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Thrills in the Dark: Young People's Moving Image Cultures and Media Education

Emociones en la oscuridad: imagen y alfabetización mediática en jóvenes

ABSTRACT

This author deals with the attraction of that feeling of terror generated in the media, especially in cinema, and from the perspective of the controlled emotion behind that fear, pleasure and pain. What is the nature of the fear and pleasure the spectator feels? Why is it important for educators to take account of this connection between the viewer and the film? This subject is treated from film culture as experienced by young Britons, with an analysis of the influence of cinema on the cultural lives of young people and the lessons that can be drawn. The author takes two young girls as an example, identifying their social identity and later outlining the state of education in cinema and the media. He presents two projects developed by young Britons on Psychosis and the creation of videogames. The author concludes that the fascinating world of moving images is open to us via films and videogames, by exa-mining ludic structures and narratives and teaching students how these are interrelated and exploring their creative processes of production.

RESUMEN

El autor de este trabajo examina la atracción hacia el sentimiento de terror en los medios de comunicación, y especialmente en el cine, desde la perspectiva de la emoción contenida que genera el terror, lo angustioso y agradable… ¿Cuál es la naturaleza del miedo y el «placer» que se experimenta?, ¿por qué es importante que los educadores tengan en cuenta esta conexión que relaciona a los espectadores con la película? En este sentido, abordar el tema desde la perspectiva de la cultura cinematográfica de los jóve-nes de Reino Unido, analizando la influencia del cine en la vida cultural de los jóvenes y cuál es la lección que deben obtener los educadores. Partiendo de una ejemplificación con dos chicas, en las que analiza sus identidades sociales, más tarde pasa a bos-quejar la situación general de la educación en el cine y en los medios de comunicación, presentando brevemente dos investigacio-nes desarrolladas con jóvenes británicos sobre «Psicosis» y sobre creación de videojuegos. Concluye este autor que podemos intro-ducirnos en el fascinante mundo de la imagen en movimiento a través de las películas y videojuegos, examinando las estructuras lúdicas y narrativas que existen, enseñando a los alumnos de qué forma se interrelacionan y explorando sus procesos creativos de producción.

KEYWORDS / PALABRAS CLAVE

Cinema, terror, emotion, young people, social identity, videogames, creative process.
Cine, terror, emoción, jóvenes, identidad social, videojuegos, proceso creativo.

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It is night-time in a house in a small village. Two twelve-year-old girls are watching a video of The Silence of the Lambs (Demme, 1991). They watch in the dark; and, since the girl whose house it is has only just moved in, there are temporary curtains at the windows. One curtain is loose, and the fabric flaps eerily. As the girls thrill to the terror imaged on the screen, their fears are compounded by knocking on the windows – the boys of the village are outside, adding their mock-threats to the threatening mimicry of Buffalo Bill and Hannibal Lecter in the movie. Next evening, in the house of the other girl, they develop a reciprocal sleepover into an extension of the film`s thrill. They sleep in a tent in the garden, frightening themselves deliciously with the evil spirits outside the tent, quarrelling over whether to close the opening in the canvas to keep out the spirits, or open it to let out the insects.

This instance of spectatorship, of the viewing of horror, exemplifies the classic questions perennially raised about the genre and its social uses. In particular it highlights the perplexing emotion central to the genre: the thrill of horror, the fear which is also pleasure, «the insistent operations of terror and desire» (Donald, 1992), the «distress and delight» (Buckingham, 1996) of watching horror films. Why do these two girls (why should anyone?) deliberately set out to terrify themselves? What is the nature of the fear and pleasure they experience? Why might film educators want to understand such an engagement with film?

It also exemplifies some of the dilemmas facing film and media educators. It demonstrates a love for American cinema which some film educators find problematic; and for a genre of film often considered inappropriate for young people, indeed often regulated to prohibit their access to it.

More generally, I want to consider this in the light of young people's film culture in the UK. What does this instance suggest about the place of film in the wider cultural lives of young people? How might it be located within contemporary models of media literacy? What are the lessons for media and film educators? I will begin with the case study of these two girls; then consider the wider landscape of film and media education.

1. Theories of terror

Academic commentaries on the genre invariably address the contradictory affect of fear and pleasure. Carroll (1990) points out that the genre is unusual in being defined by its emotional consequences, rather than, as is more usual, by its content: «horror» is derived from the Latin «horrere», to bristle, or shudder, an etymology that at once emphasises the emotion and the physicality of its expression.

Analyses of this aspect of the genre take a number of different points of departure and theoretical frameworks. One influential strand develops the philosophical notion of the sublime, which was popular in the 18th century, following the widespread availability of Boileau`s 1674 translation of the treatise on the sublime by the classical scholar Longinus. The English philosopher Edmund Burke developed an account of the sublime (Burke, 1960) which provided a theory of the conjunction of fear and wonder provoked by objects of terror and awe, both in nature and in art. Immanuel Kant wrote both an early thesis on the sublime (1960) and a more fully developed (and more often-quoted) account in The Critique of Judgement (1952). Kant develops a theory of how both fear and terror can be stimulated by the sublime object; but argues that, while the sublime beggars our imagination in its immensity, it confirms the superiority of our reason in our ability to conceptualise it. Kant`s developing theory can be seen as an instance of the contradictions and tensions characteristic of the disjunction between the Enlightenment ideal of the rational self and the explosive forces of revolution and narratives of transgression and irrationality so typical of the Romantic movement.

Carol Clover, in her wide-ranging study of the genre, Men, Women and Chainsaws (1992), adopts a psychoanalytic stance to investigate how horror texts invite gendered forms of response and identification. Broadly, her thesis inverts Laura Mulvey`s well-known proposal (1975) that film narrative structures its audience as male and voyeuristic/scopophilic. Clover argues that horror audiences, rather, are invited to identify with the victim, and thus are structured as female and masochistic.

David Buckingham (1996) presents a study unusual in the literature in that it concentrates on real audiences rather than text or ideal reader. His research into the television viewing of 72 children from four schools provides a series of very specific insights into the pleasure of horror. His suggestions about the nature of the fear/pleasure of horror are complex. He partly agrees with Clover`s view of victim-identification, but demonstrates that in fact the pleasure derives from shifting identifications, in which the viewer slips rapidly from one point-of-view to another. But he also finds a pleasure in the critical distance young viewers can achieve, and their awareness of artifice; in an expert knowledge of the genre and its history; in forms of aesthetic judgement evident in their responses; and in the social play of viewing and of subsequent discus-

sion. He finds a kind of subversive pleasure in the monsters and the havoc they cause, and observes that the children dwell on the «gory bits», seeming much more interested in this than in the «just ending» sometimes used by moral apologists for horror. He identifies this kind of viewing with the «paratactic» reading strategies observed by Hodge and Tripp (1986), in which young people stitch together chains of images to provide subversive narratives often at odds with the ostensible structure or meaning of the text.

Finally, he also suggests that watching horror is a kind of rite of passage – that it`s about learning to cope with fear, the pleasure afforded in part by the newly found power over the fear; and that these skills are socially modelled by friends and family, as well as being «taught» by the text, which contains coded instructions on how to deal with the affective charge it emits.

What concerns can we derive from these quite disparate commentaries?

One question is that of identity. Who is the subject who experiences this thrill? How the identity of the viewer might be addressed by, affected by, submitted to by the text is a question invited by a consideration of the sublime (how does the phenomenon of the sublime permit both affirmation of and challenge to the ideal rational integrity of the Enlightenment subject, and successive constructions of subjectivity up to the present day?); by psychoanalysis (what elements of the psyche are addressed by what elements of the film text?); by cultural studies (how are social and collective identities involved in the reading and social uses of horror?).

A second question (again, related) is the aesthetic question. The sublime, for instance, was originally formulated as a paradigm of aesthetic quality – for Longinus, it`s a matter of how to produce great writing; Burke`s examples of the sublime in art are drawn from Milton`s depiction of Satan in Paradise Lost. But if our modern equivalent of the sublime is to be found in the horror film, beset, as Buckingham shows, by assumptions of aesthetic worthlessness, how can we read the aesthetic preferences made by its viewers – preferences dependent on the stimulation of fear? And how is pleasure related to aesthetic judgement, in societies whose dominant groups, as Bourdieu so effectively demonstrated (1984), privilege sublimated forms of aesthetic experience which deny or repress textual pleasure?

2. Lucy and Jessica: «you have to see what happens next!»

Lucy and Jessica are talking to me about horror films. Lucy is an ardent fan – Jessica claims not to like them, though later in the interview she shows extensive knowledge of certain films. Lucy spends some time on The Silence of the Lambs (Demme, 1991), a film she`s watched on more than one occasion. She describes the dénouement of the film, the scene in the

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house of the serial killer Buffalo Bill, where Clarice Starling (Jodie Foster) has tracked him down, only to become herself the hunted, at the mercy of his infrared night glasses: «L: No but I mean, like – I`m thirteen, and I shut my eyes, when I, when you were in his house, and the way, still now, that I watched it a year ago, and I`ve watched it since, but still now, you know at the end, she has the binoculars where he can see in the dark – still now, whenever it`s dark, like if we`re playing a game in the pitch dark, or, I always think that he`s somewhere and he`s got the glasses, he can see me and I, I don`t know, but they, they, they`re the things that seem to scare me, because if ever I`m in the dark I just think, something can see me and I can`t see it».

For the most part, the viewer is not represented by the second person pronoun here, but the first person, as if the universal viewer become more intimate, Lucy herself; though she shifts between herself-as-viewer

and other-as-viewer: «when I, when you were in his house...». Her discourse suggests that the viewer is in control: all the action, at least at the beginning, is a kind of spectatorial drama, even structured around the narrative of her first viewing of the film (I watched it a year ago), subsequent viewings (and I`ve watched it since), and a continuous present, made up of her memories, the film-in-her-head, vividly represented by the dramatic repetitions of «still now...», evocative of the tellings of ghost stories.

Even when the monster is at his most threatening, his actions (he`s somewhere and he`s got the glasses, he can see me) are subordinated to the main verb in the clause, which signals Lucy as Actor, in the controlling act of spectatorial mentation: «I always think...».

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always framed by the controlling viewer, operate within their grammatically subordinated context as if within the limits of the screen, showing the monster, the represented participant in the semiotic transaction. However, the Goal of his actions, ostensibly Agent Starling, has shifted to the spectator, Lucy herself, as if she`s rewritten, or refilmed, the point-of-view shots to show, not Starling, but herself. The play of pronouns, though, is wider than these structures would suggest – not only the «I» of herself as spectator, the «me» of herself as victim/heroine, the «he» of Buffalo Bill – but also the «you» of the universal viewer (or perhaps me, the interviewer/teacher); and the «she» of Agent Starling (in an odd slip which reverses the seeing-seen roles: «she has the binoculars). Furthermore, in a pronominal extension which makes the social context of these textual transformations very clear, she refers to the «we» of herself and her friends, re-enacting the thrill of the dark: «still now, whenever it`s dark, like if we`re playing a game in the pitch dark, or, I always think that he`s somewhere and he`s got the glasses».

So, as in the account given by David Buckingham (1996) of one teenager`s viewing of The Lost Boys, the viewer shifts rapidly between different points of view. In Lucy`s account, however, these shifting points of identification move beyond the film, as the structures of the fiction are replicated in the spaces and rituals in which her own actual social identity is bound up.

But what social identities are bound up in these processes? To simplify – who, exactly, is feeling thrilled or scared, about what? and what part do they play in the production of this fear, and of the object of it?

Edmund Burke (1977) is very clear about the mixed emotions provoked by the sublime object, emotions he describes as a mixture of fear and wonder; and he remarks on the need for representational strategies of concealment: «To make anything very terrible, obscurity seems in general to be necessary. When we know the full extent of any danger, when we can accustom our eyes to it, a great deal of the apprehension vanishes. Every one will be sensible of this, who considers how greatly night adds to our dread, in all cases of danger, and how much the notions of ghosts and goblins, of which none can form clear ideas, affect minds which give credit to the popular tales concerning such sorts of beings» (page 257).

Immanuel Kant's early notions of the sublime present a similar structure, in which the sublime landscape produces a metaphor of terrifying emptiness; but also fills the unknown space with invented objects or creatures: «Deep loneliness is sublime, but in a way that stirs terror. Hence, great far-reaching solitudes, like the colossal Komul desert in Tartary, have always given us occasion for peopling them with fearsome spirits, goblins and ghouls» (page 49).

In many ways, this simple structure of a darkness - a space which is in one sense empty, but in another replete with imagined horrors– appears to be bequeathed directly from Burke and Kant to our own time. Lucy observes the same structure in The Silence of the Lambs: the empty darkness of Buffalo Bill`s house, replete with the threatened horror of the killer, and the partly-imagined, partly-remembered images of horror that have been briefly shown us: the bath of human skin; the killer sewing up the human skins. The «neces-

sary obscurity» remarked on by Burke seems clearly to be a pre-requisite of the effect of horror in this film. Already, though, it is equally clear that the fear caused by the darkness, the emptiness, is no less dependent on the monsters it suggests, or only partly conceals. Indeed, at the beginning of Lucy`s account, she concentrates on starkly revealed images of horror rather than on concealed ones – the emphasis is on wide-eyed, shocked revelation rather than on concealment: «L: No, I – I really like the film Silence of the Lambs – but it just really scares me. I don`t know why. Because it`s not just the fact that – I mean I`m not – like Predator – I`m not scared of, cos I know they`re not true – but – I know there are people that – you know – might do that, and – the way that you see people mur – you see them being murdered, and you see all the blood down the well, and, you know, it`s just the way he treats her, and the way he sews up the skin, and things».

Here, the action of the sequence is subordinated to the action of spectation and the objects of the spectatorial experience: «all the blood down the well»; «the way he sews up the skin». These are brief images of extreme violence that represent important themes and ideas of the film, though in fact they account for an extremely small proportion of the footage. In this sense, they transcend the narrative structure, and are strung together by Lucy, in her act of reconstituting the essence of the film, to represent an important aspect of it for her: the nature of the monsters in the movie – the horrors that haunt the darkness. They function as «synchronic syntagms» (Hodge & Tripp, 1986; Hodge & Kress, 1988), powerful images which viewers might use to assert a particular version of a text. In this case, Lucy is constituting a version of the monster for two reasons: to show how really horrific he is, and how bizarrely horrible his behaviour, and so to convince us of the shocking nature of the film and account for the fear it causes; but also to make a claim for the credibility of the monster. She is making a modality judgment; and for her, Lecter and Buffalo Bill are highly credible because they could exist, at least in the appeal to social reality made by the slasher/stalker subgenre of horror that really began with Psycho. She compares this kind of monster to Predator (McTiernan, 1987) in which the monster is a kind of invisible alien, who only appears as a barely-formed ripple of light. She`s making a point often made by girls – that monsters based on «real» stories of rape and murder are more frightening than fantasy monsters.

Lucy and her friends organize their play, their textual engagements, and their environment around the mechanics of concealment and revelation: a darkness that`s frightening and delightful both in itself and because of what it might conceal. She shuts her eyes as she imagines herself in Buffalo Bill`s house. She describes the living-room where they watch the film:

– L: But it was so scary because it was Ellie – it was when Ellie slept round my house, and we were in the house on our own, and all the boys outside knew we were watching it, and we sat there in the corner, and it was just pitch dark, and it was just when she was in the well, and I was sitting there under the covers, and the boys knocked on the window.

– AB: [laughs].

– L: – and scratched –and I– my –I screamed so loudly, I just–.

– AB: Which boys?

– L: They`re just some boys in the village. You know Will Phipps?

– AB: Mm.

– L: He was one of them. Cos he –um– and a boy called James Gardner.

– AB: So they were just knocking on the window to frighten you?

– L: And they –cos that window– cos we haven`t been at Swaffham Prior that long –um– one of our windows still –just half the window– we didn`t have enough material for the curtains –so half a window hasn`t got curtain– if you see what I mean.

– AB: Mm.

– L: And – so we had no way of shutting it, and you just look out in the corner of your eye, and.

– AB: Were you there, Jessica?

– J: Mm.

And after watching the film, Lucy sleeps at Jessica`s house the next night: «J: And then she came to my house and we slept in a tent in the garden, and she wanted the flap shut so that all the evil spirits or something couldn`t get in, and I wanted it open so that the insects could get out. Then we just went back inside».

So Lucy appropriates the historic signs of the sublime, and they work for her, allowing social dramas woven of her own textual mechanics: the torn curtain of the vicarage, the village boys, Jessica`s garden, the tent-flap. The girls recruit these fabrics, places, characters, to construct their own dynamic of concealment and revelation behind which lies the imagery of the film – this film, others they know and enjoy, and a set of cultural echoes stretching back to the Romantic sublime, through a series of transformations and distortions, seen from our historical moment, as Jameson suggests (1981), through a kind of x-ray, revealing the shadowy layers of accreted meaning.

If the affective charge of horror can be employed by children in their social play, at the same time we can observe the exercise by them of forms of aesthetic taste, which are of course of interest to media educators. The version of the sublime presented in Kant's Critique of Judgement attempts to banish what he sees as the vulgar, excessive imagery of the sublime, its panoply of ghosts, goblins, supernatural clutter, and holy bones. His pruned version, which privileges the ascetic empty landscape over replete and explicit images, is an offshoot of the form of aesthetic judgment he advocates in the Critique: the pure gaze critiqued by Bourdieu as the pleasure-denying stance of bourgeois ideology. By contrast, Bourdieu seeks an account of a popular aesthetic in the Bakhtin's carnival (1984), his notion of a «grotesque realism» which permits a visceral reversal of dominant aesthetic value and the refined, cerebral imagery in which it is represented.

Contemporary accounts of horror reveal the same kind of polarised approach. On the one hand, the champions of 'body-horror' as an aspect of popular culture appear, an approach typical of Cultural Studies (Jancovich, 1992). On the other hand, we can see a modern version of the `pure gaze', in an aesthetic which praises Hitchcock for building suspense without revealing the horrific object explicitly. The same aesthetic, of course, will condemn popular body horror for tasteless explicitness, as Philip Brophy (1986: 8) condemns Cronenberg, Hooper and Landis for the excess of modern body horror: «the contemporary horror film often discards the sophistication of such a traditionally well-crafted handling of cinematic language».

It is this sophistication which Brophy describes as «the Hitchcock debt», and he constructs an evaluative opposition between what he describes as the «telling» mode of the more restrained aesthetic and the «showing» mode of body horror, which he claims is «photographic», and which he presents as aesthetically degraded.

These oppositions of academic camps suggest that the old divisions between elite and popular culture, and more specifically between 'commercial' and 'arthouse' cinema are as fixed and obdurate as ever they were. However, there is evidence at the same time of the kind of unsettling of boundaries proclaimed in postmodernist thought. Carol Clover points out how the horror genre has become upwardly mobile in recent years, using, in fact, «The Silence of the Lambs» as an example (1992: 232). At the same time, it is clear that the conventional divisions of critical taste represented by the old academic camps would mean nothing to Lucy and Jessica, or indeed their parents:

middle-class families who both enjoy the spectacular thrill of horror films such as these, but also express a considered appreciation of them. Teachers, however, are caught between the aesthetic judgments of the critical-academic domain and those of popular audiences, and are thus obliged to negotiate somehow.

What can film and media educators learn from this account of two girls and their engagement with horror? In a recent publication using data from a current media literacy research project, I and my colleagues have shown that, while media teachers value the media cultures of their students, they may often not know very much about these cultures, may misunderstand them, or may have difficulty in making connections between such cultures and the work of the media classroom. We also argue that this may not be their fault: there are very real obstacles in the way of making such connections (Burn et al, in press).

My argument here is that, in constructing a formal curriculum for the study of film as a great contemporary art-form, we need to be aware of children's moving image culture. While we may wish to introduce them to the heritage of national film (and it is a legitimate goal to widen their experience of different genres of film), we must pay attention to the experiences of children like Lucy and Jessica, whose filmic pleasures are not untypical of children of their age across Europe. They find legitimate pleasure in the popular cinema of America; in the excessive imagery of body horror; in the forbidden fruit of film genres which national regimes of regulation may seek to deny them. They elaborate their pleasure in social play, in experimentation with identity and friendship: this kind of film appreciation is embodied, ludic, affective, sensual, humorous, rather than abstract, cognitive, serious. In these senses, it resembles the general domain of popular fandom in the media of film, television and computer games, the social practices of appropriation and transformation documented so well by Henry Jenkins (1992).

Media educators do not need to be confined by the practices of fandom, but they do need to include them and be aware of them. They have legitimate goals of developing the critical faculties of their students, of teaching them to analyse film texts, of equipping them with the skills to creatively produce their own moving image work. But unless these enterprises begin from, and constantly return to, the rich and complex popular pleasures which characterise children's film preferences, experiences, and playful transformations, the work of the classroom will become elitist, formalist exercises.

3. Moving Image education: the wider picture

If Lucy and Jessica's encounter with Hannibal Lecter point towards the need for educators to recognise children's cultural experience of film, then the full picture needs to consider how a critical approach to film is developed in the classroom, and how creative production work is encouraged. I will briefly sketch two scenarios from my own research, and from the work of practitioner colleagues in the UK, to suggest some important themes here.

3.1. Analysing Psycho

This project involves 13-year-old students analysing Hitchcock's celebrated slasher movie. In practical terms, they are provided with the film footage imported into Microsoft's free editing software, Windows Moviemaker. Because Moviemaker automatically splits long footage into brief clips, the students are faced with a screen full of small sequences (figure 1). They are then able to categorise these to explore themes, ideas (such as the fear inspired by horror films), characters, film grammar (they can sort all the close-ups, for instance), and so on. They are then asked to produce an oral presentation accompanied by a Powerpoint show featuring images, moving image sequences, sound files, script extracts and notes.

Figure 1: A student works with Windows Moviemaker to analyse sequences from Psycho

This may sound like a conventional formal analysis. However, because the students are asked to compare the film to recent horror films they know and enjoy, there is a link with their own film culture, and they are encouraged to use image and sound files from their own films to contextualise their account of Psycho. Furthermore, because they connect a formal analysis (of filming and editing structures, for example) with their own pleasure and understanding, the danger of a decontextualised formal analysis is avoided.

Finally, because the work begins from a reworking of the actual moving image text in an editing software, and continues as a form of production using image and text, the conventional divisions between analytical work and creative production often noted in media education are avoided. This is both analysis and production (a more detailed account can be found in Burn and Durran (2007).

Of course, the use of editing software suggest a wide range of possibilities for the production of moving image texts in schools, and there has been something of an explosion of this kind of work since the introduction of free editing softwares in the first decade of the century. While on the one hand, media and film educators have exploited these technological advances to help students learn about the grammar and theory of film by making their own, on the other hand they are slowly coming to terms with the changing social and cultural landscapes of online media production. Where once students might have made trailers for movies as an exercise in film marketing and distribution, it now makes more sense to see such work in the context of the mash-up fan cultures which produce tributes, parodies, and other transformations of films for Youtube. Such contexts offer rich possibilities for film and media educators to re-connect the work of the classroom with the media cultures of their students.

3.2. Making Games

This project developed a game-authoring software, now commercially released under the name Missionmaker, for use in schools. One of the most competent producers of 3-D computer games in our project was a boy, Ogedei, who made three major games over the course of the three years of the project. His particular love was horror-themed games; his last and most complex game, made when he was 14, was called Rebellion. In it, the player plays the role of a rebel commando whose mission is to free his city from the control of an evil alien Overlord (figure 2). A full account can be found in Burn (2007).

What has this to do with film education? I include it for two reasons. The first is that 3-D graphic-based computer games are another form of moving image text. Whether they are played in the classroom or designed and produced, they involve narrative sequences, different shot types, character and player point-of-view, filmic temporality, sound and dialogue. The consideration of such features in the media classroom can only help students to grasp the grammar, style and meaning of the moving image, not because

computer games are the same as film, but because, while they share many of its signifying structures, they are different. An early experiment with a colleague involved asking 12 year-olds to compare a scene in the film of «Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets» with the same scene in the computer game version. It was vividly apparent how camera angle, time, dialogue, visual design, narrative structure, viewer/player involvement, were both related and different. It was equally apparent that any notion of literacy, and media literacy in particular, must be able to account for children's understanding of and engagement with the Harry Potter mythos across book, film and game.

The second reason I have for connecting this example of game design with film education is that games and films are increasingly closely related, adapted from each other, mutually influencing each others' themes, narratives and visual styles. To return to Ogedei, his game was rooted in his love for horror games such as «Resident Evil and Silent Hill». He worked hard to re-create the thrill of threatening non-player characters appearing from nowhere to confront the player, accompanied by appropriate noises and warnings. He exploits, in fact, the same dialectic between the ominous empty space and the emerging monster that we observed in the Kantian sublime, and which Lucy and Jessica found so pleasurable in The Silence of the Lambs. But he was also keenly aware of the interplay between film and game franchises, and many of his favourite games were adaptations of films, or had been adapted into films. The lesson for the media educator, then, is that, in the exploration both of moving image culture and semiotics in the classroom,

to consider films and games alongside each other is a productive way forward.

4. Conclusion: the media educator's balancing act

We are faced, as media educators, with many conflicts. Those indicated in the case studies discussed above include the opposition between the popular commercial cinema of Hollywood and the art-house film of our European national heritages; between the analysis of film in the classroom and the creative production of the moving image; between the conventional models of film education based around the industry's processes of production, marketing and distribution and those emerging from the fluid creative practices of the participatory internet; between the apparently comfortingly settled form of cinema and newer moving image media such as computer games.

My own instinct in the face of such conflicts is that we can have the best of both worlds. We can explore art-house film and the legacies of European cinema and properly appreciate our students' engagement with global popular cinema, as long as we make the cultural distinctions that beset these categories an object of enquiry with our students rather than an imposition of our own cultural preferences. We can productively confuse the analysis and production of film if we move away from conventional print-bound modes of interpretation and explore 'multimodal essays', using the very fabric of the moving image as our mode of analysis. We can occupy the intriguing world between the moving image forms of film and game, moving between narrative and ludic structures, learning with our students how these interrelate. We can embark, with our students, on an exploration of the creative processes of moving image production as fan art, Youtube parody, even machinima produced in virtual worlds, in ways which retain an awareness of the century-old traditions of filmic language, reconstituted in the new spaces of online culture.

In this way, we can get the best out of the restless neophilia of the new media age, without sacrificing the cultural history of the moving image which is a vital part of the artistic legacy of ourselves and our students. To return finally to the example of horror, we can find a continuity between the Gothic and Romantic sublime which formed part of the irrational underbelly of Enlightenment Europe and the contempo-

Figure 2: A screen grab from Ogedei's computer game, Rebellion, showing a rebel commando the player meets at the beginning.

rary images of pleasurable horror which migrate from film to game and back again. We can follow these through the social anxieties, affective thrills and playful creativity of our students, making these the point of departure for the critical and creative work of the media classroom.

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