

Politics of Resistance: The Elusive Final Interpretation in *Joker's* Laughter

Few films in recent history have created such a sensation upon their release as *Joker* (2019) by Todd Philips. The reactions ranged from enthusiastic reviews to skepticism regarding its politics. However, it is Joaquin Phoenix's unanimously praised performance that turns *Joker* into one of the most intriguing characters in recent commercial cinema. Most interestingly his success lies not so much in the convincing delivery of well-written lines, as in the interplay of two somatic functions: laughter and dance. These two expressions of non-linguistic communication, executed flawlessly by the actor, ultimately become a form of multi-leveled resistance. Culturally accepted both in the West as signs of joy, in *Joker*, laughter and dance become a space of numerous conflicting and complex feelings that resist linguistic description and ultimately the possibility of final interpretation. Regardless of *Joker's* hesitation to assume a political responsibility for his actions in the movie, it is exactly in this rejection of possibility of final interpretation that he and the film assume a political stance against the West's quest for a center as a point of reference. Although a lot has been said about the film allegedly promoting violence and disorder as an antidote to western capitalistic lifestyle, my claim is that it is this resistance that actually fueled the controversy surrounding the film and not the rather obvious political implications of the plot. The present paper will apply theories of laughter and the affect theory to examine how laughter and dance disrupt dominant ideologies and to shed light on the film's mechanisms of non-linguistic expression as a means of resistance.

Female Action Hero VS Male Dominance: Female Representation in

Mad Max: Fury Road

In recent years, female action heroes seem to have conquered the world of cinema, partially satisfying the demand for strong female characters that would elude the voyeurism of what Laura Mulvey famously described as "the male gaze" and that would not function as a mere passive spectacle, but as leaders of action who take initiatives and advance the plot. However, among feminist theorists there has been a great debate on whether these films actually renegotiate and challenge the patriarchal structures, or just reproduce the same old stereotypes in a more polished and misleading manner. The latest entry of such a female character is *Furiosa* (played by Charlize

Theron) in George Miller's *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015). The interest of the film is two-fold: not only is the heroine a powerful and carefully elaborated character that overshadows all the male ones, but there is an apparent self-awareness of gender in the plot that puts the patriarchal structure in the spotlight. My objective is to examine the female representation in the aforementioned film and question whether the film actually achieves to successfully challenge the well-established male dominance or falls in the trap of repetition and reconfirmation. I will show that, despite the fact that since Ripley's character in *Alien* (1979) there has been an undeniable progress in action movies regarding gender stereotypes, unfortunately there is still a long way to walk. The road to gender renegotiation is paved with false expectations, delusive victories and... male voyeurism.

Politics of Cinematic Space: The appropriation of the East in *The Hurt Locker*

In 2010 *The Hurt Locker* won the Best Motion Picture Academy Award and Kathryn Bigelow became the first female director to win the Academy Award for Best Direction. Although the film was a moderate success at the American box office, it quickly turned into one of the most critically acclaimed movies of the year. The film tells the story of a special unit, whose sole purpose in Iraq is to defuse mines and bombs, and the critics praised its apolitical and objective portrayal of U.S. soldiers in Iraq. The movie's relevance to the contemporary politics of space becomes more than apparent when we think of the ever increasing tension between the West and the East, manifested in the controversial intervention of the western forces in the Middle East, the increasing number of terrorist attacks, the raising feeling of islamophobia in the West and the millions of refugees who seek shelter in Europe. In this paper I will argue that *The Hurt Locker* uses the cinematic space (onscreen, offscreen, mise-en-scène and framing) in a way that perpetuates the colonialist view of the East, as it has been exposed by Edward Said and postcolonial theorists, as a mystical, seductive, primitive and inherently dangerous space in which the native population lives in the shadows. The movie, far from being apolitical, (that is, if "apolitical" could ever be used to define a war movie), justifies and normalizes the appropriation of space by western ideology.