

## Reflection Statement

My video *Who's the Delivery Man?* explores the nature of perception and its influence on interpretation through the comparative exploration of genre convention. I utilised a standardised scene when presenting different modes of expression to investigate the impacts on meaning and my responder's perception. With a close analysis of cinematic conventions, my video adopts the recognisable formal modes of expression associated with certain genres. I intend to represent the widest scope of generic conventions in order to better illustrate their disparate impacts upon the responder's interpretation of the same scene, thus my chosen genres are Horror, Romance, Film Noir and Musical. The viewer's interpretation is then altered in response to the diverse manipulation of visual codes, ultimately disorientating their understanding of the scenes' reality. Hence, the video reveals expression to be as much a product of form as it is of content. By drawing the responder's attention to the modes of visual communication and manipulation, my major work will improve their ability to navigate the media-saturated postmodern world. My intended audience comprises film scholars or students interested in the impacts of certain film genres as well as psychologists concerned with the logistics of visual communication and the implications involved in individuals' experiences of meaning. I also intended my Major Work to be enjoyed by people interested in metafictional and self-referential films that explore cinematic literacy, similar to the films *Stranger than Fiction*, *Being John Malkovich* and *Adaptation*.

My work explores postmodern theorist Roland Barthes' ideas regarding how genre and convention communicate a hierarchy of previous archetypes and devices to create meaning in the responder. Barthes' 1967 essay *Death of the Author* (translated by Richard Howard) proposes that no composition is original; rather a "tissue of quotations" in which "the origin of meaning lies exclusively in language itself and its impressions on the reader." Barthes' concept explores the notion that all works of art within a network of convention and associations build upon previous works of art and are embedded in culture. For example, the

incorporation of a mirror sequence explores how the mirror transcends its functional purpose to produce different meanings for each genre. The mirror shots in the horror extract play on audience's previous experiences of shock in films such as *Shaun of the Dead*, *The Ring* and *Candyman* to create anxiety and tension. However, the Film Noir mirror shots adhere to the vanity and danger of the protagonist as reflective surfaces suggesting the notion of self-obsession, commonly associated with the archetypal femme fatale evident in Wilder's *Sunset Blvd* and Scott's *Blade Runner*.

This investigation of genre is an extension of my English Extension 1 Course, focusing on Crime Writing. By investigating the "unlimited combinations" and "transformations of the classic 'whodunit' murder mystery," (Board of Studies rubric) this course is concerned with the evolution of genre, investigating its adaptability to changing context. My major work examines the inverse relationship in which perceived reality can be shaped by generic representation, conforming to the dimensions of deliberate and contrived representation. Thus, my readings of Tom Stoppard's play *The Real Inspector Hound* have influenced the development of my concept due to his explorations of Jacques Derrida's Post-Structuralist criticism as well as his propositions suggesting that preconceived meanings restrict interpretation. By investigating Derrida's deploy of signs and signifiers, my auteurist experimentation was influenced to explore the notion of the destabilisation of the centre by frustrating my audience's expectations regarding the logocentric values of genre to reach an unresolved conclusion. My fluid ending in which I leave the viewer questioning which genre will correspond to reality, relates to Derrida's no stable 'transcendental reality'.

The production of my video was a technical as well as an aesthetic process, and necessitated using a high-quality digital video camera, a shotgun microphone and boom effectively. Thus, the forty-eight hour shoot became a rigorous, yet rewarding experience in which I utilised Steven Ascher and Edward Pincus' *The Filmmaker's Handbook (Third Edition)* as a practical guide. Consecutively, postproduction editing involved my use of the program 'Final Cut

Express,' allowing me to develop the practicalities of my execution with flexibility and creativity in which I adapted Walter Murch's editing theory within *In the Blink of an Eye* (*Second Edition*). Specifically my use of 'colour corrector' allowed manipulation of each image such as the Horror scene's darker and desaturated images and the Musical scene's exaggerated brightness and overexposure.

My video demonstrates the relationship between representation and interpretation through the utilisation of a banal narrative, in which the intrinsic ambiguity of an identical script provides various opportunities for unique interpretations with each scene. The contrasting depictions of the Delivery Man lingering in front of the closed door is executed through Romance Scene featuring balanced, middle shots fully lit with warm complementing tones seen in Nichols' *The Graduate* and Curtis' *Love Actually* which is contrasted with the Horror scene's isolating long shots obscured by dark shadow alluding to similar shots in Bertino's *The Strangers* and Carpenter's *Halloween*. The juxtaposition of these different presentations compels the viewer to reach contradictory conclusions regarding the Delivery Man's intentions. The symbolism of the different packages is utilised as a narrative device, with the revelation of each different package forming an associative signal to the viewer that conveys additional meaning. For instance, the Horror segment's package is revealed to be an Alarm System, which directs the audience to interpret the protagonist as the typically vulnerable 'damsel in distress.' Contrastingly, the Romance scene provides an intertextual allusion identifying the package as a box set of Jane Austen novels, hence transforming the responder's original interpretation to the love interest; thus complying with the narrative clichés represented in Jeffers McDonald's book *Romantic Comedy: Boy Meets Girl Meets Genre*. Therefore, the narrative itself is subordinate, as the expression is a product of artifice in which meaning is derived from the viewer's subjective discernment of the content.

Exploring the notion in which information is coloured by symbolic value, my comparative video focuses on classic conventions associated with each genre. For instance Film Noir's application of mise-en-scene involves chiaroscuro lighting, which generates visual contrast to compliment the thematic preoccupation with light and dark. I implemented the unbalanced composition and expressionistic lighting within the Film Noir genre by casting shadows and subdued rays of light created from window shutters and used the typical black-and-white spectrum seen in Huston's *The Maltese Falcon* and Wilder's *Double Indemnity*. For the Horror genre I used intermittent cuts to a boiling pot throughout the sequence, forming an accessory symbol to the building tension of the scene as the pot gets closer to overflowing. This technique of sporadic intercutting is associated with the notion of impending disaster, often leading to the climax of the action, as exemplified by the bursting popcorn in Wes Craven's *Scream*. The musical entailed a less realistic approach as both protagonists stare straight into the camera making direct contact with the viewer, breaking the fourth wall by acknowledging the audience. This disrupts the illusion of reality, submitting to the genre's anti-realist style embodied by Burton's *Sweeney Todd* and Donen and Kelly's *Singin' in the Rain*, when both Mr Todd and Don Lockwood address the camera directly.

With a strong focus on the technical methods of cinematic communication, my video explores the pre-existing connotations associated with camera placement, composition and editing that conspire to shape my responder's verdict on character and narrative as influenced by readings of Mercado's *The Filmmaker's Eye* and Grant's *Film Genre: From Iconology to Ideology*. J.V Sijll's *Cinematic Storytelling* alerted me to the use of x-axis, in which filmmakers frame the protagonist moving from left-to-right in order to exploit the western tradition of reading left-to-right, therefore allowing their eyes to follow the protagonist comfortably. Conversely, the antagonist is portrayed through the reverse: walking right-to-left, creating a subconscious aversion to the character through the discomfort of following right-to-left. I embraced this technique in my Horror piece with the protagonist walking left-to-right across the screen to subtly encourage my audience's allegiance to her.

Correspondingly, Pudovkin, a Russian theorist investigated the power of editing and its

intention to provide “psychological guidance” to the viewer, provoking specific emotional reactions. In particular, Pudovkin’s principals regarding simultaneity in *Film Theory and Criticism* (4<sup>th</sup> edition) discussed the act of editing two separate activities together, as if to create a sense of simultaneous action in which tension and intrigue can be provoked through rapid intercuts between the two. For example, the intercuts between the woman cooking and the Delivery Man approaching her house in the Romance scene instigates a sense of curiosity and playfulness as the audience anticipate their encounter. Yet for the Musical scene, the alternating between the two protagonists whilst they sing and dance generates a sense of unity as a connection is bridged through melody.

*Who’s The Delivery Man?*, builds upon the audience’s preconceived notions of genre in line with Barthes’ concept that interpretation is a product of convention and device shaped by previous works. Overall, I believe my video *Who’s the Delivery Man?*, successfully attains its purpose to communicate how one’s interpretation or understanding of a character or narrative can be coloured by visual context.