

"NARRATIVES"
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Course provided by University of Arts London. Produced in association with Truro & Penwith College, under UAL Guidelines. Course Leads: Alice Brighton & Stuart Lansdowne.

“Narratives”

Start: 11th December 2023

End: 9th February 2024

Published 12th February 2024.

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Cover Design by Theo Dowker

(Contains imagery from Porter Robinson *Nurture*, 2021)

Typeset in 10/12pt Times by

Graphicraft Typesetters Ltd., Hongkong

Project responds to the brief provided by University of Arts London (UAL) for multi-media. All information and outcomes within this paper are included in direct response to UAL exam criteria specific for this unique module.

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Abstract

“Narratives” delves into the presence of postmodernism within our contemporary world, culminating in a composition of a stylised short film and accompanying media.

Separated into two sections, part one of this paper offers a demonstration of a range of contextually relevant theoretical perspectives across the modern and postmodern epochal movements; providing a comparative analysis of contrasting worldview, lifestyle and societal functions, using various apropos theories to reinforce and further my own perspective. My findings here are then subsequently constructed into a formal piece of essay writing that responds to the title *Transition of Modernism to Postmodernism*.

With a foundation of comprehension, I begin to issue focus towards the characterisation of postmodern media, beholding particular interest in film and visual design (considering the effect and impact of societal shift and developing technologies). I analyse postmodern properties of a plethora of iconic cinema to present a well- rounded understanding of primary attributes of the aforementioned epoch; more specifically, how these attributes translate through the medium of moving-image. My discoveries are summarised in the second formal piece of extended essay writing that, in turn, responds to the title *Beyond Modernism; Film in a Postmodern State*¹. Again, in this essay, I explore relevant exemplifications of dynamic changes in structure and style throughout the growth of postmodern film with reference to relevant theorists to support and inform my argument.

The first visual output of this paper arrives in the form of a faux client work exercise. I create a series of unique poster designs to serve as stylised concept art for a hypothetical Postmodern Film Festival arranged by an existing local film house. Within this exercise I evidence an understanding of the core traits of postmodern film and use their notoriety to construct a desirable advertisement for the festival. I explore variation within a cohesive body and display a strong understanding of brand identity within my work.

Part two of this paper follows the conceptualisation, pre- production and post- production of a stylised short film. I begin part two by identifying and exploring specified topics of interest

¹ “*Beyond Modernism; Film in a Postmodern State*” refers to essay assigned by Prof. Alice Brighton; “Yr2 unit 12 Project 2023 - 24.pdf” – author note: pdf is not accessible to viewers outside of Truro College cohort.

within postmodernism; again employing leading theoretical perspectives to further my developments. With the conceptual hypothesis for a moving-image product, I create and develop typographical, editorial and shot-type ideas in order to cement a canon within my film and assign myself, as the creator, a concrete visual identity of my film prior to production. I use discoveries and conclusive arguments within part one to inform and reason for and against decisions within the creative process in part two. I evidence a continued awareness and understanding of postmodern characteristics throughout the production process, this culminates in a justification of all editorial choices within the production and post- production process.

This paper concludes with a full project analysis of both part one and part two. Within this analysis I evaluate my successes and identify any possible shortcomings within the timescale of this project alongside the UAL Exam Board's criteria issued by Truro and Penwith College².

Following this, I feature scans and notation of my sketchbook exploring a linear progression of events through my visual design and creative process. The sketchbook section of this paper provides further detail of events particularly throughout part two and serves as a tool to display all visual content relevant to this project.

“Narratives” reaches its end, but not before detailing a log of production providing a timeline for key events throughout the project. This log permits a concurrent evaluation across the project and evidences any extra decision-making left unanswered for in the main paper. A reading list and bibliography is also featured at the foot of the paper.

² Refers to modulated “*Production Log*” required by UAL Criteria; students should keep a running log of their completion of assigned projects. In this paper the Production Log is at the end of the paper formatted in a table with a date of entry and evaluation of progress at each given stage.

PART ONE

Postmodernism vs. Modernism

Exploring the poignance of the Postmodern epochal movement within the contemporary world. Evidencing an understanding of both Modernist and Postmodern epochs; I will explore leading theories alongside cultural attitudes and beliefs within both the former and the latter. My research will form the basis of a summative essay that compares the two epochs, using justified and informed points to draw considered conclusions. This essay will also present my comprehension of the transition from Modernism to Postmodernism and explore the way in which this transition is identifiable when comparing media sources.

What Is Post Modernism? (Overview)

Postmodernism is a contemporary movement that – in its simplest form – can be defined as: the fulfilment of an assortment of leading theories formed as direct reactionaries to modernism (Alvesson, M. 2002). **More detail. Explain modernism as a predescocer** To comprehend the true ethics of postmodernism, I will need to explicate an understanding of modernist theories and attitudes.

Modernism (The Grand Theories):

In short, modernism is a global movement in society and culture that, from the early decades of the twentieth century, sought a new alignment with the experience and values of modern industrial life.

Modernism embarked on the justification of reality as submitting to a grand narrative based around properties associated with The Enlightenment.

Within modernism the concept of the ‘grand theory’ refers to overarching comprehensive theories that aim to provide a unified understanding of various aspects of human society and culture. Modernist grand theories sought to establish universal principles and prescribe a totalising vision for the human condition.

Scientific Positivism: Positivism, introduced by Augustus Comte, is a contributing theory within modernist thought, it asserts that scientific knowledge and empirical observation should be the basis for understanding the world (Mill, J.S. 1968). It aims to apply the scientific method to social sciences; seeking universal laws governing human behaviour. Positivism, at its core, upholds the idea that knowledge can - and should - be derived from empirical observation and scientific methodology. It dictates that knowledge is grounded in

sensory experience and observable phenomena. Comte disregards other 'ways of knowing', such as intuition, introspection, or religious faith; considering them meaningless practices (Mill, J.S. 1968). [Need More.](#)

Ethnocentrism: The role of ethnocentrism in the modern epoch defines itself as the tendency to view one's own culture as superior to others. Within modernism, researchers have examined implicit biases and stereotypes related racial prejudice marked by globalisation, technological advancements, and cultural interconnectedness,

Ethnocentrism often reinforces the distinction between in groups (one's own cultural, ethnic, or social group) and out groups (other groups). People may develop a stronger sense of solidarity and identity with their in group, which can lead to biases against out groups.

From a contemporary standpoint, ethnocentrism is criticised for creating communication challenges, as individuals from different cultures may interpret messages differently. It can lead to misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and conflicts when people from diverse backgrounds fail to recognise and appreciate one another's cultural norms. Ethnocentrism is also seen to plicate stereotyping within cultures towards other cultures; this is another criticism of the modernist character, leading to oversimplification and misrepresentation of the diversity and complexity within different cultures.

Ethnocentrism contributes to our cultural hegemony where the dominant culture within a society establishes and maintains its own values, norms and worldview as the standard; marginalising or devaluing other cultures in the process.

Binary Opposition: A concept rooted in structuralist and poststructuralist thought, Binary Opposition played a significant role in shaping the discourse of the modernist epoch. A contributing factor to the representation of reality within this epoch, binary oppositions were used as a tool to deconstruct and challenge established norms.

Modernist artists and writers sought to break away from conventional forms and challenge established norms. Binary oppositions provided a means to deconstruct traditional structures, questioning and undermining entrenched dualities such as good/evil, nature/culture. Modernism explores the relationship between the individual and the society

Need More.

Postmodernism:

Hyperreality: Hyperreality refers to the condition of the contemporary world where what is real and what is simulated becomes indistinguishable; blurring the boundaries between reality and representation.

The concept of Hyperreality was introduced by the French theorist Jean Baudrillard in his work, “Simulacra and Simulation”. When discussed with regard for postmodern characteristics, hyperreality can be defined as emerging as a response to the increasing dominance of media and technology in contemporary society. Baudrillard argues that – in the postmodern era – the distinction between reality and simulation has collapsed, leading society towards a hyperreal environment.

This definition of hyperreality has close links to the idea of simulacra, which are copies without an original. Simulacra replace reality, and as they proliferate, the distinction between the real and the simulated is obfuscated.

Hyperreality can be associated with the saturation of media and technology in contemporary culture; mass media, advertising and digital technologies contribute to the creation of simulated experiences that often replace what is real.

Within the issued theory of hyperreality (as an employer of simulacra), there is a deep-rooted connection to consumer culture of present day. Commodities are often valued more for their sign value (brands/imagery) than their user value; thus facilitating the suggestion that the brand and images become more real than the actual product they are representing.

To an extent, Baudrillard argues that experiences themselves are often simulated in the hyperreal; leading to a detachment from authentic lived experiences. He claims that mediated experiences such as virtual reality, theme parks and video games contribute to this phenomena. In a hyperreal society, Baudrillard suggests that signifying models (such like Barthes’ semiotics – sign, symbol and index) are not to be disregarded, however, he implicates that the nature of the ‘symbol’ as a signifier has been redefined. He theorises that society has experienced a loss of referentiality, resultant of hyperreal existence. This loss of referentiality contributes to the disintegration of meaning and truth, the symbolic signifier no longer refer to an external reality; they refer only to other signs, symbols and indexes.

Baudrillard bemoans the political implications of hyperreality, suggesting that the simulation of events and crises can have real world effects. He cites The Gulf War as an example; where media coverage and simulations played a significant role in shaping public perception.

In summary, hyperreality – as a postmodern characteristic – reflects the profound impact of media, technology and consumer culture on our perception of reality. The blurring of boundaries between the real and the simulated raises questions regarding the nature of experience, meaning and truth in a society saturated with signifiers.

The Global Village: 20th century media theorist Marshall McLuhan brought the term “global village” into the English lexicon when he explored the effects of media on society in his book “Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man” published in 1964. Marshall McLuhan introduced the idea of the global village to describe the world as a tightly interconnected and interdependent community due to advancements in communication technologies. The term, of oxymoronic nature, emphasises the compression of time and space through the developments of electronic media, making the world function like a small village.

McLuhan argued that electronic media, especially television, had the power to harmonise the population by facilitating instant communication and access to information. This reiterates McLuhan’s stance whereby the global village is closely tied to the principal that electronic media collapses geographical distances and creates a sense of interconnectedness.

Within the concept of the global village, McLuhan coins the term “the medium is the message”; a phrase understood to speak for the form of a medium embeds itself within the message, creating a symbiotic relationship whereby the medium influences how the message is perceived. The term furthers McLuhan’s belief of interconnectedness.

McLuhan’s theorisation creates a dichotomy within its consumers. In many ways, it could be interpreted that the global village concept raises concerns about cultural homogenisation, where the influence of mass media may lead to the erosion of distinct local cultures. The ubiquity of global media could contribute to the spread of a common culture, overshadowing diversity. On the contrary, it is a widespread, postmodernist, thought that the global village doesn’t necessarily result in cultural homogeneity, but instead promotes an interconnected relationship between diverse influence and perspective. The simultaneous co-existence of various cultural expressions and perspectives are actually facilitated by the concept of the global village.

Some critics argue that the global village concept oversimplifies the complexities of global relations, overlooking power imbalances and inequalities. Concerns about media manipulation and misinformation challenge the seemingly utopian vision of a harmonious global village.

In conclusion, the global village – as a postmodern characteristic – reflects upon the transformative nature of electronic media and technology on the way in which we perceive and engage with the world. It signifies a shift towards a more interconnected and interdependent global community; raising both optimistic and critical perspectives (note criticism on the consequences of the transformation).

Cultural Relativism: Cultural relativism suggests that all beliefs, customs and ethics are relative to the individual within their own cultural context. A reactionary against ethnocentrism (the tendency to evaluate foreign cultures in relation to the individual within their own cultural context), cultural relativism is defined as having an understanding of a culture on its own terms, without infringing judgements using the standards of one's own culture.

The term itself stems from modern anthropology. Anthropologist Franz Boas played a key role in promoting the concept as a methodological approach. With regard to its function as a characteristic of postmodernism, cultural relativism is further developed as a philosophical perspective that challenges the existence of universal truths, objective standards and stigmatism surrounding evaluation of cultures. Cultural relativism, in this sense, informs that reality is further developed as a philosophical perspective that challenges the existence of universal truths or objective standards. This contributes the postmodernist argument that truth is constructed within specific cultural contexts and there is no overarching, objective reality.

In essence, the global village and cultural relativism, in the context of understanding the dynamics of a highly interconnected and diverse world, present a range of correlating perspectives. The respective theories are related in way that emphasises the importance of understanding, respecting, and appreciating cultural diversities. The philosophy of the *global village* provides a platform for cultural interactions, while *cultural relativism* offers a conceptual framework for approaching these interactions with openness and cultural sensitivity. In many ways, such as in the circumstances of postmodern theorist; Michel Foucault, cultural relativism offers a development on the foundations of the global village. Acknowledging the power imbalance left unanswered for in the global village, Michel Foucault emphasised the importance of understanding and interpreting cultures within their own

contexts; acknowledging the role of power, language, and identity in shaping cultural realities. However, both cultural relativism and the global village face criticism regarding the ethical implications of accepting all cultural practices without critique.

Jacques Derrida: French theorist, Derrida was an influential poststructuralism and deconstruction theorist. The latter being a particular core concept within Derrida's works. Deconstruction challenges traditional assumptions about language, meaning and the stability of texts.

Rather than providing a fixed meaning, or interpretation of a text, deconstruction seeks to reveal the inherent contradictions and complexities within language. Derrida argued that language is inherently unstable, and attempts to pin down a single, definitive meaning are futile. Instead, he encouraged to explore the polysemic nature and ambiguity within texts.

Derrida deconstructs traditional binary oppositions found in Western philosophy, such as presence/absence, speech/writing. He argues that these pairs are not hierarchical and that one term in the binary often relies on the other for its meaning. Deconstructing these oppositions reveals the interdependence and instability at the heart of language and modernist theory; insinuating that the hierarchal grand theories with the modern epoch were undermined by the coexisting reliance on binary opposition to weigh in meaning.

Derrida also explores the idea of the trace, suggesting that meaning is always marked by traces of other meanings. Additionally, he introduces the term "hauntology" to discuss the 'ghostly' presence of the past in the present. The past, according to Derrida, is never fully absent but continues to influence, and shape the present.

Barthes: Roland Barthes (as included within the "Immersion" project) is an influential theorist who explored the way in which texts generate meaning. Building on linguistics (focus of "Immersion" study), he considered that all cultural forms; including media, are essentially made up of system of signs. Barthes identifies two interrelated theoretical perspectives: Semiotics (Media Language; built around the study of individual signs) and Structuralism (the study of the relationships between those signs).

Barthes considered texts to be open to many possible interpretations formed from an expanse of unique perspectives. To consider possible readings (interpretations), he deciphers texts by separating the pieces (semiotics) and how these ‘pieces’ fit together (structuralism).

Barthes considered the meaning of the finished product, i.e., music video, song, film, book, is to be created by the audience – therefore the text always remains open. Barthes thus suggested that published text has polysemic justification as opposed to being a monosemic product.

When consulting semiotics (alongside structuralism) Barthes follows the developments of predecessor Ferdinand De Saussure, whose definition of semiotics is as follows: He defined a sign as “something which stands to somebody for something,” and one of his major contributions to semiotics was the categorization of signs into three main types: an icon, which resembles its referent (such as a road sign for falling rocks); (2) an index, which is associated with its referent (as smoke is a sign of fire); and a symbol, which is related to its referent only by convention (as with words or traffic signals). Peirce also demonstrated that a sign can never have a definite meaning for the meaning must be continuously qualified.

Hall: Stuart Hall is a cultural theorist whose work attempts to explain how society interacts, and how individuals can hold different interpretations and responses to a media text.

Furthermore, his work bears a focus on understanding the ideological underpinning of media texts and media audiences (similar to that of Barthes’ adoption of Marxist theory of myth – *see below*). Hall moved media theory away from a model that assumed the audience respond en-masse and interpret text in the same way.

Hall’s works became part of ‘Reception Theory’. Within this practice he states that; the way in which an audience has individual interpretation of a media text, and that reading itself, is part of a two-stage process. The first is identified as the producer encoding ideology into a text with the desire that it would be read in a particular way. Secondly, the audience then decodes the text, but they also bring their own ideology into the text. A preferred reading is made where ideologies meet.

Hall suggests that media texts could be read in three possible ways: *Preferred or Dominant Reading*, *Negotiated Reading* and *Oppositional or Aberrant Reading*. Preferred Reading: In short, the audience either comply, negotiate or oppose the messages encoded within the visual delivery of the media. When understanding the complexities of both Barthes and Hall’s theories,

I find it important to outline the particular mode that is given to the specific media itself – both theories suggest the media text as acting as the signifier for a certain control. This ‘control’ being the poignancy of the theories and ideas with which the producer designed the media.

Hall states there are four factors which cause people to read media differently: Demographic; who you are (generally categorized into age, gender groups for example), Psychographic; values, opinions and beliefs of the individual, Situated Culture: how and where you consume a text, Cultural Competence; one’s cultural understanding and experiences (informed by lived experience).

Comparing Theories: The primary difference between Barthes’ and Hall’s respective theories is as follows: Hall assumes a transactional stance to media texts (considering producer and consumer) whereas Barthes issues a more relational approach. Although both theories consider the mode of the audience as being active, the relationship of the producer in relation to the consumer (audience) is held in a different light; within Hall’s Reception Theory, the relationship of the producer and consumer is being measured (three possible readings). However, in Barthes Theory, the consumer is said to form ‘ideology’ from a text without regard for the producer’s intentions being of similar likening to the ideology they’ve arrived at. Barthes does not dismiss the role of the producer yet, he does not limit a consumer to with the denominatives of preferred, negotiated, and oppositional readings; rather, he prompts similar understandings to be formed by the audience by suggesting the role of the producer affects one’s perception of certain events within texts.

Therefore, although similar in theory (both suggest that texts are open-ended and consider the consumer to exist as an active body who can decode texts to produce a unique understanding/justification), Hall’s form of readings within the Reception Theory – although considers the prominence of the producer explicitly – implies that the audience is not completely free willed. In contrast, Barthes’ theory implies the body of a producer within its practice, does not suggest that the audience are creating the exact same understanding as producer (Hall’s preferred reading) rather defines them as being similar.

Rhizomorph Theory: In whole, Post Modernism is a reactionary towards the centralised powers and rigid existence of Modernism, an exemplifier of such fallout can be found in the adoption and abandonment of the conceptually minded root (Depth) and rhizome (Surface) tropes.

In literal terms, the rhizome is a subterranean stem, a point that is necessarily connected to another point.

Philosopher Gilles Deleuze theorises (in conjunction to the prior metaphorical control of flower, stem and root to discuss differences between two epochs): “We’ re tired of trees” ... “We should stop believing in trees, roots and radicles. They’ve made us suffer too much”.

Trees are genealogical, whereby contrast “the rhizome is an anti-genealogy”. He issues that the iconic signifier (Barthes, 1967) of the tree symbolises the distinction between subject and object, between signifier and signified, encompassing the whole of dualistic logic through its branching patterns.

The focus of Deleuze’s work *A Thousand Plateau* (1972) was the concept of Rhizomorphism, a post- structuralist model for society defined by the Frenchman as; representing the connections between semiotic chains, organisations of power, and circumstances relative to arts, sciences and social struggles with no apparent order or coherency.

Postmodern Nihilism:

Nihilism is a philosophical perspective that asserts the absence of inherent meaning, value, or purpose in life. It is a position that challenges or denies the existence of objective truths, ultimate moral principles, or any fundamental basis for human existence. Nihilism suggests that traditional modernist beliefs and systems of meaning – particularly religious, moral, and metaphysical frameworks – are unfounded or meaningless. Nihilism suggests that life, the universe, and existence lack inherent or objective meaning. This perspective often arises from scepticism toward traditional religious, moral explanations of purpose. Nihilism involves the rejection of absolute values or moral principles; questioning the existence of universally valid ethical standards, arguing that universal values are – at best – subjective and contingent.

The roots of Nihilism emerge from earlier philosophical and cultural developments. Within ancient Greece, Pre-Socratic philosophers such as Heraclitus and Parmenides explored the nature of reality and limitations of human understanding. Additionally, ancient Indian philosophy of Buddhism held its own construct of existential scepticism; its emphasis on the impermanence and the absence of a permanent self can also be identified as a pre-cursor to

contemporary definitions of nihilistic thought. The Buddhist teachings of Nirvana as being “a place of nothingness... non-possession and... non-attachment”

Friedrich Nietzsche, a 19th-century German philosopher, is often associated with the development of nihilism in the modern world.

Nietzsche argued that the rejection of traditional values would lead to a “crisis of meaning”, foreseeing the danger of a nihilistic void. He distinguished between passive nihilism, which accepts the absence of meaning without creating new values, and active nihilism, which involves the intentional creation of new values.

His concept of the “Superman” or “Superhuman” represents an idealised individual who transcends conventional moral and societal norms, creating their own values and affirming life in its entirety. Key aspects of the “Superhuman” explore the characterisation of a figure who rises above traditional notions of good and evil. Nietzsche critiqued traditional morality as being based on the values of the weak and the herd. The “Superhuman” is defined as someone who has the strength to forge their own values beyond the constraints of conventional moral systems. Nietzsche introduced the idea of eternal recurrence, suggesting that the Superhuman is someone who could willingly embrace the concept of living their life over and over again. This implies a deep affirmation of life and an ability to find meaning and value in every experience.

Summary:

As a result of targeted, specified research³ I have produced detailed accounts on a variety of leading theories within both Modernism and Postmodernism; I have furthered my exploration of perspectives by comparing and critiquing certain theoretical workings. I have constructed the research chapter to present a foundation of both Modernist and Postmodern core beliefs and successfully made informed accounts of their strengths and criticisms as societal guidelines.

Within the Modernist Field, I analysed the importance of Universal Truth and contributing works such as; Ethnocentrism, The Enlightenment, and modernist Binary Opposition.

Conversely within my exploration of Postmodernism, I have focussed upon postmodern

³ Drafts, shorthand notes and annotations of readings are all featured within the Figures chapter towards the back of this paper. Further discussion of topics are featured in the Production Log also featured towards the back of this paper.

perspectives on reality and assisting theories of; Hyperreality, Semiotics and Postmodern Binary Opposition.

Alongside focus on the transition between movements, the subsequent essay will build on my knowledge of the respective theories and include comparative writing with a heightened aspect of opinion and personal perspective.

Form of Postmodernism

Summative Essay

Showcasing a developed understanding of Modernism and Post Modernism, exploring the transition from the former to the latter. Focus is primarily exerted on the traits of Post Modernism (with an applied regard to project- specific categories such as film and cultural deposition) in a cohesive composition of prior research to demonstrate a clear and refined comprehension of core values.

Contents:

Introduction

Foundations of Modernism; Certainties and Grand Narratives

Technology; Postmodern worlds

Conclusion

Introduction:

The transition from the modern to the postmodern epoch illustrates a poignant shift in the fabric of human thought, culture, and society. Spanning the latter half of the 20th century and extending into the 21st century, the unravelling of established certainties and emergence of a more nuanced, fragmented, self- aware worldview cemented the epoch of postmodern. Within this essay I will first explore the complexities of this transition, delving into its key features and influences across a plethora of domains – from philosophy and art to social construct and worldviews.

Foundations of Modernism; Certainties and Grand Narratives:

The modern epoch, spanning from the late 19th to the mid- 20th century, was marked by a belief in progress, rationality, and the pursuit of universal truths. This era saw significant advancements in science, industrialisation, and philosophy. The Enlightenment, with its emphasis on reason and empirical observation, laid the foundation for modern thought. The industrial revolution transformed societies leading to urbanisation and technological innovation

Emergence of Modernism: The seemingly impervious façade of modernist certainties began to crack by the mid-20th century. World Wars, economic upheavals, and the realisation of the destructive potential of technology raised doubt about the unbridled optimism of progress. The

form of postmodernism emerged as a response to the latter uncertainty, it challenged the grand narratives of modernism and introduced a more fragmented scepticism and pluralistic perspective to societal existence.

Deconstruction of Narratives: One defining aspect of the postmodern epoch is the rejection of grand narratives – overarching theories that claim to explicate for the entirety of the human experience. Postmodernist philosophers, such as Jean-Francois Lyotard, argued that the metanarratives of progress, enlightenment, and universal truth were oppressive and exclusionary. Lyotard challenged the idea of objective reality and a single grand narrative; suggesting that belief in the latter gave way to acknowledgement of multiple, subjective truths.

Postmodernism embraces the concept of deconstruction, pioneered by Jacques Derrida, which sought to dismantle binary oppositions and hierarchal structures embedded in language and thought. The approach of a deconstructive narrative exposed inherent biases and power dynamics within hegemonic discourses thus paving a way for a more inclusive, diverse and considered understanding of reality.

Relativism: Postmodernism emphasised cultural relativism, recognising that different societies and individuals interpret the world through differing lenses shaped by their idiosyncratic historical, social, and cultural contexts. This acknowledgement of cultural diversity challenged the ethnocentrism of modernist thought, employing a more inclusive and tolerant world view.

The arts, in particular, adopted this shift towards pluralism. Artists such as Jeff Koons, embraced a bricolage of styles and references; rejective of a singular artistic canon, this eclectic approach celebrated diversity, irony and self- awareness whilst simultaneously challenging modernism traits of artistic hierarchy and disregarded the modernist emphasis on originality.

Technology:

The advent of the digital age proved pivotal when considering the transition from modernism to postmodernism. Facilitated by the developed interconnectivity of society as a direct effect of the internet and advancements in communication technology, the digital age reshaped was disseminated and consumed. Marshall McLuhan’s concept of the ‘Global Village’ became a

reality, transcending geographical boundaries and generating a sense of interconnectedness between disparate cultures.

Hyperreality: Postmodernist thought was deeply influenced by the notion of hyperreality, introduced by Jean Baudrillard. The prolific nature of media and technology led to a blurring of the lines between reality and simulation. Mass media, advertisement and virtual realities created a landscape where the distinction between authenticated experience and mediated representation became increasingly homogenised.

The concept of hyperreality is evident with the surfeit of simulated experiences in contemporary culture; from gaming to curated online personas. This shift challenges the modernist belief of an objective reality and underscores the fluid and constructed nature of individual perception.

Fragmenting Realities: The digital has also brought about an unprecedented influx of information, giving rise to a phenomenon known as information overload. The sheer magnitude in harmony with the growing accessibility to data contributes to a fragmented cultural landscape.

As opposed to the modernist notion of a linear progression of knowledge, individuals with the contemporary climate navigate a vast interconnected web of information, contributing to a sense of disorientation and uncertainty.

Social media sites, such as Facebook and Instagram, have amplified this fragmentation by creating algorithms where individuals are exposed to information that reinforced their existing beliefs and cultural standpoints. The democratisation of information, while empowering a sense of diversity, ultimately prompts a tentative relationship between the source and the consumer as a result of inauthenticity and ‘misinformation’ spread by the former; thus, challenging the modernist faith in the authority of expertise.

Identity: The postmodern epochal movement has witnessed a re-evaluation of traditional, modernist, perspectives surrounding identity, challenging fixed categorisation. Issues of gender, race and sexuality have been deconstructed and reconstructed in ways that transcended binary oppositions; facilitating a more inclusive and intersectional understanding of identity.

Postmodernism played a crucial role in the development of gender binaries by challenging the essentialist views of gender prevalent in modernist thought. Theorists such as Judith Butler

argued that gender is performative, a social construct that is enacted and reinforced through repetitive behaviours. This perspective has destabilised rigid gender norms, opening up space for a more diverse and fluid understanding of identity.

Cultural Hybridity: Globalisation, a core characteristic of the postmodern epoch, contributed to the hybridisation of cultures as they intersected and blended in dynamic ways. Homogenising tendencies of modernism were replaced by a furthered appreciation for cultural diversity that has echoed the transformative qualities of postmodernism.

Theorists, such as Homi K. Bhabha, have explored the idea of cultural hybridisms; emphasising the fluid and dynamic nature of cultural identities. Bhabha suggested that the occurrence of fusing traditional and contemporary elements, as seen within pop culture and the diasporic tendencies of art, has become emblematic of a postmodern world in which cultural boundaries are constantly re-evaluated.

Conclusion:

The epochal shift from modernism to postmodernism represents a grand shift in human thought, culture, and societal existence. As the certainties that were present in modernism have crumbled under the mass of global conflict, technological advancement, and cultural diversity; the post-modern era has emerged as a response to the complexities and uncertainties of the contemporary world.

The deconstruction of overarching narratives, the celebration of cultural diversity and the embrace of fluid identity, characterise the postmodern epoch.

However, as I explore the shift into the postmodern era, it is essential to critically examine the challenges that accompany such a transition. The tension between cultural relativism and universal values, the risks of nihilism in the face of fragmentation, and the ethical implication of a world without clear boundaries are all vital considerations.

To conclude, the transition from the modern to the postmodern epoch is an ongoing one, a journey that bemoans for continual reflection, dialogue and engagement with the complexities of our ever-evolving world.

Postmodern Film

Exploring postmodern themes and characteristics within contemporary film. Developing an historical picture of the evolution of cinema by evidencing an engagement with case studies and implementation of my prior research. As evident in the latter, the form of postmodernist views and theories can take heed to specific territories such as: identity and the postmodern, ethnicity and the postmodern, historicity and the postmodern, gender and the postmodern and narrative and the postmodern. From this point in the project onwards I will be focussed on the employment of these terms - and their attached semantic ambiguity - to assist my analysis of postmodern film. Refining my palette of postmodern characteristics and theories in order to profit when I progress to producing my own postmodern short.

Art in a Postmodern Setting:

Art underwent a radical transformation during the transition from modernism to postmodernism. Whilst modernist art often adhered to a linear progression and held an emphasis on originality, postmodern aesthetics embraced eclecticism, irony and a self-aware playfulness that challenged established forms.

Postmodern traits include engaging with appropriation, borrowing elements from diverse sources and recontextualising them within their work. The notion of the 'pastiche', as introduced by Fredric Jameson, has become central to postmodern aesthetics; pastiche involves the imitation or emulation of various styles without a clear reference to an original, highlighting the fragmented and intertextual nature of postmodern art. This eclecticism is not just an aesthetic choice but a deliberate rejection of the universal tendencies of modernism, celebrating the diversity of cultural and historical influences.

Evolution of Cinema (Overview):

A subject analysis on the evolution of Hollywood Cinema as it grew out of the modern era and transitioned in the postmodern cinema that litters the contemporary world. I intend to implement and apply relevant, subject-specific knowledge and display a broad contextual awareness for concurrent historical developments and beliefs.

Modernist Hollywood cinema, prevalent throughout the modern epoch (early 20th century to the 1960s (approx.)), has been characterised by linear narratives and adherence to classical storytelling structures. Film typically followed a cause-and-effect progression, and classical

Hollywood cinema emphasised clear resolutions. Genres such as film noir, melodrama, and classical musicals were prominent in the modernist era. These genres often adhered to established conventions, offering audiences familiar narrative structures. Modernist films often presented clear moral distinctions and a sense of optimism. The narratives frequently featured protaNeeds More, omission pov\

Subject Analysis (Case Studies):

Specific subject analysis of postmodern film, identifying postmodern characteristics and themes using prior research to inform my ability to provide an astute, and detailed, perspective of core traits and concepts within each standalone example.

- Case Study: The Piano (1993)

Directed by Jane Campion, *The Piano* challenges the patriarchal culture in classical cinema and subverts the filmic normalities gender through a plethora of specific signifiers and iconography.

Throughout the film, Campion highlights the performative nature of gender – our ideas of femininity and masculinity are constructed in our performances of these roles. Gender is ‘what we do’ rather than ‘what we are’. Moreover, *The Piano* explores how gender, and its connotations, change meaning with cultural and historical contexts – gender is contextual.

Set in 19th century New Zealand, the film is above all thought provoking. *The Piano* issues focus to the post-colonial critique of New Zealand’s - and Australia’s – colonial past (and implicates their neocolonial present). Subverting expectations about feminine desire and its historical trope of being an institutional containment of marriage; Campion explores the former alongside the psychological perplexities of human relationships, particularly love and its historical connotation of masculine control, that quickly become the film’s primary concepts. These debates highlight issues that remain prevalent in contemporary culture – the inarticulacy of what enables women’s agency shapes itself throughout much of the film. Disposition of these themes are spread throughout protagonist Ada and the dichotomy of her relationships with Baines and Stewart.

Jane Campion takes heed from postmodern philosopher Judith Butler, and her respective works surrounding gender performativity in cinema, as she shapes the character of Ada McGrath. Butler coined gender performativity as a term that refers to the ways in which gender is

constructed through repetitive performance of outward signs and actions (indexical signifiers – learnt) and not something that is natural and internally motivated. Butler argues that gender is not a fixed identity, a prohibition that forms identity. She also argues that gender is a domain of agency and freedom, as well as complicity and oppression.

Within the concept of gender being unfixed, *The Piano* is able to license an ignorance to gender normalities employing a female perspective throughout the film. Campion is able to echo Judith Butler's views through her direction as she explores the characterisation of male and female gender tropes all through the eye of the marginalised feminine gaze. One way in which this is represented is the depiction of sex that primarily hones in on the enjoyment of the female counterpart – not only does this bring us closer to the protagonist in this given scenario – I feel as though the length of these particular scenes are included as a reaction to the saturation of filmic content for the male gaze.

The audio-visual language of the film furthers the subject matters, for instance the camera gives the piano an almost character level qualification within the picture; it could even be argued that the piano beholds a gendered characterisation by virtue of it being an extension of Ada. Campion subverts the historical position of the feminine role – specifically throughout the modern era – making a reference to the characteristic of the woman being spoken for. And therefore, it is to be suggested that if the music “made” by an instrument is in some ways her narration also functions as the voice of the speechless protagonist; her voiceover serves as a form of extradiegetic intrusion. One example being, in a crucial scene as Ada becomes a victim of her assigned marriage her voiceover again enters the fray. With her somewhat of a haunting delivery, Ada's voiceover is composed by Campion to offer a functionality that serves purpose rather than just bestowing a narrative body that explicates the plot. It functions as the ideological level as a counter to customary “othering” of the feminine voice in modern epochal cinema and simultaneously serves as the representative of multiple postmodern characteristics. The inclusion of Ada's narration supplies the audience with an intimacy with which they are unfamiliar with prior (this, overtly heightened by Ada's absence of speech throughout the film).

Considering the role of the piano in a different light when acknowledging the motion picture in its entirety, one could suggest that the instrument acts as a synecdoche for the verbose use of a soundtrack throughout the film. Any occurrence of music within a scene can potentially be linked as an indexical signifier for Ada's presence and supreme importance.

The film conducts itself with a show don't tell attitude; most of what we learn about the nature of controlling husband, Stewart is through visual depictions. Ada's second husband is voyeuristically spying on his wife and her lover, whose face is buried in her skirts. As he watches, his pet dog licks his open palm.

As for the role of hierarchy in the film, *Campion* – unlike her contemporaries – displays a clear hierarchal standpoint between the characters similar to that of modern epochal cinema. However, the director still approaches the tool of hierarchical disposition in a manner of subversion and reflexivity by favouring Ada's story – we, as the audience, are subconsciously provided with a sympathy and awareness of the feminine societal 'role' - a perspective that was left untouched or that has been most definitely marginalised within modern era cinema (synecdochical for the modern society).

Albeit minor, *The Piano* is inclusive towards other postmodern traits such as pastiche and intertextuality; for example, a close-up of Ada's hair tied in a tight spiral knot, in evoking an ocular vertigo. This invites comparison to an emblematic shot in Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo*. In this gesture the camera, in each case, indexes the female object of its fascinated gaze.

A final postmodern element of grandeur is the momentary power play in which Flora (Ada's daughter from a previous marriage) is enforced as a metonymy for the viewer. Upon Ada's banishment from visiting her lover, Baines, Flora is to deliver a note from the former to the later. After reading the note, Flora is made aware of her mother's infidelity and instead issues the note to Stewart. We, as the viewer, are then momentarily following Stewart's perspective up until he punishes Ada for her actions; within the very next scene Flora is pictured standing alongside her mother and the film continues from the female perspective. I believe this is included for effect as to juxtapose the characterisation of the two performative gender roles in question. For the audience, physical violence of Stewart is much vulgar than anything committed by Ada; again, suggestive of a hierarchal ranking subverted by the gender roles.

- **Case Study: Natural Born Killers (1994)**

Directed by Oliver Stone, and notably written by Quentin Tarantino, 'Natural Born Killers' follows the murderous rampage of Mickey and Mallory Knox; portrayed by Woody Harrelson and Juliette Lewis respectively. Its narrative style, and thematic elements reflect the tropes of

postmodern film, characterised by a departure from traditional, chronological storytelling and a self-aware engagement with cultural, media, and social issues.

The film employs a fragmented and nonlinear storytelling technique; weaving together flashbacks, hallucinations, and media portrayals for effect. This creates a disjointed ambience within the narrative structure, challenging the conventional linear storytelling and a self-aware engagement with cultural, media and social issues. The film frequently engages with the role of media in shaping our reality; satirising and critiquing the sensationalised depiction of violence by the media. The protagonists, Mickey and Mallory, are portrayed as becoming media celebrities, with their murderous crimes glamorised and distorted by sensationalist journalism. This reflects postmodern concerns of the blurring of boundaries in society and uses the media as a synecdochic exemplification of the contemporary world within the theorisation on the obfuscation of true reality. In doing so, the picture employs flattening of effect – a characteristic of postmodern film – to accentuate its underlying perspective.

In association with blurring realities, ‘Natural Born Killers’ alludes to the philosophy of Baudrillard’s Hyperreality where distinctions between reality and simulation become obscured. The symbolic elements and hyperbolised imagery contribute to hyperreal aesthetic. The film uses vivid colours, stylised violence, and surreal sequences to create an exaggerated reality that challenges viewers’ expectations.

Director, Oliver Stone, frequently draws on other postmodern characteristics – such as intertextuality - to deliver a range of perspectives and thematic tones throughout the film. ‘Natural Born Killers’ is laden with reference to other films, genres, and popular culture. The film’s assortment of influences contributes to a self-referential and intertextual narrative, inviting audiences to recognise and interpret these references in the context of the story. One core example of intertextuality within the **picture occurs when...**

Postmodern narratives often feature anti-heroes and moral ambiguity. Mickey and Mallory, as protagonists, are charismatic but morally reprehensible. The film subverts expectation in challenging the traditional constructs of heroism and morality, in turn this reflects a postmodernist scepticism toward clear-cut distinctions between the dichotomy of “good” and “evil”; this – in a wider context – could be identified as a metonymy with which the depiction – or rather the subversion – of the former and latter tropes of classical cinema and modernist narrative, can be considered as a postmodern commentary on the totalising perspective of the grand theory.

The film presents a self-awareness by poking fun at itself as a piece of cinema; frequently incorporating metafictional elements that acknowledge the artificiality of the narrative. This includes postmodern characteristics such as having characters break the fourth wall, addressing the audience directly. This metafictional technique highlights the constructed nature of the film and challenges the viewer's suspension of disbelief.

In conclusion, 'Natural Born Killers' embodies postmodern characteristic through its fragmented narrative, media critique, hyperreality, intertextuality, moral ambiguity, cultural critique, and metafictional elements. The film serves as a provocative exploration of contemporary issues such as the negative effects of media and interconnectedness of society challenging postmodern theories like The Global Village (in doing also presents an awareness of the postmodern contemporary world). However, reinforces its function as a postmodern text in its delivery, challenging traditional storytelling conventions, making it a notable example of postmodern cinema.

- **Case Study: Jackie Brown (1997)**

Described as Tarantino's most 'overlooked' directorial role, Jackie Brown is a carefully balanced prescription of postmodern cinema. Interested in subverting the impact of postcolonial film and typecasting roles, Tarantino implements satirical and reactionary methods to combat stereotype. A film immersed in the theme of getting old, Jackie Brown – much like the totality of Tarantino led projects – is ridden with intertextuality and pseudo pastiche, core elements of the postmodern epoch. The film also implements a non- hierarchical scheme with multiple protagonists sharing difference experiences and perspectives of the storyline and providing a varied depiction of the main theme, getting old.

The first point of contact the audience has with the film is the introduction to the eponymously named Jackie Brown played by Pam Grier. The importance of Grier in this role of a strong character, who is later depicted as bestowing controlled, powerful and cunning qualities, is monumental in Tarantino's attempt to juxtapose the typecast roles Grier – a black woman – had prior to acting in Jackie Brown. The power of this move is clearly issued to audience in the two-and-a-half-minute scene of a headstrong Jackie Brown walking through an airport terminal. Alone this scene is impactful, but given it is the totality of the opening scene, Tarantino really hits home the desire for Pam Grier being depicted in a role that juxtaposes those she embarked on prior.

- **Case Study: Kill Bill – Vol. 1 (2003)**

Kill Bill's 'deliberate obfuscation' of symbolic meaning, positions itself as a post- modern filmic narrative; one which calls into question notions of auteurship, and the artifice of meaning itself.

The film takes a 'bare bones' approach to narrative structure in which very little meaning is attached to its iconic signifiers; very little is known about the reason for the Bride's attempted murder, the history of The Divas and most prominently of the titular Bill.

Throughout the run- time of *Kill Bill*, Tarantino rebels against the deposition of auteurship; no art is every fully owned by its creator. For example, when a fan of martial arts films hears the claxon horns that signify the bride's rage, they know they are taken directly from *Five Fingers of Death* (1972). However, that film lifted them from the theme song for TV show *Ironside*. The more a rabbit hole is explored the harder the nucleus of creation becomes to trace. The vast ether of filmic texts, every single one is interconnected to each other by 'n' degrees of separation. In this way, the point can be made that each and every pop culture reference bestows an index of infinite meaning associated with it, which is – fundamentally – considered at the same time as having no meaning at all.

Put theories here about semiotics and signifiers in relation to post modern film.

The acquisition of autership is investigating metonymically with the genre that *Kill Bill* 'riffs' on. It can be interpreted that the stance, 'no one can claim ownership over a piece of art', is echoed throughout the themes of revenge that contribute wholeheartedly to the film's storyline. The concept of revenge, as a singular act, desires to be perceived as a belonging (or perhaps is attributed) to an individual/party; however, in actuality its meaning and significance is forced onto the subject by another body.

Within *Kill Bill*, Tarantino adheres to and juxtaposes themes surrounding the concept of a revenge plot for effect... Within the 'hero' hell- bent on retribution we see the creation, consumption and dissolution of symbolic meaning. The hero's entry into the existing symbolic order is visualised as the moment they have witnessed an act of violence done onto them. For the remainder of the film, the hero becomes increasingly more consumed with seeking 'justice', developing into their sole life goal precluding them (and ultimately the audience) from fulfilment. Finally, when the hero enacts revenge the meaningless of the endeavour is often revealed. As dictated by one film critic "by fulfilling their desire the hero is met with the dissolution of the symbolic order which they lived their life in, and therefore, literally or metaphorically dies."

As previously alluded to, Tarantino uses the tropes of a revenge plot for effect; The protagonist doesn't

Flattening of effect

What is a revenge plot.

How tarantino subverts this.

(meaning – understanding if no one understand there is nio meaning)

Semiotics

- **Case Study: Snatch (2000)**

Snatch is a film that employs postmodern characteristics to create a unique and engaging cinematic experience. This crime comedy intertwines multiple narratives and challenges traditional storytelling conventions, both hallmarks of subverting expectations in postmodern filmmaking.

Explicating, the film can be characterised by its intricate narrative structure, weaving together multiple storylines that intersect and collide. This complexity is a distinctive postmodern trait – challenging the linear status quo of classical cinema (modern era). The film introduces characters from various backgrounds, each with their own motivations, and follows their interconnected paths.

The use of multiple protagonists, such as Turkish, Tommy, and Mickey, creates a range of varied perspectives; this, in cohesion with the non- linear progression of events, creates a fragmented and non- hierarchal story that defies the conventions of a single, unified plot – metonymically contributing to the postmodern nature of the film.

In terms of its self- reflexivity, the picture is constantly displaying metafictional qualities that acknowledge its existence as a constructed narrative. Characters frequently break the fourth wall, either to address the audience directly or to comment on the nature of the story that is being played- out; this attributes further to the postmodern characteristics in the film by suggesting the character's awareness of their own appearance. One example of such occurs when the character Bullet- Tooth Tony provides commentary on the importance of a good story whilst quite literally narrating his actions.

This self-reflexivity invites the audience to engage with the film on a more intellectual level; blurring the boundary of reality and fiction, the awareness of a character being part of a filmic experience aligns with postmodern tendencies to question the authenticity of narratives and embrace the artificiality of the medium as opposed to consuming media on face-value alone.

Another prevalent postmodern trait within the film is the select elements of pastiche and intertextual references, paying homage to various genres, films, and storytelling conventions. The blend of styles and genres can be identified as a form of pastiche (combining elements from an assortment of sources to create something new). The film draws upon tropes of heist films, gangster movies and elements of comedically inclined writing, blending these influences into its own unique narrative.

Intertextuality is also present throughout *Snatch*: there are an abundance of references to popular culture, literature, and has direct relation to Guy Ritchie's previous directing output, *Lock, Stock, and Two Smoking Barrels*... the character Barry the Baptist in the former film is played by former boxer Lenny McLean and in the pivotal boxing match between Mickey and Bomber Harris, a direct shoutout to McLean's most infamous fight can be found. Mickey checks his gloves for blood before laying out his opponent with a single punch. This is exactly how the real-life bout between McLean and Mad Gypsy Bradshaw went down in 1986.

Addition of intertextual layering enriches the viewing experience for audiences familiar with such references, applying depth and complexity to the film's narrative.

The film embraces subjectivity and unreliable narration challenging the notion of an objective, universal reality. Characters present their version of events, and the film allows the viewer to consider different perspectives on the same situations. The truth becomes elusive and the lines between fact and fiction is blurred.

For instance, the character Frankie Four Fingers experiences a series of misadventures that are subject to multiple interpretations. This subjectivity adds layers of complexity to the narrative and aligns with post-modern scepticism towards the existence of a singular objective truth.

Another postmodern element of the film, Tarantino employs his distinctive visual style characterised by; rapid editing, dynamic camera work, and stylised cinematography. The use of quick cuts and freeze frames contribute to the film's post-modern aesthetics. These stylistic

choices break away from the classic cinema norms of continuity editing, creating a more fragmented and visually dynamic experience.

Acknowledging the audio-visual harmony throughout the picture, an eclectic and varied soundtrack further enhances its postmodern sensibilities; a range of genres and styles compliment the diverse narrative structure. It could be suggested that this synthesised blend of visual and auditory elements creates a sensory- rich experience that challenges tradition with regard for cinematic normalcies.

In conclusion, Snatch stands as a testament to the postmodern turn in filmmaking, embracing narrative complexity, metafiction, pastiche, and intertextuality. The film's ability to deconstruct and rehash traditional storytelling conventions and engage with the audience on an intellectual and reflexive level exemplifies the postmodern ethos.

Grand Budapest Hotel (2014)

Fight Club (1999)

- Case Study: Shaun of The Dead (2004)

Directed and written by Edgar Wright (co-written by Simon Pegg) 'Shaun of The Dead' is a British horror-comedy film that is celebrated for its fresh and self-aware reinvention of the zombie genre. The film contains postmodern characteristics through its implementation of parody, intertextuality, metafictional elements, critique of consumer culture, blending of high and low culture and use of homage for effect within the postmodern landscape.

Edgar Wright's direction distinguishes itself as a postmodern work through its use of satire and genre subversion. Satire, in this context, involves a deliberate parody of conventions of traditional zombie films, whilst simultaneously paying homage to the genre's historical success. The film subverts audience expectation in its seamless blend of horror with humour, creating an unconventional narrative that follows a relatable protagonist, Shaun. The departure from the conventions of the 'hero' archetype also contributes to the postmodern characterisation of the film.

'Shaun of The Dead' embraces the concept of intertextuality, littering its run time with reference **and**

The infusion of pop culture references serves a dual purpose. Firstly, it pays homage to the sources that inspired the filmmakers, demonstrating an appreciation for the cultural world from which the film emerges. Secondly, it engages the audience by inviting them to recognise and interpret these references hinting towards a sense of shared cultural knowledge.

The film incorporates metafictional elements, a core trait of postmodern cinema; 'Shaun of The Dead' ventures beyond the boundaries of typical narrative storytelling to draw attention to its own function as a constructed narrative. Characters within the film display an awareness of zombie movie tropes, contributing to the layers of self-awareness and serves as a foreshadowing act, enhancing the viewing experience.

This awareness permits Wright and Pegg to provide a playful commentary on the expectation and clichés associated with the genre, again reinforcing the dynamic relationship between the audience and the film itself. As opposed to practices such as breaking the fourth wall or narration, the approach of 'Shaun of The Dead' takes to acknowledging and interacting with the audience is indirect yet – ironically – presents itself as excessively overt and, at times, rather conceited. It could be suggested that in the not-so-subtle vein of deconstructing the Zombie genre, Wright and Pegg are enacting the highly stylised nature of postmodern cinema by presenting hyperbolic discourse for comedic and foreshadowing effect. All in all, it is undoubtedly self aware and issues direct and indirect implementations of pastiche and homage with reference films such as Day of The Dead and Dawn of The Dead and the Zombie genre (of which the former directly influenced the title: 'Shaun of The Dead'), further reinforcing the postmodern nature of the film.

These metafictional elements contribute to the film's overall sense of playfulness and subvert the traditional distinction between fiction and reality. The audiences become a co-conspirator in the film's narrative, aware of the constructed nature of the story. The former remark issues a link towards Baudrillard's theorisation of hyperreality as Wright's consistent acknowledgement of the audience through the character's awareness of their situation blurs the lines between reality and simulation; this is exacerbated by the implausibility of their situation (Zombies) drawing the characters closer to the audience in their nature than the circumstances within the world they are presented as existing within.

The film also uses metafictional traits to critique the consumer culture as – even in the midst of a zombie apocalypse – the characters continue their routine of activities, satirising the monotony contemporary reality. The film criticises the characters' attachment to routine and

consumer products, offering a humorous yet cogitative inducing commentary on the pervasive influence of consumerism within contemporary society.

The juxtaposition of the extraordinary – a zombie apocalypse – with the ordinary – a trip to the pub or visit to the corner shop – highlights the absurdity of everyday life and the characters' insistence on maintaining a semblance of normalcy. This critique resonates with postmodern concerns about the commodification of daily existence and the ways in which consumer culture infiltrates even the most extraordinary circumstances.

As exercised within my research on the transition to postmodernism away from modernism, postmodern frequently blurs the boundaries between high and low culture. 'Shaun of The Dead' applies

Parity walking to shops.

The adoption of irony is a prevalent factor, the film strikes a delicate balance between humour and genuine tension. This creates an ironic juxtaposition that keeps the audience engaged. Characters in the film regularly respond to life threatening situations with a nonchalant attitude, contributing to the overall playful tone and equally contributing further to the postmodern characterisation of the film with a flattening of effect.

The dramatic irony within the film extends beyond character reactions to encompass the broader narrative; the aforementioned juxtapositions also prompt reflection on the absurdity of the human condition and challenges traditional storytelling norms.

Wright and Pegg frequently engage with cultural nostalgia within the film. While updating the genre for a contemporary audience, the film intentionally evokes a sense of nostalgia for classic zombie movies in the past. The use of familiar tropes and the film's dedication to paying homage to its predecessors resonate with fans of the genre, adding a layer of cultural nostalgia the enriches the viewing experience.

In summary, 'Shaun of The Dead' stands as a testament of the effectiveness of postmodern storytelling in cinema. Through its adept use of parody, intertextuality, metafictional elements, consumer culture critique and blending of high and low culture; the film transcends the confines of traditional, modernist, cinema. It not only pays homage to classic zombie films, but it also reinvents the genre for a contemporary audience.

Beyond Modernism – Film in a Postmodern State

Summative Essay

The evolution of film from modernism to postmodernism represents a profound shift in artistic paradigms, narrative structures, and thematic concerns. This essay explores the evolution of cinema from the modernist to postmodern state; examining the characteristics that define each epoch and then discussing the impact of nihilism on postmodern filmmaking. By navigating through iconic films and cinematic genre, I aim to elucidate the complexities and transformations within the realm of film that have transcended the boundaries of the traditional storytelling and formed the postmodern condition.

Contents:

Modernist Cinema

Postmodern Cinema

Presentation of Nihilism in Postmodern Cinema

Modernist Cinema:

Modernist cinema, prevalent from the early 20th century to the 1960s, was characterised by linear narratives and adherence to classical storytelling structures. Films such as “A Story of Floating Weeds” (1934) exemplified a classical approach, providing clear cause and effect progressions and resolutions.

Genres like film noir, melodrama, and classical musicals were prominent in the modernist era. These genres adhered to established conventions, offering audiences familiar narrative structures and thematic tropes.

Modernist films typically presented clear moral distinctions and a sense of optimism. Characters faced challenges, but narratives tended to resolve with a triumph over adversity, reinforcing societal values (grand theories). Hollywood, in this era, typically engaged in social realism, addressing societal issues within a generalised narrative framework. “The Grapes of Wrath” (1940) tackled economic hardships during the Great Depression, exemplifying a commitment to portraying relevant social issues. Modernist film often contributed to the construction of national identity, especially during wartime. Films such as “Casablanca” (1942) conveyed patriotic sentiments and showcased American values as part of the war effort.

Postmodern Cinema: Postmodern Hollywood emerged as expressionist art within the postmodern epoch; illustrating postmodern traits in the arts such as, departing from linear narrative in cinema. For example, nonlinear storytelling, as seen in films like “Pulp Fiction” (1994), challenged traditional narrative structures and embraced the idea of a fragmented society. Post modern films often employs genre hybridity, blending elements from multiple genres. “Blade Runner” (1982), for example, combined science fiction with film noir aestheticise

Postmodern Film Festival

Introducing a secondary outcome for this project, I will create and publish a brand identity proposal for a hypothetical events agency's "Post- Modern Film Festival" event.

Not only will this permit subsequent visual outputs and products within/for this project, but it also gives way to an opportunity to present my abilities to respond to an industry specified brief with regard for creating/developing a full package brand identity and image.

Subsequently, I also intend to use this task to present my understanding of the topics within the project in a practical, creative, faux-commercial setting across areas of influence throughout the creation and submission period.

Brief:

Planning:

Analysing:

Shape.

Production:

Chronology of events leading towards a complete product.

I first experimented with creating a logo to inform the house style and brand of the hypothetical festival.

Using Adobe Illustrator I explored different ways in which E

Evaluation:

As a result of my outcome, I believe that I have displayed competence within Adobe software (Photoshop, InDesign and Illustrator) and exemplified a strong ability to apply rules and theories regarding both Brand Image and Post- Modernist traits.

Outlining one particular acknowledgment of the latter.

PART TWO

Research and Planning:

Topic/Subject Matter:

Within the concept of postmodernism, I have developed an interest in the relationship of postmodern beliefs and Nihilism. Regarding the short film in

Flaneur:

Originating within 19th-century French literature, the term “Flaneur” is a concept introduced by poet and social critic Charles Baudelaire and further developed by later writers such as Walter Benjamin. The flaneur is a type of stroller – of masculine orientation – who leisurely observes and absorbs his landscape with no discernible purpose.

The flaneur is often identified as possessing a heightened aesthetic sensibility. They appreciate the visual and sensory aspects of the urban environment, acknowledging beauty in the everyday scenes and mundane practicalities of his environment.

Baudelaire and Benjamin: Baudelaire’s flaneur is described as a wanderer of a cityscape, looking at and listening to the “kaleidoscopic manifestations” of life. In the 20th century these foundations of The Flaneur were developed by Walter Benjamin in his work *The Arcades Project*. This study used Baudelaire’s flaneur as a starting point for an exploration of the impact of modern city life upon the human psyche.

Like Baudelaire’s conception, Benjamin’s flaneur is an urban explorer, a detached yet perceptive figure with an applied interest to the transformative effects of modernity on perception. He dictated that the act of wandering, observing, and collecting is not only a personal experience but also serves as a method for understanding the changes brought about by industrialisation, consumer culture, and the commodification of everyday life.

Epistemological Nihilism: A philosophical position that questions or denies the possibility of truth, or the ability to have justified beliefs. It represents a radical form of scepticism regarding the nature and attainability of knowledge. Epistemological nihilism denies the existence of knowledge of any meaningful or justifiable sense. It challenges the idea that we can have justified true beliefs about the world or that there are objective standards for determining what counts as knowledge.

Nihilism about knowledge is often accompanied by scepticism about the concept of truth itself. Epistemological nihilists may argue that truth is either unknowable or that the very notion of truth is flawed and lacks a firm foundation.

David Hume's Scepticism:

Hume was a prominent advocate of empiricism, the philosophical position that emphasises the role of sensory experience in the formation of knowledge. He argued that all ideas and concepts ultimately derive from impressions, which are the more vivid and lively perceptions we have through our senses.

Hume's Scepticism involves empiricist values that emphasise his views on the role of sensory experience in the formation of knowledge. He argued that all ideas and concepts are derivative of impressions (vivid and lively perceptions obtained through the human senses).

Hume extended his perspectives on scepticism to consider the concept of personal identity; he questioned the traditional notion of substantial and enduring self, arguing that one's sense of self is a bundle of constantly changing perceptions and experiences. This challenges the religious notion of the unchanged soul (also recognised as the "eternal soul").

Hedonism:

Hedonism is a philosophical position that asserts pleasure or happiness as the highest intrinsic good. The central idea is that pleasure and the avoidance of pain are the ultimate goals of human life. Hedonism suggests that individuals should seek pleasure and avoid pain in their actions and decisions, emphasising the pursuit of personal well-being and happiness.

Categorically, hedonism can be separated into two collectives: ethical hedonism or psychological hedonism.

Ethical hedonism is a normative theory that dictates pleasure is the only intrinsic good and pain is the only intrinsic evil. The perspective argues that individuals ought to maximise pleasure and minimise pain in their actions to achieve the greatest overall happiness. Classical utilitarianism, associated with philosophers like John Stuart Mill, incorporates elements of ethical hedonism by proposing that actions should be evaluated based on their ability to maximise overall happiness.

Psychological Hedonism, on the other hand, is a descriptive theory on human motivation, suggesting that individuals are naturally and fundamentally motivated by the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. It describes human behaviour as inherently pleasure-seeking, proposing that all actions can ultimately be traced back to the pursuit of one's happiness.

Hedonism can be either quantitative or qualitative; quantitative hedonism focuses on the quantity of pleasure or happiness, It suggests that the goal is to maximise the overall amount of pleasure experienced, regardless of its source or quality. Conversely, qualitative hedonism emphasises the quality of pleasure. It argues that certain pleasures are more valuable or preferable than others, and the pursuit should be directed towards higher, or more refined, forms of pleasure.

Pluralism:

Initial Proposition (Overview)⁴:

A short film that explores a postmodern pluralistic attitude, embracing self-referentiality and epistemological relativism in order to construct a considered take on the postmodern perspective of the modernist flaneur. It is to be intended to serve as commentary on nihilism – when nihilism is considered as a by-product of human existence within a postmodern reality – and as an exploration of an absence-of-meaning; presenting the theme of detachment from the perspective of the flaneur. A stylised abstraction of the mundane for effect: contrasting a rough, rich grainy black and white texture with a halation laden saturated colour; visually this piece of film is to take heed from the “style over function” approach to cinema.

Generating Ideas:

“

Foreign Tongues:

“I the flowers of evil, I find my freedom. Only when we break our synthetic affinity with a shared reality, we are truly free. By design, we have freedom”

Audio:

Seventh Seal Homage:

Treatment: Formalised account of film.

Production Notes:

Justification: within postmodern film everything should be justified – do that you
twerp2000

Preferred Reading:

Production Process:

Of

Evaluation

EVALUATE POSTMODERN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FILM

Production Log:

W/C	WEEKLY OVERVIEW	THOUGHTS
DEC 11 23	Analysis of the project brief. Exploring the nature of modernist and postmodern movements. Researching and planning for a write-up on a range of leading theories of both the modern and postmodern epochs.	
DEC 18 23	Initialisation of the paper, write-up on range of leading theories of both postmodern epochs; providing a foundation of understanding for further research into comparative analysis and future implementation of theoretical perspectives within an analysis of filmic content.	
DEC 25 23	Formalisation of content in the product of a summative essay exploring the differences and transitional period between modern and postmodern epochs. Initialisation of latter understanding within a filmic context. Research of modernist cinema and postmodern cinema.	
JAN 01 24	Written entry – overview – of cinema in both modernist and postmodern states with comparative examples. Subject analysis on leading postmodern filmic bodies, evaluating postmodern characteristics and traits present.	
JAN 08 24	Producing drafts and extra research for the essay: 'Beyond Modernism; Film in a Postmodern State'. Completion of the latter essay. Formalising contents of the essay into a video essay.	

JAN 15 24	<p>Creation of a suite of images/designs that shape a proposal for a brand identity of a postmodern film festival. (Secondary outcome). Beginning to plan and theorise possibilities for a postmodern filmic short.</p>
JAN 22 24	<p>Creation of a formalised treatment and pitch to lecturer summarising the prose of my short film. Pitch to lecturer.</p> <p>Plan of production and editing (spreadsheet identifying self-initiated deadlines for specific pieces/stages of production period).</p> <p>Initialisation of production.</p>
JAN 29 24	<p>Production and evaluation of a test product.</p> <p>Producing further shoots. Consistent awareness and analysis of progress evaluated alongside outlined treatment and the project's exam criteria.</p>
FEB 05 24	<p>Completion of my short film "(un)form: The Dress". Evaluation for the totality of the project considering the UAL exam criteria specifications.</p> <p>Completion of this paper; tidying bibliography and figures categories.</p>

Sketchbook:

Scans and digital copies of visual design work produced in support of this project, specifically curated for this paper. Across the collection of visual imagery, captions provide a further insight to the production process of this project as I explore references and artist's works of whom inspired my own endeavours.

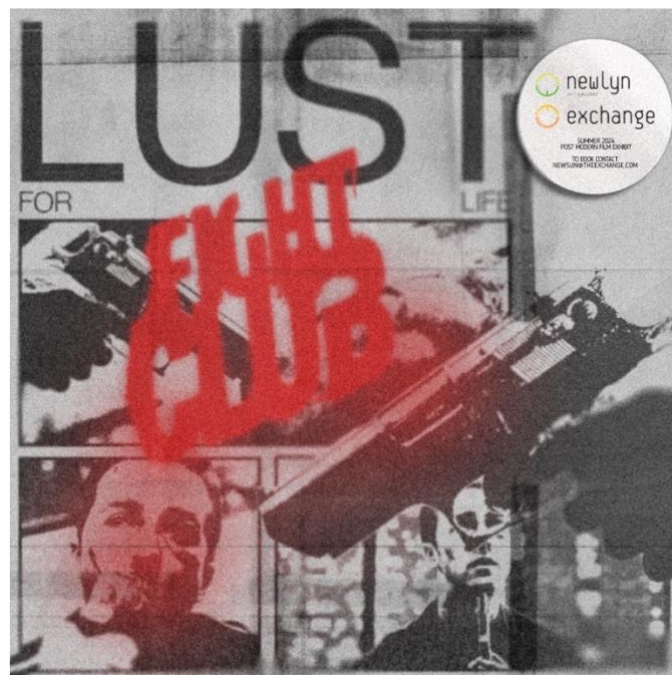
All subsequent imagery is curated and owned by Theo Dowker unless otherwise noted.

The chronology of all subsequent imagery is parallel in its lineage with the paper's structure.

Draft Copy of

Cover Sleeve for: *“Beyond Modernism, Film in a Postmodern State” (Essay):*

Experimenting with displaying the themes of postmodern film as a synecdoche of lusting for life; using *Fight Club* (1999) as the subject, exploring threshold techniques and gritty design work.



References: *Fight Club* (1999); Identity: Newlyn & The Exchange Art Gallery, Penzance, Cornwall, UK.

Please Note: Above designs were not commissioned by Newlyn Gallery and the use of their name and brand identity is for personal use only.



Credits: Stills (from left to right): *The Terminator* (1984) *Natural Born Killers* (1994); Font: Blogger Sans; Identity: Newlyn & The Exchange Art Gallery, Penzance, Cornwall, UK.
Please Note: Above designs were not commissioned by Newlyn Gallery and the use of their name and brand identity is for personal use only.

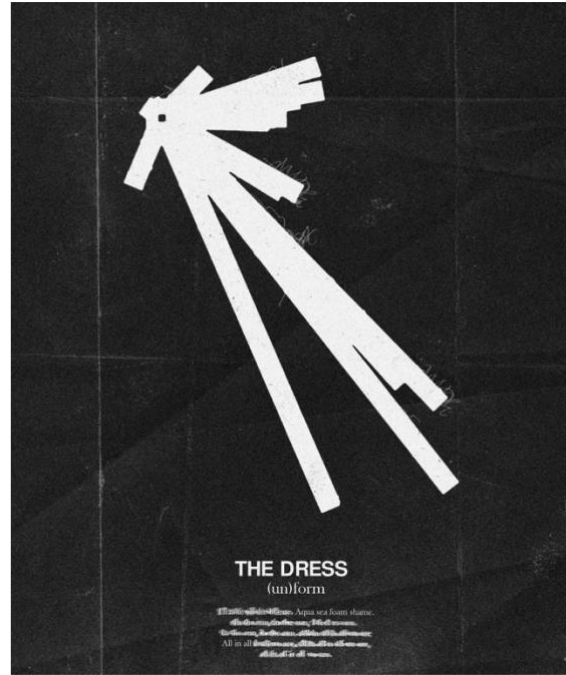
Part 2: “(un)form: The Dress”

Project Proposal Form:

Document illustrating intentions and purpose within “(un)form: The Dress”. Includes: Written Synopsis, Plan of Action (shoot plans and layout), Accompanying visual exploration that informs the film.

Promo Poster:

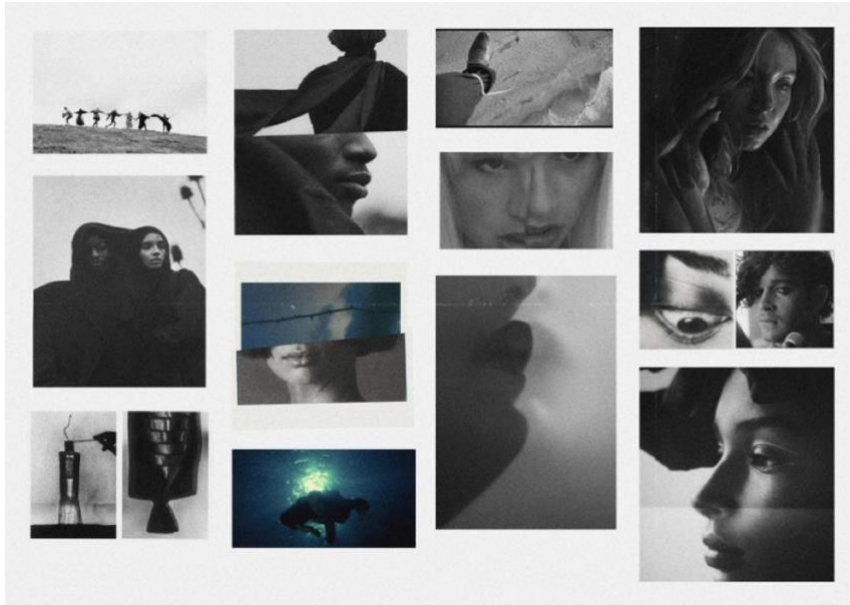
Produced prior to the mobilisation of the production stage; primarily as an additional method of consolidating my plans regarding how I intended the film to appeal visually.



References: The Dress, *In Utero* (1993) – Lyrics featured attributed to Kurt Cobain formerly of Nirvana.

~~I'll take all the blame.~~ Aqua sea foam shame.
~~In the sun, in the sun, I feel as one.~~
~~In the sun, in the sun, all in all is all we are~~
 All in all ~~we are~~, all in all is all we are,
 all in all is all we are.

Mood Boards:



References: *The Seventh Seal* (1957), Amelie Ambroise (c.2020 – present), *Kill Bill, pt. 1* (2003), *Trainspotting* (1996), *The 1975* (2016)

Photographic Resemblance (Visual World Building):



“Maggie-May” – Shot in Winter 2024 by Theo Dowker (35mm, Cinstill film stock; 800 speed) printed and arranged by hand.
The above design is an homage to the stylistic portraiture of Amelie Ambroise.

Dialogue:

in the flowers of evil, I found
my freedom.

only when we break our
synthetic agency with
shamed reality we have
true freedom.

But design: we have
freedom.

Original copy of the French spoken narration. (Prior to translation).

References: *Les Fleurs du Mal* (Baudelaire, 1967), *Passion, Pain and Demon Slayin'* (Scott Mescudi; 2016)

Title Card:



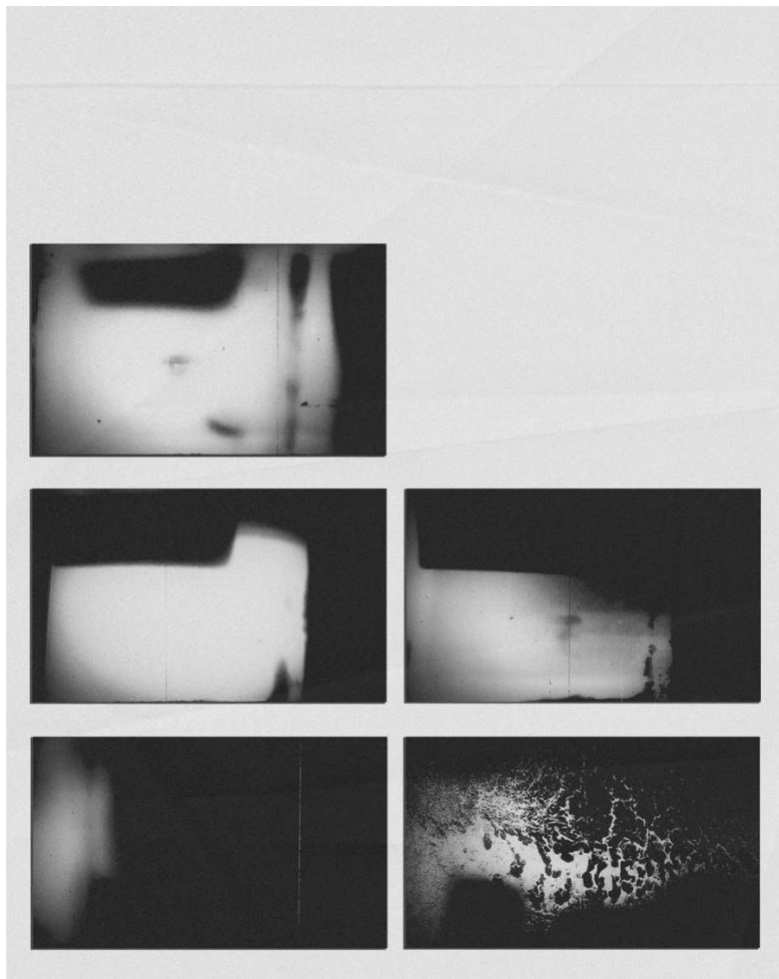
References: *The 1975* (2013) – self-titled brand.

Typography:

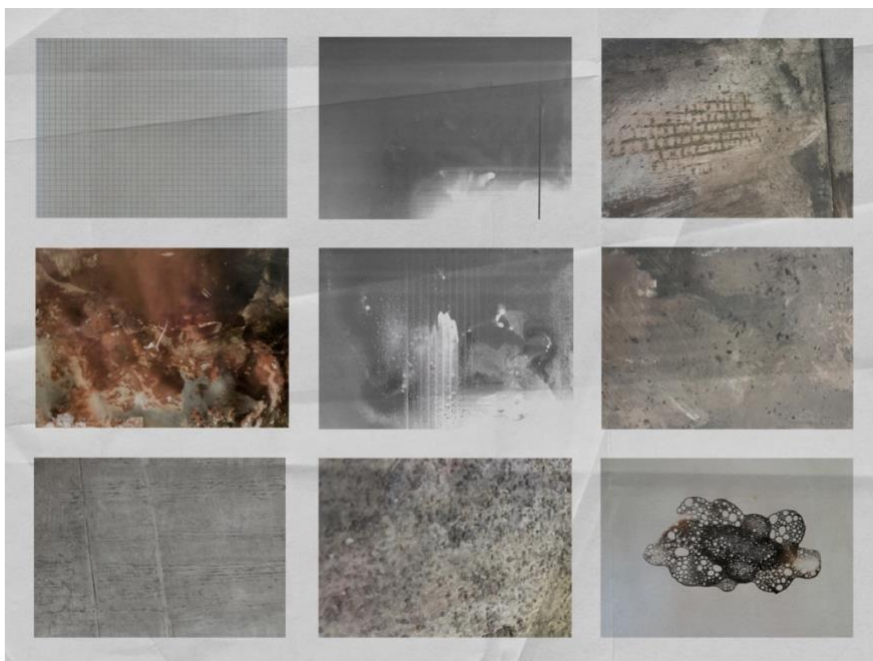
Texture Map (Video):

A motion graphic overlay produced to contribute to the detail and create the desired effect within the short. Comprises of an array of selected still frames

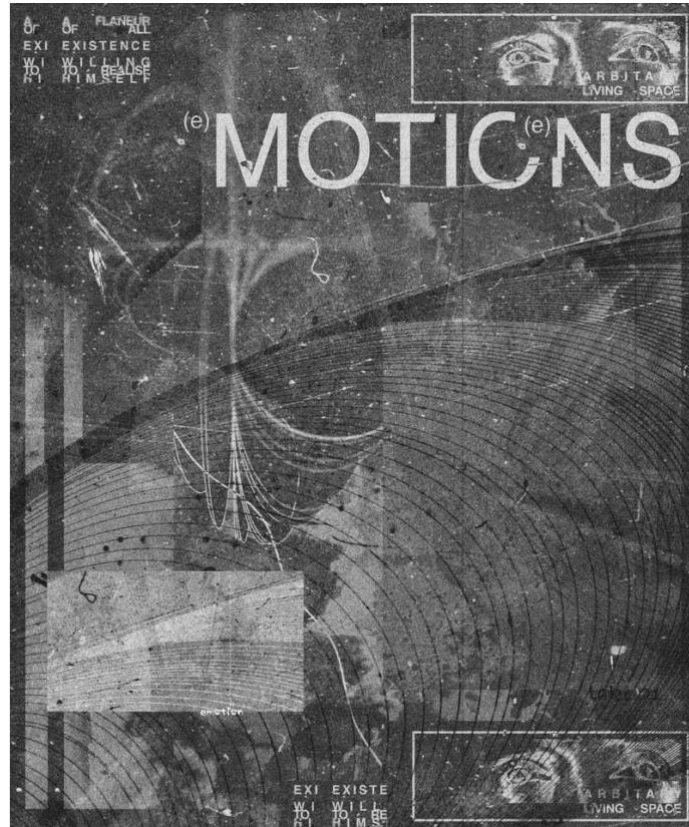
- i. Selected frames from final texture map video.



- ii. Original Texture/Imagery:



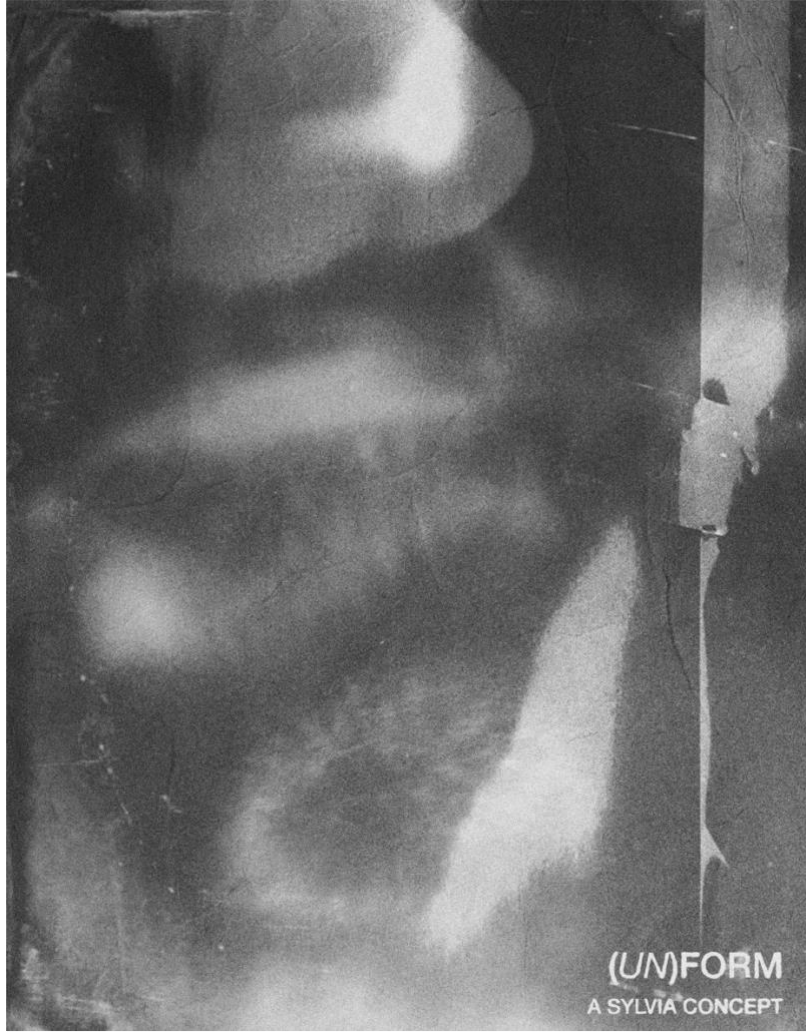
References: Imagery taken and collated by Theo Dowker.



References: *The Flaneur* (Walter Benjamin).

References:

Exploring poignant references and interconnectedness of this proposed film considering denominations of audio & visual elements.



References: Font is Helvetica, Imagery and Arrangement by Theo Dowker



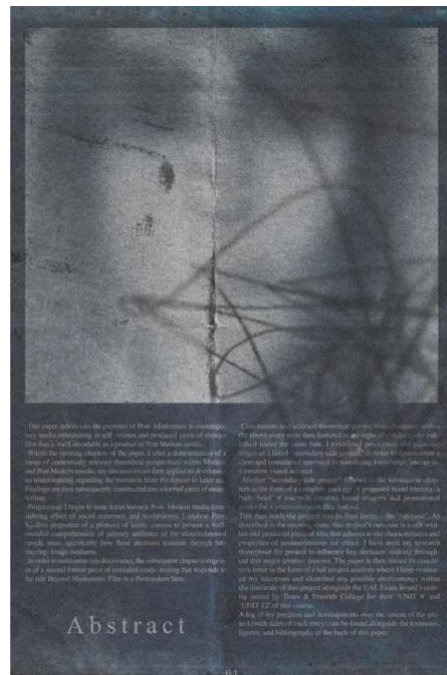
“the dress”

“Narratives” (Zine Form)

- i. Title card for “Narratives”



- ii. ‘Abstract’ graphic:



- iii. Spread of research and planning written work for part 1; “*Beyond Modernism; Film in a Postmodern State*”

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