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sur le cinéma anglophone*

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Journal Editor

Sébastien Lefait

Call for Papers

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The Institutional Hybridity of Film and TV

Interaction between media industries is nothing new. In the case of cinema and television, this is particularly true since both the US and the UK developed television early on, and that television became a mass medium in these countries first.

As Janet Wasko recalls, 'The film and broadcasting industries have shared a "symbiotic relationship" since the 1920s, with the major Hollywood companies attempting to develop and control television as a new distribution outlet' (127). Focusing on the 1950s when television became a common staple in American homes and surpassed cinema as the prime mass medium, Wasko concludes that, although early attempts to control the new media outlets failed, the big studios eventually managed to invest in it, if only through program supply.

'In other words, television provided the film industry with new opportunities that laid the groundwork for the diversification and concentration that characterized the entertainment industry at the end of the century.' (146). Likewise, John Caughie points out that histories of British cinema and British broadcasting often miss 'the terms by which these separate developments and the industrial impulses behind them can be seen to belong to the same culture' (189).

Early on, television took over many of the major codes of film representation, but for many critics it simplified some of the aesthetic richness of cinema, imposing a lower bandwidth and presentational system for the visual and acoustic image.

Eventually, enjoying a much-expanded technical range, both film and television were subsumed under the media convergence of the digital era, but each is still to some degree often disparaged as the embodiment of popular culture at its less than best. At a time when the sites of screen entertainment are more diverse than ever, and when the interrelationships of media are correspondingly more complex and ambiguous, this special issue of *Film Journal* seeks to explore some of the ongoing love-hate relations between 'film' and 'television'.

Indeed, while many studies have investigated the interactions between cinema and television, most of them have approached the topic from institutional and industrial perspectives (Balio 1990, Boddy 1990, Hilmes 1990, Buscombe 1991, Anderson 1994, Hill & McLoone 1996, Lewis 2002, Prince 2002, Wasko 2003 among others). In comparison, few have explored this relationship from a thematic and aesthetic point of view (Barr 1996, McLoone 1996).

Satire and Critique

Whether the representation of television in films is production-centred, depicting its working environment and behind-the-scenes shady shenanigans, or audience-centred, exploring the intrusion of the TV set in the domestic space and the part it plays in shaping the social and political life of a nation, the small screen has long been an object of fascination and criticism for cinema. Television's cynical commercialism and irresponsibility has often been the object of harsh satire, from Sidney Lumet's *Network* to Robert Redford's *Quiz Show*, Spike Lee's *Bamboozled* and Jodie Foster's *Money Monster*.

Reality TV has equally offered fertile ground for satire — for example in Peter Weir's *The Truman Show*, Ron Howard's *Ed TV*, or Adam Rifkin's *Shooting the Warwicks*. Cinematic treatments of television can nonetheless also act as a critical tool, denouncing its potential misuses in politics in Kazan's *A Face in the Crowd* and in Frankenheimer's *Seven Days in May*, when the protagonist becomes aware of the totalitarian agenda of his military superior while he watches his address on TV.

Fiction and Reality

For all its mundane presence in the living room, television often conveys a disturbing irruption of reality within fiction, providing newsreel footage of the assassination of Medgar Evers in Tate Taylor's *The Help* or the distressing broadcast of a Buddhist monk's self-immolation during the Vietnam war that triggers off the daughter's rejection of the American way of life in Ewan McGregor's *American Pastoral*.

Television's interplay between the banal and the extraordinary also provides unexpected springboards for parables, as in Gary Ross's *Pleasantville*, where a remote control allows for time-travel, or in Hal Ashby's uncanny *Being There*, in which television is the source of the only education that the simple-minded protagonist has ever received about the world. Television can also be mobilised in film adaptations to foreground media signifiers as a reflection on the film's own status as 'meta-adaptation' (the irruption of TV screens at the end of Joe Wright's *Atonement*, the role of television screens in Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* or in Ralph Fiennes' *Coriolanus*).

Visions of History

Whether television is reflecting the best or worst of times, however, it seems that one prevailing recent trend is for cinema to revisit its history, commemorating emblematic programmes or personalities. George Clooney's *Good Night and Good Luck* thus pays tribute to American broadcast journalist Edward R. Murrow and the part his television programme played in the undoing of Senator Joseph McCarthy. Although a nostalgic outlook may prevail in comedies (as in Adam McKay's 2004 *Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy*, set in the 1970s), retrospective visions also stress critical periods of change, both for TV and the film industry.

Quentin Tarantino's *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* is emblematic here, with its homage to the margins of Tinseltown in the final years of Hollywood's Golden Age. Just as the film industry has been under constant pressure to adapt to new economic and social environments, films dramatise similar challenges that the broadcasting industries have to face, using the medium of television to scrutinise broader contemporary changes — a recent example being Nisha Ganatra's *Late Night*, starring Emma Thompson as a TV host who has to revamp her style to counter the steady decline of her show's ratings.

Theoretical Scope of the Issue

Charles Barr recalls that British films in the 1950s used the image of the screen within the screen to set up structures of opposition between the two media. However, while playing on the tension between TV and film codes, they were already blurring the frontiers between them. The

trope of the direct address is a perfect case in point of the fundamental ambiguity of this relationship. Although common in specific film genres (the musical, comedy, documentary), it soon became associated with TV and films have then used it to denounce its fake immediacy while still fully exploiting its effect. Indeed, television scenes in films reveal a most significant interplay between the two media that highlight their similarities and differences. Whether they investigate the nuts and bolts of producing TV programmes or use the TV screen as a critical tool or self-reflexive device, television scenes in films offer a powerful instrument of self-reflexive investigation into the powers and limits of their respective medium.

Indicative Themes

The Special Issue of *Film Journal*, co-edited by Sébastien Lefait and Nicole Cloarec, will focus on English-language films from around the world dealing with such themes as

- *cinematic representation of the television industry and its working environment*
- *cinematic depiction of television audience reception*
- *the depiction in films of the impact of television on society*
- *the ambivalent use in films of television codes and tropes*
- *the use of intermedial interplay from a thematic, narrative and/or aesthetic perspective*

Proposals (250 words) and a short biography are to be sent by **September 30th 2021** to nicole.cloarec@univ-rennes1.fr, and sebastien.lefait@univ-amu.fr.

Notification will be sent by the end of October 2021. The deadline for completed articles (6,000 – 8,000 words inclusive of footnotes) is January 31st 2022.

For submissions, please consult and follow the norms for presentation indicated at *Film Journal* <http://filmjournal.org/>

Indicative Filmography

American Pastoral (McGregor, USA/Hong Kong, 2016)
Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy (McKay, USA, 2004)
Atonement (Wright, UK/Fr/USA, 2007)
Bamboozled (Lee, USA, 2000)
A Beautiful Day in the Neighbourhood (Heller, China/USA, 2019)
Being There (Ashby, W. Germ/USA, 1979)
Broadcast News (Brooks, USA, 1987)
Bruce Almighty (Shadyac, USA, 2003)
The Cable Guy (Stiller, USA, 1996)
The China Syndrome (Bridges, USA, 1979)
Confessions of a Dangerous Mind (Clooney, USA, 1992)
Coriolanus (Fiennes, UK, 2011)
Ed TV (Howard, USA, 1999)
A Face in the Crowd (Kazan, USA, 1957)
Galaxy Quest (Parisot, USA, 1999)
Good Night and Good Luck (Clooney, USA/Fr/UK/ Jap, 2005)
The Help (Taylor, USA, 2011)
The Insider (Mann, USA, 1999)
The King of Comedy (Scorsese, USA, 1982)
Land of Plenty (Wenders, USA/Germ/Can, 2004)
Late Night (Ganatra, USA, 2019)
Medium Cool (Wexler, USA, 1969)
Meet Mr. Lucifer (Pelissier, UK, 1953)
Money Monster (Foster, USA, 2016)
My Favourite Year (Benjamin, USA, 1982)
Network (Lumet, USA, 1976)
Once Upon a Time in Hollywood (Tarantino, USA/UK/China, 2019)
Our Show (Charles, USA, 2010)
Pleasantville (Ross, USA, 1998)
Public Access (Singer, USA, 1993)
Quiz Show (Redford, USA, 1994)
Real Life (Brooks, USA, 1979)
Rollerball (Jewison, UK/USA/Can, 1975)
Romeo + Juliet (Luhmann, USA/Mex/Austral/Can, 1996)
The Running Man (Glaser, USA, 1987)
Seven Days in May (Frankenheimer, USA, 1964)
Shooting the Warwicks (Rifkin, USA, 2015)
Simon and Laura (Box, UK, 1955)
Soapdish (Hoffman, USA, 1991)
Stay Tuned (Hyams, USA, 1992)
To Die For (Van Sant, USA, 1995)
Tootsie (Pollack, USA, 1992)
The Truman Show (Weir, USA, 1998)
The TV Set (Kasdan, USA, 2006)
Videodrome (Cronenberg, Can, 1983)
Wayne's World (Spheeris, USA, 1992)
While the City Sleeps (Lang, USA, 1956)

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