A Level
Media Studies

Welcome to **EDUQAS A Level Media Studies**! Put simply, Media Studies is the study of the world of the Media, from analysing camera shots in a TV or music video sequence, to evaluating how media moguls -like News Corporation- are owned and regulated. Our **exams** are worth **70%** and involves the analytical study of advertising, newspapers, music videos, video games and television dramas. Our **coursework** is worth **30%** and so we are looking for a practical and creative person who can apply the knowledge they've learnt in lessons. ***Please complete the transition task by your first lesson in September.***

1. Written Task:

Write a 500 word essay answering the question:
How are ethnicity and gender represented in this 'Black Panther' film poster?

Success Criteria:

- Write 4-5 PEE paragraphs: point/evidence/explain.
- Address ethnicity and gender separately
- Refer to specific evidence from the poster (see the list below for ideas)
- Develop and explain your views by exploring the connotations and meaning of the evidence you have chosen
- Make links to the context of the poster- what is it implying about ethnicity/ gender and our views towards ethnicity/gender in society today? How have these changed over time?

Some ideas you could explore:

- The visual codes in the poster e.g. outline of Africa, tribal dress code, use of props, colour scheme, location
- The language used e.g. in the tagline, name of the film
- The camera angles used- look up what a low angle is

Want to challenge yourself? Use the following theory by bell hooks to add depth to your response: hooks is a feminist and argues that race, sex and class determine the extent to which one is discriminated against and oppressed in and by society. Are these characters oppressed? Or does this poster challenge this theory?

2. Practical Task:

In your course work you will be asked to design a product that clearly **represents a group** (e.g. ethnicity or gender) in a way that challenges stereotypes**. Choose ONE of the tasks below and be ready to share it your first lesson back.**

a) Create a lifestyle magazine front cover. Take your own image and write your own cover lines representing a group is a specific way. We recommend you use Microsoft Publisher.
b) Write the script for a radio show in which you interview the director and a cast member about an upcoming film (that you have made up) in which representation of a group is complex (like Black Panther).
c) Choose a song that does not currently have a music video. Create a 15-frame storyboard using your own sketches / photographic images. Represent a group in a complex way.

BLACK PANTHER?

IT'S LIKE THEY NEVER TALKED TO AN AFRICAN!

As *Wakanda Forever* hits our screens, Matthew Daintrey-Hall talks to East African audiences and filmmakers about some problematic issues of representation in the blockbuster franchise.

Cultural appropriation? *Blank Panther* mixed and matched cultural materials from across the whole continent

TCD/Prod.DB / Alamy Stock Photo

When *Black Panther* was released in 2018, it had already established itself as a cultural landmark. This wasn't just the 18th movie in the most successful Hollywood series ever, it was also seen as a turning point for Black cinema. In *Time* magazine, Jamal Smith declared it a 'vision of unmitigated Black excellence' whose 'very existence feels like resistance.' Before the film had even hit theatres, it had broken records in pre-sales, many of which came from schools, church and community groups booking whole theatres. Critic Shaun King even compared its cultural impact to Martin Luther King's 'I Have A Dream' speech. The overall global gross was over a billion dollars – which also proved movies by Black directors, cast and crew, telling Black stories, are commercially viable.

But how was a film much vaunted for its celebration of African culture perceived in Africa itself?

Courtesy of Tuja May

Poet Tuja May

Wakanda For Real?

The first problematic thing is that only a few landscape shots were actually filmed on the continent. Almost all filming took place in Korea and on backlots in Atlanta, USA. Apparently, Ryan Coogler, the writer/director spent 'a profoundly moving' two weeks in South Africa and Lesotho, but that was the extent of the movie's production history in Africa.

That much is obvious, say audiences in Nairobi, Kenya. Poet, Tuja May, says:

It's more a fantasy of Africa made by Americans. They may be Black Americans, but this film does not reflect the reality of Africa today. And the accents were the most obnoxious American versions of African dialect I have ever heard…. It's like they (the filmmakers) never talked to an African ever!

Courtesy of Chief Nyamweya

Chief Nyamweya, author of the graphic novel *Trust*

The issue of British and US actors' attempted African dialects is the first negative thing many Kenyan audiences mention, but the 'mashing' of accents is more than just an irritation. As with Ruth E Carter's Oscar-winning costume design, the filmmakers' insistence on sampling and blending cultural materials from across the continent results in what could be seen as suspiciously close to cultural appropriation.

For national and global audiences Wakanda becomes what Kenyan journalist Nanjala Nyabola calls a 'stand-in Africa': a homogenous 'mixtape' of tribal images,

> **An idea of Africa bleached of its complexity, corporatised, and sold back to (real) Africans.**

Nyabola points out the irony of US high school teachers developing a 'Wakanda curriculum' to teach about colonialism, while they ignore real life historical parallels. Ethiopia, like the fictional Wakanda, resisted European colonisation – yet the political and social upheavals that it has endured are deemed too complex (or uncomfortable) for Western audiences.

Chief Nyamweya, a Kenyan filmmaker and artist, suggests another inauthentic element is *Black Panther*'s obsession with monarchy and bloodlines.

> **Pre-colonial Africa did have instances when powerful empires like the Mali and Zulu ruled, but these were not necessarily in the European model of the 'divine right of kings'… (the belief that royalty is chosen by the gods).**

Superheroes or Working Class Heroes?

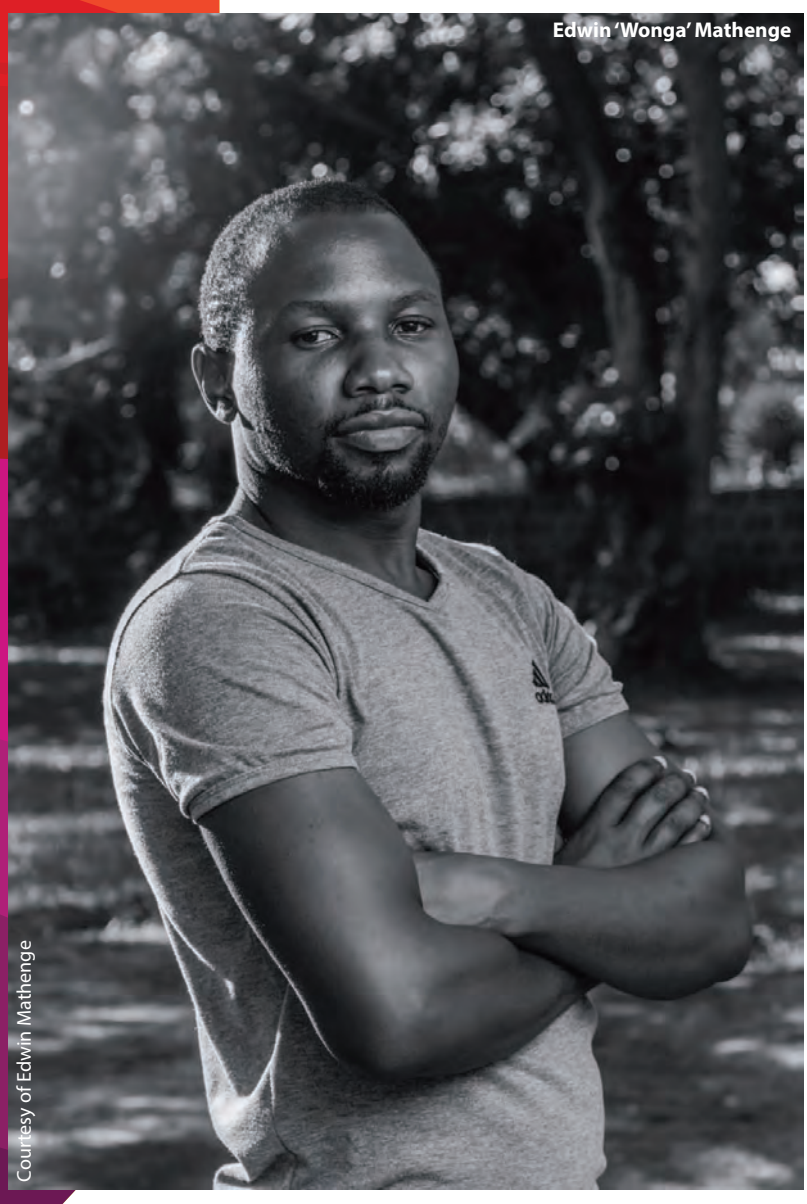
In his graphic novel and 'motion comic' *Trust* (2022), Nyamweya addresses some of these issues directly. His heroes are common people:

farmers and wise village elders who join with young activists and hackers to take on a greedy corporation that wants to steal their land. His heroes use real-life blockchain technology as part of their resistance, but in the narrative it feels more like a manifestation of traditional African community values than the gleaming science fiction of *Black Panther*. This, for Nyamweya, is a more authentic 'Afro-Futurist' story than that of a superhero-king defending his birthright.

It's also an issue that the latest Marvel comic book incarnation of T'Challa has explored. Written by acclaimed American author Ta-Nehisi Coates, the 50-issue run explicitly questions T'Challa's royal entitlement. Coates said his vision for *Black Panther: A Nation Under Our Feet* (2016-) was to examine Wakanda's political hierarchies; not just the haves – T'Challa's court – but also the have-nots. 'I want to address two big questions: can a good man be a king, and would an advanced society want or even tolerate a monarch?'

Nyamweya elaborates:

Men inheriting power, or violently seizing power… Modern Africa has seen its fair share of unelected despots proclaiming themselves 'king', such as Zaire's Mobutu Sese Seko (who looted his country's mineral wealth to build lavish palaces).



Edwin 'Wonga' Mathenge

Courtesy of Edwin Mathenge

MCU and CIA

This leads him to another problematic element of the movie: T'Challa teaming up with the American secret service.

Why on earth would a great African civilisation like Wakanda collaborate with the CIA? This is an organisation that has participated in numerous coups against popular elected leaders such as Patrice Lumumba in the Congo. Though, given the story's origin in the USA, this is not a surprise!

For music producer Edwin 'Wonga' Mathenge, it is Wakanda's lavish use of advanced technology that rings hollow.

The Western world believes technology to be a benchmark for 'civilisation'. Wakanda is depicted as the most 'advanced' society in Africa, whereas the rest of the continent is portrayed as 'primitive' because they don't have advanced tech. Mag lev trains are not the only measure of civilisation!

Mathenge, however, does acknowledge some of the more positive effects of *Black Panther*'s success.

There is suddenly more confidence amongst African storytellers. People around the world responded so positively to a movie that was marketed as 'African', so that has given traction to more 'legit' African stories.

Although Nyabola offers the following:

When I see Kenyan kids borrowing tropes like 'at last we can see ourselves in film', as if Kenyans haven't been making films for 30 years, it breaks my heart.

Renewal and Resistance

As the release for *Black Panther*: *Wakanda Forever* approaches, and pre-sale bookings at Nairobi's mall cinemas amass, East African filmmakers are using the 'traction' Mathenge refers to as fuel. There is a renewed interest and

Depicting the struggles of real Africans: *Vuta N'Kuvute* and *Bangarang*

enthusiasm for African culture not just globally, but within the continent's different nations and communities – and this can be harnessed to portray difficult periods of actual history. Recent films such as Robin Odongo's 2021 *Bangarang* (an immersive portrait of political violence) and Amil Shivji's 2021 *Vuta N'Kuvute* (a tale of sexual and political awakening in 1950s Zanzibar), cost a fraction of *Wakanda Forever*'s budget, but are still thrilling pieces of entertainment cinema. More importantly, they depict the struggles of ordinary Africans that are just as heroic as any of T'Challa's battles.

These movies manage to find funding, and – by utilising community centres and other ad hoc cinema spaces – distribution. But one can't help but wonder what would happen if the *Black Panther* franchise were to do for African creative industries what *The Lord of The Rings* did for New Zealand: training and employing a new generation of expert local filmmakers, feeding into the tourist economy for decades to come.

In the meantime, there are plenty of East African filmmakers who are eager to take advantage of *Black Panther*'s popularity, and to produce films that reflect more authentic African lives and histories.

Matthew Daintrey-Hall is a Film Studies writer and lecturer. He works closely with the BFI and Eduqas/ WJEC producing resources for GCSE and A level students.

from the MM vaults

Black Panther and Film Marketing: A Blockbuster Marketed as a Cultural Event – Siobhan Flint, *MM70*
Wakanda Forever! – Giles Gough, *MM65*
African Cinema – Maggie Miranda, *MM21*

Further reading

Chief Nayemweya's Trust is available to watch and read here: https://www.trustgraphicnovel.com/

FANG FICTION

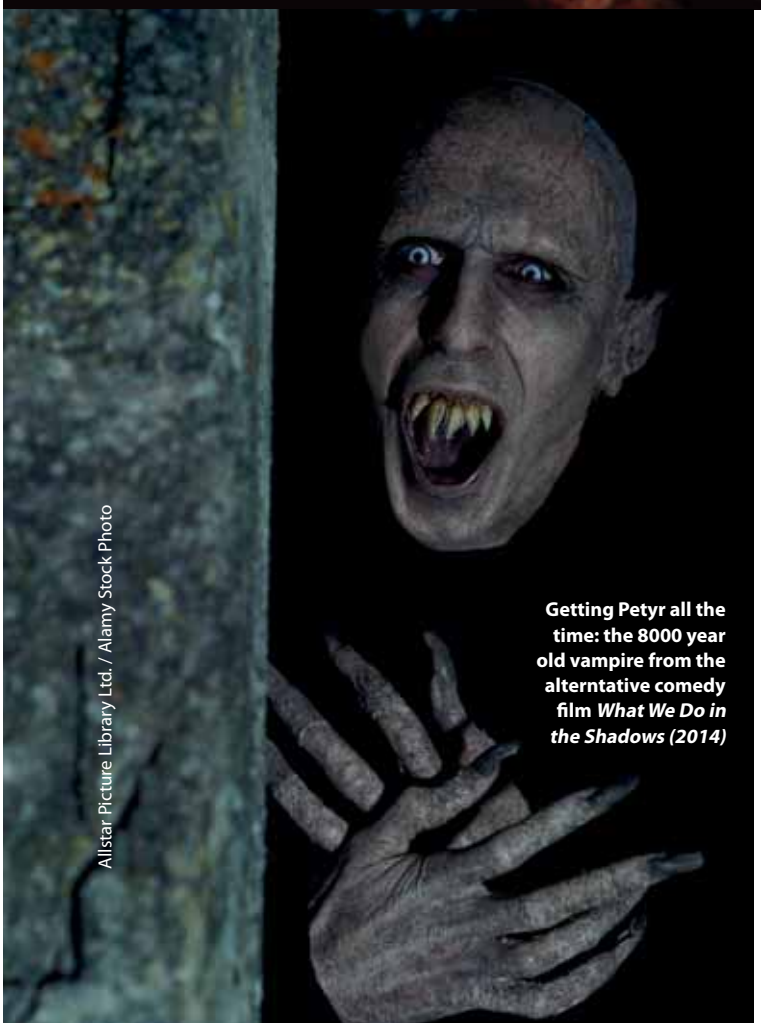
Kiss of the Vampire **sits within a long and fascinating tradition of Hammer horror films and depictions of vampires. Jonathan Nunns sinks his teeth into some historical context.**

Dracula back with a bang: Claes Bang in Mark Gatiss and Steven Moffat's 2019 reinvention

TCD/Prod.DB / Alamy Stock Photo

TCD/Prod.DB / Alamy Stock Photo

Tall, powerful and very British – Christopher Lee as Dracula



Allstar Picture Library Ltd. / Alamy Stock Photo

Getting Petyr all the time: the 8000 year old vampire from the alterntative comedy film *What We Do in the Shadows (2014)*

The vampire has been iconic in western culture for generations. Popularised by Bram Stoker's 1897 book *Dracula*, the myths surrounding the undead antagonists long predate the hit novel. One such story concerns the exploits of the fifteenth century Romanian knight Vlad the Impaler, otherwise known as Vlad Dracula, the name Stoker would later adopt for his fictional fiend.

Since the development of film and TV, each generation has created its own version of these immortal monsters, starting with *Nosferatu* (Murnau,1922). In this silent film, (a lightly disguised version of the *Dracula* novel – character names and places were changed to avoid copyright), the vampire was a rat-like creature, both inhuman and repulsive, as in Stoker's novel.

Other incarnations followed, including Universal Studios early sound film *Dracula* (Browning, 1931). Whilst the film reclaimed the iconic name, the look of Dracula was dramatically re-tooled. The vampire was now a suave and exotic Eastern European Count. The bloodless (and fangless) film substituted the sex appeal and matinee idol looks of the star Bela Lugosi, for the bloodshed

Christopher Lee's tall, powerful (and very British) version of the Count, defined the character for decades, created a very successful franchise for Hammer and made the antagonist the focal point of the film.

usually associated with the character. The film is now remembered for creating the classic characterisation: evening dress, cape, slicked back hair and Eastern European accent. Later versions include Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (Coppola,1992) and all manner of recent vampire incarnations, often derived from popular novels such as *Interview with the Vampire* (Jordan, 2004) and, more famously, *Twilight* (Hardwicke, 2008) which went on to become a hugely successful tweenage franchise. Recent postmodern reinventions of the vampire have included the successful mockumentary hybrid, *What We Do In The Shadows* (Waititi, 2014) and the BBC's own recent TV offering, *Dracula* (BBC, 2019), created by Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss, well known for their successful re-inventions of other iconic characters with *Doctor Who* and *Sherlock*.

Prince of Darkness

However, the most famous and influential version of the vampire was created for Hammer Studios' *Dracula* (Fisher, 1958). Christopher Lee's tall, powerful (and very British) version of the Count, defined the character for decades, created a very successful franchise for Hammer and made the antagonist the focal point of the film (see the original poster art). So, considering the iconic status of that film and Lee's defining image, it may seem strange that Eduqas choose the little known or remembered *Dracula* second sequel, *Kiss of the Vampire* (Sharp, 1963) as it's featured vintage movie poster case study.

The film in both title and script, avoids any reference to the famous Dracula character, despite his having served Hammer so well. So, what can we learn from this vintage example of film marketing?

Whilst it may not use the Dracula name, it certainly assumes the demographic will be familiar with the earlier films. In terms of Neale's genre theory, the poster design carefully includes many signifiers of the Gothic vampire film. The vampire bats, remote castle, full moon and low key/high contrast chiaroscuro lighting are all clear signifiers of the sub-genre. The 'wooden' look of the font used for the title and bloodied 'fang' reflects vampire lore, (the rules of the genre e.g. vampires cast no reflection and are repulsed by garlic). In this case, the reference is both to vampires feeding on blood and to a means of their destruction, the stake through the heart. So, the signifiers are used to ensure audiences would be in no doubt as to what they would get. The blood and the prominently displayed Hammer name/brand, would be further reinforcement of the product offered. Hammer Studios were, by the early 1960's, the most successful studio in Horror, exporting their economically made British shockers across the world. The blood would also be a reminder of what Hammer had done to reinvent the genre. Hammer, in its day was ground breaking and controversial, pushing at the limits of what censorship and classification would allow. The banner reference to Eastman Color reminds audiences that the film would be vibrant, in saturated colour when many films were still made in black and white. The American spelling of Color indicates Hammer's international success. This is a poster for the US market, showing Hammer had successfully broken into the most lucrative movie marketplace in the world. The inclusion of the Universal logo indicates the American Studio's role as US distributor of the film and offered the more cine-literate members of the audience a call-back to Universal's own great horror franchises, such as *Frankenstein* (Whale,1931) and the original Lugosi Dracula. In terms of quality, the poster reminded audiences that *Kiss of the Vampire* might not be Dracula, but was brought to them by the two greatest studios in horror.

A modern movie poster would be much more photo-real in representing the stars and the production values, demonstrating more fully the USP of the film it promoted. The use of an artistic, non-photo-real approach to the *Kiss of the Vampire* key art, demonstrates the technological limitations of the early 1960's. Artistic rendering of a film's USP was the norm and would be for many years to come. Only with modern computers/software would photo-real rendering of film content become available to distributors.

The *Kiss of the Vampire* poster is a set text for Eduqas A level Media

Public domain

A Deadly Kiss

The representation of the four characters featured in the poster is interestingly different to what modern audiences might expect but in keeping with Hammer's offer. The heightened emotion and non-verbal communication (body-language) of the characters was at one with the Hammer USP. They were the edgy and subversive 'rock and roll' of modern cinema in comparison with the too-restrained, repressed, documentary realist traditions of mainstream British film. Hammer wanted to offer horror fans an emotional 'rush' and their artwork made this clear. The period costumes quickly established the era of the action. The poster features no protagonists. Instead there are vampire antagonists and sacrificial prey. The strength of the male vampire is demonstrated through his one-handed grip on the female victim, whose tight-fitting costume and exposed flesh offers male gaze pleasures and conforms with the conventional sexist norms of gender performativity for the time. However, the male vampire is also recoiling from the more powerful female antagonist. Sexualised by her costume it seems that it is she who is about to deliver on the promised 'vampire kiss' of the title. This depiction, whilst sexualised, is strikingly at odds with earlier representations of women in horror advertising, who were almost uniformly the prey to male monsters. The 1960s were a period of profound change in the social norms of British life. Women began to seek greater equality and as bell hooks discusses, in that time they began to mobilise to achieve it. The representation of the female vampire is contradictory. Lines of sight show she is sexualised and on display, yet central to the narrative. She has at her mercy a passive male victim, throat exposed ready for her attack. Head tipped back he is effectively faceless, an everyman threatened, like the male vampire, by the 'danger' of the newly empowered woman. It is interesting that Hammer refers to female empowerment, demonstrating cultural relevance to attract female audiences but doing so in a way that exposed male fears. Feminism is presented as a threat to patriarchal power. As the male vampire, a traditional avatar of masculine strength recoils in fear, only the attacking bat restrains her assault on her emasculated prey.

Kiss of the Vampire is a little-remembered minor Hammer release. However, it is the poster that is important, not the film. In terms of content, it encapsulates Hammer's strengths as a studio, its international success and dominance of the horror genre. It also demonstrates the shifting norms of a time of rapid change, in which gothic horror, like all good genres, was changing to reflect the social realities of the time the films were made, rather than the era in which they were set.

In these terms, as a time capsule and a study of the film marketing of the 1960s, *Kiss of the Vampire* makes absolute sense. It is a harbinger of profound change, both empowering to some and terrifying to others.

Jonathan Nunns is Head of Media Studies at Collyer's College, Horsham.

from the MM vaults

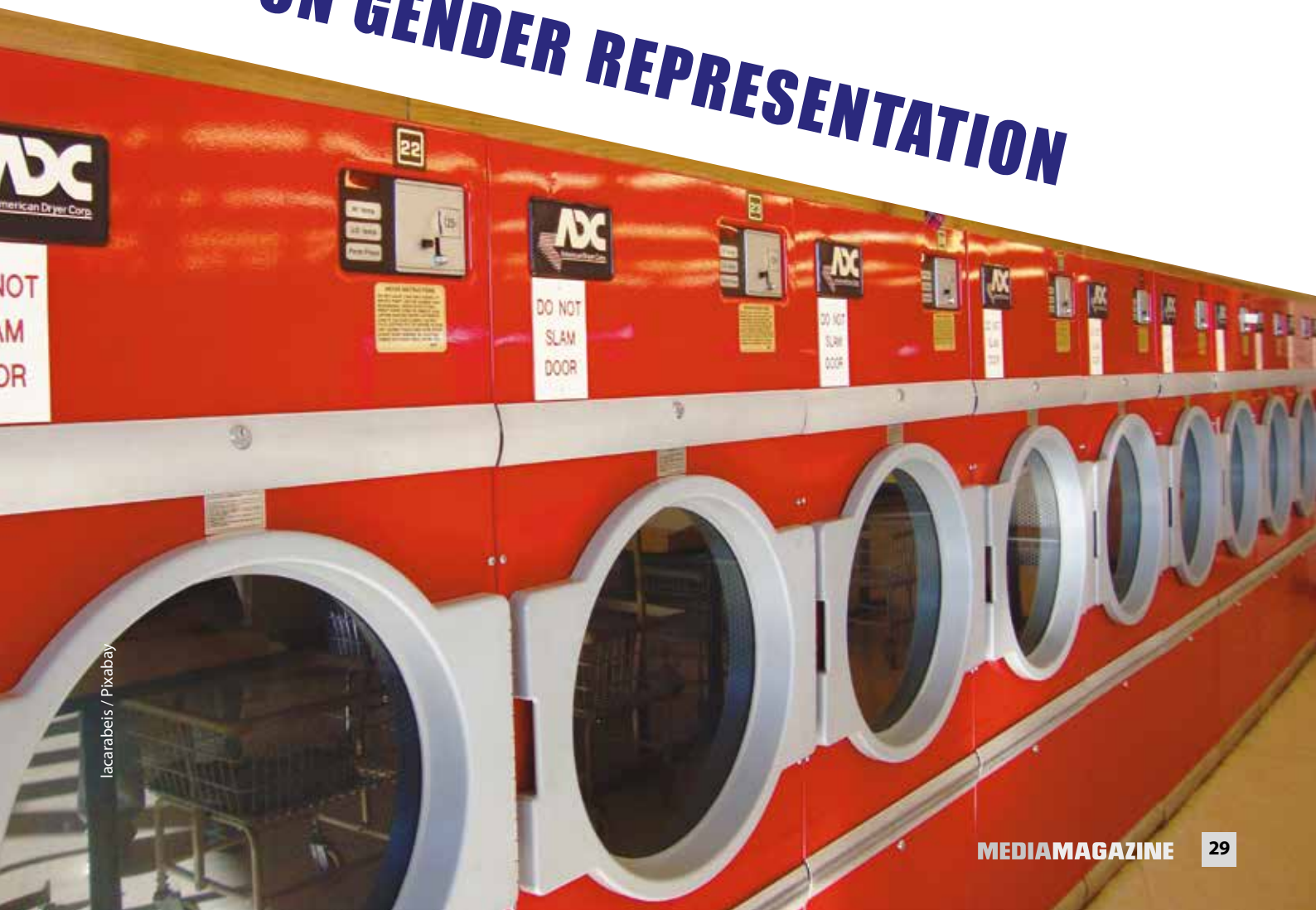
Not Just the House of Horror – Mark Ramey, *MM*46
Dracula Dynasty and Dracula Revisited – Gareth Calway, *MM*18 and *MM*20
Revisioning the Vampire – Sean Richardson, *MM*31

Sexualised by her costume it seems that it is she who is about to deliver on the promised 'vampire kiss' of the title. This depiction, whilst sexualised, is strikingly at odds with earlier representations of women in horror advertising, who were almost uniformly the prey to male monsters.

Turning the Tide

Washing powder advertising has changed as society has changed but is this just superficial marketing? Caroline Birks looks at Tide over the years and asks whether it's washing whiter or leaving a nasty stain.

ON GENDER REPRESENTATION



lacarabeis / Pixabay

If you're a media student studying with Eduqas, you will already be familiar with the Tide advert that is one of the set texts. This is the advert from the 1950s where a housewife gazes lovingly at a box of Tide while the heading screams 'Tide's got what women want!'. She wears clothes similar to the WWII poster girl, Rosie the Riveter and stands in a similar pose too. Although this intertextual reference could be viewed as empowering, ultimately it serves to remind women that the best thing they can do during this period of history, is support their husbands (and their country) by getting back into the kitchen. The female is positioned below the box of Tide, connoting that her role in the household is lesser than a cleaning product. Even though she faces the domestic drudgery and hard work of laundry, she is still more passive than a box of washing powder.

But this set text wasn't the only Tide commercial featuring 'the housewife' at this time. If you look at any Tide advert from this period, you will see a similar formula with the housewife character reliant on the product in order to complete her domestic chores. We might apply Stuart Hall's ideas about media representation here: the repetition of this stereotype reduces women to a few key traits, suggesting that women are naturally inclined to, in this case, be nurturing and central to the domestic harmony of the family home. Even though it is over 70 years since the set Tide advert was released to audiences and there have been many changes in the world including four waves of feminism, it is possible to suggest that Tide adverts still contain harmful gender stereotyping and still place women firmly in the domestic sphere.

The repetition of this stereotype reduces women to a few key traits, suggesting that women are naturally inclined to, in this case, be nurturing and central to the domestic harmony of the family home.

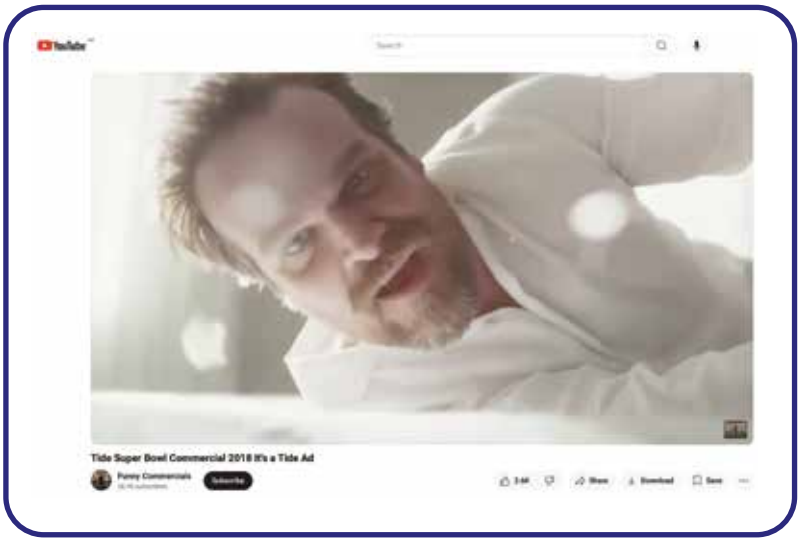

Engin Akyurt / Unsplash

Tide adverts have become more sophisticated over the years. No longer do we see the hand drawn illustrations of the 1950s but in the 2018 'It's a Tide Ad' campaign, we see a clever post-modern bricolage of familiar advertising tropes combined to create a humorous and impactful message. The advert, which aired during a Super Bowl advert break, caused a massive impact, instantly trending and getting audiences questioning the adverts they were seeing. The 'It's a Tide Ad' starring David Harbour turned every commercial into a Tide advert by claiming that if it featured clean clothes, it was an advert for Tide. Although it was a clever pastiche of traditional advertising, there were still plenty of gender stereotypes, this time foregrounding traditional representations of masculinity and largely excluding women.

In the advert, David Harbour is the active participant constructing masculinity as the dominant gender and demonstrating Liesbet van Zoonen's theory. In the first few seconds of the commercial, Harbour is seen driving a sports car, drinking and making jokes with friends in a bar, modelling perfume, watching a horse at a ranch and working with car insurance salesmen. Later, we will see him in a shaving advert and he will also take on a hyper-masculine appearance as part of a protein advert. At each location he talks about the type of advert we're seeing. His voice is deep and authoritative as he talks to the audience

and to the characters in the advert. He corrects them, answers their questions and occasionally interrupts them. The first time we see a woman in the advert is as part of the jewellery section where Harbour places a diamond necklace around her neck. Here the lighting is romantic and there is use of soft focus and lap dissolves to mimic the slow and dreamy feel of traditional jewellery adverts. As the woman looks gratefully at Harbour, he addresses the audience directly, interrupting the jewellery advert voiceover and correcting us saying 'No. Tide'. Here Harbour clearly demonstrates the power and dominance of men. He has authority and control and is able to move between different scenarios to deliver his message. This once again highlights the idea of men as active and women as passive. Additionally, the woman is used for decorative purposes bringing glamour to the advert. She meets stereotypical beauty standards and her gaze is submissive.

David Harbour in his 'Tide ad' whites



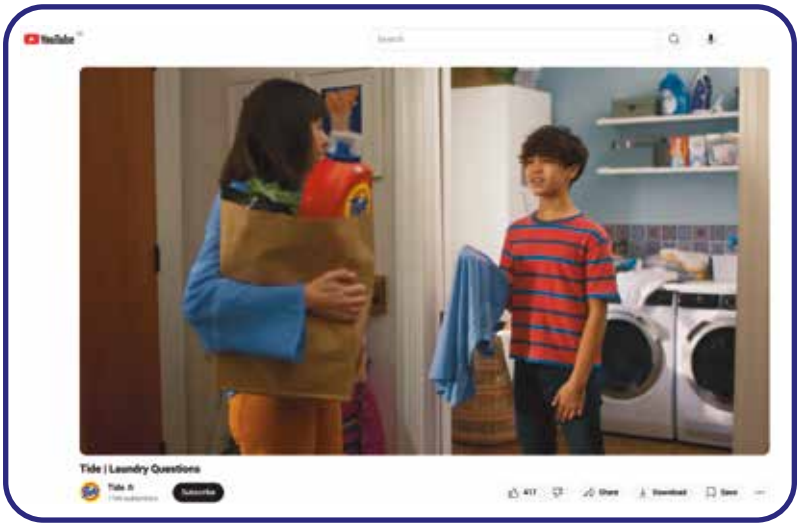
YouTube

Mike Mozart / Flickr

Not Gillette... 'It's a Tide ad!'

Gender balance: Tide's recent 'Mythbusters' ads

Doing laundry is everyone's job in 'Laundry Questions'



YouTube

There are other women in the 'It's a Tide Ad' commercial and they fulfil other stereotypes surrounding gender. There is the suggestion that women are communal when they are seen as part of small groups and of course, there is the mother figure towards the end. We do not see her doing the laundry but we do see her in the family home sitting with her children, with a basket of washing in the foreground. Unlike the 1950s Tide advert we do not see anyone doing the laundry. Harbour is never seen loading the washing machine or holding a bottle of washing liquid. The implication of this perhaps being, that as a male, he doesn't need to wash his own clothes.

So, although this advert is lots of fun, the underlying ideologies are concerning in terms of gender. They take an even more worrying turn if we consider ethnicity. Very rarely do we see people of colour in the advert and white males are always seen in positions of power, actively moving the narrative forward. We could argue that by combining lots of existing advertising stereotypes the commercial deliberately highlights negative representations in the media and challenges the audience to reflect upon these. If we were being generous, we could argue that the advert is doing more than selling a washing powder. Perhaps it is encouraging the audience to reflect on the influence of the media in their own lives.

An advert which is more clearly selling Tide as a product is the 2024 advert 'Laundry Questions', in which everyone in the household is responsible for doing the washing. The whole family are seen at different times noticing stains and loading the washing machine. Central to this is the bottle of Tide which gets passed from person to person as the answer to all their laundry questions.

However, in this advert it is still women who are the most knowledgeable about laundry. As the mother comes through the front door carrying groceries, she has questions fired at her by her children. One asks 'Is yellow a light or a dark' the other asks about cleaning a stain. Fortunately, she tells us, Tide is the answer to all of these questions connoting that the product makes her life easier and once again it is the product that is doing the hard work.

Although the mother figure is clearly active in this advert, her knowledge and authority comes from her role in the domestic sphere. Even though the whole family are now responsible for doing the laundry, it is the mum that is the expert answering a range of fairly dull questions. At the end of the advert she tells us that because Tide answers all the laundry questions, she is able to

concentrate on answering all the others, which turn out to be equally mundane and equally stereotypical in her role as mother.

There are lots of other Tide adverts online including 'Stains happen to the best of us' which takes Tide away from the domestic and into the sporting sphere featuring members of the USA Olympic team. In this advert the Olympians are all male, again excluding women from anything that doesn't involve the family home. Another series of adverts called 'Mythbusters', takes a more scientific approach, proving that Tide can clean stains at a lower temperature. There is more equality in these adverts with the male and the female 'mythbuster' seeming to have equal knowledge about laundry. Perhaps this demonstrates a more progressive side to Tide's advertising campaigns.

Overall, representation of gender in Tide adverts doesn't seem to have changed that much since the 1950s. At the heart of modern Tide commercials is family and at the head of the family is the mother. Women run the home and use Tide to help them. However, as we'd expect, one area where Tide adverts have changed is the overall style and production values. Now they feature more celebrities, more humour and more scientific focus on what the product can do. By producing a wider range of adverts, Tide appeals to the media savvy audiences of today.

> They take an even more worrying turn if we consider ethnicity. Very rarely do we see people of colour in the advert and white males are always seen in positions of power, actively moving the narrative forward.

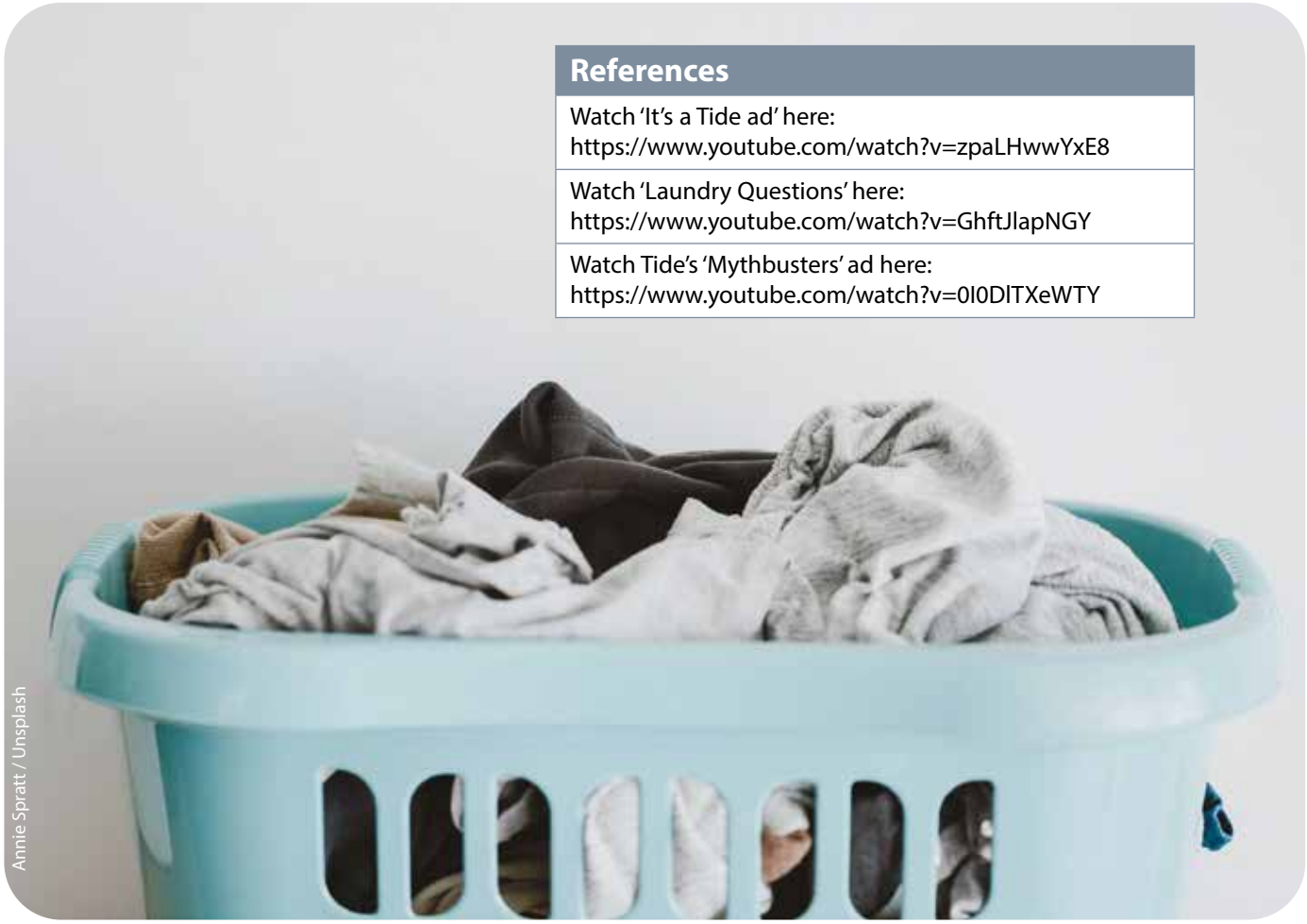
Caroline Birks was until recently a Film and Media Studies teacher and makes videos as part of Like Maria. She works for Into Film.

References

Watch 'It's a Tide ad' here:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zpaLHwwYxE8

Watch 'Laundry Questions' here:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GhftJlapNGY

Watch Tide's 'Mythbusters' ad here:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0l0DlTXeWTY



Annie Spratt / Unsplash