ON THE REVIEW OF FILM

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This paper explores the relationship between the reviewer and their review of feature films, with emphasis on the processes involved in how they go about reviewing. Currently there exists no such formal framework, or format, for reviewers to follow, yet formal reviewers and reviews exist, and endure, both professionally and popularly, as critics. Despite a lack of standardisation of their reviewing methods and techniques, where and when they have been implemented, this article then documents their cause and effect, and the impact they have on a review, it's reviewer, the films reviewed in question, and their consumers as audience members, of said films.

Keywords: Film, cinema, film review, audience

This paper intends to explore the processes involved with the review of feature films, and the changes, both formal and informal, of this process, following the advent of digitisation and the rise of social media of the 21st Century. It is not just that these two advents have enabled quite a number of popularly-sourced reviews, from such self-styled YouTube critics as Jeremy Jahns, or Doug Walker as Nostalgia Critic, that have since gone unchecked; but that what had previously been regarded as the sole domain, and presumed authority, of journalists as popular critics by the former, like the late Roger Ebert, have gone largely unchecked as well. Yet it is not the intention of this paper to in any way dis/credit or dis/empower either party, but rather, to examine, as objectively as possible, those methods and techniques in common that the reviewer as concept employs, and indeed, has at their disposal; how they are then reflected in the writing of their review; and how they have changed with the advent of digitisation and the rise of social media. These same methods and techniques have already and unwittingly been adapted popularly, primarily through osmosis, to service the new mainstream, simultaneously contributing to an environment of unexpected competition within the authority of criticism itself. Unlike some scientific circles, or even religious institutions, there is no leading representative body of popular critics that in any role mandates the qualifications of its reviewers, or strictly enforces guidelines, or reprobates, how they have gone, and how they should go, about reviewing. They are not discouraged, though they can be condemned, by the industry they review. In fact they discuss and disseminate the products

of their industry better, one could argue, than the industry itself ever could, as persons seen to be impartial to that industry, sometimes to the betterment of, but not always, the film reviewed in question.

Before the analysis of the review of film can commence, however, a standard of comparison should first be established for what actually constitutes a review, even if 'The purpose of a movie critic is to encourage good films and discourage bad ones' (Ebert 2000, p. 5). This standard is harder to establish than it first appears, and is objectively impossible to establish with an individual review, than it is for a group of reviews, or an individual reviewer, for reasons that no one review and its corresponding film is, is expected to, or ever could be, quite the same as another, and thus, cannot be held representative as concept. There is no standardised length to a review, no standardised framework or format it should follow; nor is there a standardised means by which to pinpoint, or to differentiate, a review from a piece of writing, or a performance, that could or could not contain the criticism of a film, beyond the usage of the word "review" itself and the title of the film reviewed in question (when even these can be implied by the reviewer). Examples like Ebert's reviews of films such as Martin Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* (dir. 1976), Steven Spielberg's *E. T. the Extra-Terrestrial* (dir. 1982), and Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now Redux* (dir. 2001), nowhere embed the word "review" within, or reiterate throughout, the review itself, though they have been titled and categorised as such by RogerEbert.com (despite not being required to); nor do some of Ebert's other reviews of films, such as Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (dir. 1964), Stuart Rosenberg's *Cool Hand Luke* (dir. 1967), Irvin Kershner's *Star Wars: Episode V – The Empire Strikes Back* (dir. 1980), or 'the last movie review Roger Ebert filed' (RogerEbert.com 2013, para. 1), Terence Malick's *To the Wonder* (dir. 2012). Instances where "review/s" do occur, as they do for Ebert's reviews of films such as Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (dir. 1979), and Michael Bay's *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* (dir. 2009), often refer back to previous, or other reviewers', reviews, rather than the review of the film reviewed in question. Similarly those ~5 minute reviews performed by Jeremy Jahns of Tim Miller's *Deadpool* (dir. 2016), Justin Lin's *Star Trek Beyond* (dir. 2016), and David Ayer's *Suicide Squad* (dir. 2016); and those ~30 minute reviews performed by Doug Walker of Paul Feig's *Ghostbusters* (dir. 2016), and Joe Johnston's *Jurassic Park III* (dir. 2001); nowhere embed the word "review", besides in their titles sometimes. Yet without the context of their categorisation as such, they are all intrinsically and recognisably reviews, principally because of their criticism about the films reviewed in question, that could be considered as a formal review.

An otherwise harmless lack of standardisation nevertheless establishes a dangerous precedent. Since there is no standardisation of the use of the word "review" itself, anything that could or could not contain the criticism of a film in question, but be labelled a "review" in conjunction with, could then be considered a "review" by default, as per Ebert's ""review"" of David Wain's *Wet Hot American Summer* (dir. 2001) in the style of Allan

Sherman's 1963 parody of Amilcare Ponchielli's 1876 opera movement *Dance of the Hours* (2007, pp. 319-322). Whether or not these "reviews" constitute reviews, and should then be taken into account within this analysis, remains inherently moot; they do, however, affect the authority of the reviewer and their reviews, as well as undermine the authority of criticism itself, as an apocryphal effort. If the aforementioned examples of reviews have demonstrated anything thus far, it is that the processes involved with the review of feature films best embodies the status of a tenseless verb, as opposed to its enduring reference as a noun; while an analogy for their overall state of being is one they share with what they are reviewing—film. When thought of as a static, but consistently reproducible phenomenon, like a standalone film, while a review does 'resist being generalised about' like an audience, it instead thrives 'in isolation and in specificity' when considered without its corresponding reviewer (D'Aloia 2016, p. 1). The only requirements that it should fulfil, furthermore, are those ones entirely left up to the discretion of the reviewer, with the deceptively simple expectation from their consumers, that they have at least viewed the film reviewed in question, but are by no means ever held accountable to that viewing. In placing emphasis back on the reviewer, it is therefore necessary to outline the role they undertake in the reviewing process, substituting accountability for responsibility. So long as their reviews are understood to function like a film, the role of the reviewer is not so difficult to re-imagine as a type of audience, especially when 'the critic can supplement their own experience as an audience member' to anecdotalise on their behalf (D'Aloia 2016, p. 4).

The type of audience the reviewer as 'critic' inhabits is as loosely defined as the term 'critic' itself. Its definition is one both contained within, and extending beyond, *the Nature of Audience*, and yet it behaves almost identically to the latter (D'Aloia 2016). Differences between the two audiences are subtle, and nonspecific, but the reviewer's status as 'critic' undoubtedly has some influence, be it consciously or subconsciously, over their behaviour towards a film, 'existing potentially throughout' (D'Aloia 2016, p. 3) a viewing that could or could not be 'expressed' (Deleuze 1983, p. 97) as a form of cognitive bias. Should the reviewer view a film with the intention to review it, moreover, then their status as 'critic' could be reinterpreted as an active state, one in which the reviewer is deliberately behaving as a hypersensitive, or a hypervigilant, member of the audience of the film being reviewed in question, as part of a greater "hyper-audience" of critics. The alternative, passive state, however, does and does not contrarily exist. In the strictest sense of the word as it is implied in this paper, the reviewer can still view a film without the intention to review it, that could technically constitute a passive state; but their status as 'critic' is irrevocable, at least subconsciously. Like a pubescent threshold, this passive state is only truly enjoyed by *the Nature of Audience* that does not aspire to criticise, and once surpassed, cannot be effectually recovered by willpower alone. It is also conceivable that this is how self-styled 'critic[s]' have evolved through osmosis; on the one hand, when a film 'affect[s]' (Deleuze 1983, p. 97) them to such an extent that their response to those 'affect[s]' is one they feel needs to be textualised somehow; while on the other hand, consuming films, reviews, and films reviewed

in question, that this textualisation, as a manifestation of their own threshold, emerges through the publication or performance of their opinion as a review.

Opinion is a comparatively slippery, mischievous, metatextual phenomenon, that, while all audience members are capable of providing verbally as ephemeral statements, social media has enabled to be textualised and recorded with ease. An opinion can now be as simple as an "up-vote" (as opposed to a "down-vote") as per reddit.com; a "thumbs-up" (as opposed to a "thumbs-down") as per reddit.com/r/movies (one of many dedicated sections within reddit.com, known as a "sub-reddit"); a rating out of five (stars) as per RogerEbert.com; a rating out of ten (stars) as per IMDB.com; out of one hundred (percent) as per RottenTomatoes.com (as an aggregate 'based on the published opinion of hundreds of film and television critics' {RottenTomatoes.com/about, para. 3}); or as complex as a 146 character tweet via Twitter; a one- or two-sentence YouTube comment; or a one-paragraph Facebook update. The spectrum of opinion, vast in shape and outlet, is comprised mostly of minutiae, however, polemic, divisive, vitriolic, and/or irrelevant scraps of thoughts containing little to no evidence to support their own criticism, and can be grouped into positive, negative, neutral, and unrelated, comments to do with a film opinionated in question. While opinions, such as "up-votes", or ratings out of ten (stars), and other instances where digital buttons are simply clicked by a user, can be attributed to the audience, they are typically anonymous, and thus, individual users cannot be held directly accountable to those opinions like a reviewer and their review can be held responsible, even if if those opinions can be attributed to an individual, but pseudonymous, username. This anonymity, actively encouraged on websites like reddit.com, but recently discouraged on others like YouTube and IMDB.com, where a Facebook signature is now required to comment, allows for a certain safety in 'expression' (Deleuze 1983, p. 97) without fear of reprisal, that users would not otherwise admit, like a modern-day confessional box.

Unlike reviews, which thrive 'in isolation and in specificity', opinions as they are 'expressed' through social media, rely heavily on ambiguity, and on other opinions, for support; firstly, through web pages and message boards acting as hosts for their textualisation; and secondly, through opinions of opinions of opinions, existing in self-contained, self-reflexive quasi-democracies. When grouped together, especially positively and negatively, they form a formidable chain of consensus. Depending on the host of that consensus, this positivity and negativity can be 'expressed' in various ways. On a website like IMDB.com, for example, individual users submit ratings out of ten (stars) for a film, that are then collected and averaged with other users' ratings for the same film, in order to generate an overall rating out of ten (stars) for that film, for each film in its database. These averages are subsequently broken down into statistics for each film, from however many ratings of ten-out-of-ten (stars), or nine-out-of-ten (stars), users have contributed (so far), to the demographics of those users (if and when users have provided them), 'expressed' as a percentage. Users also have the option to submit informal reviews as comments with pseudonymous anonymity, that are

judged by other users as "helpful" (as opposed to unhelpful) through a "Yes/No?" system. The more "helpful" an informal review is, and the more users that have judged it "Yes/No?" overall, the more likely it is to show up as the top informal review on a film's dedicated page on IMDB.com; a process that is prone to change, given that users are constantly contributing opinions and informal reviews, and opinions on informal reviews. This is a relatively dichotomous process when compared with a website like reddit.com, where opinions manifest, as well as interact, in one of five main ways; as posts, "up-votes", "down-votes", comments, and "gilded" comments, in a hierarchic, quasi-democratic mise en abyme. A post is first created by a user, either as a "text post", or a "new link" to another webpage (or both), that doubles as a message board for further opinion. This post is temporarily "new", and is put on a dedicated webpage with other "new" posts, where users can then "up-vote" or "down-vote" through the click of an arrow-shaped button (or a thumb-shaped button for reddit.com/r/movies). Depending on the popularity of a post's topic, top posts can quickly dominate successive ones by democratically "burying" unpopular ones, transitioning from the web page "new" to the webpage "hot". An analogous process happens within a post itself, where users can submit their opinion as a comment, and other users can then "up-vote" or "down-vote" its ir/relevance. If the quality of any one comment (and/or post) is valued enough by another user, that user can then "gild" it (only by donating money to reddit.com in exchange for virtual, but "gildable", coins) so that it stands out from the rest, regardless of its democratic ranking, on a dedicated webpage with other "gilded" comments (and/or posts). Comments themselves can then be commented on, in what is known as a "thread"; "up-voted", "down-voted", and/or "gilded", as well as opinions of those comments as comments, "up-votes", "down-votes", and "gilded" comments in "threads" of "threads", ad infinitum. These websites are not without self-moderation, either, usually in the form of an (unseen) autocratic overseer of opinions, that can censor or delete (within reason) a post, a comment, or an entire "thread", at its own discretion. While there is a noticeable overlap of rating systems that reviewers and opinions as they are 'expressed' by the audience through social media, ultimately share, the latter has become much more communised, in that it exists in environments where an individual 'expression' must work collectively, or else be suppressed; whereas the former is still much more individualised, and must be, for the sake of its own opinion's authority.

The authority of the reviewer as concept is best explored, and understood, not from their qualifications, which neither they nor their audience require to be able to opinionate, but the methods and techniques they employ that sustains, perpetuates, and differentiates, the authority of their opinion as a review. Since there is no standardisation of those methods and techniques, however, they, too, will need to be established in order to be analysed. For the purposes of establishing these methods and techniques, Roger Ebert, and the opinions as reviews of Roger Ebert, 'a film critic for more than forty years… [who] was considered one of [The United States of America's] most prominent and influential figures in the industry… [as well as] the first film critic to win the Pulitzer Prize… [in] 1975' (Two Weeks in the

Midday Sun, p. ii) will be exampled. It is not the aim of this paper to examine each and every review Ebert contributed over his extensive career, but rather, to sample and compare those ones deserving of re/publication in the form of an anthology, like *The Great Movies* (2004-2016) quadrilogy, *I Hated, Hated, Hated This Movie* (2000), and *Your Movie Sucks* (2007); among many others; with those of his contemporaries. As a standard of comparison, his reviews not only originate from the same medium, the *Chicago Sun-Times* newspaper for which he wrote for from 1967 up until his death in 2013, they also employ the same rating system out of five stars (and a circle-backslash symbol for no-stars, as per his reviews of Mike Bigelow's *Deuce Bigalow: European Gigolo* {dir. 2005}, and David DeFalco's *Chaos* {dir. 2005}, two out of three of his inspirations for 'setting the scene' {Ebert 2007, p. ix} in *Your Movie Sucks*), across a miscellany of inter/national films and genres.

What defines, and uniquely differentiates, Ebert's reviewing method, his status as a 'critic', and his opinions as reviews from opinions, is a perspective best exemplified in his novel *Two Weeks in the Midday Sun: A Cannes Notebook* detailing the events surrounding the 1987 Cannes Film Festival. Very much in the gonzo style of, but considerably less drug-addled than, Hunter S. Thompson's 1971 novel *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas: A Savage Journey to the Heart of the American Dream*, it even contains Ebert's sketches of people and places, reminiscent of Ralph Steadman's illustrations. Though it could be argued his success as a 'critic' resulted in his presence at Cannes, Ebert does confess, albeit indirectly, the opposite that [he] was once told "You can review the movies when they open [to the public]… We [the editors] don't send you all the way over [to Cannes] to write movie reviews." By which they [the editors] meant, get us interviews with stars, movie stars—and lots of them. (Ebert 1987, p. 48)

Ebert's interview with actress Isabella Rossellini, following the Cannes premiere of David Lynch's *Blue Velvet* (dir. 1986), perfectly demonstrates the influence that perspective can have over a reviewer 'potentially', despite happening after his 1986 review. In a disarmingly honest exposition, of herself, and of her character, *Dorothy Vallens*, whatever Ebert's objective opinion of Rossellini's portrayal of *Vallens* was going into the interview—admittedly, already influenced by his knowledge of her father, director Roberto Rossellini (Ebert 1987, p. 29)—is simultaneously lost, replaced, and/or combined, with that of Rossellini herself, that deepens, forever subjectively, and sub/consciously, Ebert's future interpretations of *Blue Velvet*, and 'potentially' Rossellini and the characters she will go on to portray in other films, like '"*Little* [sic] *Red Riding Hood* [dir. Brooks, 1988]' (Ebert 1987, p. 34). Similarly, Ebert's 1979 depiction of, and interaction with, Francis Ford Coppola 'aboard the yacht *Amazone*, anchored offshore… [was] a sign not so much of wealth as of power, [that] you could, if you wanted [to], find ['potentially' as] another symbol… [for] Kurtz [played by Martin Sheen, in *Apocalypse Now*]' (Ebert 1987, p. 94). That it took nearly twenty years for Ebert to write his first review for *Apocalypse Now* in 1999, and was deserving of a second review after the release of *Redux* in 2001, suggests the impact of that encounter, 'one

of the strangest episodes in the recent history of Cannes' (Ebert 1987, p. 98) could still have had some sub/conscious influence over him.

Perspective, like experience, is malleable and interchangeable; gained firsthand, through an individual experience, like an interview, with a component, or an encounter with the source, of a film reviewed in question; that is then re/applicable, in a secondhand sense, as a learned, or taught, experience is, existing 'potentially' as a part of the reviewer's sub/conscious knowledge; where one informs the other, and vice versa, just like how the 'memory-image' operates through the audience (D'Aloia 2016, p. 5). As a hyper-audience member, however, a reviewer would not only be 'constantly updating their repository of [sub/conscious] 'knowledge' external to a film, from film to film, to experiences altogether unrelated to the nature of audience' (D'Aloia 2016, p. 5), they would be doing so from a hyperactive perspective, one that heightens 'that which is objective 'knowledge' to an audience… internal to a film's interpretation… [and] that which is subjective 'knowledge' to an audience… external to a film's interpretation' (D'Aloia 2016, p. 6), with greater emphasis upon the latter. This hyperactive perspective thus allows the reviewer to review more than just the film by itself, depending on the scope of that perspective; and enables Ebert to cite something as simple as '*The Orchid Thief*, by Susan Orlean, a best seller expanded from an article in the *New Yorker*' (2011, p. 11) in relation to Spike Jonze's *Adaptation* (dir. 2002); or as loaded as 'you can't understand where [Vincent] Gallo has arrived unless you know where he started' (2007, p. xxviii) in response to Gallo's *The Brown Bunny* (dir. 2004); as well as a miscellany of inter/national films and genres currently in existence, and the zeitgeist they inhabit/ed. Given that the sub/conscious knowledge that supports this perspective is 'potentially' endless, moreover, the scope of this perspective should also be expanded to include, but not be limited by, the entirety of a reviewer's sub/conscious knowledge; about film; television; literature; and any other perspective/s they could have as a reviewer, to the betterment of their reviewing technique, and the films reviewed in question.

How a reviewer then utilises, and implements, their perspective/s in a review, is a delicate mix of four main elements: "precedence", "comparison", "summary", and "context" as 'subtext' or "costext" (D'Aloia 2016, p. 3), with a generous amount of overlap of each. Precedence refers directly to a reviewer's conscious knowledge of that which came before the film reviewed in question, and can include, but is not limited to: a historical precedence (if the film reviewed in question takes place in a historical era, as per Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* {dir. 1998} set during World War II, or is based on a real life person, as per Steven Spielberg's *Lincoln* {dir. 2012} and its portrayal of The United States of America's 16th president, Abraham Lincoln); a preceding film (if the film is a sequel, as per *The Empire Strikes Back*, or a sequel to a sequel, as per Richard Marquand's *Star Wars: Episode VI – Return of the Jedi* {dir. 1983}); a chronologically preceding film (if the film is a prequel, as per George Lucas' *Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace* {dir. 1999}), or a sequel to a prequel, as per George Lucas' *Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones* {dir. 2002}); a

preceding component (if a component, or components, of a film reviewed in question have been carried over from a previous film, as per screenwriter Charlie Kaufman, for *Being John Malkovich* {dir. 1999}, *Human Nature* {dir. Gondry 2001}, *Adaptation, Confessions of a Dangerous Mind* {dir. Clooney 2002}, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* {dir. Gondry 2004}, *Synecdoche, New York* {dir. Kaufman 2008}, and *Anomalisa* {dir. Johnson & Kaufman 2015}); a preceding source (if a director, or directors, of a film reviewed in question, have directed other feature films, like Spike Jonze, for *Being John Malkovich*, *Adaptation*, *Where the Wild Things Are* {dir. 2009}, and *Her* {dir. 2013}); and/or inspiration (if a film is adapted from a novel, as per *Adaptation* from *The Orchid Thief*, or if it is a rewrite of a previous film, as per Len Wiseman's *Total Recall* {dir. 2012} of Paul Verhoeven's *Total Recall* {dir. 1990}); and/or resemblance (if a film reminds the reviewer of a previous, but unrelated, film, as per *'Dark City* by Alex Proyas [{dir. 1998} which] resembles its great silent predecessor *Metropolis* [dir. Lang 1927]' {Ebert 2011, p. 113}); and/or technicality (if the production of the film reviewed in question in some way enhances the film's viewing experience, as per Ron Fricke's *Baraka* {dir. 1992}, 'the first film since 1970 to be photographed in Todd-AO, a 65mm [film] system… [and] the first 8K resolution video ever made of a 65 mm film' {Ebert 2011, p. 48}).

Comparison is an arbitrary combination of precedence and metaphor, comparing components, sources, inspirations, resemblances, and/or technicalities, contained within a film, or films, with the film reviewed in question: 'Look at *Dark City*, *Total Recall* [dir. Verhoeven 1990], *Brazil* [dir. Gilliam 1985], *12* [sic] *Monkeys* [dir. Gilliam 1995], or *Gattaca* [dir. Niccol 1997] and you will see [*Blade Runner*'s {dir. Scott 1982}] progeny' (Ebert 2011, p. 77). It often 'expresses' (Deleuze 1983, p. 97) a characteristic of the film reviewed in question, indirectly, through a concept, theme, and/or analogy, that the reviewer cannot, or will not, textualise—as per Ebert's substitution of the phrase 'Crap Weasels… that translates [better] in a family newspaper' (Ebert 2007, p. 86) for the original 'Shit Weasels' of Lawrence Kasdan's *Dreamcatcher* (dir. 2003, min. 53:00)—or has no direct translation with/in the film reviewed in question, as per Ebert's comparison of Tom Green's *Freddy Got Fingered* (dir. 2001) with his reiteration of the words crap and testicle:

It's been leading up to this all spring. When David Spade got buried in crap in *Joe Dirt* [dir. Gordon 2001], and when three supermodels got buried in crap in *Head Over Heels* [dir. Waters 2001], and when human organs fell from a hot air balloon in *Monkeybone* [dir. Selick 2001] and were eaten by dogs, and when David Arquette rolled around in dog crap and a gangster had his testicles bitten off in *See Spot Run* [dir. Whitesell 2001], and when a testicle was eaten in *Tomcats* [dir. Poirier 2001], well, somehow the handwriting was on the wall. There had to be a movie like *Freddy Got Fingered* coming along. (Ebert 2007, p. 111)

Yet to be at its most effective, comparison, like precedence, depends on the sub/conscious knowledge of the reviewer, and the knowledge of their consumers, to 'overlap' (D'Aloia

2016, p. 5) in order to foster 'real connections between all these givens' (Deleuze 1983, p. 97). This 'overlap' then provides, albeit temporarily, those consumers who have viewed the film/s compared in question, to share in the reviewer's perspective; while simultaneously inviting consumers who have not viewed the film/s compared in question, to view said film/s.

Where precedence, comparison, and 'overlap', cannot convey in/directly, a component, source, inspiration, resemblance, technicality, concept, theme, and/or analogy, contained within the film/s reviewed, or compared, in question; or when a reviewer's intent is to emphasise, or to specify, the precise moment, precedence, or comparison, of a film they are intending to review, or compare; they resort to a summary of 'objective 'knowledge'' contained within the film/s reviewed, or compared, in question; that is intended to foster an artificial 'overlap' 'between all these givens' should their consumers be unfamiliar with the example/s they provide. A particular shortcoming of reviewers, summary can also, and unnecessarily, reiterate the plot and characters of a film reviewed in question, in the words, and at the discretion, of the reviewer, as per Ebert's review of Francis Lawrence's *Constantine* (dir. 2005). The review is comprised of 10 paragraphs, 48 sentences, and 851 words; 38 sentences of which contain the summary of an aspect of *Constantine* ('Constantine [played by Keanu Reeves] knows he is doomed to hell because he once tried to kill himself, and is trying to rack up enough frames against the demons to earn his way into heaven' {Ebert 2007, p.57); 7 sentences of which contain a comparison embedded within the summary of an aspect of *Constantine* ('Like Blade [dir. Norrington 1998], the vampire killer, he [Constantine] is surprisingly optimistic, considering he is one guy in one city dealing on a case-by-case basis, [when] the enemy is global' {Ebert 2007, p. 57}); 4 sentences of which indirectly compare, with the intention of creating humour, *Constantine* with Luc Jacquet's *March of the Penguins* (dir. 2005) almost to the effect of the idiom "watching paint dry" ('There was a nice documentary about emperor penguins, however, at Sundance this year. The males sit on the eggs all winter long in like 60 degrees below zero.' {Ebert 2007, p. 57}); and 6 sentences which variously compare, with the intention of creating humour, an affiliation with aforementioned summary aspects of *Constantine* in a standalone fashion ('Since he was a child, [Constantine] has been able to see that not all who walk among us are human. Some are penguins. Sorry about that.' {Ebert 2007, p. 57}). There are advantages and disadvantages to summary. Used sparingly, summary can highlight, with the intention to expose, the gratuity or absurdity of a moment's representation within the film/s reviewed, or compared, in question, as per Ebert's summary of 'a priest in the film [*Constantine*], the alcoholic Father Hennessy (Pruitt Taylor Vince), whose name, I guess, is product placement' (Ebert 2007; p. 58). Too much summary, however, and a review starts to embody a re-viewing of the film reviewed in question.

Context as 'subtext' or costext, a distinguishing portmanteau to help alleviate the contradictory terms context and subtext—especially 'if the context of an audience is still understood to mean a film (D'Aloia 2016, p. 3)—refers to the 'external 'knowledge''

surrounding, or pertaining to, a film reviewed in question, which is simultaneously contextual, in that it frames the film, and could or could not 'potentially' influence a reviewer's re/viewing experience, yet is neither 'objectively… [nor] subjectively… derived… from a film's 'affection-image[s]' [Deleuze 1983, p. 97]' (D'Aloia 2017, p. 6), but distinctly and directly from the memory and the 'subtext' of the audience (D'Aloia 2016, p. 3). Costext behaves almost identically to the reviewer's perspective, as a bias would, only its instigation is one founded and fuelled by precedence and/or comparison. Although a costext can be cited, it is by no means required, in a reviewer's review; should the reviewer be aware of, or involved with, any costext or not. The only purpose for its citation, furthermore, is to acknowledge, or concede, rather than to deny, or conceal, specific influences that could or could not be 'potentially' influencing the reviewer and their opinion of the film reviewed in question, as per Ebert's '*The Brown Bunny* Saga' (2007, p. xviii). The 'Saga' includes a recapitulation of *The Brown Bunny*'s premiere on the 21st of May 2003 at the Cannes Film Festival, in which Ebert, rather offhandedly, remarked it was '"The worst film in the history of the festival"' (2007, p. xvii); followed by a lengthy 'Interview with Vincent Gallo' on the 24th of August 2004, in which Ebert admitted 'Gallo and [he] have a history' (2007, p. xviii); leading up to his review of *The Brown Bunny* postmarked on the 3rd of September 2004, in which Ebert confessed his earlier remark 'was hyperbole' (2007, p. xxv). Without this costext, however, which could be considered a reviewer-oriented costext, the reasoning behind Ebert giving the 'new version' (2007, p. xiii) of *The Brown Bunny*, the third and final inspiration for 'setting the scene' in *Your Movie Sucks*, a three-out-of-five star rating, is otherwise unjustified.

The alternative, audience-oriented costext is much more implicit, and includes examples like Stanley Kubrick's *Lolita* (dir. 1962) and Sam Taylor-Johnson's *Fifty Shades of Grey* (dir. 2015), which generated significant amounts of controversy before they even premiered. The former costext relied on its comparison with paedophilia, the subject matter of Vladimir Nabokov's 1955 novel *Lolita*; while the latter relied on a combination of comparison and precedence, firstly, to do with BDSM, the subject matter of E. L. James' 2001 novel *Fifty Shades of Grey*, and secondly, the resulting misogyny to do with that subject matter; from which the aforementioned films were respectively adapted. Yet an audience-oriented costext should not be mistaken for straight controversy, it is a manifestation of consensus as 'expressed' by the audience, and can stem from something as simple as the auteurority of a source, such as Quentin Tarantino, or the notoriety of a component, such as Carrie Fisher. A consensus, in and of itself, is not enough to warrant an audience-oriented costext, either, only if that consensus gains enough traction to 'potentially' influence proceeding opinion, and opinions of that consensus 'expressed' as a binary, as per Feig's *Ghostbusters*. Satirically reviewed by Doug Walker, audiences, and reviewers, were caught between the uneasy binary that 'The very fact you're thinking about not seeing [Feig's *Ghostbusters*] shows that you're a misogynist' (Channel Awesome 2016, min. 01:21-01:24) when it should be boycotted because it 'completely ruins what's perfect about the original *Ghostbusters* [dir. Reitman

1984]' (Channel Awesome 2016, min. 01:31-01:35). While the latter consensus stems from precedence, its antithesis has more to do with prejudice than either the 'objective' or 'subjective 'knowledge'' presented in both films, and is why audience-oriented costexts should have as little influence as possible over a reviewer's opinion of a film. By avoiding such audience-oriented costexts, a reviewer can retain the individuality of their opinion, and thus prevent the authority of that opinion as a review from being collectively weakened.

If 'The purpose of a movie critic is to encourage good films and discourage bad ones,' then the purpose of this paper has surely been to encourage good reviews and to discourage bad ones, by highlighting, with the intention to expose, those methods and techniques their reviewers share in common. In doing so, a hypersensitive audience of 'critics' were inadvertently revealed, characterised here for the first time as a "hyper-audience", running seamlessly within *the Nature of Audience*. Yet the aim of this paper has ultimately been one of exploration, and categorisation, rather than discovery, of the processes involved with the review of feature films, and the ways in which they can influence a reviewer and their review, and in turn, the consumers they are collaterally encouraging. To concede that an opinion, 'expressed' as a review, or otherwise, is an inherently subjective phenomenon, would be to concede that the entire spectrum of criticism itself, as anthropogenic as it is anthropocentric, is just as subjective; at the very least, criticism is capable of self-investigation, that reviewers and their reviews contribute to. Regardless of that subjectivity, films continue to be made, and will continue to be reviewed, and it is important to establish, without enforcing, how and why a review operates, what it can be expected to contain, and where it could be headed, without standardisation, in the not too distant future.

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