Editorial

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In this issue, we present a cluster of articles that take up the relation between psychoanalysis and film. The fields of cultural studies and film theory have been marked from their very beginnings by psychoanalysis: one has only to consider the groundbreaking work of *Screen* theorists in the 1970s and 1980s, who, influenced by Lacan and Althusser, exposed cinema as an ideological state apparatus (see Easthope (1983) for a review of this work). Laura Mulvey (1975), Stephen Heath (1981), Christian Metz (1982), and many others examined, for example, the ideological effects of standard Hollywood editing techniques, relations between spectators and spectacle, and the way subjects are interpellated into particular sexist, racist, and heterosexist subject positions. Both during and after the heyday of *Screen* theory, literary and film critics also drew on object relations, self psychology, and other versions of Lacanian theory to produce a large body of work about the relation between cultural representations, the institutions in which they emerge, and the formation and development of subjectivity. Janice Radway (1984), for example, created a paradigm for audience study that blended feminist psychoanalytic object relations with the ethnographic model developed by the Birmingham School. To mention just one more example, Žižek turns repeatedly to film and fiction to exemplify such Lacanian concepts as the Real (e.g., Žižek, 1991) and to point to the fantasmatic underpinnings of contemporary socio-political relations.

Each of the articles in this issue, as well as Jan Haaken's field note, further develops different strands of the rich and hybrid 30-something-year-old tradition of left-wing psychoanalytic cultural criticism. In "Lacan for Cinema Today: the Uncanny *Pouvoir de la Vérité*", Fabio Vighi revisits *Screen* Theory's work on editing, suture, and the gaze, demonstrating the way that the Lacanian concept of the Real alters our understanding of these processes, and elucidating, as he does so, their political potential.

Richard Rushton's "The Perversion of *The Silence of the Lambs* and the Dilemma of *The Searchers*: On Psychoanalytic 'Reading'" contributes in many ways to the psychoanalytic project, not least in his challenge to the "we/they" paradigm too often set up between the subject position of psychoanalytic critics and that of the audiences they discuss. Groundbreaking, too, is his questioning of the subject/object relation that prevails between critics and films. In Rushton's view, psychoanalysis is about the

mutual influence between two subjects; with this as a guiding precept, the reading of films, he argues, must be seen as a “two-way affair”, in which the film “gives something back” to the viewer.

In “Tentative Utopias”, Stacy Thompson looks at some examples of utopian filmic and literary science fiction and discovers two primary logics that underpin these works’ relation to capitalism. One logic is characteristic of works in which capitalism has been replaced by another system. Such works, Thompson argues, reveal a nostalgic yearning for capitalism, fearfully suggesting that capitalism may indeed be the system that correlates best with the desire of the individual. In another set of utopian works, capitalism survives the apocalypse, but the work pushes the logic of capitalism to an extreme that reveals the undesirability of living in such a system.

In “Ideological Fantasy (PG-13): Lessons for Film Studies”, Tom Conley and John M. Ingham simultaneously pay tribute to and critique Žižek’s view of the way that ideology functions. Challenging Žižek’s views of gender relations and social antagonism, Conley and Ingham look at the way market forces undermine possibilities for intimacy; at the same time, they maintain that intimacy is possible and not merely an ideological fantasy. Their analysis of the film *Milk Money* focuses on the way that films use the romantic couple to cover over the split capitalism creates between the worlds of work and domesticity, the very split that undermines intimate relationships.

Caroline Bainbridge and Candida Yates contribute to the rich field of psychoanalytic gender studies in their essay “Cinematic Symptoms of Masculinity in Transition: Memory, History and Mythology in Contemporary Film”. Specifically focusing on new filmic versions of masculinity, they argue that recent representations fall somewhere along a continuum that runs from overly defensive narcissistic modes of masculinity to modes that are more fluid and open to change. Most interestingly, they show how potentially transgressive versions are ‘reined in’ by hegemonic discourses around representation.

Jan Haaken, who makes films, teaches cultural studies, and is a clinician, describes her ethnographic work at a drag club in Portland, Oregon, in her field note, “What’s So Funny? Video Ethnography and Drag Performance”. Interrogating progressive and regressive political assessments of drag, Haaken comes to her own judgment via a study of the audiences’ relation to the show. Her particular interest is the way that humor functions to make the club a safe space in which to explore oppressive gender norms and their transgression.

The authors of these essays are influenced by a variety of psychoanalytic schools – among them Freudian, Lacanian, Kleinian, Independent – and a variety of cultural studies paradigms. Concepts such as the Lacanian “Real” and “trauma” figure prominently in many of them. What most unites these articles, as well as the remaining pieces in this issue, however, is their primary concern for what we consider to be the mission of the journal: the multiple ways psychoanalysis contributes to politically progressive theories and practices.

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