories:

**1. Seasonal shocks:** Due to the seasonal variations in different income generating activities, poor households face severe fluctuations (lean and peak) in income and consumption. In lean months seasonal depression leads to downward pressure on their resource base. In Bangladesh, traditionally there are two major lean seasons - one is summer lean season: *Caitra - Baishakh* (of Bengali month equivalent to late March - early May) and other is the autumn lean season: *Ashwin - Kartik* (of Bengali month equivalent to late September - early November). One of the main reasons behind the traditional lean months is the lack of employment opportunities during the period between paddy plantation and harvesting. NGO/MFI interventions are supposed to create alternative employment and income generating opportunities during the lean months and thus help rural poor overcome seasonal vulnerability.

**2. Financial insecurity:** This includes lack of employment opportunities, asset loss, loan repayment problems, consumption crisis, legal expenses to settle disputes, death of main income earners, and occurrence of dacoit or theft. This type of insecurity is severe in the lower income group mainly the landless poor.

**3. Natural disasters:** Recurrent natural calamities like flood, tidal wave, tornado, and cyclone which wash away or blow over all of the belongings of the poor almost every year. Crisis becomes severe when crop damages cause life threatening impact on poor inhabitants. No development endeavors can sustain if the disaster prone people are not given adequate support at the time of their distress.

**4. Health crisis:** Poor people have very little access to health services, safe drinking water and sanitary facilities. They have very little or even no scientific knowledge in health care and nutrition resulting vulnerability to all kind of contagious and epidemic diseases. People often lose their every possession to combat the health crisis.

**5. Social problems:** These includes daughter's marriage with dowry, husband's second marriage or polygamy, illegal divorce, quarreling with neighbors, land dispute, beating up wife, and gender discriminations. These social injustices are everyday experience of the poor families in rural areas. Lack of appropriate knowledge in social interactions is the main reason behind the crisis.

### **Coping with crises**

Household survey data and group discussion with rural people during 1987-94 initiated by Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) revealed detailed information on the coping mechanisms of the rural households in Bangladesh (Rahman, 1996). On the basis of the economic strength of the household, their coping strategies can be classified into two broad categories, namely (1) Informal insurance mechanism (2) Formal insurance mechanism. Informal insurance refers to the weak coping strategies, which provide immediate solution to the seasonal risk and uncertainty but may have long-term consequences to the resource capacity of the households. On the other hand, formal insurance strategies refer to the strong coping mechanism that have little or even no such consequences. Most of the informal insurance mechanisms often provide inadequate protection to the poor households. On the other hand, formal insurance mechanisms not only resolve immediate crises but also help building strong resource base of the poor (Morduch 1999).

#### **Informal insurance mechanisms:**

- Going to money lender for borrowing at usurious rate (e.g. 10 percent per month meaning 120 percent per annum).
- Using informal savings (*musti chal* or *a fistful rice taken aside from daily rice cooking*, coins deposited in clay bank or deposit box)
- Reducing consumption or begging when lean season arrives or drought occurs.
- Selling assets (household assets, land etc.) or Mortgaging land in the face of unexpected financial crisis.
- Taking non-farm income generating activities during off season.
- Working hard in own farm or for landlord to earn more.
- Going to quack for treatment and, so on.

#### **Formal or semi formal insurance mechanisms:**

- Taking support from Banks, Cooperatives or MFIs such as Microcredit, Health facilities, Training support etc.
- Using formal savings (savings deposited in Banks, cooperatives or MFIs).
- Taking coverage of insurance (rural or microinsurance).
- Taking health facilities provided by Government or NGO health centers, etc.

The choice of coping mechanism reflects the economic status of the households. Households that experience less hardship with formal coping strategies can be classified as strong households and households that experience more hardship with even informal coping strategies can be classified as weak households.

## How MFIs Provide Insurance?

Poor people need support to cover financial risks and reduce health-related vulnerabilities. MFIs provide risk coverage and social security schemes through a number of programmes including housing, education, health and some other facilities for the group members. This section will focus on some MFI financed insurance projects that cover risks and uncertainties faced by the poor households.

**Employment and Income Generating (EIG) Activities:** MFIs are governing their programs in rural areas for two inter-related goals 1) Alleviation of poverty 2) Empowerment of the poor. Empowerment against all kind of deprivation is essential for graduation of poor to cross the poverty line. The most important step towards empowerment of the poor is to organize and mobilize them to assert their rights. MFIs encourage them to form group and attain a certain degree of cohesion like respect for collective decisions, and financial discipline with savings. This group cohesion makes them ready for Employment and Income Generating (EIG) activities. MFIs then arrange training, technical assistance, loans and supervising services to encourage their members to undertake various EIG projects like poultry and livestock, fisheries, small business, sericulture, apiculture, horticulture, and vegetable growing. During lean months rural people remain unemployed and hardly earn livelihood. In this period MFIs offer alternative non-farm income generating opportunities along with loans and other supports. These EIG activities are normally unaffected by seasonal fluctuations and people earn money when farm activities suffer from seasonal lean.

'The Second Impact Assessment Study (IAS-II) of BRAC's Rural Development Programs, 1998' examines the degree of crisis coping capacity of the Bangladesh Rural Advancement committee (BRAC) members using both quantitative and qualitative research methodology. It concludes that BRAC households have employed lower number of weak coping mechanism and higher number of strong coping mechanism than non-BRAC households to confront crises which indicates that they are relatively less vulnerable (Hussain, et al 1998). Within the MFI group older members suffer no significant seasonal difference indicating that as membership matures they get more and more development inputs from MFIs that strengthen their coping capacities.

**Reducing Vulnerability Using Microfinance:** Over the past few decades microfinance (microcredit, microsaving and microinsurance) played an important role in poor people's wellbeing including significant contributions to growth of enterprise revenues and increased incomes of many households. However, focusing only on static measures of household earnings and income tends to ignore more dynamic side of poverty, the vulnerability of the poor to risks. Microfinance researchers (Rutherford, 2000; Morduch, 1999; Wright, 1999; Hassan 1999; and Mosley 1999) have identified the relationship between client level risk and microfinance showing how these risks may affect the quality of MFI's portfolio and how improving financial services and delivery mechanisms can reduce client risk. Some researchers have argued for improving the ability of clients to manage risk as a win-win strategy both for client and MFI. Cohen and Sebstad (2003) have studied crises coping mechanism rural people in three African countries Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda. They found well-established mechanisms to help households to cope with the crises they fall into three categories:

- Formal insurance
- Group-based informal insurance

- Self-insurance including savings, credit, asset sales and help from family and friends

Their study identifies opportunities to provide financial services that enable the poor to better manage risk. Its main focus was the demand for microinsurance and its potential role in improving the effectiveness of risk management strategies of rural poor.

Prior to the MFI interventions, most of the poor people in rural Bangladesh were dependent on the informal sources of savings and loans to fight crises. Informal savings such as *musti chal* (fistful rice taken aside from daily rice cooking), money deposited in *matir bank* (or deposit box), and money deposited to others for mortgaging their land were not sufficient enough to insure against of crisis. Informal loans, such as loans taken from *Mohajan* (Money lender), friends and relatives at usurious rate were the weakest weapon to confront crisis events as high interest rate causes depletion of household resources. MFIs have formalized the savings and credit behavior of the households which provided cost-effective fund for investment in non-farm activities and emergency expenditure. To make savings behavior formal MFI introduces weekly *voluntary savings* and *compulsory savings* (10% of the loan). Before 1990s members were not allowed to withdraw their savings before a certain period. In that system savings did not contribute to short term coping capacity of the households. Inaccessibility of the savings during the time of distress or severe needs was a matter of concern to many members. Most of the MFIs now allow their members to withdraw their savings for emergency use in crisis or investment use elsewhere.

MFIs also give microloans to the rural poor at cost effective rate to help them get rid of the *Mohajons* who lend money at high rate of interest. Most of the MFIs operate microcredit facilities with a system called 'group lending' where borrowers organize themselves into a self-selected group of 5-6 people, receive training from MFIs and start weekly meeting. Each member makes small savings deposits (deposits mechanism is already mentioned above). Several weeks after the formation of group, two members receive a loan. If the initial members make their required weekly payments and if the group adheres the rules and regulations set by the MFI two more members receive loan and so on. Such credit mechanism ensures two things: group responsibility for repayment of loan (repayment rate for micro lending with joint liability is more than 95 percent) and group cohesion for fighting any crisis jointly.

Microcredit is considered to be a valuable mechanism for protecting against *ex ante* risks but it has been less effective in supporting *ex post* shocks and insufficient in dealing with emergencies. Indigenous risk management instruments like informal microsavings and group based insurance like ASCAs, and ROSCAs offer poor to pool risk but they often are less than perfect (Morduch, 1999). Risk management can be facilitated through formal microinsurance and microsavings but experience suggests that these are constrained by supervisory framework and insufficient resources.

**Disaster Management Programs - helping people managing natural adversity:** In a disaster-prone delta like Bangladesh, people often face natural calamities like flood, tidal wave, tornado, and cyclone. MFIs along with other development agents come forward to give adequate support in the time of disasters. After experiencing the devastating cyclone of 1991, Bangladesh Government and some MFIs took initiative to build cyclone shelters in coastal belt. When cyclone again hit Bangladesh in May 1997, people in coastal areas were immediately taken to the cyclone centres as soon as the storm was forecast. Along with government initiatives MFIs responded promptly to the disaster and undertook relief and rehabilitation activities in the affected areas. Medical

teams worked ceaselessly to provide services to the distressed people. Relief and Rehabilitation programs sanction of tube wells for safe drinking water and many other disaster management programs were undertaken with GO-NGO partnership. In 1998, a devastating flood of unprecedented magnitude ravaged almost 75 percent of the country for about two and a half months. Apart from loss of human lives and livestock, there was extensive damage to standing crops, housing an infrastructure. Economic life slowed down, adding to problems of unemployment and decline in income of the rural poor. MFIs in rural areas undertook a massive relief operation for the affected people to help them tide over the crisis. The devastating flood of 1998 has left learning for MFIs in rural areas. It was realized that people do not want to live on relief any more; they want wage employment and other inputs in the form of loans, which they would repay later. As one BRAC member said "All we have is hope, we don't want you to take this away from us. You (BRAC and other MFIs) give us support; we know how to survive" (Access- the BRAC newsletter, October 1998). Cyclone 'Sidre' and 'Aila' hit coastal region of Bangladesh in 2007 and 2009. Again MFIs and NGOs joined government initiatives of disaster management to provide emergency food and shelter and support health, hygiene, water and sanitation to restore livelihood.

**MFI Financed Rural Health Programs:** MFIs are running Health, Nutrition and Population Programs in order to attain sustained health impact through the reduction of maternal, infant and child mortality, morbidity and fertility rates and improvement in nutritional status of the rural poor. Integrated health care approach of MFIs attempted to combine health services with economic programs for providing rural poor to fight health crises. Diarrhoea had been a major menace in the country, which caused infant and child mortality rates to go up dramatically. In July 1980, BRAC started a campaign against diarrhoeal epidemic through a process called Oral Rehydration Therapy (ORT). By 1999, more than 15000 rural health workers, who were locally called *Shasthos Shebikas* (SS), had introduced 15 million households to the *lobon-gur saline* (salt-sugar solution) that made a revolution in the treatment of diarrhoea. MFIs in rural areas are now facilitating government's Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) with management of enhanced delivery, disease surveillance and monitoring to help rural people fight against six preventable childhood diseases. Supplementation of vitamin A and training for the rural women as Traditional Birth Attendants (TBA) are among other programs MFIs are running in partnership with government. In 1995, BRAC established community based health centers called "*Shushasthos*" to provide clinical support for the complicated cases identified in the community. In 2009, essential health care coverage marked 100 million people in all 64 districts of Bangladesh for receiving health care from the *Shushasthos*" across the countries. Other NGOs have similar projects to reduce vulnerability and the occurrence of common diseases.

**Social Development Programs for Combating Social Crises:** There are various social development programs organized by MFIs to eliminate social injustices like dowry, illegal divorces, polygamy, gender discrimination, underage marriage, illiteracy, and superstitious health practices from the society. To create awareness among the rural people about individual rights and privileges, BRAC started Human Rights and Legal Education (HRLE) program in 1986. Special training courses in HRLE program give BRAC members access to information about law and raise awareness about their legal rights. To raise people's view against various forms of social injustice and deprivation MFIs initiate Theater Program - an effective medium of communication with illiterate rural people providing amusement, entertaining and education simultaneously. As a pioneer MFI, PROSHIKA started promoting theater program in 1996 naming 'People's Theater'. During 2002-03, about 182 people's theaters (now known as 'Troup') organized 39,526 village-based performances all over Bangladesh. BRAC initiated



similar program 'Popular Theater' in 1998. By December 2003, BRAC member organized 163 popular theater groups, which staged 17,338 dramas. These dramas expose social crises and injustice and put forward solutions for the villagers.

## Conclusion

Poor households face two interrelated disadvantages: difficulty in generating income leading to poverty and socioeconomic shocks leading to vulnerability. Poverty is a source of vulnerability and repeated exposure to shocks reinforces poverty. The circular nature of poverty and vulnerability needs to be broken to make rural households stronger in facing crises. In his investigation of poverty in York, England in the early 1900s Benjamin Seebohm Rowntree, the pioneer in the study of poverty, exhibits a surprising modernity in the notion of giving the poor voice and providing them with public safety nets like education, capacity building, and public services (Rowntree, 1901). Today, we cannot think of providing public safety nets without non-government interventions (NGOs and MFIs) either jointly or separately. In addition to the informal insurance mechanisms against economic and non-economic shocks government and non-government interventions with formal coping mechanisms are required to strengthen the capacity of the rural households. Mobilizing savings, expanding access to credit and fostering other formal insurance programs are effective way to help households becoming self sufficient in the face of adversity.

A set of policy priorities can be at government level including actions to reduce risk and uncertainty through increasing macroeconomic stability, improving transport and communications, creating a stable political environment and other supportive system for private risk reducing initiatives. Governments of the developed countries typically provide health insurance, unemployment benefits, and social security that sharply reduce the vulnerability of households. But neither the administrative capacity nor the funding sources are sufficient for most less developed countries to build similar public safety net (Morduch 1999). In this context GO-NGO partnership can provide complementary actions toward households' access to insurance, microcredit and savings, and employment opportunities. The Income Generation for Vulnerable Group Development (IGVGD) program is an example of collaborative programme between Government of Bangladesh, World Food Programme and BRAC. Destitute women were organized into groups and provided with skill development training, a package of basic health care services and a VGD card that grant a monthly ration of 30 kg of wheat per month for 24 months. With skill training in different IIG activities, VGD women become eligible for microloans which help breaking poverty-vulnerability circle.

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## Reviews



**Review of Frampton, D. (2006). *Cinema, The Thinking Machine: Filmosophy*, Wallflower, 254pp**  
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## **Matthew Hawkins**

Daniel Frampton comes from an academic background of film studies and philosophy, and he is one of the co-founders of the salon journal *Film-Philosophy*. As such it is no great surprise that his first monograph presents an attempt to marry to two disciplines into one unified whole. *Filmosophy* presents a “manifesto for a radical new way of understanding cinema”. Whilst drawing on the work of Giles Deleuze the book can be positioned intellectually in the affective turn within cultural theory. For Frampton, cinema is an art form that does philosophy.

Film and philosophy are two disciplines that have been successful bedfellows within academia for some time. Frampton is not the first to suggest that film can *do* philosophy, but he does so in quite a unique and innovative way. Steven Mulhall, Fellow in Philosophy at New College Oxford, argues that film is capable of philosophically reflecting on the conditions of its own existence. Mulhall cites *Blade Runner* (Scott, 1982) as an example of a film that does philosophy<sup>25</sup>. For Mulhall, the Voight-Kampff machine in *Blade Runner* is analogous to the movie camera, and the people that stand in front of the machine are analogous to actors, and viewing them as such helps one to understand the nature of what it is to be an actor. He also cites the scene in which the characters of Decker and Leon have a brief conversation about life and death, as an example of philosophy within cinema. The University Press of Kentucky publishes a series of books under the title, *The Philosophy of Popular Culture*. These books focus on the work of film directors, such as The Coen Brothers and Stanley Kubrick, as well as specific films and genres such as The X-Files and Neo Noir. The series focuses on philosophical themes that are then explored by certain directors or by certain films. Although Mulhall’s main concern is with the cinema’s ability to philosophise on its own nature, and *The Philosophy of Popular Culture Series* sets out to explore philosophy through film they both present film as a mimetic representation of philosophy with characters and plots ‘speaking out’ ideas with a broad relation to philosophical concepts. What Frampton sets out to do is something markedly different.

Frampton suggests that the cinema is a thinking machine, and the act of watching a film is to bare witness to the act of a film thinking. Frampton describes edits within a film, as shifts. These shifts are an example of film-thinking, the film *willing* the spectator to view a moment from a different angle, or the films desire to manipulate space and time. The author cites image, sound, focus, colour, framing and movement, as examples of formal elements of film-thinking. He illuminates his theory by drawing on the work of Bela Tarr, Michael Haneke and the brothers Luc and Jean-Pierre Darden. Frampton writes about the cinema with a passion and an eloquence that helps to engage the reader in the conceptual framework of his thesis, and it is clear that he has an enthusiasm for the films he is discussing, which is both a strength and a weakness of the work. It is clear that Frampton is drawn to what can loosely be described as European art cinema. A brief glance at the index reveals the names of directors such as Jean Luc Godard, Francis Trauffaut, Jean Vigo, Krzysztof Kieślowski and

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<sup>25</sup> In an interview with Nigel Warburton, Philosophy – Faculty of the Arts Open University, for the Philosophy Bites series, February 3<sup>rd</sup> 2008.



Michalangelo Antonioni, all canonical art house directors. The films of the European art cinema must be most effective for discussing the concept of Filmosophy, but it is never explained why these films are chosen above Hollywood action films or the Bollywood musical for example. Steven Shaviro stated that his desire to write *The Cinematic Body* (1993), one of the first English Language monographs to take a Deleuzian approach to film studies, came from his wish to harmonize his rampant cinephilia with his equally compulsive intellectual drive<sup>26</sup>. Frampton's writing reads like the work of a cinephile. It is often cinephilia that draws academics towards film studies, and I think that the discipline is all the better for it, but this can lead to a less scientific, yet by no means less rigorous, approach to analysis. Rather than picking a film at random and holding it up to a theoretical examination to see if the concepts developed hold muster, we prefer to pick the films we feel most passionate about, and it is these films that take the brunt of our theoretical investigation. This seems to be the case with Frampton's choices, although as he is working with concepts of affect and the body a more emotional reasoning behind his choices is valid. I do feel however that his cause would be helped if he gave some criteria to the selection of films about which he chooses to write.

One of the most admirable chapters of Filmosophy is the ninth, *Film Writing*, in which Frampton puts forth the idea of a new non-technicist language for discussing cinema. The cinema as an art form is a product of modernity and technology, and as such authors writing on the subject have found it difficult to divorce the technological means by which the film is produced from the films themselves. Whilst writing on cinema the theorist often refers to pans, tracking shots and camera movement etc, yet whilst watching a film the spectator/theorist does not perceive the movement of the camera, but the illusion of movement within a fixed frame, viewed from a fixed position within a space. Frampton states, "*we should not be taught to see 'zooms' and 'tracking shots', but led to understand intensities and movements of feeling and thinking*" (169). His new lexicon foregrounds the cinematic experience and separates the finished film from its mechanical means of production. Ultimately, however Frampton's alternative language is only of real use when deployed to discuss his own specific theoretical position, and it is thus rather limited in scope, and will prove less useful for discussing cinema and film theory in a wider context, which is a shame.

One of the problems I have with the text is that the film is removed from the author. The concept of filmosophy seems to deny the constructed nature of the film. As a practitioner, this is something that I find particularly problematic. Frampton has worked as a cameraman<sup>27</sup>, so I assume that he is not particularly adverse to the practicalities of producing moving images. He takes a broadly Deleuzian approach to his work, whilst noting as he does Deleuze's "inoffensive auturist" sensibilities (29), and his work is Continental in style. He certainly does not take a post-theory approach to film studies, and his manifesto suggests that he would not shy away from the Film Theory, so abhorred by what Robert Ray so eloquently describes as the Bordwell Regime<sup>28</sup>. However, it is not Frampton's indirect dismissal of Auteur Theory or authorial theories of narrative that I find problematic (in fact, Frampton's critique of the latter is another strength of his argument). It is rather the denial that cinema is the product of a creative and artistic act that I find most difficult to agree with. If we are to follow Frampton's line of argumentation then a film has to be considered as an autonomous being, existing in an of itself.

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<sup>26</sup> 'The Cinematic Body Redux' in *Parallax* Volume 14, Issue 1, February 2008.

<sup>27</sup> *Good to Meet You: Daniel Frampton*, The Guardian 28<sup>th</sup> June 2008, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/theguardian/2008/jun/28/3>

<sup>28</sup> Chapter Three in *How a Film Theory Got Lost and Other Mysteries in Cultural Studies*, 2001.

Then there is the problem of the nature of thinking to take into consideration. Thinking is a fluid, non-fixed process. The act of thinking is an act of becoming, always in transition. This is not the case for the final cut of a film. The body and mind of the film will always be the same. For a film to think it must be possible for a film to think *something else*, and for me, this is where Frampton's manifesto comes unstuck. However, Frampton acknowledges the fact that "all film forms arrive as one" (116), and states that his specific theoretical standpoint is aimed to further understanding of the possibilities of cinema as a philosophical medium.

It is Frampton's attempt to further understand the possibilities of cinema that lies at the heart of the strength of this book. Upon *Filmosophy*'s publication in 2006 over two decades had past since the publication of Gilles Deleuze's *Cinema 1: The Movement Image* (1983) and the eventual critique of semiotic film theory and psychoanalytical film theory. Frampton's text avoids the trappings of the polemic that have hampered the development of Deleuzian film theory, and despite some theoretical problems it is an admirable attempt to take film theory in new and challenging directions.

**Review of Hanlon, J. et al (2010): *Just Give Money to the Poor: The Development Revolution from the Global South*, Sterling: Kumarian Press, 288pp.**

ISBN (HB) 978 1 56549 334 6: \$75.00

ISBN (PB) 978 1 56549 333 9: \$24.95

**Mohammad Sadiqunnabi Choudhury**

**Background**

There are three aspects of microfinance that evolved in the process of development during the late 20th century: microcredit, microsavings and microinsurance. Microcredit has emerged from the relief and rehabilitation programme for the poor during 1970s and has gradually been matured during 1980s and 90s. Microsavings and microinsurance came into scene in 1990s when people demanded safe and secure place to save their money and wanted to insure against risks and uncertainty. Apart from microfinance there are other ways of helping poor such as Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs) and Unconditional Cash Transfer (UCTs). This book, authored by Joseph Hanlon, Armando Barrientos and David Hulme, illustrates pros and cons of unconditional cash transfers in *Just Give Money to the Poor*.

Cash transfers in developing countries have been questioned in two ways: 1) poor countries could not afford cash transfers because of too many people living below the poverty line and 2) rich people argue that poor are at least partly responsible for their own poverty and therefore unworthy of support. Over the past decade developing countries have challenged both beliefs with empirical evidence that shows countries can afford the transfers and poor people use their money efficiently. In this review we present a brief chapter by chapter illustration of how the authors convinced readers about the effectiveness of unconditional cash transfer on poverty reduction.

**Conditional VS Unconditional Cash Transfer (Introduction: 1-14)**

Conditional cash transfers are designed to reward poor people with cash payment to participate in the development process such as sending their kids to school, taking right foods, going to hospital for treatment and so on. Research result shows that many positive economic and social impacts are associated with CCTS. The idea of imposing conditions is based on the anti-neoclassical theory of economics in which it is assumed that individuals cannot make rational decisions and thus policymakers and others need to intervene. Instead, the authors trust the ability of the poor to make decisions that promote their own well-being. They argued that donors continue making poor decisions on behalf of the poor. There are debates over issues like: do poor people make right decisions about 'how to use cash transfer?' or do they need paternalistic nudges to push them toward being healthier and happier human being? *Just Give Money to the Poor* makes it clear that people know the efficient use of money and they simply need the money to get out of the poverty trap. Conditions only make the development process complicated.

**From Alms to Right and North to South (Ch - 2: 15-26)**

In the north, the evolution of poverty and vulnerability thoughts went through three phases: 1) In 16th century England, government had accepted collective responsibility to ensure subsistence for all, 2) In the late 19th century almost all European nations had introduced old-age insurance and sickness benefits and 3) In the mid 20th century United Nations declared adequate standard of living as human rights. At the end of 20th century, Southern developing countries started to advocate a fourth paradigm,

which was cash transfer from the state to poor people. Unlike the North these transfers are neither contributory nor insurance based; instead they are funded by tax revenue. The cash transfer paradigm has challenged the adaptability of northern economic models in the south. The southern challenge is against the belief that international aid and consultants could do for the poor. The authors argue that poor people use money wisely and creatively without any advice from 'aid workers'.

### **Cash Transfers Today (Ch - 3: 27-51)**

At least 45 countries in the Global South now give cash transfer to more than 110 million families. Cash transfers range from tiny \$3 per month to more than \$100 per month. The authors noted that the size of the cash transfer ranges from 0.1% - 4% of the GDP which is affordable for many developing countries in the South. Cash transfer programmes are chosen for targeting certain goals: social protection and security for young, old, disabled and working poor, breaking intergenerational poverty by giving cash for children, protecting rights and equity and maintaining economic growth and social development of the country.

### **Eating More - and Better (Ch - 4: 53-68)**

The authors argue that cash transfers meet the ultimate goal of reducing poverty. Half of the grants are spent on more and better food and results are visible in mental and physical development in children of developing countries. Data shows that all grants including pensions increase school attendance. Cash transfer has gender effects too. Most transfers go to women who report that increased money has enhanced their self-esteem and status. The authors argue that although cash transfer reduces poverty and inequality its impacts will not be full if it is not accompanied by other programmes such as quality education, better roads and infrastructure and efficient health facilities.

### **Pro-poor Growth (Ch - 5: 69-85)**

Cash transfers promote economic growth. The authors argue that poor people spend the cash transfer on locally produced goods which stimulate the economy supporting local farmers and traders. The fear of the rich that poor people will become lazy when they get cash transfer is not valid. In fact poor people invest some of their cash transfer in income generating activities. They also spend in job searching or new risky ventures. Research shows that poor people know how to make small and profitable investments and the main constraint is lack of cash.

### **The Targeting Dilemma (Ch - 6: 87-100)**

Targeting is the most controversial issue in cash transfer. There are different opinions based on empirical evidence. Experts and researchers often argue for tight targeting to ensure the benefits reach the poorest. Politicians are in search of votes and right based - NGOs are in favour of broader coverage and higher amount cash transfer. While economists ask which programme, targeted at which people, will best achieve the goals, political scientists ask which form of targeting is popular. The authors suggest for politically and financially sustainable targeting in which political leaders need to balance between acceptability and viability.

### **Identifying Recipients (Ch - 7: 101-124)**

Cash transfers programmes involve choice about who should receive money and who should not. Identifying the poorest is a complex activity. The authors suggests five selection criteria: 1) Categorical selection is based vulnerability of recipient such as children, older people and adult with disabilities, 2) Geographic identification depends on census or survey data that reveal which communities have high poverty incidence, 3) Household or individual mean test identifies recipients with a set of external

criteria, 4) In community based targeting neighbours decide who needs help and 5) Self selection is when individual decide whether to receive the grants. Whatever may be the criterion, as the authors suggest, targeting technique should be trustworthy, transparent and unbiased.

### **The Conditionality Dilemma (Ch - 8: 125-142)**

Conditions exist because of the assumption that poor people do not act in the best interest of them and must be pressured to do so. But the fundamental question asked by the authors is: Can health, education and social services be provided to those who must meet the conditions? And does the country have the administrative capacity to administer conditions successfully? Research shows that conditions substantially increase the administrative burden on civil servants, service providers and grants recipients. In a study on Mexico it was found that dropping targeting and conditioning would reduce administrative cost from 8.9 to 3.9 peso per 100 peso transferred.

### **Affordability of the Poor Countries (Ch - 9: 143-164)**

The authors argue that aid has failed because it has been misdirected by donors and because it has been tied to conditions. When governments can afford the redistribution of income to non-poor it must be able to afford it for the poor. A World Bank study found that energy subsidy largely go for better off. In Egypt it was 8% of the GDP. After the Asian financial crises, bailouts in Indonesia cost 50% of the GDP whereas its spending on poor was less than 3%. Thus poor countries can afford developmental cash transfers to make significant difference to poor households.

### **Conclusion (Ch - 10: 165-181)**

This book has opened a debate about the specific goals, targets and conditions of cash transfers. The authors outline five overriding principles for sustainability of a cash transfer programme: 1) **Fair** – most citizens agree on the choice of who receives the money and who does not, 2) **Assured** – recipients must be convinced that the money will really arrive every month, 3) **Practical** – grants must be administered efficiently with reliable and secure distribution system, 4) **Not Just Pennies** – grants must be large enough to substantial impacts in the lives of poor people and 5) **Popular** – any cash transfer programme must be politically acceptable and vote winner. There is growing evidence that cash transfers are effective component of development strategy. They help poor to get rid of poverty trap and join an upward development spiral. Simple conclusion from the authors is that for poverty reduction: ***“Just Give Money to the Poor”***

**The Indissolubility Apartheid Sexuality:  
A Review of Gunkel, H. (2010). *The Cultural Politics of Female Sexuality in South Africa*. New York and Oxon: Routledge.**

ISBN-HB: 978-0415872690: £80.00

ISBN-PB: 978-0-415-89555-2: £22.50

**Ross Truscott**

In *The Cultural Politics of Female Sexuality in South Africa*, Henriette Gunkel takes as her starting point a contradiction and a political problem: in contemporary South Africa, the right to sexual orientation is enshrined in the constitution of the country – indeed, the sexual orientation clause makes it one of the most progressive constitutions in the world, as is so often stated – yet homophobic violence, particularly against black lesbians, appears to be proliferating. Originally published in 2010, the recent paperback publication of Gunkel's book in May 2011 is timely. On the 24<sup>th</sup> of April 2011, only a week before its release, Noxolo Nogwaza, a 24-year-old black lesbian, was beaten, raped and stoned to death in Kwa Thema township outside Johannesburg. The murder of Nogwaza, however, is far from an isolated incident.

In response to this brutal murder, Mark Gevisser (2011), an insightful South African writer, framed the problem by stating that “in a country with severe inequality, violent homophobia (like violent misogyny) has become an outlet for some members of a new ‘lost generation,’ unemployable youths caught in a cycle of poverty, emasculation and criminality”<sup>29</sup>. This understanding of the problem, where violence against lesbians is framed as a part of a general crime epidemic and tendency towards violence against woman, abounds.<sup>30</sup> Gunkel complicates this understanding, paying particular attention to the heteronormative homophobic organization of desire according to which the post-apartheid nation has taken shape.

It is a well worn-in and more or less accepted argument that fantasies and performances of nationalism will almost invariably coalesce around the figure of an other of the nation, which functions as a cipher for the hostility national subjects may feel for each other, projected onto an imagined threat to the integrity and cohesion of the nation. In a South African context, compelling arguments have been made that it is apartheid ideology which is the other of the post-apartheid nation (*e.g.* Steyn 2004). Yet how is it that gays and lesbians have come to occupy the place of the other of the post-apartheid nation, representing a kind of biopolitical threat to the nation's health and well being? Why have black lesbian or gay bodies become the un-African other in the post-colonial, particularly post-apartheid South African imagination? *The Cultural Politics of Female Sexuality in South Africa* is a sustained and nuanced response to these and other questions.

**“Homosexuality is un-African”**

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<sup>29</sup> Gevisser, M. (2011, 14 May). The South African women living in fear of rape. *The Guardian.co.za* (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/may/14/south-african-women-fear-rape>).

<sup>30</sup> Exemplary here is a comment Gevisser received on his article: “Thanks, Mark, for a good article on the horrific crime of ‘corrective rape’ against lesbians in South Africa. It is good that civil society in SA is mobilizing to demand greater seriousness by the police and the courts. *You are also right to place it in its context of generally violent behaviour in the townships, the overall high levels of violence against women and the alienation of many young black working class men*” (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/may/14/south-african-women-fear-rape>, emphasis added).

In her second chapter, after an introduction to the themes of the book, Gunkel provides an analysis of the notion that “homosexuality is un-African,” a view that circulates widely in post-colonial Africa in general, and South Africa in particular, frequently in service of a nation building agenda. This view that homosexuality is un-African is posited by Gunkel, however, as an instance where colonial history is inadvertently reproduced, even as it is proffered as an anti-colonial gesture. As she states, “I explore why the statements that constitute a discourse of homosexuality as un-African refer to the history of colonialism and how the reading is informed by a populist understanding of this history” (Gunkel 2010: 28).

That there would be a repetition compulsion, an acting out rather than a remembering and working-through of a colonial and apartheid history of homophobia amongst white South Africans seems both plausible and likely. But Gunkel is not, strictly speaking, concerned with tracing these lines of continuity and argues that post-apartheid anti-colonial articulations of race and gender, embedded in post-colonial nationalism, reproduce colonial and apartheid homophobia. Indeed, she argues that the subject of post-apartheid nationalism has been constituted, despite a progressive constitution, as a heterosexual subject, disavowing the complexity of African sexuality and gendered identifications on the ground, which she explores in the later chapters of her book.

The entanglement of sexuality and nationalism, as Gunkel notes, is not a peculiarly African phenomenon, but does take on a specific form in an African post-colonial context. Claims that homosexuality is un-African, Gunkel argues, are, from a certain perspective, defensive responses to hypersexualized depictions of African bodies and African sexualities throughout the history of colonialism – the representations of Saartjie Baartman, indeed the *phantasmatic production of Baartman* in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe, to which Gunkel draws attention and discusses, are exemplary in this regard. These claims assert that Africans are not the hypersexualized, sexual deviants they were constructed to be by an overactive, paranoid European imagination. This notion – that homosexuality is un-African – refers negatively to the history of colonialism, seeking to reassert a pre-colonial Africa, a utopic time and place before Africa’s alienation from itself by colonialism and apartheid, itself a fantasy.

Negation of colonialism does, in its own way, provide a complex afterlife for colonial ideas about race, gender and sexuality. Gunkel’s analysis of the work of Zanele Muholi’s photographic depictions of violated lesbian bodies in her (2004) exhibition, *Aftermath* – specifically Gunkel’s insights into the angered criticism Muholi received from the public and from government officials – recalls Judith Butler’s (1990) essay on the photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe and the criticism and censorship attempts he received. Butler argued that Republican senator, Jesse Helms seeking a legal amendment preventing Mapplethorpe from receiving funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, on the grounds that his images were obscene and sadomasochistic, was itself an enactment of a sadomasochistic and, indeed, necrophiliac fantasy.

The response in South Africa to Muholi’s work has been similar in several respects. There have been calls for censorship, and in many comments on her images by members of the public they have been called degrading. What is most curious about these fits of homophobia, as Gunkel highlights, is that there is an attempt to silence the images because they are degrading to black women. Gunkel’s argument, set in a quite different context to Butler’s, is provocative in a similar way, making a similar assertion: the idea that homosexuality is un-African, she argues, is a kind repetition of colonial discourse on sexuality, even though it is explicitly anti-colonial; that is, this

form of homophobic anti-colonial nationalism that wants to protect the black body from degradation unwittingly repeats a colonial history in its decolonizing project, reproducing precisely what it negates: racism, or, at least, an “internalized racism stemming from the colonial situation” (Gunkel 2010: 143). This indeed is a novel insight into the problem.

During apartheid, the Afrikaner nationalist project of consolidating a civilized white population was underwritten by heterosexuality and homophobia, as Gunkel outlines with reference to an array of academic studies. Heterosexuality, inscribed in the institution of the family, was the structural lynchpin in the reproduction of the white race. Although desire for gender *difference* was normalized during apartheid – one is tempted to say *lawfully enforced*, as it was in certain instances – it was a desire for gender difference designed to reproduce racial *sameness*. Thus, not only was racial mixing prohibited, as this risked the contamination of the ‘purity’ of the *Volk*, but so too was homosexuality, as this stood as an obstacle in the path of the reproduction of whiteness, biologically but also socially. An argument that runs throughout Gunkel’s book is that it is the same heterosexual and homophobic matrix – dominant father, subservient mother, obedient children who love gender difference but reproduce racial sameness – at the heart of post-colonial nationalism. Having shown how homophobia was crucial to the racism of colonialism and apartheid, to its reproduction of whiteness and the substantiation of racial difference, Gunkel reveals the traces of this history in post-colonial homophobia by linking it to the violent xenophobic attacks that rocked South Africa in May 2008, attacks that were not truly xenophobic, but, as she argues with reference to Andile Mngxitama (2008), “negrophobic violence” (Mngxitama cited in Gunkel, 2010: 139).

Some of the most compelling moments of Gunkel’s argument – that colonial and apartheid forms of racialized sexuality underwrite post-apartheid nationalism – can be found in her chapter titled, ‘Homosociality and the Technologies of Homophobia.’ There, she moves from a focus on the discursive effects of the notion that homosexuality is un-African, to instances where this discourse is figured in the application of material and physical force. Gunkel argues that the horizontal fraternal bond constitutive of national belonging takes the form of male homosociality – assisted, it should be emphasized, at least in the examples she analyzes, by female homosociality – which requires the figure of the black lesbian, the colonial and post-colonial ‘sexual deviant’ par excellence. Apartheid homosocial homophobia – and here she has its various *institutionalized forms* in mind (ranging from, but not limited to, the psychiatric treatment of gay men in the South African Defense force (SADF), to the coercion of confessions of homosexuality and conversion to heterosexuality in the case of gay members of the SADF, the electro shock therapy and hormone treatment they received), as well as the more *informal homosocial rituals of humiliation* (from initiation ceremonies to the various repertoires of male socializing) – all worked to affirm the heterosexual identities of white South African men in particular, and heteronormativity in general, upon which apartheid was dependent. Post-apartheid homophobia – and here, again, Gunkel cites a range of homophobic acts and movements, including, but not limited to, the violent gang rape and murder of lesbians, to the deprioritization of same sex intimacy on the agenda of certain African feminist or womanist movements, to heteronormative male and female homosocial networks, all of which, to varying degrees, proffer the notion that “homosexuality is un-African” – not only fail to resist, but in fact reproduce colonial ideas about sex, sexuality and gender, precisely in their resistance to colonialism.

One instance where Gunkel makes this link – between apartheid homophobia and post-apartheid technologies of homophobia – explicit is in the case of the brutal



murder of 19 year old Zoliswa Nkonyana in Khayalitsha, Cape Town. Because she was lesbian, a group of heterosexual woman harassed her and drew attention to her, after which she was brutally murdered by a large group of men. As Gunkel formulates the continuity between apartheid and post-apartheid homophobia, "The gender identity contested in the attack is constituted as an attempt at normalizing militarized masculinities that have their roots in apartheid militarized race regime" (107). Apartheid homophobia was largely concerned with reproducing the white race, yet here we find a group of young black men and women in post-apartheid South Africa disciplining each other's gender identity through a homosocial act of collective bonding, which entailed violence against a lesbian.

Though Gunkel emphasizes mobility in the discourses of female sexuality in South Africa, in a sense, *transformation*, what the reader is denied, what Gunkel refuses to provide, is a *dialectics of female sexuality in South Africa* – and this has as much to do with her politics and the choice of her examples, as it does with the theoretical instruments she chooses to use in entering existing debates. This will likely frustrate those eager to celebrate the break with apartheid and colonialism enabled by the post-apartheid nation and the democratization of South Africa. (In a similar way, her book contains a sharp critique of the racial politics of anti-homophobic movements; although much of this critique is framed in terms of the constraints within which they have been able to act, it is not hard to imagine this frustrating those who would want to see these movements as being defiant of apartheid.) Gunkel depicts not only continuities with the past, but also a stubborn recirculation of colonial ideas about race, gender and sexuality, a form of apartheid racialized sexuality that will not be metabolized in discourses of post-apartheid nationhood. *The Cultural Politics of Female Sexuality in South Africa* will appeal to scholars from a range of disciplines working on issues of race, sexualities and gendered identities, but also, as this review has hopefully made clear, those working on issues of national identity as well.

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**Review of Diaz Nosty, B. (2005), *El déficit mediático: donde España no converge con Europa*. Barcelona: Bosch, 299 pp.**  
ISBN: 8497901207

## **Jesús Peña Moya**

*Media deficit; points where Spain does not converge with Europe (El déficit mediático: donde España no converge con Europa*, Barcelona, edited by Bosch, 2005) is a map of intellectuality, information and culture, where countries are located in different geographical places according to their media systems. In this book, Bernardo Díaz-Nosty, professor of Journalism at the University of Málaga, Spain, makes a new distribution of the continent according to the States' media diets. He establishes a relationship between democratic success, including political and economical success, and its communication resources. The North, whose media diet is based on information, offers modern political, financial, citizen-friendly structures. Excellency rules. The South, which is trapped in a communicational loop that hangs on audiovisual entertainment and light cultural programs, fights against a worn socioeconomic system which is not professional enough.

This work picks up a line of thought originated in the seventies by KGH, or Knowledge Gap Hypothesis. It was born at the University of Minnesota from communicologists Phillip J. Tichener, George Donohue and Clarice N. Olien. KGH started under the studies of communicational gaps, which supported a great deal of approaches regarding the digital division. KGH proposed a closer approach to the social system using communication as a Rosetta stone. This approach introduced the idea of changing the traditional class division, based on social strata and financial levels of audiences, for a revolutionary pattern based on the public's level of information. There were only two boxes left, these are, Info-rich and Info-poor. Both boxes find their places among the same niches they are replacing. Being information a differential element, Info-rich represent the cultural and economical elite. The Info-poor, whose interests are easy-to-digest contents and sensationalism, consists of the conformist social mass whose abilities are more limited.

This interdisciplinary approach to education-communication, which is nuanced by previous training and knowledge, cuts down the social and democratic working order of media systems regarding the citizen capacity to interpret, understand and act in the environment they live.

Firstly, the theoretical basis of KGH, linguistics or social media are established, as well as contributions by Eliu Katz, and the assignation processes of symbolic meaning in speech by Raymond Williams or codification systems presented by Bernstein. Having done this, professor Díaz-Nosty explains about the false sense of media and cultural convergence between Spain and the rest of Europe. This includes political and macroeconomic aspects and it is done through a comparative study between two States which represent the European duality. These are Sweden, representative for the North and for the Info-rich, and Spain, portraying typical Southern feeding sources and representative for the Info-poor.

This study which is supported by information provided by the European Union in *European citizens and the media* (2003) portrays Spanish society as a people addicted to audiovisual sensationalism that has rejected written knowledge. They are also described as having weak media ethical and professional work, lacking regulation and

showing the same duality North-South observed in Europe. On the contrary, Swedish society is described as a people committed to information programs, which is seen as a democratizing factor.

In this contrasting study, Díaz-Nosty introduces a new concept which has been developed in the best analyzing system to determine media's state of health in the society where it is displayed. This system is Share Multimedia, a tool which analyzes how much time citizens spend on their media diet.



## Notes on contributors

**Ray Campbell** is a second year PhD student. The purpose of his research project is to investigate the cultural history of alternative comedy. He was involved in the alternative comedy scene from 1987 to 2000. While he was a student at Newcastle Polytechnic, he opened Cabaret A Go Go in Newcastle in 1987 with a group of like-minded musicians, artists and poets. He moved to London in 1990 to work on the London cabaret circuit and played a variety of venues large and small. By the end of the decade the numbers of comedians working on the circuit had increased dramatically and it became much harder to find work, so he decided to quit. From there he moved into teaching Media Studies at Further Education colleges in London and completed his Masters in Media Culture and Communication at the Institute of Education in 2005. The subject of his dissertation was the New Romantic club culture of the early 1980's. In many respects, his current project is a continuation of his desire to fill gaps in our cultural knowledge. He is supervised by Dr Jane Stokes (Director of Studies), Dr Steven Maddison and Dr Angie Voela, all at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of East London.

**Mastoureh Fathi** is a final-year PhD student. Her thesis concentrates on the ways in which the meaning of social class is constructed among a group of Iranian women who live as doctors and dentists in Britain. The thesis entitled '*Class narratives of Iranian Women Migrants in Britain*' presents an intersectional analysis of narratives of these women and their contradictory lives as migrants, doctors and women. Previously Mastoureh carried out research with Iranian women teachers in Iran. She is mainly interested in the construction of meanings through dialogical narrative analysis and intersectionality. She is supervised by Prof. Nira Yuval-Davis (Director of Studies) and Prof. Molly Andrews both at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of East London.

**Jesús Peña Moya** holds a fulltime doctoral-scholarship in Journalism at the University of Malaga, Spain, where he works with Professor Bernardo Díaz Nosty, one of the main Spanish references in the communication research. Peña's proposal studies the place of Televisión Española (TVE), the national public broadcaster, in the Spanish media context and its contributions for democracy. In this process, the PhD study is analyzing the recent reform in TVE, taking Europe as a framework, as well as the new objectives for public service broadcasting.

**Kate Sicchio** is a choreographer, media artist and performer. Her work includes dance performances, installations, web and video projects and has been shown in Philadelphia, New York, Canada, Germany and across the UK. She is currently completing a practice-as-research PhD focusing on dance and technology and she is a senior lecturer in dance at University of Lincoln. Her PhD entitled '*Systems and Content: A Choreological Investigation of Real-Time Video Systems and the Use of Space in Choreography*' is supervised by Dr. Steve Goodman (Director of Studies) and Dr. Roshini Kempadoo, both at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of East London.

**Mohammad Sadiqunnabi Choudhury** and **Matthew Hawkins** are members of the Editorial Board.

## Editorial Board

**Mohammad Sadiqunnabi Choudhury** studied economics and worked for the research departments of Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) - a leading Microfinance Institution and Bangladesh Bank - the Central Bank of Bangladesh. Now he is an Assistant Professor of Economics at Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Bangladesh. At present, he is on study leave to UEL for doctoral research. His area of interest includes poverty and vulnerability reduction, microfinance, monetary and exchange rate policy. His PhD entitled, *Vulnerability to Poverty - The Role of Microsavings as Self-insurance against Crises in Rural Bangladesh* is supervised by Dr Meera Tiwari (Director of Studies) and Prof. Massimo de Angelis, both at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of East London.

**Matthew Hawkins** is an independent filmmaker and PhD candidate. His research is focused on film theory and film practice. His work spans documentary, fiction film, artist film and video, and the spaces in between. He is particularly interested in the concept of affective tonality stemming from Deleuze's work on cinema, how this concept can be used to understand narrative experience and how it can influence the work of practitioners in the field of moving image. He is starting the third year of his PhD.

**Roshini Kempadoo** is a London based Photographer, Media Artist, and Reader in Media Practice at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of East London. Recent exhibitions include: 'Roshini Kempadoo work: 1990 – 2004', (2004) Pitzhanger Manor and Gallery, London and 'Liminal: A question of position' (2009) Rivington Place, London. Recent publications include: 'Amendments: A fictional re-imagining of the Trinidad archive.' (2008) 'Journal of Media Practice', 9:2. 'Back Routes: historical articulation in multimedia production,' in Alan Grossman and Áine O'Brien (eds.) 2007 'Projecting Migration: Transcultural Documentary Practice', Wallflower Press, London. Current research includes 'Domino Effects' (2010) a photographic and video artwork centred on Trinidad; 'Arrival' (2010) an artwork referring to the migratory crossing to Spain from North Africa; and a chapter in Thornham, H. & Weissmann, E. (eds.) forthcoming book 'Renewing Feminism: Stories, Fantasies and Futures' (2012) by IB Tauris.

**Charles de Ledesma** is a lecturer on the School's Music Culture and Journalism pathways. In music, his lectures cover popular genre history, from blues to electronic dance; and in journalism, his seminars cover print/radio techniques and practice. Charles is putting the finishing touches to his MPhil on popular music, where he is researching contemporary electronic trance music events from global and materialist perspectives. Charles also maintains a foot in journalism's working world in his capacity as Associated Press London bureau radio 131 producer. His most recent paper, 'Psychedelic Trance Music Making in the UK: Rhizomatic Craftsmanship and the Global Market Place, in the Graham St John edited 'The Local Scenes and Global Culture of Psytrance' (Routledge) was published in autumn 2010.

**Peter Morey** is Reader in English Literature in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences. He is the author of 'Fictions of India: Narrative and Power' (Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 'Rohinton Mistry' (Manchester University Press, 2004), and co-author of 'Framing Muslims: Representation from 9/11 to 7/7' (Harvard University Press, forthcoming in 2010). He is also editor of 'Alternative Indias: Writing, Nation and Communalism' (Rodopi, 2006) and is joint editor of a forthcoming volume of the postcolonial journal 'Interventions' (12:2) on 'Muslims in the Frame'. He has published widely on colonial and postcolonial literature and theory, including essays in the

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**Maria Tamboukou** is Professor of Feminist Studies and Co-director of the Centre of Narrative Research, at the University of East London. Her research interests and publications are in auto/biographical narratives, feminist theories, foucauldian and deleuzian analytics, the sociology of gender and education, gender and space and the sociology of art. Recent publications include the monographs *In the Fold between Power and Desire: Women Artists' Narratives*; *Nomadic Narratives: Gwen John's Letters and Paintings*; *Visual Lives: Carrington's Letters, Drawings and paintings* and the co-edited collections: *Doing Narrative Research* and *Beyond Narrative Coherence*. Maria is currently working on a genealogy of the seamstress, looking into auto/biographical narratives of home based dressmakers and women working in the garment industry.

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