University of Reading

Modes of Creative Practice in the directing of independent fiction films

PhD

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DECLARATION

I confirm that this is my own work and the use of all material from other sources has been properly and fully acknowledged.

Dominic Lees

ABSTRACT

In the field of film studies, scholarly attention has focussed on the film as text, and theoretical concerns arising from the analysis of completed movies. Less academic attention has been paid to the creative practices of filmmaking, and this thesis addresses this gap. Drawing on elements of the precedent set by Bill Nichols in his analysis of documentary film, the thesis studies the individual creative strategies of feature film directors and organises their working methods into clusters of types, proposing a framework for understanding the commonalities of filmmaking practice and means of differentiation. Methodologies of this study include interviews with film directors, actors and crew, as well as practice-as-research used to explore the experience of directing fiction film in specific modes.

The thesis argues that fiction filmmaking can be organised into 'Modes of Creative Practice', grouping the approaches of film directors into a coherent theoretical structure that describes and understands the processes of creating cinema. It elaborates three examples of creative modes: 'Performance-Centred', 'Design-Centred' and 'Social Realist', illuminating the working methods common to directors within each cluster. This theoretical model of creative film practice offers a new means of categorising and understanding film, alongside existing structures such as those based on genre, national cinema or production context. The thesis is the beginning of a broader study of filmmaking practice that will identify further 'Modes of Creative Practice' following the rationale developed here.

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Practice-based research: blu-ray disc of short film, *The Burning*, attached in pocket sleeve. This film may also be viewed at https://vimeo.com/159268232 (Password: MaryTudor).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This doctoral thesis would not have come about without the initial encouragement and enthusiasm of two colleagues, Dr. Max Sexton and Julio Molina Montenegro. It was in the days when we shared tiny office spaces and undergraduate teaching duties that I formulated the first ideas for this research project, guided by Max as a pathbreaking scholar and Julio as documentary filmmaker of great knowledge and generosity. They remain dear friends; our shared explorations, filmmaking exploits and joint scholarship continues to this day.

The writing of Professor John Gibbs is not just luminous, but it drew me magnetically towards the University of Reading to seek him out as a Supervisor. I am indebted to him for taking me on and for his guidance over the past six years. I am also permanently indebted to him for bringing Lisa Purse to this project as a Supervisor; it has been an honour to learn from her. Both have been committed supporters in helping a film and television practitioner through the doors of academia. I am happy to join the roll-call of researchers who cite the Sewing Circle, in Reading's Department of Film, Theatre and Television, as a key influence and support network of like-minded and impressive scholars. Especial thanks to Doug Pye: I have joined the generations of scholars learning from his acute ability to explore the style and meaning of films.

I would like to thank all of those who were involved in the making of my short film, *The Burning*, which forms the practice research element of this study. Making a piece of film drama is an enormously labour-intensive endeavour, and it was only possible with the enthusiasm of my cast and crew. To my family who thought that I was insane to make such a grim film: you were probably right. The film had generous crowdfunding sponsors, a crew of remarkable film students, and key institutional support especially from Larry Magee.

Most of all deserving of my thanks are Annelies and Theo, who have lived through this journey with me and supported it with enthusiasm.

DEDICATION

To George Martin Lees
1898 - 1955

President of the Geological Society of London
Fellow of the Royal Society
Fabian Socialist and Grandfather

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Chapter 1: **Introduction**

The subject of this thesis is the current practice of narrative fiction filmmaking. This thesis is therefore not a study of films, as in the long tradition of text-based scholarship in film. Instead of looking at films as texts, my ambition with this research project is to deepen theoretical understandings of film practice, an area of study that I believe deserves greater academic attention than the field has enjoyed to date. While a number of writers continue to explore specific aspects of filmmaking practice (Maddock, 2019; Nevill, 2018), and the growth of practice research methodologies in the field leads to new insights, there has been less work by authors to build a broader theory of fiction filmmaking practice.

I come to this study from a background of television and film practice, having worked extensively as a freelance drama director and independent filmmaker. These experiences within a mainstream professional context have indicated to me that the focus of directors' attention during production is on the qualities of the film that they hope to produce, with less interrogation of the practice methods that they deploy in the process of creating a film. Directors may initiate some variations from industrial norms during their creative practice, but scholars have not studied such filmmaking practices in detail. This thesis will address this by examining the working practice of particular directors who adopt unconventional approaches, or who are aware of how the nature of their creative practice can impact on their films. Such directors are particularly useful because of their self-conscious awareness of the *how* of filmmaking, not just the *what*. They focus our attention on the methods and processes of creativity in film, and this study seeks to use research into these areas as the data for constructing a broader understanding of filmmaking practice.

Stemming from these broad objectives of my study, key research questions arise that form the foundation of this thesis. The central question asks whether, in the colossal world of international fiction film production, there is a limitless multiplicity of forms of creative practice, or a single framework for all productions, or groupings of types

of practice. Following from this, the study asks what form of taxonomy of creative practices can be consistent with the research findings on directors' approaches to filmmaking. The major research question is then a theoretical one: can a coherent structure for understanding the methods with which film directors create their movies be developed into a cogent theory of film practice?

A personal research objective for me in this study is to identify how its critical analysis of alternative methods of filmmaking alters and develops my own approach to creating fiction films. My practice until the start of this project was exclusively in contemporary drama dealing with social and political issues. I am interested to see how the breadth of filmmaking culture and the multiplicity of creative approaches that this thesis covers challenge the assumptions and methodologies of my own work. I will also look at the ways in which this research might develop useful tools for filmmakers when addressing the complex issues around the creation of their films.

Research limitations

The forms of creative practice adopted by the makers of films are highly varied, an observation that seems commonsense in the context of international cinematic traditions that are enormously diverse. Due to the huge scale of this range of creative endeavour, it has been necessary to establish parameters to the field of my study. My research examines the production of live action fiction films in contemporary independent cinema. I will discuss later the complexities of the term 'independent', however this limitation is significant because it restricts the current study to films that have been made with a level of commercial intention, but outside the studio system. Interesting variations in creative practice exist within the worlds of art film, experimental filmmaking and the work of film cooperatives: these are not part of this study's investigation. A further important parameter for this project is that it focuses its attention on the creative processes of filmmaking, rather than the production or industrial contexts. However, this still leaves a very broad field of investigation, given the extent of different creative skills required in the making of movies in different genres and forms.

Issues of terminology

The hypothesis that will be developed in this thesis is that the forms of filmmaking practice that we observe can be grouped together into different 'Creative Modes', with each having distinct features. I am aware, however, that the term 'mode' has been used by authors in a wide selection of intellectual contexts. Most prominently, Karl Marx discussed 'modes of production' in his theory of historical materialism. Film scholars have adopted the same terminology, using it to describe systems of industrial film production developed by the studio system. There is a conceptual link between film study's adoption of the term and debates within economics, as 'mode of production' in our field usually refers to the industrial, not creative, systems of filmmaking. Jerome Christensen emphasises how the creativity and the role of the filmmaker is rendered irrelevant to discussions of modes of production in Hollywood: 'Because meaning is incidental to the mode of production, questions of authorship are just not relevant. Form follows function, not intention' (2008: 168). I should emphasise that my study of 'creative modes' invokes very different concerns to the 'modes of production' discussed by Christensen. In this thesis, the term 'creative mode' refers exclusively to the creative processes of film practice; the concept is shaped by the artistic intentions of filmmakers, not by the economic exigencies of the industrial context in which they work.

From the outset, it is important for me to define carefully how I will be using the term 'film practice': as we will see, the term has been used rather loosely in the past. For the purposes of this thesis, I have developed the following definition of film practice:

> *the deployment by members of a film production team of creative strategies, systems of organisation, and technologies, for the purpose of filmmaking.*

This definition centres around a particular focus on the human interactions which occur at the heart of cinematic creation. This emphasis derives from my own professional experiences working as a director in independent film and television drama, from which it is clear to me that the individual contributions of crew and cast form the primary motor of the production process. This remains true whatever the

context of a film production, be it studio or artisanal, although the culture of creative production may be delimited in certain key ways by the economic infrastructure that surrounds it. My research emphasis on the qualities of human creativity in film practice does not always conform to some theorists' engagement with the field, as I will outline in this introduction. However, my definition aligns itself with the work of Mark Runco and Garrett Jaeger (2012), whose historical outline of a 'Standard Definition of Creativity' is relevant when considering creative practice in the field of film. Runco and Jaeger follow the groundbreaking theoretical work on creativity initiated by Mihaly Csiksentmihaly (2014). Their consideration of what constitutes the creative process seeks to broaden its definition beyond a conception based on the original creative thought of an individual. In fact, their research is careful to downplay the role of originality in the creative process. It leads them to the following conclusion:

> Originality is not alone sufficient for creativity. Original things must be effective to be creative. Like originality, effectiveness takes various forms. It may take the form of (and be labelled as) *usefulness, fit,* or *appropriateness*. (2012: 92)

Following Runco and Jaeger's argument that creativity must be defined using a bipartite model, encompassing both originality and effectiveness, it is clear that the study of any form of creative practice must engage both these concepts. My study of film practice looks at these two terms not just separately but in tandem. I look at how filmmakers have, over time, developed alternative models of film practice that are appropriate to specific areas of original film endeavour. The different models that filmmakers have adopted are responses by the practitioners to the need for effectiveness in their creative process. With a conscious purpose of pursuing a cinematic idea, filmmakers create strategies that will best enable them to achieve their ends. In the same way that Runco and Jaeger discuss originality with a sense of the breadth that the concept invokes, I seek to analyse the diversity of appropriate forms of practice that filmmakers choose in their creative process. Although Runco and Jaeger's field of research is cultural and communications studies, an area of concern removed from my close attention to filmmaking, their

broader analysis of creativity contributes important ideas to my thinking around the practice of film production. [1]

One problem that this thesis addresses is the terminological inadequacy that persists in discussions of the role of the film director. In academic and popular discourse, the role of the film director is frequently referenced without sufficiently interrogating the breadth of creative practice that this professional title involves. Amongst moviegoers, the profession of 'Film Director' is one of the few roles that is popularly recognised. Indeed, so central is the concept of the film director to the practice of filmmaking that no fiction film is made without a person (or very occasionally two people) in this role. This simple observation concerning film practice remains a constant through most of the last century of fiction filmmaking. However, film spectators and critics are aware that the creative output of film directors can in some cases be extremely varied. Their films are carefully categorised into many different types: according to genre, scale and budget, financing and production system, medium, and form. It is axiomatic to say that the working practice of the film director during the creation of these films must vary accordingly. Yet little in the language of debate around film practice allows us useful variance to the title 'film director'. There is an implicit understanding that the creative practice undertaken by a film director will be highly differentiated, but only occasionally do we hear closer definitional terms, such as the labelling of a filmmaker as an *actors' director* or an *action director.* These terms are hesitant attempts to acknowledge the breadth of the professional role (or roles) encompassed by the catch-all term 'film director'.

The definitional problem is highlighted if we consider two American film directors working in the same year, 1968: Stanley Kubrick, making *2001: A Space Odyssey* and John Cassavetes, making *Faces*. In each case, the film director was engaged in the same artistic pursuit, of telling a story using actors and camera (both film directors were also involved in the scripts of the movies, receiving Academy Award nominations in the same year for 'Best Original Screenplay'). However, it is manifestly true to say that the practice of Kubrick and Cassavetes in directing the two

[1] Other significant authors in their field include Philip Macintyre (*Creativity and Cultural Production: Issues for Media Practice*, 2012).

films involved very different priorities, technical considerations and areas of creative decision-making. The production context of the films was also dramatically different: *2001: A Space Odyssey* was a $12Million sci-fi 'epic' financed by Metro Goldwyn-Mayer and filmed using the most up-to-date technology, Super Panavision 70 in Technicolor; *Faces* was a $275,000 feature shot on black-and-white 16mm film. John Cassavetes as a director had a central focus on character and performance, his film has a *cinéma verité* style that emphasises close-ups of his leading players, John Marley and Gina Rowlands. In tandem with this creative emphasis, Cassavetes deliberately forsook technical innovation (other than his counter-cultural use of the 16mm Bolex camera). Stanley Kubrick's film was, contrastingly, a technological tour-de-force, its director obsessively concerned with the technical innovations in the creation of his science fiction world. The cylindrical 'centrifuge' on the spaceship *Discovery* was built in a studio at a cost three times that of Cassavetes' entire film budget; further breakthroughs included the first use of front projection with 'retroreflective matting' to create the film's backgrounds. That these two film productions demanded quite different forms of expertise from the directors is self-evident. The creative experience of the two directors during the production of their films was utterly different, yet both Kubrick and Cassavetes gave themselves the same credit, 'Director'. Nothing in this title hints at the extreme variance in creative practice of the two directors.

This is a director-centred study

One of the founding assumptions that form the basis of my research is that a film's director is the key figure in creative decision-making during the production process. In privileging the role of the director, I do not intend to negate the importance of the team that collaborates in the creation of a film. Indeed, my definition of film practice is specific in not describing the creative process as an individual endeavour, instead invoking the idea of a team of filmmakers. A film production is, by its nature, a highly complex process, and always a collaborative project. This is particularly the case with fiction filmmaking, which can involve a cast and crew of several hundred people. Owing to its complexity, film production is organised in a hierarchical structure, in which sections of the team are responsible for organisational duties ultimately governed by decision-making in the production department (led by a film's producer,

line producer, or production manager). The leadership of the creative departments of a film project is the director, who although constrained by practical and financial considerations, has ultimate responsibility for the oversight of creative decision-making during the film's production. My study is an investigation into creative processes in filmmaking and, for this reason, its focus will be on the roles of film directors, and the creative strategies adopted by them during production.

Such a director-focussed approach has at times been contentious in discussion of film art. Authorship theory, as a way of understanding the creation of film, was 'left for dead, academically speaking' (David Andrews 2012: 38) after the long reaction against the arguments of its post-war theorists. In 1991, Andy Medhurst felt able to declare that,

> The idea that a film's director is the primary, shaping force of its meaning is simultaneously inscribed as middlebrow commonsense [...] and dismissed as hopelessly outmoded by every branch of recent critical theory. (1991: 197-8)

Yet even after the debate appeared to be concluded, there remained a lingering intellectual impulse to seek the governing centre of a movie's creation, both inside and outside the academy. Medhurst's triumphalism was out-of-tune, because Victor Perkins had already initiated a phase of careful reappraisal of authorship theory. Perkins explains eloquently how an acknowledgement of a film's authorship is instinctive in the spectator's reaction to it:

> When a moment of film achieves the unlikely enchantment of unity where it is sustained and enriched by the stresses and tensions that could split it apart, we have every reason to suppose that the moment achieves the intentions of the person who gave it direction. (1990: 64)

While Perkins effectively critiques the attempts by auteur theorists, such as Andrew Sarris, to codify a director's work through particular identifiable themes or motifs, he does not think that an assessment of film authorship deserved its 'premature burial'.

The reconfiguration that emerges through his re-evaluation is more nuanced than its predecessor, holding that 'authorship of movies may be achieved not despite but in and through collaboration' (1990: 61). Far from being the all-commanding creative force of movie-making, the director can be seen as playing a role as an arbiter of creative choices brought to the film by its large team:

> The film director is, like all creators, his work's first audience […] One way of understanding the director's role is to see him checking or adjusting the elements of the film as each of them is taken to the point of registration. (1990: 64)

This conception of the film director is a strong one, because it drives towards an understanding of what is successful film directing: the ability to bring together *coherence* in the multiple creative choices involved in film production processes.

A weakness of the arguments against Sarris, Wollen and others had been the failure to root alternatives to the authorship theory in the realities of fiction film production. Writers on film authorship need not simply engage in academic considerations about film as text, they can also be concerned with investigating the nature of the filmmaking process in a move towards defining what goes on there. Authorship invokes questions around the source of creative choice in film practice, a fascination shared by anyone who enjoys a movie. Thus, although authorship theory was apparently 'left for dead', some element of thought linked to its approach nevertheless remained alive and well in the minds of every film audience.

The solidity of Perkins's argument can be seen in the continuity of discussions about authorship. Two decades after the 'premature burial' article, David Andrews described the authorship approach as having 'No Start, No End'. He makes the very insightful point that the concept of authorship is 'far too useful and far too *human* to ever be eliminated by rational argument' (2012: 38). Andrews is right to say that a search for the locus of creative decision-making, varying as it does between different types of feature film project, is unlikely to end. However, those writing on the subject no longer need to bring to their research the extremes of emotion that were evident

in the twentieth century theorists. This thesis is very fortunate to enter the discussion of film practice at a historical moment when a sense of calm has entered the debates central to its concerns. Its investigations are rooted in the strong foundations of the recent discussion of film authorship, an approach to filmmaking practice quite divorced from the concept of the auteur. As recent writers on the subject have stressed, the early debates over the auteur are no longer relevant:

> …there is now a more scholarly and empirical understanding of the actual conditions of production which permitted and constrained the creativity and self-expression of the auteur; an understanding which, in fact, no longer needs the concept of an 'auteur' and is content to write about directors within 'director-centred criticism'. (Caughie, 2007: 409)

This study of 'modes of creative practice' will be director-centred, but locating the film director within a creative group, in a process that necessarily spreads the locus of creative decision-making across different individuals and groups of people at different moments of a film's making. Its claims for the centrality of the director are made in the broadest understanding of the complexity and mutability of creative authorship in film production. (Particular attention to the shifting centre of authorship is addressed in Chapter Four: The Design-Centred Mode).

An understanding of filmmaking as a creative process centred around the director matches the experience of film practice. Film crews and actors work to the creative lead of their director – and historically this was never abandoned just because the argument against directorial authorship had been won in the academy. On set, during the film shoot, the camera does not begin 'turning over' until the director is happy with all the elements that will make up a shot. When a director calls 'Cut!' and then requires an additional 'take', each individual involved in the creative process looks to the director to find out if they are required to change, or improve, some aspect of their practice. Repeated 'takes' of the shot are made until the point when the director considers acceptable all performance and technical elements. Furthermore, during a film shoot, the director has considerable authority over the employment of most members of the creative team. Although every director works

within financial and time constraints, if they are unhappy with the performance of a member of the cast or crew, this person may be replaced[2]. This is not to say that a film's director cannot also be removed: in studio productions, it is not uncommon for a producer to fire a director after creative disagreements, or because the director is not keeping to the shooting schedule. However, it is quite safe to say that, in the history of motion pictures, a producer in this situation has never asked the crew to continue shooting without a director - a replacement director will always be hired to lead the team. If we now apply this understanding to our review of academic discussions around authorship, the fragility of those arguments that downplay the role of the director is apparent.

The centrality of the director has also been discussed outside the debates on authorship. Writers who have moved from professional practice into academia have made significant contributions to our understanding of the role of a film's director. More than fifty years ago, the teacher and former Hollywood producer Kenneth Macgowan provided a useful definition, when he described the director as the 'Prime Partner in Film-making' (1965: 389). His commentary was culturally and industrially specific: addressing the power relations that shape creative decision-making, he wrote that,

> A dynamic and creative producer may dominate a pliant director, but this is mainly in the preliminary work on script and casting, the design of sets and costumes. Once shooting has begun, the director has to control and guide the actors, the cutter, and the cameraman. (1965: 391)

Macgowan's comments relate to mid-twentieth century studio filmmaking in the United States, in which the development stage of a film was in the hands of a producer until shortly before production, when the director would be engaged. However, the concept of the director as 'prime partner' is a very useful description of

[2] Consider the decision by Francis Ford Coppola to replace leading actor Harvey Keitel with Martin Sheen after six weeks of filming *Apocalypse Now* (1979)

how creative decision-making coalesced around this individual, at the same time as being nuanced by the collaborative quality of their role. [3]

The importance of 'Independent' filmmaking

In order to study closely the ways in which directors develop differing strategies in their filmmaking, this study must concentrate its attention on a sector of the film industry in which filmmakers are able to exercise discretion in the formulation of production strategies according to their own creative interests, not to the requirements of a studio or other financing authority. I have, for the purposes of this study, limited myself to investigating filmmaking within a particular production context: 'independent film'. The decision-making autonomy of a film's creative team is important to my research because this study looks at *variations* in filmmaking practice; production contexts that are restrictive, forcing the director to work according to a pre-existing pattern, effectively 'iron out' differences in practice. This precludes me from considering the creative practice of directors in studio productions, where producers and executives have primary authority over key creative decisions in the preparation of a film. Kenneth Macgowan's description of the producer's authority, fifty years ago, over 'script and casting, the design of sets and costumes' remains relevant today. Looking at the early Hollywood system, William Luhr and others have noted how directors were required to work not just to a system of production but to specific styles:

> The 1920s and 1930s also saw a trend in which each studio sought to create its own distinctive style: glossy and polished at MGM, gritty and hard-edged at Warner Bros. Directors were expected to conform to these studio styles; in so doing they made themselves more or less interchangeable. (Luhr 2017: 50)

[3] Of additional historical interest is how Macgowan privileges the status of the editor, or 'cutter', over that of the Director of Photography ('cameraman'), during a film shoot, an emphasis that we find reversed in the twenty-first century film industry.

Equally, in postproduction, the creative role of the director is limited. For several decades in early Hollywood, the director departed the production after the last day of shooting. Although today the Directors Guild of America has negotiated that its members will always make a first cut, the director Gareth Edwards has openly discussed the restrictions he experienced during the troubled postproduction of his studio feature, *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* (2016). He described very frankly the limitations of his creative authority in such a large production. Following studio norms, the postproduction was scheduled over fifty weeks, however under the standard Walt Disney/Lucas Film terms of contract, the period in which the director is in charge of the editing process is restricted to just ten weeks. Throughout the forty weeks of creative work that followed this 'director's cut', Edwards had no authority.[4] Edwards accepts with equanimity this severe curtailing of his creative role, understanding that with an expenditure of $200 Million, the studio has the right to alter and recut the film that he had delivered (which in this case included the shooting of whole sequences with another director).

The filmmakers that I have studied for this thesis are those fortunate enough to have operated in relatively flexible environments, which allow alternative forms of creative practice to emerge. Within the 'independent film' sector that I am describing, the director's control over the complete creative journey of the film, sometimes from conception all the way to delivery, is an accepted practice.

I am aware, however, that the parallel term 'independent cinema' has meanings that shift across cultural contexts, as well as having varied definitions within film studies. In American cinema, 'Indie' has come to refer to an oppositional cultural force within cinema, autonomous in its production processes from the major studios and pitched to an educated urban audience seeking sophistication in its diet of movies. At its narrowest definition, Michael Z. Newman (2011) has limited this movement of cinema to a very precise historical period, the 'Miramax/Sundance' era, beginning with the appearance of *Sex, Lies and Videotape* (Steven Soderbergh, 1989) and ending with the 'shuttering' of Miramax's independence in 2010. Other writers apply a very

[4] Lecture to film students at the University for the Creative Arts, Farnham, UK. 27.10.2017

broad definition of independent cinema. Holmlund and Wyatt describe an extensive cultural project: 'the label suggests social engagement and/or aesthetic experimentation – a distinctive visual look, an unusual narrative pattern, a self-reflexive style' (2005: 2). Their definition of 'independent' also encompasses a huge range of scale of moviemaking, from the micro-budget film to a production such as *Gangs of New York* (Martin Scorsese, 2002), funded by the distributor Miramax with a budget of $120 Million. [5]

The film director John Sayles, who has been described as 'the virtual godfather of independent film'[6], has offered perhaps the broadest definition of independent film:

> No matter how it's financed, no matter how high or low the budget, for me an independent film emerges when filmmakers started out with a story they wanted to tell and found a way to make that story. If they ended up doing it in the studio system and it's the story they wanted to tell, that's fine. If they ended up getting their money from independent sources, if they ended up using their mother's credit card, that doesn't matter. (Carson 2005: 129, personal interview with John Sayles)

For Sayles, the concept of independent film involves being able to achieve a desired creative outcome, no matter what the process or using which resources. It is a notion of artistic independence, beginning with an individual's creative intention, achieving a film using a means that maintains that autonomy of spirit. The career of John Sayles has seen him write, direct and edit a very broad range of films, across genres and styles, but always preserving his artistic control.

The mutability of the term 'independent cinema' has led to this proliferation of definitions. The problem of the term's changing usage has been co-opted by D.K.

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[5] Whereas Newman gives a strict historical limit to his definition of independent cinema, Holmlund and Wyatt emphasise that filmmaking activity independent of the studio centre has existed for over a century, since autonomous filmmakers developed a film culture outside the control of the 'Big Three' American studios (Vitagraph, Edison and Biograph) of the 1910s.

[6] Roger Ebert, Cannes Film Festival tribute to John Sayles, 1999.

Holm into a solution for how we might understand independent film across history and culture:

> it is clear that over time 'independent' as an adjective used to describe a movie has altered, be it in the context of commercial or critical usage. In fact, how critics, professional filmmakers and moviegoers have used the word 'independent' over the years helps to chart just what an independent film is even as the definition fluctuates with changing models of film production. (2008: 12)

What Holm calls the 'models of film production' is a central interest to me in this thesis. Rather than looking at 'independent film' in terms of its cultural oppositional role, or as a concept linked to certain forms of stylistic innovation, my study of film practice looks towards 'independence' as a production context, a space in which the filmmaker is unrestricted in choosing the mode of production. Only certain conditions allow directors this range of creative freedom. Where there are single sources of finance for their movies, directors will normally encounter the maximum level of intervention in their work. Studio filmmaking is just one example; likewise, where the majority of a film's funding is from an organisation such as Film Four or Miramax, directors also suffer the uncompromising oversight of powerful executives. Newman has described Miramax as being at the heart of 'indie' film in the US, however, as Holm has commented, 'To offer a movie that is wholly financed by the Disney Corporation, as most Miramax movies were from 1995 on, and label it 'independent' is simply ludicrous.' (2008: 19)

The disagreement here is again over the definition of 'independent': for Newman, the movies generated through Miramax have been significant in offering a cultural alternative to the studio mainstream; for Holm, the important point is the lack of distance between the studio filmmaking economy and the Miramax organisation. My interest is in the capacity of filmmakers to practice independently, applying their own creative strategies, with least interference in their mode of practice from external authorities – distributors, as well as studios. So a Miramax film is not independent within my definition, because this 'independent' distributor famously

acted with such absolute executive authority, under the autocratic leadership of Bob and Harvey Weinstein, that the filmmakers financed by them could not be said to have independence in the construction of their mode of practice.

It is important to listen to the voices of filmmakers and their collaborators in describing the significance of creative independence. One of the most eloquent has been the actor, Frances McDormand, who received her first Oscar for her role in the film *Fargo* (Joel and Ethan Coen, 1996). She has been a frequent collaborator with the Coen brothers, and in interview described how she used her Oscar acceptance speech to emphasise the importance of the filmmakers' autonomy:

> I mostly wanted them [the Academy] to be aware of and publicly acknowledge that Joel and Ethan, and most of us that work with them, have and had been doing it independently from a certain system. And I don't mean through studios or through Hollywood, but independent in *choices*. Joel and Ethan have always had final cut of their film, they've always had complete control of the filmmaking, the creative aspect of everything they've done - and they have sacrificed financial gain to have that. (2003)

Both McDormand and Sayles offer perspectives on 'independent' filmmaking in the United States that stress the creative autonomy of the director. Similarly, in feature film industries in many other countries, there exist sectors of activity in which filmmakers can create for themselves their approaches to filmmaking practice. This study has focussed its research on these independent film directors, as they may demonstrate the most vivid examples of variations in Creative Modes.

Theories of Film Practice

An observation that motivates my enquiry is that current scholarship under-theorises the practice of directing feature films. This thesis hopes to provide new substance to this important area of study. The paucity of writing on the subject is not because the study of film practice is a recent phenomenon: it is nearly half-a-century since Noël Burch published his book, *Praxis du Cinéma* (1969), later translated as *Theory of Film Practice* (1981). This work is still cited as a key text in

the field, however the book offers curiously little examination of the practice of making film. Burch described his purpose as 'attempting to redefine the components of film form' (1981: 32), a project that is arguably distinct from the title of his book. The work moves through chapters dealing with important concepts: 'decoupage'; the theories of cinematic space; and then editing. In this third chapter, Burch arrives closest to an analysis of one aspect of filmmaking practice, but swiftly throws in the towel, declaring that 'editing as a plastic art is so complex a subject that those of us concerned with film probably do not yet have the means with which to undertake serious analysis of it.' (1981: 47)

Burch instead moves on to a discussion of dialectics, a debate that exercised many areas of thought at his time of writing, but which further distances him from useful insights into film practice. Burch's final chapters focus on key areas of interest to film studies: 'Structures of Aggression' and the debate between film content and form. Embedded in these later stages of the book is one very useful discussion of film practice, in which he analyses the aleatoric: how Russian directors, especially Eisenstein, harnessed chance to bring realism to their crowd scenes, a practice soon adopted by American filmmakers, who found that 'violent mob scenes' turned out best if shot according to the 'probabilistic' method' (1981: 113). Here, Burch is engaging in analysis of the actual processes and practices of film production, something that his book offers as its central subject but only fleetingly delivers. His *Theory of Film Practice* demonstrates a lack of empirical examination of the practice of film – the process of making it, the labour that it entails, the creative choices of filmmakers and the nature of how these are taken. It defines some key phenomena of film eloquently, it looks at what filmmakers have done, and examines why, but it does not look at the processes that comprise what we might understand as 'film practice'.

The influence of Burch's book was rekindled in this century, with a conference in the UK in 2003, *BEYOND the Theory of Practice,* inspired directly by his work. The edited collection resulting from this conference was Clive Myer's *Critical Cinema: Beyond the Theory of Practice* (2011). This book's purpose was to 'reopen the fundamental question of the relation between theory and practice for moving image students' (2011: 2). Myer accurately highlighted the problem, which has barely changed today,

that, 'The theory of film practice and its discursive relationship with filmmaking can too easily be mistaken for cinema studies or cinema history.' (2011:2)

However, the delegates at Myer's conference are not successful in meeting his challenge of building a theory of film practice that is distinct from film studies. Indeed, at no point do any of the contributors to the volume offer a definition of film practice, other than through its separation from film theory within the academy and the training of film production students. In his Introduction, Myer elides the two concepts of 'film practice' and 'theoretical practices of the moving image', without taking the care to delineate these terms. The book's contributors have a range of research interests, but none aligns with the intentions of my research study: to seek a valid and useful theory of film practice that can help us understand better the nature of filmmaking.

An academic author who has engaged in an attempt to comprehensively describe feature filmmaking practice is William Guynn. At the beginning of this decade, as his contribution to his edited volume, *The Routledge Companion to Film History* (2011), Guynn undertook his own description and analysis of the film production process. This centred on a chronological breakdown, which is worth quoting in full:

> Film theorists conceptualize the production of the fiction films as a set of processes divided into four successive stages:
>
> . the activities of writing involved in the production of the film's *script*;
>
> . the various techniques by means of which an action is staged in front of the camera, the film's *mise-en-scène*;
>
> . the choices filmmakers make in the process of *shooting* the film, including the camera set-up that determines the distance and angle of the camera – its framing of the image;
>
> . the successive stages of *editing* that shape the filmed material into a cohesive narrative structure composed of a chain of shots. (2011: 39)

Guynn proceeds to give useful detail to each of his four stages, with a focus on the practice methods within the processes. However, as a comprehensive description of filmmaking practice, his breakdown is highly contentious. Most significantly, his stages make a huge leap from script development to mise-en-scène, bypassing the creatively formational stage of preproduction, a phase of creative practice which includes vital decisions such as casting, the choice of locations, storyboarding and the intellectual engagement of Heads of Department in the development of a visual style for the film. Guynn's conception of postproduction is also limited, centred exclusively on picture editing and neglecting sound design and music composition, amongst other key creative elements. However, despite its deficiencies, Guynn's description of filmmaking practice is significant in academic writing because it attempts to offer an account of film production as the basis for further study.

A recent attempt to develop an account of film practice is a series of books published by I.B.Tauris, *Behind the Silver Screen: A Modern History of Filmmaking.* Series Editor John Lewis describes his intentions to look at the 'artists, technicians, and craftspeople in front of and behind the camera' [7]. The series, however, is a historical analysis of the work of the Heads of Department of film production within Hollywood, with only the introductions to each volume providing any account of contemporary practice. Virginia Wright Wexman's introduction to her edited collection on *Directing* (2017) attempts to outline the work of a film director during a shooting day, in a schematic similar to that of Guynn. She describes how,

> The director stages the scene, deciding on camera placement and lighting for the first shot in consultation with the cinematographer. He or she then organizes a run-through with the actors, choreographing their movements (a process known as blocking) and rehearsing the dialogue, giving the actors feedback (called notes) when needed. (2017: 8)

[7] frontispiece in Wexman 2017

But the order here is incorrect: in filmmaking the rehearsal and blocking of the actors precedes the final decisions on camera placement, with creative innovations by the performers often stimulating changes in the use of the camera from the plans laid out carefully in the storyboard or shotlist that will have been designed during preproduction. The problem may stem from the historicist project of Lewis: Wexman notes that her account of a director's work stems from the system designed in Hollywood by Thomas Ince in the 1910s, which she sees as the flexible basis of film practice ever since: 'Ince's model functions as a skeleton onto which variations are grafted to meet the unique demands of each moviemaking venture.' (2017: 8)

If the attention of Wexman is focused on film history rather than current practice, and the voices of Burch, Myer and Guynn are relatively weak or defined by their omissions, it is worth considering why the development of a more profound theory of filmmaking practice has not emerged. There are certainly multiple reasons for this, but perhaps the most significant is the disjuncture that exists between the work of film practitioners and that of film scholars. Only a few film scholars have useful experience in directing films, or have studied at first hand the working practice of film directors. For most authors, there are very good intellectual reasons to study a completed film as a text, without looking to the processes and labours that brought that text into being. Wexman also makes the good point that the scholastic approach of film studies has been developed based on older disciplines:

> The text-centred reading strategies employed by most film critics, which have been adapted from literary and art history models, are ill suited to the task of capturing the distinctive qualities of works created by Hollywood artists who partner with others and operate within a technologically complex commercial industry. (2017:1)[8]

[8] Wexman makes her critique of the 'literary and art history models' from her position as Professor Emerita of English and Art History at the University of Illinois.

To provide a more thorough account of filmmaking practice, it is perhaps necessary to look to the important examples of filmmaker-scholars – small in number - who have written usefully on the subject. Cathy Greenhalgh is a cinematographer, writer and teacher, who has made significant contributions to academic discussions on film, with an emphasis towards an understanding of how the filmed image creates meaning in movies. Regarding film practice, Greenhalgh expresses a familiar concern about the failure of scholarly discourse to interrogate the role of cinematography, which 'is rarely discussed at length in film criticism, and the practices of image making, embedded in the complexity of production, are even less frequently considered.' (2005: 195)

Greenhalgh develops her critique by looking back to the boom in film education and studies in the last century, where further deficiencies persisted: 'While formal properties such as framing and lighting were noted, there was rarely any reference to the conditions of production, or decisions made by director or cinematographer' (2003: 145). Greenhalgh is raising a similar concern to my own, that while the film as text has received closer and more detailed attention over time, the ways in which film is made have not been sufficiently studied. For her, the glimmer of light is in film scholarship's study of mise-en-scène, 'one of the few times in film history when theorists had at least tackled the workings of the uniquely cinematic image, and thereby revealed some of the cinematographers' processes.' (2003: 100)

In her chapter for the book, *Making Pictures: A Century of Cinematography* (2003), Greenhalgh delivers a beautiful descriptive account of the roles, and creative relationships, that comprise the job of a director of photography, as well as a sense of the historical development of the role. However, there is still insufficient attention to a theory of practice that might attempt to address cinematography within the process of feature filmmaking. She gives us some very important guidance on the nature of creative collaboration during the making of a film, approaching ideas around film authorship. However, Greenhalgh does not venture beyond these observations towards a broader statement about filmmaking that might delineate patterns of practice and differentiations of type. In her analysis of the working relationship between cinematographer Chris Doyle, director Wong Kar-Wai and designer/editor

William Chang (2005), Greenhalgh describes a unique triangle of filmmaking creativity, accompanying this with an eloquent close reading of a sequence from *Happy Together* (1997). However, these filmmakers' collaboration is viewed as an exceptional relationship, rather than one that might generate a generalised understanding of film practice across cinema.

My understanding of the nature of fiction filmmaking practice is rooted in two sources from outside academy writing. The first is the large instructional literature on film directing, which although not peer-reviewed brings some highly knowledgeable insights on the nature of filmmaking. An example is Michael Rabiger and Mick Hurbis-Cherrier's extensive volume, which provides some clear and straightforward descriptive accounts of the director's role:

> A director answers to the producer and is responsible for the details, quality, and meaning of the final film. A film team (cast and crew) is made up of a number of creative and technical collaborators. The director's job is to coordinate this collective expertise and inspire its creative energy into producing a single, stylistically unified and coherent cinematic story. (2013: 4)

These authors are able to provide such general overviews of the director's role, as well as detailed descriptions of the responsibilities of a film director in script development, decision-making on style and aesthetics, preproduction, production and postproduction. The emphasis of the writing is to deliver a useful account of directing for aspiring filmmakers, one that must therefore be comprehensive in its coverage of the many processes involved. As such, the authors do not fall into William Guynn's trap of over-simplification in their description and analysis of directing.

The second source of knowledge that supports the writing of this thesis is my own professional background as a director of television drama, short and feature films, which has played a significant role in motivating and guiding my research during this work. Looking beyond these two sources, the lack of a sufficient scholarly literature on the creative practice of film has required me to broaden the scope of my enquiry

beyond the academy. In Chapter 1, I discuss the popular literature on the 'Making Of' films and propose that these detailed descriptions of the work of filmmakers form a vital contribution to the study of film practice.

Theories of Film Style

My assertion that the range of scholarship on film practice remains limited is presented in the context of a contrastingly rich and enduring body of work concerning film style. Two approaches to film style form the intellectual roots of my study. The first is the interpretative approach that undertakes close examination of film style and analyses its significance in terms of the film's subject and meaning. Exponents include V.F.Perkins, Robin Wood, Douglas Pye and others from the journal *Movie,* published in the UK since 1962 (more recently in its online edition). The scholarly history of this approach is so long that it can be called a tradition; Jakob Isak Nielsen has written of this 'remarkably persistent critical strategy' (2007: 3) and its enduring relevance across the decades of fluctuating alternative approaches to the study of film. A key work this century is the collection edited by John Gibbs and Douglas Pye, *Style and Meaning: studies in the detailed analysis of film* (2005), a title that provides a useful shorthand for the approach that these writers adopt in their analysis of movies.

Another perspective guiding the study of film style comes from the work of David Bordwell, Kristin Thompson and others whose interest in the stylistics of film, its historical poetics, and their rejection of interpretative approaches offered a self-conscious alternative to the 'style and meaning' group. Although the differences are often nuanced, Bordwell took time at the end of his teaching career to summarise how his approach differs from that of Robin Wood:

> I don't think that Robin is interested in causal explanations at the level that I'm interested in. That would be my argument. I would say that a poetics – at least a historical poetics of cinema – tries to tell a fairly detailed causal story about why form and style are the way they are. (quoted in Nielsen, 2004)

A certain artificiality lurks in this distinction, because there is no explanation of why Wood would not take an interest in the historical development of elements of film style. However, Bordwell's prolific work establishes a research perspective that comes close to engaging in film practice:

> A signal advantage offered by poetics is that it makes allowance for artistry. Filmmakers spend an enormous amount of time getting things the way they want them - fiddling with the script, auditioning dozens of actors, trying out different locations and camera angles and cutting patterns. […] As an artisan, the filmmaker has resources of knowledge about what works and doesn't work. Passed from filmmaker to filmmaker over time, this knowledge coalesces into craft traditions, and these in turn provide schemas, those repeated patterns of shot composition, of lighting, of camera movement or editing which get the job done. (2000: 9)

For me, this passage is particularly interesting as it demonstrates that although Bordwell's poetics warmly acknowledge the importance of filmmaking craft, his approach quickly refocuses its interest towards a historical understanding of traditions of film style, rather than continuing towards a closer analysis of how filmmakers work. Similarly, in Bordwell's insightful 2005 work on film staging, *Figures Traced In Light*, the author opens with a bold question that engages his reader, making us think as a creative practitioner: 'You are a film director. Today the script requires four of your characters to have a conversation around a dinner table. How might you stage and shoot it?' (2005: 1).

After a very strong passage that takes the reader through the creative alternatives of this simple dramatic scenario, Bordwell again reverts to a mode of analysis that engages with film style almost exclusively through observation of a film text. His study is weak in its engagement with those aspects of filmmaking practice - the collaborations, the on-set chemistry within the team, the physicality of the shoot, the pragmatic considerations - that provide the formative conditions for a movie's style and which provide a depth of understanding that needs to be layered together with an objective analysis of film style.

Scholars following Bordwell's perspective have similarly skirted close to an analysis of film practice, but their interest in historical poetics have usually led them away. Jakob Isak Nielsen's fascinating study of camera movement (2007) would surely engage with the practice of moving the film camera, but other than mentions of key technological developments, such as the introduction by Robert W. Paul in 1897 of the first panning head to put on a movie camera tripod, Nielsen limits himself to interpretational analysis within the perspective of historical poetics.

Barry Salt is an independent theorist whose approach can be likened to Bordwell's study of film style. Salt is interesting for several reasons: he comes from a professional background in the film industry, where he worked in the camera department; he has a research background in theoretical physics, so brings a form of methodological rigour that differs from the film studies tradition; and he taught film practice in a number of leading film schools. Salt sets out to analyse film by quantifying the attributes of style, generating huge data resources on shot sizes and average shot lengths (ASLs). He takes a historical perspective, examining the filmmaking techniques and technologies throughout the development of cinema. In this sense, Salt's work can be grouped within Bordwell's 'historical poetics', however his value to the current study is his emphasis on empirical methodologies. Salt brought a scientist's mindset to the study of film, and his chapter offering a 'Statistical Style Analysis of Motion Pictures' (1992: 219) is unique in the scale and ambition of its empirical analysis, inspiring the 'Cinemetrics' movie measurement database founded by Yuri Tsivan and Gunars Civjans. Most of Salt's attention is on the features of style that he observes in film, but as a practising lighting director, his scholarly work is rooted in the world of filmmaking. This thesis, likewise, aims to derive its observations and conclusions from the realities of film practice. Despite eccentricities and a certain combativeness in his approach, Salt remains an important figure in holding film scholars to account, insisting on 'the critical use of rational and logical thinking in inspecting one's theories, and also the careful comparison of those theories with the real world' (1992: 2).

Of the varied scholarly approaches to film style, the 'style and meaning' group has been most relevant for my study, because this critical strategy foregrounds an interpretation of meaning, examining how elements of film style impact on the spectator's understanding of subject and theme. Furthermore, the approach of these writers provides a significant intellectual background for this thesis, because an emphasis of their enquiry is a careful consideration of filmmaker intention. Authors in the 'style and meaning' tradition seek to identify strategies of expression that are used by directors to deliver meaning to their audience. Of great importance to this thesis is the willingness of some of the writers in this group to adopt methodologies that link their theoretical propositions to the world of film practice. One of the very few scholars who have carried out primary research on a film set is John Gibbs, whose two articles on the making of Jamie Thraves's feature, *The Cry of the Owl* (2009), demonstrate how a close study of film style can form the basis of a study of filmmaking practice. If a substantial endeavour of 'style and meaning' critics is to interrogate how key decisions made in the construction of a film's mise-en-scène deliver meaning, an extension of this enquiry must be to examine how the creative decisions have been brought to fruition on the film set[9]. The beneficial impact of Gibbs's on-set research to his work as a style-based film critic is that he is able to develop a methodology that extends the critical norms of the field. In the second of the articles on *The Cry of the Owl*, Gibbs first presents a close analysis of one sequence of the film, but then adds to this, using his 'knowledge of the history of the film's production to explore some of the particular choices made in the construction of these sequences' (2011: 81). His interest in filmmaker choice and its impact on meaning can now be substantially evidenced at both sides of the analysis: Gibbs's first-hand research provides empirically-based understanding of filmmaker choice, and his skills as a critic support his analysis of how textual meanings are delivered to the spectator.

My study takes this research interest further, harnessing it to my intention of analysing the nature of filmmaking creative practice itself. This thesis contextualises the creative decision making, setting out the broad strategies of film practice that

[9] Bill Krohn's retrospective account of *Hitchcock at Work* (2003) is another example of scholarly research rooted in an account of film practice.

directors chose to adopt. Through the concept of 'Modes of Creative Practice', I hope to offer a theoretical overview to explain the different forms of practice that we observe in the making of feature films.

Taxonomy

In proposing separate Modes of Creative Practice, this study is engaging in a process of categorisation and there are important theoretical considerations related to such a taxonomical project. Writing on taxonomies has been predominantly linked to the requirements of specifics academic disciplines, with a large amount of work within computational science and smaller studies in fields ranging from psychology (Lamberts and Shanks, 1997) to fantasy studies (Farah Mendlesohn, 2002). The most significant authors working on a generalised understanding of taxonomical systems are Geoffrey Bowker and Susan Leigh Star, who collaborated on a key work, *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences* (1999). Their study examines the conceptual and sociological need for systems of classification; looking at the subject in the broadest terms, they provide a very clear statement that, 'A 'classification system' is a set of boxes (metaphorical or literal) into which things can be put to then do some kind of work' (1999: 10). The authors' emphasis here is important: a taxonomy is not just an intellectual ordering of things or ideas, it leads to useful outcomes in terms of work or productivity within a field. This understanding has helped shape my research for this thesis: the Modes of Creative Practice must be intellectually coherent as categories, and in addition the modes must be useful to filmmakers in helping them prepare and execute the central creative processes in the production of their films.

Hypothesis

This study is founded on the understanding that, in the making of every movie, directors and their teams adopt particular creative and organisational strategies in order to achieve the desired creative outcomes for their film. Film practice is a process of creative decision-making that may be manipulated and altered according

to the intentions of the filmmakers.[10] Recognising the differences in the tasks of directing varied forms of fiction films, I will propose a structure in which the variations in creative practice can be grouped into separate 'modes'.

In seeking to attribute a Mode of Creative Practice to a filmmaker, I will look at the stages of preparation of a movie and the intentions that lie behind the particular forms of practice that directors deploy. Here, my study is rooted in the approach of significant style-based film critics, who have made an enquiry into directors' intentions central to their critical method. If a particular film project is organised within a Mode of Creative Practice, then the roots of this lead back to the creative intentions of the filmmakers. A film's director will play the initiating role in defining intentions and filmmaking strategies, and also of importance to this study is to understand how such decisions impact on the work of the key Heads of Department. A director's earliest encounter with a film project is most usually when reading a screenplay. At this point, a first task of a director is to ask, what are the creative requirements to bring this text to the screen? The screenplay is a document that imagines a film, it is a 'screen idea' – a concept developed in the research of Ian Macdonald and the Screenwriting Research Group. The screenplay will be subject to the interpretative practice of a director and creative team: on first reading, a director will be aware immediately of a range of particular production requirements that the project requires, based on issues such as genre. If the script is for a Sci Fi or Fantasy film, the emphasis of the creative practice employed will be significantly different than if the film project is a contemporary realist drama. The director must consider what personal skills will be required of them in order to translate the script to the screen. Furthermore, a director may have already established an idiosyncratic form of creative practice that they wish to deploy in the film's production. All such considerations, discussed at the very early stages of a movie's Pre-Preproduction (a term used widely in certain film industries, such as Germany), will lay the

[10] The source of certain variations in practice may also be derived from the infrastructure of film production that directors find themselves within, and this may, separately, have a profound impact on a filmmaker and the creative process. This separate line of enquiry is suggested in the work on studio authorship by Jerome Christensen and others.

groundwork for the type of film practice – the Creative Mode - that will be used in the making of a film.

An important point to establish at the outset is that I do not suggest that the proposed Modes are exclusive, indeed it will be commonplace that they interact and overlap with each other. A director may adopt the creative practice of more than one mode in the making of a feature film, based on a range of creative intentions that are made for the project; in addition, more than one mode of creative practice may be relevant to a particular cinematic genre. The model of Modes of Creative Practice is therefore a loose form of taxonomy. This does not, however, undermine its usefulness in providing a definition of methods of filmmaking. The utility of this theoretical construct is an important concern in developing this study and relates to Bowker and Star's definition of systems of classification; indeed, the vitality of the hypothesis is dependent on its ability to be used by those interested in making and studying film art. I have given myself three challenges in constructing the Modes: each mode must,

- have meaning for filmmakers, describing an approach to the practice of their art;
- have meaning for critics, categorising film in a way that is useful for broader study;
- describe the production practice relating to a significant range of cinema.

Ultimately, with the extension of this study beyond the limitations of this thesis, the defined 'Modes of Creative Practice' must collectively encompass all narrative feature film.

Research Methodologies

A feature of this study is the diversity of its research methodologies. It begins with a theoretical analysis of how an earlier author used the concept of 'modes' to delineate a realm of filmmaking, investigating the twenty-year study by Bill Nichols of what he termed 'Modes of Documentary film'. I consider whether Nichols's theoretical construct can be usefully adapted to a study of fiction filmmaking practice. The

chapter also proposes a significant role in the analysis of film practice for the wide-ranging literature on the 'Making Of' feature films.

In the process of establishing the classification of three Modes of Creative Practice, I have used a variation of methodologies. As this is an investigation of film practice, I have been motivated to adopt methodologies that, where possible, base information gathering on a close engagement with filmmakers and the real experience of creating fiction film. Each of the core chapters that analyse a Mode of Creative Practice discusses the different methodology chosen for its specific research. As such, this thesis comprises three smaller research projects that sit within the broader theoretical work of the study, with the following methodological approaches:
Chapter Three, The Performance-Centred Mode: this chapter adopts an interview-based methodology to examine its Mode, as well as a text-based investigation of the creative practice of Mike Leigh. In order to internationalise our understanding of performance-centred film directing, I have conducted in-depth interviews with the filmmakers Federico Godfrid (Argentina) and Blandine Lenoir (France). To understand how the creative practice of directors impacts on the performer, I interviewed the actor Elizabeth Berrington, whose career has involved collaborating with mainstream film directors as well as performing in four films directed by Mike Leigh. The central role of the casting director in this mode is investigated in an interview with Carmel Cochrane, a leading British practitioner who has cast numerous films by independent directors.
Chapter Four, The Design-Centred Mode: this chapter adopts a practice research methodology to develop an understanding of the nature of decision-making and creative thought in the mode. I wrote, produced and directed a short historical drama, *The Burning* (2016), which allowed me to explore experientially the process of filmmaking in a design-intensive mode. The approach exploits the fact that my professional work hitherto had been exclusively in contemporary drama: film production in a genre or form that requires its director to play a dominant role in aspects of design was a new experience for me. The novelty of working in this mode enabled me to identify clearly the different challenges that a director encounters in this form of film. The chapter discusses how the heuristic quality of this methodology generates research findings of a fascinating and unexpected nature. I should

emphasise that the film was not conceived specifically in order to answer a research question: it was a creative project that served as a practice research vehicle for the investigation into this mode of filmmaking. A Blu-ray disc of the short film, *The Burning* (2016), is attached as an Appendix to this thesis.

Chapter Five, The Social Realist Mode: research into this mode is through a methodology that identifies three core aspects of film production - locations, casting, and the use of the camera – and then investigates the practice of leading film directors working in this genre in relation to them. The research question asks how creative practice differs between mainstream and social realist filmmakers in these three areas.

The broad range of these central chapters means that further theoretical issues arise in relation to the specific areas of filmmaking under review. While the broader proposal of the thesis elides its hypothesis with the concepts developed by Bill Nichols in relation to documentary film, I will also consider the work of other authors:

- Pamela Robertson Wojcik's groundbreaking writing on cinema and performance will be addressed in the chapter on the Performance-Centred Mode of film practice, which will also offer a critical reading of Cynthia Baron and Sharon Carnicke's theories around performance as a semiotic sign;
- in Chapter Four on the Design-Centred Mode, writing on mise-en-scène is used to support an understanding of the filmmaker's decision-making in creating visual elements in the frame;
- in my consideration of the Social Realist Mode, I will look at theories of realism, centred on the work of Lúcia Nagib.

This study is based on the conviction that the way in which movies are made is of great significance, and that the study of these creative processes can be revealing and insightful. It is a separate but complementary enquiry to the richly-developed studies of the completed feature film as text. With its foundations in those elements of film studies that foreground filmmaker intention and the creation of meaning, this thesis offers an original contribution to the field by focussing exclusively on the

processes of film creation. While other authors have studied in detail particular aspects of filmmaking, such as screenplay, sound or cinematography, this thesis proposes a broad and encompassing theory of film practice. I believe that if we are interested in the inspiration that motivated filmmakers, the reasons for the creation of the films that fascinate us, then it is important for us to have a critical framework with which to analyse how those movies were produced. My intention is that this thesis will help fulfil this role, offering a new theoretical basis for the pursuit of scholarship into the understanding of the practice of filmmaking.

Chapter 2: Inside and Outside the Academy: writing about filmmaking practice

In my Introduction, I have defined filmmaking practice in terms useful to this study, and described a relative paucity of scholarly research into the practice of making fiction feature films. The purpose of this chapter is to address two issues that flow from the latter observation. Firstly, I will look at the problem of primary research into filmmaking practice, justifying a move beyond academic studies in order to mine the considerable research resources written by authors working within the popular literature on the making of feature films. Second, I will look in detail at the work of Bill Nichols, whose research and publications over a twenty-year period sought to establish an overarching theoretical understanding of documentary film. Nichols has been influential to my doctoral project since its inception. His work to establish a conceptual framework that can help us better understand documentaries is based around a system of categorisation, 'the idea of modes, or distinct types, of documentary' (2001: xiv). In his early work, titled *Representations of Reality* (1991), Nichols develops his concept of 'modes' on a foundation that is of particular relevance to the character of documentary production: how the filmmaker engages with the real world, and how s/he chooses to present that reality on screen. Nichols also conceived his system through a close analysis of the historical development of the documentary form, suggesting an organic change in modes over time. Although these are different concerns from my very specific focus on the nature of filmmaking practice, the work of Bill Nichols establishes a theoretical precedent for my project with its project to categorise the creative practice of fiction films into separate 'Modes'.

Part One: Outside the Academy

The lack of sufficient primary research into filmmaking processes presents a significant obstacle for this project. If my intention is to describe the variations in practice undertaken by film directors, and to build a conceptual structure that may help us define and differentiate these practices, then a broad knowledge of how films have been made across the last century is essential.

I am helped in part by academic writers who have studied the developing technologies of film production. There has been a strong body of work on more recent technological developments: Thomas Elsaesser and others have written on the resurgence of 3-D; Lisa Purse (2013) and Stephen Prince (2002) have studied the significance of digital imaging in contemporary cinema. Specific technical phenomena, such as widescreen, have been studied in detail (John Belton, 1992; David Bordwell, 1985). Authors have written on earlier cinematic technology in very useful detail: a significant and broad overview was provided by Teresa De Lauretis and Stephen Heath in their collection of studies, *The Cinematic Apparatus* (1980). Authors contributing to this volume often pursue an interest in the historical development of the audiovisual technologies of cinema, following Peter Wollen's essay that opens the book. Wollen writes a broad and knowledgeable overview of the 'recording, processing and projecting or exhibiting' of film (1980: 14), but excludes consideration of the people who interact with the technology. He addresses the technologies as dry facts of technical development, never peopled by the technicians whose imaginative exploitation of the machines or chemical processes created new marvels of cinema. This illustrates a problem for my study of film practice, which seeks to look closely at how film creators use the tools of production, and the strategies developed for creating meaning in film. Frequently, authors move very swiftly away from a rooted study of film technology to their personal theoretical concerns. Mary Ann Doane, writing on sound editing and mixing, makes some very interesting historical observations, especially from 1930s sources during the breakthrough of the talkies, but she is more concerned with issues around the ideology of film, and value systems of visual and aural perception (1980: 47). Her dislocation from a serious engagement with film practice is illustrated when she writes extensively about the primacy of dialogue, but makes no mention of the screenwriter or indeed the script, the building block to which all elements of creative filmmaking practice are usually referenced. This example demonstrates the distance between my study of filmmaking practice and that of writers motivated by different theoretical concerns. Doane's analysis of film sound stems from her interest in the ideologically dominant position of the spoken word; in the cases that she cites, my interest would instead be in the work

of the screenwriter and how their decision to create a dialogue-heavy script impacts on the filmmaking practice of the team that interprets their work.

From MOD to MoLit

There is a further approach to writing about the creative process of producing feature films, the 'Making Of' literature, which presents a huge resource in terms of our understanding of filmmaking. The work of authors in this tradition is linked to the long history of 'Making Of Documentaries' (MOD), or the shorter video 'special features' that are packaged with DVD and Blu-ray feature film releases, referred to by scholar Paul Arthur as 'MOs'. Authors following the 'Making Of' approach distinguish their work by their focus on just one film; unlike writers who look at an extended body of work by a single film director, the 'Making Of' authors seek to tell the story of the realisation of a single movie, with an emphasis on its creative and technical processes, and also the history of its reception. Through the eighty-year history of the 'Making Of' literature on feature films, the writing has developed three sub-categories. There are the books written by filmmakers themselves (such as John Boorman on *Emerald Forest* (1985), John Sayles on *Matewan* (1987)); there are important observational books by journalists (Lillian Ross on *The Red Badge of Courage* (1952), Paul Sammon on *Blade Runner* (1996)); and there are a small number of 'Making Of' books written by film academics (Robert Carringer on *Citizen Kane* (1985), Stephen Rebello on *Psycho* (1990)). The literature as a whole continues to provide one of the most valuable sources of primary research into filmmaking practice, giving detailed accounts of the creative and technical activity involved in producing a feature film. As such, it is a very important resource for my study.

Significantly, the large majority of writers of this literature come from outside the institutions of academic film criticism. This helps us distinguish the works from other very important series of books that look at individual films, such as the 'BFI Film Classics'. The latter provides a different emphasis, combining an account of a film's production alongside a review of its critical context as well as a discussion of

'its place within a genre or national cinema'[11] and its critical history. Such theoretical concerns are almost never addressed by the writers of the 'Making Of' literature, whose aim is to tell the inside story of a movie's creation for a popular readership of film enthusiasts.

The 'MoLit' tradition, however, contains intrinsic difficulties in terms of academic study. The first problem is that this non-scholastic approach does not reach to the earliest decades of cinema: it begins towards the end of the first half-century of moviemaking. The literature begins in 1938, when the filmmaker Michael Powell wrote a book titled *200,000 feet on Foula: The edge of the world*. The publication followed the completion of Powell's breakthrough feature film, a very personal project that took his career beyond the drudge of 'quota quickies' and into large-scale film production. His intention was informative: to communicate to his readership the experience of making *The Edge of the World* (1937), to illuminate some of the technical processes and in particular to describe the dynamics of the cast and crew during the film shoot. Powell's book was a form of journal, which described the drama of his film's production: as its director he had taken his team to the remote Shetland island of Foula, an adventure that matched the best pre-war tales of derring-do, and his book title deliberately referenced Jules Verne. The book had a popular touch, but this was also an important moment in literary history, marking the beginning of what is now a long tradition of writing about feature filmmaking practice.

The second issue concerning MoLit is that the nature of popular writing leaves questions over its validity as a resource for scholarly research. This is not a peer-reviewed literature: it locates itself within commercial publishing, with authors' success in bringing a work to imprint based on the market potential of a study. The literature thus has a bias towards researching films that have reached a large audience, in particular those that may have developed a significant fan following. A 'Making Of' work on *Blade Runner* will fit a publisher's marketing requirements,

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[11] Series introduction, https://www.palgrave.com/gb/series/14789 [accessed 30.03.2018]

whether or not the author possesses the research and study skills of Paul Sammon. The literature is therefore vulnerable to wide variations in the quality of research that it offers, and the focus of its authors' concern may be towards issues of interest to fans, concentrating sometimes on personalities and personal relationships rather than revealing insights into the nature of the filmmaking practice that led to the movie's creation.

The three subsections of authorship of the 'Making Of' literature that I have described – filmmaker, journalist and academic – indicate further variability in the quality of research outcomes. Although the film director writing about their own film practice offers us a unique internal view of creative decision-making during a film's production, the subjectivity of such research means that we must be aware of natural bias. It is also worth considering whether a film director is in the best position to both describe and analyse their own methods of filmmaking practice. A filmmaker's experience across a film production can be highly emotional and sometimes traumatic, involving personal conflicts with their collaborators and producers as well as positive moments of creative exhilaration.[12] A director's account of their own film practice will certainly be coloured by such experience; as research, it must be treated as having great interest, but mixed value. An important observation, however, is that those 'Making Of' books written by directors are frequently structured as journals of the experience of creating a film – their ambition is more limited than works authored by critics or academics.

The trained film journalist undertaking a study of the making of a feature film has the advantage of highly-developed research skills. Lillian Ross's experience as a *New Yorker* staff writer, with a reputation as a skilled interviewer, is key to the success of her work with John Huston and his team while researching for her book, *Picture* (1962). However, the nature of her very close involvement with the production company raises questions about her independence. During the making

[12] During my interview with director Blandine Lenoir, for Chapter 3 of this study, the filmmaker had an emotional need to spend a major part of our meeting telling me the story – off the record – of her very difficult relationship with her leading actress. Any 'Making Of' journal that she might write about *I Got Life* (2017) would be a highly partial account.

of *The Red Badge of Courage* (1951), Ross was given close and deep access to the team at MGM studios, including studio production head Dore Schary and the film's producer Gottfried Reinhardt, as well as John Huston. She was effectively 'embedded', in the language of 21st-century journalism. This system of news gathering, in which an organisation (often a military unit) invites a journalist to join its personnel in order to witness at close hand a particular event, puts the researcher in a potentially compromising position. In their study of embedded journalism, Pfau, Haigh et al. interviewed scores of correspondents who had experienced this form of close contact with military units in Iraq in 2003. These writers emphasised the pitfalls of such close relationships: 'One reporter described embedding as 'professionally treacherous', explaining that 'There is a real danger of getting too close to your subject'.' (2004: 76)

However, many of the concerns within journalism studies about 'embedding' centre on impartiality during a conflict, and do not apply in the context of Ross's research into the 'making of' a feature film. The problem of the journalist's dependency on her 'hosts', however, still applies. It is not something that she addresses in the book, but one that we must be aware of when evaluating her research methodology.

The positive effect of such close contact, achieved through Ross's insider relationship with the team at MGM, will have provided her with insights that a more objective reporter might have lacked. Her constant presence in the production office would have helped generate trust, a relationship phenomenon that has been discussed in detail in Altman and Dalmas's 'Social Penetration Theory'. Pfau et al. describe how,

> Relationships develop through contact, which makes possible increasing self-disclosure. Self-disclosure involves sharing of information about oneself with another, which facilitates social penetration. Relationships begin with relatively limited breadth and depth but, through increasing self-disclosure, develop in intensity and intimacy. (2004: 78)

It is doubtful that the level of intimacy achieved by Lillian Ross in researching for her book, *Picture*, was counterproductive to her project. Her intention was to provide a descriptive account of filmmaking in the broadest sense, not a critical account: 'I decided to follow the history of that particular movie from beginning to end, in order to learn whatever I might learn.' (1962: 9)

Ross's book is written in the form of a novel, without authorial commentary – a remarkably original means of portraying the making of a movie. In it, her close relationship with the key figures (Huston, Dore Schary the Production Head, and the producer of *Red Badge*, Gottfried Reinhardt) is very evident. She describes an evening with these men:

> Huston showed up, and the three of us drove off with Reinhardt to Schary's house. We found Schary in his living room, wearing grey slacks, a navy-blue blazer, a baby blue sports shirt and loafers, and looking relaxed and happy […] Huston gave Schary an affectionate slap on the back. 'How are you, kid?', he said. (1962: 120-121)

This choice of prose style allows the reader to sense the intimacy of Ross's research involvement with these men, in which she could witness both the professional relationships of the moviemakers and their social interaction. It should be regarded that the close, embedded contact with the director and production team will have provided Ross with the advantages of 'social penetration', with only limited disadvantages derived from being 'too close' to her subjects.

The distinctions and connections between two approaches to writing about film practice, academic and popular, is one of the central concerns of this chapter. As a first point of analytical departure, it is important to examine where there are pre-existing commonalities of thought. This literature review interrogates whether there are useful links between the two estranged traditions of writing about film. In my examination of both traditions, I have made an assumption that on the one hand journalists and filmmakers do not read scholars' discourses surrounding film

(indeed, this is my professional experience as a film director, and also as a journalist during a period when I worked as a freelance writer for *Variety*, the film business magazine and website). Academic writers, in contrast, will be aware of journalistic film criticism and elements of MoLit. I am interested in looking at the points of contact and divergence between authors inside and outside the academy when writing the 'Making Of' literature. Although many of the writers may be unaware of the discourses that concern academics, this does not mean that they cannot provide insights into scholarly thinking. By illuminating how the 'Making Of' literature makes a contribution to the development of thinking in the school of film theory, I hope to establish the validity of the 'Making Of' literature as a resource in the academic study of film.

Authorship and the 'Making Of' Literature

Almost by definition, writers of the 'Making Of' literature are in love with the films that they write about. This passion generates a longing to discover the creative sources of the work of art that has inspired them, with the writers keen to celebrate the mind and imagination of their filmmaker-heroes. In all books on the making of a feature film, writers share a fascination for the locus of creative authority. A 'Making Of' book frequently begins with chapters looking at the conceptual origin of the film and the work of the screenwriter, before moving on to the creative role of the Director in realising the project. Some writers even pronounce their director-focus in their titles (such as Tony Moral's 2013 work, *The Making of Alfred Hitchcock's 'The Birds'*). Others begin with broader assumptions about the creative responsibility for the film that they are studying; however, defining authorial responsibility can be understood as a principal intention in this genre of film writing.

Authorship is therefore a vital consideration to the 'Making Of' writers, whether or not they consciously engage in the academic debate surrounding authorship theory. In this section, I will look further at some of the ideas and assumptions in academic writing on authorship, and then examine in detail some key works of the 'Making Of' literature in order to discuss the extent to which the research of these

writers enhances understandings of film practice in a way that may aid this theoretical approach to film study.

'Movie', authorship and auteurism

In Ian Cameron's article, 'Films, Directors, and Critics', the writer stresses that 'The assumption that underlies all the writing in *Movie* is that the director is the author of a film, the person who gives it any distinctive quality' (1962: 8). This focus on understanding the authorial responsibility for a film was central to the work of many film scholars in the middle decades of the twentieth century, particularly in France, the USA and the UK. A distinction should be made between the early *auteur* theorists, who sought to identify the artistic imprint of directors who were working within the studio system, leading to the framing of an established canon of greats, with a broader scholarly interest in film authorship. The dominant assumption was, as in Cameron's statement, that the film director was centre and leader of the creative practice of filmmaking. Approaches to authorship became more nuanced in the reaction to the *auteur* school of thought in the 1970s. Graham Petrie represents a good example of this. He stressed that the theory's single-minded concentration on the director leaves a nagging worry: 'how can we ever be sure that we are attributing credit where it really belongs?' (1973, reprinted in Grant 2008: 111). Petrie wanted to include other members of a filmmaking team in an assessment of the work's creative authorship, broadening it to 'any major collaborator on a film whose influence seems to have been decisive in creating its quality or lasting impact' (op cit: 117). He pointed to the essential role of stars, such as Greta Garbo and Bette Davis, cinematographers such as Boris Kaufman and Gregg Toland, and writers such as Dudley Nichols and Jacques Prévert. All these should share a claim to their films' authorship.

As an intervention within this debate, the 'Making Of' literature can potentially play a very significant role. If we exclude those books written by film directors themselves, the writers offer a descriptive account of filmmaking from an outsider's standpoint. Some of the trained journalists who have undertaken 'Making Of' projects have carefully watched the process of film production at

close hand. Such writers are ideally placed to comment on the true locus of creative authority within filmmaking, because they are lay-people from outside the film industry who have a fascination for the processes of film production. These observers often write with a stress on the human and professional relationships between the central figures of a film team, thereby offering insights into theoreticians' arguments over who deserves authorial credit in a film.

Lindsay Anderson: *Making a Film: the Story of* Secret People

I will begin a close analysis of works from the 'Making Of' literature with one of the founding examples of the form. During the late 1940s, Lindsay Anderson was a film critic and writer, co-editing the film journal *Sequence* from 1947 to 1952. The future film director was following a similar path to that of the great French 'New Wave' filmmakers (Chabrol, Godard, Truffaut), who were writing for their famous journal, *Cahiers du Cinéma,* during the 1950s. Anderson managed to gain access to the British film director, Thorold Dickinson, who was preparing to produce his feature film, *Secret People* (1952), at Ealing Studios in London. The conspiracy drama was to star Valentina Cortese as an immigrant who becomes embroiled in an assassination plot. Anderson was inspired to write a detailed, observational account of the making of this film. He describes his intentions as:

> to give the interested reader an impression of what it is like to make a feature film in a British studio to-day…This is not one of those books that seeks to…tell you how a film is made. It sets out to give you a day-to-day account of how a film *was* made, which is a different thing. (1952: 5)

This approach is an interesting one. Anderson was a film critic, so his customary relationship with a film was to address it as a text, providing critical analysis of the finished movie. Now he wanted to write a book about the making of such a text: as he says, this was not a generalised book about filmmaking, but a completely specific observation of how *Secret People* was created. This focus was clearly linked to his personal progression from film critic to film director, which serves to enliven the book: Anderson's work is brimming with a young wannabe-

filmmaker's enthusiasm for the practices of film production - he wants to know how it is done.

The book's relationship with authorship theory is highly significant, as its publication predates by two years François Truffaut's famous article in *Cahiers du Cinema* (1954), which staunchly differentiated '*auteurs*' from '*metteurs en scène'*. Before beginning his research with Thorold Dickinson, Lindsay Anderson had rehearsed his ideas about authorship in his writing for the film journal *Sequence*, which he co-edited. John Gibbs stresses the significance of Anderson's article, 'Creative Elements', which discussed the locus of film authorship, in the journal's Autumn 1948 number. Gibbs also points to Anderson's involvement in the journal's discussions, in 1950, of the attributes that were an indication of the work of an auteur: 'The distinction between artists possessed of 'personal quality' and the work of the 'impersonal master craftsmen' is almost as important to the debates in *Sequence* as it was to become for *Cahiers du Cinéma*' (2013: 27). For Lindsay Anderson, this was the contemporary intellectual context when he began research for his book on *Secret People*.

In Anderson's early chapter, 'Beginnings', tracing the origins of *Secret People*, there is already a strong sense of this movie being a personal project for Thorold Dickinson. As an experienced film director working within the British studio system, Dickinson first developed the script in-house as a side project while working for the production company 'Two Cities Films'. However, when a major movie that he was assigned to by the company, *Then and Now*, collapsed near the end of preproduction, he left the studio and took his personal project with him. Anderson writes that, 'Dickinson was determined that, with so much thought and work sunk into it, *Secret People* should now be brought to life – if not by an established studio, then by himself, in independent production.' (1952: 13)

Such artistic independence would characterise the eventual production of the film. The head of Ealing Studios, Michael Balcon, renewed an earlier interest in the project and drew Dickinson and *Secret People* into his organisation. The history of this film project provides a fascinating parallel with studies by writers on

authorship, which often look at how directors working within the Hollywood studio system fought to create films bearing the mark of their personal authorship. Dickinson can be seen as a similar studio-employed filmmaker striving to create individual work. In Anderson's book, this is certainly how the author views him. In Anderson's interview with Michael Balcon, he presents this conception of Dickinson and finds that the studio boss shares the view of him as an individual auteur. Balcon says of Dickinson,

> All too often he had been given scripts not of his own choosing, scripts not worthy of his great ability. In *Secret People* he at last had a script of his own making, something essentially of the cinema and not adapted from a novel or play, something in which both emotionally and intellectually he was very much involved. (1952: 14)

The image presented here is a familiar narrative: the struggling director, cramped by the mundane moviemaking demanded of him by his studio, but fighting to make his own meaningful film. Yet this image of Thorold Dickinson is drawn by a studio executive, the very person who - according to certain myths – should be the oppressor of individual creative freedom. Other 'Making Of' writers from this period who interviewed studio bosses, such as Lillian Ross in her observation of Louis B. Mayer, found their characters conforming to the controlling stereotype (1962: 25-28). However, with Sir Michael Balcon we are presented with a studio boss who is encouraging of individuality. The studio becomes, for Dickinson, a warm and nurturing creative environment; Balcon even allowed *Secret People* to be labelled 'A Thorold Dickinson Production'. Lindsay Anderson was writing before the *auteurist* theorists began to systematically research Hollywood studios as the unexpected location of directors with authorial signature on their movies. Already in 1952, Anderson was establishing the idea that a tightly-controlled studio could be a place where film art is made by 'author' directors, at least a decade before Robin Wood's *Hitchcock's Films* (1965) or Andrew Sarris's attention to Ford within Hollywood studios (1962). Anderson's 'Making Of' book on *Secret People* establishes early research evidence to support the developing concepts of film authorship, ideas in which he, as editor of *Sequence,* was closely involved.

Following his chapter on the role of Balcon's studio, Anderson's approach is then to offer a form of journal of the preproduction and shoot of *Secret People*. It is highly detailed, with a close attention to production issues and the organisation of the shoot. He records each and every shot achieved by the team, with daily totals of screentime filmed (quite similar to the daily Production Report written by a contemporary script supervisor). As a research process, Anderson's work is painstaking – few writers in the 'Making Of' literature have attended every day of a film's shoot – and this allows him to provide a full account of the decision-making by Dickinson and his team.

Alongside his diary, Anderson makes general observations about the crew and the dynamics on set. In the following example he carefully evaluates the balance between creative individuals and the needs of the production:

> Individual brilliance is not the same as professionalism…it may well cost the whole more than it contributes to it. Whatever the job, professionals display largely the same characteristics: the instinct for co-operation, an awareness of the problems of others, a constant relation of their part to the whole that must result. (1952: 96)

Anderson's stress is on a collective engagement in the production. Although earlier in the book he has conceived of this project as very personal to Thorold Dickinson, during the shoot the role of the individual must necessarily be restrained. Fascinating here is that Anderson was already engaging in the issues around individual and collaborative authorship, although such terminology had not yet been developed. As such, his 'Making Of' book represents a very useful resource to academic writers, with its contribution to discourses on film authorship. I have noted above that, as an editor of *Sequence* magazine, Anderson was already engaged in debates that proposed that certain élite filmmakers possessed 'personal quality' as artists. This was before he wrote his book on Thorold Dickinson: with *Making a Film: The Story of* 'Secret People', he not only

gave an account of the creation of a movie, but also began to nuance his – and our – understanding of film authorship.

Anderson's second major concern in his book is the film script. He includes the entire Shooting Script of *Secret People* as written by Dickinson, presenting it as a vital piece of documentation revealing processes of the construction of the film, but without any comment. The reader is left without any critical guidance: we can only observe Dickinson's decision-making through the precision of his choice of shots and the exact organisation of the film shoot around this template, not through any structured observation of the process by Anderson. Each scene can be tallied with Anderson's daily journal reports during the shoot, but again there is no analysis of how any variations to the director's initial plan may have come about during the production. Later in the book, Anderson only gives us one very general observation:

> there is in fact no limit to the changes and developments which a film is liable to undergo after the ratification of the shooting-script. These may be divided into two classes: modifications made during shooting, and those decided on during editing. (1952: 206)

It is a statement of exaggerated simplicity and Anderson leaves his reader no wiser, at this point, as to the creative (or authorial) role of Dickinson's collaborators during the filming or postproduction. In this sense, the book lacks the analytical precision that would be expected from a piece of academic research, failing to follow through to more profound conclusions in its direction of enquiry. However, the work's value is that it comes from primary research: Anderson writes from his personal experience of being on set with Thorold Dickinson; his diary-style reports of discussions with members of the cast and crew provide highly valuable insights into filmmaking in a British studio in the early 1950s.

Anderson's book provides an illuminating perspective on how issues of film authorship were considered before the *auteur theory* was developed just a few years after the publication of *Making a Film*. His account of filmmaking is emphatic

in privileging the role of the director; it characterises production as a smooth-running machine managed by a skilled team, it acknowledges collaboration but fails to make any specific investigation into the creative contribution of any of the heads of department. To provide a metaphor: Anderson's idea of this creative group is not like the collaboration of a football team in which each player performs a specific and important role; rather it is like an *équipe* in the 'Tour de France' in which every member plays a self-sacrificing role in supporting their Team Leader – the Film Director wears the Yellow Jersey and our attention is on no-one else.

Dan Auiler: *Vertigo: The making of a Hitchcock classic*

While Anderson based his 'Making Of' book on first-hand observation of the film production process, other writers have based their work entirely on secondary research. Forty years after the release of Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958), Dan Auiler published his book, *Vertigo: The making of a Hitchcock classic* (1998). This is a work by an independent researcher and film enthusiast; he is not a critic or an aspiring filmmaker in Anderson's mould, nor an academic versed in the theoretical discourses of film studies. Auiler has a fascination with Hitchcock as a person: 'As much as any film buff, I enjoy arguing over the film's every detail […] But what connects *Vertigo* to my soul is the palpable sense that this story was connected, very deeply, to Hitchcock's own soul. (1998: 208)

Elements of the book pursue Auiler's interest in Hitchcock the man, such as a psychological account of Hitchcock's early sexual experiences in Weimar Germany (pursued by two women, who he shies away from but finally joins in order to watch them having sex in a hotel room). Auiler uses such biographical accounts to guide his understanding of the themes of voyeurism and repressed desire in *Vertigo.* More significantly, these explorations also give the book an emphasis on Hitchcock as the author of the film. Auiler's title locates *Vertigo* within an oeuvre – 'a Hitchcock classic' – which strongly supports the concept of the director as holding personal authorial control of his films.

Auiler's book is interesting because although it comes from a writer outside the academy, the issues of debate around authorship theory are alive within his writing. On rare occasions, Auiler addresses the concepts directly:

> Hitchcock's roots were in the art-film movement of the twenties […] One of the dramatic arcs of his subsequent career was the constant struggle for the kind of independence that allowed him to mix commerce with work that was true to the art-film vision. *Vertigo, North by Northwest, Psycho,* and *The Birds* would be the final films Hitchcock would make with the kind of overarching power traditionally ascribed to auteurs. (1998: 18)

There is some confusion here, with Auiler conflating early auteur theory, which described directors working within the studio system, with later ideas of authorship that insisted on a director's complete dominance of the creative process. Nevertheless, Auiler adopts a broader and more rigorous approach than Anderson, engaging in a detailed examination of the director's creative relationship with specific collaborators. This is not just limited to the making of *Vertigo*. He generalises about Hitchcock's work with screenwriters:

> A love-hate relationship developed between Alfred Hitchcock and almost every one of his writers. Few directors were as involved in the writing process as he was; many writers felt he deserved cowriter status on their screenplays. (1998: 27)

Auiler also provides a general examination of the creative collaboration between Hitchcock and Robert Burks, cinematographer of all the director's films from *Strangers on a Train* (1951) through to *Marnie* (1964), with the one exception of *Psycho* (1960). Specific to *Vertigo*, Auiler looks closely at the role of art director Henry Bumstead. Through these studies, Auiler is gradually modifying his auteurist description of Hitchcock, conceptually bringing himself closer to Petrie's intervention in the debate, with the proposition of a collaborative interpretation of film authorship. Auiler concludes with a statement that elegantly describes this idea:

> Hitchcock's consistent, singular vision gives the impression of a true auteur at work, yet everywhere in his history, there is evidence of how many people worked together to create this seemingly personal vision. Hitchcock allowed incredible freedom of interpretation from his colleagues; yet – and this is the key – their interpretations all stayed true to the idea of what a Hitchcock film should be. (1998: 207)

The statement does not close the debate about collaborative authorship, in fact Auiler opens some important areas of consideration. He offers the idea that there was an identifiable 'Hitchcock Film' that had developed by the middle of the director's career, with a clear style to which all the director's collaborators were required to conform. Certainly, Hitchcock was famous for his extremely accurate storyboards; his film shoots were sometimes a process of painstakingly realising these drawings in motion. However, Auiler fails to illustrate exactly the latitude of creative contribution that each Head of Department was allowed within this stylistic structure. He gives more depth to a discussion of the 'Hitchcock Camera Style', which he describes as 'creatively mixing subjective camera work and carefully timed montage to build suspense' (1998: 208). In Auiler's description, the use of the camera in a Hitchcock film is stylistically fixed, in a way that greatly limits the scope for creative investment by the lighting and camera department. Questions remain over whether Robert Burks was the co-author of this style, or if the choice of shots was entirely dictated by Alfred Hitchcock himself. The extraordinary detail of Alfred Hitchcock's storyboards indicates that in terms of framing and camera movement the director asserted his authority, if not in lighting style.

Auiler is first and foremost a film enthusiast who wants to communicate to his readership the excitement of how Alfred Hitchcock made a film. However, he also makes a strong attempt to define the nature of Hitchcock-the-auteur, which can be seen as a significant contribution to the discussion of authorship in filmmaking. Had Auiler been a film academic, he would have extended his discussion to close

some of the questions that he leaves open, but his research in this book is nevertheless very valuable to discourses within the academy.

Paul Sammon: *Future Noir: The Making of* Blade Runner

The writer Paul Sammon is an example of a 'Making Of' author who comes from a journalistic background. He had written extensively on film for *Cinefantastique* and *Omni* magazines before producing his book, *Future Noir: The Making of* Blade Runner (1996). The tone of the book sits at the lighter end of the 'Making Of' genre, his intention to bring to life the production process of a film he describes as 'addictive eye-candy' (1996: 3). Most importantly for the purposes of this study, Sammon never mentions authorship theory nor engages directly in any of the theoretical discourses around film.

Sammon's book has a different emphasis from other 'Making Of' works analysed in this study: his interest is in the film *Blade Runner* itself, so he does not approach his work with Anderson or Auiler's central focus on the role of the director. Sammon describes his own fascination with the film, 'the striking costumes, the fantastic flying cars, the atmospheric ethnicity, the moody music, the lavish, lived-in sets' (1996: 3), emphasising how production design is central to his compulsive interest. Sammon writes three chapters before introducing the director, Ridley Scott, concentrating instead on the personalities of writer-producer Hampton Fancher and his two producer partners, Brian Kelly and Michael Deeley. The latter, at the time a major Hollywood executive producer, is cited as the prime mover in successfully getting the film financed.

In the tradition of the observational writer, as Lindsay Anderson and Lillian Ross before him, Sammon was given unfettered access to *Blade Runner*'s production and his book is based on more than seventy interviews, centring on the producers, director and screenwriters but also including the Heads of Department, conducted both during the production and afterwards. Sammon's approach throughout the book is to give a chronological account of *Blade Runner*'s production: for this reason, Scott's entry in the book is delayed. However, Sammon is aware of the huge authorial impact of Ridley Scott during preproduction. He quotes the

screenwriter David Peoples, who revised the script for Scott: 'I can't emphasize enough that Ridley Scott is really the author of *Blade Runner.*' (1996: 69)

A great virtue of Sammon's *Future Noir* is that it engages in some of the issues surrounding performance and the director's collaboration with actors. This key responsibility of every film director, which should stand central to any understanding of film authorship, is frequently neglected by writers in the 'Making Of' tradition. Sammon, in typical journalistic fashion, takes keen interest in the terrible working relationship between Harrison Ford and Ridley Scott and the resulting disruptions on set. This leads to some important insights into the creation of the performance style of the film. When Ford returned months after the *Blade Runner* shoot to record his voiceovers, Sammon reveals that the actor's hatred of this film project (and its director) motivated him to try to undermine it with the most drab voice recording that he could manage. He refused to meet Ridley Scott for the recording session, so the voice we hear is completely self-directed. The laconic voiceover that Ford provided for the introduction to the film, which establishes so beautifully both the character of Deckard and the world of the story, introduces us to a style of performance that frames the whole narrative of *Blade Runner*. While the text for the voiceover has shared authorship between the writers Hampton Fancher and David Peoples, Harrison Ford is solely responsible for the interpretation, even though there are aspects of his performance that may have been, in the actor's mind, deliberately poor quality. In providing us with these insights, Sammon has unintentionally described an important aspect of collaborative film authorship, in which intense frictions in a creative relationship can cause unexpected value for a movie. Most 'Making Of' writers who take interest in issues of authorship concern themselves with seeking positive examples of collaboration (especially Robert Carringer, as we will see below). However, Paul Sammon, who takes no interest in the discourse on authorship whatsoever, has unwittingly brought to light issues in the making of *Blade Runner* that help us understand collective authorship in a more nuanced way than might otherwise have been possible. This should be conceived as an accidental overlap of research interests, between a journalistic account and academic debate. However, it

emphasises the value of non-scholastic investigation to the development of certain discourses within film studies.

Sammon's complete lack of contact with film theory makes his book an excellent case study of how the ideas within the academy succeed or fail to influence other genres of film writing. We have seen how Sammon unintentionally contributes to our understanding of creative relationships and film authorship. His book has an additional virtue in this regard: his interviews with the filmmakers of *Blade Runner* appear to be conducted in a very relaxed mode, they are not the interviews of a theorist who wishes to put their idea to the test before an expert. So Sammon gives Ridley Scott space to develop his own sense of the director's role in authoring a film. In his interview for the book, Scott describes his personal conception of the director's role:

> Every incident, every sound, every movement, every colour, every set, prop or actor, is all part of the director's overall orchestration of a film. And orchestration, to me, is performance. […] There should be a total integration on a film, a complete synthesis running through the hands of a director who is involved in everything. (1996: 72/3)

The interesting point to note is not just that Scott has a sophisticated concept of his role as the author of the film, but that his ideas overlap significantly with style-based film critics within the academy. Scott's 'total integration' bears a strong similarity to the concept of 'coherence', described by John Gibbs in his book, *Mise-en-scène: film style and interpretation:* 'all the different elements of mise-en-scène which go to make up 'the action' […] everything is pulling in the same direction: the decisions are integrated in the service of the drama.' (2002: 41)

Implicit within Gibbs's notion of coherence is the issue of authorship: if all creative decisions in the making of a film are being guided 'in the same direction', then this must be by a single or collective author. Ridley Scott uses the parallel idea of 'complete synthesis' to describe the nature of his directorial control of a film that he is making. Neither he nor Sammon may be aware of the concept of 'coherence',

but their own version of the idea is important to them in understanding how movies are created. This link between currents of thought inside and outside the academy is circumstantial but highly significant: it serves to provide real insight for Gibbs and others in the development of their discourses, as well as demonstrating the value of this element of film theory to film practitioners themselves.

Robert Carringer: *The Making of* Citizen Kane

Robert Carringer was Associate Professor of English and Cinema Studies at the University of Illinois when he wrote his book, *The Making of* Citizen Kane (1985). This work is significant to an understanding of the 'Making Of' literature because Carringer's study was specifically framed as an intervention within the discourse around film authorship. Carringer's choice of subject was clearly deliberate, as the role of Orson Welles within Hollywood had been discussed extensively and the director was portrayed as an auteur within the studio machine. In his preface, Carringer writes,

> According to the auteur approach, the director is the real author of a film, and films should be regarded primarily as expressions of directorial intent. *Citizen Kane* was for critics the centrepiece of this movement. […] Pauline Kael's well-publicized case on behalf of *Citizen Kane* screenwriter Herman Mankiewicz forced acknowledgment of his important contribution, but for the most part it only served to stiffen auteurist recalcitrance to issues of collaboration. (1985: vii)

Carringer's intention in writing his 'Making Of' book was to demonstrate that the classic authorship model was wrong: 'the collaborative process provides the best framework for understanding the remarkable achievement this film represents. By *collaborative process* I mean the sharing of the creative function by the director with others.' (op cit)

This book is a good demonstration of how the 'Making Of' tradition of film literature was so well established by the mid-1980s that an academic could use the

form for something more than the original intentions of these books, which was to inform a popular readership about the processes of filmmaking. Carringer's detailed analysis of the background to *Citizen Kane* (1941) and the context in which it was produced provides a breadth of understanding of authorship in Hollywood. He shows how contemporary opinion in the film industry was very hostile to the arrival of the East Coast prodigy in Los Angeles, with journals such as *Variety* predicting disaster after the studio RKO signed a contract with Welles giving the director total creative control. The level of the director's control of his first feature film was unprecedented and at the expense of the familiar tight control of creative decision-making wielded by the film studio. Of particular importance is Carringer's discussion of the dispute over the screenplay credit for *Citizen Kane*. To the less-informed, Welles's insistence on having the credit – thereby denying the right of Mankiewicz to assert his contribution – appears to be the behaviour of a director hungry for total control. This was certainly the interpretation of industry commentators at the time. However, Carringer points out that Welles was simply following the protocol of the radio industry from which he had come:

> The contractual agreements in radio were similar to those with RKO – Welles, on behalf of the Mercury (Theatre), signed the primary contract with the sponsor. Writers were engaged under subsidiary contracts with the Mercury, and they assigned all claims of authorship to the corporation. In this way, a legal basis was created for Welles to claim script authorship regardless of the nature or extent of his actual contribution to the writing. (1985: 32)

The furore in the Hollywood newspapers, however, forced Welles to abandon this tradition of radio drama. He finally backed down under pressure, conceding a recognition of collaboration in the final credit: 'ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY: Herman Mankiewicz, Orson Welles.'

With this detailed historical account of the contemporary dispute, Carringer provides a very useful perspective on film authorship, opening space for better consideration of the thoughts and intentions of mid-twentieth century film

directors. The contractual norms for radio and film scripts, and the contemporary understanding of intellectual property, actually hid the collaborative nature of the process. As a result, film credits may appear to represent a more author-centred process than the reality of these movies' creation. Contemporary observers would not have been confused: industry insiders at the time would have been wise to the system and would have carefully read between the lines of the credits. Perhaps no-one in Hollywood at the time was confused into thinking that film credits genuinely represented an accurate reflection of the creative process. Film analysts, writing many decades after Orson Welles's career, can make the anachronistic error of taking his movie credit lists at face value: a more accurate interpretation uses historical insight to guide the discourse on film authorship in the 1940s.

Carringer develops his thesis of *Citizen Kane* as an example of collaborative authorship by providing detailed analyses of the roles of Heads of Department who worked on the film. He stresses how Welles, as a newcomer to filmmaking, relied on studio experts such as art director Perry Ferguson to guide him. This included the drawing of storyboards - which contrasts starkly with the creative process of Alfred Hitchcock who maintained complete control over the preparation of shots. The relationship between Welles and cinematographer Greg Toland is portrayed by Carringer as the key creative collaboration of the film. Their similarity of character – iconoclastic rebels within the system – laid the groundwork for a series of brilliant technical achievements in the image-making for the movie: 'On *Citizen Kane*, Welles not only encouraged Toland to experiment and tinker, he positively insisted on it […] they approached the film together in a spirit of revolutionary fervor.' (1985: 81)

However, Carringer's project of developing *Citizen Kane* as a model of collaborative authorship begins to founder when he discusses the decision-making around the film's postproduction. In the editing of *Citizen Kane*, Carringer's book makes it clear that the director had complete authorial control, from the moment the shots were constructed to the final cut. In fact, it seems that there was not much for editor Robert Wise to do:

> the film was largely preedited: the footage itself tended to dictate the way it would be cut […]. Most of *Citizen Kane* was shot with only one camera, without any covering footage and, Welles says on Toland's advice, with practically no close-ups or reaction shots. This made it virtually impossible to tamper with the unusually long takes that are the hallmark of the film's cinematographic style. (1985: 110)

When looking at the sound postproduction, Carringer hopes to build an image of creative collaboration in the working relationship between Orson Welles and James G. Stewart (RKO head of postproduction sound operations), but his interview with the retired technician contradicts the thesis:

> Stewart credits Welles with the sound concepts […] and says that most of the ideas involving the use of sound in the film came from Welles. Working with Welles, he adds, was one of the most significant experiences of his own professional career: much of what he knows aesthetically about sound he says he learned from him. (1985:105)

Carringer is reporting an astonishing statement from a man who, when he was working on the postproduction of *Citizen Kane*, was at the top of his career in film sound, whereas Orson Welles, in 1941, was a complete novice to the movie industry. Certainly, Welles's background in radio drama gave him very useful experience in the manipulation of sound for the creation of drama, nevertheless it is remarkable that Stewart, interviewed decades after their work together, accepts that the director was the primary author of the sound design of *Citizen Kane*.

In Carringer's consideration of the music for *Citizen Kane*, he is also forced to concede that Welles provided complete creative leadership. Bernard Herrmann was his appointment (they had worked together in radio at Welles's Mercury Theatre) and he composed entirely to the director's vision: Carringer writes that 'The main concept in his score can be traced to an idea of Welles's [….] The main operatic conceptions in the film originated with Welles.' (1985:107)

Yet despite the mounting evidence that contradicts his theory, Carringer does not give up in pursuing his general model of collaborative authorship. In his conclusion, Carringer describes in detail two conversations that he had with Orson Welles on the subject, proudly demonstrating how he had challenged the *auteur*'s sense of supremacy, presenting him with the alternative concept of creative collaboration. Yet it is Welles who makes Carringer modify his ideas, not *vice versa*: Carringer recounts Welles's final statement, made in their last phone call.

> He is most definitely not ambivalent on the subject of collaboration, he said, but has a clear-cut point of view. Collaborators make contributions, but only a director can make a film. He is the one element in the formula that cannot be sacrificed. Without him, *Citizen Kane* could not have been made. (1985: 134)

Carringer finds himself forced to accept the director's argument, but in his final statement he shows that has adjusted his own thesis: 'I think there is no disputing Welles on this point. At the same time, I think it has a corollary. The quality of a film is partly a measure of the quality of its collaborative talent.' (op cit)

Carringer's project, of using *Citizen Kane* as a case-study with which he will demonstrate the concept of collaborative authorship, has been reduced to statement about how a film team might influence the quality of a movie. As a conclusion to an excellent book, Carringer's final statement is also a dreadfully trite observation: the statement is no better than proposing that 'a quality cast and crew are essential to making a good film', something that is not in the least revelatory to film scholars or filmmakers. The detail of Carringer's 'Making Of' study, and his close examination of decision-making within one film, make this book an important consideration of authorship in filmmaking. However, the writer's intention of replacing a classic director-centred theory of authorship with a broad collaborative model cannot be sustained as a general theory by the end of his book, because of the particular level of control secured by Welles in the creation of *Citizen Kane*. Instead, Carringer's study shows that the quality of authorship varies between the different departments of film production and the

individuals and relationships involved. This is a more inclusive concept of film authorship than one focussed solely on the director, but it might have been better illustrated by using a film other than Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane*.

As a genre of film writing, the 'Making Of' book brings together authors from a wide variety of backgrounds. In this overview, I have looked at examples from across this range and examined their relationship with authorship theory. My intention has been to analyse how this mostly non-academic literature may be useful to support and develop the discourse on filmmaking practice within film studies. Lindsay Anderson demonstrates the currency of the concept before its adoption within the academy. Dan Auiler, as a non-academic with an awareness of film theory, illustrates how powerful were the ideas developed in theoretical writing over three decades before his book, such that he addresses the issues directly and attempts a contribution to our understanding. Most significant of all is the work of Paul Sammon, the most 'popular' writer of this sample, who lacks any interest in - or knowledge of - authorship theory, yet who makes significant insights into the concept. Robert Carringer provides us with an example of how film academics can use the literary form of the 'Making Of' approach to writing on film explicitly with the purpose of revising an aspect of film theory. However, his personal project is ultimately undermined by his research for the book.

The 'Making Of' literature should be seen as reflecting scholastic research into film practice, though without any institutional integration into the academy's generation of thought in film studies. The relationship may also be reciprocal, although as a resource for academic study we must always be aware that the 'Making Of' literature lacks peer review. The depth and rigour of much of the MoLit authors' work is very impressive. For the purposes of my thesis, the 'Making Of' literature offers unparalleled primary research into feature film production processes. Nowhere in the academy does such an equivalent body of research into film practice exist. Writers and students of film practice will necessarily gravitate to the 'Making Of' literature in order to expand their understanding of the creation of individual feature films.

The 'Making of' Documentary

The parallel audiovisual forms to the 'Making Of' literature are the MO short documentary (also popularly known as a 'Behind The Scenes') that is found on many DVD or Blu-ray discs as a 'special feature', or the longer-length Making Of Documentary (MOD) film. There has been limited study of these types of documentary, although they have received more scholarly attention than the 'Making Of' literature. In describing the subgenre of film documentary, Paul Arthur makes the definitional point that 'the category MO refers here to individual films annotating a single work' (2004: 38), reflecting our description of the 'Making Of' literature. He traces the form back to the very early days of American cinema, with the 1908 documentary, '*Making Motion Pictures: A Day in the Vitagraph Studio*'. This tradition developed until, 'By the Thirties, nearly every major studio had a series of backstage featurettes intended to plug upcoming releases, introduce new stars, or show off technological innovations such as color.' (2004: 39)

The form continues to broaden in scope and scale. A number of 'Making Of' feature documentaries have had considerable success, including *Hearts of Darkness* (Fax Bahr, George Hickenlooper, Eleanor Coppola, 1991) and *Lost in La Mancha* (Keith Fulton, Louis Pepe, 2002).

Of interest is the gradual development of an accepted form for this kind of documentary filmmaking, reflecting the practice of 'Making Of' authors who have written structurally chronological accounts of the inspiration, creation and reception of individual movies. In his survey of more than a thousand relatively recent MO special features, Robert M. González gives a clear analysis of the formal qualities of the Making Of film:

> there are several commonalities in form [...] First, there is an undeniable intimacy of tone in these interviews, inviting me to lean in to listen more closely. Second, most MODs are enhanced with cinema verité-style video footage that wanders through sound stages, foreign shooting locations, and pre-production design facilities, inviting me to wander along, too. Third, the professional film artists who speak on MODs – directors,

> designers, composers, crew members, and actors – share technical details of how specific scenes were designed, filmed, edited and scored, inviting me to be a part of the inside story. (2008:2)

González uses his research into MO special features, conducted within a theoretical framework of creativity studies, to argue that the form demonstrates the collaborative quality of creative practice in moviemaking:

> MODs are collectively told tales of collaborative creativity. As collectively told tales, MODs relate a collection of perspectivally diverse stories that dramatize the communicative interaction among a film production ensemble. (2008: 3)

Although his analysis speaks to another theoretical discourse, it is fascinating to see that the Making Of Documentary is used here to support an understanding of what film scholars would describe as collective authorship. Yet an opposite conclusion had been reached a few years earlier by Paul Arthur, writing on MOs from his position within film studies:

> Predictably, directors receive the lion's share of praise, and judging from a glut of faux-candid appearances and interviews, they are willing co-conspirators in an updated myth of auteurism. The heavy hand of romanticism's artist-as-madman tradition infuses MOs. (2004: 40)

Documentaries such as *Hearts of Darkness* played a significant role in developing the hagiographic quality of MOs. In this film, Francis Coppola's genius as writer-director of *Apocalypse Now* (1979) is emphasised, with scenes showing him rewriting his screenplay through the night after long and exhausting days of shooting. The documentary has a narrative structure based on the 'against all odds' formula, with the director overcoming obstacles including the heart attack of his leading actor, a hurricane that destroyed his set, and civil war in the Philippines, where he was filming the movie. The MO's image of Coppola's heroism is in part due to the documentary's use of sympathetic 'behind the scenes' footage

shot by his wife, Eleanor, on a 16mm camera during the production. It nevertheless subscribes to the 'artist as madman' image of a film director as described by Paul Arthur.

A director who even more easily falls into such an auteur mythos is Werner Herzog, a filmmaker who has consistently developed his creative style as a maverick non-conformist. The obsessive quality of Herzog is at the heart of Les Blank's *Burden of Dreams* (1982), about the director's struggle to make his feature film *Fitzcarraldo* (1982). Blank's MO again follows the 'against all odds' narrative arc, which is reflected in the storyline of the movie itself: an obsessive opera maker takes his boat through the Amazon region, finally hauling it over a mountain between two river systems. Herzog is not the only 'artist as madman' in this story: his conflicts with leading actor Klaus Kinski create a subplot as monumental as the story of the character Brian Sweeney Fitzcarraldo himself. In handling his subjects, Les Blank carefully provides his protagonist with the space to prove the extent of his lunacy. He interviews Herzog in the heart of the lush Amazon jungle, allowing him the space to ramble philosophically about the environment that surrounds him:

> Nature here is vile and base. I wouldn't see anything erotical here, I would see fornication and asphyxiation and choking, fighting for survival and just growing and rotting away […] The trees here are in misery, the birds are in misery – I don't think they sing, they just screech pain. (Werner Herzog, in *Burden of Dreams,* 1982)

Herzog is eloquent to the point of self-ridicule as he develops such thoughts on camera. Paul Arthur comments that the interviews seem to reveal a strategy by Les Blank in which the documentary maker is undermining the director-as-auteur mythos, simply by allowing Herzog to speak. *Burden of Dreams* certainly demonstrates a documentary filmmaker's sense of fun, perhaps developing a concept of the director-as-crackpot. It shows the extremes of the auteur conception of the film director through a very colourful example. However, Arthur

is certain that the dominant cause of this form of documentary is still 'the validation of directorial artistry.' (Arthur 2004: 40)

Authors studying MO documentaries have thus established two opposing views on how this form comments on film authorship. González is quite clear in his description of how the MO provides an understanding of the collective creativity of the filmmaking process. Arthur interprets the MO as being supportive of an auteurist notion of the film director, even when some of the documentarists lampoon their subjects. To better illuminate this question, it is useful to look to the economic function of the MO, which is touched on from a historical perspective by Arthur. In the contemporary film industry, the MO feature maker is an important part of the promotion of a film, working towards generating 'special features' that may improve the DVD/Blu-ray release and provide online content. An MO filmmaker is hired by a producer to shoot 'Behind The Scenes' footage during a film's production, not to work as a critical or independent documentarist: they will record moments of the film shoot in a glamorous and PR-friendly light. As a film shoot is usually dominated by the personality and decision-making of the director, this person will often be central in the material generated - the MO filmmaker is never engaged during earlier stages of preproduction which would illustrate the creative agency of the screenwriter and Heads of Department. A director-centred focus of the MO thus becomes nearly inevitable. These documentary filmmakers understand their role as clearly as an on-set stills photographer, and their attention is on the popularly-recognised figures of cinema: the director and the stars.

González, however, sees the nature of the MO documentary as inescapably more than a publicity vehicle for directors and stars. He examines the images of the documentaries and points to the many figures seen surrounding the film's director, who are always present in the documentary footage of a film shoot and who are asked to comment in interview on their contribution to the production. From this, he derives his view that the MO demonstrates the collaborative authorship of film production. His argument is strong, if not rooted in the economic structures that surround the MO form. These writers' decision to situate

the MOD as a site for disputation around issues of authorship is particularly pertinent to my survey of the Making Of literature, in which the fluidity of ideas between popular writing and the academy on the issue of creative agency in filmmaking has been established.

Part Two: Inside the Academy

I have looked at the Making Of literature through the prism of film studies and found plentiful significance to theoretical discourse in this body of work. However, I am aware that the intention of authors contributing to this literature (other than its few academic writers) is not to contribute to theoretical debate, but to illustrate the extraordinary process of filmmaking to a movie-interested public. It is therefore a primarily descriptive literature, although one that lends itself to certain theoretical debates. The Making Of literature advances our knowledge of how filmmaking is done, but pays scant attention to analysing why film practice is organised in the ways that these writers observe. In the next section of this chapter, my attention turns to the discourses within the academy. With its intention to identify distinct Modes of Creative Practice, this thesis is engaged in an exercise of categorisation, a process that invokes several important theoretical considerations. I will discuss some broader issues around the classification of film practice, and look in detail at the attempt by Bill Nichols to structure the practice of documentary filmmaking into a system of 'modes'. Nichols was the first scholar of film to attempt a theoretical categorisation of a whole area of cinema through an analysis of the approach adopted by the filmmaker in the creative process. His work dates back nearly three decades and has been much debated, with critics in the field of documentary studies finding significant deficiencies in the Nichols method. However, for my thesis his work stands as an important predecessor: he is a theoretical pioneer in the discussion of filmmaking practice who is still referenced both by scholars and documentary filmmakers, and some elements of his approach to the categorisation of filmmaking remain valuable to my work in the field of independent fiction film.

From the descriptive to the theoretical: Bill Nichols

During a period of two decades, from his book, *Representing Reality* (1991), to *Introduction to Documentary* (2nd edn, 2010), Bill Nichols developed an approach to classifying documentary film that has influenced both critical thinking in the academy as well as the work of documentary filmmakers themselves. The 'documentary modes' that Nichols identified were in some cases extensions of earlier, loose conceptions of forms of documentary, but his writing sought to provide a series of closer definitions of the categories that he identified, as well as linking them to historical developments in filmmakers' different approaches to making documentary film. Nichols' work has been seen as a seminal - but in more recent years controversial – intervention in theoretical approaches to documentary cinema.

Looking back to the very earliest efforts at filmmaking in the nineteenth century, we see the creative work of practitioners dominated by the intention of recording the world around them. It might therefore be assumed that analysing and categorising the field of documentary would have been early tasks within the discipline of film criticism. However, the critical study of documentary only gathered pace in the last quarter century. The majority of authors in this field begin their work with the necessary process of delineating the sector of documentary film, building from a discussion of the nonfiction/fiction distinction, from the first coining of the term 'documentary', used by Grierson to describe Robert Flaherty's work in 1926. Bill Nichols's approach to the study of documentary film moved beyond the simple concept of nonfiction, developing a broader project of classification. He sought to construct a sophisticated system that categorises a range of different types of documentary. Nichols launched this project through his outlining of 'documentary modes of representation' (1991: 32). This was a seminal moment in the development of thought surrounding film classification. Nichols's achievement was to take a specific sector of film and find a concept – the filmmaker's relationship with reality – that could act as the defining idea with which he could differentiate forms of documentary film.

Remarkable in Nichols's system of classification is that it is not based on genre.

Whereas in the understanding of filmed fiction, generic categories have served well as a system of classification, Nichols rejects this for documentary. He does not even discuss the popularly understood documentary categories of 'nature', 'historical', 'social' or 'celebrity'[13]. Instead, his key understanding is that documentary filmmakers adopt varying modes of representing the world: Nichols asserts that it is this complex relationship between filmmaker and reality that should be at the heart of our understanding of documentary film. Nichols embeds this insight into his system of classification by declaring that, 'In documentary film, four modes of representation stand out as the dominant organizational patterns around which most texts are structured: expository, observational, interactive and reflexive.' (1991: 32)

Nichols is developing an approach to documentary that originates from several decades earlier. John Grierson is widely quoted as defining a documentary film as 'the creative treatment of actuality' (Ward 2005:10). This is a key observation, appreciating documentary as a negotiation of the relationship between the filmmaker and 'reality', the world recorded by the camera. The spectator must understand the documentary as an interpretation of the world by the hand of the film's creators; it is a representation of reality, not the presentation of it. Nichols's categories stem from this understanding: his organisation of documentary into modes is a means of defining differing forms of 'creative treatment' of the world. Through Nichols, Grierson's definition is redefined in a more plural sense, to encompass the huge expansion of creative practice throughout the post-war period.

Of the four 'modes' of documentary presented in 1991, the 'expository' mode refers in particular to early documentary film: didactic in its address to the spectator, it 'emphasizes the impression of objectivity and of well-substantiated judgement' (1991: 35). *Night Mail* (Watt and Wright, 1936), *The Plow That Broke*

[13] Despite the fact that these categories are embedded in the institutional culture of documentary film, in which a large number of documentary film festivals follow popular categorisation: 'International Health Film Festival' (Belgium), 'Parnu Anthropology Film Festival' (Estonia), 'In-edit Music Documentary Film Festival' (Spain).

The Plains (Pare Lorentz, 1936) and the Griersonian era of documentary in the UK represent exemplars of this mode. Nichols was keen to emphasise a historical process to the development of the subsequent categories. Hence, 'expository' gives way to the 'observational' mode, developed by the practitioners of 'Direct Cinema' and including Leacock and Pennebaker, who reacted against 'expository' documentaries and sought to represent reality with as little intervention as possible. The fury with which 'observational' filmmakers attacked their forebears provided Nichols with the evidence to describe the development from one mode to the next as similar to a Hegelian dialectic:

> New forms arise from the limitations and constraints of previous forms […] New modes convey a fresh, new perspective on reality. Gradually, the conventional nature of this mode of representation becomes increasingly apparent. [...]The time for a new mode is then at hand. (1991:32)

Yet this historical model of progressive development of the modes is only partially successful. In outlining the 'interactive mode', Nichols describes how the documentarist gives up the 'observational' filmmakers' hope of representing raw reality, understanding that the process of making the film is an inevitable participation in the reality being recorded. He describes the new questions that the 'interactive mode' is able to ask, 'What if the filmmaker does intervene and interact? What if the veil of illusory absence is shorn away? This is the possibility promoted by Dziga Vertov in the 1920s as *kino-pravda.*' (1991:44)

So the origins of this mode are not a linear progression from the previous approach to representation. While the central practitioners of the 'interactive mode', such as Rouch and Morin, (*Chronique d'un Été,* 1960), were reacting against the observational Direct Cinema, the roots of the 'interactive' precede them, by several decades. Nichols is already conceding a much more complex historical relationship between the modes than he had first intended.

In the 'reflexive' mode, Nichols identifies filmmakers who stress the process of how they represent the world, foregrounding such considerations to the viewer:

'The reflexive mode addresses the question of *how* we talk about the historical world [...] the focus of the text slides from the realm of historical reference to the properties of the text itself' (1991: 57). Nick Broomfield is frequently cited as a filmmaker adopting this approach, however there is more to this mode than simply revealing to the spectator the artifice of filmmaking (Broomfield frequently 'frames' each sequence with shots of himself brandishing the sound recording equipment). As Ward notes, 'Proper reflexivity involves an understanding of the social implications and consequences of revealing that something is a construction.' (2005:19)

Nichols began his classification system with four 'modes of representation' in 1991, but as he continued to write on the subject over subsequent years, he developed his project of classification further. In *Blurred Boundaries* (1994), Nichols introduces the 'performative mode', which he conceives as emerging from its predecessor:

> The reflexive mode as first conceived seems to harbor within it an alternative mode, a mode that does not draw our attention to the formal qualities or political context of the film directly so much as deflect our attention from the referential quality of the documentary altogether. (1994: 93)

He also retreats further from his historical model: modes now are increasingly described as overlapping: the genealogy of the 'performative' is traced to early Soviet cinema (Vertov, Dovzhenko) and even some 'expository' documentaries 'that were as much poetic as argumentative, such as *Night Mail*.' (1994: 102)

Nichols's project, of continuously framing systems of classification, also led him to conceive two new categories of documentary outside the 'modes of representation':

> Historiographic films (which might readily blur the boundaries between fiction and nonfiction) address as their referent our relation to the

> historical past. Ethnographic films (which readily blur the boundaries between subjectivity and objectivity, observer and observed) address as their referent our relation to the historical present, usually the moment of filming. (1994: xii)

Interestingly, these categories fail to live on in Nichols's subsequent publications: they appear to be mostly abandoned in his later writings (which may explain why Nichols fails to mention *Blurred Boundaries* on his public webpage)[14].

By 2001, Nichols has moved further in his categorization: in *Introduction to Documentary* the 'participatory' mode has apparently ousted the 'interactive'. He also develops further the idea of the 'poetic' documentary, a mode that he describes as neither didactic nor making an argument about reality, but is concerned with a more aesthetic description of its subject: 'This mode stresses mood, tone, and affect much more than displays of knowledge or acts of persuasion' (2010: 102). *Reassemblage* (Trin T. Minha, 1982) is cited as a groundbreaking work of poetic documentary.

A decade into his project of classification, Nichols is still concerned with describing the processes by which new modes emerge. While he has moved away from what I have called the Hegelian conception, Nichols now uses terms such as 'genealogy': he sees the system as a developing and organic process. Such a conception of modes emerging naturally is perhaps deliberately invoked, to give a sense of inevitability, of historic truth, to his academic approach. However, such an assertion opens Nichols to significant criticism. We have already seen that the historical method failed to fully explain the origins of the interactive mode. Stella Bruzzi reacts against the entire project:

> when Nichols comes to adding the performative mode in *Blurred Boundaries* in the mid-1990s, he feels compelled to perpetuate the family tree rather than admit that, because of increased documentary

[14] speculation based on information at http://billnichols.net/books/ [Accessed 4th April 2018]

> heterogeneity and complexity, the compartmentalisation of documentary has become too reductive. (2006: 2)

Bruzzi criticizes Nichols on several fronts, but perhaps her weaker argument is this overall negation of the project of classification. The thesis of her book, *New Documentary*, is to cast all documentary film as 'performative acts, inherently fluid and unstable and informed by issues of performance and performativity' (2006: 1). Her intention in felling Nichols's 'family tree' must therefore be seen as motivated with the intention of preserving just one branch, the 'performative'. Bruzzi develops her own concept of the performative documentary at length, but with no reference to Nichols's earlier work, which carefully described a mode of documentary with the same title and with many similar features to those she describes.

Bruzzi's stronger argument is against what she calls Nichols's 'peddling of a Darwinian model of documentary history' (ibid.). To the twenty-first century reader, Nichols's work of 1991 does remind us of the positivist mindset of social scientists several generations before, and we have seen how he had limited success with his historical method. However, by 2001 (*Introduction to Documentary*, 1st edition), Nichols has expressly loosened this conception: he states that 'modes succeeded each other historically, but are not confined to an era' (2001, 110). Bruzzi's arguments have not fully taken into account Nichols's later writing.

Bruzzi's discussion of documentary is refreshing in her engagement with the issue of filmmakers' relationship with 'reality'. From the first problem of defining reality, to the vexed issue of whether we can justifiably describe as 'real' the images that a documentary presents, this issue, according to Ward, represents 'The central tension that constitutes all debates about documentary: the relationship between reality and artifice' (2005:6). Bruzzi surveys the strained theoretical tussles with this problem and responds straightforwardly: 'it becomes necessary to remind ourselves that reality does exist and that it can be represented without such a representation either invalidating or having to be synonymous with the reality that preceded it.' (2006: 5)

However, she mistakenly believes that she has a disagreement here with Nichols. Bruzzi states that behind the 'modes' conception there is a naïve hope that, 'somewhere in a utopian future, documentary will prove able to collapse altogether the difference between reality and representation' (2006: 4). This seems an unfair characterisation of the Nichols project. Indeed, we find that as his work develops there is a scrupulous balancing of the concept of reality. Nichols avoids the term where possible, replacing it with the word 'historical' (Nichols's 'historical world' is the here-and-now, the life that we are experiencing). Indeed, as his 'modes' develop in their hierarchy of sophistication, Nichols increasingly accepts the negotiated concept of reality as represented through film.

Nichols is criticised from a different perspective by Michael Renov, whose thoroughly different approach to documentary seems to negate the function of the 'modes of documentary' debate. Renov's interest is in Freud and the subconscious; he sees filmmakers as engaging in the development of a sense of selfhood and subjectivity through documentary practice, which must be understood at least in part as irrational. He contrasts this with the rationalism of Nichols, who argued that our attraction to documentary was based on 'epistephilia', a desire to know or a pleasure in knowing; and that the documentary film is structured around the filmmaker's intention to present an argument about the subject.

> For Nichols, nonfiction is differentiated from fiction, which is story based and tied to an imaginary world, by virtue of being propositional; the nonfiction version of the story is 'argument', which is understood to be the defining condition of all documentary diegeses. Of course this view (which I would characterize as deeply rationalist) depends in some measure on the film knowing what it wants to say. I would propose that this is far from the case. (2004: 98)

Renov is right to characterise Nichols's approach to documentary as rationalist, but the terms of Renov's intervention sit well outside the underlying thought of documentary practitioners. The overt intention of most documentary filmmaking

is to describe and represent the world within an entirely rational framework. On this basis, the 'modes of documentary representation' are categories of a rationalist project. For Renov, however, the filmmaker is not truthfully engaged in a process of representing reality, but of subconscious self-discovery. The documentary must be understood for its misrepresentations: 'as Louis Althusser famously argued [...] one could never take the self or its representations at their word.' (2004: 99)

So the claims of the filmmaker should be mistrusted; indeed the proposition that the documentary seeks to represent reality, no matter how mediated, can be regarded as a deception. The rationalist project, for Renov, is a delusion. Nichols's system of classification cannot help Renov, for whom documentary is 'a discourse of *jouissance* – of pleasure, desire, and of appeals to the imaginary – even of delirium.' (2004: 23)

Qualities of classification

We have seen that Nichols's system of classification is criticised both for its internal validity (Bruzzi) and for the fundamental rationale of its system (Renov). At what point, then, does the system fail? What are the terms by which a logic of categorisation becomes untenable? Ward refers us to the work of Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star, who investigated this question in their book, *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences* (1999). He summarises their understanding of the ideal requirements of a system of classification: 'in an ideal, abstract sense, a classification system is consistent, has categories that are clearly mutually exclusive, and that the system is complete or 'provides total coverage of the world it describes.' (2005: 24)

Bowker and Star are anxious to stress that 'no real-world working classification system […] meets these 'simple' requirements' (ibid), but they are nevertheless useful in establishing a set of qualities which determine a system's validity and longevity. Looking at Nichols's classification of documentary, we see a persistent struggle to define and redefine consistent categories; where he perceives that his system does not provide 'total coverage', he adapts or seeks new categories to

describe the developments in documentary form. Nichols's project is therefore an on-going pursuit of the Bowker and Star ideal, though he himself writes that the task of categorising documentary is fraught with difficulty:

> How we categorize and divide up a domain of experience is seldom a purely objective act in which we follow the natural fault lines given to us by a pre-existing world. Science, which deals with the natural world, can classify in this way, but when what we want to classify is the product of our own human activity, natural fault lines quickly disappear. (2010: 143)

The problem recognised here is particularly acute given that Nichols has set himself the task of classifying a form of human creative activity, one that is governed by subjective and emotional responses as well as technical and craft processes. He responds to this wisely: instead of attempting to stamp a scientific system on the world of documentary production, Nichols accepts that 'modes' coexist and overlap; he responds to filmmakers as creators, who exercise choice and judgement, so blurring the boundaries of categorisation.

The Nichols system of 'modes of documentary representation' is therefore a construct of classification far from the ideal of Bowker and Star. Yet twenty years after its initiation, many of the categories are still acknowledged as useful and are discussed widely by both theorists and practitioners. The explanation for this comes from Ward's observation that, 'Categories and the norms associated with them are social constructs and are therefore only meaningful if people broadly *agree* on their usage' (2005: 25). This is a statement vital to the understanding of how a system of classification gains and maintains currency. Categories are artificial constructs created in order to help us understand better, but the basis for these constructs must be rooted in a broadly accepted understanding of their subject. A successful system of classification expresses coherently a meaningful explanation of its complex topic. It is adopted because it is meaningful to its users, in that it reflects their own understanding of the subject.

Who are the users of a system of classification of documentary film? In order to determine if the Nichols theoretical classification system is valid, we need to interrogate whether or not the Nichols categories are meaningful to 'users' of his concepts. Writing for an audience within the academy, he offers his thesis for analysis by critics from the disciplines of film:

> What modes of documentary filmmaking exist, for example, is a question that is partly historical (different modes tend to come to prominence at different points in time) but more basically conceptual (the idea of modes, or distinct types, of documentary itself needs to be thought through and developed before it can be applied historically). (2001: xiv)

I have examined how critics have responded to Nichols' work, centred around Bruzzi and Renov's positions. However, I believe that consideration of the 'users' of Nichols's theory outside the academy is also meaningful. Of especial interest is the extent to which the ideas developed by Bill Nichols impact on the work of filmmakers themselves, and how consciously they adopt these ideas into their creative work.

A key documentary that illustrates this point is *The Lift* (Mark Isaacs, 2001), a work that demonstrates how different 'modes of representation' may coexist within a single film. In his documentary, Isaacs creates a portrait of the residents of a tower block by standing with his movie camera in the lift, watching individuals and couples during the dead time of their short, enclosed journeys up or down the building. The film is at once 'observational' and 'interactive'. More importantly, Isaacs appears to be self-conscious about his use of the concept of 'modes'. At one moment, Isaacs zooms in to a close-up on a fly that is crawling up the wall of the lift, announcing his use of the 'observational' mode that is also popularly described as 'fly on the wall' documentary. Isaacs is also showing the audience his awareness of his interaction with reality, and perhaps playing with his audience's understanding of modes of documentary representation. Standing for weeks on end with his camera in the lift, Isaacs develops a narrative of the relationships between himself and the regular users of the lift, which is at once entertaining

(they even feed him) and artful in its emphasis of Nichols's 'interactive' mode. Isaacs is commenting on the awkwardness of the social interaction between strangers in a confined space, which is accentuated by the fact that he – the outsider – has a movie camera on his shoulder. It is a film not just about social contact, but also about the relationship between the subject of a documentary and the filmmaker. Isaacs is a filmmaker deliberately making use of categories of 'modes of representation'. Although we do not know whether this filmmaker had read the theories of documentary modes, his film evidences an awareness of the concepts. Ward notes how Isaac's careful involvement of the spectator in considerations about categories of documentary demonstrates that both filmmaker and audience 'broadly *agree* on their usage', their shared acceptance of the terms providing the legitimation of this taxonomy.

Having been adopted in this way by documentary filmmakers, Nichols's system of classification attains a life outside his own writing and the debates surrounding it. The choices that filmmakers make, whether consciously adopting the definitions of the modes or deliberately rejecting them, are inevitably bound into the terms of Nichols's discussion. So the categories become real; they are useful to the creative practitioners making each new generation of documentary film. Ward comments on this process by again referring to debates outside film theory. He summarises the thoughts of Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger in their book, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (1991):

> People will orient themselves to specific knowledges by relating what *they* do and think to what *others* – perceived to be 'already *there*', 'in the know' – do and think. In terms of documentary practice, there is a clear correlation in the sense that people will make films and programmes that follow specific conventional structures, or they will endeavour to subvert these. (2005: 27)

So all practice, no matter how revolutionary, is related to the current terms and classifications of the form. The 'modes of representation' gain an enduring

resonance through their use by documentary filmmakers, whose use of the categories - or rejection of them - evidences the significance of the taxonomy.

As spectators of documentary films, we are also engaged in an examination of Nichols's 'modes', following a similar pattern of appraisal that either accepts or rejects. When introduced to his categories, we instinctively check to see if those modes correspond to our understanding of the documentary films that we have seen. As soon as we accept that Nichols's description of his typologies is even partially accurate (it is difficult to argue that 'expository' or 'observational' terms are not valid descriptions of documentary films that we have seen), then his categories become part of our ongoing framework of understanding the films that we will see in the future. We become interlocutors in the discussion about modes of documentary.

The 'documentary modes' will always be contentious and in part fluid in their definition, but they will continue to be necessary. Just as De Jong notes that 'The fragmented nature of reality does not allow it to be represented unmediated' (2012: 20), we can additionally impose this observation on the world of documentary film, a field of cultural production so diverse and fragmented that it likewise cannot be represented unmediated. We require a system of categorising documentary so that we may understand it better. A system of classification will survive when it is required both for the scholarly study of a form and for the practice that surrounds it.

This concluding statement acts both as an explanation for the longevity and relevance of Bill Nichols' theory of documentary categories, and as a statement of intent for my thesis looking at modes of creative practice in fiction filmmaking. There are nuanced differences between Nichols's project and my own. Bill Nichols sought to explain differences between documentaries through the films' relationship with the real, by looking closely at the texts and developing from his observations a concept of the diverse approaches to representing reality. The primary interest in the film as text situates Bill Nichols within the diverse traditions of film studies. His theoretical propositions have profound implications

for documentary filmmaking practice, but his research never centred on a concentrated observation of how documentaries are made. My project begins at a different starting point: it looks carefully at the practice of fiction filmmaking and from this point develops propositions about different categories – the Modes of Creative Practice – that will form a useful means of classifying the work of film directors. These modes will establish conceptual boundaries that will allow further interrogation of these forms of filmmaking. At times there will be overlap with certain other systems of classifying film – by genre, for instance. However, the initial interest of this study is in the 'how' of filmmaking. The significance of the 'Making Of Literature' is therefore apparent. These authors, inspired by their fascination with how a particular film was made, share a starting point very similar to my own. The intention of each of their books is limited: their observations of filmmaking are not applied to a general understanding of creative practice. A few of the authors provide reference to other film projects by the same director, in particular the very director-centred writers such as Tony Moral on Hitchcock. However, links are not made between different film directors who may share an approach to moviemaking. The project of this thesis is to build those links, using Bill Nichols's example of a system of film classification as inspiration for its proposition that the theory of 'Modes of Creative Practice' will be useful and relevant to both the makers of fiction films and to those who study them.

Chapter 3: The Performance-Centred Mode

Introduction

I have described how this study is an empirical one: it looks at the practice of filmmaking and seeks to organise the observed creative processes into discreet but overlapping types. With the 'Performance-Centred Mode' I am identifying an approach to filmmaking that gives precedence to one of the most striking aspects of a film: actors' performances are, for the spectator, one of the valued elements of a fiction film. Evaluation of performance is a feature of critical responses to movies and the power of actors' contribution to narrative film is accepted as a primary driver to success in distribution. Film directors whom I describe as 'Performance-centred' are those who organise their work with priority given to the collaboration with actors. They are not inventing a new approach to fiction film production, they are simply exaggerating a feature of creative work that is part of every filmmaker's process. A concern for performance is common to all fiction filmmakers and is structured into the working processes of production. The success of the film will be dependent on careful work by the director and actors in bringing the screenplay's characters to life. In this chapter, I will investigate the norms of this creative relationship within the film industry, and then identify how directors within the Performance-Centred Mode adopt unconventional practices, using the testimony of actors and directors to develop an understanding of the unique features of the mode.

I will begin by describing the points in the production process where the filmmaker commonly engages in the creation and manipulation of the actor's performance. We can identify seven stages of a director's work that centre on a concern with the development of performance. The process is dominated by director-actor collaboration, although in postproduction other creative members of the team are intimately concerned with shaping the performances as presented on screen. I will refer to the following as the 'Performance Stages' of filmmaking practice:

In preproduction:

1. **Casting** is the first meeting of director and actors, a key moment of decision-making, in which each fictional script character is embodied in a living person, an actor, for the first time;
2. **Rehearsal** explores the character, and develops a creative understanding between actor and director, establishing an agreed approach to screen performance.

In Production:

3. **On-set preparation** for shooting each scene involves further rehearsal and blocking of the action within the location or studio space;
4. The **shooting** of individual shots requires the director to make specific decisions about performance quality for each beat of the screen character's journey.

In Postproduction:

5. The **Rough Cut** of the rushes brings the screen character alive for the first time; the individual performances by an actor in the multiple shots that comprise a scene are amalgamated into a single screen performance;
6. The director and editor reassess the screen performance in the light of issues of narrative; in continual re-editing towards a **Final Cut**, they may redevelop the performance by manipulating the filmed material;
7. **Sound Postproduction** can be used to finesse or alter details of the performance, in particular through ADR ('automated dialogue replacement'), a practice that reintroduces the performer to the filmmaking process at a late stage.

While these seven stages are common to the working practice of all fiction filmmakers, the emphasis given to them by directors is very variable. Furthermore, when watching directors during their collaboration with actors, we can observe a wide range of different approaches to the task of building the performances that are critical to the film's success. The differences in practice are frequently derived from the varied backgrounds of film directors, whose professional experience may be highly diverse: television drama, commercials, theatre, screenwriting, documentary-making, acting, and more recently fine art,

are all accepted backgrounds for a career in film directing. A second key factor determining the approach to creating performance may have less to do with the background of the director; instead the particular qualities of the film project may lead a director to create a deliberate structure for collaboration with performers.[15] It is the variation in directors' approaches to working with actors that drives the project of this chapter, to identify a Performance-Centred Mode of creative practice.

Evidence for the variation in directors' practice when collaborating with performers comes from screen actors themselves. At one extreme, the actor may discover that the director has very little concern for their work, following the audition and casting decision. The leading Hollywood actor, Hugo Weaving, was cast by director Michael Bay as the voice of his VFX creature, Megatron, in *Transformers: Dark of the Moon* (Michael Bay, 2011). Despite the centrality of this character to the film, demonstrated by the fee of several hundred thousand dollars that the production paid to Weaving, Bay played no role in supporting the actor during his performance. For Weaving, this fell so far short of an actor's expectations of normal creative collaboration that he made the unusual decision to speak publicly about it:

> I have never met him (director Michael Bay). I was never on set. I've seen his face on Skype. I know nothing about him, really. I just went in and did it. I never read the script. I just have my lines, and I don't know what they mean. (interview by Radish, 2012)

In his interview with Christina Radish, Hugo Weaving expresses a particularly emotional response to his director's decision to be uninvolved in the creation of his performance. Michael Bay had made an extreme decision: not to meet his actor in one of the key 'Performance Stages' - casting. This stage provides an encounter

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[15] For example, when preparing his Oscar-winning first feature, *Theeb* (2014), Naji Abu Nowar chose to cast non-actors from Jordanian Bedouin communities, a decision which necessitated six months of work by the director in training his actors in screen performance. The film was praised for the quality of its performances, by actors who themselves had never seen a film before.

between actor and director that is normally a foundation for their creative relationship, establishing agreed ideas about the character the performer will create. Weaving is angry and disappointed at the disengagement of his director from the creative process of building his performance.

Actors thus have an expectation of a close level of engagement with their director when they are undertaking a screen performance. This is a collaboration with which they are accustomed: the training of actors has always been dominated by theatrical traditions, which centre on several weeks of close rehearsal led by the director before a play opens for public performance. This generates expectations amongst screen actors about the attention that a director will give to the preparation of their performance. However, in fiction filmmaking the quality of such engagement will vary according to the creative approach and personality of a film's director. The quantity of creative, technical and practical decisions that a film director must make during a film shoot will frequently mean that their attention is not focussed on the performers. The British screen actress Elizabeth Berrington, interviewed by me for this thesis, describes how in almost all her work she has been 'left to her own devices' in preparing a character. After a meeting with the director during the audition process, she normally receives no further collaboration before the shoot. Despite a long and successful career as a character actress, Berrington still finds this disconcerting. She struggles to negotiate this sense of neglect:

> It's a compliment as well, because you know that your director has said, 'She's in control of that [the character] – I only need to direct [the camera]'. Very often I think experiences like that are a great shame, because there's so much more that can be done with my performance. (see Appendix B)

Other screen actors find the lack of collaboration with their directors to be intolerable. The French screen actress and director Blandine Lenoir, interviewed for this thesis, recalls her experience of working on her performance on set:

> It was often a very humiliating situation, because in my experience lots of directors (apart from Michael Haneke), they just don't talk to you. They are with the technicians… All of a sudden they yell, 'Action!' Then, 'Okay, we'll do another take' – Why? They don't tell you. It's horrible. (see Appendix C)

The actor so abandoned on set by a film director must find their own autonomous methods of developing their character and performance. Berrington describes her reliance on the script as the primary resource for the actor during preparation. In 2008, she played opposite Ralph Fiennes in Martin McDonagh's first feature, *In Bruges.* The writer-director's script was later nominated for an Oscar in the 'Best Original Screenplay' category and won the BAFTA screenplay award.

> If you have a script that you know isn't flawed in any way, moments aren't leaping out at you and you're not thinking 'how would I make that work?' – *In Bruges* is an example of superb writing . . . you met this couple and you instantly knew what the stakes were, they were a strong family unit but he's a violent psychopath and she was respectful but not fearful. It was easy to know what I had to do (as the actress), but had I been in trouble in any way, or had not achieved the angle or the emotion she was meant to, I have no doubt that Martin would have been there to support me. (ibid.)

Berrington is proposing an interestingly limited role for the director in supporting screen performance: as a form of collaborator-of-last-resort who she can turn to if she is struggling to fully realise her character. In this conception, the performer achieves a high level of creative autonomy after the director has entrusted her with a role. The contrast with the theatrical tradition of director-led rehearsal is considerable; for an actor working across both stage and screen forms of performance, great flexibility is required with frequent reorientation of expectations.

The 'left to your own devices' experience of screen actors does not mean that their directors relinquish control. Some of the foremost film directors, such as Alfred Hitchcock, maintained complete command of their actors while still not engaging closely in the creation of character. Diane Baker describes playing the character Lil Mainwaring in *Marnie* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1964):

> Hitch asked me to smooth my face out and think absolutely nothing. To simply look and have no expression. He molded my face with his hands to show nothing. He didn't talk about motivation; he expected you to work it out. (qtd. in Moral 2002: 112)

This moment between director and actor is highly poignant and riven with tension. Hitchcock physically touches his actor, a potentially intimate gesture but instead one that asserts control and intends to neutralise the emotion of her performance. Although Baker never receives the opportunity to discuss her character with Hitchcock, she comes to appreciate his technique of disengaged control. At another moment during the shoot, she recounts:

> . . . he caught my eye and then just turned away and talked to someone else. I thought that he was upset with me personally, that I had done something wrong, but he gave me no direction, and later I realized he wanted Lil to be strong-willed and have an element of hurt. He got that from me. He was the master, the Svengali, the one in charge. He was provoking me to act in a certain way. (Moral 2002: 111)

Alfred Hitchcock is an example of a filmmaker whose approach to directing actors was highly attentive, but also very varied. Baker provides an image of Hitchcock as a director in complete control, yet Bill Krohn (2000: 14) notes how he allowed actors on occasion to improvise dialogue (*Murder!,* 1930; the *Notorious* kissing scene, 1946; *Family Plot*, 1976). In handling the cast of *Marnie*, we have seen how he reduced his communication with Diane Baker to a minimum. In contrast, with the film's star, Tippi Hedren, Hitchcock discussed the titular role at length before the production, as well as his personal ideas about working with actors. Bill Krohn

comments on the breadth and of their conversation, which was recorded on audio tape:

> The taped conversations between Hitchcock and Tippi Hedren before the start of production on *Marnie* focus on Hitchcock's main aim as a director of actors, which he habitually stated as a negative when he said that most films are 'photographs of people talking'. A Hitchcock film, by contrast, is a series of photographs of people thinking. (2000: 264)

Hitchcock is a good example of a director with a fluid attitude to his creative practice with actors, communicating intensively with Hedren, ignoring Baker, allowing Cary Grant moments of freedom to improvise.

Defining the Performance-Centred Mode of Creative Practice

The creative practice of Alfred Hitchcock balanced his directorial attention between the technical, visual, performance and storytelling aspects of his role as filmmaker. For this reason, he cannot be defined as a director working within the 'Performance-Centred Mode'. In developing the concept of this Mode, I am identifying an approach to film directing which prioritises an engagement with actors above the many other creative considerations that are required of a director. This mode of practice is relatively rare, and contrasts with the common experience of screen actors described by Elizabeth Berrington, above[16]. It is a rearrangement of the creative emphasis within fiction filmmaking, and those working within this Mode engage in the director-actor collaboration at a level of intensity unseen in the practice of other filmmakers. Like other 'Modes of Creative Practice', the 'Performance-Centred Mode' is not defined by the nature of the films produced, but by the filmmaking practices employed by the director.[17]

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[16] I will use Berrington's definition of the 'left to my own devices' experience of screen acting as a standard, as it concurs with the comments of other actors with whom I have discussed this characteristic of the screen actor-director relationship. British character actor Gary Pillai described how the expectation on him (performing roles on series such as *Game of Thrones*) was to 'get in, perform with confidence, and get out again').

[17] However, it must be observed that certain genres (action, fantasy) are rarely used by Performance-centred filmmakers.

This chapter will look carefully at the practice of filmmakers who give such particular priority to their collaboration with actors. Directors who share this emphasis are international and identifiable by their approach to film practice. Some leading examples are:

1. Argentina: Federico Godfrid
2. Australia: David Marchand
3. Denmark: Annette K. Olesen
4. France: Blandine Lenoir
5. United Kingdom: Mike Leigh, Sally Potter
6. United States: John Cassavetes, Jake Doremus

Through analysing the approach of some of these directors, this chapter will seek to identify which of the seven 'performance stages' of filmmaking practice are most altered by filmmakers working in the Performance-Centred Mode. I will use the directors Mike Leigh and Federico Godfrid as exemplars of filmmakers working within this mode, looking closely at their creative methods and the demands that they make of actors, in order to build a definition of the creative practice that this mode represents. Further analysis of two additional directors, David Marchand and Jake Doremus, will illustrate the individualised variations of practice within this mode.

Research Methodology

I have chosen to research for this chapter in part using an interview-based methodology. This is an approach used by film scholars for a variety of reasons. In some cases, interviews have been required in order to fill in the gaps in archival resources. An example is Linda Ruth Williams, who faced an almost complete lack of secondary research material when investigating straight-to-DVD erotic thrillers for her groundbreaking monograph which compares these nearly-forgotten titles with mainstream films of this genre: 'As the writer of the first book on the erotic thriller, my most formidable challenge was the limited, or entirely absent,

information about many of my texts, apart from the texts themselves. I needed the horse's mouth.' (2008: 130)

Another researcher who has written about the rationale for using an interview-based methodology is Heather Sutherland. Her research into the BBC's 'Light Entertainment Group', covering the department's work from 1975 to 1987, was based primarily on a huge corporate archive, but she also needed to use interviews to fill in the gaps in available information. Sutherland stresses the additional values of her research interviews, which brought extra dimensions to the quality of information gathering:

> The importance of interviews lies not only in the data but also the character of the people and, in turn therefore, the character of the Light Entertainment Group, elements that are not usually noted down in a written record. Consequently, as Ritchie argues, 'As a result of […] blind spots, oral history can develop information that might not have appeared in print.' (2010: 163)

Sutherland is able to access information on important issues, such as the locus of decision-making of this department (the BBC staff bar, which was 'the hub of creativity' (2012: 164) after the management had gone home), and the culture of the institution (militaristic, alienating) only through her interviews, which build a form of oral history of this era of the BBC not available within the official archive.

My rationale for the use of interviews as a research methodology for this chapter comes from the particular nature of this study and my own background. This is a study of filmmaking practice and it rests, in part, on knowledge that I bring from my first-hand experience as a professional director of film and television drama. My own practice in mainstream television drama and feature film production followed the norms, sometimes quite restrictive, of those industries. The Modes of Creative Practice that interest me in this thesis, however, are more distinctive approaches to filmmaking with which I am less

familiar. Throughout this project, I have looked for research methodologies that will help describe and analyse the modes through oral and experiential means, which can complement and reflect my personal database of knowledge. Interviews with film industry practitioners provide an excellent methodology given this consideration. First-hand testimony is also essential in creating a more comprehensive account of creative practices; the evidence of actors and directors is therefore vital to describing the particular characteristics of the 'Performance-Centred Mode'.

Literature Review

The project of describing and analysing a 'Performance-Centred Mode' of filmmaking is significant in the context of scholarly developments in the past decade, which has seen particular attention to film acting from certain authors. The current theoretical debate was initiated by the challenge laid down by the writer Pamela Robertson Wojcik, who charged that acting had 'been largely neglected in scholarly writing on film' (2004: 1). The introduction to her book, *Movie Acting: the Film Reader*, is a very coherent analysis of why performance, amongst the many creative aspects of film available for analysis by film scholars, has been given insufficient attention. Wojcik identifies two fundamental impediments that have led to this problem. Firstly, she stresses that, 'it can be very difficult to describe acting […]. Though most of us feel we know a good performance from a bad, few of us can articulate what an actor does to create a performance.' (ibid.)

The lack of a well-used vocabulary around the detail of performance prevents scholars from finding the tools of analysis. Second, Wojcik observes a fault in film scholarship itself:

> Within film studies there has been a bias against the more theatrical elements of film and a tendency to focus on the distinctively cinematographic […] the actor is viewed as part of the mise-en-scène, and linked to theatrical components, his or her performance is viewed as an effect of framing, sound, and, in particular, editing. (Wojcik 2004: 2)

Wojcik describes a history of scholarly ambivalence about the nature and significance of actors' work in film, tracing this back to early theorists such as Munsterberg, Kuleshov and Eisenstein. These Russian practitioners' concept of *typage*, she writes, 'favors non-actors and 'real' people over trained actors, and assumes that meaning and expression will be created contextually through the juxtaposition of a physical type with other montage elements.' (2004: 5)

Writers continued to demonstrate a similar disregard for the importance of the actor, with Walter Benjamin declaring that 'the audience's identification with the actor is really an identification with the camera' (1968: 228). Later film theorists pursued an emphasis that did not favour performance:

> … genre theorists have attended more to visual style, narrative structure, thematic opposition, and historical context than on performance […]. In semiotic and then psychoanalytic models […] discussion of acting was subsumed into discussions of identification and the actor's role was again largely conceived as an effect of framing and editing. (Wojcik 2004: 6-7)

A writer who has joined Wojcik in giving scholarly attention to film performance is Virginia Wright Wexman. Her contribution provides a detailed account of how the theatre's development of actor training, in particular the Stanislavskian 'Method' and the Lee Strasberg system, became influential in Hollywood film. Her attention to the detail of acting, and its change of emphasis as performance approaches evolved, helps elucidate the transitions of acting styles observed on screen. However, a common feature of the writing of Wojcik and Wexman is the neglect of the role of the director in helping shape screen performance. The authors' understanding of acting assumes that the creative contribution is almost solely that of the performer. In Wexman's chapter on Marlon Brando's performance in *On The Waterfront* (Elia Kazan, 1954), the director is barely mentioned; in fact, the screenwriter Bud Schulberg receives more attention and Kazan is discussed only in the context of being his collaborator. Wexman is unconsciously attributing a director-actor creative practice to Kazan-Brando that is even less collaborative

than that described by Elizabeth Berrington. She thereby misreads the status of Elia Kazan, who was not just an 'actor's director', but was one of the most significant 'Method' performance directors in the United States at the time. Kazan had himself been an actor, and co-founded the influential 'Actor's Studio' in New York, helping to develop the Method with Lee Strasberg. Marlon Brando, meanwhile, had developed a similar Stanislavskian approach through his work with Stella Adler. Kazan and Brando, though differing on contemporary political issues, shared so much in terms of their common approach to developing performance. It seems inconceivable that Wexman should overlook this powerful collaboration when discussing Brando in *On The Waterfront*, but the author's actor-centric focus leads to this omission.

Wojcik shares Wexman's actor-focussed approach and in her detailed discussion of film performance mostly neglects the potential significance of the on-set collaboration between actor and director. In her extensive and impressive sequence of questions in pursuit of a definition of film acting (in three categories: ontological, stylistic and ideological), Wojcik omits the role of the film director in the practice of creating screen performance. Only when she considers questions of authorship does she ask, 'To what degree do directors shape performance? How important is casting and the role of the casting director?' (2004: 10). However, these and further questions around star or ensemble authorship are posed but not answered. Where Wojcik considers the practice of creating screen performance, her attention is almost exclusively on the decision-making of the actor. There is no sense of the variations of practices or the creative parameters set by the film director: these issues, I hope, will be addressed by the considerations of this chapter.

Cynthia Baron and Sharon Carnicke developed the scholarly emphasis on performance in their 2008 book, *Reframing Screen Performance*. Their intention was to 'position performance elements as legitimate aspects of film and semiotic signs in their own right' (2008: 113), following neglect by scholars over earlier decades. The authors are interested in 'acting choices' and the book is fascinating in a comparative study of screen adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet*. While providing

a close analysis of performance styles, this study again betrays a disregard for the actor-director collaboration, similar to that noted in the work of Wojcik. In four pages of scrutiny of George Cukor's 1936 film, the director is only mentioned once, and as an appendage of the studio boss who hired him, Irving Thalberg. Consideration of Lesley Howard and Norma Shearer in the title roles is only linked to Thalberg. While this toweringly powerful studio producer would have had control over casting (Shearer was his wife), Thalberg would not have spent entire shooting days in close collaboration with the actors: directing the performers on set was the responsibility of Cukor. Yet when Baron and Carnicke consider the nature of the actors' performances, they exclude the director from having any link to the choices made:

> Howard and Shearer use gestures, facial expressions, and vocal styles that could be interpreted by their audiences as childlike. Throughout the film, they fill their performances with soft, gentle, carefully modulated movements, avoiding anything quick, rigid, or angular. […] They never frown, glare, or narrow their eyes. (2008: 116)

The authors' conception is that the actors worked autonomously from any other collaborators in the production, bringing to the screen performances that they had independently conceived. The director is completely absent from these scholars' attention.

However, in discussing other versions of *Romeo and Juliet*, Baron and Carnicke suddenly focus closely on the role of the director. The authors contrast the 1936 George Cukor adaptation with Franco Zeffirelli's 1968 *Romeo and Juliet* starring Olivia Hussey and Leonard Whiting, and Baz Luhrman's 1996 film with Leonardo DiCaprio and Claire Danes. There could be no greater contrast than with the authors' handling of Cukor's earlier film. Zeffirelli is portrayed as completely in charge of his film, while in three and a half pages of analysis of Luhrman's adaptation, the actors are only mentioned once, but the director is invoked on fifteen occasions. So Baron and Carnicke betray a highly unstable approach to the analysis of screen performance choices, with no rationale offered as to why the

director is considered irrelevant to the performances in one production, but central to the performances in another. Furthermore, the decisions on acting style and character interpretation are still not conceived as a collaboration between performers and director, but as a discreet element of the 'overall design of the film' (2008: 127). There is no attempt by these authors to engage in a consideration of how these performances were developed during the separate stages of film production.

It is worth considering the reasons for these four authors' incomplete, or unstable, appraisal of the processes of creating screen performance. I believe that the problem is derived from an analytical approach that treats the film as text, rather than as the product of a sequence of interlinked creative practices. The spectator and the scholar viewing a film will read the actors' performances, represented on the screen solely by the actors themselves. The spectator is unaware of the role of the director in guiding performance on set, in evaluating the best quality takes, and in directing the editing of those rushes into the performance that is finally offered to the audience. It is a relatively easy mistake, therefore, to centre an analysis of screen performance on the creative work of the actors alone. It is unfortunate that authors writing with the intention of illuminating the neglected area of screen performance have adopted this approach. Baron and Carnicke curiously adopt an actor-centred analysis in tandem with a highly director-centred standpoint, but without offering a rationale for their sudden leaps in critical orientation. Perhaps it is the luminosity of directors such as Zeffirelli and Luhrman, working with relative newcomers to film acting, which unbalances the authors' approach. In this chapter, I will work towards a more balanced and complete understanding of the creative practices of screen performance. While I view this practice as one led by a film's director, I am interested in the multiple collaborations that contribute to creating the performance that we witness on screen.

Case study of a Performance-Centred Director: Mike Leigh

Mike Leigh is a film director whose creative process I will use as a key example of the Performance-Centred Mode. Leigh's early career in theatre has profoundly influenced his working practice as a filmmaker. His training and early work was at

the top level of the theatre establishment, studying at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts (RADA) and working as assistant to major theatre directors such as Peter Hall and Trevor Nunn. However, Leigh's work in the theatre became more experimental in the 1970s, when he developed a new approach to his collaboration with actors. Leigh's method was to workshop his actors over very long periods, to develop their unique characters. Story elements - how the characters meet and interact to create drama - would emerge later, after extensive work on character development was completed. By the end of this period, as Michael Coveney writes, Leigh's distinct approach had crystallised:

> The manner of working was at last fixed. There would be discussions and rehearsals. Plays or films would develop organically with actors fully liberated into the creative process. After an exploratory improvisation period, Leigh would write a structure, indicating the order in which scenes happened, usually with a single bare sentence. (1997: 80)

Leigh has used this process in his television plays (including *Hard Labour*, 1973; *Abigail's Party*, 1977) and subsequently in his feature films.

The important alteration that Leigh makes to mainstream filmmaking practice is the position of the screenplay. Whereas the writing of the screenplay is the first creative stage in most feature film projects, Leigh begins work on a new film without any clarity as to the final script outcome. He has emphasised this point in interview: 'People say to me 'Do you know the story (when you begin)? Do you know the end? Do you know the narrative?' The answer to those questions is 'No, No, and No'.' (Carney 2000, 6)

Mainstream film practice gives the screenwriter the primary role of creating characters and story; the director and actors then interpret and develop these characters during preproduction and the shoot. Although Mike Leigh is the writer and director of his films, he has altered the balance of creative responsibility in his filmmaking process: during the months of collaboration with his actors during rehearsal, he offers them a central role in the authorship of characters.

From the beginning of Leigh's work encountering actors, he changes the expectations of traditional film practice. An actor's normal experience of auditions is a meeting with a casting director and director – and sometimes with a producer as well – which may last ten or fifteen minutes. Mike Leigh, however, does not even call his first meetings 'casting':

> I interview people. I have meetings with them first, never for less than twenty minutes and with nobody else in the room […] I get people to talk about their lives and experiences. […] Then I spend an hour with them and get them to talk about somebody they know a bit and to 'do' them, their response to my direction. […] I also want to know if they've got a sense of humour. (interviewed in Raphael 2008: 24)

Following casting, actors in mainstream film productions might at best expect to be contracted for a read-through of the script and occasionally some days of rehearsal before the shoot. In Mike Leigh's process, the leading actors are engaged for six months, and once again he refuses to use the normal terminology for this stage of preparation, declaring that, 'They are really not rehearsals at all but the preparatory work out of which actual rehearsals will happen and define the action' (Raphael 2008: 25). Clearly, Leigh is defining 'rehearsal' in the theatrical tradition, in which actors explore the written text and the director develops the mise-en-scène. In a Mike Leigh film, there is no text at the first 'preparatory' stage. In interview, he emphasises repeatedly that the process at this stage is uniquely about character: 'The world of the characters and their relationships is brought into existence by discussion and a great amount of improvisation – that is, improvising a character.' (Raphael 2008: 25)

Elizabeth Berrington has created characters in four of Mike Leigh's films: *Naked* (1993), *Secrets and Lies* (1996)*, Vera Drake* (2004) and *Mr. Turner* (2014). Her collaboration with Leigh greatly contrasts with her more usual experience of being 'left to my own devices' by screen directors. As a performer who has worked with both mainstream and performance-centred filmmakers, Berrington is of particular

usefulness to this study as she provides us with a capacity to compare different approaches. She described to me the experience of devising a character with Mike Leigh:

> It's glorious for actors because you have the luxury of time, beginning right at the very embryonic beginnings of a character. […] First of all you start talking about real characters that you've met. They're not family members and they're not actresses, they are people your own age, so right from the off you are going to be exploring something that is very close to you. [...] So you agree on your chosen character and they then become this blueprint for this brand new invention that you are going to make, and you go on this very slow journey building this reality around somebody. So when you finally find yourself within the improvised space with other characters, you are as comfortable as I think you could be in an improvised situation. (Appendix B)

Leigh has used techniques such as travel and research to help his actors develop their characters, even sending his players away for weeks at a time to the region of England that their character comes from. As a writer-director, Leigh is thus relying very heavily on the independent work of the performer in constructing key elements of his film: 'Each actor takes total possession of his or her character and has complete responsibility for him or her' (Raphael 2008: 31). This forms part of the trust in the director-actor relationship, with performers encouraged and empowered to carry out research by Leigh – the opposite of the practice of Michael Bay, whose actors work on their character development in the context of being otherwise unsupported by their director. Having worked individually with his actors, after several months' work Leigh begins to construct how the characters will meet and interact. This is where his filmmaking practice begins to return to a familiar screenplay-led structure, but Leigh is at pains to emphasise that his process is still different from the norm. Raphael quotes him as saying, 'Just before shooting begins, I write a scenario – a shooting script, I call it. It's a very short thing. Merely a structure. No dialogue. No detailed descriptions.' (2008: 30)

A Mike Leigh film shoot will involve the actors distilling very extended improvisations down to short scenes. Elizabeth Berrington describes her experience:

> When we did *Secrets and Lies,* I was playing a character who worked in a photography shop with Tim Spall's character. Within a rehearsal space, which we pretended was our shop, we were there for impros of two hours long. Sometimes people would come in, people would phone up and ask silly questions, or the two of us would just be there. (Appendix B)

Dialogue is generated by the actors themselves. This is frequently a characteristic of the creative process within the Performance-Centred Mode. Lesley Manville, who has worked with Leigh from *High Hopes* (1988) to *Mr Turner* (2014), described the process of originating dialogue in an interview with author Amy Raphael:

> 'There is no script', Manville confirms ... As the character's history evolves, they develop a voice: 'Because you've created such a thorough background for them, the process of dialogue forming and emotional exchanges taking place look after themselves'. (2008: xii)

The experience of actors working within the Performance-Centred Mode is one of complete confidence in their director's support, and active engagement in their imaginative practice of creating a character. For Berrington, the contrast with her work with directors outside the mode is stark:

> When you are improvising with one of Mike's characters, you are as supported as you can be. This person that you've brought into the rehearsal space, you know their family, you know where they went to school, you know who their grandparents are, you've talked about it, you've tried to inhabit them in their own little space. (Appendix B)

In offering actors a central authorship role in his films, Leigh receives an extraordinary level of commitment and passion from the performers, which can bring a creative energy to his film shoots that other directors struggle to achieve. The creative contribution of the performer to the film is a distinctive characteristic of Mike Leigh's process and is an attribute that distinguishes the 'Performance-Centred Mode' from other filmmaking practices. However, it should be emphasised that the director working in this mode still maintains ultimate control of the creative decision-making. Leigh has an intense engagement with his actors, guiding their character-development and selecting which new ideas are fruitful for his film and which should be discarded.

A central aim of this thesis is to identify forms of creative practice in independent feature filmmaking that vary from a central norm. Performers collaborating with Mike Leigh find themselves engaged in highly detailed creative work that is normally the field of the screenwriter, including improvising dialogue. The distinct and highly differentiated quality of Mike Leigh's practice, with its focus on the role of the actor in creating character, allows his creative process to be classed emphatically within the Performance-Centred Mode.

Other Performance-Centred Practitioners: Robert Marchand

Mike Leigh's working methods were developed over decades of his career in British theatre, television and film, but his approach is not unique and this allows us to develop a broader understanding of the Performance-Centred Mode across the creative practice of multiple film directors. The Australian author and filmmaker, Robert Marchand, has developed what he describes as 'the Character-Based Improvisation (CBI) process' (2015: 38), which he has used in his work making TV movies (*Come in Spinner*, 1990; *Singapore Sling,* 1993; *Marriage Acts,* 2000). He has referred to Mike Leigh as a significant influence when developing CBI, indicating an important transfer of ideas and performance-centred filmmaking practice across English-language cinema. Reflecting Leigh's process, Marchand describes how Character-Based Improvisation 'starts from character independently from narrative; the focus on the detail of the character in all its

potential mundanity' (2015: 38). Again, it is a practice in which character is developed before story.

Marchand positions his CBI method against the dominant film practice approach to developing characters: 'CBI Process occupies a niche in screen drama practice and is considered an alternative to the conventional method of a script or screenplay which actors use as a basis for their performances' (Marchand 2018). The creative focus is on the collaboration between director and actor, demanding the filmmaker's prioritising of this relationship and locating this approach firmly within the Performance-Centred Mode of filmmaking. Marchand's method is divided into three phases:

1. The construction of character
2. The construction of relationships
3. The construction of drama

This process involves a number of figurative exercises and improvisations:

> The character acquires 'history', not just by an accumulation of facts, but by an accretion of experiences. Over a period of several weeks the actor frequently goes into character, making it a habitual, commonplace occurrence; he or she may be in character for lengthy periods of time and will investigate a range of personal, domestic, workplace and social situations. As a result, the character evolves and 'matures'. (op cit)

Marchand gives particular stress to the imaginative construction of 'unseen' relationships from a character's backstory. The CBI-trained actor will thus work to generate not just their own character, but detailed characters from their past, such as schoolteachers or family. He also puts special emphasis on a character's work life:

> Work experience, the workplace of the character past and present, effectively the character's C.V., is also investigated thoroughly.

> Throughout, this work puts its focus on the believable, sometimes mundane, every-day activities of the character – unlike scripted drama where there is an imperative for 'heroic' characters and out-of-the-ordinary behavior. (op cit)

Marchand is clear about the benefits of his performance-centred practice to both the spectator and the filmmakers. The CBI process serves to, 'invite the audience to consume the fictional character as if it had identity, but also encourage the director and actor (each individually) to proceed as though the characters they create have lived identities.' (2015:38)

For Marchand, his collaboration with actors within a Performance-Centred Mode of filmmaking is a strategy to create believability in his film characters, an emotional and psychological authenticity which enables the illusion of 'identity'.

Performance-Centred Practice Outside the Mainstream: Federico Godfrid

I have looked at the Performance-Centred Mode as represented in the filmmaking practice of a British director, Mike Leigh, and an Australian, David Marchand. Both of these filmmakers are independent figures who have benefitted from working within well-funded contexts: Leigh emerged from the theatre establishment and worked within BBC television, then progressed to fully-supported film projects funded by the central organisations of British cinema[18]; Marchand's work has been a series of commissions for Australian broadcasters. Directors working within the Performance-Centred Mode require particular conditions, most notably extended periods of rehearsal with their actors, and a properly-funded context would seem to be a requirement given the costs of very long contracts for their performers. In the next section I will show how the features of the Performance-Centred Mode have been adopted by a newly-emerging film director working outside the structures of a national cinema: Federico Godfrid. I interviewed Godfrid in Munich in November 2015, where he was addressing a conference of film practitioners and

[18] Leigh's recent films have been funded by: Film4, Focus Features, UK Film Council, Summit Entertainment, Ingenious Film Partners and others.

Film School educators concerned with the practice of directing actors.[19] I will use this interview, along with additional secondary research sources based on interviews with film directors, to further develop an understanding of the Performance-Centred Mode. I will look at a central question that the mode imposes on the relationship between the film director and the actors. If the practice of a performance-centred filmmaker increases the status of the actor in the creative process of film, to what extent is authorship shared between the director and performers?

Federico Godfrid is responsible for two feature films, *La Tigra, Chaco* (2008) and *Pinamar* (2016)[20]. His earlier career was in fringe theatre, in which he adopted semi-devised processes of creating plays, a background which reflects that of Mike Leigh despite being outside the theatre establishment. Both Godfrid's films are low-budget productions made using practices developed by the director in order to integrate his performers closely in the process of creating these movies.

As with the creative process of Mike Leigh, in Godfrid's work the rehearsal stage of developing performance becomes highly extended. However, he chooses a different starting point: whereas Leigh commences work with his actors before he has a strong sense of the characters and narrative of his forthcoming film, Godfrid develops a rough first draft screenplay before casting his actors. Instead, the innovation introduced by Godfrid to the director-actor collaboration is what he calls the 'Journey'. The physical location of his films is of particular significance to Godfrid; he sources the shooting locations during the drafting of his script. These two elements, screenplay and location, are the director's primary resources before embarking on a collaboration with his actors. He has conceived a form of project manifesto for the creative process which involves both himself and his cast: he calls this 'The Journey as Emotional Catalyst: To generate a fiction film from the

[19] CILECT conference: (Centre International de Liaison des Ecoles de Cinéma et de Télévision) at HFF, Munich, 11th-17th November 2015

[20] Godfrid's second feature was selected for the San Sebastian Film Festival, one of the leading events in Spanish-language cinema.

collaborative work between the director and actors travelling to a place away from their everyday life'.

In the 'Journey', Godfrid initiates a careful process in which he will develop the structure of relationships between actors, characters and director. He codifies this complex of interactions with a diagram that illustrates how, in a two-hander scene, there are four separate relationships in the creative process:

- between the two actors (green in the diagram)
- between each actor and their own character (yellow in the diagram)
- between director and actor (red in the diagram)
- between character and character (blue in the diagram)

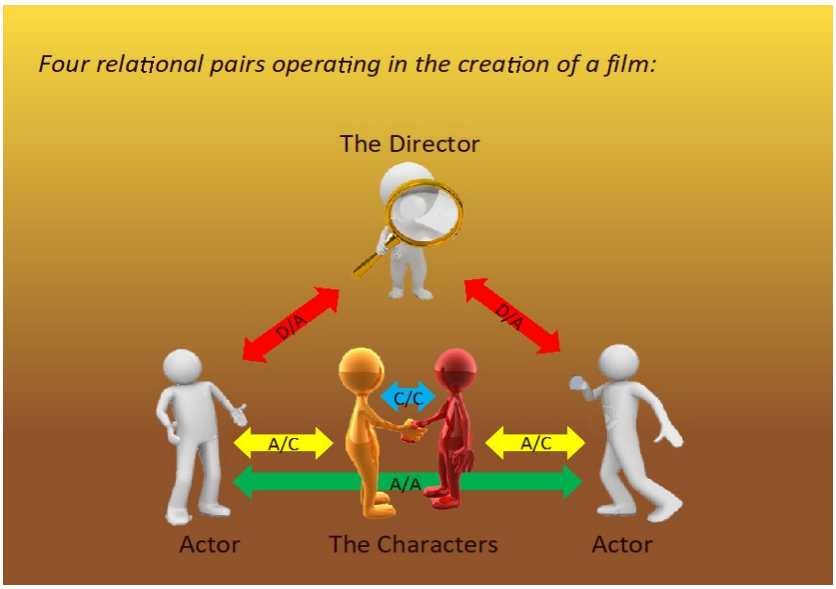

Fig.1: Relational pairs in the creation of a film (Reprinted by kind permission of Federico Godfrid)

This schematic is interesting for two reasons. Firstly, we can observe that Godfrid has concentrated on one-to-one relationships only: he is concerned with describing the 'relational pairs' rather than the group relationships of the ensemble. This is notably similar to the Mike Leigh method, in which the director works with individual actors to develop the characters before any of the actors/characters meet. The second observation is that while Godfrid is interested in the creative meeting between an actor and his/her character (illustrated in

yellow), he excludes the director-character relationship from his diagram. This relationship will become vital in postproduction, when the filmmaker is recreating the character from the performances on set that are now embodied in the film rushes; however, Godfrid's form of the 'Performance-centred Mode' shows a priority of focus on two stages of the filmmaking process, rehearsal and shooting.

In preproduction, Federico Godfrid emphasises to his actors the significance of going on a physical and creative journey; he believes that actors can better create characters if they leave elements of their personal life behind when they join a filmmaking process.

> It's essential to go away from your everyday life. Why? – because your everyday life has routines. You like to be in your home in the same way: watch Facebook, take the metro, dinner in your house. […] I think it's important to cut with that. So one of the ways to cut with that is to make a journey, because when you make a journey you start to perceive space and time in another form. […] It's interesting when you are like a stranger and you immerse yourself in space and time. (Appendix A)

Spending time in a filming location is, for Godfrid, essential to an actor's preparation: the performer's response to the social and physical location of the film will support the process of creating a fully-formed screen character: 'The movie will be shooting in a new space, so the first thing is to perceive the new space and try to feel comfortable with it. Immerse yourself in the new context, in the new culture, and perceive what will happen to you in this place' (ibid.). Godfrid is interested in the actors' sense of discovery in the location. I asked him if he rehearsed scenes for the film and his answer was revealing:

> Yes, but only on the third day. The first two days we don't take the script. We wander, go bowling, drink some beers, don't act, try to perceive the others [local people]. The third day we start to read the script and try some scenes in the spaces. (ibid.)

The expectation that Godfrid makes is that the locations that he has chosen will have a profound impact on his performers: their responses to new environments will impact significantly on their creative decisions in developing their screen characters. He wants the actors to observe local people, to allow the specific characteristics of the social locus of the film to inform how their fictional character behaves. Most interestingly, Godfrid includes himself in this process of creative reaction to an environment: 'We wander, go bowling…' The journey is not just one for the performers, in order to help them to build unique characters, but also for him as the filmmaker. This is a significant extension of the Mike Leigh method, which demands research by the actors outside the rehearsal process, but without the presence of their director. Godfrid puts himself with the performers at every stage of the preproduction and shooting process, so that the 'Journey' is an intimate experience of collective discovery.

The close quality of relationship that can be developed in such a collaborative process far exceeds that of conventional filmmaking. The way that Godfrid describes talking with his actors during the shoot is similar to that of a good and supportive friend: 'I ask them, how do you feel it? And they tell me, but sometimes I feel that they are afraid, I have to say, 'Have confidence, it's okay just do it'.' (ibid.)

A nurturing relationship towards the cast is a key feature of directors in the Performance-Centred Mode, but through joining his actors on the 'Journey' Federico Godfrid builds a particularly heightened quality in the director-actor collaboration. During the Journey, he is embedded with his actors as they experience unfamiliar environments, enabling him to watch closely as these circumstances influence the performers' understanding of their characters. Godfrid will therefore know the source of each decision that an actor makes about their character; he also develops a level of personal trust with his cast that may bear fruit during the film shoot a few weeks later.

In Godfrid's process, there are strong similarities with the Mike Leigh method: giving performers a sense of agency in the development of their characters and the creation of the film. The script draft that Godfrid takes on the location 'journey' is

an early version of the screenplay, one that he does not expect to shoot in this form. The director watches closely as the performers interact with each other, influenced by their new surroundings, and he welcomes creative change. As the rehearsal process continues, the film's characters emerge differently from the writers' original intentions: 'They start to converge […] the characters start to live in the place. Part of their behaviour is to be there. So what is written starts to change.' (ibid.)

In describing the stages of his filmmaking process, Godfrid calls this phase the 'Constant rewrite between Director and Actors'. The performers are allowed a considerable creative contribution to the rewriting of the screenplay; Godfrid is allowing a form of managed 'devising', in which the agency of the performer comes to bear in the screenwriting process. However, the space that Godfrid allows his actors is very delineated: they have influence between the first draft and final draft stages of scriptwriting, but he maintains ultimate authorship. We discussed this specifically in our interview:

> **DL:** *How much power do you give the actor?*
> **FG:** I give them all the power of the character – but at the end, I have the power. Though I let them go to wherever they want. Sometimes they propose things that I say, 'Yes, you're right'. At other times, 'No'. You have to let them work, but you have to direct it. (ibid.)

This sense of a filmmaker-actor relationship in which the performer's influence is encouraged, but contained, is common to directors working within the Performance-Centred Mode. When the writer Amy Raphael interviewed the actor Alison Steadman, one of the original collaborators with Mike Leigh, she received a very frank response on this point: 'The actors may feel they are in control, but they're not. Don't be fooled: he doesn't have a blank sheet of paper, get a group of actors together and wait to see what happens.' (Raphael 2008: xv)

Leigh allows his actors months of time (which he emphasises is not rehearsal but preparation for the shoot) in which they will build their characters. These

characters are then the essential raw material with which Leigh will write his script. Godfrid's method is slightly different, beginning with characters sketched in his first draft, but then allowing the actors to develop them further during the 'journey'. In each case, the filmmaker draws the performers into the vital writing task of creating characters, but excludes them from a final role in building narrative.

Practice within a Performance-Centred Film Team

The filmmaker's creative emphasis may often demand significant changes in the working culture of a film team. In an interview for this chapter, a director's perspective on how she likes to collaborate with the film team is allied to her choice of creative mode. Blandine Lenoir, whose negative experiences of screen acting motivated her to become a film director, describes how her attitude to the team filmmaking process is at the root of her work in the performance-centred mode:

> Above all, what interested me in cinema was the way of working collectively. If it were just me and my camera, that would be boring. Working with a team is what fascinates me. What always interested me most in cinema was not the beautiful pictures, but the performance of the actors. (Appendix C)

Lenoir's link between a performance-centred approach to film practice and a collectivist culture of filmmaking is significant. Her stress on collaboration with her actors requires a broader, more democratic system of organising the working relationships on a film set. Lenoir is emphatic in giving credit to her key collaborators, such as editor Stéphanie Araud and actress/co-writer Nanou Garcia, who have worked with her through a twenty-year career.

This chapter has described in detail the differences in filmmaking practice adopted by performance-centred film directors. My intention in this thesis is broader however: in defining a distinct mode of creative practice, I hope to describe how the mode also necessitates changes in the professional practice of the major

collaborators who work with these film directors. Within the film industry, the key Heads of Department (or 'HoDs') who are brought into the team around the film director each bring with them a body of practices through which they fulfil their professional and creative responsibilities to the film production. As in all professions, there are norms of behaviour and structures of work that are standardised across the field. My research for this chapter has looked at how these norms are altered for HoDs collaborating with performance-centred film directors.

In the Performance-Centred Mode, I have analysed how in the first of the seven stages of director-actor collaboration, casting, significant changes in practice are adopted. I will develop this theme through my interview[21] with a London-based casting director, Kharmel Cochrane, who has developed a reputation for her work with independent film directors, including Robert Eggars, Hope Dickson Leach and Hong Khaou.

The importance of the casting process to the performance-centred director is clear, as this constitutes the opening of the collaboration that lies at the heart of their film practice. However, this stage of a director's engagement with actors is important to every film director, and there are established procedures that shape the work of the casting director. The role is also vitally important to the interests of the producer of a film, as the successful attraction of recognised and commercially appealing actors to a film project will lead to further opportunities for raising finance. The casting director is therefore frequently the first Head of Department engaged in a film's preproduction. In studio filmmaking, they may work with the producer before a director is appointed, choosing key roles in the film in negotiation with the studio executives; when the director is subsequently hired, it will often be only the minor roles that are still left to cast. However, in independent film production the primacy of the director's choice over cast means that he or she will be appointed first, and they will often be allowed to bring their own choice of casting director to the project.

[21] See Appendix D

The established pattern of a casting director's work follows clear stages:

- to receive a briefing from the director, describing how each character in the script is to be interpreted for casting, and the priorities that they wish to pursue;
- to seek candidates for audition who are willing to work within the budget constraints of the production;
- to hold auditions for the actors with the film's director (although on rare occasions in the absence of the director, in which case the casting tape is forwarded for consideration);
- to organise recalls of actors if required by the director;
- to provide advice on casting decisions;
- to secure and contract the chosen actors.

Casting director Kharmel Cochrane has described how for directors working in the Performance-Centred Mode, the casting stage of filmmaking takes on much more significance than in the practice of other directors. This attitude towards casting is, for her, definitional for the mode. Its directors are, above all,

> the ones that care about casting… with others it could be the lights, it could be the music, the photography, the locations, but I think that [they are] the ones that really see casting as the pinnacle, as the thing that's really going to shape their film. (Appendix D)

The nature of her own work, as a casting director collaborating with a performance-centred director, is considerably changed in comparison with her role supporting other clients. Filmmakers without this emphasis will require a lot of guidance from their casting director about the nature of actors and their individual backgrounds. An essential part of Cochrane's role is to help the director contextualise the individual and develop an awareness of their career. Working in the Performance-Centred Mode, she says,

> It's usually easier, because they will come armed with a really good knowledge of actors. So, when I worked with this director, and we were

> talking about people, I didn't need to show him showreels, because he has seen their body of work, or he had seen them in the theatre. […] The pressure was off, because he knew just as much as I did, or more. (ibid.)

In this context, the role of the casting director is to support the director by attracting the kind of talent to the project that will excite the filmmaker. Ironically, given the importance that these directors place on casting, Cochrane says that she has a less of a role during the auditions themselves – 'I take more of a backseat. I don't talk as much, I don't give as much of my opinion.' (ibid.) Her role is also reduced following auditions. Many mainstream film directors rely on the thoughts and opinions of the casting director about the quality of performance that candidates have brought to the session, however, Cochrane finds that within this mode the director's decision-making is quite independent from her, and 'with these directors it's more of an educated choice.'

The enthusiasm and confidence that performance-centred filmmakers bring to casting can greatly extend the process. We have already seen how Mike Leigh interviews, rather than auditions, actors in long meetings. This concurs with Kharmel Cochrane's experience of directors in this field. Whereas average lengths of first meetings between mainstream directors and actors might be fifteen or twenty minutes,

> performance-based will generally be a lot longer. When we were doing *Nosferatu* (Robert Eggars) we were generally spending an hour-and-a-half with an actor, and everyone thought we were crazy, but actually it was really nice to spend that time. (ibid.)

A further addition in the casting sessions is the frequent requirement for the casting director to hire 'readers', who will work with the actors during the audition. While working with Eggars, Cochrane was asked to employ two experienced actors as readers, and even to source props for the scenes: 'it was pretty much like a rehearsal. It was like doing a proper American version of a screen test without all the hair-and-makeup.' (ibid.)

Kharmel Cochrane is a prominent Head of Department within the UK film industry who has worked with a broad range of directors, and clearly identifies differences in their creative approaches. In our discussion, the concept of the 'Modes of Creative Practice' was immediately familiar to her. She confirmed how she must change her own professional practice based on the approach of the director who has engaged her services. The divergences can be quite extreme:

> **DL:** *Do you as a Casting Director shift the way you work according to the type of filmmaker you are working with?*
> **KC:** Definitely. We have one director who is all-absorption, so if I'm working on a job with him, I can't even think of doing anything else because he wants everything at every point. […] whereas other directors don't even meet the cast – I just send them a link and they confirm someone.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to establish clear grounds for the definition of the Performance-Centred Mode of film directing. In the Introduction, I described the 'Performance Stages' of the filmmaking process: if we are to determine particular features for this Mode of production, a common pattern of alteration of these Performance Stages must be established. From the examples of Mike Leigh, Federico Godfrid and David Marchand, it is clear that the practice of directors within the Performance-Centred Mode greatly accentuate the second stage, 'Rehearsal', while also lending weight to 'Casting' and 'On-set preparation for the shoot'. So these first three 'Performance Stages' become enlarged within this Mode. A corollary of this observation is a budgetary distinction of these film productions: their producers will spend a much larger proportion of their budget in preproduction in comparison with more mainstream films. Indeed, Mike Leigh has recounted his early days at the BBC, in which he would make his producer alter the standardised budget, shifting funds towards engaging actors for much longer periods of rehearsal than the corporation would normally allow.

A further common feature of these directors, and the discussion of their working methods by critics and filmmakers alike, is the lack of attention to the postproduction stages of creating screen performance. These filmmakers share a focus on those moments of production when they are personally involved in the creative work of their actors; unsurprisingly, close collaboration with performers is the aspect of filmmaking that most inspires and excites directors who favour working within this Mode. The creative work that begins after the shoot is wrapped is never prioritised in these filmmakers' commentary on their working process.

A further question raised by this chapter concerns the issue of creative authorship of a film made within this mode. We have seen how the creative status of the performer is considerably enhanced during the making of films in the Performance-Centred Mode, with frequent examples of directors relying on their actors to improvise dialogue. However, while this may indicate a form of co-authorship, in every case that this chapter has studied, the film's director ensures that their personal creative control is rigorously asserted.

All directors working in this mode utilise a variation on the devising process developed in the theatre, but for them this is a means towards an end. David Marchand describes the functional purpose of his 'Character-Based Improvisation' as a means to deliver realism in performance. Federico Godfrid's form of the Performance-Centred Mode is a strategy that has a similar goal. He described to me how,

> In realistic films, like this one, there has to be a moment where I, the director, cannot perceive whether the actor is behaving as himself or his character… day by day you don't know what is real, what is fiction. (see Appendix A)

The 'Journey' is a process that embeds Godfrid's actors as characters within a specific environment. He wants his performers to spend so long within an unfamiliar place that they come to feel completely familiar; and as a result the

spectator, as well as director, will accept the illusion of these characters as local to this social space. So Godfrid's adoption of a Performance-Centred Mode is quite deliberately a strategy designed to serve a realist genre of fiction film. Like all directors working in the mode, Godfrid is generous, intimate and encouraging of his actors. However, this does not mean to say that the cast is being offered a central stake in the authorship of his films.

Alison Steadman has asserted the iron grip on authorship that Mike Leigh always maintains, despite his apparent reliance on the creative energies of his actors. His motivation in creating such a distinctive form of performance-centred film practice should be seen as deriving from Leigh's personal position as a radical within the British theatre and film establishment. Leigh's career dates back to a point in the development of theatre in the UK in which radical practitioners worked to liberate performance from the strictures of conventional British theatre traditions. Means of empowering the performer through strategies such as devised theatre were politically and culturally vital for Leigh and others from the 1970s onwards. He carried this cause with him when he began creating plays for the BBC and later as a feature film director. Leigh's particular form of practice has become essential to his creative identity: in his case, the Performance-Centred Mode is essential to creating the special character of 'A Mike Leigh Film'.

For the actor, the intimate experience of collaborating with a performance-centred film director does not necessarily make them feel more closely in touch with the outcome of this process, the completed film. One frequent collaborator of Jake Doremus, an American director famous for adopting a form of the Performance-Centred Mode, is Felicity Jones. The spontaneous style of creative process that Doremus encourages from his actors she has likened to documentary-making, with the camera recording everything that happens between the performers in a long process of experimentation and filmed improvisation. Her comments are particularly pertinent to the issue of the balance between the creative authorship of the director and the performers. The Jake Doremus approach may give his actors very considerable influence during rehearsal and shoot, but Jones is aware of the limitations of her creative contribution after the film shoot is wrapped. She

describes watching the completed film as 'always a surprise because you shoot so much footage and don't know what's going to make it into the final edit' (interview with Zakarin, 2014). It is a truism to point out that in all fiction filmmaking, the director and editor (and ultimately the producer) take creative control during postproduction; Jones is describing how in Doremus's 'Performance-Centred' method there is an even more emphasised sense of dislocation for the actor from the final creation of their character.

However, it must be stressed that while directors working within the Performance-Centred Mode may carefully restrict their actors from having creative control of a film, they share a devotion to the performer. After all, these are film directors who want to spend weeks or months with their actors before they begin filming. This is a far cry from Alfred Hitchcock's deliberately provocative statement to Francois Truffaut, that 'Actors are cattle'. Performance-centred film directors demonstrate a close interest in the personalities of the performers, and what this can bring to a film, and are prepared to set out on a long journey of creative revelation with their actors before shooting the film. We have seen in this chapter that this focus of interest can be universal; it need not be restricted to particular film cultures. For this reason, the Performance-Centred Mode will be a relevant and highly applicable concept when analysing the creation of fiction film.

Chapter 4: The Design-Centred Mode

> *I love the creation of things – I love the sculpting, I love the colouring. Half the joy is fabricating the world* – Guillermo Del Toro[22]

Why a 'Design-Centred Mode'?

We have seen how, in the Performance-Centred mode, filmmakers with a creative emphasis on one particular aspect of their craft – the collaboration with actors – develop distinct strategies within their work, allowing us to group them into a defined Mode of Creative Practice. In this chapter, I outline a second mode of practice, one in which the creation of the visual environment of the film dominates the director's attention. For this reason, I classify it as the Design-Centred Mode of film directing. My research looks at the creation of films that rely particularly heavily on elements of design to deliver layers of meaning, requiring particular skills and working practices beyond the filmmaking processes seen in other modes.

All filmmakers, to a greater or lesser extent, use props, set design, colour, costume, and makeup as tools in the delivery of meaning in their movies. In the 'Design-Centred Mode' these processes of design are a primary concern of the director and the filmmaking team. This contrasts with the emphasis of directors working within other modes of creative practice, such as the Social Realist Mode that I investigate in the next chapter, for whom a naturalist principle means the role of the art department is curtailed. For directors in the Design-Centred Mode, filmmaking begins from the outset with the creative intention of maximising the resources of production design in the creation of visual style. There are directors who have established individual filmic styles in which their movies' design is central and provides the spectator with a coherent and recognizable authorial imprint. A selection of these filmmakers includes:

1. Australia: Baz Luhrmann

[22] Quoted in Salvesen 2016, p.23

2. France: Jean-Pierre Jeunet
3. Mexico: Guillermo Del Toro
4. United Kingdom: Peter Greenaway, Derek Jarman
5. United States: Wes Anderson, Tim Burton, Terry Gilliam.

A significant number of these directors came to filmmaking from other artistic pathways: Peter Greenaway and Derek Jarman began their professional lives as artists; Tim Burton, Terry Gilliam and Jean-Pierre Jeunet worked first in animation. The Design-Centred Mode has a natural appeal for directors coming from the visual arts, and the skills that these filmmakers bring helps them operate within this mode. However, the mode is not the exclusive preserve of the artist-turned-film director. Guillermo del Toro, for example, is a director whose work is renowned for the strength of its visual worlds, but he did not train in fine art. His first interest was in film makeup and prosthetics. As a young filmmaker with just a few successful short films to his credit, Del Toro travelled from his home in Mexico to the US. However, while the normal trail for aspiring directors in LA is to the offices of studio executives, in order to pitch the concept for their breakthrough feature, Del Toro had come in order to study under the great make-up artist, Dick Smith. Del Toro had admired Smith's legendary work on films such as *The Exorcist* (William Friedkin, 1973) and *Scanners* (David Cronenberg, 1981). He worked with Smith and studied his practice; for the young Del Toro, the absorption of such design skills was a key to his future success.

Guillermo Del Toro's positioning of design at the forefront of his creative practice has been widely recounted. For the production of *The Shape of Water* (2017), he chose designer Paul D. Austerberry (who subsequently received an Oscar for his work on the film). Austerberry (interviewed by Julie Miller, 2017), describes the director's central concerns when they began work on the movie:

> 'The first day that we had a production office, Guillermo brought in a huge box full of Benjamin Moore paint samples—3,500 colors total', remembered Austerberry. 'We literally went through every single one of them, because Guillermo is very aware of and specific about color—with

> costumes, the sets, everything. We went through the colors and he would say, 'Elisa's color,' 'Strickland's color,' 'Giles's color.' By the end, we had picked 100 colors from this box of 3,500. (Miller 2017)

Del Toro's emphatic concentration on issues of design, from the earliest stages of his movie's production, situates him firmly within the Design-Centred Mode.

While my focus for this study is on the independent film sector, the intensive use of the art department is not restricted to this field of filmmaking: there are also certain genres, such as Sci Fi and Fantasy, as well as non-generic traditions such as Historical Film, which require the filmmaker to adopt a Design-Centred Creative Mode. To successfully create films within these genres, a director must possess or develop particular skills in conceiving elaborate visual worlds, and be capable of visual leadership in their construction.

I should make it clear that within this chapter, my examination of the 'Design-Centred Mode' will be concerned with analogue processes used by filmmakers to create the worlds of their films. The use of digital visual effects (DVFX) to generate fictitious environments is now a very significant feature of the design of feature films, however this thesis is limited to a study of the independent sector in which budgets for spectacular DVFX-heavy imagery are unavailable. A further extension of this research project would certainly seek to examine the creative practices around DVFX and perhaps this might constitute a separate Creative Mode, however the scope of the current enquiry will not extend to these questions.

This chapter will begin by outlining some theoretical issues relevant to the creative decision-making of directors in the Design-Centred Mode, centring on a fracture between the contradictory commitments of these directors to authenticity, or to the overt display of cinematic artifice. The latter is expanded with an analysis of the work and practice of Australian film director, Baz Luhrmann, in which I identify specific alterations of creative practice that flow from his design emphasis. In the second section, I reflect on a practice research methodology that I have employed in order to investigate the nature of working in the Design-Centred

Mode. In the making of my short film, *The Burning* (2016), I have narrowed the focus of my attention to one specific element of the cluster of creative practices involved in a film's design: costume-design and costume making. These practices constitute a very significant part the mise-en-scène of a design-centred feature film: for the spectator, whose visual attention while watching a film is primarily on the actors, the costumes worn by those artistes is arguably the most pronounced part of the awareness of a film's design. Whereas my study of Luhrmann relates to the issue of artifice, my practice-as-research investigation develops ideas around realism and authenticity within the Design-Centred Mode.

The Director and the Art Department

The work of a film's art department is to create the physical world of a film in a way that conforms to the creative intentions of the project. The central figure in this process is the production designer, who works with a team to realise a film's set, or to adapt existing locations to the needs of the screenplay; departments such as costume and make-up may fall within the responsibilities of the designer, or can operate as independent departments with overlapping creative interests. The scale of this enterprise can be huge: art departments generate more employment than any other single department of film production. I will outline how a director creatively engages with the production designer and the art department in the majority of independent feature film, so that we can map how this relationship changes in the Design-Centred Mode of filmmaking practice. I should note that the relationship between director and production designer can be misinterpreted: despite the wide range of writing on the art department in instructional handbooks, scholars on the subject have sometimes misread the structure of creative decision-making in this area of filmmaking. In her otherwise excellent book on the subject, *Art Direction and Production Design*, Lucy Fischer writes that, 'Determining the overall concept for the visuals of a work is the production designer's first task' (2015: 12). This statement is in fact an inversion of the creative relationship between director and production designer. Catherine Martin, an Oscar-winning designer, comments on her relationship with director Baz Luhrmann: 'Baz has a view about how he would like to see something, and it's my job to turn that vision into reality' (interviewed in Bazmark 2013). So the visual

concept for a film will initiate with its director, who will then collaborate with Heads of Department to develop and realise this vision.

In most independent film projects, the director will frequently have a preferred production designer whom they will bring into the project, but almost always long after the formation of the producer-writer-director creative team. The director will therefore have prior knowledge of the screenplay and will have developed creative ideas on the world of the film, and on this basis s/he will brief the designer on their intentions for the visual realisation of the project. The early stages of collaboration include location scouting, which is frequently undertaken by a team comprising the location manager, director, production designer and director of photography. Quite swiftly, decisions are made on which sequences of the script will be filmed in studio or on location, by which point the director and designer will have established their common principles of the visual language of the film. A director will have further contact with the art department in discussion about props. 'Action Props' are key objects that the actors use or touch, and will be the responsibility of the film's art director, who will consult with the director about such decisions, as well as choices of action vehicles. The director will have separate meetings with the costume department, developing concept ideas before the casting process and making final decisions during costume fittings with the actors. During the film shoot, the production designer is often absent from the set, as their responsibilities are normally to the preparation of the next studio set or location in the shooting schedule. The director's closest relationship with the art department at this point is with the 'standby art director', who has responsibility for dressing the set to each camera position.

The collaboration between a film's director and its production designer is a feature of all fiction filmmaking, and in the history of cinema there are celebrated examples in which the director-designer partnership has developed through successive productions:

- Spike Lee and Wynn Thomas (*She's Gotta Have It* (1986), *School Daze* (1988), *Do The Right Thing* (1989), *Mo better Blues* (1990), *Jungle Fever* (1991), *Malcolm X* (1992))

- Clint Eastwood and Henry Bumstead (*thirteen films, including Unforgiven* (1992), *A Perfect World* (1993), *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* (1997), *Mystic River* 2003), *Flags of Our Fathers* (2006))

- Bernardo Bertolucci and Ferdinando Scarfiotti (*The Conformist* (1970), *The Last Emperor* (1987), *The Sheltering Sky* (1990))

- Mike Nichols and Richard Sylbert (*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (1966), *The Graduate* (1967), *Catch-22* (1970), *Carnal Knowledge* (1971), *The Day of the Dolphin* (1973), *The Fortune* (1975))

- Wes Anderson and Adam Stockhausen (*Moonrise Kingdom* (2012), *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014), *Isle of Dogs* (2018).

However, although all of these creative relationships have been enormously productive, they cannot for this reason alone be situated within the Design-Centred Mode. The 'creative modes of film directing' are defined by the forms of practice adopted by filmmakers; in this chapter I will look at the special nature of the directing process within the Design-Centred Mode and some of the unique qualities of creative practice that can be observed.

Artifice versus Realism

The creative processes undertaken by the art department are by their nature artificial, part of the complex task of building a cinematic world that is coherent to the spectator. However, at the heart of this endeavour is a dilemma about how the artifice of filmmaking should be deployed in the film's relationship with its audience. On the one hand, the intention might be to create a world that so closely accords to the spectator's personal experience, or understanding of the world or its history, that it will appear authentically real. The invitation to the spectator is to accept that the research and design skills of the film's art department provide a complete and authentic designed world, allowing the viewer's absorption into the film story to continue with little conscious regard to the production design of the movie. Alternatively, the creative purpose of the filmmakers can be to present a cinematic world that maintains evidence of its own artifice. In this form of film design, the relationship between the director and the spectator is radically different. Here, the filmmaker's intention is that the spectator should never lose sight of the artificiality of cinematic creation. The design elements of the team's

work are deliberately accentuated, deployed to create self-consciously striking images, or anachronistic combinations of style or historical detail that draw attention to the artifice of the production.

These conflicting approaches to film design have a long history. In Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson's study of *Classical Hollywood Cinema* (1985), the authors describe two categories of 'showmanship' and 'invisibility'; meanwhile, James Shapiro (2006) looks at the concept of artifice in the films of Alfred Hitchcock. A design practice that displays its artifice has roots in theatrical design and also has significant theoretical underpinnings: it is a creative tradition that conforms to the argument that the authentic representation of the real is illusory, it accepts what Jean Baudrillard called 'the impossibility of rediscovering an absolute level of the real'[23]. Cinema that forces an awareness of its artifice on its spectator seeks to reinforce this concept, strategically undermining the photorealist qualities of the live action moving image.

The tension between the two conflicting intentions, the one aiming towards realism and the other celebrating artifice, is discussed in detail by Steven Dillon in his study of more recent American film. His research, like this thesis, looks at independent cinema and traces the impulse towards realism and authenticity as a reaction to mainstream movies:

> Hollywood film in the 1990s was more dependent than ever on special effects, computer-generated imagery, titanic budgets, and budget-bending stars, so it is not surprising that many independent films tended to decry artifice and turned to the traditions of neo-realism in Rossellini, the loosely formed narratives of the French New Wave, and the seemingly spontaneous and always explosive performances in Cassavetes. (2006: 74)

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[23] From 'Simulacra and Simulation', in Poster, Mark (ed.) 2001. *Jean Baudrillard: Selected Writings* (Cambridge: Polity Press), p 180.

However, a counter current within independent US cinema of the period began to develop a different path from these realists. This movement centred around directors such as Todd Haynes, Harmony Korine and David Lynch – the latter described by Dillon as 'perhaps the most important American director who cries out on behalf of cinematic artifice' (2006: 75). Influences came to these filmmakers from abroad, with Derek Jarman cited as a guiding figure in representing an alternative to the indie realist tradition. Dillon asserts that,

> Independent film may be tempted to turn away from the artifices of Hollywood by attaching itself to reality and nature, but many of the decade's most promising directors realized that the most productive alternative to Hollywood's empty artifice is not nature, but a determinedly self-reflexive artifice of their own fabrication. (2006:176)

So Dillon is making a claim for two versions of cinematic artifice, the hyperbolic artifice of mainstream entertainment film and the cinematic artifice of the independent filmmakers. This distinction requires further elaboration, though Dillon does not develop his argument further. The key difference between these two parallel, but linked, forms of artifice seems to be that Hollywood uses its colossal design spending to make a claim for spectacle and distinction from other entertainment forms that compete for public attention – it is mode of film design derived from market- and financially-driven motivations. However, independent filmmakers who display to the spectator the artifice of their craft have no such concerns. Their intentions revolve around questions of the representation of the real, and the audience's engagement in a drama in parallel to its awareness of the fictions portrayed.

Production Design and the Display of Artifice

Steven Dillon provides the useful example of Derek Jarman as a director who helped certain independent filmmakers turn away from a concern for realism. Jarman came from a background in fine art. Before his own directing career developed, he was asked by Ken Russell to work as production designer on his film, *The Devils* (1971). The visual concept was to create an exaggerated and

anachronistic version of seventeenth-century France. Jarman created exteriors of the convent in which the art department manufactured white, buttressed walls without any use of painterly technique to give the effect of stone; the sets for the interiors combined the shapes of a vaulted crypt with the brickwork of a nineteenth-century bathhouse.

Fig. 2: Seventeenth-century convent interior designed by Derek Jarman (*The Devils*, Ken Russell, 1971)

In *The Devils*, the exaggerated and overt production design matches the extremity of the dramatic subject of the film, and the heightened performances of leading actors Vanessa Redgrave and Oliver Reed. The success of the film and his design was an important step in Derek Jarman's development as a design-centred director. He would go on to develop a cinematic style that displayed the artifice of its design in a similar fashion, in films such as *Jubilee* (1978, production designed by Mordecai Schreiber) and *The Tempest* (1979, production designed by Yolanda Sonnabend).

The Russell-Jarman collaboration lasted for just one movie. For a more sustained insight into this branch of the Design-Centred Mode, I will look in detail at a current and enduring relationship between a director and production designer,

Baz Luhrmann and Catherine Martin. Since the beginning of their film careers (*Strictly Ballroom,* 1992), these Australian filmmakers have been some of the most forthright exponents of the style of film design that delights in displaying its artifice. Their work has ranged across genres: theatre adaptation (*William Shakespeare's Romeo+Juliet*, 1996), the musical (*Moulin Rouge!*, 2001), epic romance (*Australia*, 2008) and period literary adaptation (*The Great Gatsby*, 2013). Through each of these developments, the role of the art department has been one of the most striking elements of Luhrmann and Martin's filmic style.

Baz Luhrmann's career began as an actor in the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) in Sydney. It was here that the *Strictly Ballroom* project began, as a devised, half-hour theatre piece that went on to win international drama awards. Catherine Martin began working with Luhrmann in the theatre, including on highly successful opera productions, such as *La Bohème* at the Sydney Opera House. They have both worked across media – music video, fashion magazines, live events, commercials, theatre and opera. Some of the highly eclectic design ideas in Luhrmann and Martin's films are derived from the very broad range of creative work that their careers have spanned.

As a screenwriter and director, Baz Luhrmann's working method is dominated by issues of design from shortly after the initial conception of a film idea. As soon as the scenario for a film is generated by Luhrmann and his co-writer, Craig Pearce, the director engages the design team in the development process. This is a highly unusual alteration of the norms of screenplay development: usually, the production designer would only be engaged when the script is complete and the producer is moving the film project into preproduction, and it is the script that is used to influence the creation of the movie's visual world. Luhrmann describes his approach as a deliberate shift in filmmaking practice:

> In general, production design tends to be something that happens after there's a script. What's different with our process is – apart from the fact that the production designer is my wife and great collaborator Catherine

> Martin, everyone calls her 'CM' – we begin that process as the story is being written. (Bazmark 2013)

With the art department active from such an early point of the project, Luhrmann and Pearce allow their screenwriting to be influenced by the ideas brought forward by the designers. Pam Cook writes about the impact that Catherine Martin and her team have on the process:

> When doing preparatory research for their films, once the broad outline of the scenario is unveiled, Martin and the art department begin. […] Concept books, elaborate storyboards that are works of art in themselves, emerge from this process. These include sketches, Photoshop material and images from widely varied times and places put into sequence, with the actors pasted in. This material then feeds back into the script, helping to refine and support the story structure. (Cook 2010: 22)

This variation in filmmaking practice is unique to the Design-Centred Mode. While it is not common to every director within this mode, it demonstrates the dramatic differences in creative approach that can stem from a filmmaking practice inspired as much by design as by character and story. Significantly, it gives a range of responsibilities to the production designer that are not encountered in other creative modes. Catherine Martin describes the flow of influence between her design team and the screenwriters as an 'endless chicken-and-the-egg thing…the images that pertain to that particular idea or story start to feed the storytelling and the storytelling feeds the image' (Bazmark 2013). Screenwriter Craig Pearce credits Martin with key ideas in the creation of the cinematic worlds of their films. Requiring an image that would establish the religious absolutism of Verona in *William Shakespeare's Romeo+Juliet*, he comments that during the script development, 'she came up with the idea of the Jesus statue in the centre of the town' (BBC2, 2008). Martin would go on to design and construct the vast model, which references the Christ the Redeemer statue in Rio de Janeiro. Luhrmann came to use this as a central visual idea in the film and he credits his designer with this key storytelling image of *William*

Shakespeare's Romeo+Juliet. In her collaboration with Luhrmann, Martin has additional roles alongside leading the art department. She is also costume designer of their movies, and now takes producer responsibility alongside the director, other executives and line producers. There are few production designers with such a broad spread of creative and business responsibility for their films, and Martin's position is achieved because the Luhrmann approach to filmmaking practice is so emphatically within the Design-Centred Mode.

A study of the Capulet ball scene from *William Shakespeare's Romeo+Juliet* illustrates the Luhrmann-Martin practice of parading the artifice of their films' design to the audience. The hosts are a gangster family and the palatial mansion that is the setting of the ball reflects both Italian Borgia excess and twentieth-century nouveau-riche styling. Luhrmann and Martin take Shakespeare's idea of a masked ball and adapt it into a fancy dress party, allowing them enormous scope to keep the spectator aware of the deliberate playfulness in the sequence's design. At this point in the narrative, the film has already established conflicting ideas about setting and period (Mexico/Italy/America?), its ambiguities encouraging us to accept that the movie occupies a realm of cinematic fantasy. Costume design further emphasises a clash of periods and identities: Romeo (Leonardo Di Caprio) wears a knight's armour, Dave Paris (Paul Rudd) wears an astronaut's outfit that infers the period to be any time after 1969, Juliet's parents are dressed as Anthony and Cleopatra. Many costumes invoke the hedonism of ancient Rome: Pam Cook comments on Luhrmann's decision to reference *Fellini-Satyricon* (1969), 'a primary influence for the masked ball […] at once lurid, sinister and captivating' (2010: 68). Music provides a light-hearted and provocative disruptor to any culturally- or period-specific notion of the film: Mercutio (Harold Perrineau) appears in drag, with a pure white afro wig, lip-syncing to 'Young Hearts Run Free' by Candi Station. He cavorts down a huge double staircase reminiscent of the antebellum-era Tara in *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939). Within itself, this music subtly develops the theme of temporal disorientation: the track was released in 1976, but the version in *William Shakespeare's Romeo+Juliet* is in fact a 1996 cover by house music star, Kim Mazelle.

The effect of this eclectic design might be disorientating, but the important effect is that it forces the spectator to look at the film with a level of detachment, constantly remarking on the references and clashes in styles. Luhrmann and Martin are asking their audience to enjoy the film's design by remaining continuously aware of it. The emphasis on displaying their artifice was maintained by Luhrmann when he created *Australia*, an epic romance starring Nicole Kidman and Hugh Jackman. The project lacked *Romeo+Juliet*'s opportunities to parade clashing styles, but Luhrmann finds other ways of holding the spectator's awareness of the film's artifice. Demonstrating a Visual Effects (VFX) shot of the Japanese attack on the northern city of Darwin in 1942, the director explained to critic Mark Kemode that he did not want the VFX team to create a completely believable shot of the aircraft swooping down on the port. He wanted the scene to feel slightly unreal, but as a cinematic storyteller he is convinced that nevertheless his audience will not feel alienated from the drama. For the individual shot that Luhrmann studies with Kermode, the director describes what he is trying to achieve: 'It has artifice that sits in a world where you believe that artifice. As opposed to real artificiality, this would kind of be an 'artificial reality'.' (BBC2, 2008)

This careful negotiation of Luhrmann's relationship with his audience, displaying the manufactured quality of his films while drawing them into the fiction, is key to understanding the nature of cinematic artifice in his branch of the Design-Centred Mode. Other filmmakers within the mode have developed similar approaches with considerable success, including Wes Anderson, whose work with production designer Adam Stockhausen reflects the overt deployment of artifice seen in Luhrmann and Martin's films.[24]

[24] John Gibbs comments on the concurrent distanciation and emotional engagement achieved during an underwater sequence in *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou* (2004): 'The elements of artifice on display – from the design of the overloaded submarine to the shark itself – do not nullify a response to the way the assembled mariners reach forward and establish a moment a connection with Steve, offering their support'. (2012: 148)

Realism and Authenticity in the Design-Centred Mode

If the stylistic celebration of cinematic artifice is a feature of some filmmakers in the Design-Centred Mode, it must be emphasised that this is not an inevitable feature of creative practice in this mode. Filmmakers whose practice focuses heavily on questions of design may also be committed to the near invisibility of film design to the spectator. In this, they are following a principle of film production design that is applied by many of the leading professionals in the field: a strongly-held opinion of many production designers is that their craft should never enter the awareness of the audience.

My intention in the following section of this chapter is to illuminate the nature of filmmaking within that branch of design-centred practice that is committed to the goal of realism. By its nature, this is an approach to design that is usually less flamboyant than the work of filmmakers who deliberately display the artifice of their production.

Methodology

My research has been conducted through a practice-as-research methodology centred on the making of costumes, and other considerations of film design. I have found that the insights that this methodology brings support Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt's understanding of how practice-as-research provides an essential means of generating knowledge: 'Drawing on materialist perspectives, including Martin Heidegger's notion of 'handlability', our exploration of artistic research demonstrates that knowledge is derived from doing and from the senses.' (2010: 1)

The practical 'doing' that I have undertaken has been the making of a short film, *The Burning*, a historical drama set in 1558. I considered this film project useful as a source of research into the Design-Centred Mode because its period setting makes the film acutely dependent on its design. The film's production presented a large range of challenges in the creation of costumes for its eighteen characters. As a research process, my practice falls into what Hazel Smith and Roger Dean have

described as a 'qualitative' type of research (2009:4). This is one of three research forms that they outline: unlike 'conceptual' research ('argument, analysis and the application of theoretical ideas' (2009: 4)) and 'quantitative' (scientific research that investigates a single factor by keeping all others stable), 'qualitative' research allows open input of ideas and responses, without limiting its scope of enquiry. This conception overlaps with ideas developed by Brad Haseman (2006), in which he understands that practice-as-research by creative arts practitioners is a process in which investigations are undertaken without the rigorous development of a hypothesis – it is a more open activity of knowledge acquisition, seeking the unexpected. The established method in many areas of academic enquiry, of developing concrete research questions before commencing research, is less useful to lines of enquiry in the creative arts, a point emphasised by Robin Nelson:

> questions typically imply answers and, in turn, evoke perhaps 'the scientific method' in which data lead to the resolution of a hypothesis. In my experience, PaR [practice-as-research] typically affords substantial insights rather than coming to such definite conclusions as to constitute 'answers'. (2013: 30)

I will examine the preproduction phase of the making of *The Burning* in order to illuminate the process of moving from creative intentions to the actual realisation of the costumes worn by the actors. My interest is not just in the theoretical process, but also the physical and practical tasks involved and how they influence the creative decision-making of filmmakers. I will also be looking at professional collaborations between members of the filmmaking team in this process.

An additional motivation for choosing costume design as the focus of this study is my desire to address the lack of scholarship in this important area of film. Few writers in the area of film studies have worked on costume design and there is no detailed practice-based research into costumes for film. There is a tendency among writers to requisition the issue of film costume for purposes beyond the film itself: Stella Bruzzi's stated interest is in how 'clothing exists as a discourse not wholly dependent on the structures of narrative and character for signification'

(1997: xvi). Her extensive discussions of psychoanalytical theory around clothes, and of fetishism, take the issue of film costume far from the style-based criticism that I am adopting here. In Harper's detailed examination of British costume film in the 1930s and 1940s, her interest is not in costume design: 'My primary aim is to address the social function of historical film, and to ask why certain periods recur in films in specific patterns; why, for example, the Regency age was deployed more at some times than at others.' (1994:2)

It remains just Sarah Street, in one of the only books published on the subject this century, who points to the usefulness of a study of film costume in developing an analytical approach to narrative film. She writes:

> A careful study of the role of costume in a film's mise-en-scène illuminates the effect of specific choices made by the director and costume designer. Highlighting costume also extends beyond the text, in raising issues of authorship and the various factors that determine a film's overall 'look'. (2001:101)

My study will develop some of the themes of Street's work. Through a close examination of decision-making in the costume design for *The Burning*, I will show concrete examples of how issues of authorship can be raised through such practice-based research. This will reveal how creative choice in the Design-Centred Mode comes not just from the director but also from other sources, shifting the locus of authorship in some unexpected ways.

Research limitations

The practice-as-research exercise that I am using in this chapter - my work as writer-director of *The Burning* - is designed to examine the creative decision-making of a director working in the Design-Centred Mode. So in this project, I am investigating my own experiences as a filmmaker. The deficiencies of this approach are clear: the findings are not the conclusions of a neutral observer, rather the observations of the practitioner undertaking the exercise himself. However, there are strong arguments for the approach's merits: it can look at the

process of creating a film's mise-en-scène *from the inside*, using the first-hand experiences of the filmmaker as its data. In addition, as the researcher I can use my own past experience as a filmmaker to illuminate points of comparison with other modes of production. *The Burning* was an exploration of a form of filmmaking that I had not attempted before. My previous creative work has been exclusively in contemporary realist drama, for broadcast television and independent film, so my earlier experience of design practice was focussed on naturalism: the simple adaptation of locations, the gathering of everyday props, purchase of costumes from High Street clothing stores, 'invisible' makeup. In contrast to this, while making a historical film I have been confronted with a range of decision-making tasks quite new to me, and which have provided an insight into the cluster of skills and practices which dominate the filmmaking process in the Design-Centred Mode.

Creative Intentions and Design Spectacle

Before discussing the detail of costume design and making in *The Burning,* I should describe my intentions for this film as its writer. My original story looks at the passions and politics of Reformation England, but deliberately locates the drama far from the setting used in mainstream cinema: instead of the Tudor court, this script is set entirely in a small village in southern England. As a writer, this was a core intention: to dramatise the issues of the Reformation and to present them as emotionally central to ordinary people's beliefs, not part of a power game amongst factions of the ruling élite. This motivation had a profound effect on the rationale for costume design in the film. Our intention was to harness costume as a device that would:

- locate the drama of Reformation politics in a naturalistic rural setting;
- emphasise the film's characters as linked to their environment, part of a society rooted in the countryside that surrounds them.

The commitment of this film project to a realist portrayal of the past was central both to the creative intentions of the production and to the investigation of a realist approach within the Design-Centred Mode.

In the making of our historical film, however, it was important to be aware of the cinematic traditions of this sub-genre. One approach to portraying history on film has been to overtly emphasise the artifice of production design: Errol Flynn's thigh-high boots and Bette Davis's plunging neckline in *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex* (Michael Curtiz, 1939), or the splendour of Alexandra Byrne's Oscar-winning costume design for Shekhar Kapur's *Elizabeth: the Golden Age* (2007), are good examples. The creative intentions in *The Burning* were at variance from this deliberate spectacle of design. The study of cinematic spectacle has been a major focus for scholars and usefully, Brown (2008) has revived the 1970s/80s debate on screen spectacle with his work on historical film. He provides a definition of spectacle drawn from the work of earlier writers on the subject:

> Laura Mulvey's famous phrase, 'to-be-looked-at-ness' […] Neale's description of 'a system which is especially concerned […] to display the visibility of the visible' […] the shock of the artifice in the 'cinema of attractions' may be used to historicize spectacle. (2008:158)

Brown then develops his own further distinction between different forms of screen spectacle:

> Within historical films […] spectacle can be divided into two main categories. The first emerges from what I call the 'décor of history'. The décor of history is an excess of detail: detail in the mise-en-scène (décor, but also costume) that is excessive to the requirements of historical verisimilitude […] The second kind of spectacle, the 'spectacular vista', is on the other hand an excess of action: excessive in scale and qualitatively excessive (a battle occupying a large valley would be a stereotypical example). (2008:159)

During the preproduction of *The Burning*, members of the design team were unaware of the theoretical construct outlined by Brown, even when discussing the

lavish costumes in the historical films of Curtiz and Kapur, cited above; yet it is interesting to note that as film practitioners there was an implicit understanding of Brown's 'décor of history' category of film spectacle. Our film was to be deliberate in its avoidance of such a form of spectacular cinema.

Costume has frequently been a significant consideration in this distinction. Marketa Uhlirova writes about its central role in the beginnings of cinema:

> Early 'marvelous' cinema strategically foregrounded costume as a 'screen' on which the emergent medium could parade its own possibilities, and test spectatorial desire. And it is impossible to divorce its fascination with opulence from the highly saturated visual culture of the late nineteenth-century metropolis, where luxury and abundance were made publicly accessible. (2013: 127)

Uhlirova stresses how the 'turn-of-the-century' film directors worked with the express intention of harnessing costume design for the purpose of impressing their audience with ravishing spectacle. Costume is a source of wonder, a pleasure outside the narrative strategy of the cinematic storytelling, but which might play a role in gathering a wide audience for a new medium.

More than a century later, our consideration of costume during the preproduction of *The Burning* was centred on quite different concerns. We have seen that a key principle of historical *realism* was central to the creative intentions for the film. It is worthwhile to consider for a moment the question of verisimilitude in this form of filmmaking. The intention to create a sense of realism in a film can be seen as the opposite of the creation of spectacle: it seeks believability, whereas the spectacular emphasises cinema's artifice (Brown talks of the 'shock of the artifice' (2008: 158)). The creation of a film design replete with accurate period detail need not be in order to impress the audience with spectacle, but to create a completely believable world. This motivation derives from a major challenge facing the film director. Engaging the spectator in a historical narrative can be especially difficult: in any film, the opening moments of the spectator's experience

are acutely self-aware, we are conscious of the process of our own watching. In costume drama, the self-awareness of the act of watching is prolonged by the inevitable unfamiliarity of so much of the film's setting. In particular, the spectacle of a well-known actor wearing historical costume can be slightly absurd; it emphasises the distance between actor and character, so enforcing our alienation from the cinematic fiction. Our attention to the costumes – admiring the craft of the design – takes us away from the narrative. However, if this admiration can be extended to persuading the audience that they are witnessing a well-researched and historically accurate portrayal of a period, a sense of authenticity can be achieved. So the rich detail of a historical film's design can play a central role in developing a sense of realism; it is an artificial process that ultimately achieves the invisibility of the artifice of cinema.

Harper has shown how the tension between the spectacular and the realist in historical film is almost as old as this form of filmmaking. Researching pre-Second World War film, she discovers how:

> In The Daily Telegraph of 16 December 1937, (Campbell Dixon) quoted a letter supposedly from a working-class correspondent in which spectacular historical film was described as 'like smothering every dish in syrup. In time, the appetite for plain wholesome fact, like the appetite for plain wholesome food, is lost' […] A letter to the Daily Telegraph on 17 December 1937 insisted that workmen preferred historical films which showed 'what really happened', while only epicene solicitors foolishly spurned realism. (1994: 63)

While the class basis of the audience for *The Burning* was not a consideration in the preproduction of the film, the approach to its design was consciously geared towards its role of authenticating the film's portrayal of 'what really happened' in sixteenth century England.

Realism and Costume Design for *The Burning*

The creation of the costumes for *The Burning* was a dominant concern throughout the preproduction process. For me as a director, this was the most striking difference of working in this mode of design-centred filmmaking. Major research tasks were required: the accumulation of a wealth of design knowledge on the Tudor period became central to the directorial role in the earliest stages of preproduction. The use of an external expert advisor was an essential addition to the preproduction team: our film engaged Dr. Cathy Flower-Bond, who leads the 'Historic Clothing Research Project' at the Weald and Downland Museum, West Sussex. Her input was from the position of a historian, and this intervention meant that the film's design team pursued a strongly realist approach in creating costumes for *The Burning*.

The film's costume design follows the quest for naturalism in its adherence to the principles of the Sumptuary Laws, which from as far back as 1336 had defined precisely what individuals of the different classes in England could wear, what textiles could be used and from whom clothing could be bought. The laws were a means of preventing the lower orders from imitating the styles of the upper classes. *The Burning* is set in 1558: just four years before the action, Mary Tudor had passed yet another 'Statute of Apparel' reinforcing the conformity of popular clothing.

In most narrative filmmaking, the costume designer's approach is to create a *variety* of clothing styles, reflecting the script's conflicting individuals and their dramatic roles. It is a design rationale that follows narrative function. For *The Burning*, if we were to adhere to historical accuracy, the costumes must break from this accepted practice. To follow the letter of the Tudor law, the clothes of our ordinary sixteenth-century characters could not play an individualising function. This was a concern to me, as my interest in costume design is always in how it helps underpin the character drama of a screenplay. I was presented with a creative choice: to conform to historical realism, or to deliberately violate it for the purposes of drama. I chose the former, but primarily because there was a good rationale for maintaining the conformities of Tudor clothing in *The Burning*. In this drama, similarities between characters was important: a central theme of *The Burning* is that of collective insanity; it describes a situation in which the passions

of a social group become so heightened that their link to basic morality is severed. The climax of the film shows the villagers whipped up by their preacher, who manipulates the crowd in the manner of a demagogue: he generates a group frenzy in which there are no longer any individuals, they have become a collective force, a 'mob'. In our costume design we could emphasise this visually: the village men (and boys) all wear clothes with a similar design: 'doublet', 'hose', shirt and hat.

Figure 3: *The Burning:* Male costumes following standard design

Differences in cut and colour are minimised. In this respect there is a confluence between the strictly realist dramatic intentions of the film and the historical requirements of the period costumes.

In *The Burning* there is one emphasis on *difference* in costume design, and this relates to social class. In the film, the main class difference is between the two central female characters: Beth (the matriarch of a rich yeoman household) and Judith (the poor widow who works as her servant). Judith wears the minimum of clothing allowed to a sixteenth century woman: her 'kyrtle' is sewn into her simple skirt, her chest is covered by a 'partlet', long sleeves are a separate (washable) part of the costume. In contrast, Beth wears a gown over her kyrtle and a full woollen skirt, signs of her greater wealth and social status.

Fig.4: Elizabeth Morton as 'Beth', in gown, kyrtle and woollen skirt

The design emphasis is on Judith as the social outsider. This difference will come narratively into play at the end of the film, where it is only Judith who retains any moral perspective on the events unfolding. This isolated character in her unkempt peasant clothing will be the one who remains outside the 'mob', opposing the Puritan villagers in their persecution of an innocent catholic Altarboy.

Fig. 5: Production still from *The Burning* illustrating class differences in costume

Accidental Realism

In the early stages of preproduction, I conceived a rationale for the colours of the costumes that would emphasise the closeness of this community to the landscape around them. The characters in *The Burning* would wear clothes in light and dark browns, creams, ochre, and yellow. This was consistent with the natural colour dyes available in sixteenth century England: birchwood bark was used to give browns; alderbuckthorn provided yellow; tansy could be used for lime-green; elderberry was used to dye cloth a pale purple. I wanted two exceptions to the colour scheme: firstly, the Altarboy would wear red, to emphasise his ecclesiastical upbringing; second, the Protestant lay preacher, Thomas, would wear black. In Tudor England, both of these colours represented wealth. Red cloth was restricted under the Sumptuary Laws, and was dyed using Madder (Rubia tinctorum). Black was a rare colour only worn by churchmen and the elite; later in the seventeenth century, it would become a hallmark of the Puritans, who were mostly drawn from the richer merchant classes – my character, Thomas, would appear to the film's audience to be a forerunner of these intransigent Christians.

For the film's costume designers, it was straightforward to dye linen red for the Altarboy's costume. I volunteered to dye the wool cloth for Thomas's costume black. Taking several metres of our pale cream cloth and quantities of Dylon's black fabric dye, I followed the procedure of dyeing, which involved several hours of churning the cloth to make it absorb the colour. However, the result when finished was a pale blue. I repeated the work with a fresh batch of black dye, but after many hours of churning, rinsing and drying, the wool cloth was no more than a slightly darker shade of blue. I repeated it again, only to achieve a rich midnight blue, which was still far from my intended black.

At this point, I discussed the problem with our historical advisor, Cathy Flower-Bond. She explained to me that my painstaking work in trying to dye cloth black was exactly the experience of sixteenth-century textile artisans. There was no black dye available in that period: to achieve the colour, Tudor workers would use blue and repeat the dyeing process with this colour nine times. Just as in my experience, the colour of the cloth would darken with each dyeing. This was why

black cloth was extremely expensive, so becoming a symbol of privilege and status in Tudor society. With this historical insight, I was able to look at my own midnight-blue wool cloth not as a failure of my work in helping the costume department, but as a useful contribution to the film's realism. Thomas is a wealthy man of the village who aspires to wear the black clothing of a higher class, but can still only afford a cheaper colour. The midnight blue represents his aspiration; we can imagine that the next generations of his family will wear the black-and-white of the Puritans, although he himself never reaches this status. Although I had the option of purchasing modern, pre-dyed black wool to make Thomas's costume, I chose to embrace the accidental realism of the cloth that I had dyed myself.

The limitations of realism

Sarah Street has written of an endemic tension in the work of filmmakers in costume drama who strive to adhere to historical accuracy: 'While a director might proclaim an overall commitment to realism, this is compromised by the tension between authenticating processes and narrative pleasure.' (2001: 30)

The costume design for *The Burning* was indeed a central part of the strategy of authentication for this film; its realism would help convince the audience of the 'truth' of this cinematic world. So far, we have seen two examples that work against Street's proposition: both in the case of the Sumptuary Laws requiring a similarity of costume and the blue/black of Thomas's apparel, this film afforded a rationale which allowed us to marry realism and narrative purpose in the designs for *The Burning*. However, a further example during the film's preproduction demonstrates the accuracy of Street's assertion.

In Tudor England, it was the law to wear a hat. As Shapiro writes, 'every male aged six and above who was not a gentleman had to wear a wool cap' (2012). Under Elizabeth I, this would become enforced by statute in 1571, and the hat would be known as the 'Statute Cap'. The Act of Parliament made clear in whose interest this provision was being enforced: it required that each person of the lower social orders must wear 'a cap of wool, thicked and dressed in England, made within this realm, and only dressed and finished by some of the trade of cappers, upon pain to

forfeit for every day of not wearing 3s. 4d.' This draconian law also reflected a cultural code: in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England, headwear was ubiquitous in a tradition that began with the 'Monmouth Cap', which had emerged a century before. In preproduction for *The Burning*, the costume design team began by making precisely authentic Tudor hats for the male characters: round, floppy and made of wool. Most men in this social world would have worn exactly such a hat.

Fig. 6: Thomas Bell by Holbein

Fig. 7: Statute Cap in brown Herdwick

But as a filmmaker, I confronted a problem: my characters, wearing these caps, would look to a contemporary audience like a parade of academics at a degree ceremony. The large, floppy hats appeared slightly absurd. My film's protagonist is a desperately serious man, consumed by grief and rage: I could not imagine my audience engaging with his story if he is wearing an authentic Tudor cap. So I made the decision to break from realism: the hero would wear a simpler 'beanie' woollen cap and only a few of the other male characters would wear the required 'Statute Cap'.

A similar dilemma emerged when considering the headwear for the film's second central character, the catholic Altarboy. In the film, he represents innocence and honour. Dramatically, I needed the boy to *look* quite distinct from the other characters in the film. In reality, a sixteenth century parish churchboy would wear on his head something that resembles soggy, uncooked pastry.

Fig. 8: detail of altarboy from 16th-century painting

My actor was an eleven-year-old with long, naturally curly hair that provided a link to the representations of angels in Renaissance art. I did not want to cover his hair and lose this important reference. In order to make this character stand out as different from all the others in the film, as well as to emphasise his innocence, I decided to have him as the only character without any headwear. Just as Street predicted, I was prepared to risk the authenticity of the representation of Tudor England in *The Burning* for the sake of my conflicting concerns as a narrative storyteller.

Fig. 9: Costume Designer Rosie Rogers adjusts the Altarboy's cassock

In making this decision, I was taking a risk: would my audience be aware of the extreme historical anomaly when they saw a character without headwear? I was

forced to make a calculation that was based on my assumptions about the contemporary audience's understanding of Tudor England, which I considered would be based on their cultural experience, their historical knowledge and – most importantly – the cinematic and televisual texts that would have created for the spectator a strong previsualisation of the sixteenth century. Street has also discussed this process of negotiation between the filmmaker and the past as previsualised by the spectator:

> 'Authenticating processes' refer to the ways in which films based on historical fact are obligated to present some semblance to 'the truth' as it has come to be understood. This of course depends on the extent of public knowledge about that particular event. (2001: 30)

In preparing to shoot *The Burning*, I was aware that the rich cinematic representation of the Tudor period has seldom followed accurate historical realism. In Shekhar Kapur's *Elizabeth: the Golden Age* (2007), Cate Blanchett appears as the queen with long, flowing red hair. This is historic nonsense: the Tudors considered hair to be exceptionally erotic and the Queen would not have risked such an affront to decency. So I was able to assume that my audience, culturally trained in such inaccuracies, would accept as historically 'authentic' a bareheaded Altarboy in *The Burning*.

Further compromises of historical accuracy concerned materials for making the costumes. The range of material available for clothes-making in the sixteenth century was very limited. Wool cloth was manufactured in the home and required huge amounts of labour to produce just small quantities. The main alternative cloth for Tudor farmers was linen, as this period predates the arrival in England of cotton. In preparing costumes for the film, decisions were firstly governed by a consideration of what visual information would reach the film's spectator: would they be aware of the quality of different materials? What would be known about the materials used in this period? Our assumption was that film audiences are mostly unaware of the history of clothes-making and would be unlikely to scrutinise the costumes shown on screen closely enough to discriminate between

different types of cloth. Our decision-making was based in part on this delicate negotiation of assumptions between filmmakers and audience, and in part on pragmatism: the very small budget of the film allowed for the purchase of wool cloth, but ruled out the use of linen in every character's costume. This was a curious reversal: for clothes-makers in the sixteenth century, the value of these two cloths was the opposite, with linen (derived from the abundant flax plant) cheaper than wool. We decided to make the Altarboy's cassock with linen, as this was the single most prominent costume element of the film. But for other costumes, linen was substituted with cheaper calico (a crude form of cotton). Early screenings of the film have shown there to be no reaction whatsoever to the inaccurate use of material. Indeed, the uniformly favourable reaction to the quality of the film's costumes indicates a combination of inattentiveness and lack of historical awareness among its audiences. A risk-heavy decision in preproduction has been proven well-judged.

The agency of the performer in film costume design

The relationship between the actor and their costume is complex and subject to a number of considerations around the divide between performer and spectator. The costume worn by the actor relates in the first place to their character. Costume allows a performer to feel 'in character', so can be closely bound to the nature and quality of performance. The action of the performer in putting on a costume is an act of transformation, a process inhabited first by the actor and then accepted by the spectator. The audience is given to assume that it is the character who has chosen to wear these clothes; details of personality are registered and absorbed in the consumption of the visual narrative. But simultaneously, the audience is aware that this is an actor wearing a costume, and this leads to further questions: has the actor chosen their costume? What is the agency of the actor in relation to the design professionals involved in the production?

Costume designers in film are not accustomed to consulting closely with actors: many of these professionals will have begun their training in the world of fashion design, a cultural tradition in which the model is a clothes-horse for the fantasies of the designer. In the fashion industry, the model arrives at the very last stage of

design and production; in filmmaking, the actor arrives a little earlier in the creative process but the costume designer and director will already have made decisions about an overall style, and concept sketches will already have been drawn. A colour-scheme may already have been established, and this will be central to the visual design of the whole film.

There are conditions in which this customary lack of influence of the actor on costume decision-making may be altered. In some areas of mainstream cinema, a star may choose to use their power considerably. Jonathan Stubbs recounts one occasion in which an actor became closely involved in research into period clothing and personally influenced the design of his costume:

> During the production of *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1935) [...] it was reported that the actor Charles Laughton discovered 150-year-old receipts and measurements belonging to Captain Bligh, the character he was playing, at a Savile Row tailor and had the company cut his costume to the same specifications. (2013: 38)

Laughton clearly had more authority than both the film's director (Frank Lloyd) and art director Cedric Gibbons: the account finds no consultation process, although we might assume that the director agreed with Laughton's decisions. However, such cases are a break with the norm. In contemporary mainstream and independent film production, both the performer and the costume designer work to the creative lead given by their director. This is my own creative experience in filmmaking and television drama, in which polite consideration is given to the actor's opinions about their costume, without offering them control of the process. However, we should also consider the varied creative emphases in the different Modes of Creative Practice and how these may affect the levels of intervention that are afforded to the performer. If, in the Performance-Centred Mode, a director has a very close relationship with the actors, s/he is likely to offer a strong role to them in decision-making concerning costume design. In contrast, the heightened visual sensibilities of the director in the Design-Centred Mode may mean that a final concept for the film's costumes will be completed at the earliest stage of

preproduction and before the actors are cast. However, we should note that in both these hypothetical cases, the director remains the focus of authority in decision-making: it is his or her choice as to the role of the performer in influencing costume design. This follows accepted production norms in the film and television industry.

Having established these norms of professional relationships and authority in creative decision-making, I want to illustrate the careful ways in which the performer can begin to exert greater control over the costume design for their character. My practice-as-research provides some very useful examples of how the agency of the actor can become critically important to the decision-making process, subtly transforming the initial intentions of the director and costume designer.

For the role of Judith in *The Burning,* I cast Jorjana Ingham, an actor who brought an intense energy to her preparation for the role and an enthusiasm for the historical research required in developing her character. Ingham's professional training is in the 'Method' and she sought any means possible to understand the social and cultural background of Judith. In early preproduction, Ingham joined the Costume-Making Workshop led by Dr. Cathy Flower-Bond; having developed the knowledge and sewing skills required, she proposed to me that she should make her own costume. Authenticity was part of her rationale: in the sixteenth century, a poor widow such as Judith would have made all her own clothes. This was a request that a sensitive director could not refuse: my working relationship with actors is to encourage them in whichever approach they choose to create depth in their character. If Ingham believed that sewing her own costume would help prepare her performance, I was reluctant to deny her the opportunity. This seemed to me to be a relatively safe decision: for reasons described earlier, the costume design throughout the film was limited to the styles and materials established in the Sumptuary Laws, so I knew that Ingham would deliver a costume that followed the necessary design. I accepted her request and she began work on sewing her costume. However, I was not prepared for the results of her limited skills as a seamstress.

Judith's costume looks quite different from those of the other characters in the film: it is misshapen, unevenly stitched, lopsided and too big. But while my costume designers were dismayed by the quality of Ingham's work, for me this costume was perfect: its rough and amateurish quality emphasises the poverty of the old woman; Ingham's body looks shrunken within the oversized 'kyrtle', as if she has lived a life of hunger.

Fig. 10: Jorjana Ingham on set: note the contrast with the finer tailoring of the girl's costume in foreground.

Ingham's intervention brought unexpected visual meaning to her character's costume. Prior to her request to make her costume, I had not discussed with the designers the idea of varying the actual quality of craft in the making of our different characters' clothing. It was only Ingham's participation in the costume-making for *The Burning* that unexpectedly added a new layers of meaning within the film's mise-en-scène. The poor craft skills evident in Judith's costume highlight her otherness and her poverty. This case helps us broaden our understanding of the process of creative decision-making in filmmaking, showing how certain subtle but very influential elements of a film's design may be derived from outside the professional intentions of the director or Heads of Department. Ingham may not wield the power of a star such as Charles Laughton, but her intervention in the costume design for *The Burning* had a similar creative impact to his over *Mutiny on the Bounty*.

Codes of verisimilitude

In her book on *Costume and Codes in Popular Film* (2001), Sarah Street develops the idea of 'codes of verisimilitude' with which audiences understand the world in which a film is set. She extends this to an audience appreciation of 'generic verisimilitude which presents costumes as part of a genre's iconography, for example gangster suits and hats' (2001: 7). In the creation of costumes for *The Burning*, I was interested to find how I was engaging in the iteration of the genre iconography of Tudor drama. This involved careful consideration of issues such as authenticity and realism, as discussed above. However, I was not prepared for the acute sensitivity of other members of the creative team to the issues around generic iconography. In particular, the actors were highly aware of the range of meanings represented by their costumes. The most significant occasion of this was during preproduction, when my leading actor, George Watkins, came for his first costume fitting. The actor pulled himself into his doublet and hose, appreciating their good fit, then tried on his green woollen hat. This was the simple 'beanie' rather than the proper 'Statute Cap'. Watkins looked at himself in a mirror and briefly considered what he saw, then turned to me, his eyebrow wrinkling quizzically; he mimed drawing the string of a bow-and-arrow. Watkins was clearly concerned that his costume was following too closely the generic iconography of a Robin Hood film – a very relevant concern, as we first encounter his character in a dense forest. I had not spotted this overlap in meanings created by our costume choices, but as a filmmaker, I immediately shared his anxiety. We risked a collision of visual signifiers that could confuse my audience. If I failed to address the problem, the spectator might read deliberate humour into this cross-textual reference; or the green hat could generate expectations of heroic derring-do within the narrative. I immediately worked with the costume designers to reshape and re-colour the hat, and was profoundly grateful for the intervention of my actor in the process.

The nature of Watkins's intervention in the design of costume for the film was qualitatively different from that of Ingham's earlier in the process. Whereas her contribution to the design was derived from a chance overlap between her

enthusiasm as a 'Method' actor and her lack of skills as a seamstress, with Watkins his intervention was a carefully-judged assessment of cinematic tradition and the meanings associated with his proposed hat. The actor was participating in a process of creative decision-making that was being followed by his director and costume designers, offering his own compelling opinion to the considerations underway during preproduction. I think it is worth stressing the significance of the means of Watkins' intervention. His use of a single gesture – Robin Hood's bow-and-arrow – was a highly-charged but also witty means to express the dangers of using the hat that we had offered him. But the fact that his opinion was not being expressed in voiced argument was indicative of the actor's awareness of the performer's customary lack of agency in costume-design. His gesture said simply, 'Wearing this beanie will make my character resemble Robin Hood', but he made no further comment. He left the final decision to his director and designers, while knowing that his mild lampooning of the hat would make it very difficult for them not to respond.

Fig. 11: George Watkins as 'Richard' in *The Burning*: his hat has been modified following his intervention

Conclusion

Scholarly writing on mise-en-scène in cinema has traditionally followed an assumption that a film's director plays the principle role in decision-making on all aspects of this complex process. In this, writers are simply reflecting attitudes

within filmmaking culture itself. In French film culture, the role of director has been indicated by the phrase, 'mise-en-scène par…' and this is not a credit shared with the many Heads of Department involved in creating meaning in the frame. When a film of mine was awarded the 'Prix de la Mise-en-scène' at the 'Rencontres Henri Langlois' in Poitiers[25], I was told that, in anglo-saxon terms, I had received the prize for 'Best Director'. But this attitude is challenged by many scholars, and even mainstream filmmakers. Michael Powell acknowledged that the creative input of other Heads of Department was more significant than his:

> It is not generally recognised by the public that the most genuinely creative member of a film unit, if the author of the original story and screenplay is excluded, is the art director. […] In the film world the producer and director and cameraman are so full of themselves that it is not sufficiently acknowledged that the art director is the creator of those miraculous images up there on the big screen, and that besides being a painter and an architect, this miracle man has to be an engineer as well. (2000: 343)

Powell is describing the process of filmmaking from the point of view of a director steeped in the practices of the 'Design-Centred Mode'. Many of his most celebrated films, such as *Black Narcissus* (1947, production designer Alfred Junge) or *The Red Shoes* (1948, production designer Hein Heckroth) were triumphs of studio art departments. In Powell's view, to be 'genuinely creative' on a film set is to be the actual creator of that set and all the meaning within its rich visual texture. For him, the role of the director is reduced to that of a consultant, awe-struck by the work of those that he theoretically commands.

Scholars of film have also broadened the understanding of decision-making away from the director-centric approach. Gibbs's account of film production describes how the process can 'require the director and other participants to make decisions in the moment, responding to feeling and intuition [...] so much is dependent on the developing creative interaction of the key personnel.' (2011: 92)

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[25] *Borderland* (Short Film, 1994)

His emphasis is rightly on a collaborative process in film production. However, missing from most accounts is a specific appreciation of the influence of a film's actors in the creation of a film's mise-en-scène. In this chapter I have given examples of how costume design can be profoundly influenced by the agency of the performer in the decision-making process. The extent of an actor's influence over this aspect of mise-en-scène will be very varied, depending on issues such as the commercial power of the specific performer, or the Mode of Creative Practice in which they are operating. But through a close observation of the practice of filmmaking, we can affirm a key position for the performers in helping create the visual world of the film.

Street has argued that a close study of film costume design can have great value both for style-based film criticism and for other areas of critical discourse around film. Through my practice-as-research we have seen the strength of her assertion. The creative authorship of key elements of a film's mise-en-scène must be understood as belonging frequently to the performers as much as to the director and designers. The value of an engaged and motivated actor to a film during its preproduction, and the performer's agency in the creative process, deserves further investigation.

The first section of this chapter has illuminated another shift in the locus of authorship in the Design-Centred Mode, showing how the agency of the production designer is expanded. The creative relationship between a director and production designer within this mode of filmmaking is heightened, and in the case of Baz Luhrmann and Catherine Martin, reaches the status of co-producers of their movies. Most significantly, we have seen how key creative processes can be fundamentally altered in the Design-Centred Mode: in script development, the designer can play a vital role in feeding ideas to the screenwriters. In the case of Stuart Pearce and Baz Luhrmann, the writers have become reliant on the input of narrative imagery from their designer, a unique shift in status that is made possible because the script is conceived from the outset as functioning in a Design-Centred Mode of filmmaking.

Chapter 5: The Social Realist Mode

Introduction

A detailed interest in filmmakers' intentions is at the heart of this thesis. In previous chapters, I have looked at the shifting emphases of directors' intentions when creating a film, highlighting differing practices employed where a filmmaker prioritises design, or close engagement with actors. In both these Modes of Creative Practice, we can clearly discern an intention to make a film with particular qualities: a film of visual complexity in the Design-Centred Mode, or one that emphasises character and relationships in the Performance-Centred Mode.

This chapter looks at directors working in the Social Realist Mode. These filmmakers can be grouped together not just on the basis of their creative practice: directors following the tradition of social realism are also uniformly interested in using their art as a political intervention, in the broadest sense. The filmmakers' intentions are derived not just from their artistic interests, but also from a sense of social anger. A key goal of this chapter is to build an understanding of how this sense of purpose has helped motivate the development of distinct methods of film practice during the long tradition of social realist cinema in the last fifty years. Looking closely at the work of four north European filmmakers - Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne of Belgium; Ken Loach, and Paul Greengrass of the UK - I will isolate common film practice as well as their interpretation of social realist principles of filmmaking.

The Social Realist Mode is more closely aligned with an area mapped by scholars within film studies than the modes developed in the previous two chapters. 'Social Realism' has been widely discussed as a distinct form of filmmaking, with particular significance in British cinema. Contemporary directors working in this form engage in a creative practice informed by traditions of social realism stretching back to the middle of the twentieth century. Film scholarship has focussed on the form for nearly as long. Prior to discussions of *social realism* was the debate about *realism* in cinema, a theoretical concern that continues to this day. I will begin this chapter with a consideration of both these issues. I will

consider Lúcia Nagib's work on realism and world cinema: her writing is significant to this thesis not only through her contribution to the widespread and ongoing debates about cinematic realism, but because she engages as I do in understanding the practice of filmmaking as a means of defining it. I will use Nagib's reference to a realist mode of production as a theoretical underpinning for this chapter's investigation into the creative practice of social realist filmmakers.

Realism and Cinema

In Raymond Williams's seminal discussion of realism, *A Lecture on Realism* (1977), the author traces the terminology of the form, showing a historical development from its early use in literature and the theatre, to the twentieth century understanding of realism in film and television. He emphasises a distinction between the terms *naturalism* and *realism*. Naturalism strived through art to show the world as it actually is - in the period of Emile Zola its cause was the simple presentation of external appearance, what Williams calls 'reality with a certain static quality' (1977: 65). This creative intention was, in that historical period, a highly provocative endeavour. In cinema, naturalism relates to the earliest period, with its roots in the photographic pioneer Sir John Herschel's statement that his art's purpose is 'the vivid and lifelike reproduction and handing down to posterity of any transaction in real life'[26]. Williams describes the problem of naturalism as its failure to attempt key understandings: why has the reality surrounding us come to be thus? What are the forces that change it? Realism, however, is understood as a quite different project. Williams describes how it did not strive to be a simple portrait of the world: 'realism – in the Marxist tradition, for example – was that method and that intention which went below this surface to the essential historical movements, to the dynamic reality.' (1977: 65)

Realism, in this sense, is a creative form that intends to interpret reality as part of the process of its representation. The roots of what we now understand as social realism are already apparent in this early counterpoint between naturalism and realism.

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[26] Quoted in Kracauer 1960/99: 172

Scholarly interest in realism has continued consistently since Raymond Williams, with film studies providing a rich literature on cinema's relationship with the real. Lúcia Nagib has developed her analysis of realism in film over a period of twenty years. She has a broad interest in forms of realism, emphasising a revival of cinematic realism in the past two decades (see Nagib and Mello, 2013). In her 2011 work, *World Cinema and the Ethics of Realism*, she proposes that this revival is not a new phenomenon, describing,

> the cyclical re-emergence of realist approaches to cinema around the world, in the form of physical realism, social realism, surrealism, conceptual and medium realisms, real sex on screen, political and private documentary forms and the autobiographical genre. (2011: 2)

This is a very broad understanding of varied realisms, but Nagib rightly focuses on the processes of filmmaking in her analysis of cinematic realism, arguing that the concrete quality of production allows us to define a concept that is otherwise open to dispute. She locates this position within a scholarly tradition that began with André Bazin, who was 'the first to locate realism at the point of production' (2017: 311). Nagib offers a schematic, in a table that she entitles a 'Taxonomy of Cinematic Realism', with columns dividing 'Modes of Production', 'Modes of Address', 'Modes of Exhibition' and 'Modes of Reception'. She concludes that,

> The only clearly identifiable and measurable cinematic realism derives from the first category, that is, from modes of production, relying heavily on: the physical engagement on the art of crew and cast with the profilmic event; the near identity between the cast and their roles; real location shooting; the audiovisual medium's inherent indexical property; and the engagement with works of art in progress within the film. (2017: 13)

My project in this chapter, of identifying methods and approaches to film practice that can be coherently grouped into a Social Realist Mode of directing practice, will develop from Nagib's five concrete pillars of realist production outlined above, and

support her project of 'locating cinematic realism in the way films are made' (2017: 2).

Defining social realism

In his 1977 discussion of realism, Raymond Williams considers in detail a work by Ken Loach, a filmmaker who, at that time, was already developing a reputation as a social realist practitioner. Williams focuses on Loach's 'Wednesday Play' for the BBC, *The Big Flame* (1969), written by Jim Allen, which dramatized a strike by Liverpool dock workers. In the film, Williams identifies a fusion of the two concepts of naturalism and realism. Loach shoots the drama in the locations where the strike had taken place, using several of the dockers as actors in the piece, which to Williams appears to be an attempt to present reality in the tradition of naturalism. However, Williams also notes that the political viewpoint of Allen and Loach is clear to the spectator: we are aware that the filmmakers are engaging in an interpretation of reality, and the drama develops an imaginative, rather than 'drama documentary', position when it concludes with the betrayal of the dockers by their political leaders. As Loach and Allen move further away from a dramatised re-enactment of the events of the original strike, their interpretive engagement with actuality situates the television play firmly in Williams's definition of realism, emphasising his point of how *The Big Flame* fuses naturalistic and realist forms within a single television film.

I argue that such a fusion, or confusion, of intentions lies at the heart of social realism. Filmmakers in this tradition are anxious to portray reality in the most honest means available to them: in this sense, there is a naturalistic urge behind each social realist project. Indeed, Graham Fuller has described Ken Loach as a '*metteur en scene* of rigorous naturalism' (1998: 9). However, the form is also defined by its filmmaker's political purpose, which is by necessity an interpretative response to reality.

Writers on social realism have noted key defining characteristics. Notably, this includes the type of protagonist at the heart of the narrative and the social world that they come from. Julia Hallam and Margaret Marshment assert that,

> Social realism is distinguished by the attention it pays to characters who usually figure as background presences in the generic mainstream, those marginalised by virtue of their social status and/or ethnic identity. (2000: 190)

In the history of social realist cinema, this has frequently involved building narratives based around working class characters. For Ken Loach in the 1960s, the representation of working class lives on screen was a deliberately radical intervention in the television and film culture of the time, which he saw as a near-hegemony of upper- and middle-class values and interests. The portrayal of working class characters has continued in social realist film, such as in Pablo Trapero's *Crane World* (1999) and my own *Outlanders* (2008), both films centred on working class lives in the construction industry. However, Hallam and Marshment's point is a broader one about marginalised characters: in recent decades, especially since the early years of the twenty-first century, social realist cinema in Britain has sought to represent other sections of society, marginalised on the basis of ethnicity (*Bullet Boy*, Saul Dibb, 2004), or through their location in unrepresented provincial towns (*The Margate Exodus,* Penny Woolcock, 2007).

For Samantha Lay, writing about British Social Realism, this is a clear definitional quality of the form: 'The conviction that films should have a social purpose, and a moral force, rather than being merely entertaining or diverting, is shared to varying degrees by all the film-makers' (2002: 2). Social realism is therefore not simply a cinematic form wishing to portray characters outside the mainstream, but to dramatise their lives with political intent.

Ken Loach is a revolutionary socialist who represents a very clear example of a director whose filmmaking intentions are derived from his politics, and his oeuvre is consistent in its use of the social realist form. In this chapter, I will also be looking in detail at the work of Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne: although these filmmakers do not espouse a political credo in the manner of Loach, they clearly describe how their political/emotional response to the world around them

motivates them as directors. Jean-Pierre Dardenne has described how anger is key to the originating intention behind each of their films: 'You always need something that you are against before you start' (quoted in Wood, 2005). The writer Philip Mosley has defined the brothers' film oeuvre as,

> an ethical body of work within a politically informed social realist mode, one that engages with questions of honesty to ourselves and others, and of how we assume and exercise a sense of human responsibility. (2012: 10)

Such a nuanced political motivation behind social realist cinema is very typical of directors working in this form. Samantha Lay's definitional point, that social realism must involve a political intention of some sort, is useful in helping identify the work of filmmakers who do not consistently use social realism as their cinematic form. One of the early British social realists, Tony Richardson, whose *A Taste of Honey* (1961) helped define the form in the UK, only made a small number of films in this mode before moving towards more commercial cinema; similarly, the Argentinian filmmaker Pablo Trapero made *Crane World* early in his career but has followed this with a number of movies in other genres. In this chapter, I will be looking at the social realist work of Paul Greengrass, who also has had a career that moves in and out of social realism, carrying his trademark camera style, which he developed when directing documentaries and highly political films (*Bloody Sunday*, 2002), into his more mainstream and studio productions (*The Bourne Ultimatum,* 2007*)*.

Samantha Lay adds that social realist filmmakers have an additional agenda, a wish to challenge the ways in which cinema creates its representations: they are 'reacting to the way the world is 'constructed' by the majority of mainstream films' (2002: 10). John Hill has described how 1960s realist cinema defined itself in opposition to the Hollywood of the period and 1950s British middle class comedy, while the 'Brit Grit' cinema of the 1990s was a self-conscious reaction to the 'heritage' cinema epitomised by the Merchant Ivory productions of the 1980s. Visual style thus becomes a defining feature of social realist cinema, with most

commentators defining a 'gritty' image quality and unelaborate use of camera, which clearly contrasts with the high production values of mainstream film. Lay comments on Ken Loach's adoption of camera style for very specific effect: 'Loach's cinéma vérité style makes his features look like documentaries, which activates the social or 'critical realism' (see Knight 1997) and work to differentiate his films.' (2002: 89)

In the work of social realist filmmakers, there is a sense that these artists claim that they have something special to say, based on their access to real social conditions and ways of life that are beyond the experiences of other directors (or which are deliberately overlooked by them). This is a deliberate positioning of the storyteller in relation to the spectator that is a particular characteristic of the mode. There appear to be two objectives when a social realist director presents a film to an audience: for those spectators from similar marginalised backgrounds to those of the film, it is a rare and generous portrayal of their lives in the popular cultural medium of cinema; to those from outside the marginalised world, the film is a window into the struggles of others. Importantly, this means that the filmmaker communicates in two modes simultaneously: as Kristin Thompson has written,

> Realistic motivation can appeal to two broad areas of our knowledge: on the one hand, our knowledge of everyday life gained by direct interaction with nature and society; on the other, our awareness of prevailing aesthetic canons of realism in a given period of an art form's stylistic change. (1988: 17)

The social realist filmmaker is determined that, for the whole audience, the social and cultural conditions portrayed in the film will appear unquestionably authentic. It would be safe to assume that a large section of Ken Loach's cinema audience does not have everyday experience of his characters' environments; to these spectators, the worlds of his films must be constructed according to conventions that are recognisably associated with cinematic representations of social life on the margins.

Conventions of social realist cinema – a historical perspective

In this chapter, I will look in detail at the stylistic choices of social realist film directors as well as their practice, concentrating on British filmmakers Ken Loach and Paul Greengrass as well as the Belgians Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne. Much has been written about the key conventions of this cinematic form, and scholarly attention on social realism in the UK has often begun with the work of the 'Free Cinema Group' (Tony Richardson, Karel Reisz, Lindsay Anderson, Lorenza Mazzetti) and the 'kitchen sink' films of the 1960s. These films were distinctive for key elements of their visual style, which Samantha Lay summarises:

> Social realist texts are often described as 'gritty', a term which can be applied to describe the surface realism and the landscapes which characters inhabit, the way these landscapes and characters are filmed and character attitudes and behaviours. Social realist texts are commonly associated with an observational style of filming which tends to produce a distance between the text and spectator. (2002: 22)

However, the developing conventions of social realist cinema in this period must be understood not as a rupture from traditions of film style (as many of its proponents hope), but as a continuation of the development of stylistic approaches seen in other cinematic movements earlier in the century. In particular, it is valuable to look to the brief but intense flourishing of an earlier school of film, the neorealism of Italian cinema which began in the mid-1940s. Peter Bondanella analyses the stylistic conventions of Italian neorealism:

> nonprofessional actors, authentic locations, documentary photography, commentary on subject matter, the rejection of Hollywood genres, and a leftist perspective defining film as a force for social change rather than as a kind of amusement. (1993: 13)

These identifiers of neorealism, clearly providing inspiration for the later social realism, were luminous in the creation of a distinctive form of cinema. However,

critics in the twentieth century clung too rigidly to them in their account of the neorealist movement. To Bondanella, this led to the stylistic features of neorealism becoming ossified into, 'a single definition of Italian neorealism that fast became a critical formula rather than a tentative, neutral critical analysis, a prescription rather than a description.' (1993: 13)

The most insightful contribution of Bondanella's survey of neorealism is his tracing of elements of the filmmakers' style and practice back into the Italian fascist-era cinema. Whereas critics and filmmakers wilfully maintained that there was a complete rift in cinematic tradition between the twenty years of Mussolini and the postwar period, insisting that there was no cultural value of any sort in any of the movies created under fascism, Bondanella points out significant continuities. During the 1930s, Italian cinema developed a category of 'fictional documentaries': these films were frequently based on narratives of armed conflict, but already a distinctive approach to casting was being adopted: 'In some cases, non-professional actors were employed (the actual protagonists of the events portrayed), and in other instances, famous actors appeared with ordinary sailors, soldiers, and airmen' (1993: 9). This feature of filmmaker choice – the interest in using untrained performers to provide a sense of realism to film characters – was to be developed both during the neorealist movement and later under social realism.

Key individuals also provide continuity across the periods of Italian film production history. The founder of Italian neorealism, Roberto Rossellini, had begun his career as a film director during the fascist period, employed at the Cinecittà studios established by Mussolini in 1937. His breakthrough films of the postwar period, *Rome: Open City* (1945) and *Paisan* (1946) featured the combining of trained actors and non-professionals – and were critically applauded for this quality. We have seen that this approach to casting, deployed by social realist directors to this day, had been developed during the fascist era of Italian cinema of which he was part. In this chapter we see a further political irony that links contemporary social realist film, politically-motivated and left-wing, with the style of cinema developed to create fascist propaganda movies in Mussolini's Italy.

The creative practice adopted by Rossellini in the making of *Paisan* featured approaches that are typical within both neorealism and social realism. The film was shot entirely on location, some of them very difficult for a film crew to access. Rossellini, however, was determined to use the authenticity of these places to build a broad and convincing picture of Italy at war. Further distinctive features of the filmmaking practice were Rossellini's style of staging and shooting the action. In key sequences, the director encouraged his actors and non-actors to draw on their knowledge of wartime events that had occurred in their own communities just eighteen months before. This attempt to build performance based on experience was then supported by particular ways of using the camera. In the shooting of sequences for the film, Rossellini adopted a long-lens strategy in order to keep his crew away from the ensemble of actors and non-actors who were performing.

Fig. 12: Distant camera, true lives: *Paisan* (1946), the capture of a fascist militia sniper by partisans in Florence

In Figure 1, we see how the director assigned the camera a position at a considerable distance from the action and instructed the camera operator (Otello Martelli) to simply follow the chaotic drama unfolding before him. Aesthetic concerns around the framing of the action are sacrificed in favour of a sense of the unpredictable, the actors and non-actors improvising – or restaging – a scene. The filming strategy, as well as the civil war subject of the sequence and even the costumes, would be reflected in the creative choices of Ken Loach when shooting his film, *Land and Freedom* (1995), nearly half a century later.

William Guynn understands the changes in film practice by Rossellini and others in this period as a rupture from the already-conventionalised concept of film directing as the formal mise-en-scène of a screenplay.

> in the 1930s, French filmmaker Jean Renoir resisted the idea that mise-en-scène was simply the realization of the shooting script; for him, the script was a partial and tentative document, and the moment of shooting, when the actors came together in the location or on the set, should be open to improvisation by both actors and director. This tendency reveals a radically different perspective on the creative process, an emphasis on the moment of shooting, most fully expressed in the work of Italian filmmaker Roberto Rossellini. In his films before the 1960s, Rossellini worked from minimal scenarios, thus avoiding pre-planned mise-en-scène. He preferred to discover the film's location with his actors: he lay in wait to 'trap' the real, to use his expression. (2011: 54)

Roberto Rossellini provides a strong case that links elements of both film style and film practice between neorealism and social realism. The notion of 'trapping' or 'capturing' the real is a principle that runs through the work of film directors in both traditions. Another illuminating case from Rossellini's career came during the production of his film, *Journey to Italy* (1954). Shooting in the south of the country, the director was aware of excavations at Pompeii, which had recommenced following the war. When the Pompeii museum notified Rossellini of

a potential archaeological find, he took his crew to the dig. David Thomson's BBC *Arena* documentary comments how,

> He leapt at the opportunity to shoot a sequence, as a documentary, but with his leading actors witnessing the unearthing of petrified forms of human bodies, frozen in their death agonies a dozen centuries before […] This discovery was the vindication of Rossellini's method, a chilling parallel to the characters' inner lives. (Arena, 1990)

Rossellini was able to have his characters Katherine Joyce (Ingrid Bergman) and Alex Joyce (George Sanders) watch the actual unearthing of archaeological finds (Figure 2), a moment of extraordinary film practice that merged fiction and documentary forms. With the profilmic event unravelling before the actors, the nature of performance practice was transformed away from the crafted and rehearsed and towards an experiential moment for the actor-as-character.

Fig. 13: Documentary footage of an archaeological find, from *Journey to Italy* (Roberto Rossellini, 1954)

This sequence can be seen as a key statement of neorealist filmmaking practice that would influence social realist directors in later decades of the twentieth

century. However, the fusing of the real and the fictitious within *Journey to Italy* also reflects the phenomenon analysed by Bondanella, linking neorealist creative methods to its historical roots in the 'fictional documentaries' of fascist-era Italian cinema. Looking forward to this chapter's investigation of creative practice in contemporary social realism, this insight helps us understand that the key conventions of social realism have historical roots stretching to before the early work of Tony Richardson or Ken Loach. Further, the conventions that now seem so solid to the contemporary viewer are actually in a state of flux, being adapted by filmmakers while they are being used, shifting and developing over time, and even, on occasion, being taken up by filmmakers not working in this mode. It is particularly interesting to note the thoughts of long-time social realist film director Ken Loach, when he views his own body of work retrospectively at a late point in his career. The author Graham Fuller asks Loach to reflect on the merging of forms in *Up the Junction* (1965, 'The Wednesday Play', BBC TV):

> *Q: There are sequences in the Clapham pub where the actors are speaking to the camera as if they are being interviewed by somebody doing a TV documentary [...] Were you consciously trying to replicate documentary-style interviews?*
> Yes. When she was writing the novel Nell had recorded people's conversations as they talked to her, or as *though* they had talked to her and that, in a way, matched our feeling for documentary, our wish to replicate documentary elements in the films. (1998: 14)

Loach comments that he would no longer use such devices of style in his work three decades later, although he recognises the power of the actor-interview to British cinema in the 1960s. The director carefully positions himself as a filmmaker evaluating the use of the conventions of social realism, adapting them as his career within this mode develops over time. Significant for this thesis, we see a director self-consciously considering elements of film style and creative practice within his own work, able to identify the central approaches that he has adopted in the past and in his current filmmaking. Loach thus reveals the potential for grouping the differences of social realist film practice into a coherent Mode.

I have already noted that social realist directors adopt systems of practice that deliberately counter the norms of mainstream film production. I will identify specific aspects of film practice in which they have created clearly different methods of creative work. The three areas that I will consider in detail are:

- The social realist approach to film locations
- The social realist approach to casting
- The use of the camera in social realist filmmaking.

Film locations and authenticity

Film locations play a strikingly enlarged role in the creative process of the director in the social realist mode. In this section, I will show how the rationale for the use of locations by these filmmakers differs significantly from the norm of mainstream film production, adding significant considerations to the decision-making involved in choosing where to shoot scenes, and subsequently to how the locations are used in the creative practice of the film shoot.

The use of locations, rather than sound studios, in the making of feature films must be understood in a historical context. During the first half-century of the development of the film industry in Europe and the US, film production became dominated by the use of studios, a phenomenon driven by technological as well as creative considerations. Cameras and lighting equipment were physically huge and extremely heavy, meaning that moving a film unit to a location was a difficult and unwieldy process. Considerations of cost also militated against the filmmaker breaking out of the studio environment. The organisation of equipment and personnel within a studio complex was stable and efficient, allowing for the swift completion of scenes. In the 1960s, the technological development of lighter-weight film cameras offered solutions to some of the more practical reasons for a film unit to remain in the studio. Such improvements in film camera equipment coincided with the development of social realist film movements in the postwar decades. In her discussion of the 1960s British social realist film directors, including Tony Richardson, Karel Reisz and Lindsay Anderson, Samantha Lay notes

how the tendency to use locations was already developing during an era when studio-bound filmmaking and, especially, television drama, was still the norm.

> In terms of practice, location shooting was preferred. Richardson, particularly, disliked working in the confines of the studios, choosing instead to work within the limitations each specific location imposed, even for interior scenes. (2002: 61)

New technologies began to liberate film directors who were motivated to take the filmmaking process into the social environments in which their narratives were situated. This creative shift in filmmakers' interest coincided with major structural shifts within the British film industry, and an awareness that the studio mode of production was breaking down. Max Sexton has described how 'Technological and aesthetic development had led to a massive increase in location filming. Large studio film production, it was believed, was drawing to an end' (2014: 7). Sexton references John Bennett, a contemporary of the 1960s and 1970s, who described the large London studios as a 'dinosaur'. He emphasized at the time how they were being 'overtaken by technological change and the vogue for realism. Lightweight cameras, fast films, electronics, and the hard economics of a contracting industry have dictated the evolution of the all-location picture.' (1974: 8/9)

For social realist filmmakers working in this period, the availability of lighter cameras and the mobility that this offered was an opportunity to pursue authenticity by breaking out of the confines of the sound studio. The use of locations became a point of principle for these directors, who were soon uniformly insisting on shooting on location, not in the studio.

An additional rationale motivated the filmmakers to use locations from the very world of the characters represented in their movies. This was the period in which Ken Loach prepared his breakthrough movie, *Kes* (1969), scripted by Barry Hines, a secondary school teacher from Barnsley who had an intimate knowledge of the working class world of his story. Loach seems to have been intent on preserving the sense of authenticity that the screenwriter brought to his story.

> We filmed at the school he [Barry Hines] taught at and that was where we found David Bradley, who played Billy. He was just one of the kids from the class who was the right age. The kestrel, or kestrels, actually – which were called Freeman, Hardy and Willis – were trained by Barry's brother, Richard, who showed David how to work with the birds himself. Everything had an appropriate size about it, and it was helpful to shoot on such a modest scale. (qtd. in Fuller 1998: 42)

Loach was taking advantage of the reduced scale of feature film production that new technologies offered him. As a social realist, he wanted to make his film within a community, using the local features as the locations to set his drama. Additionally, this approach to film locations was deliberately linked to a developing film practice that differed from the brash attitudes and extravagance of much mainstream production. Loach was seeking a human scale to his mode of filmmaking. This is typical of the social realist director's commitment, involving a careful honesty to the characters of the narrative, and a motivation to portray their environment with complete authenticity. I have linked this intention to Raymond Williams' discussion of naturalism, and it is an understanding of authenticity linked to this concept that governs social realist filmmakers' decision-making during preproduction.

When creatively engaging with the film locations, social realists frequently favour a design approach that emphasises what Philip Mosley calls an 'unadorned' representation of the physical environment of the film. The directors Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne have explicitly commented: 'We check streets and other places that can serve as settings and that don't need any alteration' (Danvers). The role of the Art Department here is not to layer meaning upon the location using dressing props and other devices, which is the creative intention of filmmakers in other modes. Instead, production design in the Social Realist Mode emphasises the ordinariness of the set, trying to preserve the location in its natural state. Mosley describes the impact upon the spectator that this approach delivers:

> By choosing to film the surface of the world in unadorned detail, but not superficially, the Dardennes invite the spectator to enter a physically and morally charged space. It is via the visceral experience of the spectator that profound human meanings may emerge rather than by an attempt on the part of the directors to graft such meanings onto the film from a comfortable distance. (2013: 22)

This concept – of presenting a location with as little directorial intervention as possible – provides an accurate description of the principles of social realist film in relation to locations. Filmmakers will, out of choice, decide to shoot a film in the very locale of their characters' world, and they will seek to leave the location in the real state in which they find it.

Robert How, a location manager who has worked twice for Ken Loach, on the films *Ladybird, Ladybird* (1994) and *Carla's Song* (1996), told me how location scouting with Loach was entirely about finding a place that was authentic. They would view potential locations, together with Loach's production designer, regular collaborator Martin Johnson. Bob How described what would happen if Loach walked into a space that he knew was right for the film: "This is perfect!", he would say, "Martin - don't change a thing!" Loach's response was first-and-foremost a reaction to the authenticity of the location. The technical skill of Martin Johnson was brought to bear after Loach departed. He and his Art Department understood their task to make the set look and feel on camera exactly how it had appeared to the director when he first visited the location. This is a much bigger creative task that it might seem: the film camera tends to 'clean up' the look of interiors (this is particularly a feature of digital cinema cameras). Loach's characters often inhabit unkempt and poorly-decorated spaces and the effect of the camera and film lights is to make such interiors look quite fresh and bright. Johnson would know that unless he worked hard to 'dirty it down', through repainting and set-dressing, the location would only disappoint Loach when he returned to shoot.

This observation has significance when considering the concept of authenticity. I have already linked the social realists' understanding of authenticity to the idea of

naturalism as discussed by Raymond Williams. Another reading of this conception of authenticity is what Richard Burt has called the 'fidelity model'. This is the working use of authenticity in the mind of Ken Loach when he goes location scouting. However, the role of Martin Johnson illustrates another understanding of authenticity: that it is a construction, in which filmmakers present a semblance of reality that will be convincing to the spectator. The tools of this construction are what Sarah Salih calls 'cinematic authenticity effects' (2009): careful assemblages of signifiers appropriate to the fictitious world of the film. The creative team working on a social realist film are engaged in deploying these 'authenticity effects' in order to create a portrayal of reality that will be convincing to the audience.

The concept of authenticity is central to filmmakers' intentions across all forms of social realism in world cinema. For instance, we can return to the case of contemporary Italian film and the movement of what Laura Leonardo has described as the 'New neorealism' of the 21st century: here, film directors argue forcefully for authenticity as central to their filmmaking principles. Leonardo looks at *Anche libero va bene* (Rossi Stuart, 2006), quoting the director's interview at the time of the film's release:

> In an interview for Cineuropa.it in 2006, Rossi Stuart stated that while making his movie the only objective he had in mind was 'massima autenticità'; hence his camera had to remain almost immobile while shooting, acting like a mirror where the feelings and the emotions of the protagonists could reproduce faithfully and freely. (Scala 2013: 7)

It is the 'fidelity model' of authenticity that filmmakers in the Social Realist Mode apply in relation to film locations. This, I argue, is a defining attitude towards the practice of film in this mode of creative practice. The work of Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne exemplifies the values that characterise practitioners working in this form. The Belgian filmmakers have based all their feature films in the deindustrialised district of Seraing, west of the city of Liege in Wallonia. It is their own hometown, which they portray without ostentation, spurning establishing shots. Yet through their extended oeuvre we slowly become familiar with this

distinct urban environment. The importance of locations in the Dardenne brothers' filmmaking is demonstrated by the care and time that they invest in the scouting phase of preproduction. Breaking from film industry norms, they do not hire a location manager, choosing to carry out this work entirely by themselves, a task that occupies the brothers for three or four months during preproduction. Scouting for locations in Seraing will, for these local filmmakers, have particular emotional significance given their family and personal attachment to the district. The Dardenne brothers are also engaged in an explicitly political project when choosing locations, one which resonates in terms of economic and social culture. Mosley comments,

> they acknowledge the reality of what Luc calls, in a filmed interview with Frédéric Bonnaud, a landscape of 'empty devastation' formed by boarded-up buildings, factory walls and industrial detritus of various kinds. But they also see these 'dead zones' as indicative of the contemporary situation, of a certain postmodern condition. Jean-Pierre says that despite this void in which young people especially seem 'lost' and lacking a connection to older generations, these zones within the urban centre, unlike suburban areas, are 'still crossed by a solidarity' that bears the trace of a different past. (2013: 31)

The visual presentation of locations in social realist film is not uniform. I have commented on the Dardenne brothers' deliberate restriction of the information provided to the spectator in the shots that they choose: scenes frequently open suddenly, without establishing shots, as if the camera is grabbing the drama in the midst of events unfolding before us. There is scant opportunity to pay attention to the physical surroundings in a Dardenne film, and few wide shots to help us. In Figure 14 (below), a still from the brothers' film *Rosetta* (1999), the camera is very typically bound close to the physical body of the actor; while the action is clearly situated in its urban environment, the composition centres on the character drama, picking up the social and political meaning of the location only incidentally in relation to the human experience of the protagonists. We absorb the sense of an urban 'dead zone', but without specific guidance by the filmmakers. The framing of

this shot is curious and uncomfortable: it is not a well-composed 'Over-the Shoulder' shot, Rosetta's head is central to the frame such that it begins to obscure the face of Riquet (Fabrizio Rongione). Colour in the frame is carefully deployed to absorb Riquet into his urban surroundings, with costume choices merging his body with the concrete of the riverside walkway.

Fig. 14: Still from *Rosetta* (Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, 1999)

In contrast to the Dardenne brothers' decision to abandon establishing shots, the early British social realists framed their locations very emphatically in order to emphasise the working class environment of their films. Lenses and compositions were chosen in order to emphasise the industrial environment of its characters' drama. Samantha Lay describes how in this early phase of British Social Realism, the pictorial representation of urban locations is linked to a broader project:

> because the British New Wave make claims to realism, certain shots – most notably townscape and landscape shots – must be more than just spaces for narrative action. Since they are shot in real locations they demand to be read as 'real historical places'. In effect they become 'signs of reality' and serve to authenticate the realism in the text. (2002: 62-3)

Fig. 15: Rita Tushingham and Murray Melvin in *A Taste of Honey* (Tony Richardson, 1961)

So despite the different presentation of locations on screen, the principles at work, in terms of commitment to an authentic representation of reality, are common in works of social realist filmmaking. In my examination of the Social Realist Mode's approach to the use of locations, we can identify a distinct group of attitudes and practices that are particular to this group of filmmakers, with the primary intention that drives decision-making being the political commitment to the representation of its working class or 'outsider' characters and their environments.

Casting

A very distinct feature of social realist cinema is its lack of stars. In its relationship with the audience, this form of film consistently follows a pattern of eschewing the hiring of recognisable actors in order to attract publicity and attention. Indeed, so ingrained is this feature, that it could be argued that one of the pleasures of social realism is the experience of watching unfamiliar faces on the screen. The experienced spectator of social realist drama expects not to recognise the actors, to the point where the presence of high-profile performers can be disruptive of the viewing. This characteristic of social realist cinema has developed over many decades. While there are occasional exceptions, it points to an approach to casting that is common across directors working in the form. In this section, I will look

closely at the statements that the social realist directors Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, and Ken Loach, have made about actors and about casting, in order to explain the rationale and practice methods used in the Social Realist Mode.

The approach to casting in this mode reflects attitudes towards film performance itself. This genre of film characteristically features a highly naturalistic style of screen acting. While other genres such as comedy or action film may celebrate exaggerated or mannered performance, directors in social realist cinema frequently seek a level of low-key, life-like acting from their casts. This may be linked to the principles of realism and authenticity. Ken Loach seeks a mode of performance that is completely instinctive and never reveals the process of acting. He contrasts this with mainstream methods of directing and acting, where:

> you can see the hesitation in the actors' eyes, their thought processes, their struggle to be articulate, their quandaries about where to move to next, and even the fact that they've rehearsed what they're saying – just what's going on in their heads. (Fuller 1998: 17)

The search for a different, uninflected naturalism in performance has a major impact on the practice of casting in the Social Realist Mode. Directors will choose actors who are able to perform with such transparency, or will cast individuals who have no drama training whatsoever in the hope of finding completely unselfconscious performances. Loach sees the experience or training of the actor as irrelevant:

> I actually think that the distinction between actors and non-actors is a false one because the whole process of meeting actors and auditioning them is about finding people who are believable, who can make something that is fictional true, and make a film live. (Fuller 1998: 18)

The value system behind this statement links strongly with the principle of authenticity: Loach is seeking actors who will appear, to the spectator, to be effortlessly part of the world of the film, not standing out in the movie in great and

memorable performances, but who will fit naturally into the emotional and psychological requirements of their character.

The search for authentic cast members can lead to an expansive and exhausting process of preproduction work for the social realist filmmaker. In the preparation of her film *Fish Tank* (2009), Andrea Arnold worked tirelessly with casting director Jill Trevellick, meeting hundreds of potential actresses in East London for the lead role of Mia. This is a process known to casting directors as 'street casting', a term which values the chance meeting between filmmakers and the perfect individual from the social background of the movie. It was by chance that Trevellick spotted 16-year-old Katie Jarvis on the platform of Tilbury Town train station. The girl was in the midst of a furious argument with her boyfriend – behaviour that seemed characteristic of the fictional character they were looking for. In a story very familiar in the casting of social realist cinema, the non-actor was plucked from obscurity to play the protagonist in Arnold's film. The casting of Jarvis fits the approach of the Social Realist Mode: a non-actor who lived very close to the location of the film, in Dagenham, she had been brought up in a housing estate similar to that represented in *Fish Tank*. These attributes, and Jarvis's strong personal qualities, motivated Arnold to cast her in the film.

The casting director, Kharmel Cochrane, has described how even in formal auditions, the practice of casting is transformed when she is working with a social realist director. Cochrane describes her experience with one such filmmaker:

> he will want everything to be authentic, so if there's a Waiter, he will want them to have a background in waiting. He is not that bothered about the auditions, he's not that bothered about that process, but he will ask questions about waiting – 'What's the most annoying thing that's happened to you?' or 'If you are in the kitchen and this is happening, how do you react?' - and he'll film it, and I always sit there and think, this is such a different way of spending the day, because I find out lots about people, but without ever seeing anyone perform. (Appendix D)

The basis for the casting choices made by directors in this mode may also be unconventional. Cochrane finds that her own value system about performance quality is not relevant to her social realist film director: for him,

> It will be, like, whether their energies click, or whether he finds them funny, or what they were wearing, or the most peculiar thing. He'll always ask them what they listened to on their way in, on their iPod – whereas I couldn't care less what they listened to! […] But it always works: it's always real, every performance is believable. (ibid.)

While many casting directors working for social realist filmmakers engage in a huge 'trawl' of communities, in a smaller number of cases, the principle of authenticity may lead to an opposite approach, deliberately limiting the scope of casting. Ken Loach describes his very closed process of finding the leading actor, David Bradley, for his breakthrough movie, *Kes* (1969): 'The reason we only went to one classroom in one school in Barnsley to pick a boy for *Kes* was part of the thinking behind the project, the idea being that there's a kid in every class like Billy.' (qtd in Fuller 1998: 114)

As with Arnold and *Fish Tank*, Loach was guaranteed to find an 'authentic' actor through his strategy of limiting the casting search to a particular region and social environment. This practice is widespread in the Social Realist Mode, and frequently stretches to the casting of supporting artists and extras. During the preproduction of *Bloody Sunday* (2002), director Paul Greengrass recruited large numbers of citizens of Derry, Northern Ireland, some of whom had been present at the massacre in January 1972, to play civil rights protesters in the crowd scenes of his film. For political reasons, Greengrass was unable to use the actual locations of the historical event in the Bogside district of the city, and relocated the film shoot, along with the supporting artists from Derry, to an estate outside Dublin. To further add to the authenticity of his casting, the director also recruited ex-British Army servicemen who had served in Ulster in the 1970s. Greengrass commented later on the risks of putting together such a potent mix of extras who had so closely experienced the events being portrayed:

> we brought soldiers from Britain, nearly all of whom had never been back to Ireland. And I remember distinctly the first day when we had several thousand people from Derry there, who had come down from the community – and a bunch of ex-British soldiers with those Paratroop hats on. And you could feel the crackle […] I remember thinking, Christ I'm not sure this is such a good idea! (Greengrass 2013)

The realism of this cinematic reconstruction was not just seen on the screen by the film's audience, but was felt on set by the participants themselves. In this way, Paul Greengrass did not have to coach the actors to deliver their performances: the emotions of the figures on screen are actual, relived responses, using emotional memories from three decades earlier.

This approach to achieving authenticity of performance in non-actors is typical of the practice of directors in the Social Realist Mode, and has been perfected by Ken Loach. For the TV movie *The Big Flame* (1969), Loach engaged dockers who had been involved in the industrial dispute represented in Jim Allen's play. Raymond Williams finds this particularly significant in his theoretical discussion around cinematic authenticity:

> In the film, undoubtedly the overall intention is the presentation of the general life, and when the dockers speak as themselves it is possible for the trained ear to recognise that speech which is at once authentic and rehearsed. That is to say, it is authentic in that it is the accent and the mode of speech of men reproducing their real-life situations. It is also rehearsed in that it is predetermined what they will say at that point and in what relation to each other. (1977: 72)

This approach to casting appears designed to merge the naturalistic ('authentic') with the rehearsed (realist representation) in order to achieve what the social realist filmmaker hopes will be a construction of reality that is utterly convincing to the audience. Bernadetta Scala and Antonio Rossini (2013) link such an

approach to casting and performance in contemporary Italian cinema back to the practices of Italian neorealism. They comment on how the director Matteo Garrone, in his breakthrough film, *Gomorrah* (2008), is following a strategy aiming towards social authenticity:

> Garrone follows neorealism also in his choice to employ real people, the scugnizzi of the Neapolitan streets with their unique features and language, rather than professional actors; and to tell their 'real' stories no matter how sad and violent. (2013: 5)

It should be pointed out that the strategy of casting non-actors in the Social Realist Mode involves a high degree of risk to the director. We have seen how Ken Loach, in the preproduction of *Kes*, sought a lead actor from a very small pool of talent – one classroom. The director in this mode must be certain that their own talents in working with actors and untrained performers will enable them to draw out a commanding performance. Lisa Mullen found that Andrea Arnold was frank about the risk involved in casting Katie Jarvis as Mia in *Fish Tank*: '"It seemed like a massive risk," she admits. "I just didn't know if she'd be able to do it"'. (2009: 17) In the case of Jarvis, the decision to cast a non-actor was vindicated by the vivid performance that she brings to the screen, and Jarvis won several awards for her role including the London Critics' Circle award for 'Young British Performer of the Year'.

Although the casting of non-actors is by no means a prerequisite of the Social Realist Mode, the favouring of 'unknowns' impacts considerably on the time and expense of preproduction in this form of film practice. Joseph Mai describes the process undertaken by Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne:

> Casting and preparation of the actors also requires more time than in a traditional production. The brothers often advertise in newspapers, sort through the hundreds of photographs and résumés they receive, before auditioning dozens of unknowns. (Mai 2010: 65)

The Dardenne brothers are thus breaking with the practice of film casting in the majority of feature films, in which a professional casting director will contact actors' agents with a list of characters that they need to find for a film project. The Dardenne brothers do not even appoint a casting director. The burden on them is very heavy: in the search for the lead actress for their film *Rosetta* (1999), they describe how from the thousands of responses from the newspaper advertisements, they began auditions with a huge shortlist:

> We filtered them down to three hundred candidates, whom we filmed with a video camera. They would simply introduce themselves, and then we asked them if they have already done any theater, film, or video, even just with friends. They answer, and we then work through two scenes with each candidate. (quoted in Mai 2010: 128)

The time resources required to cast in such a way are enormous. In contrast, in a mainstream film production the casting director will conduct the initial interviews with actors, in order to save the director time during preproduction. Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne are famous for the very long time that they take to produce each of their films, with the casting occupying a major part of the first year of their work. Much of the rationale underlying their process of casting reflects other practitioners in the Social Realist Mode. Basing all their films in Wallonia, the Dardenne brothers will cast almost exclusively from this region; their central characters are most frequently (but not exclusively) played by unknown screen actors. As such, the brothers' priorities fit into the principles of authenticity seen in the casting process of Ken Loach. However, they have a unique interest in the physical type and presence of the actor. As Philip Mosley writes, their casting is often centred around the look of the performer as much as their social background:

> They do not base these choices on an actor's professional visibility or technical competence but rather on being convinced that a certain body or face may incarnate a particular character. This fit is so tight that actors' and characters' names occasionally remain the same: Assita Ouedraogo/Assita in *The Promise*, Olivier Gourmet/Olivier in *The Son.* (2012: 13)

During any film casting process, filmmakers of all kinds will, most frequently, seek actors who can convincingly inhabit the characters concerned. However, Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne take this to a further extreme, wanting the actor to not just represent the character, but to completely embody them. The implications in terms of filmmaking practice extend from casting into rehearsals, which again occupy months of preproduction:

> Our rehearsals are very physical. We have thorough rehearsals for anything to do with the body: the falls, how to pick up the phone, how to walk, and get up, how to sit on the bath and wash your feet, anything to do with movements and positioning (Dardenne brothers interview, 2014)

Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne are striving through these methods of film practice to create an authenticity of performance. Their very time-consuming approach, which includes a month on costume try-outs alone, is not typical of filmmakers in the Social Realist Mode, but the rationale for their method develops from the principles shared by these directors.

This feature of the Dardenne brothers' work demonstrates clearly how the creative practices of the different Modes overlap. Many features of the brothers' practice, in particular during rehearsal, are strongly associated with the Performance-Centred Mode. While the directors' background in documentary filmmaking has led them towards a genre of feature film that is clearly located in social realism, the emphasis of their practice is focussed on performance. Some of the Dardenne brothers' rehearsal strategies are idiosyncratic and deliberately dispense with key features of practice in the Performance-Centred Mode (Mosley notes that they refuse to allow their actors to improvise), however the weight of creative intention is firmly directed towards the painstaking development of their actors' performances. This observation is important in the understanding of the Creative Modes of Production that I describe in this thesis: rather than being exclusive forms of film practice, there will always be an element of overlap between the modes.

I have noted key features of the practice of casting in the Social Realist Mode, including the use of unknown or little-known actors, the search for able non-actors to play leading roles, the importance of the geographic and social background of the cast, and the extension of these principles to supporting artists and extras. However, I should stress the porous nature of these defining attributes of casting practice in the Social Realist Mode. Filmmakers working in the form only seldom follow a very strict code of practice. Major directors break with the norm of casting new faces in leading roles: Ken Loach chose Peter Mullan to play Joe Kavanagh in *My Name is Joe* (1998) and Robert Carlyle to play the lead in *Carla's Song* (1996); Paul Greengrass, who has one foot firmly in commercial film, cast James Nesbitt as Ivan Cooper in *Bloody Sunday*. The Dardenne brothers surprised many when they based their film, *Two Days One Night* (2014), around the international star, Marion Cotillard. However, having broken with their normal casting practice, the brothers required Cotillard to conform strictly to the principles of their filmmaking:

> The most important thing for us was firstly for Marion to agree to all our conditions. There was nothing terrible about them. They involved being treated the same as the other actors. That was it: there was to be no favourable treatment which would put her on a pedestal and frighten everyone else, including us. It would have got in the way of the work. She had to agree to be there, to eat with us, to share a car with other actors, and so on. It's important to us for the people we work with to be treated equally, the same as us. (2014)

Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne possess the scale of reputation that persuaded the actress and her agent to agree to these conditions. The experience of viewing the movie is certainly different from that of other Dardenne brothers films, with the spectator conscious of the presence on screen of such a recognisable film star. However, Cotillard's character, Sandra, is an outsider who has suffered industrial victimisation by her company; this sense of alienation is intensified by the

inclusion of such an unusual actor who appears a misfit amongst the Wallonian cast that she plays against.

The camera in the social realist mode

In their study of social realist cinema, Hallam and Marshment discuss the film style chosen by this group of filmmakers and offer a very broad statement that intends to unify the genre in terms of its use of the film camera:

> social realism tends to be associated with an observational style of camerawork that emphasises situations and events […] creating 'kitchen sink' dramas and 'gritty' character studies of the underbelly of urban life. (2000: 184)

The key term employed here is 'observational', one that implicitly highlights the connection frequently made between the style of social realism and documentary film. This link is sensible if we look at the career backgrounds of many of these feature film directors. Of the small sample that I am studying in detail in this chapter, both the Dardenne brothers and Paul Greengrass began work in documentaries, while Ken Loach's origins were in the theatre. In this section, I will examine the approach to the use of the film camera by each of these filmmakers, and question whether the statement by Hallam and Marshment provides an adequate over-arching explanation of their choice of film style.

Many of the writers on Ken Loach have linked his use of camera to a documentary style. John Hill writes that, 'the most striking feature of Loach's cinema is its partial adoption of visual technique adapted from traditional documentary (such as unbroken takes, long shots and apparently 'natural' sound and light)' (2000: 256). This link with documentary style is supported by Loach's regular cinematographer, Barry Ackroyd, who described how the documentaries made at the start of his career fed into his work with the director:

> 'I was shooting documentaries and some music videos in the Seventies and early Eighties, and I'd assisted on many documentaries,' Ackroyd says of his

> own background. 'My break into [narrative] filmmaking was Ken Loach - social realism, natural ways of capturing things, simplicity of style,' Ackroyd adds. 'I tended towards British documentary camera style, which means long lens, very observational, with a kind of intimacy'. (Rhodes 2016: 43)

Looking simply at the techniques employed in terms of the use of the film camera, the Loach approach can certainly be seen as reflecting documentary practice. It is also a uniform and codified film style, which stresses observation. Ackroyd has described the method:

> Ken's style can be summed up quite simply: the camera stays still and the story comes to it," says Ackroyd. It's a style that does not waver from project to project. The films are shot - and edited - in sequence. With few exceptions, everything is filmed on location, in very long takes, with the camera at eye level. (Oppenheimer 2007: 22)

However, an important concern in this thesis is the creative intention of filmmakers: I seek to define the Creative Modes not just in terms of how directors work, but why they choose to make films in their particular ways. Hill's observations about the nature of shot and lens used by Ken Loach are valid, yet the director's rationale does not stress the achievement of a documentary 'look' for his films: his approach to the camera is based on concerns around performance. Loach's founding principle is to allow the actor to perform in the freest possible way on set. This has considerable impact on how he deploys the elements of film style. Loach describes his decision-making about where to put the camera thus:

> What's important is that you place the camera in such a way that it doesn't inhibit the actor. It mustn't be too close or in the actor's eyeline all the time so he or she can relate to the other people in the scene without the camera pushing in or intruding. That means standing back a little way. (qtd. In Fuller: 41)

So Loach's placement of the camera is motivated principally by a concern for helping his cast achieve a realism of performance. He is very well-known for staging scenes in which his camera is only allowed to occupy the edges of the set, using long lenses to capture the performances. The cast have unrestricted freedom within the playing area and are encouraged to respond instinctively, in an unrehearsed way, to the action (Loach does not allow his actors to read the film's screenplay). The strategy of restricting the cast's knowledge of what will take place in a scene offers them the opportunity to treat the scene as a lived experience, rather than a staged performance. During the shooting of his Spanish Civil War film, *Land and Freedom* (1995), Loach prepared a scene in which trucks of Communist soldiers come to arrest their former comrades, who are fighting for the anarchist 'POUM' militia. The director did not tell his militia protagonists that one of their key members would be shot in this scene – only the actor himself was briefed by Loach, and blood squibs were hidden beneath his costume. Loach wanted his actors to respond as if it were a real event, his cameras recording the shock and rage of the POUM militia about this fratricidal killing. The technical implications were clear to Barry Ackroyd's camera department: multiple cameras would be needed (the film had four 'second camera operators'); the camera positions would be well outside the playing area, so long lenses would be required; actors would not hit focus marks established by the team, but would be followed by panning movements of the cameras with focus pullers forced to improvise during the action (a major technical challenge when using long lenses). The resulting scene is chaotic, reflecting the nature of the drama; the visual style is strikingly uniform throughout the sequence, with each cut moving to another long-lens angle. The composition of the frame is always untidy: in Figure 5, we see how Loach has successfully captured actor Ian Hart's shock and desperation, but the figure of the Communist officer responsible for the shooting is chopped off at the shoulders.

Fig. 16: Ian Hart in *Land and Freedom* (Ken Loach, 1995)

The scene appears highly 'documentary', with a roughness that we are accustomed to viewing in documentary films. However, this visual style is primarily a product of Loach's strategies around performance, with what Barry Ackroyd calls the 'British documentary camera style' used as a means of recording the spontaneity of the actors' responses.

Loach's social realism is characterised by other striking limitations in the use of the camera, always motivated by the same principles. Loach is adamant that tracking the camera is disruptive to performance. He works to film his scenes in a way that does not require his actors to think about camera acting technique during their performance, and believes that using a dolley and track will distract from the integrity of performance 'because the actors you're following have got to hit their marks; and, as I've said, it's better if they don't have that restriction in their minds' (Fuller: 41). As a director who frequently works with non-actors, an approach that strips out technique clearly has the advantage of making the filming process more accessible to the newcomer. In terms of the camera language of Loach's films, camera movement becomes limited to panning and tilting, with long lens focus-pulls recording the actions of his characters. Such is Loach's commitment to affording freedom to his actors, that he is prepared to greatly limit the range of

cinematic expression (in terms of tracking, jibbing, and crane shots) available to him as a director.

Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne: the 'Corps-caméra'

John Hill has described the use of 'unbroken takes' as a hallmark of social realist film. Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne are directors whose visual style conforms exactly to this characteristic: their approach to each scene is to create a 'plan séquence' that will cover the entire action. Working quite differently from Ken Loach's method, the Dardenne brothers will dedicate several hours of rehearsal on set to developing the long take. Luc Dardenne describes in detail their working process:

> Toward seven or seven-thirty the morning, before the crew arrives, the two of us work through the scene with the actress […] One of us plays cameraman, often with an auxiliary viewer, in search of the frame, while the other works with the actress. Together the three of us compose the shot. Then we call the camera operator, the sound engineer, and the director of photography (Benoît Dervaux, Jean-Pierre Duret, and Alain Marcoën). The director of photography watches, the soundman plots out the movements of the boom, and the cameraman brings along his equipment. All together we start looking again. The cameraman tests the feasibility of our proposals; we look and discuss together. (qtd in Mai: 135)

The films of Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne are characterised by a lack of additional 'coverage' of each scene: there is no shot/reverse shot strategy, no establishing shot, no cut-aways. Each dramatic sequence is dominated by a single continuous take. This carefully-developed visual style offers the spectator the sense that they are witnessing the action exactly as it happened – the reason why the 'long take' has frequently been associated with a documentary style. Joseph Mai is emphatic in asserting the motivation for the use of very extended continuous shots: 'the entire creative practice of the Dardenne brothers is harnessed to the purpose of realism and for them, the long take is a means of achieving this.' (2010: 53)

An interesting contrast emerges here between the creative intentions of Ken Loach and the Dardenne brothers. Whereas Loach is focussed on achieving a transparent realism of performance, Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne's principle aim is to present a sense of realism linked to time. Their use of cinematic techniques is specifically harnessed to persuade the audience that they are living through the drama, which is happening 'live' before them. Luc Dardenne, in his interview on the making of *The Child* (2005), elaborated their intentions:

> We construct the fiction – the framework of the fiction, the setting – as if it's something that we can't control, something that escaped our attention, something that we couldn't make to fit. They [the characters] have lived before they get in front of our camera […] we try to give our viewers the impression that when the film starts the characters already have an autonomous life before we get there. (Wood 2005)

The entry into scenes is often very sudden in a Dardennes film: we open on actions that are already in motion, as if the camera is 'catching' real events in the process of unfolding. The long take then carries us through a dramatic scene and the cut out is frequently just as abrupt as the entry. The length of the shots, and the form of movement choreographed by the Dardenne brothers, situates their work within an understanding of cinematic realism developed in the mid-twentieth century. As Nagib observes,

> The tracking shot has been associated with realism since *Cahiers* critic Luc Moullet, at the dawn of the Nouvelle Vague, coined the famous phrase, 'Morality is a question of tracking shots' (*'La morale est affaire de travellings'*, 1959, p.14) [...] Moullet intended to highlight a filmmaker's commitment to the objective world with all its unpredictable ambiguities. (2011: 29)

The look of the Dardenne brothers' films is markedly different from Loach in several ways. The Dardenne brothers use wider lenses, not the 'observational' long lenses of Barry Ackroyd; their depth of field is very large (a quite

unfashionable visual quality in terms of current cinema). A common stylistic feature, however, is the use of handheld camera, a creative decision that is a common trait within the Social Realist Mode. In the work of Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, the approach to the handheld camera has been very carefully developed over time and deserves close attention.

Handheld camerawork is very often linked to a 'documentary' style and filmmakers have used the technique with the intention of bringing a sense of 'liveness' to feature films. When used by Ken Loach, the handheld camera certainly contributes to the 'observational' quality of his films: the camera operator is outside the action, recording the drama as it unfolds. By contrast, the handheld camera in the Dardenne brothers' films is never treated as an outsider. The Dardennes have established a regular ensemble in the lighting and camera department, based around Director of Photography Alain Marcoën and Camera Operator Benoît Dervaux, and with them they have developed a very specific approach to camera movement. Using a lightweight 35mm camera, Dervaux's movements on set are choreographed with the same precision as the blocking of the actors. Jean-Pierre described, in relation to the filming of *Rosetta* (1999), how, 'he is in the film. He is just like her. He is wearing headphones, so he hears the sound from the boom microphones, just like us.' (Qtd in Mai: 135)

It is very unusual that a camera operator has headphones during a film shoot: most seek to focus their attention solely on the frame and camera movement, with only secondary attention to the dialogue of the scene. But the Dardenne brothers want their operator to experience the scene as if he is taking part in it: the headphones give Dervaux such closeness to the dialogue that his experience is of being within the drama. For Dardenne, the physical movement of the camera operator on set, carrying the handheld camera, are beyond what can be achieved by standard film grip equipment:

> The movements of Benoît Dervaux carrying the camera are more subtle, alive, more felt and complex than any movement created with the help of machinery. His bust, frame, legs, and feet are those of a dancer. With

> Amaury Duquenne (his assistant) who accompanies him and supports his movements, the two form a single body-camera. (qtd in Mai: 55)

This concept of the 'corps-caméra' (or 'body-camera') is key to the Dardenne brothers' film style. Dervaux carries the spectator into the drama, as if participating in it. The choice of wide lens means that he must be physically very close to the actors to frame his shot, and the aperture choice widens the depth of field so that much of the physical environment of the drama is in focus.

A paradox emerges here, in terms of the role that the 'corps-caméra' plays in the spectator's reception of the film. On the one hand, the physicality of the Dervaux's role in the drama, and his closeness to the action, brings the spectator into a highly intimate relationship with the protagonists and the narrative of the film. Joseph Mai, in discussing this with the Dardenne brothers, comments how 'Luc emphasizes the camera as a means of encounter, of contact' (2010: 55). Richard Rushton analyses the sense of proximity to the action that we feel in a Dardennes film, noting Daniel Frampton's assertion that this directly leads to our empathy for the characters (2014: 303). On the other, the result of the Dardenne brothers' use of the camera is distancing. If we consider a traditional approach to the coverage of a scene, a film director will often seek to give the spectator a privileged view, finding camera angles that give access to the emotional reactions of each character, and 'shooting for the edit' – filming a wide enough variation of shots from multiple camera positions, so that the editor can later sculpt the scene to provide the spectator with different characters' outlook on the drama. The 'long take' of a scene in a Dardenne film prevents the spectator from gaining privileged access to the close reactions of multiple characters in a scene. In a 'two-hander' scene, Benoît Dervaux has the option of framing closely on one character (in which case we will never see the reactions of their interlocutor), or loosely on both characters (in which case the spectator cannot closely see the reactions of either). Rushton rightly points out that in the films of Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, we are very frequently presented with the drama in a balanced two-shot:

Fig. 17: Profile 2-shot from *The Unknown Girl* (Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, 2016)

Rushton argues that the manner in which the Dardenne brothers' long take frequently finds such 2-shots has a negative impact on the spectator's access to the drama. This approach to the camera actually serves to, 'retard access to the interior of characters. They do not allow us to get 'inside' a character in the way many Hollywood (and other) films do…we rarely get to see a character face-on.' (2014: 309)

The statement is slightly exaggerated, because in scenes with a solo actor, Benoît Dervaux is able to frame closely on the performance. However, another characteristic of the Dardenne brothers' approach to the film camera, frequently following a protagonist's movements through a scene, again serves to generate a sense of separation, as we have seen in Figure 17, above, and again in *The Child* (2002), in which long takes follow the actor Olivier Gourmet as he moves around the training workshop where he meets his son's killer.

Fig. 18: The shoulders of Olivier Gourmet dominate the frame. *Le Fils/The Son* (Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne, 2002)

While the 'Over-the-shoulder Shot' is a staple of film style, it comes to play a dominant stylistic role in the films of the Dardenne brothers.

This distancing, as in the *verfremdungseffekt*, allows us space to think about the drama as well as emotionally react to it. The constantly moving handheld camera has certain visual similarities with documentary film style, allowing the Dardenne brothers' films to be firmly linked to the traditions of social realist cinema; yet other technical decisions, such as the use of wide lenses (exactly the opposite of the Loach method), represent a radical departure from what Barry Ackroyd has described as a 'documentary camera style'.

The strategy of the 'corps-caméra' achieves the paradoxical result of both intimacy and distance. The physical closeness of the camera to the action brings the spectator tightly within the action, yet the way in which the camera can capture the drama necessarily gives a sense of separation. Rushton finds that the Dardennes approach to the camera creates a 'combination of sympathy and distance' (2014: 310). He develops a theory of what he calls 'empathetic

projection': instead of the emotional engagement experienced in viewing a more traditionally-shot movie, in which the spectator is guided to feel *with* the characters in the drama, the sense of distance that we feel towards the protagonists in a Dardenne brothers film 'allows viewers to empathetically project a great depth of feeling onto or into those characters' (2014: 313). This markedly different mode of engagement in film is achieved through a carefully-developed approach to the use of the film camera by Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne.

Paul Greengrass and the 'reactive camera'

Paul Greengrass has one of the most distinctive approaches to the use of the film camera in popular cinema. He is a director who works in more than one mode, bridging commercial cinema and social realist forms. It is Greengrass's political intention that provides a basis for conceiving several of his films within the Social Realist Mode. Among these are *The Murder of Stephen Lawrence* (1999), *Bloody Sunday* (2002) and *United 93* (2006). Early films in his career developed from subjects that had been part of his documentary work while directing for the television strand, *World In Action* (Granada Television, 1963-98). Greengrass is explicit in describing the political significance of these works. He emphatically affirmed the political reasons for making *Bloody Sunday*, a portrait of the Bogside Massacre of 30th January 1972, when British troops of the Parachute Regiment shot twenty-six civil rights protesters in Northern Ireland, fourteen fatally.

> It seems to me that the legacy of Bloody Sunday -- the meaning of it -- is about the primacy of the civil rights movement. The fact that most of the civil rights movement was destroyed that day, a message that has lived on and has come to fruition today, is a message applicable to many parts of the world. (qtd. in Desowitz)

The origins of the Greengrass camera style – handheld and frenetic – emerged directly from his career as a documentary-maker. Particularly interesting is how he describes the trademark camera style developing together with an approach to delivering the narrative in his films:

> In *The Murder of Stephen Lawrence* film and *Bloody Sunday* I finally found my way, my aesthetic. Handheld, first-person, stripped out dialogue, action-led films of collision and conflict where you're thrust into the action gathering fragments and details along the way, and where the very sparseness of dialogue paradoxically allows characters and theme to emerge more clearly. (David Lean lecture)

Having reached this maturity of film style, and a distinct 'voice' that he has barely deviated from since, Greengrass very clearly recognises the link between his work and social realism. He told his BAFTA audience at the David Lean Lecture in 2014 that his cinema is 'operating within classical British social realist traditions', describing himself as 'very old-fashioned'.

In the staging and filming of sequences, for Greengrass, the 'liveness' of the drama is paramount. In some of his productions, he has staged the action of his films in real time, creating an experience of lived events for both the cast and crew. The journalist Heather Timmons was so struck by the scene on set during the filming of *United 93* (2006) that she depicts it as a real event:

> WITH a violent shudder, the front of a reconstructed Boeing 757 pitches toward the ground. Actors struggle not to slide from their seats, some screaming, one chanting, 'Oh, my God.' A camera flits from seat to seat, stopping to focus on individual vignettes of terror, as an actor playing a hijacker barks, 'Sit down!' over the loudspeaker. (2006)

Timmons's description here of the way the film camera relates to the action is particularly telling. In a Greengrass film shoot, the operator works exactly as would a documentary camera, grabbing moments of drama as they occur. The distinctive attitude to the camerawork is that it is unrehearsed, or must look and feel as such. This contrasts greatly with the carefully-planned shots of other film directors, in which the camera takes a narrative role that positions it as a storyteller aware of the drama that will unfold. Greengrass has clearly codified his approach to the camera, developing his theory of the 'reactive camera'.

> The fundamental difference is between a 'knowing camera' and a 'reactive camera' […] a knowing camera is a storytelling camera […] that's traditional, orthodox camera storytelling. The other type of a camera doesn't know what's going to happen, and is led entirely – and reacts to – what's going to occur […] I like to get the camera as close in as possible and led by the action. So it's reactive, so it's febrile, it's what gives it its 'jittery-ness'. (Greengrass 2013)

A camera operator working with Paul Greengrass may see a sequence rehearsed, but will always react to the action as if s/he has never seen it before. The camerawork is always handheld and there can never be a pan or tilting movement that anticipates an action that is about to occur. In a very real sense, Greengrass's 'reactive camera' records the action exactly as if it were a documentary camera.

Greengrass has worked with a number of high-profile cinematographers in his career, including Ivan Strasburg (*Bloody Sunday*) and Oliver Wood (*The Bourne Supremacy*, 2004), however it has been his relationship with Barry Ackroyd that has cemented the 'reactive camera' style. There is a continuity here between Paul Greengrass and Ken Loach, with whom Ackroyd developed his feature film career, beginning with *Riff Raff* (1991). Paul Greengrass began working with Ackroyd in 2006, on *United 93*, a decision that the director of photography attributes to Greengrass's enthusiasm for the visual style that he had developed with Loach. Certain techniques were imported directly by Ackroyd, such as continuous shooting. In 2006, he shot *The Wind That Shakes the Barley* for Loach and *United 93* for Greengrass. Both directors adopt a strategy of 'liveness' in the staging of scenes and do not want to halt the action once it has begun. However, the directors' decision to shoot on 35mm film for both movies created the problem of reels of film in the camera magazine running out before the end of the sequence. Ackroyd had solved this problem for Loach by the staggered use of multiple cameras:

> We do takes that are long, sometimes more than 10 minutes, and by staggering two cameras we never have to halt the action to reload [...] That way the actors don't have to break their flow. I introduced that concept to Paul Greengrass and we used it on *United 93*. (qtd. in Oppenheimer: 24)

In the sense that the camera operators shoot continuously on a Greengrass or Loach set, there is an overlap with the creative practice of Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne. The major difference is that Benoît Dervaux follows a painstakingly choreographed plan, whereas Barry Ackroyd is at pains to deliver rushes that appear completely unrehearsed. The edited films, however, use the material in very different ways. As we have seen, the Dardenne brothers are committed to the long take, presenting extended sequences to the spectator unmediated by the editing process; Paul Greengrass will edit the rushes into a frenetic, fast-cutting style. This is underscored by research into the cinemetric data of Average Shot Lengths (ASLs). If we compare two films – the Dardennes' 2002 feature, *Le Fils,* and Greengrass's 2006 film *United 93,* we find that the ASL for the former is 68.9 seconds, whereas in the Greengrass it is just 3.9 seconds (and this is one of the longest ASLs of his entire oeuvre). So while the creative practice on set may show similarities with directors in the Social Realist Mode, the outcome can be used to create remarkably different visual styles. However, underlying the different editing styles is a common creative intention of what Joseph Mai calls 'the illusion of spontaneity'. In the work of the Dardenne brothers, he emphasises the directors' care in creating,

> shot compositions that may […] appear random or careless when in fact they are precise. The brothers may have mastered the illusion of spontaneity, improvisation and accidental capture of action, but they studiously plan each of their shots, some of which are extremely difficult to achieve. (2010; 115)

Paul Greengrass's creative method, involving strenuous efforts to create the impression of documentary realism, can accurately be described as an 'illusion of spontaneity'. Although Ackroyd and the other camera operators on his set are

shooting according to the 'reactive camera' principles, the director maintains strict control during shooting. One observer on the set of *United* 93 described his method as this:

> Greengrass directs like a composer. Standing before the two monitors […] he holds a hand before each monitor and directs the cameramen through gestures – gestures which are decoded by his assistant director and radioed to them. (Faraci)

Devin Faraci is actually likening the director to an orchestral conductor, a parallel that is very accurate: the creative moment itself is in the hands of the cast and crew, but their work is not spontaneous, it is constantly responding to the work of the director to mould and shape their process.

In considering the approach to the camera in the Social Realist Mode, I have illustrated both commonalities and disparities in the decision-making of filmmakers. Barry Ackroyd, vividly represents the differences, and a clear example is in the choice of lenses. His films with Ken Loach have all been characterised by the use of long lenses, while when working with Paul Greengrass, Ackroyd pursues a similar goal to that of the Dardenne brothers, using wide lenses and apertures to achieve an extended depth of field (specifically Zeiss and Cooke prime lenses with no neutral density filtration, which would cut down the depth of field). Given such opposing technical choices, is it possible to find an overarching understanding of filmmakers' creative decision-making in the Social Realist Mode? To do so, we must move beyond Hallam and Marshment's simple definition of the genre as having an 'observational style', which fails to capture the complexity of both the intention and the technical processes in this Mode. Their definition might suit the use of the camera on the set of a Ken Loach film shoot, positioned mostly on the periphery and using long lenses to look in on the action, but cannot account for the Dardenne brothers' strategy of bringing the camera right into the action itself, the 'corps-caméra' becoming part of the action not separate from it. In the use of the camera for all social realist filmmakers, the creative intention is best described as the 'illusion of spontaneity'.

When we also consider the two other areas of creative choice discussed in this chapter, the approach to Locations and to Casting, Joseph Mai's concept of the 'illusion of spontaneity' is still useful, but does not sufficiently describe the creative ambitions of social realists. Something that distinguishes their cinema from other forms is that these filmmakers seek to create a sense of realism not just for the spectator but also, very often, for the creative participant in the filmmaking process. We have seen that if possible, the director will choose locations that are precisely the social environment of the characters in the drama; members of the cast may be people from the identical background as the character that they are playing, allowing the performer to 'be themselves' rather than portray a character. In the organisation of a film shoot, social realist directors are known to structure the schedule in order to create a sequence of lived experiences for the performers, rather than organising the efficient shooting of all the scenes in each location in turn. The Dardenne brothers and Ken Loach will always film their scenes in story order. Loach will go so far as to prevent his actors from seeing the script, the performance of each scene becoming an unrehearsed experience. This is not just to enable non-actors to achieve their performance. Loach made *Carla's Song* (1995) with the very established lead actor, Robert Carlyle, but still used a strategy to allow him to perform in the film as a lived experience. In a scene when Carlyle's character, George, returns to the tenement in Glasgow that he shares with his Nicaraguan girlfriend, Loach showed Carlyle the door to the location and asked the actor to enter and find Carla. Ackroyd's camera was positioned to observe Carlyle searching the apartment, until - to his horror – he finds the body of Carla lying with slit wrists in the bath. The shock of Robert Carlyle is real, not performed. The author Samantha Lay has described social realism's attempts 'to create a text which aims to look unreconstructed' (2002: 90): in the practice of the Social Realist Mode this frequently goes further, deploying strategies to make performances, locations and camerawork actually, not apparently, unreconstructed.

The creative practice of the Social Realist Mode thus becomes an extreme process of creating realism. For this reason the Mode is particularly important in a wider theoretical understanding of cinematic realism itself. Nagib provides a powerful

argument that such a creative engagement with the real gives this form of cinema an ethical dimension:

> I will argue that film crews and casts who choose to produce rather than reproduce reality and to commit themselves to unpredictable events are moved by an ethics that Alain Badiou has defined as 'an active fidelity to the event of the truth' (*Being and Event* 2006: xiii). (Nagib 2017: 312)

Although directors working in the Social Realist Mode may use a different language when reflecting on the motivations underlying their filmmaking intentions, this concept of the 'event of the truth' is clearly evident within the creative strategies of their film productions. These directors are not just moved to use cinema as a social-political voice, they are ethically committed to creating a truth effect through realism.

This chapter has demonstrated that several of Nagib's terms ('physical engagement on the part of crew and cast with the profilmic event; the near identity between the cast and their roles; real location shooting' (2017: 13)) are identifiably part of what I have termed the Social Realist Mode. We can also observe here a relatively rare coalescence of thought between film theoreticians and film practitioners. Just as Nagib has emphasised the centrality of film practice in defining realism in cinema, so too has Ken Loach described his filmmaking practice as central to the meaning and significance of his films. In interview with Graham Fuller, Loach states that 'The way you make a film is an important way of validating the ideas in it' (1998: 114). For him, as a politically committed social realist, the methods and creative practices deployed in the making of his films are bound up with his intentions for his movies. The 'Social Realist Mode' can therefore be seen as a coherent set of film practices that has the additional purpose of being central to the filmmakers' definition of the genre of film in which they are working.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion

This thesis makes a bold claim, in which I propose that the concept of the Modes of Creative Practice constitutes a cogent strategy for organising the varied filmmaking methodologies of directors into separate classifications of types. In concluding this thesis, I will examine the ways in which the concept succeeds, or fails, in this task, and look at the usefulness of the results of this project to authors and film directors. This chapter will also reflect on the research methodologies employed during this project, in particular creative practice research, in considering the broader findings of the study.

In evaluating the claim of this thesis, there are key fundamentals against which it should be tested. Most importantly, due to the nature of a study that wishes to express a practical understanding of exactly how films are made, this theoretical proposition must rest on empirical foundations. Here, I am led by the example of the brilliant and nonconformist film cameraman and theoretician, Barry Salt, who asserted that, in discussing our theoretical approaches to film, we should always insist on 'the critical use of rational and logical thinking in inspecting one's theories, and also the careful comparison of those theories with the real world.' (1992: 2)

However, while Salt's dictum is valuable in its insistence on an empirical foundation to theories of film practice, he implicitly proposes a separation of the theoretical and the real world. His statement imagines the logical mind creating a theory, which is then evaluated against the conditions of the world that it addresses. This conception differs from that of Desmond Bell, whose discussion of creative practice research offers an alternative perspective: 'Theorisation can only be arrived at through an attentive understanding of what artists actually do when they make work' (2006: 96). Bell's assertion is that the root of theoretical propositions must be in the prior attention to the detail of creative practice, and he explicitly states that any theory that has not been derived on this basis is invalid. His proposition is relevant to this thesis, because the concept of the Modes of Creative Practice stems from a close analysis of filmmaking techniques, as well as

some of my own understanding based on my professional experience as a director. Throughout my research I have strived to base the development of this theoretical model on the actual conditions within the independent film production sector, relating it to the real world as experienced by directors, actors and film professionals.

Effectiveness of the Modes of Creative Practice as a system of classification

The model proposed in this thesis, the Modes of Creative Practice, has been developed with the intention of creating a conceptual system for scholars and filmmakers to organise film practice in the future. To work effectively as a coherent system of classification within this intellectual space, we must look at the established principles of taxonomies and evaluate the Modes against these standards. If we look at some of the foundational concepts behind taxonomies, the structure of the Modes of Creative Practice does indeed fit into the intellectual relationships expected within such systems of classification. A classification will always be organised into a broader type and sub-types: within my theory of filmmaking, the broader category under review can be defined as 'forms of fiction filmmaking practice'; the Modes of Creative Practice are designed to operate as subtypes of the overall category - to be specific they operate as universally quantified conditionals of the broader type. An explanation of this form of relationship is the interaction between two statements, such as 'a cat is a mammal' meaning the same as 'all cats are mammals'. As we can follow a similar logical path to the statement, 'all Modes of Creative Practice are forms of fiction filmmaking practice', the conceptual foundations of this taxonomy appear to be sound.

In the introduction to this thesis, I drew on the work of Bowker and Star in their analysis of systems of classification. The particular value of the work by Bowker and Star is their generalised analysis of systems, rather than the field-specific studies that characterise the work of other authors investigating taxonomies. Bowker and Star describe three distinct qualities that are required to make such a system of classification coherent:

1. *There are consistent, unique classificatory principles in operation […]*

2. *The categories are mutually exclusive […]*
3. *The system is complete.* (1999: 10)

Examining these three principles, the concept of the Modes of Creative Practice is found wanting. Although the classificatory principles are clear and consistent (each mode is defined by its particular forms of creative practice or the specific organisation and methods of the film production process), the theory fails to fulfil the second and third qualities. I have argued that the Modes of Creative Practice are a system of classifying filmmaking that allows for considerable levels of overlap: compelling examples of this emerge when we address the working methods of, for example, a Performance-Centred director such as Mike Leigh when he undertakes a historical film project that demands his engagement in practices within the Design-Centred Mode[27]. The system of classification thus violates the second of Bowker and Star's principles, which insists that the categories be mutually exclusive. However, in the field of film studies, an appreciation of the fluid boundaries between the Modes is essential when analysing the complex and personally-driven forms of filmmaking practice developed by individual film directors.

As a nascent theory of film practice, what I have not yet constructed is a network of Modes which, in total, equate to the entirety of fiction filmmaking practice. Here, the theory of the Modes of Creative Practice fails to comply with the third principle in Bowker and Star's list. Considering their third statement, that 'the system is complete', I consider that the task of developing an all-encompassing account of all forms of filmmaking practice will most likely be impossible: the idiosyncrasies of film directors may render the task unending and the evolving nature of creative methods may further complicate the proposal.

Thus, I am forced to accept that the concept of the Modes of Creative Practice will never succeed in fulfilling the requirements established by Bowker and Star. However, in relation to the three principles, the authors add that, 'No real-world

[27] For instance, Leigh's films, *Topsy Turvy* (1999), *Vera Drake* (2004), *Mr. Turner* (2014) and *Peterloo* (2018).

working classification system that we have looked at meets these 'simple' requirements and we doubt that any ever could' (1999: 11). So the validity of the theory built within this thesis is thankfully saved by the necessity for a pragmatic rather than an idealist interpretation of classification theory. Bowker and Stark suggest frankly to theoreticians striving to build a model of classification that they 'get out of the loop of trying to emulate a distant perfection' (1999: 321). Instead, I base the validity of the theory of Modes of Creative Practice on both its academic rigour and its relevance to filmmaking practitioners.

At the beginning of this thesis, I posed the research question, *is there a limitless multiplicity of forms of creative practice, or a single framework for all productions, or groupings of types of practice?* From the outset of this study, I have been working towards a grouping of types of creative practice in filmmaking. My work began with an assumption: when researching the proposed Performance-Centred Mode, I started from an idea based on my personal observations as a director in television drama and film: that certain directors give an unusual emphasis to the role of the actor in their creative process. I then used the research process, through interviews and secondary reading, to investigate whether this assumption was valid and whether such an approach to the art of film directing could be built into a clearly-identifiable mode of practice. We have seen from the results of this research how directors' emphasis on their engagement with actors during key 'performance stages' of filmmaking stands them apart. The casting process is completely redesigned by directors in this mode; rehearsal in preproduction is extensive, quite unlike the practices of mainstream filmmaking; approaches such as devising script content and dialogue with the cast are introduced to film production, developing a practice seen only in some areas of experimental theatre. The Performance-Centred Mode as a distinctive type of film practice can be clearly identified and I have worked to define its attributes.

The strongest evidence that substantiates this case comes from my interviews with screen professionals. A particularly interesting feature of my research has been the discovery that current practitioners find the theory useful in understanding their own work. With the Performance-Centred Mode, we have seen how,

- the casting director, Kharmel Cochrane, found the concept of the Performance-Centred Mode useful in helping her describe the different working practices of directors with whom she had worked;
- the director, Federico Godfrid, found the Performance-Centred Mode a good description of the creative emphasis of his own film practice;
- the actor, Elizabeth Berrington, found that her experience of different directors' methods of working with actors reflected the differentiation of the Performance-Centred Mode from mainstream film practice.

In their description of systems of classification, Bowker and Star stress that utility is a key function of successful taxonomical forms, so it is important that this thesis has shown its relevance to the practice of working filmmakers. This is despite that fact that the concept of the modes is an innovation, so current filmmakers have not been introduced to the term, nor have directors yet embarked on film projects with a mode of practice as a part of their deliberate creative intentions. However, by identifying clear variations in filmmaking practice, this study has demonstrated that creative practices can be grouped separately and that we can define clear characteristics that are distinctive to each mode.

A second research question that has driven this study has been, *what form of taxonomy of creative practices can be consistent with the research findings on directors' approaches to filmmaking?* Here, I think it is important to understand that although the theory of the Modes of Creative Practice stands scrutiny, within the types that it has identified there is a degree of variability. For instance, in outlining the Social Realist Mode, we have seen some very stark alterations to mainstream filmmaking practice, with the adoption of alternative techniques of staging fictional sequences, in which strategies are used to enable actors to deliver completely natural, 'unperformed performances'. However, directors in this mode are seen to apply different conceptual approaches to the role of the film camera. Most frequently, this is an adoption of documentary-style camera work. Certain filmmakers pursuing the notion of the camera as a witness of the real have concluded that using a long-lens to view the action from afar is most appropriate.

Yet in the filmmaking practice of the Dardenne brothers the same logic leads to a different use of the camera, creating a close-lensed 'plan-séquence' and the development of the sophisticated concept of the 'corps-caméra'.

A third research question that began this study was, *can a coherent structure for understanding the methods with which film directors create their movies be developed into a cogent theory of film practice?* This thesis answers this question positively with the Modes of Creative Practice as a means of describing and analysing filmmaking. However, in order for it to fit with our broad knowledge of directors and their work, the theory must also take account of individuality and practice methods that are deliberately unconventional. In each of the three modes developed in this study, a clear set of filmmaking practices are identifiable. Nevertheless, the directors in each mode cannot be said to share identical approaches to film practice; this is not the proposition of this thesis. There is space within each of the theoretical constructs to allow for variation in filmmakers' creative processes. The need to understand film directors as unique and individual artists, while also trying to conceive them as working within a particular Mode of Creative Practice, is a necessary qualification of this theoretical construct.

An example is in my study of the Design-Centred Mode, which began with a close analysis of key directors including Baz Luhrmann, whose creative process illustrates major changes in filmmaking practice within this mode. This revealed the reorientation of creative priorities and the changing relationships in a production team, with the production designer involved at an earlier stage of preproduction and even in script development. The locus of authorship of a movie becomes shared between the director and design department. In the case of Luhrmann and Catherine Martin, this extends to the pair working as co-producers on their movies in a firmly established Design-Centred Mode that differs starkly from other collaborations in mainstream cinema. They are perhaps the most prominent filmmakers who have operated consistently in the Design-Centred Mode throughout their careers, but they appear to be an exemplar of the mode rather than a standard to which others conform. It is instructive to observe the different creative relationships developed by directors who move in and out of the

mode, such as the British director Stephen Frears. A key creative relationship in Frears's career is with the costume designer, Consolata Boyle. Together, they have created several historical dramas, including *Florence Foster Jennings* (2016) and *Victoria and Abdul* (2017), during which an unusual creative dynamic has developed. Instead of the director developing heightened design skills and an increased collaboration with his art department team, as in the Luhrmann-Martin relationship, Frears responds to the design-centred priorities of such films by shifting creative authority towards his design team. As reported in the Daily Telegraph (2016), Frears describes his light-touch relationship with Consolata Boyle: 'I barely need to speak to her as I know what she's doing is going to be dazzling.' The director displays a generous sense of confidence and trust, but it is as if Boyle is a semi-detached, almost-free creative agent in the design process of Frears's films. In terms of creative authorship, this indicates a process in the Design-Centred Mode in which a director's collaborators may play a greatly enhanced role but without the hand-in-glove cooperation as we have seen in the Luhrmann-Martin partnership. If shifting qualities of creative collaboration are observable in the Design-Centred Mode, my own practice research was able to identify further insights.

The role and value of practice research

Central to my research into the Design-Centred Mode was my practice research in the making of the short film, *The Burning*. As a researcher and filmmaker, this was a vital moment that allowed my ideas about the creative modes to be lived in my experience of film production. In this sense, the value of the Design-Centred Mode as an element of my proposed system – Bowker and Star's box 'into which things can be put to then do some kind of work' (1999: 10) – was proven in the process of the work that my team achieved during the making of *The Burning*. To conclude this practice research, I will evaluate the process and benefits of this methodology. In examining the ways in which the mode's particular qualities were made evident to me, I will adopt the strategy described by Smith and Dean in which they emphasise that such practice research requires filmmakers to 'reflect on and document their own creative practice' (2009: 5).

It was self-evident that the nature of the tasks confronting me in the creation of *The Burning* was different from any other filmmaking experience that I had encountered. Creating a convincing cinematic portrayal of sixteenth century rural England required a range of design expertise that I had not developed in my earlier career. I began the research process six months ahead of the production, visiting the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum near Chichester, an institution that has dismantled original historic buildings from across the region and rebuilt them in a valley outside the village of Singleton. There, I found an overlap of intentions between the curators of the museum and my creative ambitions for *The Burning*: we shared an interest in the authentic representation of rural life in the sixteenth century. I was able to move through a landscape that had been created to reflect a historic village's economy and society; I could hold tools and sit on wooden furniture in the design of the period. From the museum, I learnt about key aspects of the physical environment that my characters must inhabit. Most significantly, the research pointed towards issues of light and colour: it was the darkness of domestic interiors and the convergence of colour tones in a limited palette based on wood, mud and plant-based textile dyes that had most creative impact on me.

During this research, I encountered a qualitative difference between the familiar process of location scouting for a film and the heightened design and location research required in the Design-Centred Mode. Looking at sixteenth-century buildings in the Weald and Downland Museum was, in one respect, an exact parallel to the normal preproduction stage of location scouting. During this stage, a director will visit locations and attempt to creatively re-imagine the script's drama in those environments. However, my practice research revealed to me the many additional layers of consideration that are integral to the Design-Centred Mode. Levels of understanding and imagination are magnified: in making a historical drama, such as *The Burning*, this involved accumulating considerable knowledge about the period and then imagining how characters would use the spaces around them differently. This included how the characters moved physically in the interior spaces and how social order would influence behaviour. A reality that the Weald and Downland research demonstrated to me was the small number of objects in a sixteenth century domestic interior: in the period before

manufacturing, a household had many fewer props. The impact of this for the film was the intensified cinematic significance of individual objects (in *The Burning* this includes the preacher's prayer book and the village girl's hair pin). Such issues hugely expanded the creative considerations within a period of preproduction that for a contemporary drama would have been simply about finding suitable locations. If the Design-Centred film project were a scifi or fantasy, this stage of preproduction would involve imaginatively creating the physical environments and the fundamental rules that govern them – again, extensive creative tasks that are specific to filmmaking in the Design-Centred Mode.

An unexpected outcome of my research process for *The Burning* was that the Weald and Downland Museum offered me a solution to the major set-building challenge of my production – it would act as a film studio lot for *The Burning*. The offer was hugely significant for a very low-budget short film production and for this reason alone was compelling. However, as the film's director, I had already begun to re-imagine the drama of the script within the environment of the Selbourne valley and was creatively happy to locate the story there. These unforeseen circumstances then shifted the research focus of the project: with the locations and sets secured, a large proportion of the design task of producing *The Burning* was complete, however the major outstanding issue was costume design. I have described many of the research outcomes of this journey in Chapter Four. For this conclusion, I will reflect further on the insights gained during the process of the film's production.

Creative practice research is embedded in the personality of the practitioner undertaking the research; it is moulded by their interests and creative intentions. As a director in a mode of filmmaking that was unfamiliar to me, I wanted to be involved in some of the practical tasks of the costume-making for *The Burning*. The costume department included people with considerable skills in design and sewing; I could complement these resources if my contribution was the dyeing of the cloth for the costumes. This task drew on my interests in colour: the palette of the film had become especially important to me during the early research phase at the Weald and Downland Museum. Emerging through this practice research was

the development of my personal engagement in the design of the film. I discovered that I was not a director such as Stephen Frears, who gives his design team almost complete autonomy in the creation of costumes for his films; I was a Design-Centred film director who wants to research the design issues of a movie in depth and then become personally involved in the practical and tactile processes of costume-making. In Chapter Four, I have described the variations in director-design department relationships in the Design-Centred Mode – the practice research methodology enabled me to explore the subtle differences in these creative collaborations and to discover my personal reconfiguration of professional relationships when working in the mode.

The costume designer working on *The Burning* was Sophia Johnson. Before this film project, we had never worked together. At the time of the film's production - the practice research for this thesis - I had not yet identified the quality of the director-designer relationship as a distinctive feature of the Design-Centred Mode. It is therefore valuable to reflect on our collaboration in order to demonstrate the usefulness of this methodology in exploring the particular team relationships within this Mode of Creative Practice.

My enthusiasm for research into the design of the clothing worn by farmers and agricultural labourers in sixteenth century England was matched by Sophia Johnson, a fact that cemented our creative relationship. As described in Chapter Four, I set up a specialist workshop in period clothing led by Dr. Cathy Flower-Bond. Attendance at this workshop was not limited to the costume design team: I was a keen participant as well as other members of the production. Johnson had not created sixteenth century period costumes before and was fascinated by the detailed insights offered by Flower-Bond. Following the workshop, we planned together the costume making tasks for *The Burning*, with Johnson being supported by co-designer Rosie Rogers and additional costume makers.

Fig.19 – Close collaboration between director and costume department: (L-R) Dominic Lees, Sophia Johnson, Rosie Rogers.

When planning the division of labour, my decision to cement myself as a participant within the costume team stemmed from my own enthusiasms; furthermore, the low-budget character of the production meant my practical contribution was of significant value. Reflecting on this practice research, I am aware that as a director working in the Design-Centre Mode, I was instinctively building a heightened creative relationship with the key figures in the film's design team. The nature of producing a historical drama and the particular exigencies of the Design-Centred Mode led me to alter the professional relationships for this project. This contrasted with my earlier professional experiences in broadcast television drama and film productions, in which the separation of departmental responsibilities is clearly defined and respected. The making of *The Burning* had the advantages of an independent film production, in which the relationships and processes of filmmaking could be altered from conventional norms. Within this context, our roles could be shifted in order to follow the particular requirements of our design-centred film project.

My creative relationship with Sophia Johnson did not develop to the point of that seen in the Baz Luhrmann-Catherine Martin collaboration, however it was characterised by close co-working on the actual creation of costumes – something

that would be quite exceptional in director-costume designer relationships found in mainstream film production. I am led to the conclusion that there is a spectrum of intensity of collaboration in the Design-Centred Mode, across which the locus of authorship may vary and the nature of the creative practice may change. At one extreme, Stephen Frears acknowledges the huge scale of the costume design task in his design-centred films, but chooses against his close engagement in the department, empowering Consolata Boyle to take sole charge. At the other, I am a director who will become involved in both the research and the practical tasks of costume making. The shifting of creative authorship varies likewise: both Boyle and Martin have taken a major role in generating the design concepts of their directors' feature films and their creative contribution to their films is commensurably heightened; Sophia Johnson was responsible for the single most important aspect of the design of *The Burning* so had a similar expanded role in the creative authorship of the film, but the creative practice was more shared with her director in comparison with Boyle and Martin.

The value of practice research to the development of these insights has been its role in providing me with the ability to compare my own experience of the Design-Centred Mode with that of directors and designers that I have studied. The methodology provides a form of primary research that has enabled explorations of the processes of the mode from within its practice: as a director, I have experienced the increased burdens that design-centred production imposes on filmmakers and observed how I respond to these requirements. On a personal level, this project has also enabled me to discover the changing nature of my own practice as a filmmaker when working in this mode. The production has left me with a heightened awareness of the role of costume as an expressive tool in creating film and an understanding of the practical means of exploiting its potential.

One of my intentions in developing this theory of film practice has been to propose a way of conceiving filmmaking that is useful to practitioners. In Chapter Two, I analysed the value of Bill Nichols's theory of documentary modes to filmmakers in that field, looking at the example of Mark Isaacs's film, *Lift* (2001) which overtly

refers to aspects of Nichols's work. The theory of Modes of Creative Practice in narrative fiction is in its infancy, yet during the small number of interviews for this thesis I have already seen the potential for its relevance to feature film professionals. This project has ambitions to achieve significance both within the academy and within the practice of future filmmakers. These broad aims lie beyond the scope of a doctoral thesis, but indicate the role of this research as a foundation for future development. In conclusion, I will outline the potential future directions of this research.

A further intention of this research has been to develop a tool that may be useful to film scholars in analysing the history of filmmaking. One function of my proposed system of classification for film practice is to retrospectively understand better the practices of film directors across the past century. A taxonomy can play a useful role, here: in her development of a taxonomy of fantasy literature, Farah Mendlesohn writes that 'the divisions […] are validated by their ability to map the past – hindsight as a valid critical tool' (2002:169). I hope that the Modes of Creative Practice will add a new consideration for authors analysing the work of individual film directors.

The central chapters of this thesis have developed three Modes: the Performance-Centred, Design-Centred and Social Realist Modes of film practice. My decision to research into these three areas of feature film production was derived from a broad observation that directors' methods in these Modes can vary from mainstream norms in ways that might allow for a systematic distinction of forms of practice. However, I should stress that these are by no means the only Modes that might be identified. This thesis is the beginning of a larger research project that will aim to develop a clearer understanding of creative practice in other areas of feature film production. In Chapter 4, I discussed how the practices around digital visual effects (DVFX) might provide a rich direction of future research, and perhaps the delineation of these practices as a distinct Mode. Another Mode of Creative Practice that I will seek to address in future research will be classified as 'kinetic cinema', typified by the Wachowski siblings, Michael Bay and certain directors from the French 'cinéma du look'. Such a mode would step beyond the

research limitation of independent cinema established in this thesis, however the huge technical complexity of the filmmaking undertaken by these directors creates a distinct body of skills and creative approaches should be addressed within our understanding of film practice.

A question that further research will also need to confront is the derivation of the Modes of Creative Practice. I have taken upon myself the role of defining the Modes, but such an external voice may not be the safest in determining the realities of film production. Desmond Bell's approach to the theoretical understanding of creative practice argues that the development of a theory must be linked to a process of close observation of practice. Extrapolating from this, there is an implication that a solidly-founded theory of film practice should be based on a reflexive relationship between the creative practitioner and the work of the theoretician. Future research around the Modes of Creative Practice must therefore develop a process of testing the basis for each mode against the experience of a range of film directors within each form. This in turn will lead to the flow of supplementary ideas into the theory from practitioners themselves, allowing for a degree of fluidity in the definition of each Mode over time. I noted in Chapter Two that Bill Nichols's documentary modes shifted (or, in some cases, expired) during his twenty years of theoretical work in his field, and I expect a similar dynamic within the development of the Modes of Creative Practice. Further potential research development in this ongoing project will look in detail at how the qualities of different Modes impact on the working practice of Heads of Departments in the production of films, not just directors. In this thesis, I have discussed how the work of a casting director, location manager, actor and production designer are altered by the mode of practice adopted by a director; further scope for research will allow greater detail of the nature of each Mode of Creative Practice through the perspective of other crew members.

The academic significance of this doctoral research is already beginning to be witnessed. The extended timeframe of the research period for this thesis has allowed me to contribute articles to academic journals that introduce some of my research findings to a wider audience. In 2016, my article, 'Cinema and

authenticity: anxieties in the making of historical film', published in the *Journal of Media Practice*, looked at the findings from my practice research in the making of my short film, *The Burning*. The article highlighted the requirement in the Design-Centred Mode for directors to develop unusual depths of understanding of elements of production design; it also elaborated the theoretical issues around verisimilitude in historical filmmaking. The practice research element for this thesis provided the substantial content of a conference paper at the University of Birmingham, 'Practice research in the making of historical film drama', in the same year. More recently, I have introduced the concept of the Performance-Centred Mode in an article on 'Improvisation in filmmaking practice' that has been published in *Media Practice and Education* (2019). In the process of submitting the piece to the journal, it has been interesting to see how the utility of the concept of Modes of Creative Practice is apparent to academics in the field. To quote an anonymous peer-review reader of the manuscript, 'The focus on a 'performance-centred mode' enables the author to identify the relationship between this method / approach to directing film actors and research plans / outcomes across the creative arts' (Anon 2019). For this reader, a broad understanding of improvisation is aided by a theory of filmmaking based on the concept of the Modes of Creative Practice. The implication of the reader's comment is that the theoretical proposal of this doctoral thesis may provide a tool for much wider-ranging enquiry around research practice in the arts – an outcome of my project that was not predicted at its outset.

Impact on Pedagogy

An outcome intention that was built into this research project from its inception was the potential impact of a theory of Modes of Creative Practice on the pedagogical approaches adopted by film schools and other institutions committed to the training of filmmakers. For teachers of filmmaking, I believe the categories of the Modes that I have outlined in this thesis will provide a useful conceptual basis from which further pragmatic strategies of educational delivery may be developed. Currently in film schools, a linear process of training in preproduction, production and postproduction skills sits at the core of the curriculum, alongside broader education in the context and culture of international cinema, with

individual institutions showing small deviations from this norm. While this is useful at a foundation and intermediate level of film training, the Modes of Creative Practice will allow advanced students to engage in the careful manipulation of the processes that they use in the making of their films. The Modes provide a platform for understanding the many alternative methods that film practitioners can deploy, as well as being a springboard for experimentation and innovation. The beginnings of this impact of my doctoral research on film pedagogy has come with an invitation from the world film schools association, CILECT[28], to write a chapter for its forthcoming edited volume, *21st Century Film, TV and Media School Book – Volume 2: Directing*. This chapter is entitled, 'Many ways of directing a film: teaching the 'Modes of Creative Practice'. I hope that it will signal the beginning of the next stage in the development of the ideas that I have researched in the preparation of this doctoral thesis.

[28] 'Centre Internationale de Liaison des Écoles de Cinéma et Télévision'

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Appendix A

Interview with Federico Godfrid, Munich 18th November 2015

DL: *Your method: is it for a particular kind of film?*

FG: I don't know – maybe. In 2000, I made my final 30' film for my studies. After a year of work, very stressful, I saw my movie and I said: that's not the movie I want to make… I was unhappy with the performance, with the script, with all. After that, I started to direct $50 theatre, after that experience. After one year…it was a success for me. It cost me. I started to realise that we can do it… we can make a theatre play by just getting together people and do it – some coffee and work. From that time for seven years, every year I made a play, and at the same time I was teaching at the school – acting for movies – but I don't make any movie. It's very difficult to do a movie because of the budget, it's not just fifty dollars and a group of actors. After seven years of doing plays, and travelling with the plays all over our country, I was with my partner, the co-director of this movie…I was at La Tigre Chaco, a small town in the north of our country…there someone organised a theatre festival. We went there, to the festival, in the afternoons we said: this is the right time to write our movie. I tell Juan in that moment, maybe we can find a way to be here with a group of actors and technicians and write a movie here. We told that to the people of culture of La Tigre Chaco and they were – like, flash! – yes, here, that's possible. We returned to Buenos Aires and they started calling us; we said, we have to go there and write in the space. They said, Come on!

The two of us take a bus, on the bus we wrote the synopsis – we have to write something for the space, the space inspires us. The movie was about a boy who was running out of Buenos Aires, we don't know why, but the time he spent in that town waiting for his father he meets his old girlfriend from his childhood and his family relatives. In fifteen days we wrote something, we went back to Buenos Aires and started to cast with a kind-of-script. It was really weird, that script, and we found the two leading characters; and with the two leading characters we went to La Tigra and started work with them there.

DL: *So why did you take the actors to La Tigra? You are still working on the script, so why did you need to work with them there?*

A: There was a script, but when you start to improvise these scenes, to really work it and improve it, it starts to change. A lot of things change – at the beginning, he went to stay in La Tigra at the house of the carpenter, but when we go with actors we found an incredible woman – 74 year old – so they will stay with her, the script changes.

DL: *Important to your method is your attitude to script – you, Federico, feel that this is something to collaborate with , it is not for you as writers to finish it.*

FG: We always try to get the better script… In the middle of the shooting, everything will change too.

There is an anecdote, the end scene between the two brothers (the younger brother that he met when he returns to La Tigra) it will be on the swimming pool. When we come to La Tigra, we discovered a drought. When we went to the swimming pool, it was completely without water and a chicken in the swimming pool. We tried to take the chicken out, and we realised, this is the final scene… The only way that this appears in the movie is to go to the space and be inspired by the space – same for the directors, the screenwriters and the actors. We try to encourage the actors to do the same thing that we are doing,. We say to them, we are not the kind of directors who have the truth, who tell you – no we are doing a collaborative work. The actors say: what do you think about this? I say, Let's try it. There is one scene and we said to the actors: this is your last scene together – you do it. The actors were very worried, during a week they tried to write what would happen in that scene. Then one day they showed us, and we said, that's interesting; we changed a few things that they showed us, and then we shot it.

DL: *Tell me how you developed your second script.*

FG: We went to my father's seaside place. Off season it's completely empty. After six months I thought we had the final script, but…then we did the casting. In the script, the character is a young mother. When I saw Violetta Lucas (actress), I thought, she's a little young…she'd never be a mother. I thought it's more strong, what's between her and him, so we rewrote a fundamental thing about the character. She's four years younger, she has no son, everything is different. Everything started to change after the appearance of the cast. After that, when we

had the three leading actors…we went to the locations and stay with three of them, eight days, and rehearse each part of the film.

DL: *Is this whole process about creating the trust between director and actors?*

FG: Yes, because I'm talking about the bond between directors, characters and actors. Yes, it's about trust.

DL: *Why is the journey essential in your filmmaking practice?*

FG: It's essential to go away from your everyday life. Why? – because your everyday life has routines. You like to be in your home in the same way: watch facebook, take the metro, dinner in your house. There is something about your everyday life, and I think it's important to cut with that. So one of the ways to cut with that is to make a journey, because when you make a journey you start to perceive the space and time in another form. I think time behaves in another way: the day is longer, and you start to perceive that. When you're in your day-to-day life you don't see it. It's interesting when you be like stranger and you immerse in space and time.

DL: *...for you personally as a director/writer. But why the actors as well?*

FG: Because the same thing. The actors, when we rehearse in the space where we live, they come from another rehearsal, may be with another movie, they have kids… Two hours rehearsal and then, 'See you tomorrow'. When we are out of our day-to-day life, that starts to change. What should we do? Suddenly we start to work and work and work. If you're in your usual place, your work is not fluid in the same way that when you get out.

DL: *What's the goal, what are you trying to achieve?*

FG: Different things. Once the movie will be shooting in a new space, so the first thing is to perceive the new space and try to feel comfortable with it. Immerse yourself in the new context, in the new culture, and perceive what will happen to you in this place.

DL: *You decide the location of the film. Then in preproduction you take your actors –to help them prepare character? Or the script? Or is it for you?*

FG: For me it is to prepare several things. One of the things is the character, the bond between the actor and her character – that's one of the principal issues that we travel for. So if the script take you to your dead mother's house – you need time for that: the first step is the actor sees the space. There is an anecdote by

Kieslowski, that when he shot *Three Colours: Red*, he met with Irene Jacob in the room where she would shoot the movie, one month before the shoot. And he said what do you think about the room? - Oh, I like it, but I don't know… Well, I want you to bring your stuff of your home here. So the actress brought her stuff there and then she asked him to live in that location for a month. And he said okay. I don't know if it's true – but that's what I try to do. Be with actors in the place. You have to feel the place – the actor and the character.

DL: *At this point the actor has read the early draft… Then what changes?*

FG: A lot of things change. The actor in realistic films, like this one, there has to be a moment where I, the director, cannot perceive whether the actor is behaving as himself of his character. They start to converge…the characters start to live in the place. Part of their behaviour is to be there. So what is written starts to change. Also with relationships: the relationships between characters start to converge with the relationships between actors. The actors' relationship I want for the script. And I work with the actors' relationship. So if I know, for example, that the young brother love the older brother. And there was such a situation that the older brother was with a girl and he said that he hadn't slept with her. And I talked to the younger brother, I tell him, "he fucked her, obviously" – "no, no!" – "Why not?" – "No, no he told me" – "You believe it? Come on, you believe that? – "Yes" – "You are a Younger Brother".

Was that just a note, like a director? … I showed him that, so he can start to work with that. It's a kind of mixture, day by day you don't know what is real, what is fiction.

DL: *These are professional actors?*

FG: They have experience. I'm always deconstructing the actor. I don't let the actor construct the character like one block after another. So I try that he feels like he doesn't know what he's doing. I need that fear in the actors, that's part of the process. After this process of preproduction the actor is safe with his character. So when the shooting start I will do something to… so the actor has fear. Don't be sure, if you're sure the movie will be dead.

DL: *They created their characters, they created their relationship. You rewrite your script –*

FG: - On the basis of my observations. The other part is, in that place appears a lot of characters that are from the place. I don't like the movies where the actor constructs his character, and then the movie, they shoot it, it is the same. It's important that each actor bring each character. So from the very beginning, when I do the casting, I look what the actors bring me in the image that I have of the character, but it's too different each actor, and the relationship, and the scene, is completely different.

DL: *You make a decision of trust.*

FG: I do three casting meetings with the actors, I don't trust the first day.

DL: *You know these guys will change your film, you take them on the journey and you show them the place. Do you rehearse scenes from the film, in the place?*

FG: Yes. But only on the third day. The first two days we don't take the script. We wander, go bowling, drink some beers, don't act, try to perceive the others. The third day we start to read the script and try some scenes in the spaces. I ask them, how do you feel it? And they tell me, but sometimes I feel that they are afraid, I have to say Have confidence, it's okay just do it.

DL: *You are giving them control of their character?*

FG: Yes.

DL: *How much power do you give the actor?*

FG: I give them all the power of the character – but at the end, I have the power. Though I let them go to wherever they want. Sometimes they propose things that I say, yes, you're right. At other times, no – you have to let them work, but you have to direct it.

Appendix B

Interview with Elizabeth Berrington. Brixton, 5th December 2016

DL: *You have mentioned how impressed you are with the quality of performance in imported TV drama compared with the UK. Why do you think this is?*

EB: There's a great difference in styles in the way actors are taught in Eastern Europe, in Australia, in America, for instance, and so those ideas that Stanislavsky had that were then taken to the States and developed, that work became so incredibly sophisticated that actors are trained there in the Meisner technique…it's not really something thing that we have a handle on here. It's a long time since I've been to a British drama school but my feeling is that there are little tiny pockets of it, where people are working in that way. For the most part, that isn't something that's taught, so actors don't learn it and directors don't learn it.

DL: *So you are aware, as an actor in the UK, that directors you are working with, you can assume they won't be versed in the Lee Strasberg tradition*.

EB: Yes: and 98% of the actors that you work with as well. So the English style, I feel…tends to be a bit more of a cerebral response, in order to discover the work.

DL: *Do you think your way into the character?*

EB: It depends on the nature of the piece, so if it's a quite formulaic piece – one of the shows that by its nature have to be produced quickly and their scripts have to be realised quickly… if you're fortunate enough to get one of those jobs – those bread and butter jobs… to an extent you are left to your own devices. So you've auditioned, with your Director and Producer, and they have seen your performance and they're happy that what you've done in that audition space is what you're going to bring on the first day of filming, with a little bit more polish. They are entrusting you to just get on with it. And my main experience, in that sort of work, is that they can then focus on the technical – so they are directing as a cinematographer, that's where their vision is and you are expected (and rightly so) to do your thing.

DL: *The key thing is, as you say, you are 'left to your own devices'. When you are cast you have established with a director the groundwork of the character, and you then work solo – and you know that you're not going to get further backup?*

EB: Let's just say certain shows, a really established generic thriller like *Touch of Frost* or *Granchester*, yes, your professionalism is relied upon. It's not acting by numbers, but you are to show up on the day and deliver the goods.

DL: *So can you describe to me what you've done between that audition meeting and when you show up on the day?*

EB: It's learning the lines: I'm saying that because I think actors, to really know their role, need to know it backwards, forwards, inside-out – to be so familiar with it. The longer time that you have with your script (and there's less and less time that actors have with their script these days). There is a really awful habit, I think it began for the technical side of a production, they were given 'Sides' – scenes that you would do in that day – that would be given out in order that the director of photography would know who the actors are and what they are doing. … Now that's become a day-to-day thing now, so you tend to be sent your 'Sides' the night before. … What it encourages people [actors] to do is just learn it the night before; or somebody has a quick look at it and just thinks 'I'm so familiar with that sort of conversation, I can learn it in the bath or on the way in'. You can hear it in an actor's voice and you can see it in their eyes when they're only just on top of their script. If you're unprepared in that way, you can style it out to a certain degree (depending on what it is – perhaps it's the type of role that you are so comfortable with, say the lawyer in a Court Room drama) but what it doesn't allow you to do is be able to respond absolutely truthfully in the moment, so if another actor was to throw you some sort of curve-ball or an amazing organic response from their performance, if it does connect with you emotionally then you are either liable to forget your line or not respond to that thing you've been given and just carry on, just simply grasping at what comes next.

DL: *Is this quite a disappointing process?*

EB: It is certainly disappointing if scripts are really late or actors aren't prepared. In some long-running series people are only just getting their scripts the night before or two days before, or they'll be given huge scenes to learn over the course of a weekend before they're back on set on Monday. If you are dealing with huge emotional storylines it's very hard not to generalise them emotionally. Another thing I recognise is that if the emotions are so huge and the actors are not fully prepared, another thing actors can do is - because they don't want to over-emote -

they can reduce the performance in order to try and make it more intimate and truthful – because they are only just in control of it. In a perfect world, if I had plenty of notice of the part I'm playing, and plenty of time with the script, that's where I would begin: I'd learn it by constant, constant repetition – really fast repetition initially, so you're not attempting to add any emotion to it. You just learn it like 'The cat sat on the mat'. That's the way I'd learn it, until it's absolutely soaked in there. And then I'd have the time to go back and find out exactly the objectives in the scene, what I'm doing there, because very often what you're saying isn't actually what you're doing. That's when it becomes exciting. Having time with the script, and learning it in rote-fashion in order to absolutely never be searching for the thought – so the thoughts come truthfully, directly, then the journey would be identifying the objectives in that scene: Why am I there? Who is it I'm talking to? And, What is it I want to get out of it? The nice thing about approaching it that way is … that the scene appears to be one thing, but actually you're playing something else.

DL: *What would be interesting to talk about would be how different kinds of directors, working on different kinds of material, would influence how you prepare? Can we start by talking about comedy – you've created terrific comic characters with directors who are focussed on comedy. Does you approach to creating a character alter in that context?*

EB: I suppose not really, because real comedy works when you find the truth. What people talk about when comedy works well is that you are not knowingly 'playing' the comedy, you are discovering the comedy. … In a role like that, hopefully you've got a lovely funny script, and you're discovering your character in a truthful way. You might paint in slightly broader strokes.

DL: *A comedy director is saying to you, Let's have some broader strokes? Broader than you would normally expect with a drama director*?

EB: Yes. You are all coming at it from the same direction.

DL: *Creating the character is a similar process (to drama), but when you're working with other really great comedy actors, and with a good comedy director, that's the moment where things must be different – the rehearsal as an ensemble?*

EB: Yes, I suppose. It would depend: you bring your work, your comedy that you have discovered within a particular scene. You're working with a director who is

then making the comedy work in situ – what's funny about the timing, You are playing it, they are viewing it. So all of our comedy agendas meet. There's the stuff I'm playing, I can feel it but I can't see it, that your director is watching.

DL: *A different pressure on you? You create the character, of course, but adding the pressure of comedy?*

EB: I was just listening to Matthew Baynton do a little bit from a morning play. I absolutely love his comedy and his delivery. He's a writer-director from *The Wrong Man* and also *Horrible Histories* … I'm so envious of what they do, those actresses and actors, because they have a real instinct for comedy, so play lots of different styles, they know exactly what it is they are trying to achieve. Sometimes I feel that I can discover my comedy accidentally, whereas actors like Matthew have a real ability to be incredibly naturalistic but at the same time they are masters of knowing where the comedy is.

DL: *That moment when, as you say, you accidentally find the comedy – do you know when you find it?*

EB: Yes. But it can be quite elusive as well.

DL: *That's a process of shooting comedy, where you are discovering things in the process of it…That feels like a process of discovery, similar to the way you rehearse theatre.*

EB: Yes, yes, I think that's true. Sometimes it can fall into your lap. Somehow you feel like you have an authentic voice, something about it works and you have an easy access to it. At other times, you have to work a lot harder to try and find it.

DL: *You have succeeded both as an actress in comedy and in drama. Can you describe your own variation in approaches between drama and comedy?*

EB: I don't know if it's hugely different. I would describe myself more as an actress than a comedienne. I've been lucky to be able to be quite versatile – fortunately, because I wouldn't have made a living if I hadn't, I've not had the chance to do leading roles, I'm more of a character actress. I do think it's the same process: it's about finding the truth, ultimately. But you just know what's appropriate. If it's a comedy, I'm going to explore things that are more obviously funny – the timing – but I don't think it's any less truthful.

DL: *That's an additional exploration of comedy, that's an additional element compared with a drama character creation*.

EB: No. Let's look at this drama, *Stella*, for instance, which is set in the Welsh valleys, and the script is very amusing, it's very obvious to see the comedy: it's clear, apparent; and you know the journey that you are making and you know your punch-line. It's a fun show, it's a delicious show. For the most part, everyone's speaking with a Welsh accent, there's a delight of that and it celebrates its Welshness, so you're playing that lyricism. And in that show, we were allowed to indulge the colourful elements to the characters, all the things that make it a comedy.

DL: *So the context that both the show and the director is offering you is an invitation to go in a direction that is appropriate to create different kinds of characters.*

EB: The script and the genre are telling you what you can do. But by the same token, if there's a raw drama that has to be played and my character walks through the door, her husband has left her and she's in floods of tears – I have to find the truth of that in both shows.

DL: *Going back to what you were saying before, "left to your own devices" is still the process that you're experiencing as an actor*.

EB: That's the worse case scenario. It's a compliment as well, because you know that your director has said, 'She's in control of that [the character] – I only need to direct [the camera]'. Very often I think experiences like that are a great shame, because there's so much more that can be done with my performance.

DL: *You would enjoy more rehearsal process*?

EB: Oh, yeah.

DL: *How often do you experience that in television?*

EB: So rarely. And you can see it in shows which have been beautifully rehearsed. Like *Happy Valley* – that's such a compelling drama because it's beautifully written and beautifully performed.

DL: *So you can tell, as a professional, if a show has had rehearsal or not?*

EB: I think an audience can tell, whether they realise it or not. It just looks and sounds so completely different. Another example that really stands out this season is the show *Fleabag*. Phoebe Waller-Bridge, she's done this show for the BBC, she's a very sophisticated actress and comedic actress as well, so she's in the class of Mathew Baynton and that school. She had done a one-woman show that was very contemporary, really rude, about a young woman out and about in London, and

rather unusually she was able to make it into a short TV series. Now that show is obviously so exquisitely rehearsed because it had been a one-woman theatre piece, it's arrived on screen at a real level of sophistication. She's able to do some very clever moments in shot where a really funny and naturalistic 2-shot is being played between her and her would-be partner, then she'll turn to camera and speak directly to the audience – that's done with such confidence, such lightness of touch and expertise, that could only happen when a show has been thoroughly well-rehearsed.

DL: *But in your professional experience, on a TV drama you don't get rehearsal.*

EB: No. You'll get a little bit of rehearsal on set that day, but that's just for camera, or maybe if there's something really emotional going on…

DL: *And is it the same lack of rehearsal experience in film*?

EB: There's more time and money available in film.

DL: *The scene that you did with Ralph Fiennes in In Bruges, was that a pre-rehearsed scene?*

EB: No – we rehearsed that on the day. There wasn't a read through beforehand so I met them all there. It was a very brief scene but it was clear what the stakes were and what was happening.

DL: *So there was a director who, again, was making an act of trust after the audition and casting you, and you were "left to my own devices" to prepare this*.

EB: No, not with Martin probably, because he's the writer-director so his scripts are so perfect… everything was really well-prepped.

DL: *So a writer-director is helping you more in some way?*

EB: Not necessarily. If you have a script that you know isn't flawed in any way, moments aren't leaping out at you and you're not thinking 'how would I make that work?' – *In Bruges* is an example of superb writing – in that scene, you met this couple and you instantly knew what the stakes were, they were a strong family unit but he's a violent psychopath and she was respectful but not fearful. It was easy to know what I had to do (as the actress), but had I been in trouble in any way, or had not achieved the angle or the emotion she was meant to, I have no doubt that Martin would have been there to support me.

DL: *And he would have had the time resources to do that?*

EB: Yes.

DL: *How was creating a character a different process when you were working with Mike Leigh?*

EB: I've had wonderful experiences of working with Mike. It's glorious for actors because you have the luxury of time, beginning right at the very embryonic beginnings of a character. It's all documented what Mike does, but first of all you start talking about real characters that you've met. They're not family members and they're not actresses, they are people your own age, so right from the off you are going to be exploring something that is very close to you. You're not expected to do anything like 'ageing up' or doing something that's not at all within your sphere. So you agree on your chosen character and they then become this blueprint for this brand new invention that you are going to make, and so you go on this very slow journey building this reality around somebody. So when you finally find yourself within this improvised space with other characters, you are as comfortable as I think you could be in an improvised situation. Because I believe in order for improvisation to really work it does need boundaries, otherwise it can just end up being a bit of an ego trip. The manner in which Mike collaborates in improvisation, in order to discover a scripted piece, is very involved. It takes a great length of time, when we did *Secrets and Lies* I was playing a character who worked in a photography shop with Tim Spall's character. Within a rehearsal space, which we pretended was our shop, we were there for impros of two hours long. Sometimes people would come in, people would phone up and ask silly questions, or the two of us would just be there.

DL: *So Mike Leigh would just have someone walk through the door, to see how you would react?*

EB: Yes, but anybody who was there was there for a reason. So anyone who phoned up would have been an actor exploring their own character's experience. Things aren't done just for the sake of it, to see what you would do next. Those are the boundaries when you work with Mike, which I think sets it apart.

DL: *I'm really interested in how boundaries are key to successful improvisation.*

EB: People talk about that brilliant moment of impro in *Midnight Cowboy* when Dustin Hoffman and John Voigt are crossing the road, having that conversation, and it's all live on this busy street. And then this taxi almost bumps into him and he smacks the car and says, "There are people walking here!" It's electrifying

because it's truthful; because he [Hoffman] is an actor fully prepared, he's not thrown by that [the taxi], he's then able to carry on the rest of his scripted dialogue. It's a moment of explosive improvisation, it's unexpected and it's beautiful.

When you are improvising with one of Mike's characters, you are as supported as you can be. This person that you've brought into the rehearsal space, you know their family, you know where they went to school, you know their grandparents, you've talked about it, you've tried to inhabit them in their own little space. You've got your own rules about what he would do or she would do. So in that sense, the improvisation has its own boundaries, and within those boundaries anything can happen, you're going to react with whoever you come into contact with.

DL: *I understand that one thing he does is he develops individual characters extensively before he brings them together. Had you fully formed your character before you started working with Tim Spall's character?*

EB: Yes. Tim was the lead role, so he would have done much more of that than me, he would have developed all sorts of relationships. Phyllis Logan who plays his wife…they would have done all of that: a couple who love each other and can't have a family, they would have developed all those moments of tragedy and disappointment at not having children. They would have discovered all that in their own personal improvisation before that gets to screen, so that's why all those moments are so incredibly loaded.

DL: *How about research?*

EB: My particular job in that wasn't terribly difficult. Anyone could be a photographer's assistant in a local shop, so I did a little bit of research for a couple of days, shadowing someone in a shop – but you'd do much more research if the role required it.

DL: *Do you take that research idea into your process when you create other roles, in TV dramas?*

EB: I haven't had to, because I haven't been asked to – I'd love to do that.

DL: *So your working process, then, is based around the kind of director you're working with and the production context that each project offers you?*

EB: Yes. You have to be flexible. If you're fortunate enough to get a decent film gig and you've got a larger role to learn and prepare, and you're fortunate to have the

time to do it, then yes. But very often in my career the roles aren't that big so you don't have that level of preparedness, you are just arriving on set and you are relied upon to do your job. So my standards are that I just want everything to be truthful and in the moment as much as you can be, and whether you've got the help of the director or your acting colleagues – maybe they're working in a different way – hopefully you'll achieve the same aims. But you've got to be quite self-sufficient.

DL: *Do you find yourself working with actors and you become aware of their different approach?*

EB: Yes. I think sometimes some actors are just going through the motions: adopting a voice, they have pinned their characterisation on a few things … not much more is required from them and they can get away with that. At other times, you can see a different spark in somebody and you're fortunate enough to have scenes where you can develop that with your colleague.

DL: *Tell me about your drama training experience.*

EB: I absolutely loved it, I was so thrilled to be training as an actor in London, I'd moved away from the Wirral. I had a great experience being there. This was in the '80s, but I suppose what I experienced was quite typical of drama school at that time (I'm sure it's changed a little bit): there was a lot of emphasis on losing your accent and learning to speak with Received Pronunciation – and that is important, that's really useful actually, because it allows you the flexibility to not always be a Scouse actress but be lots of other different things. But when it came to stage technique, I now look at is as a rather dated approach: all of us young women wearing long 'practice skirts', looking rather elegant and sophisticated, a bit like Vivien Leigh, that was the style of it, a bit '50s. It wasn't a raw theatrical experience, it was rather what I call 'voice beautiful' theatre, which I think there is still quite a lot of in drama schools. It's just happened with Emma Rice at The Globe: you're not allowed to be that experimental with Shakespeare, if you break from the tradition you're going to get a shit load of criticism. I realised, straight out of Drama School, that what I was being asked to do was not play those characters. There was some confusion for a while, because I was going up for roles that were Northwest based, and I'd learnt this slightly posher English thing. I think that what

I thought was that what I was had less value than this thing I'd been taught to be. It took a while to get to the bottom of that.

DL: *Your work with Mike Leigh was quite early in your career…*

EB: The first time I worked with Mike was on *Naked*. When I first started working with Mike, it took me back to my very core, because that was the very essence of being an actor. That was stuff that I expressed when I was at Wirral Youth Theatre, and the Everyman Youth Theatre, so I had moments of discover at that time.

DL: *So you were able to take theatre traditions of how to create character and import them into film.*

EB: Ye..es. Although I would say that working in film has informed my working in theatre, actually. To get the balance between being physically big enough so you can be vocally heard and being naturalistic in an unnaturalistic space, being able to reveal all of that but with everything I've learnt from film and television that allows you to do that much more naturalistically. It's film and television that I have to thank for that.

APPENDIX C

Interview with Blandine Lenoir, 21st March 2018, French Institute, London, conducted before the UK Premiere of *I Got Life (Aurore)* (Blandine Lenoir, 2017).

DL: *You seem to work in a very collaborative way with your actors…*

BL: I take my inspiration from my actors, who are also my friends. In each film, I wrote the script because I knew who the team is, because I knew who would play each character. And on the set, because there was complete trust, we would work on the text and I would ask them to do this, or do that, and they would do it because they trusted me - and therefore they would also suggest things. With the technicians… the sound is always the same guy, I always work with very flexible technician teams, because there was very little budget in my movies, therefore I needed technicians who were flexible. We never imposed a frame in which the actors would be placed, we would work with the actors and then tell the technical team where to put the frame.

DL: *So it was led by the actors, the way in which you filmed?*

BL: There is always a second level of interpretation: there's the text, but my text said by other people would not work in the same way.

DL: *When you wrote a script, were you writing in the knowledge that this would change quite a lot when you met with the actors?*

BL: We do rehearsals in a very relaxed way, round at my place. But the text that I present is not fixed; it must work *with* the actors. I choose actors because of who they are as people; if the text does not fit with the actors, it cannot be. And so we work on it, away from cameras, and we together decide on the text. When we shoot, we shoot with that text. There is no improvisation on set. Together we have decided how we will change things; we never shoot things that have not been worked out beforehand.

DL: *How long are your rehearsals?*

BL: I never have any money for that, so it might be two or three afternoons – not much.

DL: *The screenwriting credit is something you often share with Nanou Garcia.*

BL: Ah. I met Nanou Garcia when we were playing in a film together - I played her daughter – twenty years ago. I completely fell in love with her – her humour, her

personality. For me to just look at her was inspiration. So she is co-screenwriter, but in fact she does no writing. To know that I am writing for her, that gives me inspiration. There are a few lines, by her, which are just fabulous. Have you seen *Ma Culotte*? The last line is by Nanou.

DL: *I find it very rare that directors share credits with others.*

BL: It's normal. For me.

DL: *Your way of making films before 'Aurore' – this was a way of working together with your friends who were also actors.*

BL: To make a film is a way of gathering together and doing something that we all love. It gets boring otherwise.

DL: *As a director, are you more interested in performance than anything else?*

BL: Oh, yes, because the actors in my team are geniuses. It is wonderful to be working that way, because you can try things, find out what works, you are always surprised, you can always go beyond what you expected.

DL: *In your experience as an actor…*

BL: Pah! (shrugs)

DL: *…you worked with different directors, you were able to watch different ways of film directing. When you began your directing career, did you think: I don't want to be like that! I want to direct in this way…*

BL: I never wanted to be an actor to begin with. I went to a casting meeting in order to meet a director. I decided to act in order to become a director. I very quickly found this position to be very humiliating. In 1989 when I was 15 and I began as an actress, the only female director that I knew was Agnes Varda, so I didn't even know if it was possible for me as a woman. The only role that I thought was possible for me at that time was a minor role, like Script Supervisor or Actress, in order to be on set. I had to *imagine* that it would be possible to direct, I didn't know it was.

It was often a very humiliating situation, because in my experience lots of directors (apart from Michael Haneke, though my part was lost in the cutting room), they just don't talk to you. They are with the technicians…Is this okay? All of a sudden they yell, 'Action!' Then, Okay, we'll do another take. – Why? They don't tell you. It's horrible.

DL: *In your experience this was all directors except Haneke?*

BL: There was one other but yes – I think it was the same with all the others.

DL: *So the way of making films that you chose for yourself was the opposite to this experience?*

BL: Above all, what interested in me in cinema was the way of working collectively. If it were just me and my camera, that would be boring. Working with a team is what fascinates me. What always interested me most in cinema was not the beautiful pictures, but the performance of the actors. At 13 years old, I saw 'Serie Noire' (Alain Corneau, 1979) with Patrick Dewaere, a film that made a big impression on me, because of the idea that if it had been done with another actor, the film could not have been as good. And the same for all the films of Cassavetes.

DL: *Would you say that the Cassavetes way of making films, is it similar to your collective system?*

BL: I think also that Didion makes films that way. You know, making films creates so much anxiety and very lonely, and so it is quite reassuring to have the team around you.

DL: *Do you involve your actors at all in seeing the cut film during postproduction?*

BL: Just some sequences. They give so much to my film and they are anxious. They give so much of themselves that they need to be reassured.

APPENDIX D

Interview with Kharmel Cochrane, 24th October 2017, Farnham, UK.

DL: *Do you as a Casting Director shift the way you work according to the type of filmmaker you are working with?*

KC: Definitely. We have one director who is all-absorption, so if I'm working on a job with him, I can't even think of doing anything else because he wants everything a every point. So we'll do casting together, whereas other directors don't even meet the cast – I just send them a link and they confirm someone.

DL: *What kind of films is this director making?*

KC: Social realism, very much social realism. Everything has to be authentic with the casting, so if he could have it his way he would 'street cast' the whole thing. But he's learnt with us that there can be a happy harmony between that and formal casting. Originally he was totally anti- having any actor in any shape or form, but then he realised that actually you need to have some recognisable faces to get people in and to watch this film. But he will want everything to be authentic, so if there's a Waiter, he will want them to have a background in waiting. He is not that bothered about the auditions, he's not that bothered about that process, but he will ask questions about waiting – 'What's the most annoying thing that's happened to you?' or 'If you are in the kitchen and this is happening, how do you react?' - and he'll film it, and I always sit there and think, this is such a different way of spending the day, because I find out lots about people, but without ever seeing anyone perform. He will know from that, and from their chat, whether he wants them or not.

DL: *So professionally the difficulty is how you make the judgment about actor quality?*

KC: Yes, and who to call in [for audition]. Because a lot of the time my barometer, my level will be looking at things they've done before, and judging, watching a showreel, having a feeling for something – whereas this [his method] could be a list of 150 people who have been waiters. Nothing else. So I'm just ticking boxes based on what I think he'll like. He's very into character. It's more of a guessing game, there's no rhyme or reason to that.

DL: *It sounds to me like you are taking more of a back seat in terms of the quality assessment of an actor…*

KC: Exactly.

DL: *Normally it's the two of you deciding, Was that a good audition or not?*

KC: Yep. It will be, like, whether their energies click, or whether he finds them funny, or what they were wearing, or the most peculiar thing. He'll always ask them what they listened to on their way in, on their ipod – whereas I couldn't care less what they listened to! It's about whether they can act, and do what we need them to do. But it always works: it's always real, every performance is believable.

DL: *So that's the social realist goal, isn't it – that complete authenticity?*

KC: Yes. And then when the actors do come in, having warned them that this isn't going to be anywhere like a normal audition. Because a lot of the time the actors will come in and they will talk about what they have been doing – 'Oh, I've been in this production, and I've been doing that' – and I will have to tell them, that's not what he wants to know. He'll be talking about, what you did at the weekend, with your family, your aunt, or anything *but* the actual acting. So for actors coming in to talk about their acting, that's really hard to separate. They'll still kind of segue into it, somehow or somewhere, and I have to sit there and steer them out of it. And that feels really awkward for me, because that feels like discrediting their experience, discrediting what they do. Whereas we're not at all, he just doesn't care.

DL: *So you are selecting candidates to come in for audition. Do you have to change the whole rationale at that stage?*

KC: Yeah, and I have to try and think [my way] into thinking how he's thinking. Which I find particularly difficult, because I don't know what he's thinking.

DL: *Does a social realist director like that not brief you on what he's looking for?*

KC: He doesn't. He just says he knows when he knows. But then, *I* know when he'll like someone, but it's not like watching an audition – it's just seeing how he's responding to that person, you can tell whether it's going well, or maybe by the questions he's asking – but it's bizzare.

DL: *That director is casting on the basis of his chemistry with an actor…*

KC: Yup.

DL: *Or the non-actor, and believing that he can translate that chemistry into a strong performance.*

KC: Or whether they have had some experience that he can translate into a performance, that they can draw upon.

DL: *The nature of performance that you're looking for is, then, less acting than being themselves?*

KC: Right. But then I work with another director who doesn't care at all about the acting, it's all about the look. And he's the one who is kind of in his Wes Anderson / Lynch world of 'everyone has to look in a particular way'. So it doesn't matter – their acting has to be at a certain level – but we did pretty much six years of auditions for this TV series and people couldn't be too pretty, or too… everyone had to fit, and marry to his world, of being unhinged but not too odd.

DL: *So the look was particularly important?*

KC: Yup.

DL: *One of the areas of filmmaking that I'm looking at is the visual, design-centred filmmaker, who I think does work in a different way?*

KC: Yes. We'd be having conversations in the casting about wardrobe, with the actors. So we wouldn't be talking about the performance, we'd be talking about the world [of the film] and the wardrobe and the music. It was like all those things mattered, and the performance would just play off everything else. Because they would be dressed as the character, the colours would…they would be in this world where, for instance, there is no iphone in the whole thing, the cars are outdated, they are '70s battered cars, the wardrobe is pretty timeless…

DL: *Did you bring any wardrobe into casting?*

KC: No. We would know when someone walked in – if they had the right dress. We showed them the pilot, which was a brilliant visual reference,…

DL: *Was that your idea, to send them the pilot?*

KC: Yes.

DL: *So you wanted the actors to see the pilot so they knew the kind of director they were looking at?*

KC: Yes. Because the director hadn't done anything except for the pilot and a short film that won awards, he didn't have a backlog of work that someone could

go into and look up on google. And this pilot, which was made six years earlier, on not much money, we sent it to the actors and they either got it or they didn't.

DL: *They came to meet you and the director having dressed for the part?*

KC: Yes – without asking. We wouldn't ask. Or, they didn't, and they didn't get the world, they came like in the social realist version [of casting]. Everything was heightened, the speech was weird, it's not usual syntax. But because they're only used to watching British realism… we said, 'No it's like Wes Anderson, and Fargo', and nobody had seen Fargo, so they didn't get the reference. The director and I knew exactly what we were looking for.

DL: *So you would show the director a load of faces before the casting, or were you left to make up the list on your own?*

KC: I was left to do it by myself, and we would do afternoons of castings, and we always came out of it thinking there was not a single debate between us, as to who we were going to cast. Nor with the Producer, our producer was great. But with the Execs, at every turn, pretty much.

DL: *So the Executive Producers couldn't adapt to this director's visual interest?*

KC: The didn't get it. Because they are used to a certain way of TV. Whereas Jonathan and I are the same age, we grew up watching the same things, I knew exactly what he was referencing, what he meant. The Execs were at least thirty years older, so we were talking about fruits and geeks, and iconic shows that I'm sure they'd watched, but they didn't get why it was so important to us.

DL: *So that director needs a certain kind of Casting Director..*

KC: Yup. He's gone on to do another TV show for Amazon, he doing *Vanity Fair*, and they've got their casting director already – and he was calling me, asking me what I thought about this, what I thought about that. That's not how they work, whereas we were on the phone every single day for six months, several times a day; texting, it was really personal.

DL: *Are there any other director types that you feel made you shift the way you work?*

KC: There are director types that I won't work with anymore. And sometimes I don't know they are going to be like that.

DL: *I don't mean the personalities, I mean the types of cinema they are making.*

KC: Yes, it's the type who doesn't know what they want, but wants to make something that is iconic. Again, that is social realist, but not having the confidence to make the casting decisions. So we go again, we go again, we go again. We end up casting the first person we saw, who they thought was good, but they didn't want to believe me until they'd exhausted.

DL: *Have you worked with directors who themselves have worked as actors, who come from the theatre, who might have a more performance-centred way of making their films?*

KC: Yes. And that's where you find the actors are happiest in the audition room, because they are with someone who understands the pressures and talks to them in a language they understand. Who gives them notes that they need, rather than those notes made just to hear yourself speak. Sometimes you get stuck because, the director has come from an acting background, they have a really clear sense of how they want it, and they can't break from that. If an actor comes in and they're great, and I think that they're great, and it will be all technical – but they did this when they said that word… And I think, because I have no technical training,

DL: *So they are importing their background as an actor into the directorial role in casting?*

KC: Yup. And they are critical based on something they were taught, whereas I am quite unbiased, because I know no technique other than the bits I have picked up. I don't mind when someone pulls it and starts again, as long as it feels believable, it doesn't bother me. But if you come from a trained background, there are rules as to when you do things.

DL: *These directors are not necessarily actors, but they will make their film prioritising their collaboration with the actors.*

KC: Yes.

DL: *You have said that they are directors who make actors happiest in the audition. How is your relationship with actors leading up to the auditions – does this vary from the other types of director that you have described?*

KC: It's usually easier, because they will come armed with a really good knowledge of actors. So, when I worked with this director, and we were talking about people, I didn't need to show him showreels, because he has seen their body of work, or he had seen them in the theatre. So there wasn't any of that doubt of, 'Can she do it?' –

we knew, which is easier than having to sell him someone, and the director saying, 'Kharmel, what do you think?' The pressure was off, because he knew just as much as I did, or more.

DL: *And do you run the meeting differently?*

KC: I take more of a backseat. I don't talk as much, I don't give as much of my opinion, until they act. And if I really disagree, I let it be known, but most of the time I'm pretty happy because their reasons for casting, and reaching that choice, seem to marry, to be justified. Whereas I think that with some of the other directors it might be about the way they look, or the fact that they've never been in anything before – that can excite them – but it seems with these directors it's more of an educated choice.

DL: *So it slightly reduces your role?*

KC: Yes

DL: *So how does it feel? Are you shifting gear between these different directors?*

KC: I think I tend to get the same type of director, it shifts slightly but I tend to gravitate towards the social realist type, the auteurs, the ones that take it really seriously, I guess. I don't know how to differentiate, there are different ways of doing the job. Some people can switch off at six in the evening and switch the phone off, but there's not been a project or job that I've worked on were I haven't been speaking to the directors at all times of the night, all times of the day, weekends, nothing is out-of-bounds. Sitting in a car park in Cornwall, trying to get WiFi. I almost felt guilty when I got paid, because I was so used to working harder, or working more.

DL: *The hardest directors to work with are the ones that extend your job.*

KC: The ones that really care.

DL: *Every director would say they care, but one director would say that I care about the look, another might say I don't care about the look it's got to be their -*

KC: - I think it's the ones that care about casting… with others it could be the lights, it could be the music, the photography, the locations, but I think that the ones that really see casting as the pinnacle, as the thing that's really going to shape their film.

DL: *Those are the directors that I call the 'performance-centred' filmmakers, for whom casting is the first moment of making those performances.*

KC: And it's the collaborative, it's the directors that do want you to be available to talk through every panic until the first day of principal photography. And then you don't hear from them for another year! Until you go and see the film.

DL: *And when you take on a job with that kind of performance-centred filmmaker, do you know that you are going to spend longer on it – so do you negotiate a fee on that basis?*

KC: No, I'm terrible, I'm a terrible negotiator – I would do everything for free. I mean I wouldn't. I need to be stronger, because I will always end up doing more, effectively, than what I'm getting paid to do. But I can't help it because I want it to be amazing. And I think that if I do an amazing job and it wins lots of awards, that's better for me than getting paid. I make enough money doing commercials. There are a couple of films that we've been working on for years, from development to when they shoot, one in particular over two-and-a-half years, and we went through three recasts… I said, I don't want a single person in that film that I've not cast. And we got paid £500 for the whole film – it would have cost me ten times that, for all the manpower we had on it.

DL: *In the way you organise your working life, you have your long projects and your short commercials?*

KC: Yes.

DL: *Going back to the casting meetings… The different types of director that you work with…do you plan the meeting differently, different lengths of time? Is there anything about the format that changes from one filmmaker to another?*

KC: Yup. The length of time. So the performance-based will generally be a lot longer. When we were doing *Nosferatu* [Robert Eggars] we were generally spending an hour and a half with an actor, and everyone thought we were crazy, but actually it was really nice to spend that time. The scenes were really full-on. And we hired readers. I find it absolutely absurd that casting directors ask people to come in and read opposite someone who's giving them nothing. I don't understand how you're supposed to do a good job. When it's low budget, I do read in, we have to put up with it.

DL: *So for that kind of performance-centre director, you know you've got to bring in a good reader…*

KC: And we had two, a male and a female. There was overlapping dialogue, it was technical. My Director was in America, so it was, 'How am I going to get the best out of that actor with me reading two of the parts – that's insane'. We had them stand up, for some of them sat down, and things like that take time – you've got to adjust the camera and the lighting. Which is why we had an hour-and-a-half. We'd start with some scene, and go back to them, or give them props (because it was whisky drinking)… It was a much nicer experience. It felt real, it felt like we were giving actors a proper bite, rather than just sitting there and reading some paltry…

DL: *Wow, so you were almost staging something with props and…*

KC: Yes, it was pretty much like a rehearsal. It was like doing a proper American version of a screen test without all the hair-and-makeup, and all of those things.

DL: *And other types of director – how would it differ?*

KC: We would just sit them in a room and make it as much unlike a casting studio as we could. The lights would go off, we'd move them away from the grey wall, we'd put sofas out, we'd put cushions out.

DL: *This is for the social realist directors?*

KC: Yes. It would be more 'on a sofa' – conversational. If one of my directors could have his way it would never be done in a casting studio: it would be done on a park bench, but yes, that's unrealistic. With those auditions we would still have all the girls in the room. How we used to work was that it was an office-cum-casting-studio, so they'd still be in there, they'd be answering the phone and they'd be typing away. Whereas when we did the full-on performance-led films it would be silence.

DL: *But with the social realist director?*

KC: …they'd want all the interruptions, the Amazon delivery, all of that. Absolutely loved it – the more disruptions the better. I'd have my kid there sometimes, when she was a baby.

DL: *What do you think those directors are getting out of all those interruptions?*

KC: I think just the casualness. He really liked to see how people would break. So from talking like you and I, to suddenly having a third person enter, to look away, almost getting embarrassed, at being exposed at doing this. It was really interesting. There's another director, a full-on social realist. This was a documentary, an actor-led documentary about alzheimer's, and we had […] We

did all the initial tapings in the office, we did the rest in his house, which was this amazing Mews house in Notting Hill, and we'd have all these actors waiting in his kitchen, making themselves cups of tea. I didn't find that experience good for the actors. And in the audition we had the actors do the actual Alzheimer's test…asking them to say what day of the week it is, then spell 'World' backwards

DL: *So they were realising that they might be on the scale?*

KC: Yes, because they're all in their seventies. Yes, so we had a few complaints. I think that's when you cross the line.