

Czech and Slovak
**Journal
of Humanities**

Theatralia et cinematographica

1/2019

Czech and Slovak Journal of Humanities (CSJH) is a peer-reviewed scholarly journal established in 2011 at Palacký University, one of the oldest Central European universities. The journal is dedicated to various important fields of the humanities: history, philosophy, the visual arts, theatre & film (including TV and radio), music, and cultural anthropology, with interdisciplinary themes among these fields.

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Czech and Slovak Journal of Humanities is published two times a year in the following sequence: *Philosophica*; *Historica*; *Theatralia et cinematographica*; *Musicologica*; *Anthropologica culturalia*.

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Zpracování a vydání publikace bylo umožněno díky finanční podpoře udělené roku 2019 Ministerstvem školství, mládeže a tělovýchovy ČR v rámci Institucionálního rozvojového plánu Filozofické fakultě Univerzity Palackého v Olomouci.

Published and printed by:

Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci (Palacký University Olomouc)

Křížkovského 8, 771 47 Olomouc, Czech Republic

www.vydavatelstvi.upol.cz

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ISSN 1805-3742

On the cover: publicity still featuring Clara Bow, personal archive of Gaylyn Studlar.

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Editorial

It has been forty years since the publication of Richard Dyer's *Stars*, a book which – by combining semiotics and sociology – virtually single-handedly inaugurated a new discipline within the scholarly study of film called *star studies*. In the four decades that followed, even when a scholar did not agree with its premises or conclusions, he or she felt obliged to refer to it and argue with Dyer's ground-breaking ideas. More often, however, it has served as a crucial inspiration and theoretical foundation, informing dozens of research projects on individual stars and their audiences. *Stars* – along with Dyer's other books on related topics such as *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (1986) or *White* (1997) – continues to be a cornerstone of the discipline and hardly an article or a book chapter interested in the mechanics of stardom can do without at least a reference to it. This issue of the *Czech and Slovak Journal of Humanities* provides living proof of its unfading significance. Out of the six articles on stars and star systems – the topic of this issue – five employ Richard Dyer's ideas as one of their important points of departure, the only exception being a text dealing with voice acting on the radio. This does not mean, however, that star studies is paralyzed by homogeneity or lack of invention. This issue provides compelling evidence of the variety of questions one might ask about stars' identities, labour and agency, class, gender and racial politics, or their function within the industrial structures of film and media industries.

In "Poor Little Star: Femininity, Authenticity, and Hollywood's Class Problem," Gaylyn Studlar uses the case of Clara Bow to examine how the Hollywood studio system of the 1920s, through its films, but above all by means of promotion and publicity, addressed issues of gender and class and used them to construct a public image for the star based on authenticity which, however, also proved threatening. Cynthia Baron's article "Moving Beyond the Naturalized Whiteness of Star Studies: Analyzing Hollywood Stardom in Light of American Cultural Politics" combines a historical inquiry with a critical perspective directed at the contemporary film industry which is characterized by a crucial imbalance in terms of racial representation on screen. Claire Parkinson presents another critical view of a largely neglected phenomenon – animal stardom – which has also had significant ethical implications. In "The Threat of Male Star-Gazing and Over-Exposure in *Eyes Wide Shut*," Katherine D. Johnston applies the methodological framework provided by Laura Mulvey and Steve Neale to Stanley Kubrick's last film and discusses how it addresses issues of masculinity (or rather its crisis) and male erotic objectification. Moving beyond Hollywood, Yektanurşin Duyan surveys the star system in Turkish cinema and discusses its formation during the so-called Yeşilçam period between 1960 and 1989 as well as its economic ramifications for the industry. Finally, Tomáš Bojda discusses the radio career of the celebrated Czech actor Viktor Preiss and, in the process, refines tools that can be used to analyse radio acting in general. We hope that taken as a whole, this issue demonstrates star studies' continuing vivacity as a discipline and its potential to ask important questions about film (and, in one case radio) as art, industry, ideological tool and site of audience engagement.

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Stars and Star Systems
in Film, Television,
and Radio|

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Poor Little Star: Femininity, Authenticity, and Hollywood's Class Problem

Abstract | Using the case of Clara Bow, this essay addresses the relationship between stories of stars' working-class origins, which circulated in fan magazines and newspaper columns, and Hollywood's democratization of fame, its institutionalized gender, class, racial and even regional stereotypes. The author argues that these stories often complicated the norms of the studio system in its manufacture of stars as tools for marketing movies as well as for establishing the U.S. film industry as a privileged site of a modern American elite based on celebrity and glamour. In fact, this class-centered star discourse threw into relief the social and economic dynamics of stardom, authenticating star identities but also testing public values and challenging social norms, especially those surrounding the meaning of class difference in relation to female ambition and labor.

Keywords | Hollywood – female stardom – femininity – authenticity – gender – class – star labor

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“Our chief task with Clara was to get her to wash her face and to stop chewing gum.
She has simply fallen back to her natural level.”¹
Unnamed producer quoted in “Has Scandal Beaten Clara Bow?,” *Screen Book*, October 1931.

“Oh, give the kid a break. [...] All stars put on a big show or act unnatural, except Clara Bow.
She is the only real person in Hollywood.”²
Lois Ferguson, “A Bow Rave,” [fan letter] “Hoots and Hoorays!,” *Screenland*, September 1931.

Introduction

This essay addresses the relationship of authenticity to the gendered inscription of stars' working-class origins in the Hollywood studio system. While motion picture stars have long been associated with a paradoxical play of the “ordinary” and the “extraordinary” relevant to the issue of class, I will argue that what is required at this point is a more precise historical periodization of the negotiation of class and authenticity in the discursive public construction of Hollywood female stardom. Such a negotiation was the context for the production, marketing, and reception of films as actor-centered texts or “star vehicles.” It also reached beyond individual films through a web of discursive representations of the star that might play an outsized role in shaping public understanding of a movie star as a celebrity whose fame (or notoriety) extended beyond the appeal of her films to a segment of that public. While negotiation of a star's class and authenticity in the heyday of the studio system contained predictable and systemized discursive elements

¹ Ralph Parker, “Has Scandal Beaten Clara Bow?,” *Screen Book* (October 1931): 26.

² Lois Ferguson, “A Bow Rave,” [letter in] “Hoots and Hoorays!,” *Screenland* (September 1931): 1.

established by publicity departments, film advertising, and star-centered promotion, it also incorporated other discursive forms outside of the direct control or sponsorship of Hollywood studios: gossip columns, newspaper reportage, editorials, interviews, film reviews, and general interest or fan magazine articles. As a result, different modalities of star-centered discourse might have appeared to be congruent with a studio's manufactured messages about an actor-celebrity, but they also could complicate or even contradict the studio's construction of the star's persona.³

In this institutionalized process, the agency of individuals, including the star, should not be discounted. As Richard Dyer observes, "star images are carried in the person of real people," and are, as a result, inherently "unstable."⁴ Thus, in a paradoxical combination of revelation and concealment, instability and systematic manipulation, filtered reality and fictionality, star personas were subject to multiple and shifting influences in their formation and reception. At the same time, cinematic as well as discursive inscriptions were generally committed to framing the star persona within "a rhetoric of authenticity."⁵ That rhetoric could exist within films, as Richard Dyer argues, but it also was key to extra-filmic discourses that were positioned to guide viewers' attention in a flow of information focused on the actor as a person or "personality" rather than as a performer. Articles, news items, captioned photo layouts, film reviews and interviews complemented the visual emphasis on stars in marketing for individual films. Not only were photo layouts and print advertising timed to film releases, but so were the star's personal appearances and exhibitors' "ballyhoo," including consumer product tie-ins and film poster displays in businesses, local events staged with civic organizations, and themed contests (such as star look alike competitions) at movie theatres. Cultivating public interest in a star up to and through the release of her (or his) films was an important part of achieving the ultimate goal of paid film attendance.⁶

To achieve some degree of specificity of analysis, this study concentrates on the 1920s with some attention to the early 1930s. During this period, the Hollywood studio system was corporatized as an industry and the star system honed. It was an era of sexual liberalization in American culture, but of scandal too. By 1922, the American film industry was attempting to re-assert its respectability in the wake of star-centered scandals.⁷ Former Postmaster General Will H. Hays

³ On "ordinariness" and "extraordinariness" in the star persona, see Richard Dyer, *Stars* (London: British Film Institute, 1999), 43. In 1985, Cathy Klaprat offered a pioneering study in which she argued that the "matching of actor and character" in the marketing of stars in the early 1930s depended upon the assumption that audiences wanted to be "assured that the star acted identically in both her 'real' and 'reel' lives." Certainly this was a position invested in by some in the industry and can be seen operating in references to Clara Bow as a model for the flapper off as well as on screen, but Klaprat overestimates the absolute power of the studio system to control the reception of star personas through scripting of films, advertising, and film promotion. She overlooks the agency of stars as well as the industrial need to create a measure of flexibility in star personas to accommodate different roles that can adapt to changing audience preferences and film cycles. Cathy Klaprat, "The Star as Market Strategy: Bette Davis in Another Light," in *American Film Industry*, ed. Tino Balio (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 360. Klaprat's view of the star system is challenged implicitly by Richard deCordova's ground-breaking study, *Picture Personalities: The Emergence of the Star System in America* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990).

⁴ Richard Dyer, "A *Star is Born* and the Construction of Authenticity," in *Stardom: Industry of Desire*, ed. Christine Gledhill (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 137.

⁵ Ibid. On the critical role of authenticity in the discursive formation of celebrity, see P. David Marshall, *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 100.

⁶ Dyer, "A *Star is Born* and the Construction of Authenticity," 135–137.

⁷ On the impact of Hollywood scandal in the early 1920s on the industry's reputation, see deCordova, *Picture Personalities*, 117–151. On William Randolph Hearst's yellow journalism and his newspaper chain's articulation of the "Fatty" Arbuckle scandal as a story of Hollywood's exploitation of women's desire for stardom and the victimization of female innocence, see Hilary A. Hallett, *Go West, Young Women! The Rise of Early Hollywood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), especially 184–194.

was hired to head the newly formed Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association. For the next twenty-three years, Hays functioned as both “Moral Czar” to the American film industry and its primary public representative.

At the center of Hollywood's concerns in 1922 was the need to stave off government censorship of American films and maintain the loyalty of middle-class audiences. As the highest category of Hollywood celebrity, stars were believed to be key to sustaining movies' appeal to filmgoers, but sensational scandals had already proven that famous screen actors could be a major liability to the industry. Hays encouraged all studios to add a morals clause to actors' contracts that would allow them to fire any performer who offended public morality and brought the employer or the film industry as a whole into disrepute.⁸

In this historical context, the public inscription of the star persona of Clara Bow evidenced the intersection of Hollywood's heightened concerns during the 1920s with contemporaneous class anxieties and sexism in the United States. As a celebrity actress, Bow came to represent the American underclass, those poor whites who were dismissed as “white trash.” Nancy Isenberg suggests how this term carried connotations of the dirty but also of the depraved and the delinquent; she goes on to remark of the 1920s: “If ever there was a time when class consciousness sank deep roots, this was it.”⁹ This was also a decade in which women's sexual independence became a national controversy centered on the “flapper,” represented stereotypically as a scantily clad young woman who, armed with latchkey, lipstick, and liquor flask, was ready to assert her right to pleasure.

Called “Queen of the Flappers,” the “IT Girl,” and the “Brooklyn Bonfire,” Clara Bow achieved stardom but not respectability. During the course of a career that lasted a little over a decade and took her to the heights of screen popularity, she appeared in fifty-six feature films. She became one of Hollywood's top audience draws in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Movie industry sources put her in second place as a box office attraction in 1927, first in 1928 and 1929, second in 1930, and fifth in 1931.¹⁰ In spite of Bow's appeal to audiences, her alignment with lower class authenticity was increasingly subject to moralizing and pathologizing judgment in newspaper and fan magazine coverage of her. Mired in scandal in 1930–1931, she was charged with a perceived inability (or refusal) to accommodate her embodied, original class subjectivity to her elite status as a motion picture star. In December 1930, *Motion Picture Classic*, a consistent supporter of Bow, defended not her actions, but her authenticity when it asked in an editorial: “Since when has it been a crime to be from Coney Island and admit it? [...] She is, if nothing else, herself. From the mob, she is of the mob. She does not pretend to be anything else.”¹¹ By mid-1931, the stress of these scandals, as well as overwork and the actress's well-publicized discomfort with the “talkies,” impacted Bow's mental health and led the actress to request a release from her contract with Paramount.¹² In a brief come-back in 1932–1933, Bow starred in two films produced at Fox

⁸ Censorship was a real concern to the industry because of the unanimous 1915 ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court that motion pictures were not covered by 1st Amendment free speech rights. Standard morals clause language was on the order of the following: “The artist agrees to conduct himself with due regard to public conventions and morals and agrees that he will not do or commit any act or thing that will tend to degrade him in society or bring him into public hatred, contempt, scorn or ridicule, or that will tend to shock, insult or offend the community...”

⁹ Nancy Isenberg, *White Trash: The 400-Year Untold History of Class in America* (New York: Viking, 2016), 315, 205.

¹⁰ “Clara and Lon are ‘IT’ with Theater Owners,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 7, 1930, A3; “Clara Bow Leads Film List,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 3, 1929, A3.

¹¹ “Motion Picture Classic Talks,” *Motion Picture Classic* 32, no. 4 (December 1930): 23.

¹² On her departure from Paramount, see “Oakie May Stick In, But Bow Washed Up,” *Variety*, June 2, 1931, 2. On Bow's dislike of talkies, see Elisabeth Goldbeck, “The Real Clara Bow,” *Motion Picture Magazine* 40, no. 2 (September 1930): 108.

Film Corporation. *Call Her Savage* (1932) was adapted from a highly controversial, sex-saturated novel by Tiffany Thayer; in *Hoop-la* (1933), Bow was cast as a side show hootchy-kootchy dancer willing to seduce a man to win a bet or acquire a bauble. After completing these films, Clara Bow retired permanently from the screen at age twenty-eight.

Contextualizing Bow's stardom and embedded class position within the star system's negotiation of class ideology, authenticity, and gendered public identity reveals the extent of, but also limitations in, Hollywood's management of stars and audience responses to them. Studying the discursive construction of Clara Bow's socially-classed female stardom in the heyday of the studio system also reveals strategies in the containment and exploitation of women that are relevant to the consideration of twenty-first century gendered celebrity formations. In such formations, there is a marked continuation of pathologizing discourses being applied to lower-class female celebrities who, like Clara Bow, become specularized commodities for public consumption.

Movie Respectability, Actors, and Class

A central challenge for the American film industry in its first three decades of existence was the task of lifting the reputation of motion pictures. In its early years, the movies were associated with working-class viewers, especially urban, immigrant audiences that frequented storefront nickelodeons. Behind the scenes, many pioneers in the business of making, distributing, and showing "flickers" were ambitious immigrants or the children of immigrants; a number of them were Jewish and started in family-run enterprises like the scrap metal business or clothing production.¹³ In 1922, poet and film critic Vachel Lindsay alluded to the negative impact of this situation on motion pictures when he lamented that "we are ruled indirectly by photoplays owned and controlled by men who should be in the shoe-string and hook-and-eye trade."¹⁴ Denigration of the taste, morality, and values of the American film industry would continue to be linked to class and cultural capital, as well as to anti-Semitism.¹⁵

One of the most astute of the early film pioneers was Adolf Zukor, a founder of the Famous Players Film Company in 1912 (which later became part of Paramount). In a 1928 biography of the studio executive, Will Irwin related Zukor's belief that killing "the slum tradition" was the only way to "wipe away that contempt in which the American public held the 'movie.'"¹⁶ Motion pictures had to be made more dignified and respectable so that attending them might become a regular, socially acceptable pastime for the white middle-class. Securing broad acceptance of the medium would produce enormous, reliable profits. As film historian Robert Sklar noted, that goal was met without leaving behind working-class audiences that had sustained the growth of the new medium during the nickelodeon years.¹⁷ Movies became synonymous with a democratization of entertainment not merely because of their rapid growth and modern technological reproducibility, but also because of the Wall Street-financed corporate consolidation of motion picture studios in the 1920s. Adopting a factory-like system of production and a structure of

¹³ On this point, see Neil Gabler, *An Empire of their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood* (New York: Anchor, 1989) and Steven Alan Carr, *Hollywood and Anti-Semitism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

¹⁴ Vachel Lindsay, *The Art of the Moving Picture* (New York: Liverwright, 1970 [1922]), 23.

¹⁵ On anti-Semitism articulated inside Hollywood by Joseph Breen, head of the powerful Production Code Administration from 1934 to 1954, see Thomas Doherty, "Was Hollywood's Famed Censor an Antisemite?," *Jewish Forward*, December 11, 2007, accessed October 10, 2018, <https://forward.com/culture/12234/was-hollywood-s-famed-censor-an-antisemite-00948/>.

¹⁶ Will Irwin, *The House That Shadows Built* (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1928), 151.

¹⁷ Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 46.

vertical integration guaranteeing distribution and exhibition allowed Hollywood to permeate every nook and cranny of U.S. society even as American-made motion pictures came to dominate screens worldwide.

The problem of class as it applied to audiences was a challenge Hollywood confronted and conquered in relatively short order. The successful cultivation of an audience cutting across socio-economic divides involved a shift to multi-reel feature film production and the building of motion picture palaces, as well as an enhanced emphasis on actors. While actors were recognized as a powerful source of fascination for audiences, the problem of their class was perceived by the United States film industry also as a potential blockage in the process of securing a more permanent aura of respectability.

With the aim of securing that aura, in the 1910s, the industry attempted to smooth over the “low” origin of many of the movies’ first generation of actors, initially by not discussing their personal lives at all and then by strategies that included altering, obscuring, or completely fictionalizing their origin stories and current lives for public consumption.¹⁸ Perhaps most notoriously in this regard, an actress who had worked in Yiddish theatre, Theodosia Goodman, was renamed “Theda Bara” (an anagram for Arab Death) and turned into the screen’s most exotic vamp by Fox studio. Bara performed the pretense of her weird “publicity personality” that included the claim that she was “born in the shadow of the sphinx” and had been a star of the French stage, but her efforts to adhere to the exotic identity manufactured for her by Fox’s publicity department were soon contradicted by news of her upbringing in Cincinnati, Ohio, as the college-educated daughter of middle-class Jewish immigrants.¹⁹ However, by 1918, the popularity of the screen vamp was waning. This appeared to allow Theda Bara to enjoy a normal domestic life, at least as reported by Alma Whitaker in the *Los Angeles Times*. Bara was sharing a rented mansion with her sister, Lori, and looking forward to appearing in a screen comedy. She reportedly was also enjoying the chickens running around her expansive backyard.²⁰ The wild swing from one publicity tact (the exotic) to another (cozily mundane) certainly did little to help the public grasp the nature of Bara’s authentic self, but at least it normalized the actress according to a “family discourse,” another key strategy that helped align stars with respectability no matter what their class origins or screen image.

In the late 1910s, Hollywood began to frame stars rhetorically within what Richard deCordova first identified as its “family discourse.”²¹ As deCordova explains, this strategy originally reflected Hollywood’s desire to separate movie actors from the moral disrepute attached to stage players who worked at night, traveled from town to town, and faced an array of moral and sexual

¹⁸ On the “picture personality” as the industry’s attempt to promote and publicize screen actors with an almost exclusive reference to the personalities displayed in films, see deCordova, *Picture Personalities*, 73–92.

¹⁹ On the role of Al Selig and John Goldfrap in Fox’s publicity scheme and their introduction of Bara to the press, see Eve Golden, *Vamp: The Rise and Fall of Theda Bara* (Vestal, NY: Emprise Publishing, 1996), 38–40. Theda Bara and Mae West exemplified female stars whose sexually provocative star personas were rooted in over-the-top performances of outlandish, highly stylized women in a process that downplayed expectations of authenticity. West’s generally respectable working-class upbringing and reticence about her love life contrasted sharply with her screen persona as a “hussy,” a shameless, middle-aged demimondaine who performed startling but amusing low-classness. Her screen image developed from her sexually exaggerated, “eccentric” theatrical persona. *Variety* referred to West in the late 1910s as “one of the many freak persons on the vaudeville stage, where freakishness often carries more weight than talent.” Quoted in Emily Wortis Leider, *Becoming Mae West* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1997), 70. On Bara’s star persona as inscribed in fan magazines, see Gaylyn Studlar, “Theda Bara: Orientalism, Sexual Anarchy, and the Jewish Star,” in *Flickers of Desire: Movie Stars of the 1910s*, ed. Jennifer M. Bean (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 123–129.

²⁰ Alma Whitaker, “New Theda Bara Is Born of Exclusive Society Setting,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 28, 1918, 11.

²¹ deCordova, *Picture Personalities*, 102.

temptations. In addition, in the nineteenth century female stage actors were often associated with prostitution. To combat this unsavory theatrical heritage, photoplay actors were presented by a conventionalized family discourse as living healthy lifestyles defined primarily by settled domesticity.²²

In the early 1920s, after damaging scandals, Hollywood would use the “family discourse” approach to shore up the respectability of stars, especially that of young female stars whose image of sexual innocence might be threatened by the rise of the screen flapper as well as by star scandals’ exposure of sexual nonconformity.²³ To combat public perception that Hollywood was a permissive if not an outright sinful enclave, fan magazine articles throughout the 1920s, like “The Movie Mother,” “Home Rules for Hollywood Flappers,” and “Their First Fans,” reassured fan magazine readership that young movie actresses were raised to know right from wrong and might display harmless high spirits but not depraved self-indulgence.²⁴

Fan magazines became a key cultural intermediary shaping the moral economy of stardom and public perception of star subjectivity as authentic, obviously manufactured, or some blending of the two. Fan magazines began in the 1910s, but they exploded in number and popularity in the U.S. in the 1920s.²⁵ Throughout this period, female stars constituted the overwhelmingly dominant subject of these magazines. Although fan magazines were almost all published independently of the film industry, they depended on cultivating a mutually-beneficial relationship with the studios. Newspaper coverage of stars also expanded greatly in the 1920s. This took a measure of control away from Hollywood’s discursive regulation as newspapers enjoyed more freedom than fan magazines to offer skeptical and tough-minded reportage on stars. Wire services, newspaper chains, and syndicated gossip columnists had the ability to spread star-centered news (or rumors) coast to coast.

The Young and the Restive

On the cusp of that expansion of the public face of the star system and simultaneous explosion of youth culture in the United States, producer Thomas Ince declared in *Munsey’s Magazine* in 1918, that veteran stage stars were now abandoning their “sinking ship” to join film; this was a futile effort he said because: “The screen screams for youth. It clamors for the unlined face.”²⁶ Ince praised Hollywood extras who rose to become actors by virtue of “personality and perseverance,” thus dramatizing a climb to stardom as a spectacular but achievable avenue for social mobility. He made no class or gender distinctions in his discussion of screen careers for young people, and the egalitarian spin of his commentary would be echoed broadly in Hollywood promotion, especially in fan magazines, which were addressed primarily to women and girls and made

²² Ibid., 102–103.

²³ In 1922, investigation of the murder of director William Desmond Taylor exposed the fact that he had left a wife and children behind in England and was carrying on affairs with more than one young female star. On the exposure of subculture behavior through scandal with a focus on the relationship between political sex scandals and the sexual liberalization of society, see Ari Adut, *On Scandal: Moral Disturbances in Society, Politics, and Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

²⁴ See, for example, Katherine Albert, “Home Rules for Hollywood Flappers,” *Photoplay* 36, no. 1 (June 1929): 32–33, 134–136; Caroline Bell, “The Movie Mother,” *Picture-Play* 19, no. 6 (February 1924): 86–88; Grace Kingsley, “Their First Fans,” *New Movie* 1, no. 3 (February 1930): 24–27, 113–114, 116, 120.

²⁵ For an overview of the history of fan magazines, see Anthony Slide, *Inside the Hollywood Fan Magazine: A History of Star Makers, Fabricators, and Gossip Mongers* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010).

²⁶ Thomas Ince, “The Star is Here to Stay,” *Munsey’s Magazine* 56 (November 1918): 342.

affordable to working-class readers. In general, the film industry cultivated the impression that it knew and appreciated that females constituted its most avid fans and faithful audience base.²⁷

Even before the opening of studios in Hollywood, motion pictures had a wild and woolly heritage that encouraged the idea that the business was always open to new talent no matter from where it came.²⁸ Extending this tradition of openness, in 1919, *Motion Picture Magazine* offered an editorial called “The Land of Promise”:

The greater your belief in your Land of Promise, the greater is your chance of reaching it. [...] MOTION PICTURES ARE THE LAND OF PROMISE! [...] the one land, where youth has found and kept a firm foot-hold. [...] If your dreams are worth while, if your endeavor matches your ability to dream, the shadow art offers you a stepping stone to the altars of success.²⁹

Comments like these elevated Hollywood as a mythological place for idealistic youth and no doubt fed the fantasies of “movie struck girls” who were drawn to the glamour and independence Hollywood represented to them. So many young women responded to the idea of a screen career that soon Hollywood was begging movie hopefuls to stay home as the city was overrun with thousands of them who had arrived alone, without sufficient money or preparation. The publication of shocking stories of the fate of some who tried to break into the movie business and became sexual victims of predatory men served as cautionary tales, but also threatened the film industry’s ongoing quest for respectability.³⁰

Reflecting on Hollywood and its reputation for immorality, Benjamin B. Hampton, former tobacco industry executive and film producer, addressed how this issue was undermining the film industry and its ability to attract the right kind of female talent. He was quoted in *The Literary Digest* in May of 1921:

The public has been convinced that studio-land is filled with [...] young women who spend most of their waking hours lolling in boudoirs waiting to vamp strange men. All of which is far from the truth – all of which injure the movies [...] in that the nice girl ambitious to become a screen actress, is almost invariably discouraged by her family and her friends. [...] *The movies need the nice girl.* [italics original] They need the girl that comes from a good family with education and tradition back of her. [...] [because] a fine screen actress can not [sic] be fashioned out of coarse material.³¹

Even as his commentary serves to naturalize middle-class femininity as American society’s – and the screen’s – ideal, Hampton appears to be trying to reassure *The Literary Digest’s* middle- and upper-class readers that Hollywood would not ruin the “nice girl.” He reveals his class bias by dismissing the potential of any working-class female (“coarse material”) to become “a fine screen actress.” In other words, when it comes to screen careers in Hollywood, poor girls who were not educated, not of good breeding, and not “nice,” need not apply.

²⁷ Gaylyn Studlar, “The Perils of Pleasure? Fan Magazine Discourse as Women’s Commodified Culture in the 1920s,” *Wide Angle* 13, no. 1 (1991): 7.

²⁸ Ince, “The Star is Here to Stay,” 346. On the “movie-struck” or “screen-struck” girl, see Shelley Stamp, *Movie-Struck Girls: Woman and Motion Picture Culture After the Nickelodeon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000) and Diana Anselmo-Sequeira, “Screen-Struck: The Invention of the Movie Girl Fan,” *Cinema Journal* 55, no. 1 (2015), 1–28.

²⁹ “The Land of Promise,” *Motion Picture Magazine* 28, no. 7 (1919): 29.

³⁰ Shelley Stamp, “It’s a Long Way to Filmland: Starlets, Screen Hopefuls and Extras in Early Hollywood,” in *American Cinema’s Transitional Era: Audiences, Institutions, Practices*, ed. Charlie Keil and Shelley Stamp (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 332–359 and Samantha Barbas, *Movie Crazy: Fans, Stars, and the Cult of Celebrity* (Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 59–68.

³¹ “Movie Myths and Facts as Seen By an Insider,” *The Literary Digest*, May 7, 1921, 38.

Concurrent with the publication of Hampton's comments, an auburn haired sixteen-year-old girl from one of the poorest neighborhoods in Brooklyn, New York entered Brewster Publications' "Fame and Fortune Contest of 1921." This annual screen talent and beauty contest was not affiliated with a major movie studio, but it promised the winner some publicity, the possibility of small film role, and a bolero jacket to wear.³² This adolescent girl of the poverty class, Clara Gordon Bow, survived eight rounds of competition and was announced as the winner in the January 1922 issue of *Motion Picture Magazine*. As Marsha Orgeron has argued, fan magazines in the 1910s and 1920s institutionalized an interactive fandom, one that offered opportunities to "transform spectators of celebrity culture into participators in celebrity culture;" Orgeron calls fan magazine contests like the one Clara Bow entered, "the ultimate and in some ways the most radical act of sanctioned participation in which readers might take a step to stardom."³³ Such contests met the desire of many young female readers to have a respectable way to enter the film business as they also served the interests of fan magazines by giving them the gloss of authority and influence.

Clara Bow was part of the first generation of "movie struck" girls who dreamed of stardom. With her home life a misery, Bow's only childhood joy was the movies; she imitated stars in front of her bedroom mirror and devoured fan magazines.³⁴ She dropped out of high school to help support her family and borrowed a dollar from her father to have the photos taken for her entry application to the Brewster contest. In announcing her win over thousands of other applicants, *Motion Picture Magazine* declared Bow to be "The New Star," but acquiring meaningful employment in the East Coast motion picture scene was not easy for her. In 1931, *Screenland* claimed that Bow's contest win "did very little toward helping the Flaming Flapper to fame. She fought her way up the ladder, alone."³⁵ Finally, Bow snared a good role as a hoyden in Elmer Clifton's historical whaling saga, *Down to the Sea in Ships* (1923). Soon, she would secure a short-term contract with Preferred Pictures, and she set off on her very first train ride, which took her to the "Land of Promise."³⁶ In Hollywood, Preferred Pictures boss B. P. Schulberg put Bow into film after film, often in profitable loan outs to other studios. When Schulberg was given the opportunity to return as an executive to his former employer, Famous-Players Lasky, Bow and her contract went with him. Some thought the studio wanted Bow more than it wanted B. P.³⁷

Clara Flaps in Hollywood

Clara Bow quickly came to be considered the screen's most sexually potent personification of the flapper, a controversial symbol of the radical threat youthful modern femininity was presenting to the traditional order of gendered sexual relations.³⁸ In March 1925, Marjory Adams noted in the *Boston Daily Globe* that Bow "had played the American flapper so long and so well that it

³² "The New Star," *Motion Picture Magazine* 22, no. 12 (January 1922): 55, 99. Mary Astor (then Lucille Langhanke) previously won this fan magazine contest. See "Brewster Magazines Announce Winners of 'The Fame and Fortune Contest,'" *Moving Picture World*, November 20, 1920, 329.

³³ Marsha Orgeron, "'You are Invited to Participate:' Interactive Fandom in the Age of the Movie Magazine," *Journal of Film and Video* 61, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 4.

³⁴ David Stenn, *Clara Bow: Runnin' Wild* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000), 15–16; Harry T. Brundidge, *Twinkle, Twinkle, Movie Star!* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1930), 7.

³⁵ Ruth Tildesely, "Rich Man Poor Man," *Screenland* 23, no. 3 (July 1931): 56.

³⁶ "Schulberg Signs Clara Bow," *Moving Picture World*, July 28, 1923, 320.

³⁷ Stenn, *Clara Bow*, 56–57, 70–71.

³⁸ For contemporaneous views on the danger in women's changing sexual desires, see Hugh McMenamin, "Evils of Woman's Revolt Against the Old Standard," *Current History* 19 (1927): 3–32; Joseph Collins, "Woman's

seemed impossible to think of her in any other role.”³⁹ Bow’s schedule of filmmaking was furious; she appeared in fourteen films during 1925.

The term “flapper” was first applied to adolescents in Great Britain, but in the United States it became the most prevalent way of referencing the controversial “modern girl,” no matter what her age or social class.⁴⁰ In terms of sexual subjectivity, flappers were often portrayed as seeking to abolish the sexual double standard. They were no longer interested in marriage but promiscuity. Philosopher Will Durant declared that history would look back on women in the 1920s and observe how marriage, “[an] institution which had lasted ten thousand years was destroyed in a generation.”⁴¹ Historian Paula Fass has noted: “Gazing at the young women of the period, the traditionalist saw the end of American civilization as he had known it.”⁴²

Those who were more liberal considered the flapper as relatively harmless, a young woman in energetic pursuit of a good time who dented middle-class norms of feminine refinement and sexual restraint but did not destroy them. This was the image that movies tried to cultivate as Hollywood eagerly exploited the flapper as a controversial model of modern femininity associated with excesses of consumption, energy, and playful sensuality. Hollywood’s take on youthful, transgressive flapper femininity emerged in the 1920s in a remarkably resilient film cycle starring a new generation of female stars. The flapper was a central character in almost five dozen feature films made from 1921 through 1930, such as *Nice People* (1922), *Prodigal Daughters* (1923), *Sinners in Silk* (1924), *Flapper Wives* (1924), *The Painted Flapper* (1924), *The Adventurous Sex* (1925), *Wild, Wild Susan* (1925), *We Moderns* (1925), *The Exalted Flapper* (1927), *IT* (1927), *Modern Daughters* (1927), *Our Dancing Daughters* (1928), and *Bare Knees* (1928), among others.

On screen, flapper heroines flirted but almost never appeared to relinquish their pre-marital chastity. Endings reassured audiences that the heroine could still be reined in by a good man. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* described this overworked formula in its review of Bow’s *The Adventurous Sex*: “The reckless and beautiful heroine whose mind and heart are in reality quite as pure and sweet as her aghast mother’s is saved just in time for a happy ending from paying for her recklessness with death and disgrace.”⁴³ In spite of such strategies of sexual containment, many believed that this type of film was a veritable sex manual for young people. In his study of the impact of films on American youth, Herbert Blumer quoted one adolescent among many who admitted to imitating Clara Bow: “I have learned from the movies how to be a flirt, and I have found out that at parties and elsewhere the coquette is the one who enjoys herself the most.”⁴⁴ In “What the Films are Doing to Young America,” sociologist Edward Alsworth Ross wrote that movies were making young women (as well as young men) more “sex-wise, sex-excited, and sex-absorbed than [...] any generation of which we have knowledge.”⁴⁵

Morality in Transition,” *Current History* 27 (1927): 33–40; Edward Sapir, “The Discipline of Sex,” *American Mercury* 16 (1929): 413–420.

³⁹ Marjory Adams, “One Screen Star Who Won’t Grow Up: Clara Bow as a Pirate,” *Boston Daily Globe*, March 22, 1925, B5.

⁴⁰ On very young flappers in Britain, see Sally Mitchell, *The New Girl: Girls’ Culture in England 1880–1915* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 182–184.

⁴¹ Will Durant, “The Modern Woman: Philosophers Grow Dizzy as she Passes,” *Century Magazine* 113 (February 1927): 421.

⁴² Paula Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 2.

⁴³ Mae Tinee, “Flapper Flaps for Film Fans in This Drama,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 13, 1925, 19. Mae Tinee (a play on “matinee”) was the nom de plume assumed by all staff film reviewers for this newspaper.

⁴⁴ Herbert Blumer, *Movies and Conduct* (New York: Macmillan, 1933), 52.

⁴⁵ Edward Alsworth Ross, *World Drift* (New York: Century, 1928), 179.

Even when presented as actions of the middle- or upper-class flapper, as in *Black Oxen* (1923), *Wine* (1924), *My Lady of Whims* (1926), *Dancing Mothers* (1926), and *The Wild Party* (1929), the precocious flirtations of Bow's young screen flapper were imbued with erotic authenticity and authority. The *Los Angeles Times* reviewed her performance as a flapper in the college life picture *The Plastic Age* (1925) and dryly noted that "[she] seems remarkably fitted for the part," but a review of the film in the *New York Times* gives us a more palpable sense of her sex appeal: "She has all the lissomeness of Lya De Putti and eyes that would drag any youngster away from his books. [...] she knows how to use eyes, shoulders, and all the rest of her tiny self in the most effective manner. She radiates an elfin sensuousness."⁴⁶

Perhaps among the reasons that audiences and reviewers found Bow's sexy flapper so compelling and convincing was that Bow transferred traits perceived to be stereotypically attributed to working-class sexuality to her on-screen fictional "betters." Through acting savvy as well as charisma, with turbo-charged physical vitality and irresistible "cuteness," Bow softened the threat of her characterizations of "flaming youth" without sacrificing erotic charge.⁴⁷ This was something that other screen flappers, including Joan Crawford, another working-class transplant to Hollywood, rarely managed.⁴⁸

In one of her first interviews, printed in September 1924, Clara Bow talked to Alma Whitaker of the *Los Angeles Times*. Whitaker praised Clara as "a jolly, natural, untutored, impish little hoodlum and engaging roughneck, one of those glowing creatures that rise up out of drab neighborhoods every so often to enchant the world."⁴⁹ As would become common in newspaper and fan magazine coverage of Bow, Whitaker infantilizes the actress, describing her "giggles," "gurgles," and "bubbles;" as infantile as this rhetoric may make Bow seem, the actress also displays the aggressive sexuality commonly attributed to youthful flappers. To Whitaker, this combination makes for an amusing display. She notes that off-screen the adolescent actress loves being the proverbial "baby vamp" who enjoys the challenge of vamping any and all men: "When the hapless victim is scared into speechlessness she gurgles with naughty delight and tries another." Whitaker is charmed by Bow and declares: "I hope she won't ever try to be a lady!"⁵⁰

Whitaker's 1924 interview with Bow set the parameters for the ongoing discursive representation of Bow as childish but possessed of a precocious, untrammelled sexuality aligned with stereotypes of the licentious working-class woman. Sexually precocious flappers of all classes were exhibiting attributes long associated with disreputable, transgressive working-class females, including indiscriminate promiscuity and public vulgarity (profanity, suggestive dancing, smoking, drunkenness, daring exposures of the body). While it is recognized that flappers punctured cultural codes of middle-class femininity, their dissolving of divisions of class in terms of sexual mores has been largely overlooked. However, Whitaker points to a convergence between Bow's flapperesque sexual provocation of men and her being a "roughneck," a term usually applied to working-class men. In 1927, Bow starred in *Rough House Rosie*; a trailer for this lost film

⁴⁶ "The Plastic Age Breaks Record," *Los Angeles Times*, September 6, 1925, 17; "The Screen," *New York Times*, July 19, 1926, 13.

⁴⁷ On Bow's savvy understanding of her various audiences and how she used acting techniques to appeal to them, see the account based on recollections of director Clarence Badger in Joshua Zeitz, *Flapper* (New York: Crown, 2006), 242.

⁴⁸ On the different acting styles Bow and her contemporary Colleen Moore employed to bring the flapper to life on screen in distinctly different ways, see Sara Ross, "Good Little Bad Girls: Controversy and the Flapper Comedienne," *Film History* 13 (2001): 400–423.

⁴⁹ Alma Whitaker, "A Dangerous Little Devil is Clara, Impish, Appealing, But Oh, How She Can Act!" *Los Angeles Times*, September 7, 1924, B13.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

advertised her character as “The girl who got her men by treating ‘em rough.” Bow plays Rosie O’Reilly, a cabaret dancer who incorporates boxing into a dance act with her “six roughnecks” (i.e., chorus girls). In 1928, Whitaker sharpened the negative class implications of her assessment of Bow in 1924, claiming that then, she thought the actress “bizarre, crude,” with Bow appearing “awkward, a little roughneck trying to act ladylike.”⁵¹

Throughout her screen career, Bow rejected the illusion of elevated class origins often imposed on female stars. A newspaper reporter noted of her in 1930: “She does not affect the manners of a great actress. She is Clara Gordon Bow, was christened that way and is what she is and proud of it.”⁵² In her memoir, former film flapper Colleen Moore discusses the attempt of Adela Rogers St. Johns and screenwriter Hope Loring to “remake” Bow. Moore recalls St. Johns inviting Bow to a party attended by “dignified and important people” whose intellectual conversation after dinner was interrupted by Bow, who told “the dirtiest story imaginable, with such perfect pantomime nothing was left to the imagination.” Moore claims that hostess St. Johns fled the room in embarrassment.⁵³ Stories like these were not shared by fan magazines and newspapers, but it was acknowledged that Bow was socially shunned by other stars. The reasons for her exclusion were cited as everything from being too beautiful to her “outlandish clothes and her outlandish publicity.”⁵⁴ Ruth Waterbury told readers of *Motion Picture Magazine* in late 1929: “The only trouble was that Clara has climbed higher than she knows.”⁵⁵

Heigh-Ho, Another Bow Boyfriend

Bow’s active “private” sexuality, veiled by the discretion of fan magazines and the protection of the studio system, became a symbol of her flapper sexual independence and proved central in the discursive attempt to whet public curiosity in and fascination with the actress. At the same time, reportage on her many broken marital engagements and hints that she treated sex as recreational, also became central to the process of judging and shaming her for her off-screen sexuality. In *Photoplay* in 1926, a caption for a photo of Bow notes: “She plays the reckless generation – on and off the screen.”⁵⁶ The caption then directly refers to her ill-fated erotic entanglement with Robert Savage, former Yale student and scion of a wealthy Eastern family. Savage half-heartedly attempted to commit suicide with a safety razor after his failed attempt to force Bow out of her car and into the courthouse to marry him. As a result of the suicide attempt, he was subjected to a state sanity hearing.

An article by John P. Miles distributed nationwide over wire services described Bow at the hearing. She showed, he said, signs of being “terribly embarrassed,” blushing and then wriggling “into her huge red fur so that it hid all but her eyes” when she heard the eye witness testimony of a male friend of Savage’s. That friend testified that Clara and Bob had such a strenuous petting

⁵¹ Alma Whitaker, “Tired of Being ‘It’ Girl,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 2, 1928, B9.

⁵² “Film Redhead Finally Says She is Here: Clara Bow Entertains Informally in her Suite at Baker,” *Dallas Morning News*, June 17, 1930, 10.

⁵³ Colleen Moore, *Silent Star* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1968), 147–148. Adela Rogers St. Johns recounts her failed attempt to improve Bow in Rogers St. Johns, “Clara Bow: The Playgirl of Hollywood,” *Liberty Magazine*, no. 30 (August 3, 1929): 16–18.

⁵⁴ On Bow’s shunning, see Dorothy Manners, “Looking Them Over,” *Movie Classic* 3, no. 5 (January 1933): 51; on Bow’s cursing, spitting, gum chewing, and socializing with studio workers, see Brundidge, *Twinkle, Twinkle, Movie Star!*, 6.

⁵⁵ Ruth Waterbury, “Why Clara Bow Can’t Stay in Love,” *Motion Picture Magazine* 6, no. 1 (December 1929): 62–63, 122–123.

⁵⁶ “Clara Bow photograph,” *Photoplay* 30, no. 4 (September 1926): 84.

session that the porch hammock on which they sat almost gave way, and that Bow “kept on kissing him [Savage] so hard that his lips were sore for two days.”⁵⁷ Bow’s own testimony revealed that she was engaged to another man (the actor Gilbert Roland) at the very same time she was making out with Savage, thus confirming that the little flapper was careless in her affections if not promiscuous. The court declared Savage to be sane, but Bow judged him to be poor material to be either a lover or a husband. Miles judged the trial to be a “droll comedy.”⁵⁸ Ruth Waterbury later speculated in *New Movie* that Bow “flappered around with young Savage” because he “probably represented class to her.”⁵⁹

However comic or pathetic, the Savage episode was proof that Bow’s sexual appeal to men was authentic, powerful beyond the confines of her screen image or as Adela Rogers St. Johns noted, “for once the truth does not detract from the public’s cherished illusion.”⁶⁰ The *Chicago Daily Tribune* crudely characterized Bow’s erotic lure in terms suggesting the class disdain and disgust that underscored much of the coverage of her, especially after 1930: the actress was “just a jug of syrup to the men who flocked around her like flies.”⁶¹ Bow’s frequent transgression of the boundaries of verbal discretion also marked her as low class, as hopelessly vulgar in her lack of proper restraint in discussing matters such as sex. In September of 1930, *Motion Picture Magazine* called her “the most difficult player to keep properly muzzled that Hollywood has ever seen. [...] If you get within listening radius of her you can hardly avoid hearing intimate and spicy details about her life, her family and her love affairs.”⁶² Newspaper headlines already had demonstrated the truth in this claim when Bow bolted to Dallas, Texas that summer to confront the wife of the married lover she was eager to discuss but refused to name in 1928.⁶³

Bow’s trip to Dallas in June of 1930 became known from headlines across the country as the “Love Baum” trip. It inspired the socially superior writers in newspapers and fan magazines to comment knowingly on the actress’s impulsivity, stupidity, and vulgarity. The aim of Bow’s trip to Dallas, unauthorized by her studio, was to confront the wife of her former lover, Dr. Earl Pearson regarding a \$56,000 payment that Paramount made out of Bow’s studio trust fund to prevent the actress from being named as co-respondent in Mrs. Pearson’s divorce suit against her husband, a physician Bow had met in Los Angeles. Unlike most stars in the 1920s, Bow managed (with the help of a lawyer) to negotiate a contract with no morals clause when she was at the top of her box-office popularity. Without the leverage of a morals clause to ensure her good behavior, Paramount hoped that Bow might be controlled by holding in trust bonus money she would be awarded for films completed and bad publicity avoided.⁶⁴

A spate of very bad publicity for Bow started inconspicuously on June 16, 1930, in an elevator at the Baker Hotel in Dallas. A local Paramount employee spotted Clara, and she responded when addressed by name. Once the press arrived at the Baker, Bow claimed during an interview

⁵⁷ John P. Miles, “‘Caveman’ Lover is Sane Despite Attempted Suicide: Clara Annoyed as Love Scene is Pictured,” *Atlanta Constitution*, June 15, 1926, 3.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Waterbury, “Why Clara Bow Can’t Stay in Love,” 122.

⁶⁰ Rogers St. Johns, “The Playgirl of Hollywood,” 20.

⁶¹ Mae Tinee, “Is That You, Clara? Just a Jug of Syrup to the Men Who Flocked Around Like Flies,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 19, 1933, D2.

⁶² Gladys Hall, “The Seven Deadly Sins of Hollywood,” *Motion Picture Magazine* 40, no. 2 (September 1930): 28.

⁶³ Ruth Biery, “The Love Life of Clara Bow,” *Motion Picture Magazine* 36, no. 4 (November 1928): 106.

⁶⁴ On Bow’s contract negotiations resulting in a no morals clause, see Stenn, *Clara Bow*, 197. The lack of a morals clause in her contract may be related to the huge financial loss Paramount feared it would suffer at the box-office if they fired her or to the hope that her great popularity meant she could weather any but the worst of any transgressions that could not be concealed from the public.

that she was visiting friends, but a wily Dallas reporter tricked the actress into revealing the real reason for her visit.⁶⁵ Called back to Hollywood by Paramount, Bow instead fled to New York and the arms of current fiancé Harry Richman. One newspaper reported that Bow feared the reaction of Will Hays. When finally disembarking the train in Los Angeles, she denied all the statements she had made in Dallas.⁶⁶

Leonard Hall characterized the notorious “Love Baum” trip in *Photoplay* as “a ferociously unhappy and miserable time for all concerned.”⁶⁷ It cemented the perception nationwide that Bow was not only impulsive but self-destructively authentic, bound to the habits and values of her underclass upbringing. That upbringing had been laid bare in a three-part article on Bow’s life featured in *Photoplay* in early 1928. Based on interviews with Bow, Adela Rogers St. Johns narrated the star’s life from the first-person perspective of the actress. Although not the first time the incident was discussed in Bow’s publicity, attention was drawn to Bow’s mother attempting, in a fit of insanity, to kill her daughter; this shocking event, as well as the damage done to Bow by not having a normal, healthy mother, would be discussed again and again in stories about the actress, no matter what the central focus.⁶⁸ However, fan letters proclaimed Bow’s life story to be inspirational rather than depressing and disturbing.⁶⁹ A letter to the editor from a woman who claimed to have known Bow stated: “I’m proud and glad to say that Clara has told the truth;” another letter declared the series had revealed the actress to be “a more worthy example to be copied than is found in many of our best church audiences!”⁷⁰

Bow’s rise to stardom was regarded by her fans as a triumph of talent, hard work, and genuineness. She was regarded as authentic, a star who appealed in her refusal of pretense and snobbish, “highhat” behavior. Fans were credited with sending her 45,000 letters a month at the peak of her popularity, and they were frequently praised for their unwavering loyalty. Samuel Richard Mook noted in 1932 in *Picture Play*: “Clara Bow was a star the public made, and the very way they stuck by that girl in the face of everything was a revelation of loyalty unsurpassed.”⁷¹ Yet, the stigmatype of poor white “trash” attached to Bow as an “Other” would also stick. A newspaper story in July 1929 related the story of Clara’s escape from her mother’s butcher knife and then judgmentally declared, “[a] girl cannot come out of a background like that and be normal.”⁷² Bow transmogrified her childhood trauma and hurt emotions into powerful acting (as was frequently suggested), but the authenticity and power of her best screen performances could not

⁶⁵ “Film Redhead Finally Says She is Here,” 10.

⁶⁶ “Clara Bow Ordered Home,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 20, 1930, A1–A2. On Bow’s changing account of the reason for her Dallas trip, see “Clara’s Back! But What a Change – From Dallas,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 5, 1930, A1.

⁶⁷ Leonard Hall, “What About Clara Bow?,” *Photoplay* 38, no. 5 (October 1930): 60.

⁶⁸ Clara Bow as told to Adela Rogers St. Johns, “My Life Story,” in *Photoplay* of February 1928, March 1928, and April 1928. The earliest account of the attempt on Bow’s life by her mother may be Jim Tully’s passing mention of it in “Clara Bow: The Astonishing Life Story of a Popular Screen Star,” *Pictorial Review*, no. 29 (November 1927): 60; Ruth Biery claims that the story of the mother’s attack was made up “so Clara’s early life would sound more dramatic for publicity purposes,” in Biery, “Clara Speaks for Herself,” *Modern Screen* (August 1934): 108. Bow’s biographer, David Stenn, reports the attempted murder of Bow by her mother was confirmed by extensive psychological analysis of Bow at the prestigious Institute of Living in 1949–1950. See Stenn, *Clara Bow*, 264.

⁶⁹ On negative reactions from film folks as well as fans to Bow’s life story, see Pamela Hutchinson, “*Photoplay* Magazine: The Birth of Celebrity Culture,” *The Guardian*, January 26, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/filmblog/2016/jan/26/photoplay-magazine-hollywood-film-studios-stars-celebrity-culture>.

⁷⁰ Louise Murphy, “Clara Hears from a Friend,” [letter to] “Brickbats and Bouquets,” *Photoplay* 34, no. 1 (June 1928): 10.

⁷¹ Samuel Richard Mook, “Why Stars are Stars,” *Picture Play* 36, no. 4 (June 1932): 20.

⁷² Mayme Ober Peak, “Cupid Snares Clara Bow,” *The Hartford Courant*, July 21, 1929, E3.

compare to the public spectacle of her “private” lacks and excesses, also perceived as rooted in her working-classness.

In autumn of 1930, Bow refused to pay blackmail money to her former secretary Daisy Devoe after firing her. Bow then went to the authorities. Devoe was investigated by the District Attorney’s office and a grand jury entered an indictment against Devoe on thirty-six counts of embezzlement. The trial began in January of 1931. The *Los Angeles Times* made Bow sound foolish, even stupid, because she “hired a beauty parlor girl as a private secretary and gave her access to her home, bank account, and most intimate correspondence.”⁷³ On the stand, Daisy was cool as a cucumber as she described Bow as dirty, drunk, violent, addicted to gambling, completely lacking in good taste or a sense of responsibility, and, of course, hypersexual. At the insistence of Devoe’s attorney, love letters and telegrams to Bow from various men (including the actors Gary Cooper and Harry Richman) were read into the record on the first day of trial. With her testimony covered on page one of newspapers across the country, Daisy exposed Bow as a low-life hussy, a self-indulgent, stupid, tasteless, working-class woman unworthy to be admired or emulated. Bow was described as representing the compounding of moral failings, financial chaos, and sexual excess that could be expected to accrue when a member of the undeserving poor was suddenly vaulted into the ranks of the rich and famous. Yet fans of Bow may have not been completely shocked by these sensational claims, for not long before Devoe’s trial, Cecil Belfrage, a fan magazine writer unflinchingly sympathetic to Bow, discreetly admitted of the star, “Clara simply isn’t the type of person who was intended to run a thirty-five-hundred-dollar-a-week life. She is almost entirely lacking in the subtle social arts.”⁷⁴

As scandal enveloped Bow in late 1930 and early 1931, the inadequacy of her mother (described as invalid or insane) became the governing trope of numerous articles. Some were written in the form of the “open letter” or framed as friendly advice to help Bow save her career and sanity. These accounts, most often in fan magazines, usually took the opportunity to enumerate Bow’s past missteps, and inevitably speculated as to what kind of woman the actress might have been had she had a good mother and a proper upbringing, as Adele Whitely Fletcher does in her “Open Letter to Clara Bow:” “Had your mother lived she might have saved you some of your mistakes.”⁷⁵ Stories of deprived, suffering, work-burdened girlhood were used before and after Clara Bow to generate sympathy for Hollywood actresses, like Mary Pickford or Joan Crawford, but these stories almost always centered on a narrative of transformation in which the actress’s innate middle-class refinement is waiting to be released by the opportunities of stardom. In this formula, the family of the future star is often portrayed as unwavering in its support of her. Even if lacking money, it is never lacking in culture or love. At the center of the family is a good mother who guides her daughter to motion picture success through her loving but disciplinary presence.⁷⁶

In contrast, the dominant discursive narrative representing Bow situates her as a victim, a child of the undeserving poor lacking in guidance and who, in spite of her acting talent and astonishing work ethic, seemed incapable of transforming herself to meet the standards of her new class. As Marquis Busby remarked in 1927: “Of all the stars in Hollywood[,] fame has brought

⁷³ “Affairs’ of Clara Bow Exposed by Miss De Voe,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 15, 1931, A1.

⁷⁴ Cecil Belfrage, “From Where I Sit,” *Motion Picture Classic* 31, no. 1 (August 1930): 10.

⁷⁵ Obviously prompted by the “Love Baum” trip, Adele Whitely Fletcher also condemns Bow as “very stupid” for seeing a married man. See Fletcher, “An Open Letter to Clara Bow,” *Modern Screen* 1, no. 1 (November 1930): 41.

⁷⁶ A typical approach to actresses and their mothers is Adele Whitely Fletcher, “Beauty – Brains – or Luck?” *Photoplay* 38, no. 7 (September 1930): 64–65, 140–141. On this trope in fan magazines, see Gaylyn Studlar, “Whose Baby Are You? Mother/Daughter Discourse in the Star Images of Mary Pickford and Joan Crawford,” in *Motherhood Misconceived*, ed. Heather Addison, Mary Kate Goodwin-Kelly, Elaine Roth (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009), 81–110.

about the least change to Clara Bow.”⁷⁷ Bow could be admired as sincere and unpretentious off screen and as fans’ most beloved proletariat on screen, but without change, she was doomed to fail in her new station and class status.⁷⁸ In one of the most pointed denunciations of Bow in the wake of her disastrous trip to Dallas, *Photoplay* editor James R. Quirk insinuated that she was the kind of irresponsible star drawn from the working class who had endangered Hollywood in the days before Will Hays came on board with the MPPDA. Bow, he said, was “the last, or at least we hope she is the last, of the type of motion picture actress who disregards all laws of convention, and hopes to get away with it. A shopgirl who has been lifted by mere pulchritude and impish personality, from nowhere to worldwide fame [...] it was inevitable that the time would come when she would bring destruction upon herself.”⁷⁹

Around the same time as Quirk’s editorial was written, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that Bow was being warned to “watch her step” by Paramount lawyers because of highly publicized claims and counter claims over a thirteen-thousand-dollar gambling debt Bow incurred in Nevada.⁸⁰ Yet, at the same time, Paramount was working to strategically manage Bow’s latest transgressions against public morality by incorporating references to them into her films. After the “Love Baum” trip, Paramount considered remaking Bow’s silent film, *Hula* (1927) as a talkie retitled to “Oh, Doctor!” with her character pursuing a married man as in the original, but changing his profession from engineer to doctor.⁸¹ *No Limit* (1931) has Bow’s character repeating the star’s headline-drawing assertion that a casino attempted to defraud her of thousands of dollars after leading her to believe her betting chips were each worth fifty cents.⁸² Paramount and later Fox studio sought to rhyme on-screen romances in Bow’s films with her well-known sexual adventures off-screen. Men to whom she was engaged but never married, Gary Cooper and Gilbert Roland, were cast as her leading men in *City Streets* (1931) and *Call Her Savage*. Bow was placed in the double bind of working in a studio system eager to exploit her as the exciting exemplar of a controversial mode of female sexuality at the same time that it sought to secure its respectability. This resulted in contradictory strategies: public warnings against her further transgression against standards of public morality were counterpointed by the exploitation of those same violations by direct references or more amorphous allusions to them in her films.

⁷⁷ Marquis Busby, “All Flappers Don’t Flap,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 29, 1972, 13. On how her childhood “not only poverty but terror and gloom and despair” marked her, see Faith Baldwin, “She actually KILLED it!” *Modern Screen* 5, no. 3 (February 1933): 27, 96.

⁷⁸ Habitus is defined by Pierre Bourdieu as “embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so forgotten as history – the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product.” While the concept is useful in understanding Bow, it should not obscure the role of Bow’s agency. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1992), 56.

⁷⁹ James R. Quirk, “Close-Ups and Long-Shots,” *Photoplay* 38, no. 3 (August 1930): 29–30.

⁸⁰ “Clara Warned to Watch Step: Studio Lawyer and her Own Cite Contract Danger,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 26, 1930, A1. The Quirk editorial appeared in the December issue, but the fan magazine would have gone to press at least six weeks to eight prior to its appearance.

⁸¹ Stenn, *Clara Bow*, 196.

⁸² On the gambling controversy and *No Limit*, see Cal York, “News! – Views! – Gossip! Of Stars and Studios,” *Photoplay* 39, no. 1 (December 1930): 46. On studio discussion of *Hula* as a talkie, see Stenn, *Clara Bow*, 202. Bow’s comeback film for Fox, *Call Her Savage*, incorporated startling material appearing to reference Bow’s life, including the porno-tabloid sensational claim made in *The Coast Reporter* that she had sex with a Great Dane given to her by fiancé Harry Richman. In *Call Her Savage*, Nasa (Bow) first appears as the teenage wild child of a wealthy Texas rancher and his unhappy wife. An extended scene shows Nasa playfully wrestling on the floor of the family home with a Great Dane. Years later, forced into prostitution to feed her baby, Nasa returns to her apartment to find her child burned to death in a fire, a scene that echoes Bow’s descriptions of the death of a childhood friend, “Johnny,” in a tenement fire. See Clara Bow as told to Adela Rogers St. Johns, “My Life Story,” [First Installment], *Photoplay* 33, no. 3 (February 1928): 104–105.

Conclusion

Unlike Theda Bara, Clara Bow's authenticity was not questioned, but it still proved to be a problem for Hollywood. Cinematically and discursively, Hollywood sought to authenticate stars in terms that might bind audiences into greater affective investment with the star as a person who might be regarded as more than an image. In spite of Bow's success at the box-office, rhetorical strategies at work in publicity and promotion played an important role in constructing Clara Bow as a public figure. Those strategies suggest a deep ambivalence about Bow's cultural meaning in an era of changing sexual mores as well as uncertainty about her value as a woman of the lower-class elevated to a higher one via the celebrity of movie stardom.

The case of Clara Bow as a celebrity demonstrates the instability that can grow around a working-class female star who appears to be unable to discard or unwilling to disguise her identification with her original class. Hollywood elites as well as popular press writers often shamed Clara Bow for her working-class authenticity marked by sexual indiscretion and a failure to improve, i.e., to embrace middle-class appearances and values. However, a fan letter that Bow kept as one of the few from among the thousands upon thousands that she received suggests a very different response to Bow:

I am just a small girl but I fell in love with you the first time I saw you [...]. I love you more each time I see you. Mother says if you ever come to Pittsburgh in person I can have you up for dinner (will you come). We are not rich but mother says you are not high hat and wouldn't mind our modest means. Gee how I would love to see you in person. Your little Friend Virginia Lester.⁸³

Some might see this letter expressing a child's "love" for a movie star and her mother's reassurance regarding acceptance of their class merely as proof of the power of Hollywood to manufacture star "authenticity." But the existence of Virginia's letter, kept for over thirty years by Clara Bow, can be read also as confirmation of the complex process of negotiating class, authenticity, and mediated celebrity, both for Hollywood stars and their fans. Transgressing the imbricated cultural, moral, and gendered norms for Hollywood's construction of glamorous female stars as respectable models of identification for middle- and working-class girls and women, Clara Bow's stardom raises important issues regarding the oppressive persistence of class hierarchy, the gendered embodiment of class, and the cultural role of social mobility. In this respect, Hollywood's problem with Clara Bow as an elite but working-class female star is illuminated by sociologist Stephanie Lawler. As she reminds us, "class positions cannot just be taken up and left, even if one has the means to do so: class is embedded in people's history."⁸⁴

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⁸³ Virginia Lester, undated letter, f74, box 3, "Fan Letters," Clara Bow Papers, Margaret Herrick Library, Douglas Fairbanks Study Center, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Beverly Hills, California.

⁸⁴ Stephanie Lawler, "'Getting Out and Getting Away': Women's Narratives of Class Mobility," *Feminist Review*, no. 63 (Autumn 1999): 6.

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Moving Beyond the Naturalized Whiteness of Star Studies: Analyzing Hollywood Stardom in Light of American Cultural Politics

Abstract | The paper examines the social identity of individuals in the top tiers of Hollywood stardom alongside historical and cultural factors that have created a naturalized connection between whiteness and American movie stardom. The discussion considers the cultural implications of actors' physiognomies, stars' function as commercial assets, and Hollywood norms that reflect the perspective of dominant social groups. It proposes that research on the cultural significance of performers who represent the heterogeneity of American society, together with work that foregrounds the conventional whiteness of movie stardom, will generate a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of film performers' cultural appeal.

Keywords | Hollywood stardom – whiteness – American racial politics – representational politics

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Introduction

Transnational studies regularly analyze film and media stars associated with diverse social identities. Martin Shingler's *Star Studies: A Critical Guide* (2012) illuminates film stardom through an analysis of stars in British, Chinese, European, Indian, and American cinemas.¹ *Revisiting Star Studies: Cultures, Themes and Methods* (2017), edited by Sabrina Qiong Yu and Guy Austin, offers a cosmopolitan look at stardom with chapters on Chinese, Indian, Mexican, Italian, and American stars, and inquiries that reach beyond their appearances in mainstream films.² Yet in studies of stars from western industrialized countries, the nation often continues to mean "the white nation [and] at the level of major stardom whiteness prevails."³ In response, Arthur Knight, Paul McDonald, Benjamin Woo, and other scholars highlight the whiteness of film stardom and media fan culture in America in particular. In doing so, they challenge writing that allows the whiteness of Hollywood stardom to be the unexamined norm.⁴

¹ Martin Shingler, *Star Studies: A Critical Guide* (London: British Film Institute, 2012).

² Sabrina Qiong Yu and Guy Austin, eds., *Revisiting Star Studies: Cultures, Themes and Methods* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017).

³ Ginette Vincendeau, *Stars and Stardom in French Cinema* (London: Continuum, 2000), 41.

⁴ See Arthur Knight, "Star Dances: African American Constructions of Stardom, 1925–1960," in *Classic Hollywood, Classic Whiteness*, ed. Daniel Bernardi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001); Paul McDonald, *Hollywood Stardom* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013); Benjamin Woo, "Inside the Invisible Bag of Holding: Whiteness and Media Fandom," in *The Routledge Companion to Media Fandom*, ed. Melissa A. Click and Suzanne Scott (New York: Routledge, 2018).

Building on their work, this discussion looks at the implicit relationships between actors' inherent physiognomies, the potential impressions about the social types they might embody, and the American film industry's self-censorship policies that are designed to accommodate powerful constituencies. To denaturalize the prevailing whiteness of American movie stars, the essay contrasts patterns in the studio era and contemporary Hollywood stardom with the heterogeneous demographic makeup of the U.S. population. The analysis examines factors that have given rise to the "empirical" and "ideological" whiteness of Hollywood stardom, from the predominance of white male critics to America's history as a nation in which non-Hispanic whites and particularly white men have laid claim to personhood.⁵ Exploring ways to move beyond the whiteness of star studies as a field of inquiry, the discussion covers research that shows how "stars embody, incarnate, or personify social groups or historical moments."⁶ It recognizes that attention to diverse stars and social groups leads to "broadening and specializing the meanings of 'star' and 'stardom,'"⁷ and it identifies the value of foregrounding, rather than naturalizing, the white, male identity of most major film stars, and of disentangling "popular" American identity from its equation with whiteness.

Stardom and Performance

Hollywood stars are an integral component of American popular culture and the mainstream American film industry. At the same time, there is also a fundamental connection between acting and film stardom. As Paul McDonald points out, whatever "factors contribute to the production of stardom, film stars are only stars because they perform in films," engaging in "performance specifically concerned with the representation of dramatic character through the media of the voice and body."⁸ Star studies have long explored the relationship between stars and their characterizations. Echoing a perspective Barry King outlined in 1985, scholars have considered questions of impersonation, occasions when stars adjust their physical and vocal expression to embody specific characters distinct from their other film roles, and the process of personification, which involves a certain continuity across a range of performances and reflects iterations of a star's off-screen persona.⁹ Christine Geraghty adds context to the distinction between impersonation (embodying a character) and personification (apparently playing oneself) by noting that prestige stars are known for their acting in auteur films while genre stars are required to deliver performances that repeat gestures and expressions associated with certain characters or character types.¹⁰ McDonald has also reframed the binary between impersonation and personification. He explains: "As all acting brings together the actor with the character or role, no act can ever be entirely attributed to the role/character or the actor. Rather, impersonation and personification describe degrees of balance between the elements that make up the enacted figure."¹¹ In addition, McDonald amends the idea that personification reflects an actor's limitations by illustrating the

⁵ Woo, "Inside the Invisible Bag of Holding," 246–247.

⁶ Shingler, *Star Studies*, 183.

⁷ Knight, "Star Dances," 390.

⁸ McDonald, *Hollywood Stardom*, 182.

⁹ Barry King, "Articulating Stardom," *Screen* 26, no. 5 (September 1985): 27–50.

¹⁰ Christine Geraghty, "Re-examining Stardom: Texts, Bodies, and Performance," in *Reinventing Film Studies*, ed. Christine Gledhill and Linda Williams (London: Arnold, 2000), 183–201.

¹¹ McDonald, *Hollywood Stardom*, 201.

crucial role of consciously crafted “brand” elements in star performances that feature signature smiles, walks, head tilts, and so on.¹²

Contemporary scholarship recognizes that Hollywood stars are valued for their acting abilities and for the physical and vocal choices that distinguish their brand. Research at the intersections of star studies, industry studies, and critical race theory also allows one to consider why certain acclaimed actors do not have the visibility that leads critics to identify the signature star features of their performances. This work can shed light on why an actor like Julia Roberts is a “branded” A-list star, while Viola Davis, who has “triple crown” acclaim (Tony, Emmy, Oscar), is not. Davis won a Tony for Best Featured Actress for the production of August Wilson’s *King Hedley II* in 2001 and a Tony Award for Best Actress for the 2010 revival of Wilson’s *Fences*. In 2015, Davis became the first black artist to receive the Emmy Award for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Drama Series. In 2017, she won the Oscar for Best Supporting Actress for the film version of *Fences* (Washington, 2016). In addition to other awards, Davis has a presence in American popular culture. In 2017, her star was added to the Walk of Fame in Hollywood and she was named an icon in *Time* magazine’s issue on the year’s 100 Most Influential People. Yet Davis, like some other performers, remains known for her acting abilities and is not seen by producers or consumers as a top Hollywood star.

Stephen Heath’s observations about the “presence of people” in film suggest some productive ways to consider why some actors reach top-tier star status while others do not.¹³ He identifies multiple categories of presence, including agents (with narrative functions), characters (with narrative functions and qualities that contribute to mood or theme), star images (created by film appearances and publicity), and figures (emblematic of filmmaking sectors or eras). He highlights the category of performers’ expressions and gestures, and the embodiment of culturally specific gestures, poses and gaits. Heath also identifies two other crucial registers. One involves persons, who are distinguished by their inherent appearances and speaking voices. The other concerns the social type most easily associated with a performer’s physical and vocal qualities.¹⁴

These multiple registers function simultaneously to shape audience interpretations, with perhaps one or more element playing a more dominant role in engaging someone’s attention at any given moment. Research on stardom and screen performance reveals that the categories of person and perceived social type are strongly linked. For example, Andrew Higson finds that audiences do not encounter actors’ gestures and expressions in the abstract but instead as details bound together with an actor’s “physical type (e.g., long face, large body, high-pitched voice...) [which calls] up specific cultural connotations.”¹⁵ Costume, makeup, post-production sound, and computer generated effects can and do change the way audiences perceive a performer’s body and voice, and their subsequent impressions about the cultural connotations of the character being portrayed. At the same time, as John O. Thompson noted long ago, the effects of an actor’s physiognomy and performance choices become especially visible when one applies a commutation test to consider the implications of another performer playing the part.¹⁶

Equally significant, the cultural connotations that audience members perceive as associated with an actor’s body and voice will vary, depending on their biases and personal and cultural experiences. Sergei Eisenstein observed early on that theatre and film productions of all types

¹² *Ibid.*, 201–212 and 260–267.

¹³ Stephen Heath, *Questions of Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 178.

¹⁴ For a gloss on Heath’s categories, see Cynthia Baron and Sharon Marie Carnicke, *Reframing Screen Performance* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 68–78.

¹⁵ Andrew Higson, “Film Acting and Independent Cinema,” in *Star Texts: Image and Performance in Film and Television*, ed. Jeremy G. Butler (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 159.

¹⁶ John O. Thompson, “Acting: Screen Acting and the Commutation Test,” *Screen* 19, no. 2 (July 1978): 55–70.

grapple with this psychological and social reality as they use actors' faces "to create first and foremost an impression."¹⁷ Furthermore, as he highlights, the practice of using a performer's physiognomy and voice to create an impression about a character's moral qualities or social status is never objective, but instead depends on "the subjective impression of an observer," which includes the people who write the narrative, design the production, embody the characters, and participate as audience members.¹⁸ Acting teacher Stella Adler makes a parallel point, for in her view "socially determined perceptions" are what lead a person (writer, director, actor, or audience member) to see someone as a biased stereotype or as an accurate social type.¹⁹

These insights are pertinent to research concerning the factors that shape both producers' and consumers' subjective impressions about Hollywood stars, for performers' physical appearance, and the cultural connotations audiences can read into their bodies, figure into actors' star status.

Person, Social Type, and Industry Self-Censorship

McDonald points out that "Hollywood stardom is [both] a cultural and commercial phenomenon."²⁰ Hollywood stars have "cultural significance" because their performances offer representations of "human identity," and at the same time, they are "assets deployed in the film market with the aim of raising production financing, capturing revenues, and securing profits."²¹ Hollywood actors are thus able to function as high-value commodities only if depictions of their bodies and voices can circulate in film markets without disturbing influential constituencies. In this respect, stars are like any other aspect of commercial American film and media production, and thus subject to the industry's efficient self-policing of film content.²²

As scholarship on film censorship has shown, graphic depictions of sex or violence are "the most conspicuous subsection of industry regulation,"²³ because Hollywood can present its control of that material as socially responsible, whereas its regulation of cultural and political material reveals the industry's accommodation of traditionally important customers and business allies. From the 1920s forward, Hollywood has regulated the representation of "religion, politics, [...] corporate capitalism, ethnic minorities [...] and a host of other issues, large and small."²⁴ With Hollywood's censorship of social and political topics purportedly unrelated to "the potentially harmful effects of the screen [film executives have seen no] public relations advantage to be gained by advertising the film industry's accommodating attitude toward big business" and the presumed values of its widest and whitest audience.²⁵

For example, from its earliest years Hollywood has avoided depictions of miscegenation to ensure distribution of its products throughout the entire United States. Ruth Vasey explains: during the studio era,

¹⁷ Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, ed. and trans. Jay Leyda (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1949), 127.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Scott Balcerzak, *Beyond Method: Stella Adler and the Male Actor* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2018), 82.

²⁰ McDonald, *Hollywood Stardom*, 1.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Jon Lewis, *Hollywood v. Hardcore: How the Struggle Over Censorship Saved the Modern Film Industry* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 180–181.

²³ Ruth Vasey, *The World According to Hollywood, 1918–1939* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 6.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

the MPPDA [Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America] and the studios usually considered stories featuring African Americans in any central capacity – certainly any capacity implying social equality – as too sensitive. Sequences showing the ‘mingling’ of blacks and whites often led to protests in southern states and could lead to the movie’s distribution being curtailed in parts of the South.²⁶

Once the Production Code Administration (PCA) was established in 1934, it could cite its strictures on representations of “impure love, the love which society has always regarded as wrong and which has been banned by divine law”²⁷ to censor depictions of miscegenation or other representations of physical/emotional intimacy that might offend the “racial prejudices” of prominent audiences.²⁸

In a similar vein, PCA head Joseph Breen “coined the term ‘industry policy’ for dealing with those films that, while technically within the moral confines of the code [...] were adjudged ‘dangerous’ to the well-being of the industry [...] because they dealt with politically sensitive topics.”²⁹ He required filmmakers to change candid depictions of racism, poverty, unemployment, or labor-management conflicts in America because he saw candid treatment of such subjects as “communistic” criticism of existing institutions.³⁰ The PCA’s appeal to “industry policy” represented a concerted “response to factors originating outside the industry itself.”³¹ Those forces included foreign governments, state and local censorship bodies, individuals or organizations with the power to generate negative publicity, and “other institutions of corporate capitalism.”³² Vasey explains that “industry policy not only covered the depiction of foreigners and foreign locales [...] it ensured the general probity of onscreen public officials, as well as the benevolence of [white] cinematic bankers, lawyers, doctors, teachers, social workers, newspapermen, and police.”³³

Industry policy precluded “explorations of social conflict,” especially those emerging from class, race, ethnic, or gender hierarchies.³⁴ It also prohibited challenges to those hierarchies. For example, to “overcome a boycott of Hollywood films by the Mexican government,” in 1922 the MPPDA issued a resolution to block films that presented “the Mexican character in a derogatory or objectionable manner.”³⁵ Yet that did not put an end to the pattern of casting Mexicans as “the *bandidos*, ‘greasers,’ and half breeds who threatened the chastity of white womanhood and antagonized the triumphant white hero.”³⁶ Similarly, throughout the studio era “cinematic representations of Asians shifted in response to U.S. foreign concerns,” and yet in the end “American movies suggested that Asians were either passive peasants or villainous despots.”³⁷

²⁶ Ibid., 139.

²⁷ Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Censored: Morality Codes, Catholics, and the Movies* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 307.

²⁸ Ibid., 297.

²⁹ Ibid., 245.

³⁰ Ibid., 246.

³¹ Ruth Vasey, “Beyond Sex and Violence: ‘Industry Policy’ and the Regulation of Hollywood Movies,” in *Controlling Hollywood: Censorship and Regulation in the Studio Era*, ed. Matthew Bernstein (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999), 102.

³² Ibid., 103.

³³ Vasey, *The World According to Hollywood*, 194.

³⁴ Ibid., 195.

³⁵ Vasey, “Beyond Sex and Violence,” 112.

³⁶ Colin Gunckel, *Mexico on Main Street: Transnational Film Culture in Los Angeles Before World War II* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2015), 6.

³⁷ Peter X. Feng, “Introduction,” *Screening Asian Americans* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 2.

In 1954, PCA head Joseph Breen released direct control over Hollywood representations. Despite this, many visual and narrative practices codified during the studio era to preempt objections from vocal constituencies have remained in place. The arrival of the rating system in 1968 seemed to suggest that American films were freer than before, but since that time, accommodation of marketplace forces have made social and political censorship a key aspect of Hollywood film practice. In addition, litigation or protest initiated by local politicians, civic leaders, or special interest groups such as the American Legion now present themselves as forces with which to contend.³⁸ The corporate consolidation in the entertainment industry also delimits stardom in contemporary American cinema and self-censorship represents an effective negotiation of the marketplace.³⁹ As Jon Lewis notes, “in Hollywood content regulation does have its political dimension. But the political is subsumed by or conflated with the economic.”⁴⁰ In this context, actors become major stars only when producers are convinced that the performers embody social identities that can appeal to dominant cultural perspectives.

Patterns in Studio Era and Contemporary Hollywood Stardom

Research by Arthur Knight provides ways to reconsider factors shaping both producers’ and consumers’ subjective impressions about Hollywood performers. Building on Richard Dyer’s work in *Stars* (1979), *Heavenly Bodies* (1986), and *White* (1997), Knight revisits some of Dyer’s observations. In particular, he considers Dyer’s statement that “[s]tars matter because they act out aspects of life that matter to us; and performers get to be stars when what they act out matters to enough people.”⁴¹ To examine these points, Knight raises a series of questions. He asks: “Who controls which performers get to [...] act out” things that matter and who determines that something matters and should be acted out?⁴² He also asks: “Who is ‘us’? How many people is ‘enough people’? What do ‘enough’ of ‘us’ mean by ‘matter’?”⁴³

Knight’s scholarship on African Americans’ “constructions of stardom” in the studio era offers illuminating answers to these questions.⁴⁴ His work shows that despite white audiences’ limited awareness of black performers, “African Americans never lacked stars [who they] defined from within a different set of values and constraints.”⁴⁵ His research also calls attention to the fact that stardom in the Hollywood studio era illustrated America’s “structured inequalities of race and gender.”⁴⁶ By comparison, industry affiliated publicity has often naturalized those inequalities. For instance, the American Film Institute program, “100 Years ... 100 Stars,” part of an annual CBS series on American television from 1998 to 2008, featured 50 contemporary stars celebrating the 50 greatest stars of the studio era. The AFI program identifies Humphrey Bogart, Cary Grant, and James Stewart as the top three male stars and Katharine Hepburn, Bette Davis, and Audrey Hepburn as the top three female stars. Of the 50 studio-era actors named, the list includes

³⁸ Charles Lyons, *The New Censors: Movies and the Culture Wars* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997).

³⁹ See Jon Lewis, *The New American Cinema* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 87–120.

⁴⁰ Lewis, *Hollywood v. Hardcore*, 7.

⁴¹ Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1986), 19.

⁴² Knight, “Star Dances,” 387.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 386.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 390.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 395.

only one person of color, Sidney Poitier, named as number 22 in the list of 25 male actors.⁴⁷ The program implies that the contemporary actors speak for all American audiences, and that their choices reflect the merits of the studio era actors irrespective of cultural norms and practices that benefit white Americans.

Moreover, whether one looks at studies conducted by professional market research firms such as Harris Interactive or informal polls by fans, Hollywood's circulation of primarily white stars continues. In 2012, the nationwide Harris Poll (of over 2,000 people) found that 80% of America's top ten favorite movie stars were white men. In rank order, the top Hollywood stars that year were Denzel Washington, Clint Eastwood, Tom Hanks, Johnny Depp and Brad Pitt tied for fourth, John Wayne, George Clooney, Harrison Ford, Meryl Streep, and Matt Damon. Notably, Washington and Streep are the outliers in the group, and there are no performers representing Hispanic, Asian, Native American, or Pacific Islander groups.

In the 2014 Harris Poll, white men accounted for 60% of America's favorite movie stars. There continued to be only one person of color, yet white women increased to 30% of America's top ten favorite movie stars. In rank order, the top Hollywood stars that year were Denzel Washington, John Wayne, Brad Pitt, Johnny Depp, Tom Hanks, Clint Eastwood, Jennifer Lawrence and Meryl Streep tied for seventh, Harrison Ford, and Angelina Jolie. This pattern continues in the 2016 Harris Poll. Denzel Washington continues to be the only person of color in America's top ten favorite movie stars, white men fill 60% of the top ten spots, and white women have 30%. In rank order, the 2016 list includes Tom Hanks, Johnny Depp, Denzel Washington, John Wayne, Harrison Ford, Sandra Bullock, Jennifer Lawrence, Clint Eastwood, and Brad Pitt and Julia Roberts tied for ninth.⁴⁸ Here again, whiteness is defined as non-Hispanic white, and the idea of racial or ethnic diversity is reduced to the inclusion of one African American actor.

A sampling from recent voting in the People's Choice Awards reflects the same pattern. For performances in 2015, Channing Tatum was voted Favorite Movie Star, with Johnny Depp, Robert Downey, Jr., Chris Pratt, and Will Smith the other nominees. For portrayals that same year, Sandra Bullock was named Favorite Movie Actress; Anne Hathaway, Scarlett Johansson, Melissa McCarthy, and Meryl Streep were the other nominees. For performances in 2016, Ryan Reynolds received the most votes, and Robert Downey, Jr., Tom Hanks, Kevin Hart, and Will Smith were nominated. For 2016, Jennifer Lawrence was voted Favorite Movie Actress, while Scarlett Johansson, Anna Kendrick, Melissa McCarthy, and Margot Robbie were nominated. For performances in 2017, Chadwick Boseman was named Favorite Movie Star, with Robert Downey, Jr., Chris Hemsworth, Chris Pratt, and Nick Robinson also nominated. Scarlett Johansson was voted Favorite Movie Actress for 2017, while Sandra Bullock, Anne Hathaway, Bryce Dallas Howard, and Lily James were nominated. In summary, over these three years, the 30 nominations go only to non-Hispanic whites, with the exception of the four nominations for African American actors.

Internet Movie Database surveys lead to much the same results. A 2013 list of the twenty-five biggest movie stars features 64% white male actors, 24% white female actors, and 12% black male actors.⁴⁹ In a 2017 survey of the twenty-five biggest movie stars, black male actors lose ground as white male actors gain percentage points. The survey features 72% white male actors,

⁴⁷ "AFI's 100 Years ... 100 Stars," American Film Institute, accessed October 27, 2018, <http://www.afi.com/100Years/stars.aspx>.

⁴⁸ "America's Favorite Movie Stars," Harris Interactive, accessed October 27, 2018, <https://theharrispoll.com/his-roles-over-the-years-have-taken-him-into-the-past-and-the-future-out-into-space-and-even-into-a-childs-toy-chest-and-this-year-tom-hanks-currently-in-theaters-as-attorney-jame/>.

⁴⁹ dolphinsrock81, "Top 25 Biggest Movie Stars in the World," Internet Movie Database, accessed September 14, 2018, <https://imdb.com/list/ls051970081>.

24% white female actors, and 4% black male actors.⁵⁰ There is no information about the racial, ethnic, or gender identity of the people whose opinions are expressed in these surveys, and thus these results appear to represent the views of American audiences in general. The surveys also present themselves as reflecting a natural reality, rather than a contingent and constructed cultural phenomenon.

The pattern in the Harris Polls, People's Choice Awards, and IMDb surveys also appears in polls by the Quigley Publishing Company. Since 1932, the company has "polled film exhibitors in the U.S. to gauge their views on whom they regard as the top money-making stars in any year."⁵¹ In *Hollywood Stardom*, McDonald provides an overview of Quigley Polls covering almost twenty years, from 1990 to 2009. These annual polls show that for American exhibitors, 72% of the valuable stars are white male actors, 18% are white female actors, 8% are black male actors, and 2% are black female actors.⁵² Notably, the only variation from the other polls and surveys is the addition of Whoopi Goldberg, whose success in *Sister Act* (1992), *Made in America* (1993), and *Sister Act 2* (1993) put her in the top ten for Quigley polls conducted in 1992 and 1993. As in the other surveys, the results illustrate the whiteness of Hollywood stardom and the reality that a handful of African American actors are the only performers of color who have wide visibility in American popular culture.

The racial, ethnic, and gender pattern continues even in polls about acting ability. For example, in the 2018 Ranker Poll of the 100 Greatest Movie Actors and Actresses, American consumers once again give priority to white men, followed by some recognition of white female performers, and minor recognition of black male actors. This poll, which reflects fans' ranking of stars' acting abilities and their mastery of roles they have played over the years, features 68% white male actors, 26% white female actors, and 6% black male actors. The black male actors named in the poll include Denzel Washington at number 28, Samuel L. Jackson at 48, Sidney Poitier at 53, James Earl Jones at 76, Will Smith at 84, and Forest Whitaker at 92.⁵³ Here again, voting choices involve the erasure of Americans who belong to other minorities.

The pattern of assessments about Hollywood stars is especially striking when one compares it to demographic information as reflected in United States census information for 2016. According to this data, white men (from Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa) make up 31% of the U.S. population and white women constitute 31% of the population. Black men (from sub-Saharan Africa) make up 6.5% of the American population, as do black women. Latino and Hispanic men (from Latin America and the Iberian Peninsula) constitute 8.9% of the U.S. population, as do Latina and Hispanic women. Asian men (from East Asia, Southeast Asia, and India) make up 2.5% of the American population, as do Asian women. The remaining 2.2% of the United States population includes men and women who belong to Native American, Pacific Islander, or two or more races.⁵⁴

Moreover, these statistics do not fully capture the dominant conceptions of "American" identity. For instance, the census definition of white includes individuals with ancestry in the Middle East or North Africa, yet twenty-first-century Islamophobia in the U.S. has increased

⁵⁰ CountJohn, "25 Biggest Movie Stars of All Time," Internet Movie Database, accessed October 27, 2018, <https://www.imdb.com/list/ls000003041/>.

⁵¹ McDonald, *Hollywood Stardom*, 25.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 26–27.

⁵³ "The Greatest Actors and Actresses in Entertainment History," Ranker, accessed September 14, 2018, <https://www.ranker.com/crowdranked-list/the-greatest-film-actors-and-actresses-of-all-time>.

⁵⁴ "Comparative Demographics Estimates: 2016 American Community Survey 1 Year Estimates," United States Census Bureau, accessed October 27, 2018, https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/product-view.xhtml?pid=ACS_16_1YR_CP05&prodType=table.

the vast cultural distance that has separated individuals with Middle Eastern or North African ancestry from people with European ancestry, who are in a better position to lay claim to white identity. In addition, the dominant equation between “true” American identity and northern European ancestry in particular has kept some Americans in a perennial foreign or alien status. For example, in the years following the Civil War political and labor leaders targeted Chinese workers in the American west, south, and northeast, characterizing them as “anti-citizens whose very presence would endanger white republican freedoms.”⁵⁵ Subsequently, “Asians [as a whole] were ineligible [for citizenship] during much of the twentieth century.”⁵⁶ Similarly, throughout U.S. history, dominant socio-political forces have framed people from Mexico and other Latin American countries as “unable or unwilling to integrate into U.S. society, preferring to remain linguistically and socially isolated.”⁵⁷ Thus, as Leo Chavez points out, “Asians and Mexicans [especially] became legally racialized ethnic groups [and have thus] found themselves cast as permanently foreign” and as people who face “obstacles to their integration into the nation.”⁵⁸

Notably, even if one works with the census definitions, there is a considerable contrast between American constituencies and the social identity of American movie stars. While only 31% of the U.S. population, non-Hispanic white men account for 60% to sometimes 80% of the high-value stars. Non-Hispanic white women account for 31% of the population and are slightly underrepresented in the polls. Black men comprise about 6% of the U.S. population, a percentage that has parallels with polls ranking high-value stars. From there, the census data and the polls diverge completely, leaving more than 30% of Americans unrepresented in the rankings of high-value stars. Moreover, the polls and surveys about movie stars establish a binary between white and black, with black male actors somehow assumed to be standing in for all people of color. That situation masks distinctions among diverse minority populations, and ultimately the pattern means limited visibility, for black male actors constitute 4% to 12% of high-value stars while racial and ethnic minorities constitute 38% of the American population.

Cultural and Industrial Factors Shaping Contemporary Hollywood Stardom

These considerations prompt one to revisit Arthur Knight’s questions about who controls which performers act out things that matter and which audience members determine what matters. One way to answer these questions is to look at the makeup of Hollywood executives. Each year, *The Hollywood Reporter* identifies the 100 most powerful people in the entertainment business. The 2017 report reveals that the pattern in the surveys about American movie stars reappears in the percentages of industry executives. *The Hollywood Reporter* identifies white men as 59% of the most powerful people in Hollywood, with women constituting 24% (up from 19% in 2016) and people of color constituting 17% (up from 10% in 2016).⁵⁹

⁵⁵ David R. Roediger, *How Race Survived U.S. History: From Settlement and Slavery to the Obama Phenomenon* (New York: Verso, 2008), 123.

⁵⁶ Leo R. Chavez, *The Latino Threat: Constructing Immigrants, Citizens, and the Nation*, second edition (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 10.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁵⁹ THR Staff, edited by Alison Brower, “The THR 100: Hollywood Reporter’s 100 Most Powerful People in Entertainment,” *The Hollywood Reporter*, accessed October 27, 2018, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/lists/thr-100-hollywood-reporters-powerful-people-entertainment-1013405>.

One can also look at the racial, ethnic, and gender makeup of film critics. Following the release of a 2018 University of Southern California Annenberg School report, a series of articles shared the finding that film “criticism is a field dominated by white men.”⁶⁰ The report shows that male critics constitute 77.8% of the total, compared to female critics who comprise the remaining 22.2%. It also demonstrates that non-Hispanic whites are 82% of film critics while people of color make up 18%. Reporting on other related research, a series of coinciding articles discuss the findings that female critics are “more likely than their male counterparts to review films directed by and starring women” and that they “tend to give higher ratings to films with women in leading roles than male critics do.”⁶¹

The fact that 82% of film critics are white carries into fan culture and assumptions about fan culture. Work by Benjamin Woo and others has shown that a white bias informs naturalized notions about media audiences. Asking if fan communities are “really as white as we imagine,” Woo analyzes the difference between “empirical whiteness” and “ideological whiteness.”⁶² Noting that whites (male and female) make up the empirical 62% majority of the American population, Woo points out that minority “voices and experiences [still] don’t make up [even] 10% – and certainly not one-third – of fan studies.”⁶³ Discussing evidence confirming that media fan activity involves 77% white participants, except among younger fans who are more diverse, Woo explains that a “series of discursive moves and slippages have [served] to justify [the] marginalization [of race] by defining [media] ‘fandom’ [...] in ways that tend to foreground and, indeed, privilege white fans.”⁶⁴ He finds that the cultural dominance of whites in America not only shapes the areas of research that are valued. It also makes the white fan the norm.

Similarly, Paul McDonald concludes that a confluence of cultural and commercial factors plays a significant role in determining which actors become the stars whose performances circulate widely in American society. As he explains, “[s]ymbolically and economically, Hollywood stardom only valorizes certain forms of identity.”⁶⁵ His research shows that stars “are mass-mediated figures and so their status is [...] contingent on broader cultural and social dynamics which define ‘popular’ identity and which have their most obvious effects in how race, gender and age delimit the range of star images which are ever on offer at any given point in Hollywood history.”⁶⁶ In fact, McDonald finds that from the beginning of the twentieth century, “Hollywood stardom has worked through a system in which commercial value is produced almost exclusively through a small cohort of white male actors roughly aged from their mid 20s to their mid 50s.”⁶⁷

McDonald’s research, which shows that white male actors occupy the highest tiers of Hollywood stardom, clarifies the industry’s various categories for bankable, commercially useful performers. Drawing on information compiled by industry analysts, he outlines the various rungs in the star-actor hierarchy, which sees new acting school graduates below both performers with

⁶⁰ Brent Lang, “Movie Critics are Mostly White Men,” *Variety*, June 11, 2018, accessed July 29, 2018, <https://variety.com/2018/film/news/movie-critics-white-men-study-1202839058/>. See Andrew Pulver, “Film Critics are Overwhelmingly White and Male, Study Says,” *The Guardian*, June 11, 2018; Andreas Wiseman, “Movie Critics are Largely White and Male, New Study Finds,” *Deadline Hollywood*, June 11, 2018.

⁶¹ Cara Buckley, “Male Critics are Harsher Than Women on Female-led Films, Study Says,” *New York Times*, July 17, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/17/movies/male-critics-are-harsher-than-women-on-female-led-films-study-says.html>.

⁶² Woo, “The Invisible Bag of Holding,” 246–247.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 247.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ McDonald, *Hollywood Stardom*, 31.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 283.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 31.

a few credits and membership in the Screen Actor Guild, and established working actors with recognizable faces. The next step in the bankable hierarchy includes name actors such as William H. Macy, Paul Giamatti, Laura Linney, and Frances McDormand, with the white male actors often given supporting roles in studio pictures and the top name actors enjoying a certain star status in television and independent films. Noting that Parker Posey, Tilda Swinton, and Greta Gerwig have achieved visibility “in films produced, and in many cases also distributed, outside the structures of Hollywood,”⁶⁸ McDonald observes, “if white male actors have largely defined the A-list elite, then in the independent sector, white female actors seemingly occupy equal if not higher levels of visibility [compared] to their male counterparts.”⁶⁹ The top three tiers of the bankable hierarchy feature stars, A-list stars, and A-plus list stars. Contemporary stars who can serve as the selling point for a film include Al Pacino, Meryl Streep, Kate Winslet, Robert De Niro, Halle Berry, Will Ferrell, and Samuel L. Jackson. By comparison, A-list stars whose presence in the cast can guarantee funding include almost exclusively male actors such as George Clooney, Bruce Willis, Denzel Washington, Russell Crowe, Johnny Depp, and Mark Wahlberg, with Julia Roberts one of the few A-list actresses in Hollywood. The A-plus list includes only male actors like Tom Cruise, Harrison Ford, Brad Pitt, Will Smith, and Matt Damon. As these lists reveal, the top tiers of Hollywood stardom feature primarily white male actors.⁷⁰

Valued, bankable stars embody “popular” identities, especially as defined by industry power players and their prioritized audiences. In this context, “bankability” is a euphemism or code word for performers who most easily embody dominant views about the race, ethnicity, and gender of “popular” American identity. Studio backing of films such as *Wonder Woman* (2017), *The Black Panther* (2018), *Crazy Rich Asians* (2018), and *Captain Marvel* (2019) are exceptions that prove the rule, as the majority of Hollywood productions reveal that America’s historical definitions of personhood align it with white male identity.

This alignment became an active area of inquiry in the 1990s. The scholarship includes *The Wages of Whiteness* (1991) by David Roediger, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism, and History* (1992) by Vron Ware, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (1993) by Toni Morrison, *White* (1997) by Richard Dyer, and anthologies edited by Ruth Frankenberg and Mike Hill. Identifying the impetus for deconstructing whiteness, Annalee Newitz and Matt Wray explain that “[i]t has been the invisibility (for whites) of whiteness that has enabled white Americans to stand as unmarked, normative bodies and social selves, the standard against which all others are judged (and found wanting).”⁷¹

In *How Race Survived U.S. History* (2008), Roediger maps key historical developments that led whiteness to become the naturalized position of power in America. He notes that “the very idea of formal equality among industrious free white [male] citizens emerged in and after the American Revolution from creating, measuring, and imagining their social distance from African American slaves or from Indians whose alleged laziness rationalized their dispossession and exploitation.”⁷² Highlighting that the idea of race, including the white race, is a relatively modern concept, Roediger traces its appearance in American legal documents, including the 1691 legislation against consensual interracial sex, designed to police the behavior of white women and

⁶⁸ Paul McDonald, “Flexible Stardom: Contemporary American Film and the Independent Mobility of Star Brands,” in *A Companion to American Indie Film*, ed. Geoff King (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017), 497.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 498.

⁷⁰ See McDonald, *Hollywood Stardom*, 19–31.

⁷¹ Annalee Newitz and Matt Wray, “Introduction,” in *White Trash: Race and Class in America*, ed. Annalee Newitz and Matt Wray (New York: Routledge, 1997), 3.

⁷² Roediger, *How Race Survived*, xv.

limit citizenship to people with two white parents.⁷³ He also attributes the “staying power of the white supremacist social system” in America to the fact that in the late seventeenth century white elites created not simply a new “set of racial attitudes and prejudices, but a new social order” in which race and identity became intertwined.⁷⁴ This new social order became so fundamental to the United States that when “Congress passed the nation’s first naturalization law in 1790, it named the race of the imagined American citizen as white.”⁷⁵

With whiteness, citizenship, and personhood bound together by the late eighteenth century, the 1857 Dred Scott decision could assert that African Americans possessed “no rights which the white man was bound to respect.”⁷⁶ With whites possessing personhood in opposition to all people of color, African Americans were not the only targets of white terrorism; while “California had a relatively small nonwhite population, between 1850 and 1936 over half of its 352 lynching victims were Mexican, Latin American, or American Indian. Providing one lynch victim in twelve, the Chinese suffered out of all proportion to their number.”⁷⁷ The Civil War brought new levels of atrocity against Indians, and during Reconstruction and western expansion, African Americans and Chinese became “anti-citizens” whose mere presence was thought to impinge on the freedom of whites.⁷⁸ In the late nineteenth century, the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision gave legal sanction to disenfranchisement and white supremacist terror, and “U.S. imperial adventures in Cuba, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and the Philippines” led one South Carolina senator to commend his colleagues for their support of the “divine right of Caucasians to govern inferior races.”⁷⁹

Continuing into the twentieth century, “experts counted a handful of races – generally the red, white, black, brown, and yellow – corresponding to their perception of broad divisions of humanity by color.”⁸⁰ Waves of immigrants, among them Irish, Jews, and Italians, witnessed the effects of the white supremacist order and understood “the privileged safety that came with being white.”⁸¹ Those benefits became especially clear during the New Deal era, as the National Industrial Recovery Administration “refused to eliminate racial wage differentials [or] prohibit selective layoffs of black workers.”⁸² The new Social Security Act “excluded occupationally most black, Indian and Mexican workers from its social insurance and unemployment plans.”⁸³ Federal housing policies led to subsidized loans that helped whites purchase homes but channeled people of color into shoddy public housing, and in every aspect, “the New Deal state laid down racial guidelines about who was fit for citizenship and who for exclusion.”⁸⁴

During World War II, entrenched anti-Asian racism in the U.S. “forced 120,000 Japanese Americans – only 40,000 of whom were classed as enemy aliens – into incarceration camps.”⁸⁵ A few years earlier, between 1929 and 1936, the U.S. government had deported between 400,000

⁷³ See *ibid.*, 6–7.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 56.

⁷⁶ Qtd. *ibid.*, 77.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 123.

⁷⁹ Qtd. *ibid.*, 132.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 153.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 176.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 177.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 183.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 189.

and two million people of Mexican descent, 60% of whom were American citizens.⁸⁶ Emerging from inconsistent policies all designed to maintain a “steady oversupply of cheap farm labor,” in the 1950s one “initiative” led to the deportation of 800,000 Mexicans and the proposal for a border fence, which was not built due to U.S. State Department concerns that it could become a target of Soviet Cold War propaganda.⁸⁷ In the 1970s, “FBI agents, federal marshals, and police of the Bureau of Indian affairs” laid siege to the village of Wounded Knee and forced the surrender of a few hundred Oglala Sioux people who had made the decision to occupy the site of the 1890 massacre “as a symbol of the demand for Indian land, Indian rights.”⁸⁸ Eventually honoring the protesters’ request, a presidential commission examined the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty; the commission “found it valid,” but determined that the treaty was “superseded by the U.S. power of ‘eminent domain,’”⁸⁹ thus perpetuating the government sanctioned appropriation of Native land dating back to the colonial period. These and other related developments in American history have shaped the conception of “popular” American identity that has made Hollywood executives, film critics, and mainstream audiences see white male actors as most “naturally” suited to the top tier of movie stardom.

Rethinking Stardom in Light of American Cultural History

Political developments in twenty-first century America continue to reflect the country’s deep-seated patriarchal white supremacist social order. These social realities make it especially important to ask the questions about stardom that Arthur Knight considers. Who controls which performers get to act out things that matter? Which audience members determine what matters? Who is “us”? Scholarship by Knight and others offers ways to explore these questions in light of America’s racial history. For example, taking Knight’s finding that in the studio era “African Americans never lacked stars” as a starting point, scholarship can get beyond the equation between whiteness and cultural significance by studying actors other than top-tier stars, researching stardom beyond Hollywood, and examining the social dimensions of actors’ public images.⁹⁰

Through their attention to actors from diverse social groups, scholars have illustrated the value of “broadening and specializing the meanings of ‘star’ and ‘stardom.’”⁹¹ Anna Everett highlights that in the 1990s, the “politics of multiculturalism propelled widespread acceptance of major stars from all racial and ethnic groups,” including “Denzel Washington, Andy Garcia, Halle Berry, Will Smith, Wesley Snipes, Jennifer Lopez, and Antonio Banderas.”⁹² Everett sees “the decade’s multicultural and pluralist star constellation” emerging in part from the acclaim for Spike Lee’s *She’s Gotta Have It* (1986) and *Do the Right Thing* (1989) and the crossover success of “Hispanic Specialty Films” *La Bamba* (1987) starring Lou Diamond Phillips and *Stand and Deliver* (1988) starring Edward James Olmos.⁹³

⁸⁶ Francisco Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Reparation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006).

⁸⁷ Roediger, *How Race Survived*, 192–193.

⁸⁸ Howard Zinn, *A People’s History of the United States* (New York: Harper Collins, 2015), 534.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 535.

⁹⁰ Knight, “Star Dances,” 390.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Anna Everett, “Introduction: Stardom in the 1990s,” in *Pretty People: Movie Stars of the 1990s*, ed. Anna Everett (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 2 and 4.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 5.

Olmos in particular became a star who embodies Chicano and more broadly Latinx identity. His mainstream career includes roles in *Blade Runner* (1982) and *Blade Runner 2049* (2017), as well as the television dramas *Miami Vice* (1984–1990) and *Battlestar Galactica* (2004–2009). His independent film career stretches from *Zoot Suit* (1981) and *The Ballad of Gregorio Cortez* (1982) to *Go for Sisters* (2013) and *Monday Nights at Seven* (2016). His star image reflects his social activism. In the 1990s, he co-founded the Los Angeles Latino International Film Festival and founded Latino Public Broadcasting, which advocates for diversity in television programming. In 2006, he directed *Walkout*, an HBO film about the 1968 East Los Angeles Walkouts, one of the first mass Chicano protests in America, in which students protested against unequal school conditions.

Olmos's actor-activist image is evidence that stars can be defined by a "set of values and constraints" distinct from standard Hollywood stardom.⁹⁴ His star image is significant because it sharply contrasts with stereotypes for Hispanic and Latinx actors/characters, which include "el bandido, the harlot, the male buffoon, the female clown, the Latin lover, and the dark lady."⁹⁵ It also reflects the political foundation of Second Wave Chicano cinema, as reflected in work by theatre and film director Luis Valdez. Founder of the anti-prop theatre troupe El Teatro Campesino, Valdez wrote and directed the stage production of *Zoot Suit*, which in 1978 became the first professionally produced Chicano play in the U.S. In 1982, Universal Pictures released Valdez's film adaptation of the production. Like *Cabaret* (the 1966 Broadway show and 1972 film), *Zoot Suit* uses the artifice of the musical to create social commentary; in the play and the film Olmos portrays El Pachuco, who "is simultaneously narrator, conscience, and trickster."⁹⁶ In the role, Olmos personifies the slickness, toughness, and cynicism of the zoot-suiters whose expression of cultural pride brought them into conflict with white servicemen and the Los Angeles Police Department in the 1943 Zoot Suit riots.

Zoot Suit represents an occasion that led a performer and a director to move from the margins to the mainstream. Following his "mesmerizing" stage and screen portrayal of El Pachuco, Olmos would appear in *Blade Runner* and *Miami Vice*.⁹⁷ Valdez's next film *La Bamba* was financially successful, as were others in the brief wave of Chicano features that followed. Notably, this cycle of films "offered more interesting and compelling roles to Latina and Latino actors," and thus "opportunities for audience identification and ultimately stardom."⁹⁸ As Mary Beltrán points out, Olmos especially "had the opportunity to portray Mexican American and Latino heroes of a wide variety," and together with "small roles in highly successful mainstream films and television," his performances in the acclaimed independent films "set the stage for his future stardom."⁹⁹

There are of course many other actors who "embody, incarnate, or personify social groups or historical moments."¹⁰⁰ Best known for her performance as Yellow Mary in Julie Dash's 1991 film *Daughters of the Dust*, Barbara O. Jones began working in film two decades earlier. Due to her roles in a collection of films, Clyde Taylor describes her as "an essential performer" in the L.A. Rebellion, a term he coined to describe the work of black independent filmmakers who started

⁹⁴ Knight, "Star Dances," 386.

⁹⁵ Charles Ramirez Berg, *Latino Images in Film: Stereotypes, Subversion, Resistance* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 66.

⁹⁶ Mary C. Beltrán, *Latina/o Stars in U.S. Eyes: The Making and Meanings of Film and TV Stardom* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 116.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 130.

¹⁰⁰ Shingler, *Star Studies*, 183.

working together at UCLA in the 1970s.¹⁰¹ She had the leading role in Haile Gerima's 1973 short *Child of Resistance* and Julie Dash's 1977 short *Diary of an African Nun*. She also portrayed the central character in Gerima's feature film *Bush Mama* (1979). For the contemporary era, one could consider the significance of actor-producer-director Ryan Higa, whose "Nigahiga" YouTube channel has more than 21 million subscribers, making it the 36th most popular channel on YouTube. This channel features short comedic narratives with sophisticated special effects, as well as comedic music videos, including self-parodic ones by Higa and his collaborators as the K-pop group, Boys Generally Asian. Higa and his production team also post behind-the-scenes material and generate unscripted games on the "Higa TV" YouTube channel. Given the clever conception and impressive production value of Higa's work for more than a decade, some argue that Higa is the leading contemporary YouTube artist.¹⁰²

One needs to move beyond, however, what Benjamin Woo describes as the "add minorities and stir" approach to address imbalances created by the dominant white social order and its implications for both the empirical and ideological whiteness of Hollywood stardom.¹⁰³ For instance, if there ever were a candidate for an un-hyphenated film star, it would be Denzel Washington. He has been in the top ten of America's favorite movie stars since 1995 and held the top spot for five years. He is a bankable star, and even a prestige star, with an Oscar for Best Supporting Actor for *Glory* (1989) and another for Best Actor for *Training Day* (2001). Yet at the start of his career, critics consistently compared Washington to Sidney Poitier rather than white actors, and his career trajectory reveals that contemporary Hollywood's "permissible field of representation" remains influenced by studio-era values.¹⁰⁴ For example, while early on he played the romantic lead in independent films, as Hollywood productions like *The Pelican Brief* (1993) and *Philadelphia* (1993) illustrate, crossing over into the mainstream meant taking roles with a limited or non-existent romantic dimension.¹⁰⁵ This censored framework has continued into his twenty-first-century action cinema roles in films such as *The Book of Eli* (2010), *Safe House* (2012), *The Magnificent Seven* (2016), and *The Equalizer 2* (2018). With stardom often depending on the circulation of images that emphasize an actor's romantic allure, star status has been elusive for male and female actors of color.

As Washington was becoming a major star in the 1990s, articles touched on questions of social identity, and biographer Douglas Brode foregrounds the fact that during this period, reporters often asked Washington to talk about his status as a black actor. Notably, as Brode explains, Washington consistently emphasized, "I'm very proud to be black, but *black is not all I am*. That's my cultural, historical background, my genetic makeup, but it's not the basis from which I answer every question... I don't think I should be talked to only as a black actor."¹⁰⁶ Washington's Academy Award for his performance in *Training Day* might have minimized subsequent press coverage of him as an African American actor. Yet fans and the press continue to identify stars such as Denzel Washington, Chadwick Boseman, and Michael B. Jordan as black stars, whereas fans and the press never refer to Tom Cruise, Bruce Willis, and Harrison Ford as white stars. Mainstream American star-focused publicity also gives comparatively limited coverage to stars

¹⁰¹ Clyde Taylor, "Preface: Once Upon a Time in the West ... L.A. Rebellion," in *L.A. Rebellion: Creating a New Black Cinema*, ed. Allyson Nadia Field, Jan-Christopher Horak, and Jacqueline Najuma Stewart (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), xvi.

¹⁰² Pema Euden, "9 Reasons Why Ryan Higa is the Best You Tuber," *Odyssey*, accessed October 28, 2018, <https://www.theodysseyonline.com/9-reasons-why-ryan-higa-is-the-best-youtuber>.

¹⁰³ Woo, "The Invisible Bag of Holding," 249.

¹⁰⁴ Vasey, *The World According to Hollywood*, 12.

¹⁰⁵ Cynthia Baron, *Denzel Washington* (London: British Film Institute, 2014).

¹⁰⁶ Douglas Brode, *Denzel Washington: His Films and His Career* (Secaucus, NY: Carol Publishing, 1997), xii.

like Benicio Del Toro (from Puerto Rico) or Jackie Chan (from Hong Kong), and women of color continue to be the least represented in movie publicity.

These realities are a telling reminder that Hollywood stardom tacitly illuminates “the structured inequalities of race and gender.”¹⁰⁷ One might recall that in any binary, one term has value, while the other lacks value, and that the term with value retains its power by being “unremarked, in discursive paradigms and visual fields.”¹⁰⁸ Thus, to challenge rather than support the structured inequalities that shape Hollywood stardom, there is a need for research on performers outside the domain of the industry’s major star assets. To analyze rather than sustain the cultural biases that shape “popular” conceptions of American identity, there is a need for scholarship that foregrounds the whiteness that makes an actor like Tom Cruise a commodity that circulates easily in a society founded on the notion that the ideal American citizen is a white male.

It may be that “[s]tars matter because they act out aspects of life that matter to us.”¹⁰⁹ Yet historical realities in the U.S. require inquiries into the sort of questions raised by Arthur Knight. Research that moves scholarship beyond the naturalized whiteness of star studies involves work in production studies that offer concrete information about the executive decisions that lead some actors to become top-tier stars. This work can show who has tended to control the visibility of performers, and who has most often determined that something matters. Ethnographic studies can shed light on what specific performers mean to certain audiences, clarify how “us” has often been defined, and explore alternative ways to define American audiences and members of American society. In both lines of scholarship, to examine rather than gloss over the effects of America’s history of white supremacy, this work can investigate the possible social implications of actors’ physical appearance, and how the film industry’s history of self-censorship figures into past and present decisions by producers and consumers. Star studies will either naturalize or interrogate the processes by which certain individuals not only matter, but also become high value commodities. The larger but specific historical context for film stardom in America sets up two distinct paths for scholarship, with star studies either inadvertently revealing or explicitly recognizing the nation’s foundation in a social order that allows whites and white men especially to most easily lay claim to personhood and “popular” identity.

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¹⁰⁷ Knight, “Star Dances,” 395.

¹⁰⁸ Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 5.

¹⁰⁹ Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies*, 19.

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Animal Stars: A Critical View of Creaturely Celebrity

Abstract | Star studies has focused primarily on human stars and the systems and conditions by and in which human stardom and celebrity are produced. Although animal stars have cultural, symbolic, and economic value, scholarly work in star studies has, with few exceptions, largely ignored animals. This article addresses star studies through a critical lens that attends to the symbolic and economic dimensions of animal stardom. It argues that acknowledgement of the importance of both realms within star studies generally draws attention to the ethical dimension of animal stardom specifically. It further proposes that alternative histories of film are revealed by situating animals at the centre of scholarly enquiry and discusses how this puts focus on previously obscured dynamics of stardom, particularly in relation to industrial conditions and systems.

Keywords | star studies – animal stars – animal stardom – creaturely celebrity – star labour – ethics – critical animal studies

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Introduction

The study of stars and stardom has undergone several key developments since the publication of Richard Dyer's influential work in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Despite the growth of academic interest in stardom generally, animals have figured little within scholarly enquiry. In its focus on the ideological work of stars and questions of the symbolic value of star image, animals have tended to occupy a peripheral location, primarily called upon as signifiers of otherness in relation to human identity and an animality/human binary which is activated in the racialised representation of black bodies. Animality and the animal image were, for Dyer and other critics of racialised representation, deployed by mainstream film as signifiers of sexual subversion, depravity, and signalled a challenge to safe social norms. In *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* first published in 1986, Dyer, writing about Paul Robeson, argued that the black body is an ideological reminder of "animal vitality" and "mere animal capacity incapable of producing civilisation."¹ In an earlier analysis of images of Africa, Dyer commented on the use of animal wildlife shots and the way in which they were used to connote social chaos in *Sanders of the River*.² Certainly, it was not Dyer's intention to consider the symbolic or for that matter commercial importance of animals to questions of stardom or film generally. What is important, however, is that these few references in Dyer's study do point towards the ideological work that animals do within systems of representation.

¹ Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (London: Routledge, 2003), 136.

² Richard Dyer, *Stars* (London: BFI, 2007), 92.

The ideological function of animality provides a useful start point in that it underscores the symbolic value of animals within systems of cultural production and from here we can proceed to build a broader picture of animals within star systems, one that acknowledges the commercial value of animal stars to film and which also draws attention to the distinct differences between the human and animal labour of stardom. Animal stars have been economically important to film studios and stories of Warner Bros. and Universal-International's reliance on animal stars such as Rin Tin Tin and Francis the talking mule to remain financially solvent have become entrenched in Hollywood mythology. Other animal stars such as Bonzo the chimpanzee, Lassie, and Fagan the lion were cultivated through the Hollywood studio star system, generated substantial box office returns, and attracted significant press attention and public interest in their lives and deaths.³ In March 2018, "Bento, the keyboard cat," one of the first Internet animal stars died, his demise widely reported across news outlets.⁴ Other Internet animal stars such as Lil Bub and Grumpy Cat are estimated to be worth between \$200,000 and \$100 million respectively.⁵ These animal stars and celebrities are "taste makers," have economically significant fan bases, attract huge crowds at their public appearances and their deaths are considered newsworthy. David C. Giles argues that animal celebrity is reliant on projected meanings, those imposed by the media and the public, and that the animals who emerge as stars "act as a conduit for our fantasies and desires."⁶ It should be remembered, as Jonathon Hutchinson wryly points out, that "[p]lets do not engineer their own celebrity; rather it is the strategic and coordinated efforts of their owners that create 'accidentally famous' animals."⁷ The focus of this article is therefore an exploration of animals, not as signifiers solely in service to our theorisation of human identity, but as individual beings who are constructed as stars by many of the same cultural, ideological and capitalistic mechanisms of stardom that apply to humans. Beginning with an examination of early cinema that uses archival materials and focuses on the case of Jean the Vitagraph dog, this article proceeds from a position that draws on theorisation of stars and stardom underpinned by the ethical and political concerns of Critical Animal Studies. Informed by approaches to stardom that interrogate both its symbolic and commercial dimensions, the impetus of Critical Animal Studies steers a course of questioning to ask how such systems of stardom impact the material lives of real animals. It is at this conjunction of approaches that questions of agency, performance, commodification, and labour are problematised in ways that are specific to nonhuman animals and which, this article argues, are obscured dynamics of animal stardom.

Early Animal Stardom

Following the immense success of the 1905 Hepworth Manufacturing Company film, *Rescued by Rover*, there was little doubt amongst producers and exhibitors that films with dogs as the main subject had great audience appeal. Blair, the collie dog who had appeared in the main role, featured in later animal rescue stories including *Dumb Sagacity* (1907) and *The Dog Outwits the Kidnappers* (1908) and such was the attraction of those films that, after 1905, Rover became an especially popular name for dogs. While Rover was, without doubt, a hugely popular on-screen

³ Claire Molloy, *Popular Media and Animals* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

⁴ See Gavin Haynes, "Bento the Keyboard Cat, Internet Sensation and Youtube Star, Dies," *The Guardian*, March 20, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2018/mar/20/bento-keyboard-cat-youtube-dies>.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ David C. Giles, "Animal Celebrities," *Celebrity Studies* 4, no. 2 (2013): 125.

⁷ Jonathon Hutchinson, "I Can Haz Likes: Cultural Intermediation to Facilitate 'Petworking,'" *M/C Journal* 17, no. 2 (April 2014), <http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/view/792>.

character, Blair the dog was not a star in the sense that the industrial infrastructure of stardom did not exist at that time and there were no moves by Hepworth to construct a canine star persona. It was not until 1910 that the identification of individual performers' names, the circulation of knowledge about a player's existence outside their work in film, and the desire of audiences that translated into the consumption of the personal lives of picture personalities was recognised and exploited by the nascent film industry.⁸ The same industrial conditions that created human stars were also at work in the construction of animal stars. Beyond the well documented significance of *Rescued by Rover* to the development of film language,⁹ what was important about Rover/Blair was that the 1905 film and its featured canine player set a trajectory for the emergence of animal stars at the same historical moment as human stars.

In 1908, *The Moving Picture World* wrote about the popular Selig Films *The Four Footed Hero* (1907) that “[r]eports from all over the continent tell of the fascination with which pleased audiences have witnessed this excellent film,” a primary draw of the film, reviews noted, being the depiction of canine intelligence.¹⁰ *The Four Footed Hero* reworked the story of the heroic canine rescuing a child, a narrative staple of the time in light of the enormous popularity of *Rescued by Rover*. An unnamed canine hero in James Williamson's *£100 Reward* (1908) exemplified another of the many attempts that were made to emulate the success of Hepworth's dog films. In the film, the dog hero finds stolen jewellery, assists in the capture of burglars and helps his poor human companions who receive the £100 reward for the return of the gems. Such narratives placed the dog at the centre of the action and emphasised their intelligence and loyalty to deserving human companions. Despite the considerable number of shorts that featured canine heroes being produced by early film companies, it is apparent from the trade reports that cinema audiences did not seem to tire of such stories. Moreover, an intelligent dog could rescue not only a human on screen but also a weak narrative as the trade comments on *The Sheriff's Daughter* (1910) reveal. A commentary in *The Moving Picture World* was unimpressed with the story and regarded the film as having “little novelty” but expressed strong approval for “the intelligent work of the dog,” a German Shepherd named Blondy.¹¹

Other movies that featured heroic canines fared better in terms of their narrative innovation, but the focus of praise was often the dog's performance with little mention of the human co-stars. In 1910, an article on Lux films in *The Moving Picture World* was effusive in its review of *How the Dog Saved the Flag* (1910) in which “a wonderfully trained dog becomes the savior of the flag in time of warfare.”¹² The review referred to “the cleverness of this animal,” who, it noted “is virtually the hero of the piece,” something which the paper advised was “sufficient to stamp this particular film with the mark of success.”¹³ Importantly, the trade press remarked: “We have observed over and over again that ‘doggy’ subjects are always popular with an audience.”¹⁴

⁸ See Paul McDonald, *Hollywood Stardom* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013); Richard deCordova, *Picture Personalities: The Emergence of the Star System in America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990); Jennifer M. Bean, ed., *Flickers of Desire: Movie Stars of the 1910s* (London and New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2011).

⁹ For discussions of continuity editing in *Rescued by Rover* see Simon Pople and Joe Kember, *Early Cinema: From Factory Gate to Dream Factory* (London and New York: Wallflower, 2004); Sarah Street, *British National Cinema* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997); Bryony Dixon, “The Origins of British Cinema, 1895–1918” in *The Routledge Companion to British Cinema History*, ed. Ian Hunter (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 23–33.

¹⁰ “Pictures that Draw,” *The Moving Picture World*, February 1, 1908, 76.

¹¹ “The Sheriff's Daughter,” *The Moving Picture World*, June 25, 1910, 1102.

¹² “The Lux Films,” *The Moving Picture World*, January 8, 1910, 20.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Comments on *The Flag of Company "H"*, a Pathé production that bore remarkable narrative similarities to Lux's *How the Dog Saved the Flag*, noted how rare it was to find a dog with such intelligence and that the "success in finding one makes the pictures notable and overbalances any shortcomings [...]"¹⁵ The review of another Lux production, *The Sailor's Dog*, also released in 1910 pointed out that "[f]ilms which represent the sagacity of any animal are always interesting and always hold the attention of the audience. Something about such exhibitions appeals with especial strength and in nearly all cases brings hearty applause."¹⁶ Such was the popularity of "doggy subjects" that it is perhaps no surprise that by 1910, alongside the appearance of human stars, canine stars emerged from the same developing institutional infrastructure.

It is indicative of the shift in how dogs were discussed in the trade papers that an unnamed canine player who had featured in the popular Pathé film *Le chien emballé (Oh, You Doggie!)* in 1909 was, the following year, the named central subject of an article in *The Moving Picture World* about a flood at the Pathé Frères factory in Joinville le Pont.¹⁷ The move towards identifying an individual canine performer by name after 1910 paralleled the same shift in the identification of human stars. In the article the dog was referred to as the "well known" Francois, a watch dog in his off-screen life, who reportedly refused to leave his post despite the place being abandoned by the human employees as the flood waters rose.¹⁸ In the account, Francois stayed until the flood subsided and was found several days later in a boiler room where he had apparently rescued and protected the unnamed office cat. Such feats of "real" canine rescue mirrored the onscreen performances of bravery that audiences enjoyed and appeared to give some insight into the real life and personality of a well-known canine performer. Moreover, the discursive individuation of the dog was signalled in his naming, an appellation that the cat in the account was denied. In the case of animals generally and animal stars specifically, the act of naming had and continues to have currency; it signalled the individuation of an animal through the ascription of human social conventions, and in the context of star studies, it reflected the industry's acknowledgement of the desire of audiences to know more about the featured players onscreen.

Jean the Vitagraph Dog

In 1910, "The Vitagraph Girl," Florence Turner, and "The Biograph Girl," Florence Lawrence made public appearances and garnered significant attention from the trade journals as the nascent culture of movie stardom took shape. In the same year, another star, Jean the Vitagraph Dog, appeared in eight one- and two-reelers, three of which – *Her Mother's Wedding Gown*, *Jean Goes Fishing*, and *Jean the Match-Maker* – also starred Turner, The Vitagraph Girl. From Jean's eight appearances in Vitagraph films that year, five included her name in the title. In addition to those in which she starred with Turner, Jean featured as the lead player in *Jean and the Calico Doll*, *Jean Goes Foraging*, *Jean and the Waif*, *Where the Winds Blow*, and *A Tin-Type Romance*.

Jean was brought to Vitagraph by Laurence Trimble, an aspiring actor and writer. Trimble, an experienced dog trainer, directed all the "Jean films" as well as many of those starring Florence Turner and would go on to have further success with another dog star, a German Shepherd Dog

¹⁵ "Comments on the Films," *The Moving Picture World*, June 18, 1910, 1048.

¹⁶ "The Sailor's Dog," *The Moving Picture World*, March 10, 1910, 385.

¹⁷ "Pathé News," *The Moving Picture World*, March 26, 1910, 469.

¹⁸ Ibid.

called Strongheart, in the 1920s.¹⁹ It was however Jean and the “Jean films” that began Trimble’s movie career and gave audiences and film reviewers an understanding of what a canine performer could deliver to an onscreen role. Jean’s debut performance in *Her Mother’s Wedding Gown* was well received with *The Moving Picture World* reporting that “[t]he introduction of ‘Jean,’ the acting Scotch collie dog, into the picture is a great attraction and addition, giving an extra touch of real Highland life to this altogether distinctive picture.”²⁰ After *Her Mother’s Wedding Gown*, Jean continued to be identified by her name in the trade press and garnered most of the attention while her co-star Turner received little or no mention in the trade commentaries on Vitagraph dog stories.

In her second screen role, *Jean and the Calico Doll*, the movie was promoted by Vitagraph as a child story with Jean being referred to in promotion as “a wonderful canine assistant.” However, the trades did not regard it as a child story and in reports a month after its release, *Jean and the Calico Doll* was widely regarded as “a dog story, which has much interest, as all such stories do.”²¹ For *Jean the Match-Maker*, Vitagraph promoted the film as a love story “in which the wonderful dog ‘Jean’ again appears”²² and which the trade comments described as a “pleasantly diverting picture” in which “the dog performs her part to perfection.”²³ Later the same year in a review of *Jean Goes Fishing*, the paper noted that Jean “performs remarkable stunts” and described her as “an attractive feature [which] cannot fail to please any audience.”²⁴ By the end of 1910, she was referred to as the “famous dog Jean” and her public appearances were deemed worthy of comment.²⁵ For instance, reports of a Vitagraph Company event attended by several hundred employees, including their stock featured players, in February 1911 made special mention of her presence noting that “the great Vitagraph dog Jean” was “a popular guest at the dinner.”²⁶

Widely advertised alongside Maurice Costello, John Bunny, and Florence Turner as one of the members of the Vitagraph stock company²⁷ and later referred to as “the most famous dog of the day,”²⁸ Jean the Vitagraph Dog was a canine movie star. Although she was one of many well-trained dogs to appear on screen in the early years of cinema, Jean’s promotion as “The Vitagraph Dog” ascribed an equivalency between the collie and the emergent human stars of the day that the other canines did not achieve. Jean and Florence Turner appeared in a further five films together between 1911 and 1912: *Jean Rescues* (1911), *The Stumbling Block* (1911), *Auld Lang Syne* (1911), *Jean Intervenes* (1912), and *Signal of Distress* (1912). Jean’s final film for Vitagraph was a documentary short in which the collie dog appeared as herself in a film about the birth of her six puppies. The film no longer survives but it is clear from trade reports that the documentary short about a mother and her “children” served to fulfil a desire in audiences to access some glimpse into the real life of the celebrity canine. On the release of *Jean and her Family* in March 1913, *The Moving Picture World* wrote:

¹⁹ For an account of Trimble and Strongheart, see Kathryn Fuller-Seeley and Jeremy Groskopf, “The Dogs Who Saved Hollywood: Strongheart and Rin Tin Tin” in *Cinematic Canines: Dogs and Their Work in Fiction Film*, ed. Adrienne L. McLean, Kindle edition (New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2014), 1186–1668.

²⁰ “Notes of the Trade,” *The Moving Picture World*, August 1, 1910, 304.

²¹ “Comments on the Films,” *The Moving Picture World*, September 10, 1910, 575.

²² “Vitagraph advertisement,” *The Moving Picture World*, September 17, 1910, 664.

²³ “Jean the Match-Maker,” *The Moving Picture World*, October 1, 1910, 748.

²⁴ “Jean Goes Fishing,” *The Moving Picture World*, November 26, 1910, 1236.

²⁵ “Commentaries,” *The Moving Picture World*, December 10, 1910, 1360.

²⁶ “Vitagraph,” *The Moving Picture World*, February 25, 1911, 413.

²⁷ See “Vitagraph advertisement” in *Cinema News and Property Gazette*, May 1912, 23.

²⁸ “Miss Hayes and Films; Her First Appearance,” *New York Times*, March 15, 1931, 116.

Jean, the Vitagraph Dog, is a celebrated player. Her many appearances in Vitagraph Life Portrayals have made her so well known, she has become a moving picture celebrity. A few weeks ago there was only one Vitagraph Dog, and Jean still bears that distinction, although no doubt, since she has given birth to four sons and two daughters, we can soon look for several Vitagraph Dogs with the inherited talent of their mother.²⁹

The highly anticipated Vitagraph Dog family was not to be, however, and in 1913, various Vitagraph artists resigned, amongst them Laurence Trimble and Turner. Trimble's departure also signalled Jean's leaving Vitagraph and Trimble, Jean and Florence Turner moved to England in 1913. The same year, *The Cinema* carried advertisements for *Jean's Evidence* (1913), a short produced by The Turner Film Co. Ltd, featuring Florence Turner and Jean and described as "a sensational drama in two reels in which Jean plays the detective, saving the heroine's honour, and disclosing the real thieves."³⁰ At 1,800 feet in length, the film was, the advert claimed, "one long thrill from start to finish."³¹ Despite Jean being the canine companion of director and producer Trimble, publicity for the 1913 film leveraged the previous on-screen successes of Turner and Jean, claiming that the film presented "Miss Florence Turner and her Famous Dog, Jean."³² The advert featured photographic stills of both Turner and Jean with additional graphical reproductions of Jean's head in the top left and right corners of the full-page announcement. Such associations were to become commonplace in film promotion where a human co-star was referred to as the canine star's "owner," the relationships having similar marketable opportunities as human onscreen pairings. In her study of Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle and canine co-star Luke, Joanna Rapf explains how the relationships between human stars and canine performers became an important part of the individual dog's star image but points out that, other than Luke, virtually no canine stars "actually belonged to the actors with whom they worked."³³ This was true in Jean's case where film promotion referred to her as Florence Turner's dog but in accounts of her professional and private life, Trimble was reported as being Jean's owner and trainer.

In much the same way that early filmmakers had tried to copy Hepworth's success with *Rescued by Rover*, other companies attempted to emulate Vitagraph's success with Jean. The key difference between the two being that the earlier attempts to mimic the success of *Rescued by Rover* were primarily emulating the narrative while the later examples also promoted the featured canine player as a star performer with specific attributes that distinguished them from other dogs. Nestor Films promoted Blondy as "a most remarkable dog" who possessed "almost incredible intelligence."³⁴ Éclair Films America promoted the 1912 film *Man's Best Friend* as a "canine drama film" by Lawrence McGill and introduced "Gyp, the famous Blue Ribbon Pomeranian Dog, supported by a strong cast of Eclair Favorites."³⁵ Gyp's photographs and lithograph posters supplied to exhibitors pictured Gyp with two unnamed female performers, the promotion of a canine player who had already proven herself in the show ring apparently having greater appeal than that of the human performers. The same year, the Lux comedy, *A Mad Dog*, featured Ponto the pup, and Essanay produced *Dooley's Reward* with the eponymous canine depicted as a homeless dog who eventually finds a loving home after performing a feat of chivalry. Selig,

²⁹ "Jean and Her Family," *The Moving Picture World*, March 22, 1913, 1242.

³⁰ "Jean's Evidence advertisement," *Cinema News and Property Gazette*, August 27, 1913, 84–85.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Joanna E. Rapf, "Answering a Growl: Roscoe Arbuckle's Talented Canine Co-star, Luke" in *Cinematic Canines*, ed. Adrienne L. McLean, 899.

³⁴ "The Sheriff's Daughter advertisement," *The Moving Picture World*, June 18, 1910, 1072.

³⁵ "Man's Best Friend advertisement," *The Moving Picture World*, January 27, 1912, 265.

a company much better known for films that featured wild animals in dramatic safari hunt stories also promoted featured canines; Mazie, the dog, and Rex, the Selig dog. Such attempts to construct dog stars were, however, relatively unsuccessful in comparison to canine performers such as Teddy the Wonder Dog also known as Keystone Teddy, a featured player for Mack Sennett's studios, Thanhouse's Shep, and Luke, known as the Biograph Dog and teamed with his real-life human companion Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle. Trade newspapers such *The Moving Picture Weekly* included a regular feature that gave exhibitors useful ideas on how to drum up business and urged them to be creative in the creation of stunts using dogs that would draw audiences to theatres, especially where new releases that featured canine stars were being shown.³⁶ Thus, in addition to being onscreen performers, by 1917, dogs were also used heavily in film promotion stunts. Exhibitors were advised to "play that certain bet, a trained dog, as an advance notice and patronage getter"³⁷ and in another case to "obtain a large dog [...] and by means of two straps thrown across his back have a sign [...] hang from each side."³⁸ Where it was not possible to have the actual canine star of the film for promotional stunts, a similar looking stand-in would, the trades advised, generate significant public attention and draw audiences to the theatres.

Canine Stardom

While other animals, particularly wild animals, were considered to have great appeal for audiences, "doggy subjects" were common in early British, U.S. and French productions, and dogs rather than other species, were more frequently constructed as stars. There were multiple reasons why canines should have such an appeal for filmmakers and audiences. For the film companies, dogs had the benefits of availability and trainability. Beyond cinema, in the US, dog acts remained popular as vaudeville entertainment, there was an increase in pet ownership, and a growing interest in dog exhibition (also the subject of Vitagraph shorts) that strengthened public awareness of and interest in dog breeds. It is of note that between 1905 and 1914, the American Kennel Club formalised the rules around the exhibition of purebred dogs and developed reciprocal agreements with the UK Kennel Club that allowed for the export and registration of purebred dogs between the U.S. and UK. A purebred "dog fancy" had grown in popularity and was institutionalised in the form of national kennel clubs across western Europe at the beginning of the century, resulting in the formation of the Fédération Cynologique Internationale (FCI) in 1911, a federation of kennel clubs that included those in France, Germany, Belgium, Austria, and the Netherlands. These wider shifts reinforced the symbolic value of dogs as breeds wherein particular types of purebred dog were synonymous with national values and identity, and attitudes around "racial purity" in humans were played out through the discourses of "breed" in canines. Rapf argues that in silent film, performances by dogs such as Luke "reminded audiences of the virtues of moral behaviour and unselfish actions [...] where his bodily language could be the equal of the people with whom he shared the screen," a particular set of conditions that Rapf suggests "only enhanced his *human* appeal."³⁹ Jonathan Burt similarly argues about *Rescued by Rover* that the absence of language in silent film provided an equivalence between the dog and the audience in the sense that the dog is the "possessor of knowledge" and the audience share his understanding which is expressed visually and reinforced through action.⁴⁰ John Blewitt also makes the

³⁶ "Bluebird Ideas for *The Girl in the Checkered Coat*," *The Moving Picture World*, April 21, 1917, 35.

³⁷ "Putting It Over," *The Moving Picture Weekly*, April 28, 1917, 36.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Rapf, "Answering a Growl," 1115–1129.

⁴⁰ Jonathan Burt, *Animals in Film* (London: Reaktion, 2002), 116.

point that animal celebrity is, at least in part, built upon knowledge of the “biophilic bond” that humans have with other species, particularly dogs.⁴¹ The symbolic value of dogs was to become ideologically significant, forged through their privileged status within a burgeoning pet culture, the discursive connections between breed and human identity, and their humanisation within silent cinema that was enabled by narratives which endorsed circulating popular knowledge of dog sagacity and intelligence.

At the same time individual dogs were achieving fame in silent cinema, a talking dog had become a major star on the vaudeville circuit and was well-known to the public through press reports that had circulated in Germany, the UK, and the U.S. Don the talking dog appeared on the same bill as Harry Houdini and between 1910 and 1913 was so popular that he became a canine celebrity endorser for Maltoid Milk-Bone and the F. H. Bennett Biscuit Company. Promoted as an extraordinary canine who was able to speak eight words in German, Don’s abilities were reportedly tested by academics and found to be authentic. Canine stardom at the time was accordingly neither confined to the silent screen nor entirely dependent on the affective capacities of dog heroism in film narratives. Instead, the emergence of canine stars in both vaudeville and cinema at the same period in history indicates a wider public fascination with canine intelligence and dogs’ humanlike capacities. Moreover, Don the talking dog was one of a number of “talking animals” who were popular on the vaudeville circuit and the public enthusiasm for such acts was further bolstered by press reports of experiments by psychologists such as Lightner Witmer who claimed that some of the higher mammals might possess the same capacities of mind as humans.⁴²

With a general fascination in the similarities of intelligence between humans and other animals and the growth in public interest in pet-keeping and purebred dogs at the time, canine stardom leveraged audiences’ familiarity with dogs’ abilities in general and through the promotion and marketing discourses elevated individual dogs to the status of star; a potent combination of the ordinary and extraordinary that characterises the star persona. Stella Hockenull, in her discussion of animal stardom, refers to such animal stars as superindividuals, those who achieve a highly developed level of personification that embodies specific values and are attributed with additional human attributes that results in a blurring of the boundary between human and animal.⁴³ Such characteristics of the animal star relied on a developed familiarity in the audience with the ordinariness of another species out of which the extraordinariness of the individual could be constructed through the film narrative, performance, publicity, and marketing discourses.

In terms of their specific values, individual animal stars embody the idealised human social norms of a given time as well as reflecting a very human desire for affinities with the animal other who, by virtue of the apparatus of cinema, is granted an illusory agency. Animal trainers and wranglers are beyond the sight of the camera, continuity editing techniques construct the impression of self-motivated action onscreen and the promotional discourses provide the cultural context by which animal stars are understood as being granted human equivalency. This constellation of conditions, however, necessarily creates the illusion of autonomy to advance the progressive erasure of animal alterity. The construction of animal stardom must therefore contain and reduce the otherness of an animal while still maintaining a sense of their individual

⁴¹ John Blewitt, “What’s New Pussycat? A Genealogy of Animal Celebrity,” *Celebrity Studies* 4, no. 3 (2013): 328.

⁴² For a full account, see Molloy, *Popular Media and Animals*, 84–101.

⁴³ Stella Hockenull, “Celebrity Creatures: The ‘Starification’ of the Cinematic Animal” in *Revisiting Star Studies: Cultures, Themes and Methods*, ed. Sabrina Qiong Yu and Guy Austin (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 279–294.

extraordinariness that is reliant, in part, on the circulating common knowledge of their species norms. Animal stardom and the institutional conditions that construct it must therefore continually negotiate the balance between the alterity of animality and its erasure through the fantasy of agency.

Such framing can be applied to Jean who, in the construction of her star persona, was attributed not only with certain humanised attributes but also the specifically gendered qualities that would be considered admirable in a talented female actress of the time. In 1920, four years after Jean's death, an article in *Photoplay* included the author's recollection of meeting Jean and a vivid description of the dog's personality in an account that also underscores the importance of the construction of agency to animal stardom which I contend remains central to the development of the animal star persona generally. Moreover, the specificities of her agency and autonomy were built on her ascribed gendered attributes. The writer remarks on Jean's haughty character, her friendly manner in welcoming strangers to watch her rehearse and, significantly, her refusal of the director's demands:

The hero and the leading lady carried out his suggestions with the greatest promptness, even the camera-man obeyed him, but when he said to Jean: "Now, go and get the slipper," she merely raised her eyes to her own master, who was standing out of range of the camera, and gave him a look which seemed to say: "Doesn't that man know that I never pay any attention to anyone but you?"

The writer claims that Jean "made me feel as no one else had, that I was extremely welcome in the studio." The piece concludes with the observation that "[Jean] was even more unbending after business hours, and condescended to be even a little bit silly, and whisked her long fringed tail about. But then great artists must have their relaxation when the strain is over."⁴⁴

The account is an anthropomorphic interpretation of the encounter between the author and Jean, one that borrows from both the common understanding of human-canine "pet" relationships that readers would be familiar with, via a filter of feminised stardom in which the personality traits that the writer ascribes to Jean serve to confirm her star status. Agency is central to the star discourse in which Jean is described as making her own decisions about when and how she will perform, her ignoring the director being framed in the article as an acceptable and expected conceit when paired with her great talent, diligence to the role and loyalty to one man. The idealisation of Jean's feminine characteristics extends to her "letting her hair down" and behaving in a silly manner, traits that were specifically aligned with human femininity and implying a degree of coquettish playfulness. In this way, Jean's star qualities were organised via the wider norms of human identity and her stardom circulated as a mediated identity.

Animal Labour

In drawing attention to the processes of mediation, it is, as Paul McDonald rightly argues, vital that stardom is understood as a product of industrial conditions and that the symbolic commerce of stardom is situated within those highly organised systems of cultural production.⁴⁵ Accounts of Jean's working life as a star performer and the reports and short film about her becoming a mother illustrate what deCordova identifies as the discourses on the professional and private lives of the star, the latter of which he dates as emerging from 1913 onwards.⁴⁶ There is no doubt,

⁴⁴ "Author in Wonderland," *Photoplay*, October 1920, 129.

⁴⁵ McDonald, *Hollywood Stardom*.

⁴⁶ deCordova, *Picture Personalities*, 98.

however, that such discourses on animal stars were, as Jennifer Bean discusses in relation to human stars,⁴⁷ often playful and ironic in tone. It is therefore the case that animal stars were not treated in an especially trivial manner in promotion and marketing or that audiences naively consumed the animal star discourse but that the language and sensibilities of star discourses of the time were generally light-hearted, irrespective of the star's species. Despite such equivalence of discursive treatment, the agency of animal stars was and indeed is problematic inasmuch as the linguistic strategies that re-shape particular animal behaviours into ironic and appealing accounts of their professional exploits obscure the human presence of a trainer, the asymmetries of power, and the exploitation of animal labour as symbolic goods.

Industrial economic approaches to stardom draw attention to the material conditions of an industry that involves the collective activity of managers, publicists, marketers, agents, producers, and others. It is when we put animals in the frame that we must extend that roster of human labour to include trainers, wranglers, breeders, keepers, veterinarians, handlers and so forth. In addition, animal welfare legislation and public attitudes about the treatment of animals have an impact on animal stardom.⁴⁸ For these reasons, the commerce of animal stardom has its own discrete set of industrial dynamics and specialist workforce. Untangling such dynamics brings to light ethical considerations, not least of which are the training techniques that have, for much of Hollywood history, been relatively little discussed by either industry professionals or within academic studies. Indeed, promotion and marketing discourses that have shaped public understanding of the exceptional status of individual animals as stars have frequently occluded the material realities of those animals' labour within the entertainment industries.⁴⁹ As Kelly Wolf argues in her study of canine stardom, “[a]nimal stars are put through a system of routinized labor, labor that precisely becomes invisible once the animal star in question becomes commoditized through the system of studio publicity.” The animal's star identity, she proposes, is created from a combination of the stories in which they were featured, “the words of their trainers and owners, as well as the anthropomorphizing that audiences were encouraged to accept as part of these various discourses.”⁵⁰ Marketing discourses, where they acknowledge the presence of a trainer, often construct them as an interpreter and biographer, telling elaborate stories about how individual animals arrive in Hollywood and recounting impressive anecdotes about their superior intelligence and acting ability.⁵¹ Where narratives ask audiences to invest in the agency, autonomy and “humanlike” heroism of an animal onscreen, the conditions of constructing those identifications are made precarious offscreen where an individual animal's behaviour cannot be managed in the same way during, for instance, public appearances and press calls. Part of the human management of animal precarity involves a reliance on a discourse of talent, a set of attributes that separate the animal star from others of their species and in doing so distances them from their animality.⁵² Studios have therefore used the publicity discourse as a means by which the illusion of autonomy is maintained offscreen; a reworking of the dynamic between animal and trainer that obscures the realities of animal labour.⁵³

⁴⁷ Jennifer M. Bean, “Introduction: Stardom in the 1910s” in *Flickers of Desire*, ed. Jennifer M. Bean, 4.

⁴⁸ Molloy, *Popular Media and Animals*, 42.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Kelly Wolf, “Promoting Lassie: The Animal Star and Constructions of ‘Ideal’ American Heroism” in *Cinematic Canines*, ed. Adrienne L. McLean, 2226–2357.

⁵¹ Molloy, *Popular Media and Animals*, 40–63.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 46.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

Conclusion

The peculiar dynamics of animal stardom continue to be underpinned by asymmetries of power between human and nonhuman animal and the ongoing commodification of animal labour and its material consequences raises ethical questions. In the context of contemporary neoliberal capitalism, the issue of commodification and audience consumption of stars marks out a stark difference between human and animal stars. Paul MacDonald describes how symbolic forms become commodities when their symbolic value is realised in the marketplace: “symbolic works become ‘symbolic goods.’”⁵⁴ He goes on to explain that “stars are not directly symbolic commodities because [...] consumers cannot actually buy stars” but, instead “[s]tardom is used as a strategy to induce consumers to pay for a ticket or buy or rent a video unit.”⁵⁵ In the case of animal stars, the commodification of their labour can be consumed through the same mechanisms of ticket buying and their symbolic value is realised as a symbolic good through ancillary markets where stuffed toys and other licensed products that use the animal star image can be purchased. Where the animal star differs significantly to the human star in terms of commodification is in the secondary markets that exploit an individual animal’s popular appeal. In this way, the pet trade becomes annexed to the primary market for the star’s symbolic value and exploits that worth in the selling of live animals. From the earliest examples of canine stars discussed in this article, the popularity of certain dogs in cinema has resulted in trends for particular breeds, the results of which have been welfare issues that include breeding and overbreeding to meet demand and notable increases in those popular breeds being surrendered to rescue.⁵⁶ In the case of “wild” or “exotic” animals, there is strong evidence that popular representations of animals, both live and animated, contribute to an illegal pet trade that has consequences for species populations and in some cases, biodiversity.⁵⁷ The commodification of animal labour and the legal status of animals as “property” enables audiences to buy their own Lassie, Dory, Nemo, Beethoven, Hooch, or Pongo (*101 Dalmatians*, 1996); the act of consumption is endorsed by the norms of pet-keeping practices and sustained by an established infrastructure of breeders, animal traders, pet shops and so forth, able to quickly respond to demand and exploit such opportunities. In this situation, the symbolic value accrued to an animal star is transferred to another individual who can then be purchased as the star’s analogue. Underpinning the attraction of animal stars is their humanlike quality, the sense that they are superindividuals, their extraordinariness being constructed through a carefully negotiated balance between the erasure of animal alterity and their progressive anthropomorphisation. The conditions of animal stardom have many dimensions that overlap with those of human stardom. For this reason, extant theorisation of stars and star systems provides an important framework for their critical interrogation. The differences between human and animal stardom however make it crucial that such questions are also viewed through a critical lens that continues to ask not only what animal stars might tell us about human

⁵⁴ McDonald, *Hollywood Stardom*, 16.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ For a discussion of this, see Molloy, *Popular Media and Animals*, 11–12.

⁵⁷ For a discussion of this issue, see Claire Parkinson, “Fears for Blue Tang Fish Spike in the Wake of Finding Dory,” *The Conversation*, August 3, 2016, <https://theconversation.com/fears-for-blue-tang-fish-spike-in-the-wake-of-finding-dory-61551>; Carla Litchfield, “Dear Santa, Please Don’t Deliver Exotic Pets for Christmas,” *The Conversation*, December 24, 2012, <https://theconversation.com/dear-santa-please-dont-deliver-exotic-pets-for-christmas-11158>; Claire Parkinson, “Les bestioles des dessins animés ne sont pas des animaux compagne!” *The Conversation*, May 5, 2016, <https://theconversation.com/les-bestioles-des-dessins-animes-ne-sont-pas-des-animaux-de-compagnie-58871>.

identity but also how those same constructions and the industrial systems that produce them impact the material lives of nonhuman animals.

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The Threat of Male Star-Gazing and Over-Exposure in *Eyes Wide Shut*

Abstract | Stanley Kubrick's final film *Eyes Wide Shut* premiered twenty years ago, banking on the combined star-power of Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman. Reflecting on her husband's film, Christiane Kubrick insightfully notes that the leads "took more than their clothes off; they took off their skin." The Hollywood couple concurred: in Kidman's words, "there is reality and there is pretend and those lines get crossed." Whether or not, as Tom Cruise claims, this was "definitely something [Kubrick] counted on and wanted," the film's marketing campaign and promotional press play to this promise. Moreover, Cruise's performance of Bill Harford artfully invokes the actor's own fraught performance of heteronormativity to further engage the character's crisis of masculinity and the threat of male erotic objectification more generally.

Keywords | gaze – heteronormativity – Stanley Kubrick – masculinity – scopophilia – Tom Cruise – voyeurism

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Stanley Kubrick's final film *Eyes Wide Shut* premiered twenty years ago, banking on the combined star-power of Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman. In an interview reflecting on her husband's film, Christiane Kubrick insightfully notes that the leads "took more than their clothes off; they took off their skin."¹ The Hollywood couple concurred: in Kidman's words, "there is reality and there is pretend and those lines get crossed."² Whether or not, as Tom Cruise claims, this was "definitely something [Kubrick] counted on and wanted," the film's marketing campaign and promotional press, "promises two dramas: that which is scripted and staged, but also, that we very much hope, which will be glimpsed between the scenes, behind the masks – the drama of the real couple themselves."³ Still, this formulation of "two dramas" perhaps too neatly divides the compounded spectacles; rather, the extra-diegetic star-gazing and intra-diegetic scopophilia intersect in *Eyes Wide Shut* to expose the conditions of the male spectacle and produce an allegory

¹ *The Last Movie: Stanley Kubrick and Eyes Wide Shut*. 1999. DVD. Warner Bros. Entertainment, 2007.

² There was public speculation that Kubrick's supposedly invasive techniques led to the famous couple's divorce. I am not trying to lend credence to this theory, but it does remain part of the film's lore. Kidman addressed this speculation in an interview with the *Hollywood Reporter*: "People thought that making the film was the beginning of the end of my marriage, but I don't really think it was. [...] Onscreen, the husband and wife are at odds, and Stanley wanted to use our marriage as a supposed reality. That was Stanley: He used the movie as provocation, pretending it was our sex life – which we weren't oblivious to, but obviously it wasn't us." Merle Ginsberg, "Nicole Kidman on Life with Tom Cruise Through Stanley Kubrick's Lens," *The Hollywood Reporter*, October 24, 2012, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/nicole-kidman-stanley-kubricks-lens-382186>.

³ Jane Alison, "Stanley Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut*: A Masque in Disguise," *Post Script* 23 (2003): 6.

of the gaze. Drawing on Steve Neale's conception of "masculinity as spectacle"⁴ and, thereby Laura Mulvey's understanding of "the nature of the gaze,"⁵ I suggest that Tom Cruise's "scripted and staged" performance of Bill Harford artfully invokes the actor's own fraught performance of heteronormativity to further engage the character's crisis of masculinity and the threat of male erotic objectification more generally.⁶

The film's self-reflexive casting teases the audience with voyeuristic fantasies of Cruise and Kidman. The film's trailer, for example, is inter-cut with black screens boasting in bold letters "CRUISE" and then (after a back-shot of Alice dropping her dress) "KIDMAN." In fact, the film's tagline – "Cruise. Kidman. Kubrick." – opts not to address the film's story but rather the stories circulating about the film. The intra-diegetic scopophilia of the memorable masquerade or orgy scene at the suburban villa enhances the "illusion of looking in a private world,"⁷ while maintaining the metafictional awareness of Tom Cruise's performance.⁸ Cloaked, masked, and ostensibly anonymous, Tom Cruise as Bill Harford invites narcissistic identification with both the male protagonist and the Hollywood super-star. Doubly marked as the "more perfect, more complete, more powerful ideal ego," Bill's image is "dependent upon narcissistic phantasies," with both the wealthy and authoritative male doctor as well as the Hollywood heavy-weight.⁹ Bill's disguise conveniently allows audiences to imagine themselves behind the mask as they partake in a supposedly "hermetically sealed world that unwinds magically, indifferent to the presence of the audience, producing for them a sense of separation and playing on their voyeuristic fantasy."¹⁰ However, if cinema indulges disavowal and allows spectators to simultaneously recognize and misrecognize the action as truly real, *Eyes Wide Shut's* self-reflexivity further disrupts this "sense of separation" by spot-lighting the actors' real life personas.¹¹ In addition to the film's development of narcissistic identification "around a main controlling figure with whom the [implicitly male] spectator can identify,"¹² the film's intra- and extra-diegetic scopophilia also demands erotic contemplation of Bill/Cruise as "the object of an erotic gaze," thereby threatening the "phantasies of power, omnipotence, mastery and control."¹³

During the ritual orgy scene, the "Tall Butler" (played by co-producer Brian Cook) ushers Bill to center stage, where the "Chief Examiner" (played by casting director Leon Vitali) orders Bill to undress and expose himself – both meta-textually and diegetically enacting "the (unstated) thesis [...] that in a heterosexual and patriarchal society, the male body cannot be marked explicitly as the erotic object of another male look: that look must be motivated in some other

⁴ Steve Neale, "Masculinity as Spectacle: Reflections on Men and Mainstream Cinema," *Screen* 24, no. 6 (1983): 2–16.

⁵ Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," in *Film and Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Robert Stam and Toby Miller (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 483–509.

⁶ While Neale's essay focuses on the visual tropes of westerns and action movies, rather than erotic dramas, its insights and challenges to Mulvey's better known essay are relevant and valuable in this context.

⁷ Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," 486.

⁸ It is also worth noting that the viewer's scopophilia around Bill/Cruise's level of exposure is additionally heightened by Warner Brothers' controversial decision to digitally insert additional nude figures in order to obscure some of the sexual spectacle in the scene, and thereby avoid an NC-17 rating for the film's original theatrical release – as many viewers coming to the film with knowledge of that controversy would already be *looking harder* at the scene in question.

⁹ Neale, "Masculinity as Spectacle," 8.

¹⁰ Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," 486.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*, 488.

¹³ Neale, "Masculinity as Spectacle," 5.

way, its erotic component repressed.”¹⁴ Because of the homoerotic implications, the scene must disavow Bill/Cruise as spectacle in order to maintain the spectator’s narcissistic identification and pleasure. Despite the Chief Examiner’s sexual insinuations (“Remove your clothes, or would you like us to.”), the scene stifles the homoeroticism by forcefully emphasizing Bill’s discomfort and interest in one of the women. Moreover, Bill/Tom’s subjection to the gaze is not only justified by the story, but it is explicitly tense and underscored with the “sado-masochism themes, scenes and phantasies” that often defend against unmediated objectification of the male body.¹⁵ Watching Bill literally *caught in the act* recalls Freud’s analysis of the fantasy “A Child is Being Beaten” wherein taboo pleasure (in this case male-gazing) must be packaged with punishment.¹⁶ As Richard Dyer argues, “many male pin-ups counteract this passive, objectifying tendency by having the model tauten his body, glare at or away from the viewer, and look as if he is caught in action or movement.”¹⁷ Like the male pin-ups, Cruise’s trademark furrowed-brow seems to defensively deflect the gaze or at least express unease.

Until this confrontation, the scene is notably “marked not only by emotional reticence, but also silence, a reticence with language.”¹⁸ Although the song “Strangers in the Night” plays in the background, the characters themselves are virtually silenced by masks that expose their eyes but cover their mouths; in fact, they only speak during the scene to express danger and disruption (“You don’t belong here. [...] Please don’t be foolish about this. You must leave at once.”). Considering “the acquisition of language is a process profoundly challenging to the narcissism of early childhood,” Neale connects “this silence, this absence of language” common to male movie performances to the “construction of an ideal ego.”¹⁹ When positioned at center stage of the ritual orgy and asked for the “second password,” Bill experiences this “symbolic castration” and must confront his own “lack” through language. As Neale explicates, “language is a process (or set of processes) involving absence and lack, and these are what threaten any image of the self as totally enclosed, self-sufficient, omnipotent.”²⁰ Also, by removing his mask, Bill is therefore lacking. Having invested in Bill as the ideal ego, the spectator is also vulnerable to these “feelings of castration;” however, looming behind Bill’s failure to convincingly “act the part,” is Tom Cruise – the film’s male “‘model’ with which the subject identifies and to which it aspires.”²¹ In other words, while Bill dons the mask of the actor and fails to deliver his lines, Tom Cruise – standing before the film’s casting director for a meta-fictional screening – performs his role with sufficient virtuosity as to be convincing (absent) but not entirely self-effacing (present).

By casting the co-producer and casting director into the scene, the film stages a meta-narrative highlighting these audience expectations. As Susan Hayward explains, “if the impersonation gets to the point where the disguise prevents the signs of the star from being read, so that the star to all intents and purposes ‘dis-appears,’ the audience feels ‘cheated’ of the process of spectator recognition, an essential component of the star-image.”²² In this sense, Tom Cruise, the iconic

¹⁴ Ibid., 8.

¹⁵ Ibid., 5.

¹⁶ Sigmund Freud, *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love*, ed. Philip Rieff (New York: Collier Books, 1963), 97–122.

¹⁷ Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 113.

¹⁸ Neale, “Masculinity as Spectacle,” 7.

¹⁹ Ibid., 7.

²⁰ Ibid. Later in the film Victor Ziegler (Sydney Pollack) tries to convince Bill that the entire scene was a “charade” and that “there was not a second password.” On the one hand, this implies that the scene itself was “totally enclosed” with “omnipotent” over-sight; however, on the other hand, it also insinuates that there is no all-knowing Other. That is, there is no answer; there is no password.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Susan Hayward, *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 384.

star, becomes a fetish object to preserve the spectator's narcissistic identification: his present absence "points to the simultaneously impossible and possible nature of that desire, which is also a feature of fetishism (desiring that which cannot be had – what is absent, adulating a fixed object – the star or icon present up on screen)."²³ In the intersecting spectacles of Bill and Cruise, "one can now see what the fetish achieves and how it is enabled to persist. It remains a token of triumph over the threat of castration and a safeguard against it."²⁴ Moreover, staging Cruise as a "real-life" fetish object undermines the disavowal of Bill as a male spectacle. Instead, the double-masquerade compounds the spectacles to illustrate the simultaneous recognition and misrecognition of masculine objectification. By taking Cruise as a fetish object, the supposed male spectator experiences a feeling of "homoeroticism and of a feminizing of the male body."²⁵ That is, once Tom Cruise removes his mask and "once masculinity is seen as a put-on, mere style, its phallic imposture is exposed as such and so delegitimated."²⁶

Staving off Bill's *over-exposure*, a masked and topless woman shouts from the balcony, "Stop! Let him go. Take me. I am ready to *redeem* him." This interruption serves as "a means by which the male body may be disqualified so to speak, as an object of erotic contemplation and desire."²⁷ Notably, the camera pans quickly to the woman and freezes on her image *before* she speaks, as though anticipating her intervention, perhaps supporting Ziegler's claim that the entire incident was staged. In this moment, the film and the diegetic charade intersect at the woman's body. Fore-fronting the woman's "to-be-looked-at-ness," the shot redirects the looming danger (the "threat of castration and hence unpleasure") to the woman's image. By diverting the fetishistic gaze from Tom Cruise, the phallic woman re-inscribes Bill/Cruise as the ideal ego now appropriate for narcissistic identification. Of course, the sight of the nearly nude woman also poses a castration threat, which is averted by the large feathery phallic mask that allows the "experience of seeing the female parts with an unchanged belief in the woman having a phallus." Following Freud, this "redeemer" furthermore "saves the fetishist from being a homosexual by endowing women with the attribute which makes them acceptable as sexual objects."²⁸ The masks, then, "suggest that because sexuality, like gender, is organized around the phallus in our culture, there can be no escaping phallic effects, no 'authentic' non-phallic desires or identities which would originate beyond (or perhaps before) the phallus and its signifiers."²⁹ That is to say, the characters/stars were always already masquerading – a point made explicit in the film's meta-fictional discourse.

Combined with the masks, the overabundance of almost identical women's breasts "builds up the physical beauty of the object, transforming it into something satisfying in itself" that can allay the threat of castration and male erotic objectification. In fact, glossing Lacan, Lapsley, and Westlake posit breasts as the "most obvious prototype" of *l'objet petit a* or "that which will overcome the lack, the missing component."³⁰ By concealing the women's faces and revealing their breasts, the film encourages the spectator to scrutinize the women's fragmented bodies in order to determine the identity of the mysterious "redeemer." Kubrick explicitly implicates the spectator in this fetishistic gaze by casting two very similar looking women to play the same

²³ Ibid., 382.

²⁴ Freud, *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love*, 216.

²⁵ Hayward, *Cinema Studies*, 384.

²⁶ Carole-Anne Tyler, "Boys Will Be Girls: The Politics of Gay Drag," in *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, ed. Diana Fuss (New York: Routledge, 1991), 32.

²⁷ Neale, "Masculinity as Spectacle," 8.

²⁸ Freud, *Sexuality and the Psychology of Love*, 216.

²⁹ Tyler, "Boys Will Be Girls," 32.

³⁰ Robert Lapsley and Michael Westlake, *Film Theory: An Introduction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 68.

role,³¹ thereby figuring the women's breasts as the key to solving the story's mystery and foregrounding the ways in which

mainstream cinema, in its assumptions of a male norm, perspective and look, can constantly take women and the female image as its object of investigation, [but] has rarely investigated men and the male image in the same kind of way: women are a problem, a source of anxiety, of obsession enquiry; men are not. Where women are investigated men are tested. Masculinity, as an ordeal, at least, is implicitly known. Femininity, by contrast, a mystery.³²

According to Neale, "this is one of the reasons why the representation of masculinity, both inside and outside the cinema, has been so rarely discussed."³³ *Eyes Wide Shut* engages and entertains this lack in discourse by calling attention to these conventions and disrupting their stability. After all, Bill's "test" at the orgy is laced with sexual "anxiety" and seeped in Tom Cruise's fetishistic masculinity.

Throughout the film, Bill's sexuality is a repressed, absent presence: even as most scenes tend toward a sexual encounter as they might in pornography, there is always a distraction that prevents consummation and suspends the fantasy of seeing Bill/Cruise as a sexual object. In a Lacanian sense, "desire is in pursuit of an eternally lost object, it is more accurate to say that fantasy sustains rather than satisfies desire, that it is the staging or mise en scène of desire rather than its fulfillment."³⁴ Piquing interest and prolonging anticipation, the film perpetually postpones a sex scene with Tom Cruise, highlighting the spectator's conflicted desire to both view Tom Cruise fetishistically and also maintain his image as the masculine ideal ego.³⁵ By spot-lighting Tom Cruise's image, Kubrick offers an allegory of the gaze and male spectacle.

Kubrick also foils this deferral of the male spectacle with Kidman's character Alice, who casually slips off her dress in the opening shot of the film, immediately claiming and disclaiming the female spectacle as the film's primary preoccupation. While the film certainly fetishizes the female body, the film's underlying scopophilic drive is directed toward Tom Cruise and the possibility of voyeuristically viewing the couple as the previews promised. Once again, this possibility is suspended as Bill embarks on his own sexual odyssey, "shot through with nostalgia, with an obsession with images and definitions of masculinity and masculine codes of behavior, and with images of male narcissism."³⁶ While cinema conventionally invokes these nostalgic images in order to mediate masculinity and divert any homoeroticism from the process of spectator identification, *Eyes Wide Shut* explicitly sexualizes traditional "images and definitions of masculinity" before heterosexual and homosexual gazes. Specifically, Kubrick tethers Bill's authority and masculinity to his role as a "handsome doctor," and then repeats that fact until it nears a pornographic trope (not unlike the "sexy sailor" or "man in uniform" in Alice's fantasy). Consider, for example, the following exchange between Bill and two female models at Ziegler's party:

³¹ Despite Ziegler's explanation that they are the same person, Abigail Good plays the "Mysterious Woman" while Julianne Davis plays the part of Mandy. I do not think this necessarily forecloses Ziegler's claim; on the contrary, I think that by casting different women, Kubrick provokes a more intense scrutiny of the women's bodies and smartly highlights the "nature of the gaze" in mainstream cinema.

³² Neale, "Masculinity as Spectacle," 16.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Lapsley and Westlake, *Film Theory: An Introduction*, 93.

³⁵ The film is, by comparison, littered with flashes from Bill's projected fantasies of Alice/Kidman's potential affair.

³⁶ Neale, "Masculinity as Spectacle," 10.

- Do you know what's so nice about doctors?
- Usually a lot less than people imagine.
- They always seem so... knowledgeable.
- Oh, they are very knowledgeable... about all sorts of things.

Not only does Bill play-up his profession to seduce women in the film, he readily whips out his medical card to open doors and win the favor of male characters, often arousing homoerotic undertones. In a flirtatious exchange with the gay hotel clerk, Bill piques the man's interest revealing himself as a doctor; although the dialogue does not explicitly voice any direct sexual advancements, the body language and subtext is unmistakable. Nevertheless, Bill's engagement in the flirtation is excused by the narrative imperative – both avowing and disavowing the homoeroticism.

For critic Jane Alison, Bill's "comic, constant assertions that he is a doctor [...] somehow demand the retort, No, no, you're an actor."³⁷ In fact, the parallels in the film are quite significant. Not only does his medical license afford Bill constant privileges and a certain celebrity status, it also gives him license to supposedly approach the body un-erotically and with professional distance – not unlike an actor. Alice's line of questioning about her husband's "professionalism" makes this connection between actor and doctor most explicit: "It's all very impersonal [...] So when you're feeling tits, it's nothing more than your professionalism?" Of course, the dialogue is easily imaginable between the real-life couple. As Alison argues, "these aspects of the film keep reminding us of the existence of Cruise himself, not Bill Harford, forcing us to see at the same moment both the character and the actor behind the character, and so dissolving the dramatic illusion. Yet we, the curious audience, are implicated in this double vision because we wanted it: we wanted a film that would expose to us the sex-lives of these stars."³⁸ Just as Bill claims that his professionalism mediates and forecloses his erotic contemplation of female patients, under the guise of narrative situational imperative, the potentially homo-erotic gaze toward Bill/Cruise is defensible and "strictly-professional." In the words of Bill, "there is always a nurse present" – or in the case of the film, an attractive female to mediate and deflect the gaze from the male spectacle. Likewise, if Bill's gaze is mediated through the patient's who is "worried about what he might find," the spectator's gaze toward the male protagonist is also "heavily mediated by the looks of the characters involved. And those looks are marked not by desire, but rather by fear, or hatred, or aggression."³⁹

Tom Cruise's own fraught performance of heterosexuality compounds the implicit homoeroticism that demands disavowal of the male spectacle. In 1998, a year before the film's release, Cruise won a libel case against the *Daily Express* for falsely asserting that Cruise and Kidman's marriage was merely a cover for Cruise's homosexuality.⁴⁰ In his article "Cruising Cruise" for *Salon.com*, Christopher Kelly addresses the public speculation about Cruise's sexual orientation and his status as a "gay icon:" "Cruise has repeatedly – and vehemently – denied these rumors, including taking successful legal action against a London newspaper that called his marriage to Nicole Kidman a put-on. But still they persist – to the point where one wonders if the actor's work isn't feeding them. Has Cruise (consciously or unconsciously) been telegraphing gay signals that audiences (consciously or unconsciously) have been picking up on?"⁴¹ I suggest, like Neale,

³⁷ Alison, "A Masque in Disguise," 6.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Neale, "Masculinity as Spectacle," 14.

⁴⁰ "Cruise and Kidman Win Libel Case," *news.bbc.co.uk*, October 29, 1998, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/203779.stm>.

⁴¹ Christopher Kelly, "Cruising Cruise," *Salon.com*, June 30, 1999, <https://www.salon.com/1999/06/30/cruise/>.

that this supposed latent homoeroticism is a symptomatic response to the “repression of male erotic contemplation.”⁴² *Eyes Wide Shut* self-reflexively addresses this repression, making legible the demands of mainstream cinema. Walking down the street late at night after a house call, Bill passes a group of young men who taunt him with homophobic slurs. Outside the context of repressed masculine eroticism – not only the comments – but the scene itself seems unprovoked. However, as Neale argues, “male homosexuality is constantly present as an undercurrent, as a potentially troubling aspect of many films and genres, but one that is dealt with obliquely, symptomatically, and that has to be repressed.”⁴³ Again, later in the film, a gay hotel clerk flirts with Bill and, although nothing in the dialogue signals an explicit sexual advancement, the body language and tone further establish the latent homoeroticism. As Jane Alison critically notes, “this [homosexual] slant, nonexistent in the novella [“Traumnovelle”], seems only to bring Tom Cruise the actor and gossipy suspicions about him to the surface.”⁴⁴ Again, by highlighting Tom Cruise the actor, the film productively explores the tension between narcissistic identification and repressed erotic contemplation in the male cinematic spectacle.

The very etymology of the word “speculations” already indicates the cultural contemplation and observation of Tom Cruise’s image. By bringing this to bear on the film’s portrayal of Bill, Kubrick critiques the simultaneous recognition and misrecognition that disavows the masculine spectacle while attending closely to the masculine reflection – the negotiation between presence and absence inherent in the image of the “star.” As Hayward explains, “gay stars are the most vulnerable in relation to the instability of the star-image because they must conceal even more than the straight star. They must convince through their performance that their appearance is ‘really real;’ their performance is a double masquerade.”⁴⁵ *Eyes Wide Shut*’s self-reflexivity positions Tom Cruise to re-assert his own heterosexuality through his acting performance, thereby either effacing himself as an actor, or exposing himself as a performer. The fact that Bill never actually has sex in the film seems to address this double-bind: on the one hand this lack may support speculations of his repressed homosexuality (or at least do little to quell them); on the other hand, had he satisfied the spectator’s scopophilic interest, he would face the threat of homoerotic contemplation by the prototypical male spectator. Instead, the film spot-lights these structures of looking and self-consciously suspends this scopophilic fantasy. The film ends with Kidman matter-of-factly declaring that they go home and “fuck,” prompting the screen’s blackout. That is, the film’s final word ends where the teasers began. In order to maintain a male protagonist with whom the spectator can identify narcissistically while upholding heteronormativity, the erotic gaze must be repressed and deflected: this central scene must occur *off camera* with “*Eyes Wide Shut*.”

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⁴² Neale, “Masculinity as Spectacle,” 16.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Alison, “A Masque in Disguise,” 6.

⁴⁵ Hayward, *Cinema Studies*, 379.

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The Economic Structure of the Yeşilçam Period's Star System in Turkish Cinema

Abstract | This study proposes that the Yeşilçam period (1960–1989) introduced the star system into Turkish cinema. The star system is analysed in light of Turkish cinema's economic and film production systems, specifically during the Yeşilçam period. The production, distribution and exhibition of Turkish cinema was a historical process whose emergence as a formal economic sector took place between 1960 and 1975. The focus of the study is on the Yeşilçam period's star system and economic structure.

Keywords | Turkish cinema – stardom – star system – Yeşilçam

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Introduction

The first movie screening during the Ottoman period took place in 1896, but it wasn't until 1917 that the empire produced its own first feature film. Due to the country's political, cultural and economic situation between 1917 and 1948, the number of "Turkish films" – and thus the number of actors – was relatively low. Until the late 1940s, Turkish cinema showed mostly European and American films, with only 43 Turkish films being made before the end of World War II. Turkish cinema was not profitable for movie producers until 1948, when the 32% tax rate was relaxed. After this tax break, an indigenous film industry based on private capital and enterprise began to take shape on Yeşilçam Sokak (Green Pine Street) in Beyoğlu, Istanbul. With the rapid expansion of film companies, domestic films, movie theatres and audiences, cinema ceased to be an elitist, urban activity and became popular entertainment, even spreading to small Anatolian villages by the 1950s.¹ Despite these developments, the star system did not emerge until the 1960s, as Turkish film production styles and the demand for cinema provided inadequate conditions.

The star system was actually created by the public, who were fully in charge of its development.² According to Benjamin Hampton and Frank Woods, the public's desire for movie stars is the prime determinant of the star system: "As soon as the star system appeared on the screen the consumer had thrown the manufacturer and the exhibitor out of the driver's seat [...]. Ever thereafter the whimsical, mercurial, merciless populace would decide the course its entertainment should follow."³ The audience created their stars by voting for them at the box office, and in doing so asserted their freedom from and control over the production process. Only through an examination of what made an actor into a movie star can one understand the emergence of

¹ Dilek Kaya-Mutlu, "Bringing Stars Home: Yesilcam Cinema from the Perspective of Audience Letters" (paper presented at international conference *The Glow in Their Eyes: Global Perspectives on Film Cultures, Film Exhibition and Cinemagoing*, Brussels, Belgium, December 14–16, 2007).

² Richard deCordova, *Picture Personalities: The Emergence of the Star System in America* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 3.

³ *Ibid.*, 6.

the star system,⁴ which is composed of both discursive and economic practices. This study will focus principally on the economic aspects.

The 1960s film production system was called the Yeşilçam type in Turkey. Yeşilçam soon became Turkey's "little Hollywood," boasting its own genres and star system. Yeşilçam gave its name to a Turkish Hollywood but it did not operate as a kind of studio system in the American sense. It began creating its own star and film production systems. Yeşilçam's heyday occurred between 1960 and 1975, producing between 200 and 300 films annually. In 1966, Turkey produced 229 films, placing it fourth globally in film productivity behind Japan, India and Hong Kong.⁵

The Yeşilçam period was star driven. Stars such as Türkan Şoray, Hülya Koçyiğit, Fatma Girik, Filiz Akın, Yılmaz Güney, Göksel Arsoy, Ediz Hun, etc. all contributed to the formation and continuation of the 1960s Turkish public's movie-going habits. Regional distributors (*bölge işletmecileri*), the most influential figures in the system, commissioned films with specific stars whose previous movies had been profitable in their region. They could also demand changes in plot and casting, altering films to feature a given star or alterations to the story might be made to preserve a star's social image. The Yeşilçam period thus ushered in a new star system in Turkey, and this system continued creating new stars.

The star system began in 1960 but stars fell back into being simple celebrities after the 1980s when the Yeşilçam film production mechanisms and economic structures – the main drivers of the star system – ended. This study proposes that the Yeşilçam period (1960–1989) saw the emergence of the star system in Turkish cinema. The star system itself will be analysed in light of Turkish cinema's economic and film production systems, specifically during the Yeşilçam period. The focus will be on the Yeşilçam period's stars and stardom, particularly its female stars.

This study hypothesizes that the authenticity of the Turkish star system came from the Turkish cinema's economic structure and film production system. The goal is to investigate the authenticity of these systems as they pertain to the Yeşilçam period.

The Early Republic (1896–1922)

Before the advent of cinema as we know it today, devices such as the kinoscope and magic lantern were used to create the appearance of moving images.⁶ The Ottoman Empire first encountered the magic lantern (*Sihir-i Sirâcî*) via the translated writings of Ahmed Midhat Efendi published in *Mir'ât-ı Âlem* magazine on June 11, 1882.⁷ Ottomans later became aware of cinema through news of the magic lantern published in *Servet-i Fünun* magazine on December 28, 1895.⁸ The *cinématographe*, a primitive film projector invented by Auguste and Louis Lumière in the 1890s, entered the Empire in 1896 as a scientific invention that promised great utility for humanity.⁹ Ayşe Osmanoğlu, daughter of Sultan Abdülhamid II, recounts in her memoirs that there were *cinématographe* screenings at Yıldız Palace in late 1896. The brief, minute-long films were

⁴ Gönül Dönmez-Colin, *Turkish Cinema: Identity, Distance and Belonging* (London: Reaktion, 2008), 9.

⁵ Dilek Kaya-Mutlu, "Between Tradition and Modernity: Yeşilçam Melodrama, Its Stars, and Their Audiences," *Middle Eastern Studies* 46, no. 3 (2010): 417.

⁶ Giovanni Scognamillo, *Bir Levanter Şövalye* (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası, 2008), 2.

⁷ Murat Cankara, "Ahmed Midhat Efendi'nin Kaleminde Büyülü Fener," *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 263 (2015): 88.

⁸ Ali Özuyar, *Sessiz Dönem Türk Sinema Antolojisi (1895–1928)* (İstanbul: Küre, 2015), 5.

⁹ Nezih Erdoğan, "Bir Seyirci Yapmak: 1896–1928 Arası İstanbul'da Sinema ve Modernlik," in *İstanbul Nereye?: Küresel Kent, Kültür, Avrupa*, ed. Deniz Göktürk, Levent Sosyal, and İpek Türel (Istanbul: Metis, 2010), 175–190.

presented to the Sultan by a French court jester named Bertrand, projected onto a dampened curtain hung on a wall, and greatly enjoyed by the palace residents.¹⁰

This first cinématographe screening in Istanbul's Pera district in late 1896¹¹ introduced the city to cinema. Cinema became an influential medium through the end of the Empire, particularly for upper-class Ottomans in the imperial capital. This upper-class comprised senior administrators, wealthy merchants of the Pera and Galata districts, and the imperial family themselves. The Pera district, Istanbul's most modernized area, was the main center for the circulation of European films. People who lived in Pera had Western educations, close commercial relationships and contact with Westerners, and the wealth to patronize this newly-introduced Western art form.¹²

In 1896, Sigmund Weinberg¹³ organized the first public cinématographe screenings at the Sponek Pub in the Pera district. Cinématographes thereafter became immensely popular in Istanbul. Eight years later, Weinberg opened the Pathé Cinema, the first permanent movie theatre of the early Republic.¹⁴ These early years of cinema encountered difficulties spreading to other regions and socio-economic groups, particularly because of limited electrical service throughout the city and relatively low cinema attendance. During these early years (1896–1927), black and white, silent, short (between one and two minute) films were called moving-pictures, photographic projections, cinématographe, or kinematoscope. With improved electrical access and political-economic conditions, cinema became a common part of daily life in Istanbul. Cinema quickly became a popular style of entertainment derived from a device that demanded its own local mode of production.¹⁵

Almost twenty years after the introduction of cinema into Ottoman society, Turkish filmmakers began producing the first feature films. In 1917, the quasi-military National Defense Organization (*Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*) produced the first two feature films: *Peñçe* (Sedat Simavi, 1917)¹⁶ and *Bican Efendi Belediye Müfettişi* (Sedat Simavi, 1917).¹⁷ After *Peñçe*, The War Veteran's Organization (*Malul Gaziler Cemiyeti*) produced an adventure film called *Casus* (Sedat Simavi, 1917). Shortly thereafter, The War Veteran's Organization produced *Mürebbiye* (Ahmet Fehim, 1919), *Binnaz* (Ahmet Fehim, 1919), and *Bican Efendi Vekilharç* (Ahmet Fehim, 1921). In addition to domestic films produced by military affiliates, Turkish cinema between 1917 and 1922 consisted of documentaries and news films produced by foreign directors and agencies.¹⁸

During these years, fifteen films were produced. The actresses¹⁹ of these films were all non-Muslim, as there was a stage ban for Muslim women. The films' actors were Hakkı Necip Ağrıman, Hüseyin Kemal Gürmen, Şadi Karagöz, Behzat Budak, Raşit Rıza Samako, and Nurettin

¹⁰ Özge Çeliktemel-Thomen, "The Curtain of Dreams: Early Cinema in Istanbul 1896–1923" (MA diss., Central European University, 2009), 4, 25, 36.

¹¹ The Pera district's symbols of modernity and Western European lifestyle consisted of modern stores, fancy restaurants, modern schools, embassy buildings, cultural centers, and theatres. A wide variety of cultural activities, from local shadow plays (*meddah* and *ortaoyunu*) to Western European forms of opera, dramas, and vaudeville were available in Pera. See Çeliktemel-Thomen, "The Curtain of Dreams."

¹² *Ibid.*, 4, 25, 36.

¹³ Sigmund Weinberg eventually became a distributor for the French film and photography company Pathé Frères, and in 1915 was appointed director of the Central Military Office of Cinema (MOFD, *Merkez Ordu Film Dairesi*).

¹⁴ Nijat Özön, *Türk Sinema Tarihi (1896–1960)* (Ankara: Antalya Kültür Sanat Vakfı, 2003), 34.

¹⁵ Çeliktemel-Thomen, "The Curtain of Dreams," 14.

¹⁶ Nijat Özön, *Türk Sineması Kronolojisi: 1895–1956* (Ankara: Bilgi, 1968), 14.

¹⁷ Arda I. Odabaşı, "Osmanlı/Türk Sinemasında İlk Kurmaca Filmler ve İlk Sinema Eleştirileri I," *Toplumsal Tarihi*, no. 280 (2018): 69.

¹⁸ Özön, *Türk Sineması Kronolojisi*, 15–16.

¹⁹ Eliza Binemeciyan, Madam Kalitea, Matmazel Blanch, Madam Saramatof, Anna Mariyeviç, and Roza Felekyan.

Şefkati. All were theatre artists who only performed onstage and in films; they were hardly known at all by the people. These actors and actresses represented the first step of stardom: screen acting. In *Picture Personalities: The Emergence of the Star System in America* (1990) Richard deCordova states that the emergence of the star system involved strict regulation of what the public knew about the actor.²⁰ According to deCordova, the development of this system underwent three significant transformations in this regard: a) a discourse on acting, b) the picture personality, and c) stardom. However, in Turkish cinema there were four significant transformations: a) onscreen acting, b) cinematic celebrity, c) the picture personality, and d) stardom.

The Pre-Yeşilçam Economic System and Film Production (1923–1959)

Table 1: Statistical data of Turkish cinema during the Pre-Yeşilçam Period²¹

Year	Films Produced	Number of Movie Theatres	Cost of Movies (TL)	Size of Audiences	Number of Production Companies
1922	2		20,000–30,000		1
1923	3	30			
1924	1				
1925	0				
1926	0			50,000 (Istanbul)	
1927	0	100			
1928	2				
1929	1				
1930	0	130			
1931	1				1
1932	1				
1933	7				
1934	3	150			2
1935	1				
1936	1				
1937	1		15,000–20,000		
1938	1				
1939	4				
1940	4				
1941	2				
1942	4				
1943	2				3
1944	4				
1945	2				
1946	6		40,000–60,000		10
1947	12	180			12
1948	18				13
1949	19	228	25,000–60,000		18

²⁰ deCordova, *Picture Personalities*.

²¹ Hakan Erkiş, “Türk Sinemasının Ekonomik Yapısı ve Bu Yapının Sinemamıza Etkisi” (PhD diss., Mimar Sinan University, 2003), 62. Empty cells in this and all subsequent tables indicate a lack of data for that year and that category.

1950	23			11,822,000 (all of Turkey)	
1951	31			12,268,000 (all of Turkey)	
1952	50			14,315,000 (all of Turkey)	
1953	52			15,372,000 (all of Turkey)	
1954	51	450		20,615,000 (all of Turkey)	
1955	57			21.350.000 (all of Turkey)	
1956	49			23,500,000 (all of Turkey)	
1957	63	600		25,648,000 (all of Turkey)	
1958	95			28,123,000 (all of Turkey)	
1959	95			25,161,000 (all of Turkey)	

In the history of Turkish cinema, the period between 1923 and 1938 has many names: The Cinema of Muhsin Ertuğrul, the Theatre Period, the Single Director Period, and the Single Man Period, to name a few. During these years, there were only two production companies and sixteen films were produced by a single director, Muhsin Ertuğrul: *Ateşten Gömlek* (1923), *Leblebici Horhor* (1923), *Kız Kulesinde Bir Facia* (1923), *Sözde Kızlar* (1924), *Ankara Postası* (1929), *İstanbul Sokaklarında* (1931), *Kaçakçılar* (1932), *Bir Millet Uyanıyor* (1932), *Karım Beni Aldatırsa* (1933), *Cici Berber* (1933), *Söz Bir Allah Bir* (1933), *Fena Yol* (1933), *Milyon Avcıları* (1934), *Leblebici Horhor Ağa* (1934), *Aysel Bataklı Damın Kızı* (1935), and *Aynaroz Kadısı* (1938).²² This prolific director was exceptional because the cinematic trend of the time was the exhibition of foreign films. Production companies tended to open movie theatres and import films, as this was more profitable and involved lower risk than producing original films.

There were economic reasons for this dearth of domestic film production: a) insufficient private capital in Turkey, b) a lack of political support and government incentives, and c) the problems of the late industrialization process left the country with a small cinema market.²³ During the Republican period, cinema was not an economic priority compared to the industrialization projects in which the state invested.²⁴ Executive domestic film producers were thus seen as “adventurous entrepreneurs.” Since there were no real capital owners during the Republican period, Turkish cinema was based exclusively on importation and exhibition of foreign films.²⁵ The 1948 tax deduction²⁶ resulted in a surge of production companies and domestic film production,²⁷ gradually increasing audience sizes and movie theatres across the country.

With the increased number of movie theatres and the spread of cinema throughout Anatolia, the industry established “the provincial branch system” (*taşra şube sistemi*). This system developed the film distribution networks and enabled closer control of the film market. The major film companies in Istanbul opened branches in important provincial cities such as Samsun, Adana, Zonguldak, and Eskişehir. After imported films had been shown in major metropolises such as Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir, they were sent to the branches for sale or rental to movie theatres in Anatolia. This system that distributed films to various regions and collected the re-

²² Özön, *Türk Sineması Kronolojisi*, 62–76; Ağah Özgüç, *Ansiklopedik Türk Filmleri Sözlüğü* (İstanbul: Horizon, 2012), 28–37.

²³ Levent Cantek, *Cumhuriyetin Buluş Çağı: Gündelik Yaşama Dair Tartışmalar (1945–1950)* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2013), 115.

²⁴ Furthermore, the technological equipment required for cinema screenings, like electricity, only existed in certain cities. See *ibid.*, 116.

²⁵ Abisel Nilgün, “Türk Sinemasının İşleyişi ve Sorunları” (PhD diss., Ankara University, 1978), 184.

²⁶ Tax rates on cinema tickets decreased from 75% to 25%.

²⁷ Nijat Özön, *Karagözden Sinemaya Türk Sineması ve Sorunları 1. Cilt* (Ankara: Kitle, 1995), 28.

venue was dubbed the Percentage System²⁸ (*pursantaj sistemi*).²⁹ Through this method, films were exchanged for a percentage of the total profit instead of for a set fee. Since tracking the precise profits and percentages was difficult,³⁰ percentage officers were appointed to track a film's profitability. These officers occasionally inspected the theatres within their provincial branch,³¹ working to track profits and report audience reactions to the films. These reports were transmitted to the officer's manager and then to the film's distributor. The information thus communicated helped the production company determine the stars and genre of their next film,³² enabling the Turkish film industry to regulate its own film production.

The provincial branch managers acted as intermediaries across Anatolia, establishing structural mechanisms whereby they could more easily track profits and lower the financial risk of producing new films. During the 1950s, this system evolved into a new distribution system: regional distributors (*Bölge işletmeciliği*).³³ The first regional distributors system was established in 1951 in Adana by a percentage officer who distributed films throughout Anatolia.³⁴ For distribution purposes, Turkey was divided into six regions: Adana, Izmir, Samsun, Marmara, Zonguldak, and Istanbul.³⁵ By the early 1960s, regional distributors system had become the dominant financial resource for domestic film production.³⁶

Regional distributors acted as financial backers for film producers. During the Yeşilçam period, films could be bankrolled entirely with these advance payments. Most film producers of the time lacked their own capital and so depended on the financial support of the regional distributors. Distributors also provided producers with information on the public's expectations and interests. Every spring, various distributors would visit Istanbul and meet with producers to order films for the following year. Distributors thus decided what films would be produced and which stars would be in them, only offering their financial support after these details had been decided.³⁷

Despite the steadily increasing number of production companies and films, Turkish cinema could not create its own capital. Although the producers assumed all administrative and financial responsibilities, they did not own capital and so were beholden to the regional distributors.

Regional distributors funded filmmakers in the form of pre-production bonds.³⁸ This first began in the 1950s when actors and actresses demanded bonds as a guarantee for their salaries. In the 1960s, most film productions were funded by bonds,³⁹ leading to usury favoring creditors and

²⁸ Before the percentage system was used for distribution, it was a type of film exhibition. A traveling cinema projectionist (*pursantajcı*) visited villages in Anatolia where no movie theatres existed, instead showing the movies at coffee shops. See Yektanurşin Duyan, "Sinemada Yıldız Olmak: Türk Sinemasında Kadın Oyuncular" (PhD diss., Ankara University, 2018), 4.

²⁹ İbrahim Altuğ Işığın, "Türkiye'de Film Yapımcılığı" (MA diss., Ankara University, 1998), 40–41.

³⁰ Rıza Kıracı, *Hürrem Erman: İzlenmemiş Bir Yeşilçam Filmi* (Istanbul: Can, 2008), 48–49.

³¹ Abisel, "Türk Sinemasının İşleyişi ve Sorunları," 139.

³² Şengül Kılıç-Hristidis, *Sinemada Ulusal Tavrı: Halit Refiğ Kitabı* (Istanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2007), 104.

³³ Işığın, "Türkiye'de Film Yapımcılığı," 41.

³⁴ Arzu Kalemci and Şükran Özen, "Türk Sinemacılık Sektöründe Kurumsal Değişim (1950–2006): Küreselleşmenin Sosyal Dışlama Etkisi," *Amme İdaresi Dergisi* 44, no. 1 (2011): 41.

³⁵ Abisel, "Türk Sinemasının İşleyişi ve Sorunları," 135–136.

³⁶ Erkalıç, "Türk Sinemasının Ekonomik Yapısı ve Bu Yapının Sinemamıza Etkisi," 93–94.

³⁷ Nilgün Abisel, *Türk Sineması Üzerine Yazılar* (Ankara: Phoenix, 2005), 106.

³⁸ Abisel, "Türk Sinemasının İşleyişi ve Sorunları," 25.

³⁹ Erkalıç, "Türk Sinemasının Ekonomik Yapısı ve Bu Yapının Sinemamıza Etkisi," 103.

bankers.⁴⁰ The producer and actors thus earned less than the bond holders. Despite an increasing demand for domestic films, the producers' lack of capital rendered the bond system intractable.

Under this system, films were produced with bonds that were repaid after the box office revenue was collected. First the directors, screenwriters, and actors were paid, with stars commanding the highest salaries.⁴¹ These stars thus perpetuated the bond system by attaching their names to the film productions.

Before the Yeşilçam period there was a demand for domestic films, but these films were not shot according to the demands of the period's stars. In fact, movies were produced for the domestic market, and thus for the audiences flocking to see the stars, not for the stars themselves.⁴² This is how actors went beyond the screen and turned celebrity into stardom. This form of stardom first emerged during the Yeşilçam period in Turkish cinema.

Cinematic Celebrities (1917–1939)

Between 1928 and 1939, twenty-eight domestic films were produced. Thirty-eight cine-magazines were published during these years⁴³ following the Republic of Turkey's foundation. When we look at the cine-magazines published we see many actresses referred to as stars and artists.⁴⁴ The magazines used the terms "star," "actor," and "artist" interchangeably, explaining that "star" simply meant actor or performer. So simple stage performers underwent the second step to becoming a star: becoming cinema celebrities.

There is an important name on the aforementioned list: Bedia Muvahhit, the first Turkish-Muslim actress. Until the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, there was a stage ban on Muslim women. As a result, all female roles were played by non-Muslims. Muvahhit acted in 45 films between 1923 and 1969, becoming a celebrity after her role in *Ateşten Gömlek* (Muhsin Ertuğrul, 1923). Muvahhit played Ayşe, the ideal woman of the young Republic's ideology. Her role in *Ateşten Gömlek* followed the actress until she died. She is remembered as the first Turkish-Muslim actress and so she is the first celebrity of Turkish cinema.

⁴⁰ Abisel, "Türk Sinemasının İşleyişi ve Sorunları," 46.

⁴¹ Kılıç-Hristidis, *Sinemada Ulusal Tavrı*, 106–107; Halit Refiğ, *Ulusal Sinema Kavgası* (İstanbul: Dergah, 2009), 90.

⁴² These stars include Azize Emir Hanım, Feriha Tefvik, Müzehher Hanım, Leman Hanım, Hikmet Hanım, Cahide Sonku, Şevkiye May, Zehra Ahmet, Berin Aydan, Mediha Baran, Perihan Yanal, Nevin Akkaya, Halide Pişkin, Necla Sertel, Şaziye Moral, Nevin Seval, Neyyire Neyir, Nezihe Becerikli, Oya Sensev, Gülistan Güzey, Perihan Çakıl, Nevin Erman, Sezer Sezin, Fatma Andaç, Aliye Rona, Suzan Yakar, Neriman Köksal, İnci Tezcan, Ceyda Karasu, Maksude Tansel, Ferzan Tufan, Ülkü Bengü, Hümaşah Hiçan, Melahat İçli, Mesiha Yelda, Ayten Kayalı, Servet Cengiz, Gülistan Deniz, Nevin Aypar, Filiz Tekin, Nedret Güvenç, Emine Engin, Pola Moreli, Müşerref Taylan, Belgin Doruk, Ayten Çankaya, Ayfer Feray, Türkan Şamil, Leyla Altın, Feriha Tekgül, Samiye Hün, İnci Birol, Semra Yıldız, Necla İz, Çolpan İlhan, Ferda Ferdağ, Yıldız Erdem, Gülderen Ece, Muzaffer Nebioğlu, Aynur Akın, Gönül Bayhan, Fatma Bilgen, Gönül Özçakar, Meral Ülkü, Muhterem Nur, Sevdağ Ferdağ, Tijen Par, Mine Çoşkun, Yıldız Yıldız, Mualla Kaynak.

⁴³ Burçak Evren, *Başlangıcından Günümüze Türkçe Sinema Dergileri* (İstanbul: Korsan, 1993), 25–37.

⁴⁴ Azize Emir Hanım, Bedia Muvahhit, Feriha Tefvik, Müzehher Hanım, Leman Hanım, Hikmet Hanım, Cahide Sonku, Şevkiye May, Zehra Ahmet, Berin Aydan, Mediha Baran, Perihan Yanal, Nevin Akkaya, Halide Pişkin, Necla Sertel, Şaziye Moral, Nevin Seval, Neyyire Neyir, Nezihe Becerikli, Oya Sensev, Gülistan Güzey, Perihan Çakıl, Nevin Erman, Sezer Sezin, Fatma Andaç, Aliye Rona, Suzan Yakar, Neriman Köksal, İnci Tezcan, Ceyda Karasu, Maksude Tansel, Ferzan Tufan, Ülkü Bengü, Hümaşah Hiçan, Melahat İçli, Mesiha Yelda, Ayten Kayalı.

Picture Personalities (1940–1959)

The years between 1940 and 1959 (pre-Yeşilçam) saw an increase in both the number of films and the number of actors and actresses. 663 domestic films were produced in these years, and many cine-magazines organized contests to find new stars. Directors and producers searched for fresh faces; some – like Sezer Sezin, Muhterem Nur, Neriman Köksal, and Leyla Sayar – were already admired by society. Others, such as Belgin Doruk and Ayhan Işık, were selected through contests. A new generation of actors emerged, rising to prominence thanks to their physical beauty and acting talent.

Richard deCordova explained the picture personality as the principal site of product individuation throughout the early years of cinema (the 1900s). By 1909, actors had begun to appear, either under their own names or known by names the public assigned them; deCordova termed these actors “picture personalities” and noted that the emergence of picture personalities is generally considered the beginning of the star system. It is around this time that stars emerged as an economic factor. DeCordova made a distinction between picture personalities and the stars, assigning the emergence of the former to the year 1909 and the latter to 1914. There is a regulation of knowledge specific to the picture personality which distinguishes it from the star.⁴⁵ DeCordova explained that three predominant forms of knowledge converged to produce picture personalities: familiarity with the actor's names, journalistic discourse about the actor's roles, and general knowledge of the actor's filmography. The second form is what truly defined the picture personality. Journalistic discourse restricted knowledge of the picture personality to the context of films, conflating the actor's personality with the film's fictional characters. In other words, it identified an actor with a character in a specific film. Similarly, the third type of knowledge pertains to the professional experience of the actor, extrapolating the second form of knowledge across the actor's previous film experience and establishing an intertextual space among films.⁴⁶

Seventy-four cine-magazines were published between 1939 and 1959 in Turkey.⁴⁷ When we look at these magazines, we can see that most of the journalistic discourse is about actors' roles and a general knowledge of their filmography.

The rise of picture personalities marks the beginning of the star system. The picture personalities of the pre-Yeşilçam era became the stars of the Yeşilçam period. Sezer Sezin acted in *Vurun Kahpeye* (Ömer Lütfi Akad, 1949), for example, and over the following years her fame grew. She acted in historical love dramas and had a habit of working with directors early in their careers.⁴⁸ Her most admired role was the female driver Nebahat in Şöför *Nebahat* (Süreyya Duru, 1965). She was the first picture personality in Turkish cinema, always referred to as Nebahat.

The Yeşilçam Cinema Style

Cinema is not only art but industry. Although ideas, designs, and aesthetics represent the artistic aspects, economic considerations range from box office revenue to production costs, including cinematic technology, research and equipment. These economic aspects make cinema an industry. The film is a commodity and this fact determines the structure of the film industry. How cinema evolves as an industry depends on the culture, economic structure, and characteristics

⁴⁵ Richard deCordova, “The Emergence of the Star System in America,” in *Stardom and Celebrity: A Reader*, ed. Sean Redmond and Su Holmes (California: Sage, 2007), 136.

⁴⁶ deCordova, *Picture Personalities*, 24, 82, 85.

⁴⁷ Evren, *Başlangıcından Günümüze Türkçe Sinema Dergileri*, 25–57.

⁴⁸ Memduh Ün, Metin Erksan, and Lütfi Akad.

of the society as well as its ability to develop its own economic opportunities. The production, distribution, and exhibition of Turkish cinema was a historical process whose emergence as a formal economic sector took place between 1960 and 1975.

Until the 1950s, domestic film production was practically nonexistent, so Turkish cinemas showed mostly European, Egyptian, and Hollywood films.⁴⁹ After the relaxation of municipal taxes on domestic films (down to 25% from around 75%), film production increased along with film companies, movie theatres and audiences. Production companies gathered around Yeşilçam Street; of the twelve production companies listed in the 1947 edition of *Our Films*, a Domestic Filmmakers Association publication, five were in Beyoğlu while seven were nearby. By the late 1950s, cinema had transformed from an elitist big-city activity into a popular form of entertainment across Anatolia.⁵⁰

Table 2: Statistical data of Turkish cinema during the Yeşilçam Period⁵¹

Year	Films Produced	Number of Movie Theatres	Cost of Movies	Size of Audiences	Number of Production Companies
1960	85	183		25,246,000	15
1961	123	180		25,190,000	23
1962	131	186		31,500,000	20
1963	116	191		41,218,000	15
1964	180	222		38,961,000	22
1965	213	247		41,627,000	25
1966	241	270		50,542,000	30
1967	202	275		50,603,000	25
1968	153				18
1969	175	1,420			31
1970	224	2,742		246,662,310	26
1971	265				39
1972	300				38
1973	209				23
1974	189	1,795			26
1975	225				19
1976	164				19
1977	124				8
1978	126	1,292		93,000,000	14
1979	193	1,126		76,000,000	25
1980	68	941	5,000,000–10,000,000 TL	38,553,202	8
1981			5,000,000–10,000,000 TL	41,523,345	21
1982			12,000,000–20,000,000 TL	33,479,210	15
1983			50,000,000–60,000,000 TL	35,835,614	15
1984			100,000,000–200,000,000 TL	26,753,374	20
1985				21,284,575	28

⁴⁹ Kaya-Mutlu, “Between Tradition and Modernity,” 417.

⁵⁰ Ibid.; Erklıç, “Türk Sinemasının Ekonomik Yapısı ve Bu Yapının Sinemamıza Etkisi,” 68; Savaş Arslan, *Cinema in Turkey: A New Critical History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 24.

⁵¹ Erklıç, “Türk Sinemasının Ekonomik Yapısı ve Bu Yapının Sinemamıza Etkisi,” 87, 113, 116, 125, 134, 156, 158.

1986				20,345,721	26
1987				11,734,923	22
1988				7,736,401	
1989				7,165,710	

Table 2 indicates that during the golden years of the Yeşilçam period the number of movies and theatres and the size of the audience increased. In 1980, the number of films produced dropped by more than half, roughly 200 movie theatres closed, and audience size fell by almost 50%. Film exhibitions bring the audience together and are an important element behind financing the cinema economy.⁵² During the Yeşilçam period, movie theatres were classified as either first-, second-, or third-class depending on the city and capacities.⁵³ This classification, called “the stand system” (*ayak sistemi*), further divides movie theatres into A and B classes. Both show domestic films and are shared by powerful producers. Movie theatres in Anatolia were also managed in this way.⁵⁴

Table 3: Financial items during the Yeşilçam Period⁵⁵

1953		1963		1971	
Item	Cost (TL)	Item	Cost (TL)	Item	Cost (TL)
Studio	10,000	Studio	14,000	Director	5,000–35,000
Players	10,000	Director	15,000	Assistant Director	1,000–6,000
Director/Script	5,000	Assistant Director	2,000	Script	1,500–10,000
Advertising	4,000	Script	9,000	Actor	100,000–150,000
Technicians	5,000	Male Star	40,000	Male Extra	3,500 (daily)
Décor	6,000	Female Star	15,000	Female Extra	5,000 (daily)
Accessories	4,000	Supporting Actor	20,500	Supernumerary Actor	1,500–2000 (daily)
Miscellaneous	6,000	Extra	3,500	Supervisor	500 (daily)

In cinema, production is synonymous with financial resources. Table 3 makes it apparent that both the financial items and the costs of these items increased since 1953. The 1960s saw the emergence of the star system, wherein actor categories were specified. Each region had its own star, and the appropriate regional distributors made sure to order movies that featured this star.

Nezih Erdoğan described this period's film production style as “readymade” (*konfeksiyon*) since films were produced to meet a continuously increasing demand and were aimed at entertaining the domestic audience.⁵⁶ The film industry depended on ticket sales for its money and so had to produce movies tailored to the audience's tastes. The audience of this period was constantly catered to and received everything they demanded.⁵⁷ Yeşilçam movies were made for

⁵² Erkilic, “Türk Sinemasının Ekonomik Yapısı ve Bu Yapının Sinemamıza Etkisi,” 146.

⁵³ Hakan Erkilic, “Düş Şatolarından Çoklu Salonlara Değişen Seyir Kültürü ve Sinema,” *Kebikeç*, no. 27 (2009): 105.

⁵⁴ Ayşe Toy-Par, “El Kapılarında Yeşilçam: 1970–1990 Arası Türkiye’de Dış Göç-Sinema İlişkisi,” (PhD diss., Marmara University, 2009), 99.

⁵⁵ Giovanni Scognamillo, “Türk Sinemasının Ekonomik Tarihi,” in *Giovanni Scognamillo'nun Gözüyle Yeşilçam*, ed. Barış Saydam (İstanbul: Küre, 2011), 285–286; Özön, *Karagözden Sinemaya*, 340.

⁵⁶ Nezih Erdoğan, “Narratives of Resistance: National Identity and Ambivalence in the Turkish Melodrama between 1965 and 1975,” *Screen* 39, no. 3 (1998): 261.

⁵⁷ Serpil Kirel, *Yeşilçam Öykü Sineması* (İstanbul: Babil, 2005), 114.

the audience, and the industry thus drew its power directly from the public.⁵⁸ Topics, genres, and casting decisions – including stars – were sculpted after audience demands. In short, Yeşilçam cinema “answered the needs of audiences,” deciding that the primary goal of film production was profit. Producers and directors were aware that this required satisfying the audience.

Both the film production industry and wider cinematic economy of this period depended on regional distributors, the most influential figures in the system. They commissioned films to involve specific stars whose films had proven profitable in their region. They also demanded changes to plot and casting, modifying scripts to feature a given star or making story alterations to preserve a star’s image.⁵⁹ These managers derived their information from audiences, and so each film was indirectly produced by audience demand. The audiences of this period were akin to sports fans, as going to the cinema was more than just watching a movie: it involved choosing the theatre, selecting the movie, and admiring the stars. Part of being a cinema fan involved being a certain star’s fan. The audiences watched their star’s movies, ravenously consumed all available information, and often reached out in hopes of a personal connection with the object of their adoration.

Stars acted as brands for the films in which they acted.⁶⁰ Audiences understood the genre by its star and expected to see certain stars in each film. Yeşilçam cinema was star-driven cinema. Stars such as Türkan Şoray, Yılmaz Güney, Fatma Girik, Hülya Koçyiğit, Cüneyt Arkın, etc. played a determining role in the formation and perpetuation of movie-going habits in the 1960s. The star’s name was displayed in larger print than the movie’s name. To spark audience interest, producers created films with the most popular stars.⁶¹ The primary goal was profit, so producers and directors catered to the demands of audiences.

During the 1970s, an economic crisis weighed heavily on the Turkish film industry. In the 1950s, cinema had been pervasive across the country and become the country’s sole form of collective entertainment. The many theatres and expanding audiences made film a profitable and investible industry. As movies became popular across Anatolia, audience profiles shifted. Rural Anatolian audiences adopted local productions before urban audiences. Cinemagoers of the 1950s and 1960s were mostly middle class, a trend which increased as open-air and local movie theatres made cinemas more family friendly. This formed the core of Turkey’s traditional audiences. Nevertheless, the era where the audience experienced film solely in movie theatres ended with the 1970s.

Political instability brought social mobility. With immigration and urbanization came a less savory audience who preferred sex, karate, and arabesque movies. They supplanted the traditional audience. This demographic shift altered the industry’s target audience and drove families away from movie theatres. This is the first reason for the economic crisis that befell the film industry during the 1970s. The second reason was a noticeable expansion of production without corresponding adjustments to the industry’s infrastructure. The third reason was the country’s political instability and economic fluctuations, which first drove regional distributors not to pay in advance and then to move away from the industry entirely. Video operators marketed tapes of Turkish movies to Turks in Europe and wanted to pay cash for movie licenses from production companies, lessening the financial impact of collapsing businesses. Industry investment was thereafter provided by videotape distributors instead of local businesses; the development that kept the industry afloat was video.⁶²

⁵⁸ Engin Ayça, “Türk Sineması Seyirci İlişkileri,” *Kurgu*, no. 11 (1992): 117–129.

⁵⁹ Kaya-Mutlu, “Bringing Stars Home,” 421.

⁶⁰ Erdoğan, “Narratives of Resistance,” 263.

⁶¹ Zeynep Çiğdem Karabekiroğlu, “Analysis of Female Star Images in Popular Magazines in the 1960s: The Case of Turkan Soray” (MA diss., Behçeşehir University, 2006), 27.

⁶² Abisel, “Türk Sinemasının İşleyişi ve Sorunları,” 124.

Germany and various other European countries ordered movies from Yeşilçam to sell and rent. Video distributors thus supplanted regional distributors, sending movie lists and arranging multiple-movie deals with production companies. Stars remained an influential part of the process.⁶³

At first videotapes were only exported, but by the 1980s they started being produced for the domestic market as well. The audience broke its habit of attending movie theatres but continued watching movies, purchasing video devices that brought the cinema into their homes. The home video market thus temporarily sustained the Yeşilçam economy, although many movie theatres, foreseeing that the videotape industry was to be short-lived, made agreements with foreign movie importers.⁶⁴

The transition to videotape brought audience complaints of inferior audiovisual quality and repetitive subject matter. Some high-profile movies were poorly received due to their technical incompetence, surprising the Yeşilçam industry. Producers quickly returned to using 35mm film but though image quality rose, the movies' composition did not improve, and the industry fell into another decline.⁶⁵ The 1986 Cinema, Video and Musical Work Law, along with an increase in private television channels in the 1990s, expedited the decline.⁶⁶

The film industry's decline precipitated a transformation in the cinema economy. American movie corporations opened branches in Turkey and directly distributed their movies, attracting large audiences. After United International Pictures – the distributor for Warner Brothers, Universal, Paramount, and more – entered the Turkish market, big-budget all-star Hollywood productions were released in Turkey at the same time as in other global cinemas. This, together with entreaties for support from the American companies, led to a revival of movie theatre attendance, the renewal of old theatres, and the opening of new multiplex cinema halls.⁶⁷

Local cinemas lacking equity and a distribution network were dominated by non-production rings, freed from the family-owned import and projection businesses that had controlled them since the 1950s. The system was again monopolized by importer-projectionists at the end of the 1980s, this time monopolized by foreign businesses. The Turkish cinema industry thus lost both its means of distribution and of exhibition. Hollywood distributors dominated the Turkish market, purchasing and distributing local movies throughout the 1990s.

The domination of distribution and exhibition by American companies, the decline of the videotape industry, and the loss of local movie audiences precipitated the end of the Yeşilçam era.

The Yeşilçam Star System

The period from the early 1960s to the mid-1970s is considered the golden age of Turkish cinema in terms of the number of the films produced, prevalence and popularity of movie theatres, and audience size. Yeşilçam, which created a unique film production system, introduced and made profitable the provincial branch system, percentage system, regional distributors system and the stand system. The star system is the most important one among these systems. Regional distributors and producers guaranteed box office hits by casting popular actors who became stars and, carried by public enthusiasm, gained strong positions in the Yeşilçam film industry.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Nejat Ulusay, "Sinema," in *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin Temeli Kültürdür II*. (Ankara: TC Kültür Bakanlığı, 2002), 227.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

During the Yeşilçam period, films and stars were classified like movie theatres. Films were divided into specific categories according to stars, subject matter and costs.⁶⁸ Costs were categorized into three classes while stars were separated into three lists: A-list, B-list, and C-list. First-class films were the most expensive, generally involving A-list stars.⁶⁹ Second class films had lower costs and introduced new or rising B-list stars.⁷⁰ Third class films were cheap, low-quality adventure and soft-core films starring C-list stars.⁷¹

Table 4: Statistics on Turkish stars⁷²

1965			1967			1971		
Star	Films	Fee (TL)	Star	Films	Fee (TL)	Star	Films	Fee (TL)
Fatma Girik (A-list)	7	30,000	Fatma Girik (A-list)	15	30,000	Fatma Girik (A-list)	8	35,000
Türkan Şoray (A-list)	10	30,000–40,000	Türkan Şoray (A-list)	13	50,000	Türkan Şoray (A-list)	11	100,000–150,000
Hülya Koçyiğit (A-list)	11	30,000	Hülya Koçyiğit (A-list)	17	30,000	Hülya Koçyiğit (A-list)	14	150,000
Filiz Akın (A-list)	6	20,000	Filiz Akın (A-list)	9	15,000–20,000	Filiz Akın (A-list)	9	40,000
Neriman Köksal (B-list)	16	15,000	Selda Alkor (B-list)	22	12,500–15,000	Sevda Ferdağ (B-list)	2	
Sevda Ferdağ (B-list)	18	10,000–12,000	Sevda Ferdağ (B-list)	15	10,000			
Selma Güneri (B-list)	18	4,000–7,000	Selma Güneri (B-list)	11	10,000			
Belgin Doruk (B-list)	5	30,000	Ajda Pekkan (B-list)	12	7,500–10,000			
Çolpan İlhan (B-list)	6	10,000–15,000	Suzan Avcı (C-list)	21	4,000–5,000			
Nebahat Çehre (B-list)	7	10,000	Nilüfer Aydan (B-list)	13	5,000–7,500			

⁶⁸ Abisel, *Türk Sineması Üzerine Yazılar*, 40.

⁶⁹ Ayhan Işık, Yılmaz Güney, Türkan Şoray, Filiz Akın, Hülya Koçyiğit, Fatma Girik, Cüneyt Arkın, Ediz Hun, Emel Sayın, and Tarık Akan.

⁷⁰ Muzaffer Tema, Sadri Alışık, Muhterem Nur Neriman Köksal, Kartal Tibet, Yusuf Sezgin, Selma Güneri, Fatma Belgen, Sevda Ferdağ, and Selda Alkor.

⁷¹ Yılmaz Köksal, Feri Cansel, Mine Mutlu, Zerrin Egeliler, Arzu Okay, and Deniz Erkanat.

⁷² Duyan, "Sinemada Yıldız," 103.

Tijen Par (C-list)	12	5,000–10,000	Tijen Par (C-list)	12	5,000–7,500			
Pervin Par (C-list)	15	5,000–10,000	Pervin Par (C-list)	11	5,000			

According to Richard Dyer, “the star phenomenon consists of everything that is publicly available about stars.” A film star’s image is derived not just from films, but from the promotion of those films and of the star through pin-ups, public appearances, studio hand-outs, interviews, biographies, and coverage in the press of the star’s doings and private life. In addition, a star’s image is also what people say and write, the way the star becomes part of everyday speech.⁷³ In brief, “the star is characterized by a fairly thoroughgoing articulation of the paradigm professional life/private life.”⁷⁴

Film studies uses the word stardom, accurately reflecting the cinematic history of the term. Yet the concept of the star was used to imply “a discursive interaction between on- and off-screen image.”⁷⁵ Some academicians even suggest that a celebrity describes someone whose fame is due more to their lifestyle than their profession.⁷⁶ Celebrities are brand names as well as cultural icons or identities, operating as marketing tools in a realm where the audience agency of the audience is clearly evident. Celebrities represent the achievement of individualism as well as its commodification and commercialization.⁷⁷

Yeşilçam cinema was star driven, and audiences flocked to see the stars they loved and adored. The star system created an approximate character prototype for each star, adjusting it to the needs of each role. Audiences understood the type of film from the cast list, often choosing a film exclusively according to the cast. The star’s name was often displayed with greater prominence than the name of the movie. Producers selected the stars people wanted to see; stars reflected society’s needs and dreams.⁷⁸

As Richard Dyer said, “love is promoted by films and by articles in the magazines.”⁷⁹ The Yeşilçam film industry depended on magazine and star journalism to promote and inspire interest in its movies outside the theatre. Magazines published during the Yeşilçam period were exclusively about stars, particularly female stars.⁸⁰ These publications used stories of the stars’ personal lives as a form of advertising for the movies.⁸¹ Popular magazines printed gossip columns, interviews, and large photos. Media corporations used stardom and celebrities to please the masses: fans wanted to read about their favorite stars, so magazines leveraged this interest and boosted their revenue. Reading the magazines made the fans feel closer to their idols, and the stars themselves gained publicity from the constant media exposure.

⁷³ Richard Dyer, “Heavenly Bodies,” in *Stardom and Celebrity*, ed. Redmond and Holmes, 85.

⁷⁴ deCordova, “The Emergence of the Star System in America,” 138.

⁷⁵ John Ellis, *Visible Fictions: Cinema, Television, Video* (London: Routledge, 1992), 91.

⁷⁶ Sean Redmond and Su Holmes, “Introduction: What’s in a Reader,” in *Stardom and Celebrity*, ed. Redmond and Holmes, 8.

⁷⁷ Sean Redmond and Su Holmes, “Producing Fame: Because I’m Worth It,” in *Stardom and Celebrity*, ed. Redmond and Holmes, 190.

⁷⁸ Seçil Bükler and Canan Uluyağcı, *Yeşilçam’da Bir Sultan* (Istanbul: Afa, 1993), 11.

⁷⁹ Richard Dyer, *Stars* (London: British Film Institute, 1998), 52.

⁸⁰ Duyan, “Sinemada Yıldız.”

⁸¹ Ibid.

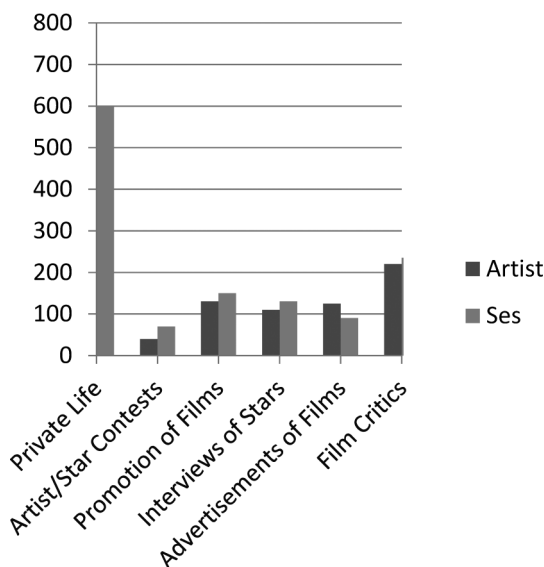


Figure 1: News about Turkish stars in *Artist* and *Ses* magazines between 1960 and 1974

In the Yeşilçam period (1960–1989) eighty-eight cine-magazines were published.⁸² Cine-magazines were a fundamental channel linking stars with their audience. In Turkey, many such magazines were published during the Yeşilçam period, with *Ses* and *Artist* being the two most famous between 1960 and 1974. *Ses*, a gossip magazine, was established in 1961 and ran through 1978. *Artist*, another gossip magazine, ran from 1960 to 1967. Both were published weekly, totaling 392 issues of *Artist* and 728 issues of *Ses* between 1960 and 1974. The data in Figure 1 was collected from 100 issues of each magazine; 80% of *Ses* articles and 90% of *Artist* articles focused on national stars. The articles cover the stars' private lives, artists/star contests, film promotions, star interviews, film advertisements and reviews.⁸³

Film magazines included photographs, interviews, and news, providing an alternate medium to produce and exhibit the stars. The focus of the news articles suggests that knowledge of the professional and private lives of various stars was more than just a subject for everyday conversation: it became the basis of an entire lifestyle. According to Edgar Morin, the private life of a star should be public. The public wants every detail.⁸⁴ When we look at the magazines published during the Yeşilçam period we see every detail of the stars' private lives: love affairs, fashion trends, income, favorite colors, home addresses, etc.

Stars are characterized by the thoroughgoing investigation and articulation of the paradigm and tension between one's professional and private lives. The question of the actor's existence outside of film finally emerged, and the private lives of the stars became a new field of knowledge. When stars' private lives became a part of everyday life, they became part of a narrative totally separate from their work on any particular film.

Looking at the films, magazines, criticism, commentary, and advertisements swirling around the Yeşilçam period's film industry, we can see it was inextricably intertwined with stars and the

⁸² Evren, *Başlangıcından Günümüze Türkçe Sinema Dergileri*, 58–93.

⁸³ Yektanurşin Duyan, "Gli anni d'oro del cinema turco: Pubblici e fandom nel periodo Yeşilçam Gli anni d'oro del cinema turco: Pubblici e fandom nel periodo Yeşilçam," *Cinema e Storia 2018 Storia e Storie Delle Audience in Era Globale* 7, no. 1 (2018): 146.

⁸⁴ Edgar Morin, *Stars: An Account of the Star-System in Motion Pictures* (United States: Grove, 1961), 6.

star system. The period's film production style evolved to support this system, eventually leading to the entire cinema economy depending on the stars and their loyal fans.

Conclusion

Before Yeşilçam, most cinema in Turkey was imported, mostly from Hollywood and Egypt. There were neither economic nor film production systems to support domestic filmmaking. Improvements to the economic structure of cinema – the provincial branch system, percentage system, regional distributors system, and the stand system – fostered the development of a unique film production system that was named after the urban area where the industry thrived: Yeşilçam. This unique film production system culminated in the emergence of the star system in Turkish cinema. The Yeşilçam period was star driven, and stars contributed to the formation and continuation of the 1960s Turkish public's movie-going habits.

Both the film production and wider cinematic economy of this period depended on regional distributors, who were the most influential figures in the system. They commissioned films to involve specific stars whose films had been profitable in their region. Stars acted as brands for the films. Audiences understood the genre of a film by its star and expected to see certain stars in each film. By 1989, both the collapse of the economic system and changing attitudes of audiences contributed to the end of Yeşilçam's star system.

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Viktor Preiss on the Radio – A Portrait of a Career

Abstract | The present study is an attempt at characterising the radio acting career of Viktor Preiss. The semantic analysis is methodologically anchored in Jan Czech's monograph *O rozhlasové hře* (1987). The synthetic nature of the article will attempt to provide the most comprehensive profile of the actor possible, emphasising in particular Preiss' variety of expression in radio broadcasting. Since the beginning of the 1970s, Preiss has been one of the most remarkable actors in the post-war generation. Broadcasting has enabled him to render a series of protagonists from throughout world literature. When still young, he already demonstrated a special talent for managing the technically demanding profession of auditory interpretation of a dramatic character, and since then has matured into one of the finest actors in front of the microphone. A key moment for Preiss was his meeting with the radio director Jiří Horčíčka, who was fascinated by his technical command, genre breadth and voice flexibility. The present study draws attention to the actor's development on the background of both social and political changes as reflected in the varying conditions the actor had to work under, but likewise in the dramaturgical transformation and in the art trends of the broadcasting media. Three radio roles out of many outstanding performances were chosen for a detailed analysis. They are the productions *War and Peace* (directed by Jiří Horčíčka, 1978), *I, Claudius* (directed by Markéta Jahodová, 2001), and *An Ordinary Circuit* (directed by Hana Kofránková, 2005).

Keywords | radio acting – actor – radio – Viktor Preiss – star – semantic analysis

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“There is no radio acting, just acting, and the real question is how you can modify it.”¹ This widely cited premise of the director Jiří Horčíčka serves to this day as an impetus for reflection on the means available to an actor, which they can make use of in various branches of acting. Despite the increasingly progressive research into the individual domains, acting as the key component of dramatic art still remains a challenging part of the resulting artefact.² Radio acting is specific for its pre-eminence among the remaining components of the production. While theatre is capable

¹ Jan Vedral and Jan Vedral, *Jiří Horčíčka – rozhlasový režisér* (Brno: Větrné mlýny, 2003), 43.

² Theoretical reflections on radio acting are scarce in both the Czech and international context. There is no monograph in Czech focusing exclusively on acting in broadcast plays, but individual, partial studies in various publications on radio or theatre are therefore praiseworthy (recently see, for instance, a collection of papers by Michal Čunderle *Dialogy řeči: tucet studií o hercích a o řeči* [Praha: Brkola, 2013], in which the author focuses on the actor's work with spoken word in both radio and theatre). English-language research into radio artistic production neglects acting, and only addresses the sound design, methods of rendering the original by auditory means, and defining the specificities of the medium. Publications such as *Voice and the Actor* (Cicely Berry, *Voice and the Actor* [New York: Wiley Publishing, 1973]) and *Radio Acting* (Alan Beck, *Radio Acting* [London: A&C Black (Publishers) Ltd., 1997]) have the character of handbooks on acting, being practical instruments to aid artistic work, and not critical or analytical reflections. Although German-language theory goes deeper in its methodological anchoring of the subject (especially in terms of the application of structuralist and semiotic methodology, for instance, Getz Schmedes, *Medientext Hörspiel: Ansätze einer Hörspielsemiotik am Beispiel*

of creating a narrative as well as the individual semantic images through light or shadow, similar to the film's use of camera work and editing, expression in a radio play heavily depends on acting. Specific aspects of radio acting concern the nature of the medium that only disposes of the auditory perspective of imagination. An actor on the radio does not have the possibility to engage visible physical action, cannot use props, costumes, motional interaction with fellow actors, and the spatial orientation of their performance. The interpreter needs to focus all of these means into vocal expression, while being supported by the technical basis of radio recording with the possibility of the director's intervention by engaging a detail, changing the actor's distance from the microphone, using a montage, etc. The technical principle of radio acting requires a specific interpretative method, the starting point of which is the actor's technical proficiency and flexibility in expressing the emotional and mental states of the character.

Profiling an actor's professional personality, which is shaped, especially in the Czech context, by performing in all interpretive media, seems to be troublesome, if considering only the specific segments of an actor's work. Spectators frequently speak of the artist's *acting style*, although they widely perceive the distinctive manner of the actor's work with regard to their long-term recognition across genres and media. Typical for the Czech context is the interdisciplinarity of the actors who, in addition to their theatre commitments, appear on television and in films, dub foreign films, and appear in radio plays, with this fact constituting a very close relationship between the recipient and the artist. Spectators "know" several aspects of the actor's style, know their physiognomy, voice and have them "pigeon-holed." As a matter of course, this long-term process leads to a horizon of expectations, where by merely being present, an actor assures an aesthetic concept, often also the genre, and type and personality of the character. This is caused by distinctive, well-known roles performed by the actor in theatre, but more often in film and/or television productions and series, these being the most accessible forms in the contemporary commercial world.

Quality criteria for an actor may include the long-term nature of their excellent artistic performances, regular cooperation with top directors, repeated casting in starring roles, and participation in particularly significant projects in a specific medium. The quality of adaptation can be attested after a certain period of time, by comparison with competitors, or through public awards from spectators or professionals. One actor who meets these requirements in broadcast dramatic art is Viktor Preiss (born 1947). This study aims to analytically reflect on Preiss' acting career in radio as seen from the viewpoint of the long-term framework of the actor's work for broadcasting, but predominantly in relation to versatility and genre flexibility, thanks to which Preiss has been a sought-after protagonist in fundamental roles from world literature, drama as well as original radio plays for more than forty-five years. A crucial aspect of the study will be the historic context of the development of the Czech radio play which formed the change in dramaturgy and thus also the typology of dramatic characters.

In terms of methodology, the article leans on Jan Czech's monograph *O rozhlasové hře*,³ in which the author analyses broadcasting artefacts and acting by semantic analysis and the structuralist framework of thinking. Inquiring into the individual plays, Czech defines specific components and the play analysed (acting, sound design, music, silence), and reflects on them in terms of the semantic analysis (for instance, when analysing Jiří Horčíčka's direction of *War and Peace*, Czech pays detailed attention to the sound design and its use by the director, but also accentuates acting when reflecting in great detail on the production of Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*

der Radioarbeiten von Alfred Behrens [Münster: Waxmann, 2002]), it also does not provide a comprehensive theoretical discourse in analysing the acting.

³ Jan Czech, *O rozhlasové hře: hledání specifiky české rozhlasové inscenace od roku 1945* (Praha: Panorama, 1987).

directed by Josef Henke). The weak point of Czech's book is, in my opinion, insufficient explicit methodological anchoring. The structural and semantic methods of analysis of radio works are utilised innovatively by the author, at least in the context of the Czech broadcasting theory, but he fails to elucidate the methodological approach elsewhere in the book. Czech's method of practical analytical thinking therefore remains valuable in the context of the above-mentioned theoretical discourse, but not quite in terms of any clearly articulated methodological apparatus.

Insufficient research in the area of radio acting is problematic in terms of the discourse of the area examined. There is a lack of original literature on acting in radio, a fact that complicates the situation for each new attempt at scholarly reflection. Terminology relating primarily to radio acting was acquired partly through long-term study of broadcasting theory (Jan Czech,⁴ Alena Štěrbová,⁵ Jan Vedral,⁶ Václav Růt,⁷ Olga Srbová,⁸ František Kožík⁹), partly through interdisciplinary research of acting, primarily theatre acting (texts of Jiří Veltruský,¹⁰ Jaroslav Vostrý,¹¹ Zuzana Sílová,¹² Jan Hyvnar,¹³ Michal Čunderle¹⁴). Naturally, the reference points of the theatrological research had to be revised against the broadcasting theory, as specific aspects of certain vehicles of expression largely differ in practical use in theatre and in radio.

The concept of the study will be based on the historiographical analytical reflection of Preiss' broadcasting career, with a special focus on three of his essential roles in radio, portrayed over twenty-seven years, on which I am going to demonstrate the uniqueness of his radio acting. The roles comprise Andrei Bolkonsky (*War and Peace*, 1978), Claudius (*I, Claudius*, 2001), and Informer (*An Ordinary Circuit*, 2005). Looking at the dating of the individual plays as well as the typology of the characters examined, it is apparent that I do not attempt to identify only one genre aspect or period of the actor's broadcasting career. The three characters were deliberately chosen for the completely dissimilar nature of each of them, the different vehicles of expression used, but also the ample space that allowed Preiss to create characters of great internal complexity with a wide spectrum of expressive interpretation.

I am going to examine the above three roles, in particular, using semantic analysis, a method that should help me elucidate which vehicles of expression Viktor Preiss uses to shape his characters and the specificity of his acting method. In conclusion, I am going to summarize the findings from the analyses into a comprehensive reflection on Preiss' acting style in broadcasting, identifying the exclusivity of his auditory output.¹⁵

⁴ Czech, *O rozhlasové hře*.

⁵ Alena Štěrbová, *Rozhlasová inscenace: Teoret. komentované dějiny čes. rozhlasové produkce* (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého, 1995).

⁶ Vedral and Vedral, *Jiří Horčíčka*.

⁷ Václav Růt, *Divadlo a rozhlas* (Praha: Čs. rozhlas, 1964).

⁸ Olga Srbová, *Rozhlas a slovesnost* (Praha: Vyšehrad, 1941).

⁹ František Kožík, *Rozhlasové umění* (Praha: Československý kompas, 1940).

¹⁰ Jiří Veltruský, "Příspěvek k sémiologii herectví," in *Příspěvky k teorii divadla: Sborník studií, Jiří Veltruský* (Praha: Divadelní ústav, 1994), 117–161.

¹¹ Jaroslav Vostrý, *O hercích a herectví: osobnost a umění* (Praha: Achát, 1998).

¹² Zuzana Sílová, ed., *Generace a kontinuita: k českému scénickému umění 20. století* (Praha: KANT, 2009).

¹³ Jan Hyvnar, *O českém dramatickém herectví 20. století* (Praha: KANT, 2008).

¹⁴ Čunderle, *Dialogy řeči*.

¹⁵ I have already addressed Viktor Preiss' radio acting in my Bachelor and then also Master's theses, which form the basis for this text. See Tomáš Bojda, "Rozhlasové herectví Viktora Preisse" (Bachelor thesis, Palacký University, 2014) and "Rozhlasové herectví. Příkladová studie – Viktor Preiss" (Master's thesis, Palacký University, 2017).

Early Years in Broadcasting

Viktor Preiss was born on March 13, 1947 in Prague. After the completion of his acting studies at the Theatre Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts (AMU) in Prague (he graduated in 1969, performing the role of Franci in František Langer's play *Periferie* [The Outskirts], directed by Jan Kačer), Preiss joined the Prague City Theatres, where he spent fourteen years. In 1983, Preiss was offered an engagement at the Vinohrady Theatre, soon becoming a leading figure, as he did at the Prague City Theatres, and creating a number of prominent characters of world and Czech drama. Preiss spent thirty-three years at the Vinohrady Theatre, until leaving the troupe in 2016 and never joining a permanent engagement again. In addition to the above-mentioned theatres, Preiss repeatedly performed at the studio theatre Viola, where he could use his minimalist, focused expression based on precise vocal characterisation and nuanced acting. Aside from his dramatic engagement, Preiss was involved in film, television dramatisations,¹⁶ and series, as well as in dubbing¹⁷ (he voiced Robin Williams, for instance). He utilised his talent for dancing and singing in music productions and musicals, even winning the prestigious Thalia Award in 1999 for the role of Cervantes/Don Quixote in the musical *Man of La Mancha* (directed by Tomáš Töpfer, Na Fidlovačce Theatre).

The very first radio work of Viktor Preiss was a recitation of the ballad *Toman a lesní panna* [Toman and the Forest Nymph] by František Čelakovský in 1972. It was the initial meeting of the twenty-five-year-old actor and Josef Melč, a director with whom Preiss has worked many a time since then. This recitation started Preiss' collaboration with radio which has lasted for almost half a century and which the actor calls his "personal professional hygiene."¹⁸ The actual starting point in broadcasting, however, was the year 1974, when the actor played several remarkable roles. This year was also the commencement of Preiss' fortunate artistic cooperation with the doyen of Czech radio direction, Jiří Horčíčka, with whom he made excellent auditory recordings. In 1974, Preiss rendered seven characters on the radio, two of which became fundamental for the future characterisation of his acting technique and defining for his professional acting inspirations. In *Father Goriot*, the young actor appears, for the first time, alongside renowned colleagues such as Miloš Nedbal, Martin Růžek, Ladislav Boháč, and Marie Vášová. Apart from being a natural lyricist, Preiss purposefully connects the juvenile timbre, in which one can immediately recognise the colourfulness of his voice and the emotional intimacy he later skilfully used, and an exceptional feeling for technical sophistication. His brilliant mastering of the difficult technical substance of the microphone destined Preiss for a full expression wherein the actor gives himself, his voice, at the disposal of the character's profile. Preiss's technical proficiency stems from an understanding of the requirements of the microphone, the ability to concentrate the psychophysical condition into vocal expression. The specific radio intimacy, the "public privacy," allows the actor to gather an inner tension into his voice and breathing. Within these contours, the actor does not need to embrace the relationship between the stage and the auditorium, so important in drama, but can for instance, truthfully convey the character's whispers by softening his voice.

¹⁶ Preiss won the Elsa Award for the best male actor for the role of vicar Josef Toufar in the television film *In nomine patris* (2005).

¹⁷ Preiss won two František Filipovský Awards for Dubbing: in 1995 – for dubbing Robin Williams in *Mrs. Doubtfire* and in 2004 – for dubbing Stephen Fry in *Wilde*.

¹⁸ Viktor Preiss, personal interview with the author, December 13, 2016.

Cooperation with Jiří Horčíčka, Andrej Bolkonsky

The period of normalisation in the 1970s and 1980s diverted the dramaturgical direction of the 1960s when the Czechoslovak state radio scouted for new authors of radio plays, while producing, for the first time, the works of Samuel Beckett, Franz Kafka, and Friedrich Dürrenmatt, to name just a few. Persecution of a number of leading authors as well as changes to the dramaturgy, with a substantial occurrence of tendentious, pro-regime works, implied a departure from the artistic progress the radio experienced in the 1960s. The new dramaturgical targeting, however, also brought adaptations of major, epic works of literature – French, but primarily Russian novels. These were traditionally made into a series in several parts, allowing for the creation of an extensive dramatic arc, a vivid depiction of the story and a stratification of the novels. The qualities of these adaptations heavily depended on the professionalism of the directors, script editors and actors alike. Dramatisations of celebrated novels such as *War and Peace*, *And Quiet Flows the Don*, *Oblomov*, and *Master and Margarita* provided well-known texts, the radio-specific language of which could be built up within an ample time frame using solely auditory means and taking advantage of the already established stereo-broadcasting.

The new dramaturgy provided the actors with the most extensive space to date. Celebrated dramatic characters of world literature were brought to life in multifarious aspects, with carefully chosen means of stratified expressive formation of the personality, wherein the actor was able to gradually build up the character over a span of several parts, with the opportunity to capture the character's mental and physical development through specific, auditory vehicles of expression. This method of work also gave rise to, more or less, permanent creative teams where the individual directors worked with the same actors; mutual understanding and long-term conceptions became especially evident in exceptional productions of epic works.

Novels have a typical aspect immanent to the nature of prosaic narrative: the elaborate psychology of the characters. Numerous works therefore provide a broad framework of broadcasting interpretation, as both the director and the actor were able to assume an attitude towards the character and, primarily, the means of expressing the personality through auditory means. This selection of the vehicles of expression was closely related to the overall treatment of the radio play by the director, usually in cooperation with the script editor. It follows that the actor's expression is based on the directorial approach to the specific play, and the interpreter gives the character its typical, distinctive voice and manner of acting. It is, however, debatable as to what extent this is a matter of the cohesion of the actor's creation, and to what extent it depends on the directorial approach. Ideally, the director and the actor should cooperate in finding the internal and external essence and expressive appearance of the character through dialogue. It is no surprise that this was exactly the case of cooperation between Jiří Horčíčka and Viktor Preiss, who, over the course of time, became one of the typical and finest actors in radio plays directed by Horčíčka.

The uniqueness and novelty of auditory adaptations of classical literary works relied on narrative approach, acting as well as comprehensive sound design, clearly specified by the director. Radio adaptations are unique in the possibility of preserving the poetics and philosophy of the novels, on which they are based, through stylistic means immanent to the auditory media. This dramaturgical tendency culminated in 1978 in an extensive dramatisation of Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* directed by Jiří Horčíčka and adapted by Jaroslava and Jan Strejček. Over a vast space of four one-hour episodes, Viktor Preiss was able to build a compact psychological depiction of the gradually maturing, conceited Andrei Bolkonsky, originally a determined soldier and arrogant son, who, affected by a war injury and emotional upheaval, progressively changes into an apathetic, embittered critic. The large radio canvas allowed the authors a generous stereophonic sound design, including compelling music written by Vladimír Truc. A number of brilliant actors

played both the leading and supporting parts, but two of them excelled – Viktor Preiss as Andrei Bolkonsky and Eduard Cupák as Pierre Bezukhov.

Preiss' Andrei is a character experiencing difficult mental development, yet it allows the actor to utilise a wide expressive range to portray pivotal emotional and mental moments. The character's dramatic arc permeates the storyline, symbolising the loss of illusions and hopes, literal mental and ideological ageing, and a consequent sudden burst. All the emotional moments are keystone expressive artefacts of Preiss' interpretation. In the moments of love confessions, his Andrei is a lyrical lover whose voice sparkles with passion when he speaks in a low voice or whispers. Preiss lays the foundation of his essential, distinctive feature of psychological acting – the art of delicate changeover from the individual vocal ranges.

Thanks to his ability to diversify the toning of his timbre and a feeling for tempo-rhythm, Preiss is able to spontaneously express nuances between the pent-up emotion and temperamental passion. In his case, abrupt changes in temper and vocal emphasis are not striking marks of exclamation, but rather the sensitively treated, natural development of the emotional fund. Preiss can gather inner tension into a muffled voice or, in contrast, turn bursts of wrath into a concise, yet persuasive, decisive imperative that indicates both demand and Andrei's aristocratic manners. In the scene where Andrei is fatally injured on the Austerlitz battlefield, Preiss visualises Andrei's internal state through an introspective monologue, i.e., an expression which requires exceptional sense of emotion and pathos. Andrei's edge of life and death is not just an external vacuum, but rather a metaphysical image, emanating a voice that does not only belong to Andrei, but to some higher divine force. The emotional exposure lies on the very margin of the expressive form. Preiss has to focus unprecedented intensity into the functional disciplining of his breath. He does not semanticise the present pain and death with a painful vocal grimace, but decelerates the pace, with his cadence indicating the fact that staring death in the face, all is calmed and humility prevails. Jan Czech states that "breath replaces gestures, facial expressions in a radio play [...]"¹⁹ Preiss' interpretation of the crucial sequences in Andrei's part exemplifies the actor's ability to utilise broadcasting language accurately within the contours of semantic creation. When Preiss strives to portray Andrei's mental and physical condition as truthfully as possible, he transposes the condition in the breathing and rhythmical composition of his expression.

The plasticity of Preiss' performance of Andrei corresponds to the sweeping nature of the dramatic character. In a role of this extent, the director and the actor must thoughtfully determine actual dramatic culminations and central conflicts and accommodate the build-up of the expressive style accordingly. Characters such as Andrei develop over the course of the play similarly to real life, and thus the selected interpretative means should correspond to the character's mental and physical development. When Preiss attains the emotional effect by the frequency of his breathing, he must intrinsically convince the listener of the verity of this condition. Breathing must be coherent throughout the performance, correspond to the tempo-rhythm of the given scene, and must portray the character's psychophysical condition in living sincerity. Jiří Horčíčka, the director, knew that condensation as well as minimalist gestures can be more instrumental for the resulting effect of the situation portrayed than explicit exaggeration of the same. Preiss' Andrei therefore attains the truest value of expression in absolute adherence to the extent of the selected means. Andrei's covetousness in face of his father's dominance, his passion in romantic feelings, his profound, genuine military ambition, but also subsequent cruel awakening gain credibility by being portrayed using precise technical means, by articulating the substance, while never getting lost in self-serving emotional boundlessness. What makes Andrei's auditory development stand out is that his intellectual world is not unfolded by images, but by voice,

¹⁹ Czech, *O rozhlasové hře*, 95.

the vehicle of the inner narrative. Imaginativeness of acting performances as well as the overall sound design of *War and Peace* ultimately becomes vivid due to the impressionable use of the auditory means that visualise the story and inner relations. The play fully utilises the capability of the broadcasting medium to convey visual conception by an audible means, as treated by Jan Vedral: “The aesthetised, stylised sound image of the radio play’s dramatic space allows us to watch the play with our inner sight.”²⁰

I decided to analyse Preiss’s role as Andrei Bolkonsky in *War and Peace* in detail partly for the significance and importance of such a performance, partly to exemplify the specifically articulated acting in the first period of Preiss’ acting career. This period, however, cannot be exactly defined by a single year or role. Specification of creative periods aims at providing better orientation in the actor’s exceptionally prolific and multi-faceted career, to provide better comprehension of the development of his artistic method and maturing of expression. Three fundamental phases in Preiss’ career according to the typology of his roles can be established: the first period from the very beginnings of his acting until the late 1970s; the second period shall include the 1980s and 1990s; and the third beginning in 2000 and lasting up to the present day. This classification should be beneficial for accenting Preiss’ progress, especially in terms of the typology of characters. Whilst in the 1970s, his lyricism and emotionally rich store of expression predestined him to be an ideal protagonist of clearly distinguishable and genre-anchored fictional characters, Preiss, over the years, matured into more complicated roles, using the vocally minimalist method that increasingly relied on work with his breath.

New Challenges

While normalization dramaturgy allowed Preiss to portray a number of major characters in prose adaptations (apart from Andrei Bolkonsky, also Mark Volokhov in Ivan Goncharov’s *The Precipice*, and Villefort in Alexandre Dumas’ *The Count of Monte Cristo*), the period after the Velvet Revolution in 1989 meant a change of direction. A number of previously prohibited personalities and authors returned to broadcasting, with the dramaturgy of Czech Radio becoming more varied. In 1996, Viktor Preiss, directed by Hana Kofránková, appeared in a radio adaptation of one of Henrik Ibsen’s plays – in the leading role of Thomas Stockmann in *An Enemy of the People*. This socio-critical drama, effectively translated by František Fröhlic, is a timeless study of public morals, manipulation, the importance of public opinion, and the handling of information. The psychological portrayal of the unfortunately stubborn Doctor Stockmann, who blindly advocates something that suits no-one, is a picture of a victim of the system, the helplessness of an individual facing the predominance of a mass. The naive, maladroit Stockmann became the first of three major characters of Ibsen played by Preiss on the radio. Even if the time separation of these plays – the other two being *Hedda Gabler* and *Ghosts* – is sixteen years, one can find some determining identical elements of the actor’s expressions, common for Preiss’s roles in Ibsen’s plays.

When analysing Preiss’ broadcasting work in more detail, the Ibsenian roles bring to light a specific orientation of expression that has become a crucial part of the actor’s mature interpretation technique. This is, undoubtedly, a tendency toward condensed vocal expression and greater focus on breathing, where the actor minimises the means he uses, deliberately applying

²⁰ Vedral and Vedral, *Jiří Horčíčka*, 182.

the unique colourfulness of his voice and the ability to rhythmise entities of speech even on a small scale. Ibsenian characters are distinguished by psychological density, which, except for climactic situations, takes effect primarily through the effect of unvoiced, hidden significance which is usually more striking as to the emotional and unconscious perception. In Ibsen's case, the most prominent expressive situations are those that are hidden, unvoiced, yet present. The crucial conflicts of the characters increase gradually during the plays, and Preiss utilises his experience to gradually layer their individual mental states. The intimacy of a microphone provides an opportunity to voice major gestures.

The specificity of auditory adaptations uncovers new perspectives of the text, especially in the case of Ibsen's plays. Semantic insinuations and the build-up of conflicts and relationships between the characters receives a new accent on the radio, focusing on the vocal expression in Kofránková's production. The environment and atmosphere of Ibsen's world does not necessarily need to develop from the scenery; the intimate concept of the plays benefits from the suitably selected casting which can concentrate their means of expression in a manner that handles the theme comprehensively by confronting the listener with the world of the characters. Casting, in this case, is truly of utmost importance, as the director has to choose types corresponding to the requirements of Ibsen's specific poetics, actors who are capable of delivering expressive performances, inner passion, and introspective images alike. The genre characteristic requires technically competent actors whose voice, ideally, embraces the psychological perspective of the character as well as the framework of relationships and the overall atmosphere of the play. When looking at actresses who starred alongside Viktor Preiss in the key roles, one can find that they actually fitted the specified interpretative requirements: Dana Syslová as Kathrine in *An Enemy of the People*, Vilma Cibulková in one of the best performances of her life as *Hedda Gabler*, and Daniela Kolářová as Mrs. Alving in *Ghosts*. All of these actresses are capable of conveying psychological inwardness, but, at the same time, can focus their vocal expression in an extrinsic shortcut, using the timbre to hint at the character's nature and type.

Viktor Preiss' mature broadcasting performance is ideal for such an interpretation. His deep understanding of what the microphone requires reached its absolute peak in the late 1990s. The actor (also considering the fact that his voice is well-known among spectators/listeners) uses this advantage in a deliberate fashion. He does not need descriptive expressions to create a pivotal dramatic situation, its atmosphere, but makes do with the frequency in intonation and breathing. The ability to abruptly change voice intensity, where the actor excels in detailed whispering and intimate lyrical confessions, as well as fierce expirations, indicates a sensible approach to the character's emotional condition. For Preiss, the deeply-felt mental aspects of a character form his typical interpretative asset.

Managing the specificity of vocal qualities is a delicate issue for many a great actor, who, after dozens of roles and thanks to the general popularity and appreciation of their work, reach a position where the listeners immediately recognise their voice. In consequence, the recipient approaches the programme with expectations about the expression the actor is going to instil in the character they play. When Preiss became the next Sherlock Holmes on Czech radio in the late 1990s, the new part brought two questions: first, how will the actor interpret the role, and second, what his detective will be like. Arthur Conan Doyle's mysteries were directed by an expert in the English setting, Josef Červinka. Holmes was played by Viktor Preiss, Watson by Otakar Brousek Sr. Their long-term cooperation from the Vinohrady Theatre was of great use, as both of them were familiar with broadcasting and were close acting partners from the stage. The actors worked in technical affinity, with their auditory co-existence proving to be another fortunate encounter of great actors, similarly to Preiss' previous cooperation with Eduard Cupák or later work with Jiří Lábus.

The individual Holmesian productions (for instance, *The Adventure of the Abbey Grange*, *The Problem of Thor Bridge*, *The Adventure of the Priory School*) were usually forty minutes long, during which Červinka was able to maintain the pace of the usually simple cases. The narrative principle was always the same: Holmes and Watson are presented with a specific case, which Holmes, using deduction of all available information and evidence, solves in the last scene. With Holmes, it is not about the fact that he solves a case, but rather about the method; in our case, what means of expression Preiss uses to render Holmes' eccentricity. A general knowledge of Holmes' habits (pipe, violin, analytical thinking) serves to overdesign the already canonical character by extraneous decorative elements of his behaviour. Holmes' extravagances and his awareness of being exceptional should be accented but should not become a purposeless parody that obliterates the quintessence of his professional exclusivity. Preiss succeeded in "trimming" Holmes of external deposits. He gave him his own intellect and vocal method. Preiss' Holmes has a higher-pitched voice, the circumspection of which differs from Brousek's restrained lower timbre. The vocal unity created by both actors determines the play's mood – usually English-like, with humorous moments that are effortlessly kind, just like the characters.

The late 1990s and early 2000s brought a welcome change in the genre to Preiss in the form of two considerable characters in adaptations of Oscar Wilde's plays. His Lord Illingworth from *A Woman of No Importance*, as well as Lord Windermere in *Lady Windermere's Fan* accurately fit in Wilde's original poetics of plays set in a high-society environment. The conversation comedy genre is particularly effective on the radio, notably for its language delicacy. Wilde's language is distinguished by sparkling wit filled with irony, sarcastic comments and language paradoxes. The play on words stands out in precisely depicted characters played by experienced actors whose spoken word is purposeful, with the added value of fineness, which is even more charming in witty, sensuous dialogues and humorous description of social manners, largely artificial and anachronistic. Preiss' Illingworth is a poignant ironist, clearly with autobiographical traits of Oscar Wilde. Preiss' language finesse rhythmically corresponds with Wilde's bluntness. He immediately and skilfully automates Wildesian language habits, exhibiting the individual vocal expressions in their contours. He preserves the savagely ironic diction, his lord is an analytical commentator, who does not preachify, but rather indifferently observes. Aristocratic tendencies clearly resonate in his voice, by intoning up, by voice gestures full of sovereignty, but also by a certain impatience caused by the perpetual weariness of Wilde's characters. Preiss precisely articulates this casual daintiness in the fast pace of speech. His stylisation can be summarised by Michal Čunderle's remark on Karel Höger, saying that "it is not a case of self-revelling perfection, but rather of sophistication in expression that restrainedly respects the deliverance."²¹ There is no doubt that Preiss precisely identified himself with Wilde's language, in addition to the Ibsenian suggestive psychology. In doing so, he found another congenial director, who gave him a chance to create more great dramatic roles: Markéta Jahodová.

Overall, the 1990s were an exceptionally prolific creative period for Victor Preiss, totalling sixty-five roles on the radio. He enacted a number of outstanding characters under the direction of Hana Kofránková, a director who gave Preiss a diversified repertoire of great dramatic figures, largely in dialogical plays that accented the acting element. It should also be noted that now, after turning fifty,²² Preiss's timbre gradually changed its nature. What remains is sparkling melodiousness, lyrical traits, and a wide variability of expression, but little by little, the former romantic gentleness blends into a more rasping and moderate style. The actor continues to work with an emotionally solid input, invested into the character's psychology, yet more and more,

²¹ Čunderle, *Dialogy řeči*, 28.

²² Viktor Preiss celebrated his fiftieth birthday in 1997.

his expression tends to temperance and civility associated with the typology and age of the characters. The drive and intensity of experience are present in a more implicit form, his acting is more significant, utilising the experience and knowledge of the microphone, especially in breathing and pauses used as semantic facilities of expression. Preiss' vocal maturity, with seemingly inconspicuous coarsening of his timbre opens the door to the great dramatic characters the actor enacted since the turn of the millennium.

Antihero Roles

Collaboration with Markéta Jahodová created, similar to the partnership with Hana Kofránková, a new perspective in Preiss' radio acting. Two years before the celebrated production of *I, Claudius* (2001), Jahodová's extensive interpretations of dramatic historical subjects focused on the versatile art personality of Leonardo da Vinci. The ten-part dramatisation (1999) of Dmitry Merezhkovsky's novel fell behind *I, Claudius* in almost all aspects. Both gigantic works covered an extensive period of time, had a number of characters voiced by excellent actors, and narrated several story lines. While *I, Claudius*, despite its length, maintained the narrative pace, continuously attacking the listeners chiefly thanks to Preiss's stunning performance, *Leonardo da Vinci*, a meticulous piece of work that, technically speaking, never staggered in its expression and auditory execution, comprised a story oversaturated by a descriptive narration, intricate composition and complicated characters. The extensiveness diluted expressions of the actors and the overall structure of the resulting piece meant that Preiss, in another title role as Leonardo, could not utilise by far his multifarious range of means of expression to dynamise the story. A broadcast of such breadth poses the risk of failing to keep the story compelling over the long term, and it seems that abridging and adding dynamism to dramatic moments and conflicts of characters would support the tempo-rhythm of the production. Compared with *Claudius*, Leonardo lacks in psychology and inner dynamism, and his static character bears no resemblance to the variable diversity of *Claudius*.

Jahodová cast actors in roles of different types of interpretative approach than was the case with Jiří Horčíčka, Preiss' first really defining radio author. Apart from the adaptations of Oscar Wilde's conversation comedies, this primarily applies to the exceptionally extensive, stratified character of Emperor *Claudius* in the dramatisation of the novel *I, Claudius* by the British author Robert Graves. From today's perspective, this part is one of Preiss' three greatest roles not just in the new century, but apparently in the entire post-1989 period of the actor's broadcasting career. In the narratively demanding, eight-part series, Preiss, in addition to his usual acting, also utilised one of the greatest qualities in his expression – the ability to deform speech, in this case by stuttering.

The actor had a chance to repeatedly attest the authentic art of creating a speech degeneration of a character in theatre (for instance, Master Fortunato in Carlo Goldoni's *Le baruffe chiozzotte* [Brawling in Chioggia]) as well as in dubbing, where he dubbed Robin Williams in *Mrs. Doubtfire* in a truly unforgettable manner. At this point, works that seemingly bear no resemblance are surprisingly close to one other, at least in terms of the vehicles of expression. In the afore-mentioned film, the metamorphism in the vocal performance varies with the disguise of Williams' character, Daniel Hillard. Preiss' vocal exhibitionism tempo-rhythmically indicates a range from squeaky falsetto to mincing crudeness. The deliberate overexposure of his intonations serves the interest of the work, comically gradating the story and being one of the vehicles of humour. When Williams (and Preiss with him) returns to Daniel's normal pitch, his speech is once again natural. It is important to note that the authentic changeovers in the speech are not

a purposeless acting formalism, as Daniel, in his eagerness, multiplies the efforts expended to gain custody of the children he lost due to divorce. Although Preiss states that “strictly speaking, dubbing usually fails to be an authentic creative work,”²³ the role of Daniel Hillard can be viewed as an honourable exception where the voice actor’s contribution creates added artistic value.²⁴

The example of voice deformation in dubbing was mentioned intentionally for inspirational comparison with the broadcast analogy of this vocal oddity. Let us return to Emperor Claudius whose stutter was both the aesthetic vehicle of his speech and a reflection of his inner insecurity, self-depreciation and habitual spinelessness. In the radio adaptation of Markéta Jahodová, Claudius partly functions as a narrator, partly as an active character. As a self-mocking narrator, he articulates the facts with a dismissive aphorism, while as an active character, he is an erudite, yet passive sovereign dominated by his string-pulling wife, Messalina, as well as by his subjects. Claudius is afraid of Messalina (Kamila Špráchalová), but also of Caligula (Lukáš Hlavica). Claudius’ psychophysical trepidation is present in almost all of his scenes through Preiss’s voice.

Preiss semanticises Claudius’ restlessness by fluctuations in articulation and intonation, an erratic rhythm caused by unfinished utterances, stammering shifts in vocal intensity where the voice, with skilful precision, inclines to urgent statements stated in a low voice, especially in the expressive parts. Together with the pauses, the ardent eccentricity of Claudius’ speech creates the premeditated stylisation of the character. It is specifically the pause, as a consequence of the speech impediment and purposeful directorial means, that emphasises the unique melodic purity of Preiss’ timbre, who obviously takes pleasure in varying his expression. The rhythmisation of Claudius’ speech crucially affects the tempo-rhythm of the overall narration. It lacks the musical nature, as mentioned by Jan Czech in the case of Josef Henke’s direction of Antonín Přidal’s play *Sudičky* (The Fatal Sisters),²⁵ yet it leaves a perception of versicolour imitativeness, detailed conceptions of the character’s personalities and spatial orientation. The vast space of eight parts makes it possible to meticulously build the dramatic arc of a figure whose psychological portrayal is depicted through Preiss’ expressive performance in all extremities of personal and sovereign life. Similar to Wilde’s and Ibsen’s plays, one can observe the effortless adaptation of Preiss’ acting to the specific spatiotemporal framework of the story, the character’s language and the genre. The highly skilled mastering of the technical factors of the broadcast production is an essential part of Preiss’ acting professionalism, which allows him to create his characters not as a mere set of qualities, but as an integral, vital figure with his own physical and mental material.

A negative character, also called an antihero, is popular among actors as an opportunity to utilise certain vehicles of expression in particularly expressive aspects. In the first decade of the new millennium, Viktor Preiss was offered a chance to portray two sharp-cut antiheroes. The seemingly different characters bear a mutual resemblance, despite stemming from various literary platforms. The first one is the Informer from *An Ordinary Circuit* (2005) by the French author Jean-Claude Carrière, while the other one is Edgar in the adaptation of August Strindberg’s *The Dance of Death* (2008). In these tight, exceptionally intense dramas in terms of their themes and psychology, Preiss created vivid images of crooked tempers who connote evil incarnate at times, and sometimes make the listener feel sorry for them.

The director, Hana Kofránková, and script editor, Hynek Pekárek, produced Michal Lázňovský’s translation of *An Ordinary Circuit* in 2005.²⁶ This chamber play for two actors – Viktor

²³ Viktor Preiss, personal interview with the author, October 4, 2014.

²⁴ Viktor Preiss won the 1995 František Filipovský Award for dubbing Robin Williams in *Mrs. Doubtfire*.

²⁵ Czech, *O rozhlasové hře*, 94.

²⁶ The play’s success was acknowledged by the prestigious 2006 Invisible Actor Award for the best performance by a male actor, presented to Viktor Preiss, followed by the staging of the radio play at Viola Theatre in Prague

Preiss as the Informer and Jiří Lábus as the Police Inspector – became a display of the vehicles of expression. Preiss himself speaks of “the exceptionality of the text,”²⁷ which is skilfully constructed as a duel between a culprit and a prosecutor, with the roles turning upside down over time. Both Preiss and Lábus played “against their types” and created characters opposing their usual acting range, thus adding authenticity thanks to the suggestive performance of both actors.

The fifty-two-minute play is constructed as a dialogue between the Police Inspector and the Informer, for whom the informing job has become a life’s calling. The cat-and-mouse game, where the Police Inspector exposes the Informer’s denunciation, turns around in the middle of the play, as the Informer tells the Police Inspector about his secret, well-thought-out activity which he can use to destroy the Inspector with a snap of a finger. The thematic monstrosity and absurdity is even more poignant by its parallel relationship with the practices of totalitarian and Nazi power. Violence against people, manipulation, spinelessness, and conformism are tender spots and timeless themes in all societies; this only increases the imperative within Carrière’s text. While the staged version of the play provided the actors with verbal as well as physical means, the auditory form is chillingly striking thanks to a vocal expression that gains unique potency through the clash of Preiss’ wheezy, penitent Informer with Lábus’ croaking, accusing Police Inspector. Preiss’ timbre, initially faltering, covers the entire spectrum of broadcasting expression. He alternates intonational and emotional postures, sharply changing from easement to nervous stutter and long pauses. The Informer is uncertain under pressure, smothering with the yearning need to vindicate himself, and with his voice enumerating the proofs of his innocence. In the scene where the Informer tries to persuade the Police Inspector with the urgent words “I swear I am pristine,” Preiss accentuates his exasperation primarily by the respiratory rate, modulating his timbre to an expressive, wheezy setting. The Police Inspector’s mocking repetition of the word “pristine” is uttered by Jiří Lábus with a sleek gibe, as he clearly takes pleasure in his dominance. The tension between the characters also accelerates the pace. Quick, short rejoinders pass from one to the other, with the actors dictating the tempo-rhythm of the play, constructing the oppressive atmosphere of the interrogation room. The pause receives a special place within the sonic hierarchy of the speech, semanticising the sense of threat and tension and dynamising the conflict of the characters. This confirms Jiří Horčíčka’s view that “a pause is not silence, but rather a word that does not ring.”²⁸

The Police Inspector is grumpily distrustful, provoking the Informer to offer a memory of greater detail. Lábus is an equal partner to Preiss. His distinct, specific timbre dominates the tempo-rhythm of the first half, he being the actual director of the Informer’s confession. To attain supremacy, Lábus does not need any effects of vocal expirations; he makes do with prompt proofs of power, he has “the upper hand,” and the Informer knows this. This adds to the surprise when the tables are suddenly turned. Preiss’ frightened, meek little man is gone and he immediately scourges the abruptly tame, astonished Lábus’ Police Inspector with confidence and makes him yet to fathom to what lengths the Informer’s influence may go. Lábus repeatedly uses falsetto to reflect surprise and helplessness, and Preiss attenuates these desperate exclamations by an offer of settlement. They both know, however, that the Police Inspector would be doomed if the Informer wanted to.

The textual quality of *An Ordinary Circuit* was mirrored by the congenial interpretation that, delicately directed by Hana Kofránková, allowed both protagonists to excel. In this case,

(first played on September 22, 2006) and even guest performances of the play in Canada (May 15–17, 2008 in Burnaby near Vancouver, British Columbia).

²⁷ Viktor Preiss, personal interview with the author, October 4, 2014.

²⁸ Vedral and Vedral, *Jiří Horčíčka*, 51.

her characteristic direction served the purpose and dramatic character of the play in the best way possible. Apart from the voices, there is almost no other audible information heard, only the closing door and paper shuffling in the introduction suggesting that the story takes place in an office, presumably in a police station. The atmosphere of interrogation, the cat-and-mouse game, cumulates the suspense and rhythm, forcing the actors to be restrained, yet expressive in content. The acting method results from the innermost comprehension of the characters' motivation. Preiss and Lábus alike identify with both dissimilar positions within their parts, accommodating their expressions to them.

The space of the concise play, depicting a duel between a contemporary man and his single adversary, is nothing like the sweeping perspective of *I, Claudius*. The stratification of expression unfolds on profoundly different levels. While Preiss as Claudius gradually constructs a large dramatic arc, the Informer concentrates an inner conciseness in him, with an immediate accent on the emotion conveyed. With copious experience and after playing numerous characters of various genres and types, Preiss demonstrates that at almost sixty, he reached the limits of broadcast acting expression.

In 2008, Preiss once again cooperated with Hana Kofránková and developed the complex character of Timon of Athens. The pitfall in the interpretation of this Shakespeare play relates to the demanding requirement for the scenography, which had to be accordingly rendered by sound design. Kofránková knew the difficulty in a verily corresponding adaptation but was confident that Timon was suitable for radio by going after the root of his psychology.²⁹ Her production is not a political drama, however, but instead a psychological portrayal of a monarch whose power is collapsing. The advantages of auditory adaptations of certain material are noted by Jan Czech, who stated that “an actor in a radio play can use finer, more differentiated, even more ‘realistic’ means of expression.”³⁰ A typical example of this is whispering on the radio, which, in contrast to a stage whisper (despite lowering the voice, an actor's whisper must resonate so that even spectators on the upper balcony hear him or her clearly), does not have to be stylised, i.e., accentuated, but rather realistically quivering, as the listener will hear it in the recorded quality. In the case of *Timon of Athens*, Preiss used a very loud voice (often screaming) as well as whispering on repeated occasions, while his voice remained fully sonorous in both cases.

The emotionally demanding role with rich language provided Preiss with another large canvas of radio drama. The actor gave his character a distinctive inward expression based on the understanding of inner devastation. Timon, a sovereign convulsed with exasperation, curses, regret, and passion, is the tragic character of a jilted monarch betrayed by his own servants. Each emotional nuance is vocally exposed in a descriptive manner of revealing the emotional motives. Vocal and breathing values make Timon an unfortunate sufferer. An alternately fast cadence and phrasing accentuate Timon's ambivalence. The precarious fatality in certain climactic scenes is filled with naturalism that uncovers emotions in a heavily striking manner.

Over the last ten years since *Timon of Athens*, Preiss has played a number of characters on the radio, some principal (conductor Václav Talich in the play *Má protentokrát obsazená vlast* [My Country, This Time Occupied], directed by Vít Vencl, 2015), some supporting (Peaseblossom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, directed by Martina Schlegelová, 2016). In addition to dramatic characters of world literature and drama, Preiss has occasionally appeared in plays for young people (Grandpa in *Svět za tunelem* [The World behind the Tunnel], directed by Michal Lázňovský, 2016). Preiss starred in 2017 in Hana Kofránková's production of *The Good God of*

²⁹ Hana Kofránková, personal interview with the author, December 2, 2016.

³⁰ Czech, *O rozhlasové hře*, 42.

Manhattan by Ingeborg Bachmann, while a year later, he interpreted, among other roles, the Teacher in Natálie Deáková's new production of *The Visit* by Friedrich Dürrenmatt.

Characteristics of the Acting Style

The arc of radio acting, spanning more than forty-five years, seems to be sufficient to trace the specific aspects of Viktor Preiss' acting style as well as to provide a wider perspective of reflection, observation of the comprehensive typology of selected vehicles of expression and the approach to the individual roles.

Preiss' multifarious acting is manifested on the radio as an expression that synthesises technical sophistication, intellectual comprehension and emotional outreach. These perspectives allow the actor to embrace varied genres and types of characters. His ability to provide vocal shortcuts and gestures, his thoughtful work with breathing and pauses resulted in maximum solidity and plasticity of expression under leading directors. It is well-known that a breadth of talent can become evident over a long time, but also in a single role. Preiss fulfils both. From romantically lyrical parts such as Eugène de Rastignac (*Father Goriot*), Janek (*The Makropulos Affair*), and Andrei Bolkonsky (*War and Peace*), Preiss moved on to more mature figures such as Villefort (*The Count of Monte Cristo*) and Carpet (*Scenes from an Execution*), and finally arrived at truly great, psychologically demanding characters such as Claudius (*I, Claudius*), the Informer (*An Ordinary Circuit*), and Edgar (*The Dance of Death*). He also lent his voice to a number of outstanding personalities, geniuses of history and art (*Leonardo da Vinci – Leonardo, A Meeting in Valladolid – William Shakespeare*). One can also recall his cooperation with Josef Červinka, under whose direction Preiss became another Sherlock Holmes in the 1990s (*The Adventure of the Abbey Grange, The Adventure of the Priory School, The Five Orange Pips*). There were also book readings (*The Little Prince, Singing from the Soul, The Black Monk, Mozart*) and reciting (*May, Apocrypha, Sázava, řeka dětství, mládí mého* [The Sázava, a River of My Childhood and Youth]). The complete list of Preiss' audio recordings comprises more than two hundred works, many of them being multiple-part, several-hour projects.

If one were to synthesise the expressive specificities of Preiss radio acting, there is a need to clearly determine the parameters for their assessment. One of the key factors is, undoubtedly, the special, deeply-felt technical quality the actor has successfully crystallised into its genuine form over the years, while disposing of its basic requirements since his beginnings on the radio. The actor displayed his maturity and deliberate ability to utilise the specific nature of radio acting since early roles such as Rastignac and Volokhov in the first half of the 1970s.³¹ There can be no question here of the straightforward development of his acting style, but rather of a certain gradual finding of his immanent style of interpretation, which, however, heavily depends on the theme and character being produced. In addition to the technical quality of expression, this includes the ability to psychologise and emotionally visualise the characters, with the proficiency in abrupt changes in vocal qualities relating to the wide spectrum of the vehicles of expression used.

The category of technicality on the radio should be clarified: it is defined as an actor's ability to handle the specific space and expressive material the actor can use in a broadcasting studio. The actor has to rely on the need to concentrate his expression, to concentrate emotions and spoken word that function dramatically only in the auditory perspective. In order to convey the content with the greatest density possible, to provide information about what the character is saying, about the character's mental state, mood, relationship with other characters, etc., the interpreter has to deliberately accumulate their inner tension into a vocal quality. The absence

³¹ Jan Vedral, personal interview with the author, April 18, 2016.

of a mimic, gestic, motional, and costume perspective is replaced by breathing and rhythmic work, which predicate the character's condition in a manner similar to the very spoken word. When considering these specific requirements for acting, what remains is the voice as a carrier of dramatic action, an instrument through which the actor visualises the character's behaviour, and the word and the most elementary unit of its expression. Technical competence, i.e., the art of handling the specificity of the medium, would be, however, an empty form if it was not closely related to the actor's emotion, intuition, and intellect they use to hone the entire psychology of the character. If an actor is to create a vivid character with great internal depth, they must fill the technical categories of the individual means by proper content – their artistic and human contribution. This contribution may vary according to the specific characters. Where one character requires expressive stylisation full of passionately prominent expressions, another will do with rational condensation, which is seldom dazzling, but usually tells much more than an explicit accentuation of an emotional state.

It appears that by moving towards the condensation by apparent minimisation of the means, Preiss matured into the current acting situation where the directors and authors alike refer to him as “perfect.”³² This succinct labelling should not be perceived as a simplifying empty phrase, but one should rather ponder on the causes for such a confession. The tendency toward condensation relates to the genre-related typology of the characters played by Preiss as a senior actor. His vocal expression initially tended to be a lyrical, romanticising timbre, which, thanks to its natural colourfulness, emotionality, and smooth velvety nature, also stood out in expressive parts where the actor teetered on the edge of pathos. This includes extreme situations such as the visualisation of death, love confessions and introspective utterances. The truthful depiction of sultriness stems from Preiss' acting type. In his case, a character's emotions are always vivid and sincere, with the actor producing them from within himself, on the stage, in film, on television as well as on radio. This is a result of Preiss' sensitive tenderness, but also humbleness. The presence of humility is an important means of truthfulness of emotion. Introspective confession in the face of death, palpably produced by Preiss in the role of Andrei Bolkonsky in *War and Peace*, would never be so suggestive if it lacked *humility*, the actor's inner emotional investment.

As voice is the determining tool of a radio actor, all of its partial means of expression – intonation, diction, articulation, intensity, expression, breathing, rhythmisation – are specific devices used to create the required viable depiction. In broadcasting, a device is any means of expression an actor deliberately uses. If the interpreter is to convey an emotion of anger, there are several ways of expressing this condition. This is called tension semanticising (creation of a meaning), which can be constructed by the actor through an increase in the intensity of timbre, its maximum expiration. It can also be achieved by an accentuated lowering of the voice that also suggests the acuteness of the situation conveyed. The variability of the means refers to the acting interpretation, the method the actor chooses to construct the character.

Preiss' flexibility and versatility in mastering all genres resulted in the interesting fact which the actor does not necessarily perceive during the individual process act of creating a new character, but which a researcher can see clearly, when looking at the comprehensive list of Preiss' roles: this being how stratified Preiss' acting expression is. The actor's output comprises characters who are fundamentally tragic as well as romantic, negative as well as positive, diversified in the language and genre and profoundly different in typology. Interpretations of classical works alternate with original, modern radio dramas, with the Shakespearean language shifting to an Ibsenian density and Wilde's sparkling wit. Preiss benefited here from an articulated in-

³² Hana Kofránková, personal interview with the author, December 2, 2016; and Jan Vedral, personal interview with the author, April 18, 2016.

terconnection of technical virtuosity and acting intellect with his own experience, resulting in varied, but always psychologically credible characters.

The interpreter is undoubtedly aware of the qualities of his talent and the melodic quality and colourfulness of his timbre, which predestined him for genre-specific, distinctive characters, especially early in life (Rastignac, Andrei Bolkonsky). These given facts of interpretation would definitely not be sufficient, however, if unsupported by a substantive understanding of the specificities of auditory production. The timbre forms a semantically and aesthetically valuable artefact only when it serves the inner message of the character's life. In Preiss' case, the depiction of emotion, one of the most inherent, yet demanding elements of expression, has always been based on the respiratory rate. The mutual premeditated interconnection of the breathing and vocal phrasing is also the pivotal rhythmic element, and as was repeated throughout the article, the innate expressive rhythm is the main characteristic feature of Preiss' acting.

The rhythmic unity reveals the patterns in the use of intonation, but particularly the breathing input that, in addition to rhythm, also accentuates the character's psychology. Over the course of time, when Preiss' deep timbre even further emphasised the impressive distinctiveness of his voice, the breathing shortcut comes into focus within his expressive approach. This can be illustrated by Preiss' Roote in Harold Pinter's *The Hothouse*. Roote's blank exasperation, vulgar indifference, sometimes changing into verbal aggression, is expressed by various breathing values. The vivid depiction of Roote does not come to life due to the facts of his doing, but rather through his behaviour. When Roote is told about a death in the sanatorium and later of the pregnancy of one of the patients, the determining factor of perception is not the fact that such a case happened, but rather the way Roote reacts. Preiss accentuated this expressive specificity, demonstrating the importance of the particular interpretative intention for the technical quality of acting, and his individual treatment of each character he plays. His versatile technical mastery therefore does not result in routine formalism of the means, but in a thoughtfully intrigued method of broadcasting interpretation.

On the radio, just like in a film, the accentuated truthfulness of an emotional depiction is exposed to the maximum extent in close-up. As opposed to film, where the close-up is conveyed by camera, the microphone visualises a vocal detail. In this specific discipline of acting, the interpreter makes their expression as intimate as possible, accentuating the situation in which the character is caught. The close-up conveys emotions, affections, and the actor has to diligently resist pathetising purposelessness. Pathos does not necessarily need to be a reproachable lapse, as some prominent passages of some characters call for, but it is always in a strictly necessary form, not as a formalistic means.

This article addressed the vocal detail, for instance, in specific scenes of Andrei Bolkonsky (his dying scene) and Claudius (whisper, wheezy stutter). Preiss uses the details cautiously, as they are close to his lyrical nature and expressive abilities. In the character of Timon, Preiss frequently gradates the expressive figures to the comprehensive gesture of downfall and hate of his character by using a tremulous detail, which, in these contours, relates to a diction and articulation that must serve the purpose of the action. It seems that some characters act specifically through details, this being their nature. In *An Ordinary Circuit*, the entire dialogue of Lábus' Police Inspector and Preiss' Informer is, for example, a deep insight of sorts. Their expression is not portrayed in close-up, in the strict sense, but by the suggestion, evoked by the very theme, which turns every aspiration into a semantic artefact.

By commenting on the vehicles of expression, one can establish the specific determining qualities of Preiss's radio acting. Despite a multifarious space and typologically dissimilar opportunities, there is an unforgettable enduring value in the invariably individualised approach to each interpretation. It is up to the actor's invention as to what means should be used to depict

the character in a manner that maintains the genre principle and aesthetic coherence of the play. Preiss demonstrates, over a long-term basis, his sophistication in understanding the psychological aspects of the characters and their true nature. He has never constructed flat characters, but in contrast, explores the instinctual causes and, particularly, the motivations of the personalities. Preiss's Edgar in *The Dance of Death* is not a repulsive archetype of depravity through an explicit depiction of all that is foul. His evocativeness stems from the pathological expression: he demonstrates the complicated inner tensions and ambivalence that correspond to the tragicomic aspect of the character, but also of the entire society.

A sparkling expression and vocal mastery have been featured in Preiss' radio acting across decades. His sense of rhythm and construction of comprehensive auditory depictions are instrumental in the imaginative perception of the listeners. The actor's velvety timbre predestined him to a lyrical expression, which he is able to subtly turn to darker modulations and corners of his acting register. The stratified speech gesture frequently comprises passionate aspiration, threat, ambiguity, and ironical aloofness, through which both the character and the creator speak. If peculiar style is to be pinpointed in terms of radio acting, then, in Preiss' case, one can recognise expressively cumulated colourfulness, finesse of detail, unparalleled rhythmicity and musicality, a sensitive ability to change moods and emotions, a presence of passion and a deep human understanding. Identification with the character is spontaneous and devout, yet full of humility.

The intimacy and harmony in Preiss' expression are activated through pleasant vocal gesturing. Preiss is prepared to underline a momentary quiver of emotion by resonating cadence, emphasis and mimic gesture. When his Edgar in *The Dance of Death* mocks his wife Alice and friend Kurt, the key semantic element is not laughter as such, but rather the repulsive self-absorption with which it is exposed. Preiss utilises mocking remarks, derision, gasping breath and irregular syllabification. From the very beginning, the dialogue with his wife is filled with the bitter dreariness of their everyday lives. While Alice, played by Nela Boudová, is indifferent about everything, Preiss' Edgar is lost in petty details for some cynical pleasure. When voicing his confession that he would love to savour "roast mackerel with a slice of lemon, and a glass of white Burgundy," the intimacy of his recollection is so pathological that the listeners cannot help but smell the roasting fish nearby. The tantalising smacking of his lips, stretching of syllables, quivering breath, and the soft, lyrical voice of the enthusiastic narrator describes Edgar's appetite for the roast mackerel, only to immediately return to his own futility. The activated noises of hesitation and shaky breathing become Preiss' functional means of expression through which he semanticises Edgar's psychophysical condition and motives.

Although physiologically, Edgar's wheeziness primarily indicates the progress of his disease, it does not prevent his hostile egotism. Despite the extrovert expression, Preiss never resorts to purposeless exhibition. His typical discipline, smoothness of articulation, and restrained sublimity of form support the contours of his expression, but do not prevent the specific expression the actor uses to articulate even the most innermost mental states (Andrei Bolkonsky, Timon of Athens). Vocal aggression and arrogance are miles away from lyrical melancholy, yet they can synthesise in the delicate shades of his vocal technique.

Conclusion

It appears that the vocal elasticity and the comprehensiveness of the means of expression make Viktor Preiss an ideal auditory interpreter who can serve the author as well as the text's intent and style, while enhancing this dimension with a unique verbal and acoustic relevance. In Preiss' case, the interpretative level of expression becomes a specific aesthetic quality that accentuates

the performance as a determining element of the audio work. The quality of Preiss' acting stems from a rare union of the artist's knowledge of the field, an indisputable understanding of the broadcasting specificities, and artistic and human values that, in the true sense of the word, create the vivid depiction of the character. The word "creates" should be intentionally underlined, as creativity belongs to the never-ending activities that keep on searching, improving, and polishing the plasticity and liveness of the shape. If this was a final, definitive commodity, the acting profession would lose its most specific component – the inner dynamics stemming from the need to create, vivify and stage. If an actor's personality is blessed with a talent of vocal beauty, the interpreter has to work with this gift and utilise it for his own work. Viktor Preiss confirms this idea through his work.

Preiss' radio acting style can be characterised as internally articulated, rhythmically controlled, diverse in genre, technically polished, linguistically rich and versatile in expression. Preiss masters the specific nuances of radio characterisation. He is capable of semanticising the intended situations through intonation, breathing, changes in intensity, phrasing and cadence. Melodic sparkle stands out in expressive details, it is internally coherent as well as aesthetically impressive. In Preiss' case, the lyrical romanticism of his early years has endured into the mature period, but its presence has given way to a gradually acquired, deliberate economy in the means. A mature actor should be able to enrich his roles by benefiting from the experience and enthusiasm of his younger self. An actor of Preiss' calibre knows very well that his ever-present humility is one of the fundamental artefacts of the resulting shape, but primarily of the approach to one's work. Listeners absorb it through the actor, it is the very essence of the credibility and liveness of the character. Not all interpreters accomplish this quality. If there is a "star" in the context of the Czech broadcasting dramatic arts, it must undoubtedly be Viktor Preiss.

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Book Reviews|

The Essential Films of Ingrid Bergman

Review by Milan Hain (Palacký University)

Santas, Constantine, and James M. Wilson, *The Essential Films of Ingrid Bergman*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018, 224 pp. ISBN 978-1-4422-1214-5.

Also available as an e-book.

<https://rowman.com/ISBN/9781442212145/The-Essential-Films-of-Ingrid-Bergman>

As recently remarked by Ora Gelley, the author of *Stardom and the Aesthetics of Neorealism: Ingrid Bergman in Rossellini's Italy*, “despite her enormous success in Hollywood throughout the 1940s, [Ingrid] Bergman has in subsequent decades not prompted the kind of detailed, theoretically influenced readings afforded to figures like Dietrich, Garbo, and another of Bergman’s contemporaries, Rita Hayworth.”¹ The discourse on the actress has focused primarily on her scandalous affair with Italian director Roberto Rossellini, thus neglecting other areas worthy of examination. Unfortunately, Constantine Santas and James M. Wilson’s volume *The Essential Films of Ingrid Bergman*, published in 2018 by Rowman & Littlefield, will not count as a much-needed intervention in the field because it largely lacks the ambition to shed new light on Bergman’s long-lasting career both in Hollywood and around Europe. One might argue that the authors primarily wanted to provide a practical guide to the star’s rich filmography rather than expose new facts about her life or apply fresh methodological frameworks to her star image and persona. The book fails, however, in my view to meet this more modest but equally commendable objective.

Santas and Wilson (both from Flagler College in St. Augustine, Florida) selected 21 films in which Bergman starred between 1938 (*En kvinnas ansikte* [A Woman’s Face]) and 1982 (*A Woman Called Golda*). For these, they provide basic filmographic information, a detailed synopsis and a commentary that usually focuses on the film’s themes and motifs. Furthermore, all of these films are rated on a scale from 1 to 5 and thus an attempt is made to distinguish between Bergman’s masterpieces and the more run-of-the-mill productions in which she starred. The problem with this approach is not so much that it is highly subjective (the criteria for the selection and evaluation of the 21 films included in the book are never elaborated in much detail) but that the structure and content of the book does not reflect that Bergman – both as a person and actress – should be the main focus. Usually, only a couple of vague remarks are devoted to Bergman’s acting or star presence with the remaining part of the text analysing or interpreting the film in question as if Bergman was not its main subject. One might also question the relevance of the detailed synopses which form a substantial part of the book: if you are familiar with the films described, you will probably skip them because they hold no revealing information; if you are unfamiliar with the films, you will probably do the same thing, since you do not want your first viewing to be spoiled.

The authors do not engage with existing scholarship on Bergman (all of their references are listed on a single page), nor have they made use of archival resources that are conveniently open to scholars. Bergman’s papers housed at the Cinema Archives of the Wesleyan University contain letters, legal papers, newspaper clippings, photographs and numerous other documents and it is a pity that they were not used for a project like this. Santas and Wilson rely primarily on Bergman’s autobiography (compiled by Alan Burgess in 1980) for biographical data but as

¹ Ora Gelley, *Stardom and the Aesthetics of Neorealism: Ingrid Bergman in Rossellini's Italy* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 51.

has been demonstrated over and over, it is full of inaccuracies and misinformation (which, of course, is not rare in the genre). Moreover, not only do they replicate the same errors and myths (for instance when assessing her collaboration with producer David O. Selznick), they also create factual mistakes of their own. Just to name two examples: the 1931 version of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* was not the first adaptation of Stevenson's novella as the authors claim (p. 10) and Miklos Rozsa did not compose the score for *Gone with the Wind* (p. 56).

Although the book is supposedly centered on Ingrid Bergman, it does not contribute in any significant way to our understanding of her star image, performance style, sense of agency when navigating her tumultuous career, or her status as a legend and icon. Instead, it focuses on themes and motifs of selected films in which Bergman starred but even as film annotations the texts are descriptive, derivative and ultimately unsatisfactory. If the publication was supposed to work as a guide for an uninitiated reader, interested in learning more about Bergman and her films, I am sorry to say that he or she would be better served by resources that are available online for free (such as the American Institute Catalog or Turner Classic Movie's website). As a half-amusing, half-pitiful anecdote to conclude my short review: on the popular social network *Goodreads*, the book has three ratings so far, mine and two five-star reviews by Harikleia Sirmans, Constantine Santas' collaborator and indexer on three of his film books (presumably including this one),² and Constantine Santas himself.³ To me, giving oneself a pat on the back on a work well done betrays a profound lack of confidence in one's work. I am positive, however, that both scholars and the general readership will make an informed opinion about *The Essential Films of Ingrid Bergman* of their own.

² See her profile on *Cloudpeeps.com*, accessed 22 July 2019, <https://www.cloudpeeps.com/harikleia>.

³ "The Essential Films of Ingrid Bergman," *Goodreads.com*, accessed 22 July 2019, <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/38508412-the-essential-films-of-ingrid-bergman>.

Nobody's Girl Friday: The Women Who Ran Hollywood

Review by Milan Hain (Palacký University)

Smyth, J. E., *Nobody's Girl Friday: The Women Who Ran Hollywood*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018, 304 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-084082-2.

Also available as an e-book.

<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/nobodys-girl-friday-9780190840822>

Most writing on women filmmakers in U.S. cinema has focused either on the silent era, balancing and correcting existing accounts dominated by male “pioneers” such as David W. Griffith and Edwin S. Porter by discussing the work of Lois Weber, Alice Guy-Blaché, Frances Marion, and Mabel Normand,¹ or on the handful of women auteurs who have been active in the industry since the 1970s, for example Elaine May, Barbara Loden, Julie Dash, Kathryn Bigelow, or Sofia Coppola.² The studio system of the Classical Hollywood era – spanning roughly the period between the coming of sound and the emergence of the New Hollywood in the late 1960s – is usually dismissed by feminist critics on the grounds that it was ruled by an exclusively male regiment of studio moguls, and only two women – Dorothy Arzner and Ida Lupino – disrupted the hegemony of male directors.

In her revisionist history of the U.S. film industry in the 1930s to the 1950s, University of Warwick Professor J. E. Smyth challenges this accepted version, perpetuated mostly by male historians such as Terry Ramsaye and Lewis Jacobs and auteurist critics led by Andrew Sarris who were preoccupied with Hollywood not as a business enterprise (for which women were indispensable) but as an art form cultivated by a small number of director-geniuses. Dissatisfied by the current state of film historiography, Smyth attempts to restore Hollywood women as important industry players endowed with power and agency. *Nobody's Girl Friday* goes far beyond Arzner and Lupino in discussing Hollywood's working women. Smyth explains that up to 40% of studio employees at that time were female. In this connection, one might easily picture a stereotype of a studio set populated by a bevy of chorus girls or a studio executive's office with three or four stenographers taking dictation, but Smyth goes on to show that a significant number of women wrote, produced and edited films and held important administrative and managerial positions at all major studios. Still others worked as influential agents, publicists, or gossip columnists. Although the studio executives were mostly male and there were virtually no camerawomen and only a few women directors, the Hollywood studio system – so Smyth argues – offered women better opportunities for self-fulfilment and creativity than the contemporary film industry which is ruled by sexism and favours (white and heterosexual) men. This also translated into more positive images of women on screen; just think of all the strong female characters portrayed by Bette Davis, Barbara Stanwyck, Katharine Hepburn, or Joan Crawford. In fact, Smyth's account

¹ See, for instance, Karen Ward Mahar, *Women Filmmakers in Early Hollywood* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008) and Jane M. Gaines, *Pink-Slipped: What Happened to Women in the Silent Film Industries?* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2018).

² Recently, for example, Maya Montañez Smukler, *Women Directors and the Feminist Reform of 1970s American Cinema* (Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2018) and Sue Thornham, *Spaces of Women's Cinema: Space, Place and Genre in Contemporary Women's Filmmaking* (London: British Film Institute, 2019).

reads as a celebration of the studio system because it was the industry's stability and division of labour that enabled women to acquire these positions in such high numbers and exert influence on the final product. When the system began to collapse after WWII, the opportunities for women dramatically shrank.

Smyth's book is divided into seven chapters that discuss various jobs where women could realize their creative potential and make a substantial contribution to the run of a studio, the functioning of a labour organization or the development of a film. Her numerous examples include Bette Davis, a top Hollywood star who repeatedly challenged her studio bosses and served as President of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and of the Hollywood Canteen; Kay Brown, David O. Selznick's talent scout and script reader who recommended Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* and Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* for film adaptations and discovered Ingrid Bergman and Gregory Peck; Ida Koverman, Louis B. Mayer's assistant at MGM who according to many accounts virtually ran the studio; Virginia Van Upp, producer (and later executive producer) at Columbia Pictures who, among other films, made *Gilda* with Rita Hayworth; Mary McCall, a successful screenwriter who became the President of the Screen Writer's Guild for three terms; Barbara McLean, Oscar-winning editor with more than 60 credits in her filmography; Edith Head, long-time costume designer at Paramount Pictures who won eight Academy Awards during her prolific career; and Katharine Hepburn, a highly individualistic actress who served as model for several generations of American women.

The book is based on thorough archival work and makes use of studio documentation, oral histories and articles in contemporary trade journals. It is important to note, however, that it never becomes a dry historical account full of names and dates (even though many names *are* mentioned). Smyth's writing is always vivid and absorbing. She manages to combine her historical erudition and knowledge of Hollywood with infectious passion, thus – at least for me – producing a model of film scholarship that stimulates and inspires. In short, *Nobody's Girl Friday* is revisionist film history at its best.

A Humble Guide to the Work and Life of František Vlácil

Review by Luboš Ptáček (Palacký University)

Gajdošík, Petr. *František Vlácil: Život a dílo*. Příbram, Svatá Hora: Camera obscura, 2018, 875 pp. ISBN 978-80-903678-9-0.

<http://www.cameraobscura.wz.cz/vlacid/>

Monographs dedicated to individual Czech film directors published after 1989 can still be counted on the fingers of one hand and are often the product of a writer's deep personal interest, arising in solitude. If they are written at all, they usually become an event in the Czech film world. This is the case with Petr Gajdošík's book *František Vlácil: Život a dílo* (František Vlácil: Life and Work).

The author of the monograph, Petr Gajdošík, stands outside academic circles as he works as an archivist in the city of Olomouc and writes about film in his free time. His activities involving promoting Czech and world art cinema on the Internet are admirable. Since 2002, he has been running the website *nostalghia.cz*, which he has devoted to the "former angels" of the 1960s who dedicated themselves to film in the real world. Apart from František Vlácil, he also includes Jiří Trnka, Jan Švankmajer, and Karel Vachek among Czech directors.

Gajdošík has been interested in Vlácil for a long time; as an editor he compiled a book of essays on the director's most celebrated film *Marketa Lazarová*¹ for the Casablanca publishing house in 2009. Vlácil is undoubtedly one of his favourite film angels at *nostalghia.cz*. This voluminous book now presents the director's complete work. The author states that he has worked on the book for about eight years but has been interested in the director for more than three decades. The book has 875 pages, 220 of which are filled with documents (biographical data, a detailed filmography, a list of realized and unrealized scenarios, a list of films released on VHS, DVD, BR, and CD, and a detailed bibliography) and over 2,500 footnotes referring to the literature and sources, all attesting to a careful heuristic work.

The result, i.e., not only the extent of the book, demonstrates both the time spent and the deep interest involved in the project. The careful elaboration of the bibliography emphasizes the author's humble approach which underlines his positivist method. The book is organized chronologically; biographical passages alternate with passages on the realized films, as well as the fate of unrealized projects that were considered for Vlácil's participation. The key part of the text focuses on Vlácil's completed films. The length of each chapter is based on the amount of resources available and the complexity of the style and narration of the analysed films. A chapter devoted to the director's diverse style in Army Film is, for example, spread over 23 pages. Over his career, Vlácil made 27 short, medium and full-length films ranging from 1 minute and 18 seconds to 165 minutes (these include his instructional, documentary and feature films). Although 90 pages are dedicated to *Marketa Lazarová*, the book's structuring works in a balanced way. For each title, the writer presents the pre-production genesis of the work, starting with the initial idea and synopsis, and focuses on the creation of the script, approval of the film, selection of the actors and locations, the budget of the films, and the actual course of the filming. The same emphasis is placed on the domestic and foreign reception and the screenings at film festivals.

¹ Petr Gajdošík, ed., *Marketa Lazarová: Studie a dokumenty* (Praha: Casablanca, 2009), 395 pp.

When there is a lack of factual information, analytical and especially interpretative passages prevail. The writer's positivist approach eliminates the heroization or romanticizing of Vláčil's life and his artistic struggles (with society, film institutions and above all with himself). It is left to the reader to complete or re-evaluate their own opinion based on a wide and comprehensive spectrum of presented information, yet the book contains an inconspicuous second plan, which presents Vláčil as an existential spiritual creator, whose life and work are firmly intertwined.

The book was not marked by the controversy between the publisher and the director's son, František Vláčil Jr., who ultimately did not give consent to print photographs and other materials from his father's estate. Only a few photographs from other sources consequently illustrate the book, which makes the comprehensiveness of the text all the more apparent.

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