HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

Hugvísindasvið

Hardcore, You Know the Score

On Hardcore Henry, *a Cinema of Speed, and the Intensification of Masculinity in a Control Society*

Ritgerð til BA-prófs í kvikmyndafræði

Bob Cluness

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Abstract

This thesis uses a detailed analysis of the 2015 sci-fi action film *Hardcore Henry* to explore the cinematic relationship between speed, shifts in our socioeconomic landscapes with the digitisation and economisation of knowledge and information, and the intensification of masculinity and gender roles in contemporary action cinema.

The thesis is split into 3 sections; the first section is a short analysis of *Hardcore Henry*, where we examine the characteristics of the film and what makes it particularly noteworthy in the canon of contemporary action cinema. We find that the film is noteworthy for two particular reasons; the first was the way that director Ilya Naishuller directed the film entirely in the first-person subjective shot. The second was the way that film incorporated into its cinematography, narrative, and structure, elements of PC and console gaming.

The second section takes *Hardcore Henry* and places it in the context of the history of cinematic technology and theory. What I show is that far from a break from tradition, *Hardcore Henry* is but the latest iteration in what is a historic drive by cinema to articulate the speed and movement of society thanks to the development of cameras, technical support, and editing technology alongside the formation of theory and editing techniques that convey a sense of action and energy to a fast paced narrative. The third section situates *Hardcore Henry* along sociocultural and political-economic lines, where we see a historical shift from Michel Foucault's idea of a disciplinary society, to Gilles Deleuze's concept of a control society. In this shift we note how the film embodies the cultural changes brought by the advancement of digital technologies, cybernetics, and game theory on our social reality, as well as how the acceleration and intensification brought on by a episteme of control have enabled the digitisation and convergence of several cultural forms, as well as intensifying homogenous representations of masculinity found in contemporary action cinema.

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Introduction

Picture the scene from a recent action film. As the camera shows a crowd in an unidentified equatorial country, the hero is keeping tabs on a suspected bomber. On being spotted by the hero, the antagonist runs off, whereupon the hero gives chase. This subsequent chase, which lasts nearly seven minutes, has both characters run through a variety of locales, including a building site. They scale steel girders and the sides of buildings, leap from ledge to ledge, off cranes at perilous heights and run through the city streets. During the chase and the subsequent carnage and destruction, both men display a mix of acrobatics and feline athleticism as they seemingly defy gravity and all obstacles in their chase. Eventually the chase ends in an embassy where the hero takes the bomber and engages in a shootout, complete with gunfire and explosions. Eventually cornered, the hero kills the bomber and sets off a huge gas explosion as he makes his escape.

Let us now describe and compare another action scene from a film that was made ten years later. We are on a motorway as the camera takes up a first-person point of view perspective of the hero, who is situated in a sidecar of a motorbike as it gives chase with a convoy of vans. As a pounding punk rock soundtrack blares out, the hero uncovers and cocks a huge gatling gun. As the first van approaches the hero unloads a mass of bullets into the van, effectively cutting it in two. As the bike speeds past, the camera whip pans to see the van flip and explode in a ball of flames. The bike then approaches the second van, the hero pumps more bullets into the back as the bike runs into the rear of the van, through it and smashes out of the front windscreen killing everyone inside. The hero then leaps from the bike onto the roof of the third van, kills a henchman, then throws a hand grenade inside. As the van explodes, the hero is thrown into the air, only to subsequently land on the pillion of a second motorcycle giving chase. The motorcycle is rammed into the lead truck, which the hero scales up and smashes his way inside, and finally killing two heavies with a knife in an extremely violent fashion.

The first scene is from the James Bond film *Casino Royale* (Martin Campbell, 2006), and it is a scene memorable in terms of the intense acrobatics of the stuntmen and the speed

depicted of the scene itself, both in the character's movements and the editing. The second was a chase scene from the film *Hardcore Henry*, a 2016 Russian-American sci-fi film written, directed, and co-produced by Ilya Naishuller. While both scenes show huge levels of action, violence, and excitement, there are pronounced differences in how both films portray said action. With *Casino Royale*, the action in the scene is fast and exhilarating with all manner of carnage and explosions, but it adheres strictly to the conventions of the continuity system that is a staple of mainstream narrative cinema, following a fairly linear trajectory from point A to B to C, before the scene ends with a huge explosion. With *Hardcore Henry*, the scene is much shorter and condensed - in terms of time, it lasts only two minutes - but it manages to pack similar amount of the action into that period. The other main difference is the shot selection used by Naishuller, that of a first-person point of view shot, a shot noted for its highly subjective nature, placing the camera (and therefore the spectator) into view of the hero as he destroys vehicles, kills bad guys, and jumps and flies off the sides of vehicles. While *Casino Royale's* action scenes provide an exciting experience, *Hardcore Henry* ups the ante in terms of providing a spectator experience, as it throws the viewer into a compressed level of cinematic immediacy that is as intense as it is visceral.

On watching *Hardcore Henry*, it is obvious that even for an action film it is what you would call a *fast* film; everything about it, from the cinematography, to the narrative and the filming process is geared up to create a film that imbibes a sense and impression of constant movement. It is a film that cannot sit still, that is always in a state of constant kinetic action. In the promotional material for *Hardcore Henry,* the main message was that it is a film that delivers a cinematic experience the viewer has never seen or attempted before, through the intensification of kinetic effects and techniques in action cinema. In effect, you were seeing a film that was marketed as a break from established norms of the action canon, that it stands alone in its developments and achievements.[1]

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[1] An example of this is can be seen in the official trailer where it exclaims in big letters, "GET READY TO EXPERIENCE A MOTION PICTURE EVENT UNLIKE ANY OTHER YOU'VE SEEN!" See "Hardcore Henry Official Trailer #1 (2016) - Haley Bennett, Sharlto Copley Movie HD", YouTube Video, 02:32, posted by "Moveclips Trailers", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sca9U6IlAns.

But is this actually true? In interviews, director Naishuller acknowledges that the first person subjective viewpoint has been utilised before in cinema and that there were precedents to what they were doing in production (although he maintains that it was the first to be done in the action genre).[2] And while some parts of the technology they deployed had been designed specifically by themselves, other technology, from the type of cameras to the CGI software, was already available on the market for years. What I posit is that far from being a unique film that stands alone among cinema as a sui genesis, *Hardcore Henry* is actually the latest development in the ongoing evolution of what I describe as *a cinema of speed.*

Before going any further, we need to determine and define what it is we mean exactly by *a cinema of speed.* And while this initially seems a simple task, in actual fact there are several issues and factors to take in before we even start. These issues can best be summed up by Timothy Corrigan in his essay on cinematic speed, where he discusses the value and execution of acceleration in contemporary cinema;

> Often overlooked in this imagistic frenzy is that speed describes not one dimension or relationship but potentially many: not only different rates of velocities and accelerations but also the intervals, pauses, and integrals that form the transitions between shifting velocities and accelerations as a "depth of speed." Within the movements and experiences of speed as various temporal degrees or "gears," in short, there potentially exist spaces of interpellation in which actions, thoughts, decisions, and emotions may adjust, redirect, or even control the flow of speed. These are the critical spaces in which temporality and speed may be executed—efficiently or not, successfully or not—and the cinematic value of speed may accordingly be most suggestively condensed and addressed as a question of execution, or how successfully,

[2] For the most in-depth interview given by Naishuller, see "Creating HARDCORE HENRY w/ Sharlto Copley & Ilya Naishuller - ETC Podcast", YouTube Video, 52:26, posted by "ETC Show", April 3rd 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n70EzGO2Lz8.

rapidly, and productively individuals and audiences execute their insertion into this rapidly moving media culture.[3]

In other words, when talking about a cinema of speed, it must be taken into consideration a multitude of aspects and factors. Are we focusing on the velocity of the movement of camera through cinematic space? What about the movement of bodies objects and actors though cinematic space? Is it about portraying a sense of constant speed, or instead is it concerned about the moments of disruption between scenes of action and moments of calm? Then there is realm of narratology; is the emphasis to be put on the speed of the plot? How do we define what is a fast plot in comparison to a baseline? How does a cinema of speed refer to the techniques of cinematic language such as shot length, selection, editing, digital effects, frame speed, and other ancillary aspects of cinema such as the use of music, foley sounds, etc.? Would a cinema of speed affect the dialogue, either in its deployment by actors, or the rate or verbiage in the script? We also have to bear in mind the condition of a cinema of speed as an idea of genre and production; Does a cinema of speed affect all of cinematic genres or just a certain genre or genres in particular? Does a cinema of speed have to be made fast in terms of shooting and production times? Then there is the nature of exhibition and spectator involvement; Does the viewer watch films in a single sitting or a condense it into a binge viewing of multiple films in a single time frame?

Clearly when analysing and thinking about what we mean when we define a cinema of speed, there are numerous factors to take into account, several of which are outside the scope of this thesis. But for now I will be working with the following definition of the cinema of speed – *That it refers to the narrative's depiction of movement and acceleration of both the camera and bodies through cinematic space*. From this simple definition, there are a few fundamental axioms towards my definition of a cinema of speed that can be posited;

- **A cinema of speed is both historical and social**: The deployment of a cinema of speed is part of a tradition that is a process that has progressed since the genesis of cinema. This

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[3] Timothy Corrigan, "Still Speed: Cinematic Acceleration, Value, and Execution", *Cinema Journal (In Focus: Speed)* 58, no. 2 (2016): 120.

process is not necessarily linear or continuous, but instead often reflects and is informed by of social conditions of acceleration.

- **A cinema of speed is technological:** the articulation of speed in cinema has been driven by the continuing evolution of cinematic technology. This evolution has taken many forms: there has been the development of cameras and equipment used to move and house them, to the development and standardisation of projection technology. Then there is the development and progression of editing technology from that of celluloid to that of video, and now digital. Finally, you have the development of special effects and their move from physical to digital processing.

- **The cinema of speed is aesthetic**: From the earliest days of film, the overriding essence of cinema as an art form has been its ability to capture the dynamism of movement and physical action in a defined space, though the deployment of various techniques to convey the movement of bodies as well as to give the spectator the perspective of and to derive pleasure from what they are seeing on the screen.[4]

The other conspicuous aspect of *Hardcore Henry* as a film is how its pervasive use of the first person subjective camera shot, along with the excessive use of violence, weapons, and macho dialogue, leads to it resembling that of a first person "shoot em up" (FPS) computer and console game format.[5] While the director has been at pains in interviews to

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[4] It is also important to point out that while I have coined the term *a cinema of speed*, there has been a body of texts and theory with regard to the concept of speed and its numerous manifestations in modern society. At the forefront of the development of a concept of speed is the writer and philosopher Paul Virilio, who has dedicated a large proportion of his work to the "science of speed". Across a series of books and essays, Virilio famously coined the term *dromology,* which he uses to describe the logic that underpins the science of speed. Dromology concerns itself with the body of knowledge where speed can change the essential nature of a moving object and its relationship not only with itself, but with its surroundings and other objects and how they appear to us. As such, speed can radically influence social perception. My concept of a cinema of speed is not directly taken from his work, but his work has inspired a productive line of thinking. In that context, the most important text to investigate from Virilio are *Speed and Politics*, trans. M. Polizzotti (New York: Semiotext(e), 1986); *War and Cinema*, trans. P. Camiller (London: Verso, 1989); *The Lost Dimension*, trans. D. Moshenberg, New York: Semiotext(e), 1991); The Vision Machine, trans. J. Rose (London: British Film Institute, 1994). *Negative Horizon*, trans. M. Degene (London: Continuum, 2005).

[5] On Metacritic's aggregated collection of media and user reviews of *Hardcore Henry*, the majority of comments from both fans and critics has been the similarity between the film's cinematography and the look and movement of many First Person Shoot 'em up (FPS) games, such as *Goldeneye*, *Call of Duty* and *Modern Warfare*. See

state that *Hardcore Henry* is first and foremost a film,[6] there is no denying that the aesthetics, design, and narrative of *Hardcore Henry* matches many of the action orientated computer games that have been on the market since the 1990s. As such, the film is emblematic of what has been a long convergence between various digital media cultures such as music, computer games, and cinema over the past two decades, in terms of the modes of production, aesthetics and output. Thanks to the deployment of computing power and digital processing, the majority of films made for mainstream cinema today are created on a wholly digital basis in terms of recording, editing, and the inclusion of effects. Games meanwhile are becoming increasingly "cinematic" in terms of the narrative, gameplay and movement, the quality of detail in graphical rendering, and how they are marketed with the use of "trailers" that resemble those of mainstream action cinema.

The overriding aesthetic that underpins much of this convergence of digital media is that of gendered maximalism that tends towards the masculine, where the historical relationship between masculinity and technology is valorised as the norm and is increasingly intensified through the deployment of masculine metaphors in describing the technologies in action and how certain techniques are promoted and propagated. The results, whether they are experienced on a laptop, headphones, or on a cinema screen, is a display of what has been termed "hypermasculinity", when homogenous masculine performative behaviour and cultures have been amped up due to the intensification of the digital production and processing it has undergone.

The purpose of this thesis is to explore two concepts that arise from viewing *Hardcore Henry*;

1) To show that *Hardcore Henry,* far from being a sui genesis of action cinema, is but part of a historical tradition in action cinema with regard to technology, processes and

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"Hardcore Henry Reviews: Metacritic", accessed December 2, 2016, http://www.metacritic.com/movie/hardcore-henry.

[6] "Creating HARDCORE HENRY w/ Sharlto Copley & Ilya Naishuller - ETC Podcast", YouTube Video, 52:26, posted by "ETC Podcast", April 3 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n70EzGO2Lz8.

aesthetics in generating a sense of speed and immediacy. I will attempt to develop a genealogy of a cinema of speed, where the invention and development of cinema and camera technology has gone hand in hand with a society undergoing rapid social acceleration, while the theorizing and evolution of action cinema aesthetics and techniques, was necessary to recreate in cinema an embodiment of movement, speed, and immediacy.

2) From this I present that *Hardcore Henry* is emblematic of a shift in practices and techniques in cinema – and other media forms - over the past twenty years, from showing outright velocity to an intensification of aesthetics and practices within action cinema. This intensification that is embodied in films like *Hardcore Henry* I aim to show mirrors the intensification of our socio-political reality and modes of power, from what Michel Foucault termed a "discipline society" to Gilles Deleuze's notion of a "control society". What underpins this shift are two factors 1) The convergence of the logic of control, gaming, and the "gamespace" across multiple media forms so that they codify broader social, aesthetic, and political practices. And 2) the utilisation of gendered technologies (gaming, computers, the internet) towards action cinema and other media forms, and how they are deployed with respect to creating a broader hegemonic cultural ideal of hypermasculinity in both the textual, performative and process aspects.

1: Part One - A Critical Evaluation of *Hardcore Henry*

With all essays about cinema, it starts with a film. In the summer of 2016 I watched a digital copy of the film *Hardcore Henry*. It's a film that despite the low budget nature of the shooting, revels in its own excess. It's fast, violent, brutal, and most of all, it is *intense* in its depictions of speed and violence. From the opening scene, where our self-titled hero falls through the sky in an escape pod, to the last few seconds fighting dozens of super soldiers on a skyscraper rooftop, *Hardcore Henry* is a film that, like many films in the action cinema canon of the last decade and a half,[7] concerns itself not just with action, but with speed – of movement, of violence, and of narrative. It is a film that according to critic Simon Abrams, "lives and dies based on its abilities to disorient, shock, and generally undermine your sense of stability".[8]

What is interesting is that for all the fanfare and hype that surrounded *Hardcore Henry* on the internet and in preview showings on the indie film circuit,[9] when it was finally granted a nationwide release, the response was lukewarm at best. After a small but strong box office receipt of $5.1 million in its opening weekend, it was pulled from nearly 2,500 cinemas after

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[7] Examples of film from this canon include – the *Fast and Furious* franchise (Rob Cohen, John Singleton, Justin Lin, and James Wan, 2001–2015), The *XXX* film series (*XXX* [Rob Cohen, 2002], *XXX: State of the Union* [Lee Tamahori, 2005], *XXX: Return of Xander Cage* [D.J. Caruso, 2017]), The *Bourne* film series (*The Bourne Identity* [Doug Liman, 2002], *The Bourne Supremacy* [Paul Greengrass, 2004], *The Bourne Ultimatum* [Paul Greengrass, 2007], *The Bourne Legacy* [Tony Gilroy, 2012]), *Bad Boys* and *Bad Boys II* (Michael Bay, 1995, 2003), *Salt* (Phillip Noyce, 2009), The *James Bond* series (*Casino Royale* [Martin Campbell, 2006), *Quantum of Solace* [Marc Foster, 2008], *Skyfall* [Sam Mendes, 2012]), *Crank*, *Crank 2,* and *Gamer* (Brian Taylor, Mark Neveldine, 2006, 2009, 2009), and several others including the spate of "superhero" movies from the DC and Marvel film studios.

[8] Simon Abrams, "Hardcore Henry", *Ebert.com*, 8 April 2016, http://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/hardcore-henry-2016.

[9] The film was subsequently the subject of a bidding war between Lionsgate, Universal, and STX Entertainment, with STX becoming the winning film company with a rights purchase of $10 million. See Mike Fleming Jr., "STX Entertainment Closing Deal for 'Hardcore': $10 Million and Wide Release Commitment", Deadline.com, September 18th, 2015, http://deadline.com/2015/09/hardcore-10-million-worldwide-deal-toronto-film-festival-1201532584.

two weeks which according to analysts was the second biggest theatre drops of all time.[10] The film also polarised the critics. Those that liked it praised it's sheer daring, saying that *Hardcore Henry* was "A revolution in action cinema […] that does something that live action has never attempted before",[11] where the action was "enthralling until it's enervating",[12] and that overall it was "a double-barrelled shotgun blast of heavy-metal excess".[13] Those that disliked the film meanwhile, stated that the sheer amount of action failed to cover up significant structural problems and failings in plot, narrative and character development, as well as the depictions of racial and gender stereotypes, with Glenn Kenny of the New York Times stating that "Beneath the film's elaborate trappings, Mr. Naishuller reveals a worldview so rawly misanthropic as to seem genuinely traumatized". The reviewer for the New York Daily News Steven Whitty was even more eviscerating; "Stupid as a bag of hammers and twice as loud, "Hardcore Henry" sounds like the title of the worst Kissinger bio ever […] it is one unrelenting hour-and-a-half of shaky-cam violence and ear-splitting noise".[14]

    Hardcore Henry was born out of the production of two music videos to the songs "Bad Motherfucker" and "The Stampede", which Naishuller directed with Sergey Valyaev for his punk band, Biting Elbows. Shot entirely in the first person subjective viewpoint using "Go-Pro" camera technology, these videos contained a stream of non-stop action and violence, with the protagonist running through corridors, jumping from buildings, and killing

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[10] Brad Brevet, "'Jungle Book' Repeats, 'Huntsman' Falls On His Axe and 'Zootopia' Tops $900M Worldwide", *Boxofficemojo.com*, 24 April 2016, http://www.boxofficemojo.com/news/?id=4179.

[11] Joshua Rothkopf, "Hardcore Henry", *Timeout.com*, 16 September 2016, https://www.timeout.com/us/film/hardcore-henry.

[12] Stephen Garrett, "'Hardcore Henry' Brings Immersive Gaming to the Multiplex", *Observer.com*, July 4 2016, http://observer.com/2016/04/hardcore-henry-brings-immersive-gaming-to-the-multiplex/.

[13] Stephen Dalton, "'Hardcore Henry': TIFF Review", *Hollywoodreporter.com*, September 13 2015, http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/review/hardcore-henry-tiff-review-822707.

[14] See Stephen Whitty, "'Hardcore Henry' not worth point of viewing: Review", *Nydailynews.com,* April 6 2016, http://www.nydailynews.com/entertainment/movies/hardcore-henry-not-worth-point-viewing-review-article-1.2588095; See also Glenn Kenny, "Review: In 'Hardcore Henry,' a Semi-Robotic Soldier Has a P33ersonal Mission", *Nytimes.com*, April 7 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/08/movies/review-in-hardcore-henry-a-semi-robotic-soldier-has-a-personal-mission.html.

a lot of people.[15] When both videos were premiered online, both became viral internet hits,[16] which in turn attracted the attention of producer Timur Bekmambetov, and actor Sharlto Copley, who stated that "after watching that [video] about 25 times on repeat, I was fascinated with the idea of trying to make a movie in that format".[17] And while there are many different aspects of the film that will require eventual analysis, such as the character, plot, dialogue, direction, etc., what I want to concentrate with this section is how the film uses camera technology to depict scenes of action and violence, as well as how it constructs a cinematic diegesis that is similar to other cultural forms.

Hardcore Henry opens with a scene that depicts a boy being beaten by bullies, before they are chased away. The camera enters the boy's POV with him lying on the ground as a man (Tim Roth) chases the boys away. Turning around and kneeling down to the child, the man slowly tells him "you… little…. pussy" as the film enters into the opening credits, a smorgasbord of graphic moments of violence depicted in ultra-slow motion, close ups, and bathed in dark red light. Both the highly stylised shot use and slow motion of the opening scene and credits cock a mocking glance at the often stylised mainstream "art cinema" aesthetics that has been popularised by the likes of Nicolas Winding Refn, David Fincher, and Christopher Nolan in the way that it uses valorised cinematic techniques such as coloured lights, close ups and slow motion to portray moments of over the top violence - guns and shotguns being cocked, people being shot at close range, broken and bottles stabbing, bricks caving in skulls.

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[15] Although these video were shot entirely in the first person subjective viewpoint, this isn't the first time that this technique or style has been used for music videos. The most notable previous example was in 1997, when Jonas Åkerlund directed the video to the song "Smack my Bitch Up" by the Prodigy. The video, which contained scenes of sex, violence, nudity and alcohol and abuse, was a big cult hit despite being criticised for its violence and aspects of misogyny. And uncensored version can be seen at https://vimeo.com/44561183.

[16] At the time of writing this thesis, the video to "Bad Motherfucker" has achieved over 34 million views on YouTube alone. See "Biting Elbows - 'Bad Motherfucker' Official Music Video", YouTube Video, 04:56, posted by "Biting Elbows", March 18 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rgox84KE7iY.

[17] Sarah Dobbs, "Sharlto Copley interview: Hardcore Henry, Chappie, dangerous stunts", *Denofgeek.com*, March 28 2016,

http://www.denofgeek.com/movies/sharlto-copley/39510/sharlto-copley-interview-hardcore-henry-chappie-dangerous-stunts#ixzz4Uc4MxLy6.

After the opening credits, *Hardcore Henry* lays out the premise to the film with the vision of a man waking up in a laboratory. Missing various body parts, he is approached by a woman named Estelle (Haley Bennett). Claiming to be his wife, she proceeds to graft robotic parts to his now cyborg body. Without a voice or a memory, he is taken to another lab to be debriefed and fitted with a voice module, but before this happens the lab is stormed by a deranged tech guru and mob boss named Akan (Danila Kozlovsky), who also possesses telekinetic powers. Both Henry and Estelle escape the lab (which we find out is actually an airship at high altitude), but on the ground she is kidnapped and taken by Akan's thugs who proceed to try and kill Henry. Before they manage to do this, he is helped by a mysterious shape-shifting man named "Jimmy" (Sharlto Copley) who despite being killed with alarming ease, keeps reappearing throughout the film in various guises in order to help Henry and provide basic exposition. From this simple premise, *Hardcore Henry's* narrative is set – get supplies and info, kill all the bad guys, and save his wife.

There are two things that mark out *Hardcore Henry* as being noteworthy as an action film in this regard. The first, which has already been mentioned, is that the entire film was shot in the first person subjective shot, which is thanks in part to the camera technology used by Naishuller. The majority of *Hardcore Henry* was recorded on Go-Pro cameras that were mounted on a helmet apparatus that was specially designed for the film itself. The Go-Pro camera, a small, lightweight and durable digital camera that was first developed in 2004 by Nick Woodman as a way to capture high quality photographs and videos of sportspeople in action from their viewpoint. As such the camera has become synonymous within the fields of action and extreme sports such as skydiving, base jumping, snowboarding, mountain biking, and surfing, for its ability to be mounted on a helmet and record the action without intruding on the actions of the sportsperson, while also being able to handle the rigours of the action across a variety of terrains, from high altitudes, to being underwater.

The Go-Pro has also become synonymous with the actions of Russian amateur daredevils who illegally climb high towers and buildings, before taking videos of themselves perched or walking perilously close to the structure's edge, several hundred metres from the

ground.[18] These videos, which have become an internet viral sensation, show them breaking into secured areas, climbing to the top of numerous structures and then performing stunts at the very top. The Go-Pro cameras, follows the head movements of these thrill seekers, which means that when they look onto the ground below you get to see viewpoints of vertiginous drops and nausea inducing perspectives.

These visual attributes, as well as being physically and technologically suitable to action film shooting, would play a crucial role in bringing an invigorated sense of immediacy to *Hardcore Henry*. The use of such Go-Pro also broke with many of the rules of cinema production in that it combined several roles into one (stuntman – actor – cameraman), meaning that the camera became a near literal extension of the body of the stuntmen who were playing Henry, helping to emphasise the technological aspect of Henry's character and the cyborg aspect of his own body.

The innovative use of Go-Pro cameras means that *Hardcore Henry* affords a visual style in numerous fight and chase scenes that, while has been intimated other recent films such as the *Bourne* series or the *Crank* movies, is made more visceral, more *intimate*, due to the highly subjective nature of the cinematography. Henry is in a constant state of forward momentum whether he is running, jumping, fighting, or falling, with the viewer experiencing this first hand, as the action coming thick and fast from multiple viewpoints and vectors that both disorientates and unsettles the spectator. The camera is highly mobile and never sits still, constantly making whip pan movements that mimic the sharp, jerking movements a person makes with their eyes or when their head moves. Because the camera is never static, there is never a single point of perspective; In the numerous scenes of violence, Henry kills people in gory close up, either with close combat weapons such as guns, knives, and bricks, or with his bare hands; some killings are clean and efficient, others are messy and nasty. During action scenes with many actors in play, we are assaulted by a barrage of action as objects such as bullets, debris, broken glass, and even blood rain down on you from several locations

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[18] for more information, read Maryam Omidi, "Roof of the World", *Calvertjournal.com*, September 30 2014, https://calvertjournal.com/features/show/3139/roofing-daredevils-climbing-extreme.

simultaneously, while multiple explosions occur both within and without the camera's field of vision.

The overall aesthetic in these action scenes is one where the image is constructed for physical and focal movement to provoke maximised levels of stimulation on the part of the viewer. It is a prime example of a concept in visual media that Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin call remediation, In their book, also titled *Remediation*, Bolter and Grusin describe a modern society where "our culture wants both to multiply its media and to erase all traces of mediation: ideally, it wants to erase its media in the very act of multiplying them".[19] From the renaissance era onwards, the history of art has been one of a process of remediation which operates according to dual logics of immediacy and hypermediacy. With immediacy, the artist attempts to satisfy our desire to experience a completely unmediated experience of reality, for the object of representation before us to be an authentic rendition of the real at that moment. For this to happen the medium being used, be it painting, photography, or film, through a variety of techniques utilised by the artist is rendered immersive and transparent, the presence of the artist becoming invisible from the final resulting work. On the other side, there is hypermediacy, where the constructed nature or the work, the processes used to create it, and the work's appropriation of other forms and mediums are foregrounded and shown to the spectator. In the past, an example of this would have been the overtly styled and coloured calligraphy of medieval texts, or in films such as *Tout Va Bien* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1972) and *Blazing Saddles* (Mel Brooks, 1974), where the directors break the "fourth wall" of the screen, highlighting the constructed nature of the films themselves.

Today hypermediation can be seen most clearly in the realm of digital media, such as the internet, where we can receive information instantly while it is displayed through the fractured multiplicity of various browser interfaces. Hypermediacy, according to Bolter and Grusin "acknowledges multiple acts of representation and makes them visible" through "windows that open on to other representations of other media," and hypermediacy "multiplies the signs of mediation and in this way tries to reproduce the rich sensorium of

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[19] Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1999), 5.

human experience". [20] In today's digital cinema, we can see how films are in a constant state of remediation, where at once they attempt to place us in a fully immersive, unmediated, and unified diegetic world that is utterly real, while at the same time the constructed nature of the film through its use of technology, and postproduction CGI and compositing, and the fragmentary nature of this digital world is foregrounded and highlighted to the viewer.

In the promotional material to *Hardcore Henry,* the Director of Photography, Seva Kaptur boldly emphasises that the film is "The first action movie, entirely shot in first-person". [21] While this is a bold claim, the fact is that throughout the history of cinema there have been very few examples where this type of shot is used extensively. Alexander Galloway in writing about the links between the first person shot in cinema and FPS games, posits that the reason for is both technical and subjective. They are technically difficult to create due to the inability of the camera to properly recreate human eye movement as well as the depth and range of human vision. Then there are the issues of subjectivity. Cinema, like other artistic mediums, present the viewer or audiences as a disinterested observer of the events and representations of people, places and objects that are brought before. There is the illusion of distance between you and the artwork. But with the first person subjective shot, this premise is short circuited as the viewpoint of the camera "extends outwards from the viewer's eye, pierces the screen, enters the diegesis of the film, and backs out again". [22] Because the shot combines both the visual and subjective view of a character in the film, while at the same time exposing the voyeuristic nature of both the camera and the spectator's view.

Perhaps the only main example of a film, and one acknowledged by the director himself, is the 1947 film *Lady in the Lake,* a film noir that is shot entirely in the first person subjective shot, whereupon you adopt the viewpoint of the film's hero, detective Philip Marlowe. Like *Hardcore Henry*, the film was marketed as a one of the kind, the first noir film shot entirely in the first person, whereas the New York Times states "YOU do get into the

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[20] Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation*, 33–34.

[21] "HARDCORE HENRY (Behind The Scenes Episodes): Technologies & VFX", YouTube Video, 09:39, Posted by "Cameraptor", April 21 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4cQwd0ryZ6k.

[22] Alexander R. Galloway, *Gaming: Essay on Algorithmic Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 41.

story and see things pretty much the way the protagonist, Phillip Marlowe, does, but YOU don't have to suffer the bruises he does".[23] While *Lady in the Lake* makes a valiant effort to show the film entirely from the protagonist's point of view, the limitations of both camera technology and special effect from the time mean that cinematography often breaks the first person subjective shot at numerous occasions.

Lady in the Lake, while a film of interesting novelty, is ultimately a failed formal experiment,[24] and subsequently the first person subjective shot has only been used sparingly by film directors, and "when they are used, they signify a problematic form of vision" on the part of the character's subjectivity.[25] This "problematic form of vision" translates itself into moments in horror and sci-fi cinema when the camera takes up the point of view of the antagonist, either watching another person or in the act of committing an act of violence, or in sci-fi genres films when we are subjected to the machinic vision of a cyborg/robot antagonist.[26] On the rare occasion it has been used extensively, it has been to promote a level or queasy disorientation from alcohol and drugs, such as the video to The Prodigy's "Smack my Bitch Up", or in the action genre such as in the film *DOOM* (Andrzej Bartkowiak, 2003)*,* where it was then used to highlight the fact that it was a film adaptation of a well-known FPS video game of the same name.

The fact that the entirety of *Hardcore Henry* is shown in the first person viewpoint of *Hardcore Henry* leads to the second notable aspect of the film, that is the film's close affinity to the look, structure, and movement of computer and video games. And it is not difficult to see why; Several of the main sections of the film, from the rescue of Jimmy by Henry (aided

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[23] T.M.P, "MOVIE   REVIEW: At   the   Capitol",   *Nytimes.com*,   January   24   1947, http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9C04E3DE123EEE3BBC4C51DFB766838C659EDE.

[24] For a more thorough investigation of the cinematic world of *Lady in the Lake* from a theoretical standpoint see James Conant, "World of a Movie", in *Making a Difference: Rethinking Humanism and the Humanities,* eds Niklas Forsberg and Susanne Jansson (Riga: Thales, 2009), 293-324.

[25] Galloway, 41.

[26] Galloway goes on to cite numerous films in his book that utilise such a perspective, but the notable films in the Horror/Thriller/Sci-Fi cannon that utilise the first person subjective shot include *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960), *Halloween* (John Carpenter, 1977), *Silence of the Lambs* (Jonathan Demme, 1991), *The Eye* (Danny Pang Phat, Oxide Pang Chun, 2002), *The Terminator* (James Cameron, 1984), *Robocop* (Paul Verhoeven, 1987) and *Strange Days* (Kathryn Bigelow, 1996).

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by Jimmy's "Clones") to the final climax action scene at the top of Akan's apartment skyscraper, resembles the layout of action orientated computer games, with Akan portrayed as an end of level "big boss" villain.

Then there is the character of Henry himself; He acts very much like the quintessential video FPS game character. Due to him having no "voice module" installed, he is mute throughout the film. While the "strong silent type" has been a staple of classic movie tough guys such as the ones depicted by the likes of Charles Bronson, Lee Marvin, and Clint Eastwood, you could still glean a certain amount of characterisation from the way they looked, moved, and acted. But with *Hardcore Henry* we don't even get to see his visual responses to situations or his physical gait and poise. Only once in the film do we get to see his face, which consists of a murky reflection from a piece of glass near the end of the film. There is also no interior monologue as to what he is thinking or feeling at any given moment. As such, throughout the film, it is almost impossible for the viewer to ascertain of pin down as to why he undertakes the insane amount of violence he does. As there is no dialogue from Henry, either exterior or interior, there is no articulation of his desires, dreams and motivations as a character. Any base drives to his character are provided by others, be it his "wife" Estelle, or through the exposition of Jimmy or one of his clones.

Hardcore Henry, as we can see, is a film that uses current levels of technology in creating a cinematic spectacle that place in you in the immersive centre of a violent diegetic world that foregrounds action and movement over that of narrative or character. Like many generic action films, it concerns itself with deploying an array of rote characters (the silent hero, the damsel in distress, the over the opt villain), but even compared to these films, *Hardcore Henry* declines to flesh out any motivations for these characters; they are obligatory blank slates with no emotional resonance that you can attach your viewing experience to. Instead they are mere vessels upon which to carry chunks of information and plot. Any plot developments that can be spoken of, is entirely formulaic to the point of being utterly rudimentary, with moments of exposition merely used to provide the basis continue to another episode of orgiastic violence and action. Narrative flow as such, has been replaced by extended series of fractured moments of the present, where these moments deliver refined and

distilled bursts of over the top, yet game-realistic action and violence. *Hardcore Henry* is a brutally effective display of bombast, aggression, and accelerated hyperviolence, across a narrative that is all sheen and surface.

Despite its perceived failings as a film, both critically and at the box office, *Hardcore Henry* shows a level of innovation that foregrounds the fundamental essence of cinema of speed as an art form; that of the representation of speed and movement to excite and a sense of the pleasure in the spectator. And while the film shows cinema being pushed to its limits, both in the terms of aesthetics and production, this is not a break but one of a long progression that has been going on since the beginning of the form. In part two, we shall look to develop a historical conditions of a cinema of speed and how they contribute to the intensity of the images the viewer can now see on their screens.

2: Part Two - The Genealogy of a Cinema of Speed

2.1: A Cinema of Speed – Acceleration and Changes in Culture and Society at the Turn of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century

In this section I will discuss how the developments, social and technological, that occurred in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, helped to create the base ferment that allowed cinema to exist in the first place and that one of the main drivers towards cinema's existence was to provide a means the articulate the sense of social speed and acceleration that was felt collectively during this period.

When we talk about a history of acceleration in society that occurred in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Hartmut Rosa & William Scheuerman assert that "most authors agree that a significant period of acceleration took place between 1880 and 1920, it should come as no surprise that many of the most astute analyses of acceleration were written either during this period or slightly posterior to it".[27] They then go on to point out that "since the Industrial Revolution, the tempo of scientific and technological innovation, many facets of economic life, and even the rate of innovation in military technology have taken on ever more dramatic proportions".[28]

The main causes and drives of this acceleration are many and too complex to properly convey in this thesis, but what can be determined, according to Reinhart Koselleck, is that while western societies were already experiencing social acceleration, they were hitting the limits that nature imposed upon it, such as the biorhythms expressed in the need for people to rest at night, to the limits afforded by nature in terms of transport, such as wind power for sailing and horsepower for carriages. But, as Koselleck notes, social acceleration "could be driven further only once technological inventions allowed it to overstep these barriers. It was

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[27] Hartmut Rosa and William E. Scheuerman, Introduction to *High Speed Societies: Social Acceleration, Power, and Modernity*, eds Hartmut Rosa and William E. Scheuerman (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 7.

[28] Hartmut Rosa and William E. Scheuerman, *Introduction*, 20.

after the French and the Industrial revolutions that acceleration began to become a general experiential principle".[29]

Therefore, what marked the nineteenth and early twentieth century in terms of acceleration can be seen by the use of technological solutions that allowed society to break the rhythms that nature imposed upon them. While there are a multitude of inventions and trends,[30] there are a few areas of social acceleration that can be identified pointed out and these are discussed below.

> **Time**: While mechanical clocks had been in existence since the fourteenth Century, it was in the nineteenth Century we saw the beginning of the miniaturisation and mass production of mechanical clocks and watches.[31] Meanwhile we see the increasing discretization in units of time from days, to hours to minutes and then seconds. The technological standardisation of time units allowed for even more fine tuning of time and its use and embedding in the context of human interaction. Kosellick for example tells of how the standard units of time allowed humans to "detach themselves from traditional temporal rhythms connected to nature",[32] which translated in the creation of night shifts in factories as well as transportation to occur outside of the day time. The nineteenth century also saw the standardisation of time both at a national level, with the emergence or rail networks in the early to mid-nineteenth century requiring the cessation of the different depiction of local times, and at an international level with the creation of Greenwich mean time and international time zones. The effect of the standardisation of time across the world, from local to global, was the prevalence of the utilisation of "punctuality, calculability and exactness in business transactions as

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[29] Reinhart Koselleck, "Is There an Acceleration of History?" In *High Speed Societies: Social Acceleration, Power, and Modernity*, eds Hartmut Rosa and William E. Scheuerman (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 121.

[30] For more details on social inventions and cultural trends, see Koselleck, "Is There an Acceleration of History?" or Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2003).

[31] Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space, 1880-1918* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2003), 110.

[32] Koselleck, 118.

well as human relations".[33] People's experience of time was being compressed and condensed.

Transport: Across the realm of personal and public transport, we can see a generalised increase in speed not just in modes of transport that already existed, such as sea travel, but with the creation of new modes of transport that outstripped the previous dominant modes. As the previous section notes, the standardisation of time across national and international zones allowed for the proliferation of rail networks and standardised time tables. Stephen Kern meanwhile plots a trend of an increase in general velocities of individual travel from walking on foot, to the bicycle, the electric tram, the railway, and ultimately all the way to the motor car[34], as well as the increase of mass transit in both urban locales and the transport arteries between cities and towns.

Electricity: As Kern succinctly states, "nothing moved faster than electricity that raced through conduits powering motors and accelerating a variety of activities".[35] The introduction in cities of the newly formed electric grid powered the factories, offices and electrified both the tram and railway lines. Electricity allowed for the creation of the telegraph cable and telephone lines, which caused a quantum shift in the speed of communications. While the use and application of electricity for communication was initially seen in terms of political and military use,[36] the benefit in conveying information at high speeds would be taken over by media and mercantile societies. Reporters could now provide information on events and happenings from greater distances, even overseas, immediately after the fact. This acceleration of communications also facilitated a change in how media itself was communicated with the development of the "telegraphic" style of prose,[37] which did away with the use of

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[33] Kern, 113.

[34] Kern, 114-116.

[35] Kern, 114.

[36] See Koselleck, 120-121.

[37] See Kern, 115.

ambiguous word and opted for a more direct style of talking and writing for use in print media. The utilisation of electrified communications also helped to facilitate the increase in transactions in the financial markets, by allowing data to be sent to banks and investors from the stock market, while also allowing people to call in to make purchases.

Production and Commerce: The use of technology and inventions first created during the industrial revolution allowed for development and deployment of machine production in many factories, allowing for a massive increase in scale, size, and speed of production within numerous industries. Because machines could work continuously and with the greatest of efficiency, this led to the development of what was termed by Frederick W. Taylor as "Scientific management", whose principle and practice became known as Taylorism, whereupon the tasks that workers took in a production line were measured and their efficiency analysed according to the time taken to perform these tasks. As Taylor himself noted, "No one can be found who will deny that in the case of any single individual the greatest prosperity can exist only when that individual has reached the highest state of efficiency; that is, when he is turning out his largest daily output".[38] For Taylor and his contemporary Frank B Gilbreth, who with his concept of "time and motion studies" applied the principles of scientific management to workers in factory spaces, the worker was to be viewed more like a cog in a machine that needed to be broken down into small elements, analysed according to the variables of time and motion, and reconstructed into such a manner that they could work at optimum levels of speed and efficiency for them to be useful.

The purpose of highlighting these few examples is to show how cinema was born into the period of the nineteenth and early twentieth century where the social, economic, and political milieu could be characterised as undergoing a form of acceleration due to the facilitation of various technologies and scientific methods. Indeed, the first use of cinematography, according to Kern was as in the way Gilbreth utilised the early cinematic work developed by Muybridge and Marey in using sequential photographs to capture the

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[38] Frederick W. Taylor, *The Principles of Scientific Management* (New York: Mineola, 1998), 2.

movement of a galloping horse, in order to capture the movement workers and improve upon the speed they completed tasks. "Cinema was the technological link: Muybridge and Marey were searching for a way to make moving pictures; Gilbreth used the motion picture camera to make chronocylegraphs".[39] As we can see, from its inception, cinema was used as a tool for capturing and articulating the speed of modern society in order to analyse and improve upon working processes. This was down to the ability of cinema to capture that which no other art form could; that of portraying movement within a snapshot of time.

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[39] Kern, 117.

2.2: A Cinema of Speed - Cinematic Language and Theory

In the previous section we considered how cinema was born into a world of modernity that was characterised by a form of social acceleration that was felt across numerous areas of society, a feeling that was as thrilling and exciting as it was brutal and efficient.

It was during that period that many artists and thinkers began to think about the way that art could convey and express this new social speed. The cubist painter Fernand Léger for example noted that, "Speed is the law of the modern world […] life rolls by at such a speed"[40]. Society in general had sped to the point that it had become a series of spectacles that older artistic forms, such as literature, representational painting, and theatre could not hope to capture. In response to this situation, Léger called for new forms of art that should capture this sense of motion in society; "We have found what we are competing with; we must renew the man-spectacle mechanically. We can make the materials themselves move, set them in action".[41] The evolution of cubism as an art form, for example, typified this drive to portray this sped up world in action, where the artist would use abstraction in order to create the sense of capturing the form and image of an object from multiple angles and steps all at once.

Meanwhile, the Italian futurists of the 1910s, led by F.T. Marinetti were positively evangelical about the possibilities of portraying a society that was built upon speed. For them, speed was the new religion and arbiter, and as such, life should be adjusted to these new ideas;

> Speed, having as its essence the intuitive synthesis of every force in movement, is naturally pure. Slowness, having as its essence the rational analysis of every exhaustion in repose, is naturally unclean. After the destruction of the antique good and the antique evil, we create a new good, speed, and a new evil, slowness.

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[40] Fernand Léger, *Functions of Painting*, trans. Alexandra Anderson, ed. Edward F Fry, (New York: The Viking Press, 1973), 35.

[41] Ibid.

Speed = synthesis of every courage in action. Aggressive and warlike.

Slowness = analysis of every stagnant prudence. Passive and pacifistic.

Speed = scorn of obstacles, desire for the new and unexplored. Modernity, hygiene.

Slowness = arrest, ecstasy, immobile adoration of obstacles, nostalgia for the already seen, idealization of exhaustion and rest, pessimism about the unexplored. Rancid romanticism of the wild, wandering poet and longhaired bespectacled dirty philosopher.[42]

For Marinetti, the magnificence of the world had "been enriched by a new beauty, *the beauty of speed.* Following dynamic art, the new religion-morality of speed is born this Futurist year from our great liberating war".[43] Marinetti's exaltations on speed bordered on the hyperbolic, to the point where he would foresee nature itself being altered to run along straight lines to make it go faster ("I hope to see the day when the Danube will run in a straight line at 300 kilometres an hour"[44]).

Eventually, the Futurists lost a lot of followers as the writing of Marinetti in particular fostered a turn to both war and fascism as the main drivers of society on speed. Yet despite the near madness of Marinetti's writing, many artists associated with the futurists would attempt to implement his theories and principles towards their art. Giacomo Balla would apply abstract speed to painting in works such as *Dynamism of a Dog on a Leash* (1912), and Marcel Duchamp, while not considered a futurist, applied many of the same aesthetics with his 1912 painting *Nude Descending a Staircase no. 2.* Umberto Boccini meanwhile would utilise the idea of continuous movement to sculpture, resulting in works such as *Unique*

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[42] Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, "The New Religion-Morality of Speed", In *High Speed Societies: Social Acceleration, Power, and Modernity,* eds Hartmut Rosa and William E. Scheuerman (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 58.

[43] Marinetti, 57.

[44] Ibid.

Forms of Continuity (1913), which was his main attempt "to express our whirling life of steel, of pride, of fever and of speed".[45]

But it was cinema that out of all the artistic mediums that truly managed to capture the spirit of speed and movement that was occurring at the beginning of the early twentieth century. Early cinematograph films, of which those produced by the Lumière Brothers became the most famous, would capture various objects in motion, such as boats sailing across a harbour and people leaving a factory, to the famous *Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat* (The Lumière Brothers, 1895), where "some inexperienced viewers would duck in their seats to avoid an approaching train".[46] In the early days of cinema, because many early film reels were hand operated, and were filmed at sixteen to eighteen frames per second before being projected at twenty four, the end result was one where the people on the screen would move at an accelerated pace that could not be matched by other moving artistic mediums such as theatre. Cinema in this sense was a truly kinaesthetic art that captured the accelerating velocities of modernity and society from that era.

When theorising on the nature and essence of cinema as an artistic medium, many cinema theorists noted that what made cinema different was its ability in being able to not only record actual movement, but to convey a sense of dynamism and speed. In his theories of the nature of cinema as a specific art form, Sigfried Kracauer noted that what made cinema different to other mediums such as photography was the way cinema "represented reality as it evolves in time; and they do so with the aid of cinematic techniques and devices".[47] In particular, he describes how cinema particularly lent itself to the recording of objects and people in the throes of the motion of their everyday business and action, and highlighted in particular the chase, dancing, and nascent motion (the contrast of movement with stillness) as "quite common external phenomena that are naturals for the screen. As might be expected, one is made up of all kinds of movements, these being cinematic because only the motion

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[45] Kern, 120.

[46] Kern, 118.

[47] Sigfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 41.

picture camera is able to record them. Among them are three types which can be considered cinematic subjects par excellence".[48]

Other theorists, such as Erwin Panofsky, noted that the main thrill of cinema as a new medium and art form was its emphasis on movement and speed. In his essay "Style and Medium in Motion Pictures", he notes that the main driver for the success of the medium was not aesthetics or subject matter, but movement; "that the primordial basis of the enjoyment of moving pictures was not an objective interest in a specific subject matter, much less an aesthetic interest in the formal presentation of subject matter, but the sheer delight in the fact that things seemed to move, no matter what things they were".[49] Early cinema before the advent of narrative cinema, according to Panovsky, was all about the projection of objects and people in motion. While early cinema relied on painting, postcards, comic strips, songs, theatre and novels for inspiration in both form and style, as cinematic language grew and developed as a medium, cinema was able to evolve, not by the introduction of other artistic forms, "but by the exploitation of the unique and specific possibilities of the new medium".[50] These unique and specific possibilities according to Panovsky was the "dynamization of space and, accordingly, spatialization of time".[51] In the following extract Panovsky notes that this allowed cinema to open up a range of possibilities that the likes of theatre and literature could not compete with.

> With the movies the situation is reversed. Here, too, the spectator occupies a fixed
> seat, but only physically, not as the subject of an aesthetic experience. Aesthetically,
> he is in permanent motion as his eye identifies itself with the lens of the camera, which
> permanently shifts in distance and direction. And as movable as the spectator is, as
> movable is, for the same reason, the space presented to him. Not only bodies move in
> space, but space itself does, approaching, receding, turning, dissolving and

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[48] Kracauer, 41-42.

[49] Erwin Panovsky, "Style and Medium in Motion Pictures", in *Film Theory and Criticism (7th Ed.),* eds Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 247.

[50] Panovsky, 247.

[51] Ibid.

recrystallizing as it appears through the controlled locomotion and focusing of the camera and through the cutting and editing of the various shots—not to mention such special effects as visions, transformations, disappearances, slow-motion and fast-motion shots, reversals and trick films. This opens up a world of possibilities of which the stage can never dream.[52]

On reading the above extract, we can identify that one of the aspects of conveying the potentialities for a cinema of movement, and therefore one of speed, is not just that the cinema is able to convey the outright velocities and movement of people and objects, but that film was also able to generate and create speed through the development of its own cinematic language. In developing its own language of cinematic speed, there were two fundamental developments of film language that contributed to the idea of a cinema of speed and are still the main building blocks for mainstream cinema today; that of the continuity system and film montage.

While the continuity system has no definitive origin or creator,[53] we can see the development of cinema in the 1900s to the 1920s evolved from that of being an open spectacle of a "cinema of attractions", to that of narrative cinema, a form of cinema that told stories and was able to convey emotion and plot, as well as action. In the continuity system, we see the cinematic narrative being broken down into smaller units of single shots, whereupon the development of shooting techniques such as close ups, the creation of space and depth through the movement and actions of actors and objects within the shot, and the use of intertitles would convey relevant information adjunct to the story. Along with the application of new techniques of film editing such as analytical, contiguity and intercutting

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[52] Panovsky, 250.

[53] Although there is no one single inventor of the continuity system, the director D.W Griffith was considered by many to be the "Father" of the continuity system for being one of the first to bring together numerous techniques in order to create coherent narratives. For more information, see David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film History: An Introduction (2nd Ed.)* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2003): See also Tom Gunning, "Weaving a Narrative: Style and Economics Background in Griffith's Biograph Films", in *Early Cinema: Space, Frame Narrative*, eds Thomas Elsaesser and Adam Barker (London: BFI Publishing, 2006), 336-347.

(or parallel) editing, directors were able to formulate and construct a sense of action, movement, and dynamism that sought to propel the narrative.

The development of the continuity system meant that many films would often contain plots that centred around a chain of "cause and effect" actions, in which resolution of tensions created by this chain of event became the climax to the story. These plots were infused around a fast paced vitality that in turn "aroused suspense through deadlines, escalating conflicts, and last-minute rescues".[54] As American cinema came to dominate world markets from the 1920s onwards, the principles and techniques of the continuity system became the dominant mode of cinematic language and, despite an increasing disruption of this cinematic style (see section 2.3), is still the main technique and model used by directors in commercial mainstream cinema today.

While the continuity system was becoming the main method of filmmaking in the US and other film industries, in Soviet Russia several filmmakers who had come through the newly founded State Film School began to study and think about the nature of film both as an artistic form and how it could be used to articulate the ideology of revolutionary communist ideas to the masses. Among a backdrop of revolutionary fervour and avant garde techniques in a variety of artistic forms, filmmakers such as Lev Kuleshov, Dziga Vertov, Esfir Shub, Vsevolod Pudovkin, and most importantly Sergei Eisenstein, began to ask questions about the essence of cinema, what it was, who it was for, and their role as directors in the body of revolutionary filmmaking. While they had many different styles and viewpoints on the nature of cinema, what these filmmakers-theorists all emphasised was the technique of what became known as montage filmmaking.

In simple terms "montage" referred to how various shots of a film were made and edited together to create a dramatic effect on screen. Soviet montage emphasised the need for dynamism and discontinuity that occurred between different shots to provide an overall sensory experience for the audience. While many of those involved with the montage movement of cinema had diverging views on what montage was and what it represented, all

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[54] David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film History: An Introduction (2nd Ed.)* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2003), 73.

agreed on montage's ability and role in propagating and educating communist ideals to the soviet people.

Many of the school of Soviet montage filmmakers were in awe of American cinema of that period with its emphasis on movement and energy,[55] and subsequently saw cinematic speed as "essential to the medium's underlying aesthetic, as well as to cinema's propagandistic power.[56] But with montage, filmmakers took the basic concept of the continuity system and went much further in creating a cinematic language that would include the development of an array of fast editing techniques and tools that would shift the emphasis on the "internal" speed of action that occurred in the shot, to that of the "external" rhythmic speed of the film.[57] This promotion of a sense of external speed, which was articulated by Eisenstein with theories such as "accelerated", "overtonal", and "intellectual" montage, allowed the montage filmmakers to succeed in "establishing a highly creative sense of space, time, and modern motion".[58] What Eisenstein, with films such as a *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) and *Strike* (1925), was looking to achieve was not the smooth flow of cause-and-effect actions that one recognizes from the continuity system, but instead aimed at creating a sense of disruption and juxtaposition though a series of fragmented, disjointed edits that shocked the audience into a series of intensified reactions and affects. Seeing themselves as engineers instead of artists, the montage school of filmmakers sought to control and manage the audience's cognitive and emotional responses through the organisation of film and shots into units that could be arranged and pieced together to provide an ideological picture of the dynamism and technological essence of a modern revolutionary Russian society.

Some exponents of the montage school went even further in their descriptions of the technological power of cinema as a programmable object that could record and affirm the speed of modern Russian society. In a series of articles and manifestos in the short lived film

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[55] Tim Harte, *Fast Forward: The Aesthetics and Ideology of Speed in Russian Avant-Garde Culture, 1910-1930* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 170.

[56] Ibid., 162.

[57] Ibid., 164.

[58] Ibid.

journal *Kino-Photo*, filmmaker Dziga Vertov posited the concept of the "Kino-eye", where the film camera could record and view the speed of modern society much easier and more efficiently than the human eye;

The main thing is:

The sensory exploration of the world through film

We therefore take as the point of departure the use of the camera as a kino-eye, more perfect than the human eye for the exploration of the chaos of visual phenomena that fills space/ The kino-eye lives and moves in time and space; It gathers and records impressions in a manner wholly different from that of the human eye […] The weakness of the human eye is manifest. We affirm the kino-eye, discovering within the chaos of movement the result of the kino-eye's own movement.[59]

For Vertov, echoing the sentiments of the Italian futurists of the previous decade, the "kino-eye" would replace the human eye and usher in a new form of human consciousness that could see past the ideological constraints of bourgeois fairy-tales and build a new worldview that could break past human constraints, with man and machine in the new modern Soviet society working in harmony, matching each other's speed and rhythms. Emphasizing the documentary over the narrative film, Vertov sought to make films such as *Kino-Eye* (1924) and *Man with a Movie Camera* (1927) that would show this new world of speed and machines. Instead of telling shallow, silly tales of adventure and romance that were the staple of US and other mainstream cinema industries, the world of the "kino-eye" cinema became a medium of truth in its ability to show the world around us in all its chaotic glory. The role of the filmmaker according to Vertov, was to use film and montage to lay out, explain, and demystify modern society, with its people, machines and processes all moving along in accelerated harmony. This demystification extended to the process of filmmaking, with scenes in *Man with a Movie Camera*, where the depiction of a day in the life of a city would shift

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[59] Dziga Vertov, *Kino-eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*, trans. Kevin O' Brien, ed. Annette Michelson, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 15-16.

from the streets to the cutting room where we see Vertov's wife manually cutting up and organising sections of celluloid film to be later reassembled into the final movie we see before us.

While the end of the 1920s saw a gulf develop between the state and montage filmmakers over the ideological use of montage in furthering the cause of communism in Soviet Russia, the principles, and techniques of montage have become one of the defining aesthetic modes towards the creation of a cinema of speed that are still prevalent in today's high-speed action cinema.

2.3: A Cinema of Speed - Camera Technologies (Dollies, Arriflex Cameras (16/35mm), Steadicam, Digital Cameras)

In the previous section we investigated how cinema evolved as an artistic response to a time when society was undergoing huge accelerative processes across multiple areas. As such, several theorists and directors picked up speed and movement as one of the defining aesthetic characteristics of cinema and subsequently developed concepts on the nature of cinema as a specific art form with regard to speed as well as creating a cinematic language that could lay out and portray a cinema of speed that is committed to expressing and articulating society, both material and ideological. Despite the progress of cinema as an art form for over a century, these concepts and techniques are still prevalent and valid to this very day.

This evolution in cinematic language and theory was facilitated due in no small part to the continuously developing technologies that would go hand in hand with other technologies of speed and movement. These technologies would develop in three main ways – the ability to free the camera from a static "point and record" position, the miniaturisation of the cameras themselves, and the increased power of technologies that allowed directors to be more dynamic in editing. Such developments would enable directors to follow the action of both actors and objects flying through cinematic space with greater freedom and ease, allowing for more dynamic shot selection and camera movement, which highlight not just greater velocities but also a greater perception and sense of movement and speed. In this section we will look at the first two developments, while the third development will be examined in sections 2.4 and 3.3.

2.3.1: Camera Supports

When it comes to camera movement, the first developments in this area of technology within the movie industry began in the 1920s and 1930s,[60] when studio companies created and developed their own technical departments to create new camera apparatuses that would allow for a greater sophistication of camera movement and shot selection. The main developments in terms of camera movement during this time was the development of camera support equipment such as the studio dolly, the crane, and the geared head.

In simple terms, the dolly is a device that allows for the creation of camera tracking shots, where the camera follows the action in a continuous movement. The first dollies created were admittedly cumbersome and unwieldy; the Bell & Howell Rotambulator, made in 1932, weighted at 320kg but it could move the camera vertically from 18 inches to 7 feet, and the operator could pan, tilt, or track with ease. This was followed in 1936 by the development of the Panoram dolly by the Fearless Camera Company, which was lighter and nimbler in movement. In both cases, the studio dolly was mounted on a cart that enabled it to be pushed or pulled in any direction needed, or it could be mounted on tracks to ensure an ultra-smooth movement. The camera was now able to follow the action continuously, moving from one location to another. Subsequently the "Dolly" shot came of age in the 1930s and 1940 with the rise of the musical genre, where the camera could follow the actors in song and dance numbers in a single long take. Although developments in technology allowed for lighter and more durable equipment, the model of the Panoram dolly was the industry model standard for decades.

In conjunction with the development of the dolly, there was also the creation of the camera crane and the geared head. Put simply, the crane, either stationary or placed on a dolly, could raise and rotate a cameraman and camera on a central pivot that could allow him to be raised from the ground to 4 metres in height with speed and efficiency. Alongside these cranes, cameras were hoisted on a support head that would allow the operator to tilt and pan the camera. Companies such as the Mitchell Company provided the first friction heads, and

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[60] Bordwell and Thompson, 219.

were followed by the Fearless company who created what was known as the cradle head. Despite this, tilt and pan camera movements were still jerky and as such, directors kept their use to a minimum, using them slowly. The main solution to this problem was the development of the geared head. The geared head was a simple device that enabled the cameraman to pan and tilt by turning a series of handles linked to small gears, allowing for smooth tilting and panning. Although they had been in use since the early days of cinema, the fact that many geared heads could only move in one direction and had to move heavy studio cameras meant their use had been minimal until the invention of the Worral Geared Head in 1952, which allowed for faster and smoother precision tilting and panning by the cameraman. As such, the Worral Geared head became the industry standard. The development of camera support technology with the combination of the camera dolly, crane, and geared head, allowed for a freedom and freeform element in studio camera movement in post-WWII cinema that could follow the action and movement of bodies and objects quickly and precisely.[61]

Despite the developments of studio camera use from the 1920s through post-war cinema and beyond, many cinematic shots still contained a sense of physical distance from the action and the actor in scenes of movement. There were technical issues in the way that cameras often were unable to follow the actor into small confined spaces or for long, continuous shots. This changed in the 1970s with the development of the Steadicam. Invented by Garrett Brown and first seen in mainstream cinema in *Bound for Glory* (Hal Ashby, 1976), the Steadicam was a system of counterweights that allowed for a camera to be suspended on a brace that was attached to the body of the cameraman. The cameraman was now able to film long-form tracking shots that could follow the actor or actors where a dolly couldn't, such as doorways, stairs, enclosed spaces and crowds. The Steadicam, according to its inventor, created a breakthrough in how actions and movement in cinemas was conceptualized;

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[61] For more information on the history of geared heads and their history, see Ryan Patrick O'Hara, "Geared and Belt Heads: Professional motion picture camera support", *theodoropoulos.info*, accessed January 17 2017, http://www.theodoropoulos.info/attachments/076_GearedHeads.pdf.

The Steadicam represents for cinema not just an image stabilizer, but a whole new instrument for elegantly moving the lens through space. "Our brains process the way we see the world — like our own ongoing personal biopic — a beautifully smooth, God's eye-view, director's eye-view, objective shot that lets us see our world in cinematic terms," says Brown. "And so I think part of the durability of Steadicam is it's the movie device that comes closest to that vision".[62]

Not only did the steadicam allow for free, unbroken movement, it also allowed for a greater intimacy in filming in its ability to follow actors and their movements closely. It also allowed for the development of the first person subjective camera shot that had barely been used since the development of *Lady in the Lake*. Directors such as John Carpenter for example, famously used Steadicam technology in the opening scene of *Halloween* where the camera takes on the subjective view of the antagonist Michael Myers as young boy as he walks into the kitchen, picks up a knife before walking upstairs to his sister's bedroom where he proceeds to stab her to death.

2.3.2: Cameras

The development of camera support technology coincided with the continuing development of film cameras over the twentieth century, which not only allowed for a greater range of movement in cinematic space, but also were able to be record detailed movement at increasing velocities. In the early decades of cinema's history, cameras were large, bulky and heavy, requiring up to four people to move them, even with the use of support technology. However, this changed after WWII with the development of cameras produced by the Éclair and Debrie companies in France, as well as the Arri Group of Germany who created the Arriflex camera. Unlike the bulky static cameras created used in mainstream studio productions, these new cameras were smaller, lightweight, and able to be mounted in small

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[62] Ariston Anderson, "Steadicam Inventor Reveals the 'Impossible Shots' That Changed Filmmaking Forever (Exclusive)", *Hollywoodreporter.com*, August 14th 2014, http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/steadicam-inventor-reveals-impossible-shots-725346.

spaces, which allowed for more dynamic shot selection as well as more immediate location shooting.

One of the main consequences of these new generation of small lightweight cameras was the effect and influence they had on the action movie genre, in particular that of the car chase scene. While the chase scene had been a staple of cinema since its inception at the turn of the century, the shooting of scenes from moving objects was strictly limited. Even with the development of the dolly, cameras had hardly been used for tracking shots in chase scenes due to the inability of the cameras to be moved at speed on vehicles that could allow them to shoot moving objects clearly. This changed with John Ford's 1939 Western *Stagecoach,* which contains a breath-taking scene where the stagecoach is being chased during a siege by the Native Americans. Shooting from necessity, the director simply hoisted a camera onto a car and started filming; "We didn't have any camera cars in those days; we just put the camera on an automobile and shot on the run. It was fast. I asked the driver how fast we had gone, and he said 40 to 42 miles per hour. You wouldn't think that horses could go that fast, but they did"[63].

But with the development of smaller, lighter cameras that could be mounted both inside and outside cars with relative ease, this coincided with the evolution of the action genres in the 1960s and 1970s to utilise the car chase as an essential component in the narrative plot. The use of Arriflex cameras in both *Bullitt* (Peter Yates, 1968) and in a uniquely dangerous and intense chase scene in T*he French Connection* (William Friedkin, 1973)[64] to the point that the use of cars in a variety of genres films became prevalent through the action cinema of the 1970s. Such films, while all showing a variety of different styles and genres from comedy to drama, all utilise on board filming of cars in movement to infuse their films with a sense of speed, action and spectacle.[65] The speed of the camera's velocity

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[63] "On John Ford's Stagecoach", *Director's Guild of America,* Winter 2011, http://www.dga.org/Craft/DGAQ/All-Articles/1004-Winter-2010-11/Features-On-John-Fords-Stagecoach.aspx.

[64] A detailed commentary on the seminal car chase scene in *The French Connection* can be found in William Friedkin, "Anatomy of a Chase", *Director's Guild of America*, Autumn 2006, http://www.dga.org/Craft/DGAQ/All-Articles/0603-Fall-2006/Feature-Anatomy-of-a-Chase.aspx.

[65] Films that can be included in this canon include, *The Italian Job* (Peter Collinson, 1969), *Vanishing Point* (Richard C. Sarafian, 1971)*, Two-Lane Blacktop* (Monte Hellman,1971), *Duel* (Steven Spielberg,1971), *Le*

through space was only limited by the speed of the cars, which reached a high point with the filming of NASCAR racing cars in the film *Days of Thunder* (Tony Scott, 1990).

From the 1980s, to our current situation, there were further developments in camera technology, both in size, usability and recording, which not only allowed cameras to be placed in situations where they could be subjected to further velocities through space, but also allowed for more extreme shot selections and filming vectors that supported a greater sense of speed and velocity to be felt by the viewers. One development was the transference of the chase scene from the ground to the air. While aerial photography had existed since WWI, it was not until the development in the 1970s of Astrovision by the aviator and cinematographer Clay Lacy that facilitated cameras to be placed on the fuselage of jet aircraft with the ability to record action without any speed or altitude restrictions. Such aerial camera technology allowed for the filming of dogfight (Where two or more planes would fight in air to air combat) scenes in 1980s action movies such as *Top Gun* (Tony Scott, 1986) and Iron Eagle (Sidney J. Furie, 1987).

In summation, we can see that alongside the increasing acceleration of society during the twentieth century, and the development of a cinematic theory and language to conceptualise the essence of cinema as a medium specific for embodying this speed, there has been a parallel history in cinema of developments of camera technology that enabled film-makers to keep pace with the world around them, as cameras became untethered from their stationary viewpoints and were now able to follow people, vehicle and objects no matter how fast they would go.

Mans (Lee H. Katzin, 1971)*, The Getaway* (Sam Peckinpah, 1972), *White Lightning* (Joseph Sargent, 1973)*, Freebie and the Bean* (Richard Rush, 1974), *Gone in 60 Seconds* (H. B. Halicki,1974)*, Smokey and the Bandit* (Hal Needham, 1977), *The Driver* (Walter Hill, 1978), *Mad Max* (George Miller, 1979), and *The Blues Brothers* (John Hughes,1980). For a summary of the car chase as an essential component of 1970s action cinema, read Tico Romao, "Engines of Transformation: An Analytical History of the 1970s Car Chase Cycle", *New Review of Film and Television Studies* Vol 1, no. 1, 2003: 31-54.

2.4: A Cinema of Speed - A New Intensity in a Cinema of Speed

So far we have reviewed how cinema's preoccupation with speed, movement, and acceleration was a contributing factor in its genesis, before becoming a key driver in both its aesthetic concepts and language (the continuity system, montage), and in the development of cinematic technologies to capture and record speed and movement (Cameras, camera supports, steadicam). As a result, across the history of cinema we see the depiction of speed, movement and dynamism becoming an essential component in the development of the "action" genre as the embodiment of mainstream Hollywood cinema.

But in the last few decades we have seen a shift in mainstream cinema, and in particular the action genre, in what can be seen as an intensification of visual styles and aesthetics used to depict the external speed of movies. This tendency has been analysed by Peter Wollen,[66] but it is David Bordwell who has provided the most comprehensive analysis. Coining this stylistic shift as "intensified continuity", where he notes that "today's popular American cinema is always fast, seldom cheap, and usually out of control".[67] In his essay, Bordwell states that the increased use of fast editing and multiple cuts has meant that the average shot length in popular Hollywood films had decreased from an average of 6-8 seconds in the 1970s to 3-6 seconds by 2000. This decrease in average shot length had also coincided with an increase in the number of shots used in a film, from 300-700 in 1960, to 3000-4000 by the year 2000.[68] Bordwell further notes an increasing use of certain types of shot selection that "constitute prominent and pervasive features of the current style",[69] such as the use of extreme lens lengths in enclosed spaces, close framing in dialogue scenes, and a free-roaming, non-static camera movement.

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[66] Peter Wollen, "Speed and the Cinema", in *Paris Hollywood: Writings on Film* (London: Verso, 2002).

[67] David Bordwell, "Intensified Continuity: Visual Style in Contemporary American Film", in *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 55, No. 3 (Spring 2002), 16.

[68] Ibid., 16-17.

[69] Ibid., 21.

Bordwell points to many sources for this intensification of editing and speed through cinema language. The first is "the perceived demands of television presentation",[70] where the production of TV shows and music videos valorised fast cuts and faster edits. Then there is the fact that "fast cutting was encouraged by tape-based editing in the early 1980s (used chiefly in music videos and the films influenced by them) and then by the arrival of digital editing systems"[71] which, unlike celluloid editing, was faster, cheaper and provided more options for fast, multi-layered editing techniques, as well as manipulation of shot on a frame-by frame basis, a tendency that Bordwell calls "frame fucking".[72] Furthermore, we can see that scenes shot in contemporary action movies are now shot from multiple angles and viewpoints which, allied with lighter cameras and the free floating movement of Steadicam meant that "by the time that *Gladiator* (2000) was made, a dialogue would be filmed by as many as seven cameras, some of them Steadicams".[73]

Bordwell, in describing this tendency as "intensified continuity", has placed an analytical emphasis on the pressures that fast editing has wrought on the continuity system, points to a discourse now occurring which has centred continuity on mainstream action cinema. The work of Steven Shaviro, for example, has concentrated on cinema that displays what he calls "post continuity", where he states that has much of the digital film aesthetics are untethering themselves from the systems built up in the age of celluloid film, and are morphing into "radically new ways of manufacturing and articulating lived experience" of the twenty-first century, ways which are built less around the continuity system of propelling narrative, but instead "are machines for generating affect" that in turn create expressive works that are "symptomatic and productive".[74]

Meanwhile, video essayists such as Matthias Stork and Jim Emerson have highlighted and analysed actioned scenes in several blockbuster action films from the *Transformers*

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[70] Bordwell, "Intensified Continuity", 22.

[71] Ibid., 23.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Steven Shaviro, *Post-Cinematic Affect* (London: Zero Books, 2011), 2-3.

franchise, *Bad Boys II* (Michael Bay, 2003)*, Quantum of Solace,* and *The Dark Knight* (Christopher Nolan, 2008)*,* where the reliance on fast editing has meant that "we're not just seeing an intensification of classical technique, but a perversion. Contemporary blockbusters, particularly action movies, trade visual intelligibility for sensory overload and the result is a film style marked by excess, exaggeration and overindulgence: chaos cinema". [75]

But while there has been much discourse about the nature of the "intensification" of processes on film language, there has not been as much coverage in the way that this "intensification" of action cinema has centred around the actual internal velocity of camera movement and bodies in cinematic space, and how this "intensification" has been fostered not just with the shift from film to video to digital editing, but also the creation of digital camera technology that allowed for an extremity of speed in movement and monitoring of bodies in motion. While it would be beyond the scope of this essay to determine an accurate periodization of this change in velocities in filmic space, we can observe how this tendency has been embodied in two action cinema films in particular.

The first example can be seen in the film *Speed* (Jan de Bont, 1994), an action thriller starring Keanu Reeves as a bomb disposal expert attempting to catch a former police officer turned bomber (Dennis Hopper). After an initial action scene and plot setup where Reeves foils Hopper's attempts to hold an elevator full of people for a $3 million ransom, the main action begins when Hopper blows up a bus the following day and instructs Reeves that there is another bus wired that will activate once the bus reaches 50 mph, warning that it will explode if it falls below that speed. The rest of the film concerns itself with plot tensions and climaxes as Reeves attempts to defuse the bomb and save the people on board.

What is interesting to note is that for the majority of the film, the action and plot is based upon a moving vehicle that is required to stay above a designated speed limit. While there have been many films in the past which have had extended scenes on board moving

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[75] Matthias Stork, "Video Essay: Chaos Cinema; The Decline and Fall of Action Filmmaking," *IndieWire*, August 22, 2011, http://www.indiewire.com/2011/08/video-essay-chaos-cinema-the-decline-and-fall-of-action-filmmaking-132832/ ; See also Jim Emerson, "In the Cut, Part I: Shots in the Dark (Knight)," *Scanners with Jim Emerson*, September 8, 2011, http://www.rogerebert.com/scanners/in-the-cut-part-i-shots-in-the-dark-knight.

vehicles, from stagecoaches, to cars, to trains,[76] with *Speed* the necessity of the film narrative to have the plot on a speeding vehicle that is going at this designated speed *constantly* is paramount. As such *the general/median velocity of the action within the film has been increased and intensified*. In previous examples of narrative action cinema, the viewer often observes moments of calm/quiet which are then punctuated with moments of action (a fight, a chase on foot or on a vehicle, etc.). There is a constant tension in the narrative and plot fast/slow, quiet/loud, and dialogue/action. But with *Speed*, we see an example of a new form of action movie, where there is less of an outright dynamic between slow/fast and more of an intensification of the general movement of action.[77]

This intensification of the general movement of action can be seen in the second film example, *Die Hard with a Vengeance* (John McTiernan, 1995). The film, which is the third in the *Die Hard* franchise, has a plot that that is centred around having the film's protagonists John McClane (Bruce Willis) and Zeus Carver (Samuel L. Jackson) being forced by the film's villain to undertake a series of tasks that are both location and time specific. If they do not reach specific times and places and solve a series of riddles, then numerous bombs will go off across New York City. These tasks include racing across the city within an almost impossible time frame that requires both MacLane and Carver to think of unorthodox ways of traveling across the city, both on foot and by car.

While *Die Hard with a Vengeance* is utterly faithful to both the standards of the Hollywood action narrative and the continuity system, what is interesting is how the heroes of the film are forced to undertake a "game" that requires them to push their bodies under time specific goals. The first example is the first game; McLane and Carver have to reach a phone booth across the neighbourhood on foot before answering a riddle. What we see here is that under the aegis of a game, the bodies of the actors are intensified in the way that they are

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[76] Examples of such films include *Vanishing Point* (Richard C. Sarafian, 1971), *Convoy* (Sam Peckinpah, 1978), *Runaway Train* (Akira Kurosawa, 1985), as well as the *Mad Max* series (George Miller, 1979-2016).

[77] There is an underlying sense of irony that while the action in speed is driven by a bus that is constantly moving at over 50 mph, most of the film during this time is located inside the bus, where many of the actor are shot in a stationary manner with a static camera. An accelerated action film where the protagonists a stationary is a pretty droll metaphor for the paradox of our contemporary accelerated society.

required to move through cinematic space under imposed restrictions at a much faster rate at a greater frequency of occasions.

While taking the examples of two standard Hollywood movies is but a small sample, the two viewpoints from the films mentioned – that of an intensification of the median speed/velocity of the action and the increased speed and movement of actors through diegetic space – can be seen in a range of movies from the late 1990s to the present day. From a film such as *Run, Lola, Run* (Tom Tykwer, 1998) - where the range of camera formats (35mm, 16mm, and video) continuously track Lola (Franka Potente) as she is shown frantically running through the streets under a strict time limit to save her boyfriend – through a series of films from the *Fast & Furious* franchise, *The Bourne* series*, Bad Boys II, Salt,* the *James Bond* series*, Crank, Crank 2, Gamer*, and *Mad Max: Fury Road*, as well as the growth of "superhero movies" from the Marvel and DC film studios, we can see emerging prevalence of narrative situations that require the actors and their bodies to be at a constant level of movement and speed though diegetic space.[78]

In order to help convey this intensification of general speed and movement through space, there has been a corresponding trend towards an internalisation of this speed as seen from the subjectivity and the viewpoint of the characters in the film. Again the development of technology in filmmaking has helped to facilitate this shift in the action becoming more closely entwined with the subjectivity of the film's characters and their movement. In the

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[78] In his "intensified continuity" essay, Bordwell notes "In popular cinema, it's again the Hong Kong filmmakers who have best integrated intensified continuity with a respect for the kinesis and expressivity of human bodies" (pg. 26). While we have concentrated on Hollywood action cinema, there has been a corresponding intensification of the movement of actors in Hong Kong and Eastern martial arts cinema. From the 1970s movies of Bruce lee, that employed fast editing but actors fighting in a static, enclosed space, in the 1980s the work of Jackie Chan in films such as *Project* A (1983), *Police Story* (1985), and *Armour of* God (1986), not only saw the intensification of movement during fight scenes, but also saw Chan move at a furious pace through numerous spaces and landscapes. The intensification of fighting movement would be taken to its limits with the 1990s martial arts films of action star Jet Li, while the development of "wire-fu" films such as *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (Ang Lee, 200) and *House of Flying Daggers* (Zhang Yimou, 2004), would utilise high wire stagecraft to have actor perform fight scenes while "magically" flying through the air. For more information on the history and speed in martial arts cinema, see David Bordwell, *Planet Hong Kong: Popular Cinema and the Art of Entertainment* (Harvard, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000); Esther C. M. Yau, *At Full Speed: Hong Kong Cinema in a Borderless World*, ed. Esther C.M. Yau (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001): Leon Hunt, *Kung Fu Cult Masters* (New York: Wallflower Press, 2003); See also Man-Fung Yip, "In the Realm of the Senses: Sensory Realism, Speed, and Hong Kong Martial Arts Cinema", *Cinema Journal* Vol.53, no.4 (2014): pp.76-97.

1990s, alongside the development of digital editing software and processing, there was the development of professional digital movie cameras and camcorders. Models such as the Canon XL-1 and XL H1, the Sony HDC-F950 camera, and the ARRI Group's Alexa Digital camcorder series were not only smaller than regular celluloid cameras, they were able to shoot and record digitally and for much longer periods.

The miniaturisation and versatility of digital cameras mean that with their deployment in contemporary action cinema, they become a literal extension of the director or cinematographer, allowing them to follow the actors in full flight, deploying lightweight and portable cameras in positions and viewing vectors not seen before. In the *Crank* films for example, the directors Brian Taylor and Mark Neveldine called upon their backgrounds in shooting extreme motorcycle action videos to create shots of incredible immediacy. In the making-of sections that accompanied the DVD releases to *Crank*, the directors are shown on high speed skates while holding onto the back of a motorcycle with one hand and holding the camera with the other while they shoot lead actor Jason Statham running or driving at full speed. In other scenes, they are also shown jumping off from bridges and buildings, as they follow and film Statham performing his own stunts.[79]

When it comes to shot setup and selection, we can trace a difference in the digital camera's capabilities when we compare and contrast the car chase scenes in *The French Connection* to that of *Crank*. In *The French Connection*, the smallness of the Arriflex camera allowed the director to shoot the action not only from the front of the car driving at high speeds through busy streets, but also the insides of the car as we see Gene Hackman's as he is thrown and bustled inside the car. We get to see the mix of fear and excitement on his face close up as he nearly runs over pedestrians and smashes into other cars. In *Crank* however, from the very first moment that Statham enters into a car and in many instances throughout the film, the camera is not only much closer to Statham's body, the angle of shooting is more extreme and closer to the ground, in one instance almost literally from underneath his foot looking upwards to Statham's face as he slams his foot on the accelerator pedal. The

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[79] Lorrie Palmer, "Cranked Masculinity: Hypermediation in Digital Action Cinema", *Cinema Journal* Vol. 51, No. 4 (Summer 2012): 17-18.

emphasis on action, aggression and speed is accentuated in the extreme as his foot and his leg take up the maximum amount of fore fronted space on the screen with his actual face reduced to a small section in the background. From a simple comparison of these two scenes, we can see that while the Arriflex cameras are able to enter the vehicle with Hackman in *The French Connection,* the smallness of the digital camcorders means that *Crank's* directors are able to take extreme shot positions to accentuate the extremity of aggression in Statham's actions and movement.

This extremity of intimacy and immediacy can also be observed in fight scenes in *The Bourne Ultimatum* and *The Bourne Supremacy.* In both films, the use of handheld digital camcorders allows the directors to not only use shaky mobile framing, but also enables them to locate many of the main fight scenes in tiny, enclosed spaces such as apartment kitchens, living rooms, and bathroom/shower cubicles. In these fight scenes, the multiple shots zero in closely on every punch, kick, and blow, from a multitude of positions and angles to the climax when Bourne finally kills his would be killer-assassins, the camera closing in on his face to convey the effort he is expending on choking the life out of them.

Thanks in part to the development of digital technologies in both the capture and recording, storage, and manipulation of images through editing and special effects, we have seen an intensification in mainstream action cinema of not just in terms of cinematic language ala Bordwell, but also in the general increase of the average speed of both the camera and bodies through cinematic space, as well as the increasing correlation between the immediacy of the action and the intimacy and subjectivity of the action.

But when we arrive at *Hardcore Henry,* we see a final shift, a culmination of what has been a long continuation of action cinema exponentially getting faster, smaller, more intimate and mobile in its language and movement. With this essay we have traced the journey of the development of technology, aesthetics and bodies in portraying a cinema of speed with increasing levels of velocity and intensity in its deployment of immediacy and subjectivity. But despite these developments there has always been a distance from the action; the director can get in close, but not close enough to show what the actor/stuntman/cinematographer is *really* experiencing. This all changes with *Hardcore Henry* being shot completely in a first-

person perspective, as the camera finally makes the final shift from close up action to inserting itself directly in the subjective vision of the actor himself.

In taking this move, much of what we consider to be essential to a cinema of speed is thrown out of the window. While there is the use of occasional use of jump cuts and flashbacks in the beginning and end, the vast majority of *Hardcore Henry* is presented to us as a single continuous display of action in the first person. An example of this is with the action packed scene described in our introduction, where Henry and Jimmy are on a motorcycle chase with Akan's henchmen on a Russian motorway. In the course of this scene there is an immense amount of action occurring, and with traditional continuity filmmaking each of these moments would have been broken down into a series of shots that would have been pieced together in post-production. But thanks to the fact that *Hardcore Henry* was recorded digitally, director Naishuller was able to utilise a variety of CGI and digital editing and compositing effects that not only meshed each shot together into a single unified whole with no breaks, but also enabled him to add fire, explosions, flying bullets and other debris directly onto the image at will.[80] Because of the use of digital CGI and compositing effects that allow for a consistency of shot duration in the final process, many of the tools and techniques of cinematic language used by cinema filmmakers to convey a sense of internal and external speed through cinematic language and camera technology – fast edit montage, zooms, pans and tilts, tracking shots, etc. – no longer apply due to the fact that Naishuller is attempting to place us in a completely unmediated, embodied experience of the first person.

So if the normal rules for creating a cinema of speed cannot be used, how is *Hardcore Henry* still able to convey a sense of dynamism and speed? First, let us examine the actual plot and action of the film itself. The plot conveys a very telegraphic style of storytelling meaning that Henry, Like Lola in *Run, Lola, Run* and Statham in *Crank* is always on the move in full flight from location to location to achieve his objective, either on foot or in a vehicle (it is often while he is in a vehicle where he is given his task objectives and relevant

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[80] For a more detailed overview into how this scene was filmed, edited and manipulated, read Mark Yarm, "How Hardcore Henry Pulled Off This Insane Action Scene", *Wired.com,* July 4th 2016, https://www.wired.com/2016/04/hardcore-henry-anatomy-of-a-scene/.

information by one of Jimmy's clones). The way the plot is structured means that when he reaches his target, Henry is then forced to undertake his mission in intense, prolonged episodes of action where he moves through a confined space often fighting dozens of Akan's soldiers, either with weapons or hand to hand combat.

The use of Go-Pro cameras, which gives us a complete rendering of first person body movement on the screen, also draws the audience's attention when there are the general body movements of Henry in the film. While camera movements have become more freeform, from the use of Steadicam to handheld digital camcorders which have created a cinematic vision that is both mobile and freeform, *Hardcore* Henry takes it to the extreme. As humans, we are almost never still, both in our body and eye movement. We are in a state where we are constantly receiving and interpreting shards of information and other various stimuli that we use to build upon and interpret the world around us and allows us to centre ourselves in our immediate spatial environment. This is the case with *Hardcore Henry* as the camera is never stable or still for a single second. Mimicking our own head and body under stress, the camera constantly shakes, tilts and pans alongside the head movements of the stuntmen playing Henry. There is a constant busyness from the camera that, even in moments of relative calm, is always displaying a level of alert twitchiness.

Because of the constant movement of the camera, both in terms of velocity through space and in terms of perspective, the relationship between Henry/ourselves and the physical space around him in the film is in a constant state of flux. Henry's movement, like the standard FPS game, "is best characterized by a single continuous trajectory through an apparently three-dimensional space" a trajectory that provides "a sense of controlled, continuous, and open ended movement".[81]

Hardcore Henry recreates a sense of the visceral level of involvement similar to such FPS games in the way that it lays out multiple perspectives as threats come at us from a variety of trajectories and vectors, as our brains attempt to orientate where the threat is coming from and our relationship to it, all the while as Henry constantly moves, either

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[81] David N. Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2007), 171.

towards, or away from the threat itself. This continuous sense of movement within a constantly changing landscape of objects and threats creates a sense of duration that is decidedly different from the perspective of time and duration that you perceive from the cinematic language of montage of the continuity system prevalent in mainstream action cinema. In *Hardcore Henry,* as in gaming, we experience sensations and actions in the real time of a continuous present, which in turn engenders a sense of immersion that according to Rodowick "creates a form of monadism in which there is no present other than mine, the one I occupy now; there is no presence other than myself".[82] Like a videogame, we are in our own world of constant action, inhabiting a series of episodic moments, a real time of the Now, where the rules of cinema no longer apply.

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[82] Rodowick, 172.

3: Part Three – Control Societies, Hypermasculinity, and the intensification of digital cultures

Introduction

In part two, we took a journey backwards in order to move forwards. While this thesis has been ostensibly about an action film released in 2015, shot with cutting edge mobile camera technology, and edited and produced with contemporary digital software and effects, we have shown that while the technology and aesthetics deployed in *Hardcore Henry* give the viewer a heightened sense of affect and immediacy that feels new and novel, it is but part of a continuing historical process of cinema that is concerned with the articulation of movement and of speed as one of the key components of its ontology, as well as being the backbone of the aesthetics of its form. Cinema, both as a technological apparatus and as an art form, was developed in a society that was preoccupied with speed and acceleration across institutions, business, finance, and culture, and it was this preoccupation which has been a contributing factor in the conceptualization of cinema as a way to articulate and guide people through such vertiginous times.

Hartmut Rosa and William Scheuerman in their book *High Speed Society,* have talked about how "in debates about contemporary society, it is now something of a commonplace that core social and economic processes are undergoing a dramatic acceleration, while general rates of social change are intensifying no less significantly".[83] They suggest that far from there being linear and always constant rates of acceleration, social, political, and cultural changes often occur in waves that can only be observed and discussed after the fact. Rosa and Scheuerman point out that most scholars and historians have been able to pinpoint a period of high acceleration during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, during the inception of cinema as an art form. With regards to contemporary society of the late twentieth century, they note; "With the fall of communist regimes and the take-off of the digital revolution in the late eighties and nineties, another impressive round of acceleration probably occurred. This

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[83] Rosa and Scheuerman, 2.

second round similarly generated a wide-ranging debate on the causes and effects of social acceleration, as much of the recent debate on globalization can be interpreted as an attempt to make sense of the ramifications of social speed".[84]

The idea of a wave of social acceleration during the period of the late 1980s, through the 1990s, and into the 2000s would seem to coincide with our current discourse about a supposed acceleration in speed and intensity in contemporary action cinema, from the action blockbusters of the 1980s and 90s, to the present day. But is this move towards a fully digitised, globalised capitalist society fuelling this apparent social and cultural acceleration? And is the new wave of digitally enhanced, gaming influenced, aesthetically overloaded movies, that take active delight in showing exaggerated violence and displays of hypermasculinity, an embodiment of this new cultural logic that is the result of this corresponding social acceleration?

In the third part of my thesis, I will examine how the historical use of technology with the rise of "scientific" labour management and its corresponding concepts developed in the previous century ushered in what Michel Foucault termed the "disciplinary" society, before it evolved, post-WWII, into what Gilles Deleuze coined as the "control" society. I will then present how the ubiquity of computer and digital technologies and the development of cybernetics and game theory have resulted in our social and material reality, being digitised to the point where our lives are now part of a "gamespace" of quantified metrics and free floating labour, where decisions and behaviours are managed by increasingly complex algorithms. Finally, I will examine how the gendered technologies of a control society have fostered a shift in the intensification of valorised behaviours and practices that underpin today's globalised society of control and how they are embodied in films such as *Hardcore Henry.*

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[84] Rosa and Scheuerman, 7.

3.1: Acceleration in Society: From Discipline to Control

I have analysed how various western societies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century underwent an upward shift of social acceleration in a variety of discourses and practices that were social, cultural, economic, and political. While western societies at that time had long been undergoing a form of social acceleration, it was the invention, development, and utilisation of various technologies that allowed society to break out from the confines and limits imposed upon us by nature. Social and personal spaces began to become more quantified, regimented, and more productive along increasingly discretised parameters. The development and standardisation with regards to the measuring of time, the acceleration of communications and travel, and the increase and intensification in manufacturing, production, and commerce, wrought a huge change across society.

In this new world of speed, we begin to see the development of new occupational, economic, and communicative structures and institutions that would open up new patterns of social interaction and even new forms of social identity. Alongside this development was the need to establish new ways of thinking about society and how it organised people for optimum efficiency and productivity across these new institutions and social interactions. As a response, the rise of the concept of scientific management developed by F.W. Taylor, and Frank Gilbreth's creation of the time and motion study methodology, observed enclosed spaces such as the workplace and the labour and bodies of its workers, in order to regiment their movements by cutting out any unnecessary waste in time and production. This approach towards people and machines led to the rise of ideologies that considered people becoming more machine-like in order to become more useful components in a paradigm of society run along the lines of the Fordist assembly line model.

This new environment of acceleration, observation, optimisation, and production bear all the hallmarks of what Michel Foucault termed the disciplinary society. In his book *Discipline and Punishment: Birth of the Prison,* and in various essays and lectures, Foucault laid out a historical path of a shift in the regime of power in western society from the eighteenth century to contemporary times, where he highlighted the transference of power from that of the sovereign king, who held the power of death over his subjects through

punishment of the subject's body, to the development of new institutions that sought to make the flows and rendering of power more efficient. Instead of imposing death or severe punishment upon the subject's body, these new institutions – governments, the courts, the police, businesses – sought to impose power through the body's potential for action, and altering their behaviour through a series of controls.

Central to all of this, according to Foucault, is the concept of panopticism, which he based on the design of Jeremy Bentham's prisons that he named the panopticon. In this design, prisoners are partitioned and displayed in such a way that they are observable by a guard in a central tower at all times. Instead of earlier structures, where prisoners were kept in subterranean levels, out of sight and in the dark, the panopticon prisoners are kept in full light and open display, "alone, perfectly individualized and constantly visible. The panoptic mechanism arranges spatial unities that make it possible to see constantly and to recognize immediately".[85]

The key to panopticism is that it engenders a sense of constant visibility and vigilance on the individual. Because they cannot know when and how they are being observed, the inmate submits to a form of self-discipline that in effect means that "the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers".[86] By the efficient arrangement of bodies, lights, surfaces, and actions that facilitate a state of constant supervision and examination, the mechanisms of power in the panopticon are made more efficient by transferring the disciplinary apparatus on the prisoner themselves; "he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection".[87] Discipline is thus achieved through a sense of observation, analysation, and regimentation.

It is these aspects of the discipline society according to Foucault, that allows the concept of panopticism to be transferred and dispersed throughout society – the barracks, the

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[85] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment,* Trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York, Vintage Books, 1995), 200.

[86] Ibid., 201.

[87] Ibid., 202-203.

school, the hospital, the office, and the factory – anywhere there is a need to monitor and control bodies and their actions in enclosed spaces;

> It is polyvalent in its applications; it serves to reform prisoners, but also to treat patients, to instruct schoolchildren, to confine the insane, to supervise workers, to put beggars and idlers to work. It is a type of location of bodies in space, of distribution of individuals in relation to one another, of hierarchical organization, of disposition of centres and channels of power, of definition of the instruments and modes of intervention of power, which can be implemented in hospitals, workshops, schools, prisons Whenever one is dealing with a multiplicity of individuals on whom a task or a particular form of behaviour must be imposed, the panoptic schema may be used. It is - necessary modifications apart - applicable 'to all establishments whatsoever, in which, within a space not too large to be covered or commanded by buildings, a number of persons are meant to be kept under inspection.[88]

Because the disciplinary society followed the criteria of ensuring "the exercise of power at the lowest possible cost", whilst bringing "the effects of this social power to their maximum intensity and to extend them as far as possible", and "to link this 'economic' growth of power with the output of the apparatuses",[89] we can recognize a deployment of disciplinary power regimes throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century occur in line with the accumulation of capital and increases in industrial production. Moreover, the increasing complexity of the institutions of society, and their apparatuses of partition and surveillance, instigate the altering of the customs, habits and production of bodies in any given enclosure.[90]

The idea of the disciplinary society reached its apogee in the early to mid-twentieth century when the maximum limits of imperialism, the implementation of Fordist techniques in

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[88] Foucault, 205.

[89] Ibid., 218.

[90] Kern gives several examples of the tactics of the disciplinary society in action, such as the way that, in order to monitor worker's tasks and the time taken, a watch book was devised "with stop watches concealed in the cover so that they could be operated without the worker's knowledge" (pg. 116).

the factories, and the New Deal reforms of the Roosevelt government in the 1930s, ensured that in the western world the state become a central instigator of disciplinary power, where "the entire society, with all its productive and reproductive articulations, is subsumed under the command of capital and the state, and that the society tends, gradually but with unstoppable continuity, to be ruled solely by criteria of capitalist production. A disciplinary society is thus a factory-society".[91]

As was shown in part one, an integral component in the development of cinema as a technology came about through the desire by proponents of scientific management to capture the movement of workers in confined spaces. The use of disciplinary tactics from the Fordist production line were also implemented in the rise of the studio system in Hollywood during the 1920s-40s, where every aspect of film production – scriptwriting, casting of actors, filming, editing, and distribution – were run along similar auspices to the factory assembly line.

Not even cinema and the film industries of Hollywood could escape the hegemony of the disciplinary society. The alignment of art alongside that of the disciplinary society and its industrial apparatus led to Hollywood, and other mass cultural media, being famously referred to by Adorno and Horkheimer as "the cultural industries", where artistic mediums such as cinema had become commodified, movies engineered according to assembly lines techniques and in line with the market imperative where "the public is catered for with a hierarchical range of mass-produced products of varying quality, thus advancing the rule of complete quantification. Everybody must behave (as if spontaneously) in accordance with his previously determined and indexed level, and choose the category of mass product turned out for his type".[92] As such, according to Adorno and Horkheimer, instead of providing works that gave the audience what it wanted, Hollywood, as a capitalist entity, moulded and shaped the audience as consumers. Instead of being autonomous agents, the audience was boiled down to box office metrics that "appear as statistics on research organisation charts, and are

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[91] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000), 243.

[92] Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as mass deception" in *The Cultural Studies Reader (2nd Edition)*, ed. Simon During (London: Routledge, 1999), 34.

divided by income groups into red, green, and blue areas; the technique is that used for any type of propaganda".[93] Because "the whole world is made to pass through the filter of the culture industry",[94] the overriding concern for Adorno and Horkheimer was that with mass culture being run along the aegis of the assembly line, and with its power and ability to stupefy, and make the audience passive recipients to whatever the studio wanted, this power could be used for ideological or propagandistic purposes, something which was shown in the way that the Nazi Third Reich or Stalinist Russia utilised mass culture for their own ideological purposes.

3.1.1: The Control Society

After the end of WWII, while the tactics and techniques of a disciplinary society were still firmly in place in Western societies, the institutions that were the hallmark of the disciplinary society were in a state of crisis as they began to crumble under a continuous series of "reforms". Meanwhile, the accumulation of capital that had occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century began to shift from the production of goods and commodities to a point where "the primary factors of production and exchange— money, technology, people, and goods—move with increasing ease across national boundaries".[95] Economies, capital, and even labour itself, thanks to the development of new technologies, mutated into something immaterial and "communicative", enabling it to "flow" across sovereign borders, in turn ushering the beginning of global systems of finance, capital, and the ideologies of globalisation.

This new worldview would require the development of new regimes and deployment of new techniques of power that, while not totally replacing, could amplify and intensify the modes and apparatus of disciplinary power. These regimes of power were defined by Gilles Deleuze as the control society. In his short essay "Postscript on the Societies of Control",

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[93] Adorno and Horkheimer, "The Culture Industry", 34.

[94] Ibid.

[95] Hardt and Negri, "preface", xi.

Deleuze noted that unlike a disciplinary society, where power and exploitation was deployed on the body through a system of observation and analysis in enclosed spaces such as school, the factory, or the office, in a control society many of the boundaries of these discrete organisations become porous and free floating, untethered to a single enclosed space; "businesses take over from factories and business is a soul, a gas".[96] While giving the impression of a new freedom of movement (The pupil or worker is no longer confined to a desk or a work station), and the illusion of an increase in material wealth (wages now become income, with bonuses related to performance), the individual finds themselves subjected to an even more intense level of monitoring from an array of communication and surveillance tools and algorithms that permeate every aspect of their lives.

In his summation of the control society, Deleuze states that in societies there are certain machines that are often associated with it – the simple mechanical machine is associated with the sovereign society, while thermodynamic machines (steam power, the internal combustion engine) correspond with disciplinary societies. Machines and engines generated efficiencies of rationalisation that could break the confines of nature and the natural rhythms of time, while the organisation of bodies in disciplinary societies could allow the capturing of labour through a series of centralised, discretized, fine-tuned processes. The social relations it created formed "individuals into a body of men for the joint convenience of a management that could monitor each component in this mass, and trade unions that could mobilize mass resistance".[97]

With the control society however, Deleuze believed that the cybernetic machine and the computer were the embodiment of these new regimes of power.[98] The computer and the technological and communicative apparatuses that sprung from its development (networks, informatics, the internet, mobile phones, database algorithms) allow for the processing and monitoring of the individual through digital social media, email, video streaming, online

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[96] Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on a Control Society", in Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations 1972-1990*, trans. Martin Loughlin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 179.

[97] Deleuze. 179.

[98] Ibid., 175.

purchases, RFID chips, etc. These technologies can capture and record one's every social interaction, leading to ever finer levels of discretization of the subject than ever before. As a result, the worker is no longer an individual that is part of an organised mass but instead, according to Deleuze, they become a *dividual*, an individual who is broken up into an ever more discrete series of "masses, samples, data, markets, or banks",[99] all of which becomes digitized information that can be captured and useable as labour.

As a result, "The society of control might thus be characterized by an intensification and generalization of the normalizing apparatuses of disciplinarily that internally animate our common and daily practices, but in contrast to discipline, this control extends well outside the structured sites of social institutions through flexible and fluctuating networks".[100] The dividual is available to anything and anyone, nonstop. Whereas in a disciplinary society, the idea of "free time" when you were not being monitored in various enclosures was a possibility, in a control society this idea becomes an impossibility. Power takes on an even lighter, yet more efficient form. Foucault might note that "visibility is a trap", but in the control society, there is no escape.

And as all life becomes sublimated to that which consists of data, we find our existence speeding up as the modes of power/knowledge subsume all of our lives into the episteme of a control society, where the "the computer functions both as a tool and as a universal metaphor closely attuned to the logics of equivalence, expansion, and subsumption inherent to capitalism".[101] The lives and labour of human society are constantly shifting according to ever changing parameters along the lines of information-processing systems that are communicative, flexible, ultra-fast, and connected to everything.

With contemporary action movies in the 1990s and 2000s, such as *Sneakers* (Phil Alden Robinson, 1992), *Enemy of the State* (Tony Scott, 1998), and *Spy Game* (Tony Scott, 2001)*,* and documentaries such as *Citizenfour* (Laura Poitras, 2014), they show how state and corporate entities can monitor and alter our lives with near impunity through the technologies

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[99] Deleuze, 180.

[100] Hardt and Negri, 23.

[101] Seb Franklin, *Control: Digitality as Cultural Logic* (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 2015), 83.

and tactics of control. But with more recent movies such as the *Bourne* and *James Bond* series, and *Gamer,* we can see this level of monitoring and mediation being intensified to an unprecedented level. You're followed by shadowy people at every turn; your travel routes, be it by land, sea or air, is tracked; your online, credit card and bank activities can be monitored; your face can be recognised from CCTV with facial recognition software; one can even have tracking chips and other "nanotech" inserted or injected directly into your flesh allowing government agencies to track your every move. There are pleas to live "off the grid", but in this new world where everything consists of digital information this is almost impossible, no matter where you go.

In *Hardcore Henry* this level of surveillance is taken a step further. While many of the tactics the previous movies mentioned use technology to monitor activities from a distance, in *Hardcore Henry* not only does Henry have a tracking chip inserted into his flesh (in a similar vein to James Bond in *Casino Royale* and *Spectre*), Henry´s "builders" also have a live video uplink though his eyes so that they can see everything he sees. By fully interiorising Henry's own body and sight as a node for tracking and monitoring him, Henry, to paraphrase Foucault, becomes the instigator of his own subjugation under a control regime.

The other thing to note with a control society is that it is *fast*. As Nealon notes, whereas in disciplinary societies - and the corresponding spread of imperialism – capital was extensive in the way it conquered new lands, markets and captured resources, in a control society capital becomes intensive in the way it seeks to deepen and saturate the limits of existing markets "insofar as global capitalism of the twenty-first century has run out of new territories to conquer".[102] The speed of computer processing and digital networks in a control society have facilitated the spread of the power/knowledge system that is globalised capitalism, the political and economic logic of globalisation, and has also expedited the intensification of financial markets, where corporations and funds can make millions of transactions in a second. Satellite and fibre optic communications now mean that one can see events unfold across the world as they happen in real time, while discourse over events across

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[102] Jeffrey Nealon, *Post-Postmodernism - or, The Cultural Logic of Just-in-Time Capitalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 26.

news and social media have become more rapid and intensified. As Deleuze notes, "control is short term, and rapidly shifting, but at the same time continuous and unbounded, whereas discipline was long-term, infinite, and discontinuous".[103]

In many ways, this intensification of society through the episteme of control and deployment of digitally mediated institutions would seem to correspond to the seeming intensification and speeding up of the representation of movement and action in mainstream cinema in the 1980s and 1990s, as per Bordwell's theory of an "intensified continuity". But while Bordwell deftly lays out the aesthetics of this tendency, he only points to sources that are technical with the deployment of first video, then digital editing software. But is there an underlying socioeconomic reason for this intensification, one that corresponds to a society that is now seems to be ordered under the logic of control?

In the next sections we shall explore how the human/computer metaphor via the research into the fields of cybernetics and game theory, has perpetuated through and into our social realities, where films such as *Hardcore Henry* are emblematic of this new cultural logic that displays "the epistemic reconceptualization of the human as a computing machine" where "flexibility and constant activity are behavioural norms",[104] but also how the film intensifies and amplifies, along the aegis of the episteme of control, valorised homogenous behaviours prevalent in most popular media.

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[103] Deleuze, 181.

[104] Franklin, 83.

3.2: The Digitisation of the Social, and the Rise of the Programmable Subject

When we talk about the rise of the control society and the part that the computer and information processes and networks have played in shaping our lives, it is not enough to simply state that computers have completely taken over our thinking and decision making capacities. Deleuze in his summation of the control society says as much when he notes that, "the machines don't explain anything, you have to analyse the collective apparatuses of which the machines are just one component".[105] So while we may think of how our cultural forms have changed and been intensified due to the implementation of computers and digital processing technologies, we need to think first of how control "accounts for a wider set of socioeconomic logics and practices undergirding the characteristic impositions of the current stage of global capitalism".[106] For this, we need to show how human behaviour and our social reality, not just the areas that are mediated by digital networks and computers, have been rendered digital under the logic of control.

While a thorough history of genealogy of control in reconceptualising the human as a digital machine and the social as a network is outside the remit of this thesis, Franklin states that the roots of the conceptualisation of human labour and behaviour along digital lines can be traced all the way back to the nineteenth Century with the writings of Marx, the work of Charles Babbage in his development of the first computers and the concept of divided labour, and the work of Herman Hollereth in the creation of tabulating machine that recorded the 1890 US census.[107]

But it was during and post-WWII that the development of theories that would aim to reimagine the human as a component in a complex digital system were first thoroughly developed. The first major development was in the field of cybernetics, an interdisciplinary field that began during and immediately after WWII with the investigation of interactions between humans and machines in war situations, alongside research undertaken to the

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[105] Deleuze, 175.

[106] Franklin, 3-4.

[107] Franklin, 19-21.

possibility of self-guiding anti-aircraft ballistics. There have been many definitions provided towards an explanation of what cybernetics is, but Franklin states that "at root it can be thought of as a logical framework for understanding self-regulation in biological life and machines and, by extension, as a logical basis through which biological organisms and machines can be considered formally interchangeable".[108]

While initial studies of cybernetics would analyse human-machine interactions, albeit under strict controls and variables, the drive by scientists such as Norbert Wiener, Warren McCulloch and John von Neumann to break cybernetic theory from narrow and particular modes of human-machine modelling led a more generalised theory of cybernetics that could undertake the study of human-to-machine interactions along wider socioeconomic lines. As such, cybernetics, both in terms of logic, terminology, and metaphor began to be applied in various social fields and sciences outside that of the machine realm – fields such as psychology, psychoanalysis, neuroscience, finance, business management, and military science - where the discussion of humans was not as individual bodies, but instead as self-regulating machines where communication, stimulation, and cognition are represented as a variety of programmable inputs and outputs that could in turn, be linked and scaled up, from a single human brain, to a greater network of human society, up to all of life itself. This desire of scientists and analysts to develop cybernetic systems to model human life would occur in tandem with the development of digital computers that could help model and process the data that would come from the creation of such systems, thereby providing the interchangeability in thinking in rendering human life in digital terms; "an individual human or animal, a brain, a social group or a group of such groups, a complex of interlocking markets, and a battlefield are intelligible and analysable as self-regulating machines, just as a computer is".[109]

In the world of cybernetics, the cyborg is the perfect embodiment of the subject whose organic and inorganic material are embedded with each other. The most often used definition today for a cyborg comes from Donna Haraway who explains in four parts that a cyborg is "a cybernetic organism", a "hybrid of machine and organism", a "creature of social reality", as

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[108] Franklin, 42-43.

[109] Franklin, 4.

well as being "a creature of fiction".[110] The cyborg is a networked being that breaks down the ontological walls between human, machine, nature, and information and material reality.

In *Hardcore Henry,* Henry is a cyborg par excellence, a melding of machine and man in almost perfect harmony. In the beginning scenes of the film in the laboratory, we see Henry seemingly being reassembled, as if he was an assembly model of a human being. Henry opens his eyes, and surprisingly is able to view his own body in the tank underwater as he views himself plugged into various tubes and sockets. His sight changes from red to all colour as his wife stands in front of him with a screwdriver as she appears to be fixing something to his head, while a scanner comes down and notes that the "video link is confirmed". A cybernetic arm and leg are fixed onto his body before he is taken to another lab where he will be given a voice module, where the other lab technicians (one of whom is referred to as "the sorcerer of sound") poke fun at him by playing back various caricature voices, from Elvis Presley to Darth Vader. The fact that his voice, one of the main components in projecting a sense of one's identity, becomes a mere programmable input that can be changed to the whims of technicians only goes to highlight Henry as the human subject as machinic metaphor.

With Henry as a cyborg-as-living cadaver, a man who was either dead or near death before being brought back to life and rebuilt with augmented machine parts, the mere boundaries of whether Henry is human/machine or living/dead are brought into question. When Akan breaks into the laboratory he tells Henry that his "girlfriend may have rebuilt you but I gave her the raw materials to work with", before forcing the technician Timothy to describe the state of Henry's body before they worked on him – "His arm was shot off below the elbow … the leg shot off below the knee … the skull was dented in, his eyes were missing and the bottom half of his jaw was shred to pieces". Throughout *Hardcore Henry,* a sizeable

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[110] Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century". In *The Cybercultures Reader*, eds David Bell and Barbara Kennedy (New York: Routledge, 2000), 291. Haraway's essay is a seminal text in a wide discourse on the nature of the cyborg and the posthuman in culture, politics and society, but other important texts include Charles Hables Gray, *The Cyborg Handbook,* ed. Chris Hables Gray (New York: Routledge, 1995); see also Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999) and Úlfhildur Dagsdóttir, *Sæborgin: Stefnumót líkama og tækni í ævintýri og veruleika* (Reykjavik; Háskólaútgáfan, 2011). Recently cyborg and cybernetic theory has made a resurgence in the realm of feminist and queer studies with the release of Laboria Cuboniks, "Xenofeminism; A Politics for Alienation", Laboriacuboniks.net, June 2015, http://www.laboriacuboniks.net/.

section of the plot sees Henry undergoing several scenes of self-surgery as he plugs into various systems, augmenting his body with various technological and chemical enhancements. This is typified in several scenes such as where Henry, while in a speeding car with Jimmy, opens up his vest to reveal several sockets, where he has to plug in a bio reader to check his life signs. Meanwhile, in the brothel scene we see the shy scientist avatar of Jimmy perform surgery to insert a "charge pump" that will keep him alive. After being left for dead by Akan by the roadside, another clone of Jimmy comes and brings him back to life by "rebooting" him. In one moment of juvenile humour, the character of Slick Dmitry even taunts Henry by calling him "half machine, half pussy!"

If cybernetics is about the desire to map out the human and the social as nodes in a network that could interchange with digital machines, then the other development in the deployment of digital as the underlying logic of control is the development of game theory. Through the developing work in the 1940s of cyberneticists such as John von Neumann, game theory concerns itself with the ability to model human interactions, behaviour and social systems as mathematical models. Von Neumann, using poker as the base metaphor and microcosm of "real life" with its modes of bluff, deception, and making decisions based on imperfect information in order to compete and gain control over greater resources, developed game theory as a visualisation of a world that "requires a process of conceptual coding in which concrete social existence is first rendered digital so that it can then be computed, and it is the assumption of perpetual competition that performs this prefatory digitization".[111] As such, "the game-theoretical model of social interaction is directed toward rendering human behaviour as modelable, and this rendering is facilitated by limiting the conceptualization of this behaviour with the assumption that it is always motivated by competition, rational calculation, and the maximization of gains".[112]

It is the idea of human behaviour as being centred around competition, and the maximisation of gains that initially saw game theory come under a wide range of criticism for the way it portrayed an impoverished idea of human life and interactions, as well as the way it

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[111] Franklin, 52.

[112] Ibid.

associated natural human behaviour with the free market capitalism, which many cyberneticists contested went against the grain of the cybernetic ideal of the homeostatic system. These criticisms however did nothing to stop game theory's socioeconomic advancement as it was applied, like cybernetics, to a range of fields such as economics, political science (Game theory was heavily utilised as an analytical tool during the cold war), psychology, computer science and biology, to areas of sport statistics such as fantasy football and poker.

The result of this deployment of game theory is such that it renders the human subject as being that of an information processor who will learn and make the best decisions based on what will provide the best immediate outcome for himself. In philosophical terms, Game theory came to be seen as a way to be able to explain human interaction in a postmodern society. In his book *The Postmodern Condition*, Jean-François Lyotard - in his development of how knowledge has become commodified and those with the power of deploying computer and information technologies in the processing of this commodified knowledge will be the winners – defines the realm of communication as the battleground where utterances and interactions he defines as "language games" in which "the observable social bond is composed of language moves".[113] In a postmodern society, Lyotard contends, each human is a node in a communications network, where the games of language consist of a person who receives a "move" and is thus is forced by the rules of engagement into a "countermove" that is passed on through the network.

This idea of being able to model and map human behaviour, language, interactions, and emotions, allied with the idea of the notion of the subject as a self-regulating flesh computer that is able to link in with machine and digital networks, led to the proposed idea where cyberneticists not only could be able to map and model human behaviour, but could also programme and control it. Work in melding cybernetics and game theory with psychoanalysis generated the idea of the social actor as a "black box", a node in a network

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[113] Jean- Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 10-11.

where the possible behaviours and emotions can be cued and managed by an array of symbolic inputs.[114]

The idea of whether human behaviour can be so easily determined and manipulated have led to propositions of the "programmable subject" which, despite there being no conclusive proof that this is an action that is possible, does not does not quell the historical fact that many state and private interests have researched on whether such human programmability is possible. The concept of the programmable subject has also been on that has inspired a number of contemporary action movies, including *Hardcore Henry*, on a wide variety of levels from cinematic form and narratology, to style and aesthetics. As a narrative theme or plot development, the idea of the programmable subject has been component of Hollywood cinema and mainstream television for decades. From espionage and conspiracy thrillers to sci-fi dramas, these films all deal with the issues of memory, human subjectivity, and the concept of programmability and control in numerous ways and forms.[115] Some have plot or narrative themes that deal with the notion of implanted or artificial memories, while others deal with the notion of the "sleeper agent", someone who has been programmed to act according to a series of cues, commands, or certain audio or visual stimuli. Films, of which *The Parallax View* is an exemplar, contain scenes where the audience witnesses the process of programming in action across a variety of methods that allude to not only one or more characters, but the audience themselves as being possibly programmable. In the *Bourne* series for example, Jason Bourne (Matt Damon) is a man with amnesia who finds that he has undergone a thorough reprogramming of his life and subjectivity, so that he is required to act with intense violence through a series or programmable orders and cues given by his CIA handlers. Throughout these films, Bourne is in a state of near perpetual precariousness as he

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[114] Franklin, 148

[115] Films that deal with such issues as a narrative theme or a plot development include *The Manchurian Candidate (*John Frankenheimer 1962, Jonathan Demme 2004*), The Ipcress File* (Sidney J. Furie, 1965), *The Parallax View* (Alan J. Pakula, 1974), *Salt (2010), Shutter Island* (Martin Scorsese, 2010), *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* (Joe and Anthony Russo, 2014) the *Bourne* series, , Salt, , TV series such as *24 (Fox, 2005 -)* and *The Americans (2014 -),* as well as sci-fi films such as *Blade Runner (Ridley Scott, 1982), The Island (Michael Bay, 2005)* and *Moon (Duncan Jones, 2009).*

constantly travels across a variety of cities and locations to uncover his past, while also being hunted by a variety of intelligence services.

While Bourne aims to fill in the gaps caused by his amnesia, for Franklin his memory loss is actually an impediment to his ability to move and function as a fighting operative-as-machine. "Amnesia, that hallmark of unimaginative writing" he states, "becomes a formal necessity because it allows the reflexive or reactive logic of the programmable object to progress unburdened by either conscious memory or unconsciously recorded trauma".[116] As such, Bourne moves in a highly determined state, where the narrative movement is constantly going forward with little or no recourse or recollection of past events. It is for Franklin, reminiscent of the Markov chain of mathematical events where "only states n and n + 1, the present and the next state, are operative".[117] For Bourne, there is no reminiscing or retrospection; there is merely the here and now and the next checkpoint, target or mission.

Both memory loss and a highly programmed, propulsive narrative structure are thematic hallmarks at the heart of *Hardcore Henry*. At the beginning of the film, as Henry is being reassembled in the lab, he is asked by Estelle if he remembers anything, to which he simply shakes his head. In this opening laboratory scenes, he is told that his memory loss is only temporary with Estelle telling the other technicians that "his memories are still catching up with him". But after the escape from the lab, we see Henry embark on a perpetual motion of forward motion in both movement and narrative. In terms of the narrative, he is the constantly moving from one task to the next, while in terms of retrospection and flashback, this occurs with other characters such as Jimmy in order to fill in their back stories. Because Henry has no memory, and no voice, he has no character of which to speak of and thus is unable to articulate any desires, feelings, or emotions. All that he inhabits is an object of action whose end goal is to save Estelle from Akan. There is nothing else.

The idea of actual memory being a block to Henry's ability to function and fight with programmed intensity is shown in the moment where, on the way to the penthouse suite of

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[116] Franklin, 161.

[117] Ibid.

Akan's skyscraper, there is a reveal that shows that in his "reconstruction", Henry has been implanted with a "memory blocker" that prevents him from remembering anything about his previous life. As Jimmy shines a multi-coloured light into his face, we are given a short montage that looks as if they are from a different film - a sunny street, a child's hands holding a toy, the beach by the shore. Jimmy notes that he left the memory blocker in so that Henry wouldn't "remember a better life somewhere" and would be a more suitable and pliable Ally in Jimmy's plan to get revenge against Akan. Before he dies, Jimmy says that "If you haven't already, you'll start to remember the bits of your past now Henry. And those memories... they're real... they're you".

The narrative twist to *Hardcore Henry* is that when Henry is finally at his lowest ebb, it is revealed that Estelle is actually Akan's wife, that the whole tale of his marriage to her was fake, and that her kidnap was concocted in order to provide "motivation" for Henry to act with the level of ferocity and intensity that he has undertaken throughout the film. Because his entire subjective viewpoint has been recorded by Akan, these "recorded memories" will be edited and placed in a new batch of super soldiers, with each clone believing that Estelle is his wife; "Every single one of my soldiers will awake willing to do anything my brilliant wife tells him, whether it's marching on Paris, or the White House lawn". The whole point of the narrative of *Hardcore Henry* is the mere creation of memories as usable data that can be used to programme other cyborgs. This leads to the only flashback of the film for Henry, one in which the man in the pre credits scene mocking a kid with "you, little, pussy" is expanded to reveal that it is Henry's father, who gives a new "motivational" speech, telling Henry that he loves him but he has to decide whether to "lay down on the ground, swallowing blood, or are you gonna get up, spit it out, and spill theirs?" The flashback, while providing a sense of Henry's character and identity, only represents that of a new set of explicit directives, a series of orders/instructions from a previous programme thought to have been wiped, but not fully deleted. Taking these instructions on board, Henry is able to rally and kill both Akan and Estelle in a brutal finale.

3.3: The World as a "Gamespace"

With the development of PC and console gaming technology in the past few decades, from being a simplistic coding situation such as *Pong*, to the fully immersive real time MMORPGs such as *World of Warcraft* and *Eve Online*, there has been the formulation of a theoretical framework as to how regimes of a control society, through tools such as cybernetics and game theory, correspond to how games and gaming in general have come to dictate our social interactions and provide the main episteme and logic of the control society, where we see our whole lives and social reality as a game that pits us against other "players", where the rules and terrain of conflicts and interaction is always shifting, and there is no clear end in sight – merely to be the "winner" in what both Alexander Galloway and McKenzie Wark have termed the "Gamespace".

While Galloway uses the term Gamespace in direct comparison with discussing the formal qualities of computer games themselves, where the Gamespace is a "fully rendered, actionable space",[118] he goes on to look at how the games such as the *Civilisation* series and *Grand Theft Auto*, openly display their world of informatics that envelop the gamer to undertake the digital logic of the ideology of control. The result is that gamer is in a state where he is "learning, internalizing, and becoming intimate with a massive, multipart, global algorithm. To play the game means to play the code of the game. To win means to know the system. And thus to interpret a game means to interpret its algorithm (to discover its parallel "allegorithm")".[119] Because of the way that the increasing power of computer processors are rendering games and their algorithms are more complex and life-like, games according to Galloway become an active medium where "gaming requires a special congruence between the social reality depicted in the game and the social reality known and lived by the player".[120] It is this congruence that leads Galloway and others to highlight the rise of the "military entertainment complex" where the entertainment industries, in collaboration with the military, create entertainment and mass media platforms that blur the aesthetics between

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[118] Galloway, 63.

[119] Ibid., 90-91.

[120] Ibid., 83.

military strategy training and the gameplay and visual spectacle conveyed in computer games or blockbuster action films.

For Wark, through his online book *Gam3r 7h3ory*, gamespace is moved to a meta commentary of abstraction, where games mirror our social reality and vice versa and the information management and simulation on display in games like *The Sims, Civilisation III* and action games such as *State of Emergency*, mean that games are the purest, most utopian form of a social reality where the digital logic of control is prevalent in education, business and finance, in military interactions, sport, etc. As Wark notes;

> No wonder digital games are the emergent cultural form of the times. The times have themselves become just a series of less and less perfect games. The Cave™ presents games in a pure state, as a realm where justice — of a sort — reigns. The beginnings of a critical theory of games — a gamer theory — might lie not in holding games accountable as failed representations of the world, but quite the reverse. The world outside is a gamespace that appears as an imperfect form of the game.[121]

Thus games are idealised versions of what we are experiencing in real life – In *Rez,* the subject is a mere outline, an ephemeral being that exists only in its actions. In performing said actions, your subjective experience merges the world around you. In *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*, we have a topographical landscape that maps out a worldview of constant risk and reward. In *State of Emergency*, the underlying boredom to act out and destroy things is linked not with time but with our material, consumerist spaces. In linking the world of games to our increasingly mediated material world, *Gam3r 7h3ory*, according to Steven Shaviro, posits the idea that games are part of a feedback loop in depicting our social reality, a world that;

> is increasingly virtual; is saturated by digital media; is oblivious of time or history and indifferent to particularities of space or topography; is governed by impersonal algorithms that tend to reify "choice" as a series of binary options without ambiguity;

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[121] McKenzie Wark, "Agony – on the Cave", in *Gam3r 7h3ory*, *futureofthebook.com,* 2005, paragraph 25 http://www.futureofthebook.org/gamertheory/index.html@cat=1&paged=5.html.

is increasingly homogeneous as it absorbs any possible "outside" within itself; is increasingly being reduced, not just to a spectacle, but to a pure agon, a perpetual Darwinian competition, a struggle that no longer respects divisions between work and leisure, or between private and public, and that never ends, but that nonetheless continually divides the world into "winners" and "losers".[122]

Wark concludes that in our social world, games, digital information, and communication have overlaid and overwritten over our physical landscape to the point where it dissolves into everyday life. We see our lives as a game and our surroundings as a playground. The turning of our lives and activity into a real-time game, and our surroundings into that of a playground can be seen not just in the rise of augmented reality games such as *Pokémon Go, Ingress,* and *Run Zombie, Run* but in the rise of Parkour. Rising from an urban sport subculture in Paris in the 1990s, Parkour is a mix of gymnastics, acrobatic and urban exploration that "sees the city as a series of physical obstacles to be overcome. The art of Parkour—through the act of the traceur (The person doing Parkour)—can be a mode for new ways of experiencing a city and its temporal spatiality. These are the new exercises of the urban that challenge conventional notions of urban cartographies and bounded spaces".[123] Along with the philosophy of Parkour, as that of the body being free to move and explore the space around it, in effect Parkour and the traceur effectively sees their urban environment as a wholly unified physical gamespace to be explored. This will to explore often leads to confrontations with police and security personnel as Parkour's practitioners often trespass onto private property, such as warehouses, construction and development sites, and building rooftops. Many of these confrontations are often recorded on the same GoPro camera technology used in *Hardcore Henry* as the traceurs, run, leap and somersault over rooftops,

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[122] Steven Shaviro, "McKenzie Wark's Gam3r 7h3ory", *The Pinocchio Theory, July 11th 2006,* http://www.shaviro.com/Blog/?p=506.

[123] Larissa Hjorth, *Games and Gaming: An Introduction to New Media* (Oxford: Berg, 2011), 87.

turnstiles and various objects to escape their pursuers. As a result, they often resemble mini trailers for the film itself.[124]

The intense yet balletic style of those who perform Parkour and their use of the urban landscape as gamespace has translated into many action scenes in contemporary action movies. Whereas many classical action movies contain various chase scenes that were often bounded by the grids of transportation, be it the road and pavement, in films such as The *Bourne* series, the James Bond films *Casino Royale*, & *Quantum of Solace,* superhero films such as *Captain America* and *The Avengers* (Joss Wheldon, 2012), and game to film adaptations such as *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time* (Mike Newell, 2010), we see the protagonists race and leap in an intensive acrobatic style across a variety of urban terrains from construction sites to shanty rooftops. This regime of acrobatic movement is intensified further in *Hardcore Henry*, which in many ways feels like an extended version of the DIY Parkour videos made by the traceurs. In one particular scene, Henry scales the side of an apartment complex, before embarking on a chase against Slick Dmitry across the city by jumping off the side of buildings, over barriers and building sites, and shopping arcades, and at one point even running across the girders of a bridge.

It is not just in terms of actor and character movement where we encounter films becoming more like that of the gamespace. For nearly four decades, we have seen complimentary but separate and discrete art forms – music, cinema, gaming – undergo a process of convergence where "the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behaviour of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want".[125] As such there has been a long cross-pollination of content, form and aesthetics between gaming and cinema since the popular rise of consumer computer games in the 1980s.

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[124] A good example of participants of parkour in action can been seen in the video "Top 3 Parkour VS Security (AMAZING!!!)", YouTube Video, 12:35, posted by "Ryan Boecher," Oct 15, 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lBN+uNa0vR-I&t=643s.

[125] Henry Jenkins, quoted in Mike D'Errico, "Going Hard: Bassweight, Sonic Warfare, & the "Brostep" Aesthetic", *Sounding Out!,* January 23 2014, https://soundstudiesblog.com/2014/01/23/going-hard-bassweight-sonic-warfare-the-brostep-aesthetic.

At first this was merely a case of intertextual transcoding, where numerous 1980s Hollywood action films, such as *Robocop, Terminator, Red Heat* (Walter Hill, 1988)*, Commando* (Mark K. Lester, 1985)*,* the *Rambo* franchise etc., were adapted into simple platform games for the nascent gaming market. In the 1990s, with the explosion of the console gaming market alongside a quantum shift in complexity of graphics and gameplay from 2D to 3D modelling, this trend turns the other way, as games themselves become adapted into live action movies, where there is a direct narrative transference from a digital gamespace of the game to that of a filmic landscape.[126] While some films, such as *Silent Hill* and *Resident Evil* achieve their own aesthetic merits, with most straight crossovers from gaming to cinema there has always been something missing, a lack in the transference from the game to the film. Much of this lack can be surmised to one root cause; that of game control, which is the fundamental difference between games and cinema. With games as a media and art form, participants are able to engage in a fully interactive manner as one can control, move, and make a character explore across and interact with a fully rendered gamespace. With cinema however, while a film creates a fully viewable diegetic world, the audience only sees and moves where the director wants us to move to. The audience are that of being mere passive engagers with the images, not participants. Because of this fundamental difference in terms of control and engagement, gaming and cinema can never truly converge into a single entity, for to do so would render both cinema and gaming as a new hybrid form, one which we have yet to see.

Despite being unable to truly combine into a singular form while still keeping their medium specificity, there has still been a convergence between cinema and gaming along the lines of form, aesthetic, and narrative that correspond to the logic of regimes of control in the way that it renders all life and subjectivity as being digital. The key to all of this has been the digitization of many of our popular cultural forms, such as music, art, photography, television, and of course gaming and cinema, where once such forms were an analogue representation to that of a material referent and physical reality, are now brought under the ontology of the

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[126] Examples of such direct transference/adaptation of games to cinema include *Street Fighter* (Steven E. de Souza, 1994*), Mortal Kombat* (Paul W. S. Anderson, 1995), *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* (Simon West, 2001), *Doom (2005), Silent Hill* (Keiichiro Toyama, 2006*), Hitman* (Xavier Gens, 2007), *Max Payne* (John Moore, 2008), *Prince of Persia* (2010), and the *Resident Evil* series.

computer where the capture and recording of images are rendered into discrete units of indexical information that can be manipulated at a whim. As David Rodowick points out, the history of cinema and photography, has been one of three overlapping histories that has built our current relationship with the digital image in visual media, histories that include "those of electronic screens and transmission, and of computing itself. This observation echoes Lev Manovich's argument that digital visual culture remains cinematic, but only in one of its dimensions: 'the visual culture of the computer age is cinematographic in its appearance, digital on the level of its material, and computational (i.e., software driven) in its logic'".[127]

As a result, there has been a convergence of visual aesthetics between gaming and cinema in the way that while nearly all of our current visual media, from image capture, to storage, to process and display/exhibition consists of digital and computation processing, the progression of games in both image and digital imaging "mimics photography and cinematography in producing the qualities of perceptual realism".[128] While many blockbuster films such as *Jurassic Park* (Steven Spielberg, 1995) and *Titanic* (James Cameron, 1997), to the *Star Wars* Prequels (George Lucas, 1999 – 2005) and others have increasingly deployed "green screen" digital technology and graphics design in creating ever more fantastical worlds and scenarios that would have previously been impossible either in studios or on location, the increased processing and computation power in PC computers and consoles have resulted in games becoming more life-like and cinematic. Game developers are constantly rendering more detailed landscapes, while in cinema the use of digital compositing technology results in the combining of live action and computer-generated elements until they become indistinguishable. Alongside motion capture technology, video game characters are developing more detailed and realistic facial features, and more lifelike movements in gameplay. Such use of motion capture technology and computer and video game graphics have now created many instances in digital cinema of "hybrid" characters, who exist in the film's universe, but are wholly made up of digital information, such as the Hulk in the *Avenger* movies, the character of Gollum in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, and most recently

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[127] Rodowick, 124.

[128] Rodowick, 125.

when the character of Grand Moff Tarkin was recreated wholly digitally for the film *Star Wars: Rogue One* (Gareth Edwards, 2016), even though the actor who played the character (Peter Cushing) died back in 1994.

In *Hardcore Henry* this confluence between gaming and cinema is more than just a highly gamic visual style and aesthetic. Whether it is the characters, the cinematography, or the narrative form, the look and feel as if you are undergoing a walkthough of an FPS game is prevalent and ubiquitous throughout the film. Much of the presentation and look of the landscape contained within the film – abandoned buildings, urban industrial sites, truck convoys, the "big boss" building/compound - emulates many of the landscapes found within many FPS games.

There are also many leitmotifs prevalent in FPS games that are also in *Hardcore Henry*. The use of "power ups" that regain the health and character in a game is a major drive in Henry's actions in a film, whether it is obtaining pumps and boosters to gain more charge power to stop him from dying, or the use of chemical enhancements, such as the final fight scene on the rooftop, where Henry double injects himself with adrenalin.[129]

Then there is the character of "Jimmy" himself, who despite constantly dying in a blaze of bullets, tank fire and, in one case, being set ablaze by a man with a flamethrower, keeps reappearing in a variety of guises, such as cockney spy, a homeless drinker, a bookish scientist or a WWII-era commando. Jimmy's purpose of the film is similar to that of the tutorial characters in video games, who during breaks in the gameplay provides information and exposition to the game itself. Jimmy provides a mix of exposition to further the plot while

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[129] The use of health "power ups" aka performance enhancing stimulants/drug within games is a motif that has also been alluded to in other films such as *DOOM* and especially *Crank*, where Statham takes a cocktail of drugs from caffeine, to cocaine and amphetamines, in order to keep his heart rate up. Other films that highlight the social link between stimulant drugs and society and culture include *Human Traffic* (Justin Kerrigan, 1999) *Requiem for a Dream* (Darren Aronosky, 2000*), Spun* (Jonas Åkerlund, 2002), and *Enter the Void* (Gaspar Noé, 2010). Even films such as *Trainspotting* (Danny Boyle, 1996) which centres on heroin addiction, has a very intensified aesthetic and narrative. For more information on the history of drugs in cinema, see Jack Stevenson, *Addicted: The Myth and Menace of Drugs in Film* (London: Creation Books, 2000); see also John Markert, Hooked in Film: Substance Abuse on the Big Screen (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2013). For the link between drugs and social acceleration this has been explored with regards to war (see Normal Ohler, *Blitzed: Drugs in Nazi Germany* (London: Penguin, 2016)) and social temporality (See Fuck Theory, "Time Capsules", *realifemag.com*, September 29th 2016, http://reallifemag.com/time-capsules).

at the same time acts as a sidekick and ally to Henry in various action scenes. Copley particularly accentuates this idea of Jimmy as a video game tutorial character in the way he overplays each character with a slightly disjointed mix of stilted staccato lines and freeform ad libs where the timing is slightly off to the action.

The highly distinctive look and comparative feel between *Hardcore Henry* and gaming has been acknowledged by Naishuller himself in that, while *Hardcore Henry* is first and foremost a film, it is one that is heavily influenced by FPS games themselves. In an interview conducted with Copley and Naishuller, they recall the shooting crew noting that close up scenes of violence resembled that of the game *Half-life*, before Naishuller goes into more explicit details of how much the games have influenced the film;

> I think the biggest thing that was there on purpose is the guard hut at the rooftop. That's the guard hut I showed in the "No Mercy" level in *Left for Dead* and said "that's what the guard hut should look like". I played that game so much and thought this would be a nice little thing. There's *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* when the sniper Jimmy is walking through the abandoned building. And again I saw the location and we had the sniper character with the ghille suit and I thought "will this be similar?" and I thought "this is one of the best levels I've ever played" […] A lot of it just seeps in subconsciously, like a lot of people have pointed out while we're doing interviews to various references like *Assassin's Creed* because Henry falls into a dumpster. And I've never played *Assassin's Creed*! And when I was shooting the scene of Slick Dimitri's apartment complex, as soon as I walked in I said "this has got a very *Goldeneye*" feel and I think anyone who played first person shoot 'em ups love *Goldeneye*. So it made sense to have a silencer pistol. So it's not in your face, but it's enough that if you play the games you will get a warm fuzzy feeling and that's not too bad to have.[130]

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[130] "Creating HARDCORE HENRY w/ Sharlto Copley & Ilya Naishuller - ETC Podcast", YouTube Video.

Despite the comments from Naishuller that we need to see *Hardcore Henry* primarily as a feature film that should be seen on a cinema screen (in interviews Naishuller cites non action filmmakers such as Kubrick and films like *The Usual Suspects* as influences[131]), the film is a perfect example of a convergent digital media text that combines styles, techniques and practices that are found in more than one art form, in this case cinema and video games. The depiction of a male action hero who undertakes a quest or mission is the staple of most FPS games, and while the utilisation of the film's predominantly urban environment as a site for chasing, fighting and exploring has turned the film's landscapes into its own gamespace. So while Naishuller and Copley state that anyone interested in action movies could watch the film,[132] it is no surprise that the people who took the greatest interest in *Hardcore Henry,* were young men who also interested in gaming and internet based pursuits.

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[131] Bryan Bishop, "The making of Hardcore Henry, the craziest first-person action movie you'll ever see", *Theverge.com*, March 16 2016, http://www.theverge.com/2016/3/16/11248318/hardcore-henry-gopro-movie-director-interview-sxsw-2016.

[132] "Creating HARDCORE HENRY w/ Sharlto Copley & Ilya Naishuller - ETC Podcast", YouTube Video.

3.4: Control Societies and Intensification of Cinema in the Realm of Hypermasculinity

In one scene of dialogue in *Hardcore Henry*, we find Henry sitting on a bus as Jimmy (disguised as a street tramp) sits down opposite him and gives him the details of what he must do for his next mission;

"All you gotta do … is break in there, kill him, open up his rib cage, take out his beating heart … and fucking eat it! […] I'm kidding, I'm fucking kidding, you don't have to eat his fucking heart!"

This snapshot dialogue is a perfect example of the dialogue that occurs throughout *Hardcore Henry*, and conveys what the film is about in the way it displays both a huge amount of violence and what could best be described as bad taste humour that peppers the exploding body parts, blood, and broken bones.

In its visual depictions of action, violence, sex and sleaze, lack of morality with regards to killing, and its depictions of gender and sexuality, *Hardcore Henry* places itself as a genre film of exploitation that is defiantly masculine and heterosexual, marketing itself to the core market for action movies – young, white, heterosexual men who as well as watching films, are also avid gamers. Displays of macho masculinity in action movies are nothing new, but with *Hardcore Henry* the intensity of the violence, language, and displays of hegemonic gender roles are done for maximum affect, where we have a souped-up male action hero operating on the edge of his ability and, according to critic Stephen Dalton, "the male gaze is quite literally, with an extra adolescent streak of casual sexism and mild homophobia", where "the female characters are mostly fantasy sex objects who rarely take the trouble to wear many clothes".[133]

Throughout part three of this thesis, we have noted how the movement of society from that of a disciplinary to control regimes of power has coincided with that of the digitisation of life, whose deployment of the computer and digital technologies facilitated the capturing,

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[133] Stephen Dalton, "'Hardcore Henry': TIFF Review".

mapping and modelling of human practices, cognition, and social behaviours for the purpose of sublimating it towards capitalisation and control.

Despite the often projected idea that numbers, digitisation, and data are determined by many as objective and genderless the reality is that the application of data and technology, like everything else, has an ideological and, therefore, a gendered quality. In his essay on the relationship between masculinity and mechanical technology, Ulf Mellström states it bluntly: "there is a materially and symbolically powerful relationship between men and technology that runs deep, both historically and in contemporary societies. There is no doubt [...] that there exists a 'pervasive and durable equation between masculinity and technology'" before going on to say that "through industrialization and modernization in the West and other parts of the world, men have always been in control of key technologies. Technology and the masculinization of power are thus intimately connected".[134]

This idea between masculinity and technology is explored also by Franklin with respect to the emergence of regimes of a control society; "the emergence of control might be understood not as a historical break but rather as an intensification of epistemic conditions to allow an already-existing tendency of capital—the dream of extending valorisation to practices beyond time spent in factories or offices—to be realized in concrete social relations".[135] This subsumption of social relations to the realm of a control society under the logic of capture, selection, and definitions that undergirds digitality, according to Franklin;

> is necessarily also a logic of exclusion, a passing on of the malign work of essentialism from the level of appearance to the supposedly more objective level of informatics [...] Just as the contemporary notion of information economy can be identified as a late-twentieth-century instantiation of an earlier dream (or nightmare) of full valorisation, the absolutely inseparable logic of grouping bodies as discrete arrangements of binary symbols—a logic that is clearly founded on older modes of raced, gendered, and classed definition—must also be accounted for within the social,

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[134] Ulf Mellström, "Machines and Masculine Subjectivity: Technology as an Integral Part of Men's Life Experiences", In *Men and Masculinities* Vol. 6, no. 4 (2004), 369.

[135] Franklin, 25-26.

political, and cultural systems of control. As Beller puts it, "whenever one considers the many valences of digital production and management, one 'might also consider the ways in which the new domain of politics overlays the old, keeping those who were once imagined as 'women,' 'natives,' and/or 'proletarians' in their planet of slums'".[136]

From the words of Mellström and Franklin we can hypothesize the following; (1) that despite the supposed inclusivity of freedom and multiplicity towards race, gender, and sexuality that is presented by a society of control, the mode of power and use of computer and digital technologies that facilitate and propagate regimes of control will be inherently masculine,[137] and (2) in the process of digitizing social relations, many of the definitions and representations of gender and masculinity that existed in previous regimes of power will not only be valorised, they will be intensified under the logic of digitisation and control.

With this in mind we can see how representations of hegemonic masculinity that are prevalent in popular cultural mediums that have not only undergone a thorough conversion from analogue to digital (and in the case of gaming has been digital to begin with), but they are also intensified from a model of masculinity to that of hypermasculinity.

In gaming there has long been a connection between gaming technology and masculinity that unlike classical technological relations, which were concerned with speed and industrial power, is more concerned with skill and mastery. The result is a sphere of culture that is based around gendered masculinity "where technology and technical skill are constitutive features of what it means to be masculine, the relation between femininity and

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[136] Franklin, 27-28.

[137] While there have been many texts and essays by writers and academics on the role that women have played in technology (see for example Sadie Plant, *Zeroes and Ones: Digital Women & the New Technoculture* (London: Fourth Estate, 1997)), and in recent films such as *Hidden Figures* (Theodore Melfi, 2016), which highlighted the role of three black women at the heart of NASA's space race in the 1960s, throughout the history of digital technologies, the vast majority of discourse, funding, and people that constituted the environments that surrounded these fields have been homogeneously male, white, and heterosexual.

technology is typically portrayed as one of nonexistence".[138] There have been many books and texts that have explored the representations of masculinity and gender in gaming both in terms of gameplay and subcultures and I will not delve into them here,[139] but suffice to say that in terms of form and aesthetic, in mainstream games, be they played on consoles, PCs, or online, the main narratives are centred on depictions of male power and violence – war, crime, sports, fighting, and the use of a multiple array of weaponry and technology. And while many efforts have been undertaken in recent years to highlight the increasing demographics of women and people of colour who identify as gamers, the surrounding controversy of the #gamergate scandal highlight the depressing reality that the discourse, practices and subcultures surrounding gaming are still decidedly white, male and heterosexual.

In music culture, Simon Reynolds and Mike D'Errico have commented on the increasing intensification and maximisation of electronic music over the past decade and a half, and how this intensification has gone hand in hand with the hypermasculinity of EDM (Electronic Dance Music) in contemporary pop culture in terms of song structure, modes of production, and sound aesthetics. D'Errico has noted that EDM particularly lends itself to a form of "Hardness" that is ubiquitous to "'Bro' cultures" prevalent in mainstream entertainment. EDM music in particular is known for being "the soundtrack to various hypermasculine forms of entertainment, from sports such as football and professional wrestling to action movies and first-person shooter video games".[140]

In terms of music production, Reynolds has coined the term for this trend, "digital maximalism", as a way to describe the turn from the stripped down aesthetics of previous forms of electronic music in the 1980s and 1990s (where the increase in intensity was solely down to the increase in BPM (beats per minute)), to a dominant trend in electronic music

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[138] Mellström, 369.

[139] See Derek Burrill, *Die Tryin': Videogames, Masculinity, Culture* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), See Also Valerie Walkerdine, Children, Gender, Video Games: Towards a Relational Approach to Multimedia (London: Palmgrave MacMillan, 2009) and Nola Alloway and Pam Gilbert, "Game Culture: Playing with Masculinity, Violence and Pleasure." In *Wired-Up: Young People and the Electronic Media*, ed. Sue Howard (London: UCL, 1998), 95–114.

[140] D'Errico, "Going Hard".

where "there are a hell of a lot of inputs here, in terms of influences and sources, and a hell of a lot of outputs, in terms of density, scale, structural convolution, and sheer majesty".[141] Reynolds points to the move from electronic hardware, which had limitations in terms of inputs, outputs and control, to the use of DAW (Digital Audio Workshops) for this maximalist aesthetic, where packages such as Ableton Live and FL Studio "encourage 'interminable layering'" where the graphic interface insidiously inculcates a view of music as "a giant sandwich of vertically arranged elements stacked upon one another".[142] Meanwhile, contemporary music software's scope for tweaking the parameters of any given sonic event opens up a potential "'bad infinity' abyss of fiddly fine-tuning".[143]

D'Errico, in taking on Reynold's idea of maximalism in digital music with regard to aesthetics and production, centres these practices of production as highly gendered. Using the example of the Massive digital software synthesizer, which is often deployed in the creation of what he terms "brostep", an amalgamation of dubstep with the aesthetics of "bro culture", he shows that the ways that the producer utilises a multiplicity of windows and keystrokes to manipulate and inscribe sound frequencies into a series of algorithms that would be beyond the limits of earlier forms of hardware (which would have required knob twiddling and a set limit to the numbers of inputs and outputs). D'Errico posits a convergence between hypermediation and masculinity within the user's experience of audio production that requires the developments of the masculinist trope of "mastering" this hypermediated interface and linking it with a range of violent, gendered, and militaristic language and control logics and tactics inherent within electronic and DJ music culture, "from DJs 'battling' to producers 'triggering' a sample with a 'controller' or 'executing' a programming 'command' or typing a 'bang' to send a signal'".[144]

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[141] Simon Reynolds, "Maximal Nation", *Pitchfork.com*, December 6 2011, http://pitchfork.com/features/article/8721-maximal-nation/.

[142] Ibid.

[143] Ibid.

[144] D'Errico, "Going Hard".

We can recognize this convergence between hypermediation and hypermasculinity in the current spate of contemporary action movies that blend a mix of technology, militaristic action, and intense speed both in the filming process and in the final cinematic form. The key to this is Lorrie Palmer's essay "Cranked Masculinity" where she studies the *Crank* series of films directed by Mark Neveldine and Brian Taylor. In her analysis, she notes that while the action heroes of the 1970s and 1980s were all about size and musculature as a form of masculine dominance-as-ideology, the current staple of action heroes are now built for speed, exhibiting a form of hypermasculinity in terms of looks and actions within a "relentlessly paced narrative"[145], where there is a "conflation of camera work and character around a mutual embodiment of speed".[146]

When it comes to digital action cinema, Palmer describes the twin logics of immediacy, where we desire to experience a completely unmediated artistic expression of our daily reality, with that of hypermediation, where the constructed nature of digital forms of remediation that permeates most contemporary media is foregrounded over the ideas of immediacy. "The cinematic medium", notes Palmer "in its own act of remediation, employs computer-generated imagery (CGI) and digital compositing to create a seamless space, especially in the action-adventure genre. From computer-generated visual effects to wire removal, action films achieve both immediacy and Hypermediacy". As such "Authenticity, realism, and mediating technology coexist in the dual logics of remediation"[147]. Relating this form of hypermediation to *Crank* and *Crank 2: High Voltage,* Palmer notes "the particularly gendered way in which the directors frames a particular mode of production in new media as a gendered technological expression".[148]

Palmer determines the links between hypermediation and hypermasculinity in three ways. The first is the gendered expression and use of camera technology, in the way the directors of the *Crank* films utilised their experience of working as "extreme sports"

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[145] Palmer, 8.

[146] Ibid., 7.

[147] Ibid.

[148] Ibid., 8.

filmmakers to shoot the action from a variety of dangerous positions while using handheld digital camcorders "which they wield as extensions of their own bodies, often wearing the camera rigs as they move with their lead actor".[149] The second was the visual style in *Crank* that would take the "intensified continuity" aesthetic of modern action cinema and push it to its limit. As well as using a multitude of different fast paced editing styles, the directors' development of a moving "bullet time rig" that was able to follow and capture a "visually hyped up, multiple angle, highly mobile perspective of Statham from all sides, practically simultaneously",[150] which helped to create a film that traded and emphasized "excess and spectacle, the centrality of surface over substance […] ADHD cinema […] transitory kinetic sensations that decenter spatial legibility […] an impact aesthetic, [and] an ear-splitting, frenetic style"[151] The third way is the gendered performance of lead actor Jason Statham as Chev Chelios and other male characters in the film in the way they exhibit a spectacular display of aggressive masculinity through violence, sex, and the utilisation of drugs and weaponry.

Taking this approach to *Hardcore Henry,* we can regard that the film, from its production shoot, visual style, and narrative, displays strong levels of hypermediation. In various videos and podcast interviews, both the director Ilya Naishuller and star Sharlto Copley tell the interviewers with great enthusiasm about the production shoot where they emphasize the action and aggressive manner in which they shot the movie, whether it is scenes where people get injured, or how they are constantly running, jumping and hitting each other. Copley notes with regard to the performance and danger of the stunt work;

> The thing that blew my mind was that the rules (for stunt filming) are far more relaxed in Russia. If you were shooting any of that stuff in North America, there'd be safety barriers and other things […] there's a sense of watching these guys work where there's an enormous sense of danger every day. A really, truly present danger in a lot of the stuff that was happening […] but because of that there isn´t this sense that

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[149] Palmer, 2.

[150] Ibid., 4, 15.

[151] Ibid., 4.

somebody is babying you, somebody's got your back. Here, you have to have each other's back. You're are all on your game and are very focused.[152]

The making-of video meanwhile shows an array of stunts, explosions (accompanied with a pumping EDM soundtrack), all while the Director of Photography Seva Kaptur describes that the GoPro camera technology is "a real action camera and is created for people who run, jump, fall and break themselves".[153] The video then shows how the camera housing technology was developed by creating a helmet to house two Go-Pro cameras that was based on helmets that are used in strikeball, an activity "requiring the use of [a] replica firearm that propels plastic BBs to simulate real combat engagements. Strikeball is used in law enforcement training, military simulation, private security engagements, recreational gaming, and as collector's activity".[154] Here, under the aegis of Go-Pro camera technology, we see the melding of acting, stunts, cinematography, and direction all under a single subjectivity of one person. In one scene the Seva Kaptur tells of how in other projects they had to use big heavy unwieldy cameras that had to be operated on dollies, but in *Hardcore Henry* "The actor is the "dolly", and he is also a steadicam and a cameraman and an operator […] he's like a living tripod, and it's funny. It's a very interesting experience".[155]

In terms of the shooting process, the cast and crew worked to an intensified, aggressive shooting schedule, where multiple parts of the process were often working in parallel, or in tandem with each other. Naishuller talks of how they were editing the film while they were shooting at the same time, as opposed to the usual sequential style of shooting first, then editing in post-production.[156] Because of the small, fast moving film crew used in shooting, action scenes that would take more than two weeks to prepare on a

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[152] "Creating HARDCORE HENRY w/ Sharlto Copley & Ilya Naishuller - ETC Podcast", YouTube Video.

[153] "HARDCORE HENRY (Behind The Scenes Episodes)", YouTube Video.

[154] "What is Strikeball?", *Strikeballevents.com*, April 11 2014, http://strikeballevents.com/forum/information/what-is-strikeball/48-what-is-strikeball.

[155] "HARDCORE HENRY (Behind The Scenes Episodes)", YouTube Video.

[156] "Creating HARDCORE HENRY w/ Sharlto Copley & Ilya Naishuller - ETC Podcast", YouTube Video.

mainstream movie production, would take a few days at a maximum. Meanwhile, costume and prop maker Oleg Savin in the behind the scenes video, tells of how he and Sergey Valyaev were continuously remaking and refining the camera and shooting technology while the film itself was being shot, often working twelve hour plus shifts.[157]

From observing the shooting and production process on *Hardcore Henry*, we can respect how their use of small digital cinema technologies not only allowed for a more aggressive and intensified shooting and production experience, it also, though the development of ultra-lightweight masks as camera rigs, collapsed several film shooting roles and tasks into one person who, in playing the lead character of Henry, demonstrates a perfect melding of man and digital machines as an embodied expression of gendered technology operating beyond its limits .

With regards to *Hardcore Henry's* expression of hypermasculinity in terms of the final film, there are noted differences between it and many other contemporary action films, the most prevalent is the use of the first person subjective viewpoint which, as we have described earlier in this thesis, negates the use of many of the tools and techniques used in film editing and the intensified continuity style. But despite this, *Hardcore Henry* still manages to display both a seamless mix of immediacy through digital effects, and the logic of hypermediation where Henry as a male protagonist "can be multiplied and extended, as if he were the controlling apparatus that proliferates his own image",[158] to the point where as a hypermediated man he is "in full flight, with both product and process clearly visible".[159]

As has been noted in the previous sections, Henry's entire body is that of a cyborg, part man and part machine, which allows him to push himself to the limit in the way that no ordinary man can do, and be able to take on an extraordinary amount of punishment and damage, more in line with him being a computer game character. As well as the high level of physical exertion he undertakes in fighting, running and jumping across the film's gamespace, Henry also experiences the following; He is tased and thrown off a bridge, landing on a car;

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[157] "HARDCORE HENRY (Behind The Scenes Episodes)", YouTube Video.

[158] Palmer, 14.

[159] Ibid., 16.

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has various wires and tracers pulled out of him with pliers; is beaten with a baseball bat and thrown out of a moving truck; the rope to which he hangs onto a helicopter is cut leading him to fall over one hundred meters into a tree. This is also in addition to him opening up his own chest and performing self-surgery in one scene.

Then there is the use of computers and digital imagery that highlight the fragmented and fractured Henry's subjectivity, despite the pretence of the Henry´s, and the film's, vision as a unified whole. Throughout the film we are constantly being subjected on the screen to "glitches" in Henry's/the audience's vision, especially when his energy or power is running low, highlighting that his - and the viewer's - embodied vision within the film is powered by technological means. There are particular scenes where we are exposed to a "flashback", such as when Jimmy tells his tale of how he came to be crippled at the hands of Akan, or when Henry reaches Akan's apartment and sees his whole life and his actions throughout the film, played before him. But instead of having the film cut to and display the flashback itself as part of the film's continuity, we view it either on computer screen, or on multiple screens, where the memories are sped up, or are actually the result of CCTV camera footage. Then, when Jimmy shows that Henry is actually beaming what he sees directly to Akan through a live video uplink, he presses a console button, whereupon Henry's - and the audience's - own vision is brought up on the console's screen and recursively fragmented into a vanishing point. As Henry moves his head and waves his arms, we see the image on the screen trace the same movement as a delayed wave.

Finally, we observe the technologically structured nature of Henry's own vision brought before us on the screen. In both the opening scene in the laboratory and when Henry is thrown out of a moving bus and left for dead, we see the screen "split" where we come to realise that his eye (and hence the camera) are not in his eye sockets. In fact, in the film's action scene climax we witness how Henry kills Akan by actually taking out his right camera/eye before wrapping the optical cortex/connecting cord around Akan's face and using it to tear his head in two. The screen again splits in two where we can see Henry wrapping the optical cortex around his mouth with the right part of the screen circling around Akan's head, allowing us to see Akan's head slice apart. Once he falls to the ground, we watch Henry pick

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up his blood-soaked eyeball and slot it back into his socket, whereupon the screen becomes a singular whole. This scene crystallises how Henry's, and therefore the spectator's, sight and the technologically mediated vision of the film on the screen collapse into a singularly hypermediated digital vision.

As well as the technological aspects of hypermediation with respect to hypermasculinity, there are also the portrayals and displays of gender in the film. We have covered enough ground with the actions of Henry in the film, but if we look at the other characters, we can examine how they confine themselves to strictly defined gender stereotypes inherent in both gaming and cinema form. In terms of the male characters, many of the grunts and heavies in the film conform to the idea of the Russian "hard man" – white, heavy built physique, short hair or shaved head, who opt for (and often enjoy) violence at every turn. Then there are the characters created by Jimmy to act as "avatars", or portrayals aspects of his personality. Many of these personalities such as the Spy, the Sniper, the WWII Colonel, the Punk, the Beggar, the Hippy Biker, and the "Jewish Lawyer" (modelled specifically on the character played by Sean Penn in the film *Carlitto's Way*) all conform to various masculine stereotypes inherent in gaming and cinema in their language, their use of drugs, and their spectacular displays of violence with guns, knives and other weapons. The only avatar who is different is The Scientist, who in his ability to be good with technology is portrayed as shy, nervous, and bumbling. The only time he decides to be active and heroic, he is immediately gunned down before he can do anything.[160]

The portrayal of the few female characters in *Hardcore Henry* meanwhile all conform to both cinematic and gaming stereotypes. While Estelle is ostensibly a scientist, she is portrayed first and foremost as the classic "damsel in distress" who needs to be saved by the hero Henry from the clutches of the bad guy Akan, before she changes in the narrative's twist to being that of the backstabbing femme fatale who has deliberately toyed with Henry's

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[160] In an ironic turn, in an interview Copley and Naishuller talk of how they created some unused characters for "Jimmy", including one which was a "Basketball player Jimmy that would have gone down the Robert Downey Jr. route in *Tropic Thunder*" where Copley would have been "blacked up". Naishuller goes on to note that for a Russian made film with a predominantly white cast and crew, they dropped this because it would have been inherently racist, so they dropped it. See "Creating HARDCORE HENRY w/ Sharlto Copley & Ilya Naishuller - ETC Podcast", YouTube video.

emotions. The fact that the film takes great delight in the final scene, where Henry slams down the door of a flying helicopter on the fingers of Estelle, with us hearing her screams as she plummets to her death, reinforces the casual misogyny and gendered violence towards women who are classic in mainstream cinema as the "bad" woman. The only other female characters of note are only in the film as sexualised and objectified fodder, either as prostitutes in the Brothel scene, where the Brothel managers turn out to be slim, large breasted women who wear latex catsuits and mini-dresses, while wielding samurai swords and guns as they fight off Akan's henchmen to protect their business.

In using Palmer's methodology in applying it to other action films, we can see that *Hardcore Henry* is almost certainly a work of Hypermediacy as hypermasculinity in the way that they utilise digital cinema technology as an embodied extension of the film crew's own gendered actions, in terms of shooting, in how the collapsed many different shooting roles into a singular all-action persona, and their own intensive schedule where numerous elements are working in parallel instead of in sequence to each other. We also regard how the film's form and aesthetic, while utilising CGI and digital compositing techniques, create the illusion of singular, seamless space, which actually displays a form of hypermediation that is deployed in very masculine ways. Finally, we recognize how the film's own narrative and characterisation employs numerous gendered stereotypes, based around various notions of cinematic violence, both in films and gaming.

Conclusion

In writing this thesis, I have in fact written not one, but two essays that takes *Hardcore Henry*, a low budget sci-fi exploitation genre film as a starting point to explore the nature of cinema through its preoccupation with action, excitement, and its depiction of various velocities, both internal (the physical movement of bodies and the camera through space) and external (the relationship that cinematic language has with expressing speed and intensity through shot selection and editing), before examining how cinema embodies and mirrors various socioeconomic evolutions and disruptions with regard to social acceleration.

In part two of this thesis, I have shown that the main essence, that is one of the main aesthetic components, of cinema has been that of speed and the articulation of movement within a defined diegetic space that in effect creates the "spatialisation of time". Over the last one hundred years, many of the main technological and aesthetic drivers of cinema has been in order to facilitate, improve, and refine upon the recording and articulation of objects and bodies moving through a cinematic space. Through a process of miniaturisation and digitisation, cameras have become smaller, lighter, and more durable. No longer static, they have become freeform observers, a "kino eye" that is able to move through filmic space at will, with the ability to be hurtled at extraordinary velocities and trajectories, or be located to observe in positions never before considered possible. The modern digital camera is the recorder of an informational world in ways that we are only just beginning to realise.

Meanwhile, in order to provide the spectator the visceral affect and intensity that corresponded to a fast moving world, we recognize the development of cinematic techniques that helped to increase the intensity that cinema provided as it moved from being a spectacle of images, to a medium that told stories. In Western cinema, this was propagated by the rise of the continuity system, which through shot selection (which in itself over the decades utilised instants of speed, such as the tracking shot, the whip pan and the fast zoom), and cause and effect editing, valorised a fast paced narrative that sought to provide tension and suspense that necessitated a release with a climatic end. This was taken a stage further with the theory and practice of Soviet montage, which by generating a sense of frisson and

"external" speed in the juxtaposition and arrangement of shots in a movie, aimed to shock and disrupt the spectator into a heightened sense of awareness and reception. The purpose of montage was ideological practical; with a lack of available film stock, film directors had to make fast, zippy films that caused a sense of agitation that could be used as propaganda pieces to educate the masses about the dynamism of revolutionary communism.

As a result, speed and intensity has been a bedrock of cinema's aesthetics since its inception as a viable art form. Even with the rise of alternatives to fast-paced narrative cinema, such as post-WWII neorealist cinema and its modern descendent, the minimal, austere canon of "slow cinema" that has dominated the film festival circuit over the past couple of decades,[161] these movements only seem to exist as a critique to, or an alternative to a cinema of speed. It builds its value, whether it be through aesthetics or critique, in relation to a cinema of speed. No matter how much slow cinema's practitioners attempt to valorise the form, it exists only in a dialectic relation to the logic of mainstream cinema's speed, dynamism and intensity

At the end of part two, we see that *Hardcore Henry* embodies the latest iteration of what has been a shift in cinematic language that has been fermenting in mainstream action cinema since the 1990s, namely a shift from the increase of the outright physical internal speed of the camera and bodies of an action film to that of an intensification and deepening of the general external speed in a film, one that has gone hand in hand with the intensification of cinema's external speed through Bordwell's concept of intensified continuity in mainstream cinema. The result is a film that internalises both aspects of cinematic speed into a subjective whole, one that resembles the action-image inherent in gaming.

Part three takes a different approach to exploring *Hardcore Henry,* as we explored how the film itself embodies greater sociocultural and politico-economic trends that have occurred in the twentieth century. Because we are spreading out from a cultural form into society itself, this part is in itself trickier to conceptualise and map. As I have displayed

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[161] For a more thorough exploration of the history and practice of slow cinema, see *Slow Cinema*, eds Tiago de Luca, Nuno Barradas Jorge (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014). For an opposing discussion on the valorisation of slow cinema, see Steven Shaviro "Slow Cinema Vs Fast Films", *The Pinocchio Theory,* May 12 2010, http://www.shaviro.com/Blog/?p=891.

processes and parts of our social reality have undergone a new form of acceleration as society has evolved from being that of a disciplinary to that of a control society, an evolution facilitated and propagated by the introduction of the digital computer and systems thinking into the fabric of our lives. This has led to the digitisation of the social, where our lives have become increasingly mediated by complex data sorting algorithms, and where social exchanges and interaction have become game-ified. This can be seen in the transmedia convergence of popular cultural forms such as gaming, music, and cinema to the point where many texts from these mediums share the same aesthetic and production modes with one another. And these modes promote and valorise intensified displays of hegemonic masculinity where the dominant idiom is one of outright excess, where hyper-violence, noise, sexualised gender roles, and action are wrapped up in a movie that acts as a function of constant movement and speed.

At this point we need to be careful to heed the basic axiom, that correlation does not equal causation. Just because we have brought together a collection of contemporary genre action movies and noted common correlations between them that seem to dovetail with trends and shifts in society does not mean that all of cinema has changed because we are now living in a control society. For that we would need to examine not just other genres of cinema (Has the melodrama changed in the same way that action movies have? What about comedies? Romantic films?), but other film industries across the world. And here it becomes much more difficult to prove causation across the board when we try to bring in these other modes and genres of cinema as the whole picture becomes infinitely more complex in terms of production, presentations, audience, market, etc. It would seem that this form of intensification only seems to occur in the action genre.

But while this may be the case, action films such as *Hardcore Henry* are still an important area for examination and discussion in the way that despite its relatively recent origins as a genre, it is a form of cinema that is most emblematic of the financial/capitalist imperative of Hollywood and other film industries, from the way that the vast majority of the industry's tent-pole "blockbusters" are centred are variants of the action genre, to the global attraction of such films on a global scale to young, heterosexual males. Because of this, action

films make economic sense to share similarities to other cultural forms such as music and gaming, the better to have them marketed to the audiences in what are multi-billion dollar industries. And despite the eventual box office flop that occurred after the frenzied hype that surrounded the bidding war for *Hardcore Henry*, the film points to what may lay ahead for digital popular media over the coming years, that of the creation of digital works and texts that are an amalgamation of various cultural forms, where the emphasis is placed less on narrative, plot, and characterisation, but instead treat the spectator as a linked machine that requires maximal stimulation from a barrage of digitally composited and processed images and sounds linked to constant movement and speed infused energy that has no past and seems to be caught in a never-ending present.

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