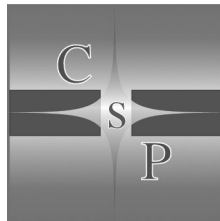


Recycling Culture(s)

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Edited by

Sara Martin



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	ix
Introduction	xi
Part I: Recycling the Book and the Screen	
The Donkey-god and the Holy Stake: The Subversion of Religion through Carnival Identities in Virginia Woolf's <i>Between the Acts</i> Isabel María Andrés Cuevas.....	3
<i>A Clockwork Orange</i> , Exploitation and the Art Film I.Q. Hunter.....	11
Recycling the Fairy Tale: Robert Coover's "The Dead Queen" (1991) Beatriz Oriá Gómez.....	21
The Bush Revisited: Twins in Black British Fiction Sabina Brancato.....	31
Recycling Goya's Monsters: The Tension between Apocalypse and Carnival in Umberto Eco's Novel <i>The Name of the Rose</i> Andrei Vasilenko.....	41
Culture of Shit: On the Cultural References and the Excrementory in the Poetry of Leopoldo María Panero Jorge Berenguer Martín.....	51
Adventurous Responses to Cultural Diversity: Multicultural Poetry Anthologies in the United States Manuel Brito.....	61
Awaiting Words: Comics and the Aftermath of 9/11 Antonio Fornet.....	73

An Interplay of Screens: Intertextuality and Self-reflectiveness in Films Based on Television Programmes Concepción Carmen Cascajosa Virino	83
You Know My Name, but Who Am I? Structure and Agency in the Making and Remaking of James Bond John Paul Green.....	93
Part II: Recycling Identity, Consumption and History	
Cultural Hybridity in Afro-Caribbean Women Writers M ^a Isabel Alonso-Breto	105
Ni soy de aquí, ni soy de allá: Forging a New Hybrid Identity in Cristina Garcia's <i>Dreaming in Cuban</i> Berenice Lara Laursen.....	115
Interracial Relationships in Fiction at the Turn of the 21 st Century Salvador Faura.....	127
Recycling Older Discourses: The Recuperation of the Australian National Myth in Elliot's <i>The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert</i> (1994) Olga Seco	137
Recycling the Past: List-making and Organising Your Life Eleanor Bavidge	147
Complexity, Change and European Convergence in Higher Education: The Case of English Philology Chantal Cornut-Gentille	157
The Agents of Public Order on the Alert: <i>Fin de siècle</i> Morals, from <i>sicalipsis</i> to Junk TV Enrique Encabo Fernández.....	169
Recycling 'Culture' and the Culture of Recycling: The Cultural and Environmental Impact of Mobile Devices in Europe Rob Jewitt.....	179

Outside the Kaleidoscope: From Cut'n'paste to Generative Process Douglas Spencer	191
History as Recycled Debris: With some British Examples Rubén Valdés	201
Contributors.....	211

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Recycling Culture(s) emerges from the enthusiasm of a small group of Cultural Studies specialists based at diverse Departments of English in Spain, who have been defending this discipline and methodology together since at least 1995, the date of the first International Culture & Power Conference. Since then, there have been twelve more conferences, all of them bearing diverse subtitles beneath the umbrella title of ‘Culture & Power.’ One of these was, precisely, *Recycling Culture(s)*, which was the key theme of our eleventh meeting. This is also our eleventh volume of selected papers (see our website, www.cultureandpower.org).

I must thank, therefore, my colleagues in the Culture & Power group for keeping their enthusiasm alive after all these years and for being the best company one can wish for in the often difficult task of putting work carried out in Spain on the international map of Cultural Studies. Chantal Cornut-Gentile (University of Zaragoza), Rosa González (University of Barcelona), David Walton (University of Murcia), María José Coperías (University of Valencia) and, above all, Felicity Hand (Autonomous University of Barcelona) deserve all my praise for their hard work and support. My thanks also to those who have joined forces with us: Dagmar Scheu (University of Murcia), Inés Praga (University of Burgos), Rubén Valdés and Carla Rodríguez (University of Oviedo) and Eduardo de Gregorio-Godeo (University of Castilla-La Mancha). For the intense work we shared in the preparation of the XI Culture & Power Conference, thanks are also due to Meri Torras and Isabel Clúa (Autonomous University of Barcelona), and to Pau Pitarch (University of Tokyo).

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INTRODUCTION

The 'XI International Culture & Power Conference: Recycling Culture(s)' invited participants to present papers that would address the issue of how culture survives today by means of constant recycling, in an optimistic attempt to overcome its own decadence in the 21st century. The papers presented dealt with a wide range of issues in response to our call to consider matters such as trash culture and/or the trashing of culture, reinventing identities, recycled bodies, cultural hybridity, collage and pastiche, cut'n'paste culture in the internet, academic fashions and Cultural Studies theory. The selection of 20 papers presented in this volume is, therefore, necessarily heterogeneous, corresponding to the conference's intention to widen rather than narrow the debate on the very idea of recycling culture(s).

The present volume is divided into two main parts, 'I: Recycling the Book and the Screen' and 'II: Recycling Identity, Consumption and History,' with self-explanatory titles. The first part groups the essays that focus mainly on texts emerging from the recycling of other texts; these are examined by the authors in the light of how they challenge the boundaries of the genres within which they operate. In contrast, the texts dealt with in the second part are examined from a perspective that privileges content, and how this refers to identity, above form. This second part is the more diverse as it also considers aspects of culture or, rather, practices that have no written or filmed textual expression such as the consumption of mobile phones or the changes in European education.

The four essays by Jorge Berenguer, Antonio Fornet, Concepción Cascajosa, and Enrique Encabo were originally written in Spanish and have been translated into English for this volume. One of the lessons learned in the course of the 'Recycling Culture(s)' conference is that language is a major barrier for scholarly communication—still today. For that occasion we decided to consider official up to five languages (Spanish, English, French, Catalan, Portuguese) and accepted eventually papers in a few more (Italian, Galician). We found that delegates who only spoke English or Spanish were more numerous than we had assumed, whereas those presenting in other languages usually had a smattering or even a very good command of either English or Spanish. Translation is, therefore, a necessary tool not only for basic mutual communication

between major languages but also to challenge the academic world to open up to other cultures. The assumption that English operates as a universal lingua franca without major inconvenience clashes with the fact that those of us using it as non-native speakers know first hand that each language requires a different way of thinking, which translation can barely transmit. Ideally, in a globalised world we should all be polyglots.

The first part of the volume, 'I: Recycling the Book and the Screen,' offers ten essays, with subjects focused mainly on literary texts, with three exceptions: Antonio Fornet's analysis of the response of comic book heroes to September 11, Concepción Cascajosa's examination of the multiple links between the film and the television screens and John Paul Green's look at the intensive recycling of English pop hero James Bond. The literary texts dealt with by the other seven essays are mainly in English, although the focus of Jorge Berenguer's contribution is the renowned and controversial Spanish poet Leopoldo María Panero whereas Andrei Vasilenko has chosen to deal with the peculiar clash between carnival and Apocalypse in an Italian novel: Eco's *The Name of the Rose*.

The subversive nature of carnival is also present in Isabel María Andrés' revision of Virginia Woolf's *Between the Acts*, which she reads from the perspective of how it fits the new anthropological discourse born around the same time as Modernism. No less carnivalesque is *A Clockwork Orange*, explored by I.Q. Hunter as an example of the interested recycling of low culture by high culture. Beatriz Oria offers yet another example of this trend by examining how Robert Coover's short story "The Dead Queen" recycles the fairy tale. Sabrina Brancato and Manuel Brito concern themselves in their respective essays with how race and ethnicity have forced the recycling of an obsolete literary discourse both in Britain and the United States.

In the second part, 'II: Recycling Identity, Consumption and History' the focus falls, as has been noted, on content rather than form and on cultural practices and not exclusively on texts. The recycling of identity surfaces as the subject common to texts as diverse as those considered by M^a Isabel Alonso-Breto, all of them written by African-Caribbean women, or by Salvador Faura, who deals with the issue of interracial relations in a wide range of fiction and films by British and Indian authors. Berenice Lara Laursen, likewise, examines the split identity of Cuban-Americans as represented in Cristina Garcia's *Dreaming in Cuban*; on her side, Olga Seco reveals how the Australian national myth is reinforced rather than challenged by Stephen Elliot's quirky film *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*.

Offering an occasion to ponder on matters as varied as the recycling of historical remains and of trash culture, the last six essays in this volume invite the reader to consider how culture itself is recycled. Eleanor Bavidge scrutinises the odd habit of making lists of the best in a constant effort to organise our experience of culture, whereas Rubén Valdés exposes the dubious strategies used to make sense of our experience of the past. Enrique Encabo points out how, very conveniently, critics of trash culture choose not to recall past debates on similar issues, thus contributing to the habitual discrimination of low-class audiences. Douglas Spencer, on his side, also finds highly suspect the inability of Cultural Studies to recycle its own methodology and praxis, warning that there is a serious risk of stagnation. Perhaps even more politically-minded are the essays by Rob Jewitt, who discloses the absurdities incurred in when combining selfish mass consumption—in this case of mobile phones—with the politically correct wish to recycle, and by Chantal Cornut-Gentile, who convincingly argues that the projected European convergence in higher education operates literally as a system of perpetual chaos.

As the editor of the volume it is my duty to thank the twenty authors for their contributions and to hope that the reader also finds their work thought-provoking and inspiring.

PART I:

RECYCLING THE BOOK AND THE SCREEN

THE DONKEY-GOD AND THE HOLY STAKE:
THE SUBVERSION OF RELIGION THROUGH
CARNIVAL IDENTITIES IN VIRGINIA WOOLF'S
BETWEEN THE ACTS

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In her determination to demolish the prejudices and repression of her own society, Virginia Woolf did not ignore the high potential of ancient rituals to remove from its throne the oppressive burden of religious conventions. Indeed, carnival imagery—as a direct inheritor of those ancient traditions—provided Woolf with a great variety of powerful weapons to enact her destructive parody of established values. Hence, the present study attempts to shed light on the narrator's resort to the complex structure of dualities and profanations inherent to carnival as an essential means of debunking and definitely abolishing an obsolete, as well as alienating system of values, still encapsulated within the Victorian precincts of conventionality. At the same time, by bringing to the surface the novel's covert parallel with certain landmark manifestations of carnivalesque acts, this analysis explores the significance of the characters' assumption of a transgressing and patently subversive form of alter ego—ultimately at the service of Woolf's advocacy for the eradication of the barriers and constraints that plague the social-ideological scenario of post-Victorian society. In this sense, the narrator's indefatigable clamours for promoting the construction of a social edifice which does not rest on the pillars of the menacingly oppressive colossus of self-engulfing anachronous precepts will similarly come to light.

Bearing this in mind, probably the most irreverently blasphemous act enacted by the dualistic, alterity-assuming characters in *Between the Acts* significantly occurs during the performance of the Victorian play. Hence, in the middle of Mr. Hardcastle's prayer, a fake donkey embodied by Albert appears on the stage, showing how its "hindquarters [...] became

active,” while, at the same time, the priest's homily paradoxically announces “a happy homecoming with bodies refreshed by thy bounty, and minds inspired by thy wisdom.”¹ In fact, the inclusion of the ass into the pageant entails a twofold meaning. On the one hand, this reveals the narrator's desire for going beyond the sole mockery and debasement of social conventions to degrade even the traditionally worshipped system of ancient myths and rituals she had inherited from Jane Harrison. Hereby, the introduction of the donkey into the church represents a degrading parody of the presence of a sacred animal originally intended as an offer to the gods.

Yet, on the other hand, it directly points to the “festivals of the ass” described by James Frazer.² Thus, as a variation of the Festival of Fools, Frazer observes the celebration in France of mock masses which, even though allegedly rememorating the biblical episode of Mary's Flight to Egypt, were however centred upon the figure of an ass. This animal was introduced into the church and positioned by the altar. Afterwards, the priest of the desolemnized ritual initiated the ceremony, significantly consisting of mixed “scraps” from different services, while the intervals between the acts of the mass were spent on drinking. The ceremony ended with the merry mingling of the attendants, which joined the animal in a festive dance, to continue by marching in a procession towards a great theatre opposite the church, where dowdy parodies were performed.

Amongst the buffooneries of the Festival of Fools one of the most remarkable was the introduction of an ass into the church, where

various pranks were played with the animal [...] and on [its] entering the sacred edifice [...] a parody of the mass was performed [...] A young girl with a child in her arms rode on the back of the ass in imitation of the flight into Egypt. Escorted by the clergy and the people she was led in triumph from the cathedral to the parish church of St. Stephen. There she and her ass were introduced into the chancel and stationed on the left side of the altar; and a long mass was performed which consisted of scraps borrowed indiscriminately from the services of many church festivals throughout the year. In the intervals the singers quenched their thirst: the congregation imitated their example; and the ass was fed and watered. The services over, the animal was brought from the chancel into the nave, where the whole congregation, clergy and laity mixed up together, danced round the animal and brayed like asses. Finally, after vespers and compline, the merry procession, led by the precentor and preceded by a huge lantern, defiled through the streets to wind up the day with indecent farces in a great theatre erected opposite the church.³

In the light of this, the unfolding of the attendants' identity in Pointz Hall, the place where the village pageant takes place in Woolf's novel, certainly constitutes a powerfully vindicating version of the "festival of the ass." Indeed, Mr. Hardcastle is celebrating mass, when the donkey—even a commonly less noble version of the ass—makes its appearance in the mock church. Though not riding the animal, the presence of a young woman carrying a child is suggested by Isa Oliver through the frequent references she makes to her son. Moreover, at the service of parody and debasement, the 'divine' child becomes dubbed by Mrs. Manresa, the old lady often alluded to as the "wild child of nature." Nevertheless, if this pageant—ultimately defined by Streatfield, in resemblance of the ass ceremony, as a composite of "(s)craps, orts, and fragments"—is important within the story, no less emphasis is made on the intervals, which actually provide the title for the novel. Indeed, it is during these intervals, as well as it occurs in Frazer's narration, that the audience gather together in the Barn, where they have tea. Not by chance, the Barn is portrayed at the beginning of the novel as a Greek temple, right of the same age and stone as the church:

Those who had been to Greece always said it reminded them of a temple [...] The roof was weathered red-orange; and inside it *was* a hollow hall, sun-shafted, brown, [...] dark when the doors were shut, but splendidly illuminated when the doors at the end stood open [...]⁴

It is precisely this enhancing otherness of the Barn as a sacred place that dooms it, in the midst of a carnivalistic world, to its own decrowning, insofar as its use as a tea-place suggests a form of profanation. Mr. Hardcastle's speech is later continued by Reverend Streatfield, a confessed "fool" whose sight becomes "the most grotesque and entire."⁵ Yet, his attempted discourse becomes continually interrupted, as in its French equivalent, by the spontaneous irruption of animal sounds, which overlap his words becoming "painfully audible."⁶

Significantly, once the mock mass is over in Pointz Hall, "a procession" is formed under the implicit guidance of the lamplit in the Victorian play, undoubtedly reminiscent of the lantern in Frazer's description of the ass procession. This is followed by dowdy acts which, initiated by the donkey's "bec(o)m[ing] active," covertly find their continuance through the character of Budge, whose part as a policeman becomes no less than a ridiculous representation of authority. Hence, his performance entails a grotesquely obscene overtone, suggested by his standing "truncheon in hand" while paradoxically "guarding respectability, and prosperity, and the purity of Victoria's land." Furthermore, his ridiculous appearance constitutes a patent mockery and decrowning of

precisely the purity he tries to preserve, not only of a land which has yet corrupted itself by oppressive conventionalisms incapable of avoiding national disaster. Indeed, the figure of Budge truncheon in hand epitomises the masculine struggle for preserving the female within the hard carcass that maintains her under male dominance. It is through the debasement and caricature of this figure of authority that Woolf denounces the prevalence of the ideological apparatus the Victorians developed in order to buttress male control, thus allowing very narrow opportunities for the Victorian middle-class woman. Actually, imbued with that engulfing belief, women themselves had come to accept this system of values strictly circumscribing women's roles within marriage. In her manual for married women—*The Wives of England: Their Relative Duties, Domestic Influence, and Social Obligations*—Sarah Stickney Ellis reminds women of

the superiority of your husband simply as a man. It is quite possible that you may have talent, with higher attainments, and you may also have been generally more admired, but this has nothing whatever to do with your position as a woman, which is, and must be, inferior to his as man.⁷

It is, therefore, through the ridiculous figure of Budge, the policeman—identified by his neighbours as a drunkard—that the Victorian attempt for imposing the patriarchal rule, conceived as “God’s law as laid down by man,”⁸ becomes, along with his ‘truncheon’ as the instrument of his tyranny, absurdly grotesque and devoid of its former meaning.

Additionally, in resemblance to the merry dance after the mock mass, whereby “clergy and laity mixed up together, danced round the animal and brayed like asses,”⁹ once the pageant is over, the whole congregation in Pointz Hall converge on the stage. In the midst of the great “jangle” and “din” that presides the merry festival, animals and men alike join in the celebration. Moreover, as in the case of the braying men in its French equivalent, the audience in Pointz Hall experience a dramatic transgression of natural borders, to the extent that “the barriers which should divide Man the Master from the Brute were dissolved.”¹⁰

In the midst of this clerical parody, an extended variant of the Carnival King is represented by what Frazer baptised as “The Bishop of Fools” or “Abbot of Unreason,”¹¹ as the genuine embodiment of such mockery. In the carnival market-place of Pointz Hall, this figure is accurately represented by the character of Reverend Streatfield. Hence, mounting on the soap-box, the clergyman-like “Queen Bess”—prepares for his own downturn. Thus, “the most grotesque and entire [...] of all sights,”¹² Streatfield is mocked and “laughed at by looking-glasses” from the very moment of his emergence as the recognised “fool” he himself admits to

being.¹³ Insofar as the priest is a patent fool and the donkey becomes the centre of the religious celebration, it cannot be other quality than Folly that is to be praised. Accordingly, it is precisely Hogben's Folly, the field where Pointz Hall stands, that is praised by Miss La Trobe as "the very place for a pageant,"¹⁴ which suggests a clear allusion to Erasmus' *Praise of Folly*.

Yet, the Reverend's role within the pageant acquires further complexity. In fact, the emphasis on his wooden nature through his reification into "a piece of traditional church furniture [...] a corner cupboard, or the top beam of a gate,"¹⁵ situates Streatfield, in his attempt to provide a convergence point for the entire pageant, as the ritual maypole around which the whole festival revolves. Literally emerged from the ground, the Reverend becomes—as in Jane E. Harrison's account of May Day rites¹⁶—the 'symbol' of the whole celebration.

Indeed, an actual Spring Festival arises from the celebration of the pageant, which additionally includes, in tune with Harrison's outline of the ritual, its respective King and Queen of the May Day. Certainly, Mrs. Manresa, portrayed from the very beginning as "the Queen of the Festival"¹⁷ is explicitly related to Giles, whom she has pointed as "[her] sulky hero."¹⁸ In this regard, as pertains to mock monarchs, Giles, who at a certain moment symbolically takes up "the pose of one who bears the burden of the world's woe,"¹⁹ suffers the battering he paradoxically inflicts both on himself and his Queen. Nonetheless, this is not the only occasion on which he becomes the victim of violence. Hence, on him does revert his own stamping on the snake "couched in the grass," with which he had previously identified himself on admitting: "I'm [...] a flickering, mind-divided little snake in the grass."²⁰ Moreover, in his depiction as "the top beam of a gate, fashioned by generations of village carpenters after some lost-in-the-mists-of-antiquity model,"²¹ Streatfield exactly embodies the "branch of May"²² standing by the door in the Spring song that, as Harrison notes, is sung precisely as part of the Christian celebrations in Saffron Walden:

A branch of May we have brought you,
And at your door it stands;
It is a sprout that is well budded out,
The work of our Lord's hands.²³

Like the ancient maypole, which should retain "a bunch of dark green foliage [...] as a memento that in it we have to do, not with a dead pole, but with a living tree from the greenwood,"²⁴ Streatfield reveals himself as a mortal human being by the tobacco stains in his forefinger—a fact which

actually “mitigated the horror.”²⁵ In her *Ancient Art and Ritual*, Harrison also quotes the description of the Cambridge May Day by Philip Stubbs. According to the Puritan writer, the ritual maypole, after having been ceremonially carried by a yoke of oxen, was followed by men, women, and children alike, who worshipped it “with great d(e)votion.”²⁶ Indeed, Stubbs comes to define the maypole as the “perfect pattern” of a heathen idol, “or rather the thing itself.”²⁷

Nevertheless, in tune with the carnival sense of the world pervading *Between the Acts*, the sole attempt for leadership is doomed to appear as “an intolerable constriction, contraction, and reduction to simplified absurdity.”²⁸ Hereby, Streatfield becomes “an irrelevant forked stake,” merely “a prominent bald branch” which, in opposition to the Cambridge maypole, transported by oxen, is condemned to remain “ignored by the cows.”²⁹ Yet, even though deprived from his authority, Streatfield still fulfils his function as the carrier of hope and life into the community of Pointz Hall, which eventually gather together in a patently carnivalesque “messalliance,” simultaneously encompassing Budge the policeman and “Queen Bess,”³⁰ along with the Age of Reason and the foreparts of the donkey, as well as Mrs. Hardcastle and little England. Furthermore, it is after the speech of Streatfield, the “representative spokesman,”³¹ that Woolf herself makes explicit her purpose of lighting up a carnivalistic universe which, once the barriers that menace human freedom and equality are eliminated, should bring to a same level—as announced by Mrs. Swithin, on trying to comprehend the pageant’s meaning—“(t)he peasants; the kings; the fool and’ (she swallowed) ‘ourselves?’”³²

In sum, on the basis of the analysis of *Between the Acts* within the parameters of the incorporation of past and present forms of carnival, this study attempts to introduce a new dimension of Woolf’s understanding of ancient myths and rites. Hereby, this essay explores the narrator’s resort to a retrieval of the ancient Roman embodiment of the Carnival Fool as the ultimate weapon to effect the erosion and debasement of a centralised structure which not only oppresses people, but also proves ineffective to eradicate the weaknesses of an unrealistically focused society—as seen through the deformed lenses of Victorian values. Furthermore, through this analysis, a new approach to Woolf’s appropriation of those ritual and mythological traditions first comes to light, thus revealing the close dovetailing between the subversive politics of carnival and Woolf’s position in the midst of an anachronistic society starving for urgent renewal.

Notes

- ¹ Note the obscene overtone of ‘homecoming,’ whose second lexeme may denote the moment of sexual climax. Woolf, *Between the Acts*, 153-154.
- ² See Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, vol. 4, *The Scapegoat*.
- ³ *Ibid.*, 335-336.
- ⁴ Woolf, *Between the Acts*, 24.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, 170.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, 175.
- ⁷ Ellis, *The Wives of England*, 24.
- ⁸ Woolf, *Between the Acts*, 152.
- ⁹ Frazer, *The Scapegoat*, 336.
- ¹⁰ Woolf, *Between the Acts*, 165.
- ¹¹ Frazer, *The Scapegoat*, 312.
- ¹² Woolf, *Between the Acts*, 170.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, 172.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 69.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 171.
- ¹⁶ Harrison, *Ancient Art and Ritual*, 78.
- ¹⁷ Woolf, *Between the Acts*, 171.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 96.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 100.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, 67.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, 171.
- ²² Harrison, *Ancient Art and Ritual*, 59.
- ²³ *Ibid.*
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 60.
- ²⁵ Woolf, *Between the Acts*, 171.
- ²⁶ Harrison, *Ancient Art and Ritual*, 58.
- ²⁷ Stubbs in Harrison, 58.
- ²⁸ Woolf, *Between the Acts*, 171.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, 176.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, 171.
- ³² *Ibid.*, 192.

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A CLOCKWORK ORANGE, EXPLOITATION AND THE ART FILM

I.Q. HUNTER, DE MONFORT UNIVERSITY¹

Despite its art house trappings, Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) was in many significant ways a big-budget exploitation film, a rich but troubling combination of high style and low, even trashy content. Generically it fused a number of competing modes, including the art film, the science fiction movie, the juvenile delinquency film, underground cinema, and exploitation film. In retrospect, *A Clockwork Orange* is probably most conveniently placed within the emergent category of the cult film, insofar as it was transgressive, seductively quotable, had great subcultural appeal, and invited appropriation by youthful cineastes.² Among critics, however, *A Clockwork Orange* has generally been regarded, through the favoured optic of auteurism, as belonging to a single, self-contained genre consisting entirely of masterpieces—that of the 'Kubrick film.'

Although some critics have discussed the film's place within science fiction cinema, and even within the little known world of British science fiction cinema,³ only two, Janet Staiger and Matthew Sweet, have dwelled on its debts and similarities to the exploitation film.⁴ 'Exploitation' functions in film history as both a semi-generic description and a pejorative term. On the one hand, it means low-budget feature films that cater to a specific demographic, often to the pointed exclusion of other audiences, and which advertise sensational material unavailable in mainstream cinema. This meaning goes back to the so called 'classical exploitation films' of the 1920s and 1930s, such as *Reefer Madness* (1936), which were independent films dabbling in topics banned by the Production Code and which "relied on forbidden spectacle to differentiate themselves from classical Hollywood narrative films and conventional documentaries."⁵ Crucially, these films always adopted an educational and moralistic framework ('the square up'), intended not only to appease police and censors but also to legitimate the audience's curiosity. On the other hand, exploitation can simply denote a film that is blatantly

gratuitous, prurient and very definitely *not* art; this considerably looser meaning dates from the 1950s, when classical exploitation no longer existed as a distinctive and segregated mode of production.

A Clockwork Orange not only resembles exploitation cinema in its lurid subject matter and visceral appeal to self-selecting audiences, but also shares important themes with British exploitation films of the 1960s and 1970s above all with sexploitation and horror movies. Alex, for instance, the film's anti-hero played by Malcolm McDowell, is a variation on the working class hedonists of sexploitation films such as *Confession of a Window Cleaner* (1974), unleashed by Permissiveness into new worlds of sexual possibility and consumerism.⁶ With Alex simultaneously embodying several post-war British social demons—Teddy boy, skinhead, long-haired layabout—the film's emphasis on youthful 'ultraviolence' continued in numerous low-budget British horror and SF films, which, from *The Damned* (1961) to *Psychomania* (1973), frequently allegorised class and generational antagonism and, at the end of the 1960s, the dangerous pleasures of the Permissive Society.⁷ *A Clockwork Orange*'s scenario of an older establishment revenging itself and eventually co-opting the rebellious young is played out in such horror films as *Frightmare* (1973) and *House of Whipcord* (1974), while its schematic depiction of oppressively rational authority pitted against the unruly and Dionysian anticipates *The Wicker Man* (1973), one of many British horror films representing a world divided into predators and victims, with middle-class normality besieged by its liberated Other.⁸

To take a wider view, *A Clockwork Orange* also belonged to what John Fraser in 1974 called the Violation Film, an amorphous but useful cycle "in which the principle *frisson* comes from the threatened gross invasion of the privacy of 'decent' people by violent men, an invasion in which rape as well as murder may be a real possibility."⁹ Anticipated by *The Desperate Hours* (1955), *Cape Fear* (1962) and *Lady in a Cage* (1964), the Violation Film coalesced as a sub-genre of thrillers and exploitation films from the late 1960s, when films like *The Penthouse* (1967), *Straw Dogs* (1971), as well as *A Clockwork Orange* in England; *Last House on the Left* (1971) in the US; and in Italy *Late Night Trains* (1975) and *House on the Edge of the Park* (1979) depicted a proletarian 'return of the repressed' shattering middle-class indifference and complacency, in which the frequent threat of rape asserted working-class virility over middle-class repression. Loose variations on this scenario are played out in art house films such as *The Servant* (1963), *Theorem* (1968), *Performance* (1970), and *Brimstone and Treacle* (1982), as well as in Beryl Bainbridge's novel, *Injury Time* (1977), Ian McEwan's *Saturday* (2005), and *The Great*

Ecstasy of Robert Carmichael (2005), the closest imitation yet of *A Clockwork Orange*'s collision of art and exploitation. Often there is a sense of educative rough justice meted out by the violators, who are somehow more real than their victims:

The interior of the secluded house in *A Clockwork Orange* hinted at a somewhat artificial evasion of unpleasant social realities by the married couple, so that with the invasion by the three figures in masquerade costumes there was a feeling of appropriateness both in the ironic confrontation of quasi-doubles and in the implacable entry of those realities.¹⁰

To that extent *A Clockwork Orange* might be illuminated by Robin Wood's celebrated account of American horror film in the 1970s, such as *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974), in which, he argues, the audience covertly sympathises with the monster when it erupts within repressive normality, because it is free to transgress artificial taboos and bourgeois norms.¹¹ It must be said that this kind of overlap between exploitation and the mainstream was not unusual in the period. Changes in censorship, the waning of the family film, and the need for films to appeal to young male audiences, which would become a keynote of the New Hollywood in the 1970s, meant that mainstream films from *Bonnie and Clyde* (1968) to *Taxi Driver* (1976) increasingly drew on violent and sexual material hitherto restricted to exploitation.¹² Often underpinned by a Pop Art trash aesthetic, and directed by graduates of exploitation filmmaking, films such as *The Godfather* (1972), *The Exorcist* (1973) and *Jaws* (1975) muddled cultural boundaries with a confident insouciance we now think of as postmodern. The rise of the cult midnight movie in the late 1960s, with *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), *El Topo* (1970), *Harold and Maude* (1971) and *Pink Flamingos* (1972), institutionalised this confusion of high and low, art and trash, exploitation and its Other. Crass, sometimes pornographic, often violent and invariably sick, cult 'midnight movies' were art-exploitation efforts indebted equally to Surrealism and underground film as to sexploitation, comic strips and the Bs. As Joan Hawkins remarks of cult films like *Andy Warhol's Dracula* (1974), they "promise both affect and 'something different;' they are films that defy the traditional genre labels by which we try to make sense of cinematic history and cultures, films that seem to have a stake in both high and low art."¹³ As noted before, *A Clockwork Orange* fits squarely into this problematic category of cult, in which the art film and exploitation converge on subject matter that is transgressive, anti-authoritarian and offensive to the mainstream.¹⁴ Rather as *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), Kubrick's previous film, fused tropes

from non-narrative experimental film with visionary hard SF, so *A Clockwork Orange* gleefully mashes up austere political fable with arousingly choreographed brutality and a good deal of (rarely acknowledged) homoerotic high camp—something else it shared with the first wave of cult films.¹⁵ This strategy can be seen as an attempt to invigorate the art movie tradition of ambiguity and subjectivity with dissonant elements of trash culture, which might appeal to young audiences as well as reintroduce some of the shock value of early modernist art:

Working at the very end of [the art movie] tradition, Kubrick was perhaps trying to *reinvent* the art cinema with *A Clockwork Orange*, most prominently with the film's music and its depiction of violence. The sensation of shock, so important to the avant-garde and modernism from Surrealism to the Nouveau Roman—both in cinema and in the other arts—is an integral part of Kubrick's project, even as he foregrounds the music of High Romanticism.¹⁶

The film's ambiguous conflation of art and trash worried censors and critics, unsure how to deal with a film both rabble-rousing and intellectually rigorous. As with *The Devils* (1970) and *Straw Dogs* (1971), with which *A Clockwork Orange* was invariably linked, it was hard to reconcile the film's impeccable artistic credentials and apparent seriousness of purpose with the manner in which rape and violence were presented. It is true that since the 1950s, especially in the US, 'art house' had been a euphemism for sexy frissons, but *A Clockwork Orange* was not a straightforward art movie, offering safe thrills for middle-class cineastes, who could be expected to cope with any amount of incendiary content. And while it shared the taboo-busting appeal of the exploitation film—though "a prestige picture" it "took audiences someplace they'd never been and showed them some things they'd never seen before"¹⁷—neither could it be dismissed merely as disreputable entertainment for the dangerous lower classes. As Janet Staiger has explored at length, this uneasy distinction, between 'good' art film and 'bad' exploitation, was extremely important in the reception of *A Clockwork Orange*.¹⁸ Gauging the film's location along the art/exploitation axis was crucial to its interpretation. Sympathetic critics argued that the film ironised the depiction of violence by presenting the fight scenes as stylised ballets and counterpointing them with classical music and Alex' ingratiating voiceover.¹⁹ Such methods of distancing, it was argued, denied viewers the pleasures of non-intellectual involvement and constructed them instead as ironic voyeurs, who registered the violence primarily as moments of

'cinema' illustrative of the film's ideas. Sympathetic critics, in other words, took *A Clockwork Orange* to be a film with a thesis, 'about' violence rather than simply a violent film. As in other 'violent' films (a makeshift category dreamt up at the time), such as *The Wild Bunch* (1969), *Soldier Blue* (1970), *Straw Dogs*, and even *2001*, violence was isolated as a general characteristic of and explanation for human social relations.²⁰ The film staged a debate about how to control 'natural' violence (embodied in Alex) in order to drive home its moral that free will is preferable to state control of the individual.

This was certainly the position of the British Board of Film Censors, whose Secretary, Stephen Murphy, went to remarkable lengths, in replying to critics of the decision to release it uncut, to defend the film's artistic integrity and intellectual rigour and distinguish it from exploitation:

The film is, in its stylised way, simply a vehicle for all kinds of speculation about the human spirit, and about the nature of Western society. Disturbed though we were by the first half of the film, which is basically a statement of some of the problems of violence, we were, nevertheless, satisfied by the end of the film that it could not be accused of exploitation: quite the contrary, it is a valuable contribution to the whole debate about violence.²¹

'Art' was what raised the film above mere exploitation and made the rapes and beatings, in all their vivid and involving detail, aesthetically essential. Art, too, was what made the film *safe*, since art films were understood to promote distance and intellectual contemplation whereas exploitation incited low, kinetic and wholly non-bourgeois responses—arousal, emotional engagement, corporeal thrills²²—and had to be censored.

A Clockwork Orange exhibited the canonical qualities of an art film—stylized, authored, self-reflexive, rather boring—but its artiness could also be seen as an elaborate 'square up' intended to justify an obsessive focus on rape, voyeurism, and naked breasts. While Kubrick avoided documentary immediacy by staging the violence as ritualised theatrical performance, scenes such as the gang fight in the deserted casino and the Cat Lady's murder were undoubtedly exciting, balletic, bloodlessly aestheticised and cruelly funny. Hostile critics such as Pauline Kael and Andrew Sarris accused Kubrick of coldly exploiting violence and sexual display in such scenes and contrasted the film unfavourably with Anthony Burgess' source novel in which Nadsat, the idiolect spoken by Alex' 'droogs,' imposed a prophylactic imaginative distance between act and description.²³ Kael went so far as to dismiss the film as resembling a porno violent sci-fi comedy made by a strict German professor.

To some extent these strictures repeat a wearisome complaint against cinema itself, that it is, as Fredric Jameson put it, “essentially pornographic” and trembles always on the edge of exploitation because of the untameable immediacy of the visual.²⁴ But in focusing on the troublesome faultline between art and exploitation, the debate over *A Clockwork Orange* registered that such categories of film were no longer mutually exclusive. The issue was especially complex and pressing debate in the early 1970s because auteurism, the liberation of materials, the ambiguous aesthetic location of film, and the breakdown of traditional audiences had made it much more difficult for mainstream critics and censors either to separate out art and exploitation films, or to anticipate audience responses, or indeed to distinguish between ‘safe’ art and ‘dangerous’ entertainment. A film like *A Clockwork Orange* cut across not just art and exploitation but also across class based distinctions between art house audiences, who would read it with the ‘correct’ attitude, and the exploitation audiences who might get off on and perhaps even imitate the violence, and yet who, being young, male and working class, were also the key target audiences for an action filled romp about teen rebellion.

What is especially interesting about *A Clockwork Orange* is not so much the art/exploitation crossover but how it is thematicised in the film itself so as to render viewers profoundly uneasy. *A Clockwork Orange* contemptuously refuses any distinction between art and trash, and is determined to seduce the audience with strategies drawn from both. Linda Ruth Williams has noted that Kubrick “long played with genre, emulating and exemplifying the pinnacles of trash genres through meticulously rendered works of cinema art.”²⁵ And as I have argued elsewhere, the film deliberately lurks on the borders of pornography; its aesthetic is one of gratuitousness and prurience, kitsch, crudity and high art flourishes:

Gratuitous erotic material and images of the commodification of sex are scattered throughout *A Clockwork Orange*, confounding the distinction between high art, trash and porn. Teenage girls suck phallic ice-lollies before engaging in high-speed sex with Alex (the result is a mini porn loop in itself); the camera lingers with icy voyeurism as the Cat Woman spreads her legs during yoga; there is an aimless shot of a topless nurse when Alex is in hospital. And, in the film’s most outrageous comment on the creative overlap between porn and great art, Alex commandeers Beethoven and the Bible as masturbation fodder, which foregrounds the exploitative elements and unsettles the boundaries between art as pure form (aesthetically redeeming violent content) and art as incitement (Alex jerking off to ‘Ode to Joy’).²⁶