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The Body of the Terrorist in Contemporary Cinema / Robert Duggan and Páraic Finnerty

Abstract: This article will explore the presentation of the body of the terrorist in a range of British and American films with a particular emphasis on how these films combine political and romantic plotlines. As part of a broad consideration of how the terrorist is presented, this essay will concentrate in particular on *Cal* (1984), *The Crying Game* (1992), *The Dancer Upstairs* (2002) and *The Quiet American* (2002). Rather than fully engage with the more complex discourse of politics, often these films ask audiences to conceptualize the transgressive figure of the terrorist through the very familiar vocabulary of love and sexual desire. Some accounts of this process have tended to underestimate the significance of the body in relation to political contexts and this essay will seek to redress this imbalance. In all of the above films, the terrorist has a complex and uncanny identity; he or she is a dangerous, shape-shifting and seductive figure that first infiltrates and then attempts to undermine the culture he or she politically opposes. Building on recent work by film critics and queer theorists, this article analyses how each film engages in a reciprocal movement whereby the threatening body of the terrorist itself becomes subject to unforeseen threat or challenge in erotic and romantic scenarios. The threatening and threatened body of the terrorist is also a queer body for which personal, gender and sexual identity are fluid and performative. While appropriating the versions of the traditional romantic plot as a means of humanizing the terrorist, these films create a vision in which normative heterosexuality is a sphere of confusion, failure and destruction. We conclude with a discussion of how *The Siege* (1998) and *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (1985) follow different but related trajectories to the dominant model explored in this essay.

Introduction

<1> This article will explore the presentation of the body of the terrorist in a range of British and American films with a particular emphasis on how these films combine political and romantic plotlines. As part of a broad consideration of how the terrorist is presented, this essay will concentrate in particular on *Cal* (1984), *The Crying Game* (1992), *The Dancer Upstairs* (2002) and *The Quiet American* (2002). Rather than fully engage with the more complex discourse of politics, often these films ask audiences to conceptualize the transgressive figure of the terrorist through the very familiar vocabulary of love and sexual desire. Many influential accounts of this process, for example by Joe Cleary in *Literature, Partition and the Nation-State* (2002), have tended to underestimate the

significance of the body in relation to political contexts and this essay will seek to redress this imbalance. In all of the above films, the terrorist has a complex and uncanny identity; he or she is a dangerous, shape-shifting and seductive figure that first infiltrates and then attempts to undermine the culture he or she politically opposes. The body of the terrorist is often figured as dangerously attractive to others. Yet in the arena of sexual desire and human intimacy, the otherwise effective terrorists become involved in a series of errors of recognition and judgment, symptomatic of and analogous to the duplicity and deceit they perpetrate.

<2> The body of the terrorist will be interpreted as threatening, threatened and queer because of its ability to complicate political, national and sexual binaries [1]. The discussion is divided into three thematic sections, within which we explore our core group of films *Cal*, *The Crying Game*, *The Quiet American* and *The Dancer Upstairs* in turn. The network of threats involving the terrorist's body will be explored and interconnected. The first section examines how the liminal figure of the terrorist threatens borders, gender and sexual norms and how they "infiltrate" domestic scenes. In these films, the devastating realization of the terrorist threat, in spectacles of horrific violence and death, is facilitated by and presupposes the more disturbing threat of the deceptive and sexually desirable terrorist's body. The second part of the analysis considers how each film engages in a reciprocal movement whereby the threatening body of the terrorist itself becomes subject to unforeseen threat or challenge in erotic and romantic scenarios. Audiences are often presented with a 'terrorist in love' whose desire for one of the potential victims of terrorism becomes his or her Achilles heel. It is therefore the world of sexual desire and human love that threatens the terrorist, making them vulnerable to mistakes, misjudgement, capture or death. The final section entitled "Queer Bodies of Terror" appraises how the selected films portray gender and sexual transformations within their narratives and how such transformations may relate to the political context of each film. The threatening and threatened body of the terrorist is also a queer body for which personal, gender and sexual identity are fluid and performative. While appropriating the versions of the traditional romantic plot as a means of humanizing the terrorist, these films create a vision in which normative heterosexuality is a sphere of confusion, failure and destruction. We conclude with a discussion of how *The Siege* (1998) and *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (1985) follow different but related trajectories to the dominant model explored in this essay.

The Threatening Body of the Terrorist

<3> Many recent films focus on the ability of the terrorist to avoid detection. *Patriot Games* (1992), *The Devil's Own* (1997) and *The Jackal* (1997) all use the stock figure of the duplicitous and apparently appealing terrorist who can "pass" in civil society. These conventional films collectively project the terrorist body as threatening through its attractive and false appearance. However, other films utilize this quality of the terrorist's body, but integrate it into a substantial romance narrative. For example, Pat O'Connor's film *Cal* (1984) scripted by Bernard MacLaverty from his 1983 novel of the same name, portrays an Irish Republican Army (IRA) member becoming involved in the killing of a member of the security forces in Northern Ireland and subsequently starting a romantic relationship with the dead man's partner. Marcella Morton, the policeman's widow, is unaware of the eponymous protagonist's involvement in her husband's death; indeed the viewer is only certain of Cal's part in the killing well into the second half of the film. Cal takes a job at the dead man's family farm and he and Marcella endeavour to keep their developing sexual relationship a secret from her parents-in-law. Cal resists taking part in further acts of violence however his IRA comrades continue their efforts to involve him in robberies and bombings. While the other IRA members are arrested trying to flee an Army night patrol, Cal escapes and returns to the Morton property only to be arrested there in the morning. As he is led away by the police at the close of the film, Cal tells Marcella that "he wanted her to know" (*Cal*). Similarly, in Neil Jordan's *The Crying Game* (1992) the politics of Northern Ireland and the Troubles is the background for an unlikely friendship between Fergus, an IRA operative, and Jody, the British soldier he detains and is required to kill, and an unconventional romance between Fergus and Jody's partner, Dil. The relationship between Fergus and Dil develops when in an attempt to fulfill one of Jody's requests, Fergus goes to London to tell Dil of Jody's love. In the same way that Cal insinuates himself into the life of Marcella through the concealment of his identity, Fergus calls himself Jimmy and becomes romantically involved with Dil. As Cleary argues, *Cal* and *The Crying Game* share "uncannily similar morphologies" (131) and *The Crying Game* can be seen as a "brilliantly reflexive twist" (121) on the structure established by *Cal*.

<4> *The Crying Game* begins with a paradigmatic representation of the power of the terrorist to seduce and betray their victim [2]. Jude the IRA agent is an attractive blond woman wearing a denim miniskirt and clutching a teddy bear, who lures off-duty British soldier Jody to a secluded place where he is kidnapped by the IRA. She projects an uncomplicated sexual availability that Jody is all too ready to pursue. Jude's role as female seductress is contrasted by her next appearance in the IRA hideout, wearing baggy and unisex clothing; she makes it clear to the film's protagonist Fergus that sex is something she "wouldn't do for [her] country" (*The Crying Game*). Her physical disgust for Jody is apparent once the subterfuge has ended and she shows some sexual interest in IRA comrade Fergus. Here, as Handler argues, she is no longer a sexual pawn, but rather a cruel and hardened member of the IRA (1994, 37); in fact, Jody accuses her of having "no feelings" (*The Crying Game*). Like the other IRA operatives, Jude dislikes Fergus's kindness towards their captive and violently strikes the tied up and hooded Jody with a gun, underlining what Fergus's true attitude should be. Reinforcing the protean and expedient nature of the terrorist's identity, in London Jude later changes her image again: she tells Fergus "Aye, I was sick of being a blond. I needed a tougher look, if you know what I mean" (*The Crying Game*). Whereas Jude had been subordinate to men in the early scenes in Northern Ireland, in London she is in charge and her dark-haired "tougher look" is accompanied by a more sexually aggressive aspect. She reminds Fergus that from the IRA's perspective "you're never out" and threatens to harm his new love interest Dil if he does not carry out their demands. Feminist critics have found problematic the fact a woman embodies the worst aspects of terrorism: Jude is a deceitful, predatory and manipulative figure prone to psychopathic displays of violence [3]. Thus, the biological woman is - and dresses as - one of the IRA's "hard men," clearly in opposition to the glamorous femininity represented by Dil, who in the film's most well known sequence is revealed to be anatomically male.

<5> Fergus complicates political, national and sexual binaries: he is a liminal, alluring figure whose identity is flexible and performative (Zilliax 25-51). Despite his own benevolent nature, Fergus is accomplished in the art of deception: at the moment of Dil's revelation, she believes that he is a Scottish man called Jimmy. Upon finding him in London, Jude compliments him on the fact he has "vanished quiet effectively. Bec[o]me Mister Nobody," adding "you've no idea how useful that could be...We've got plans here. And we'll need a Mister Nobody to execute them" (*The Crying Game*). Clearly Jude recognizes the opportunity for terrorism such anonymity provides.

<6> Again, the female body is a means of targeting political enemies and Fergus is instructed to assassinate an elderly judge on one of his regular visits to a prostitute. However, Jude's threat to harm "the wee black chick" ensures Fergus's compliance; Jude tells him "You know we won't leave her out of this" (*The Crying Game*). As in *Cal*, Fergus's romantic involvement - with the partner of the man in whose death he played a part - creates a romantic triangle that connects terrorist and victim and complicates expected allegiances and alliances. Such complexities are also explored in two later films where passion, politics and personal morality collide.

<7> In *The Quiet American*, set in Vietnam in the early 1950s, a triangular relationship emerges between Thomas Fowler, an English journalist, Alden Pyle, the eponymous quiet American, and the object of both men's desire, a young Vietnamese woman named Phuong. Fowler's initial perceptions about Alden Pyle are inaccurate: the non-drinking, non-smoking, be-speckled and naive intellectual is a manipulative and dangerous terrorist. Pyle's non-threatening exterior is a perfect cover for his sinister motives, and as Capps suggests the clean-cut actor Brendan Fraser is ideally cast for this deceptive role. Like Fowler's, our shocking confirmation of Pyle's true identity occurs as we watch his callous and cold reaction to the bombing in central Saigon. Rather than helping the wounded as we might expect, Pyle is unmoved by their pain and more interested in how the devastating scene will be represented and reported in America. In fact, Pyle orchestrates a cameraman who is conveniently at the scene, and later we learn that Pyle and his supporters have arranged the explosion. In doing so, Pyle as a terrorist distinguishes between the beautiful body of Phuong he seeks to protect and the other Vietnamese bodies he allows to be sacrificed for his democratic ideals (Capp, 2003). Like Fergus and *Cal*, Pyle seeks to protect the person he loves from the threat he himself embodies. This opens up a fissure in the cold, calculated and manipulative rationale of the terrorist, who must now distinguish between bodies: those that can be used and often destroyed for a political cause and those loved bodies that must be protected. This need to distinguish between bodies desired and bodies threatened is central to *The Dancer Upstairs*, in which a female terrorist falls in love with the policeman at a moment when his life and the lives of those around him are in constant danger from her terrorist group.

<8> *The Dancer Upstairs* hints at the political and military corruption within an unnamed Latin American country, yet the specific qualities of the ruling authority remain unexamined. Instead, the film centers on the attempts of Agustin Rejas, an incorruptible police chief, to capture the Maoist-inspired leader of a group of terrorists, Ezequiel. Rejas and his colleagues are shocked that the agents of the acts of subversion are young women and children. This terrorist organization is responsible for an all-out campaign of violent spectacle, suicide-bombings, the public murders of church and state officials, and general intimidation within the capital city. As in *The Crying Game*, sexual desire is something terrorists use to their advantage: a man secretly visiting the Chinese Embassy for sex is targeted by the terrorists, a beautiful fashion model is a gun-runner for the organization and the pretty schoolgirls an admiral leers at turn out to be his armed assassins. These beautiful bodies are attractive and deadly and contrast with the diseased and hidden body of the terrorist leader Ezequiel (O'Leary, 2004). He is briefly glimpsed dancing with an array of women on a videotape sequence and his charisma may be an important factor in his widespread influence. As Bradshaw points out the apparent innocence and ubiquity of his agents make his organization all the more threatening.

<9> Rejas's personal crusade to find Ezequiel is juxtaposed with his emerging relationship with Yolanda, his daughter's beautiful ballet teacher. Unknown to him, Yolanda is harboring Ezequiel above her dance studio and is herself his committed follower. A platonic romance develops between Rejas and Yolanda, with the detective concealing the nature of his job and Yolanda her identity as a terrorist. Their romantic interactions are, unknown to them, triangular transactions whereby Yolanda functions as a medium between Rejas and Ezequiel. In the film's climactic scene Rejas captures Ezequiel, and a distraught Yolanda runs into Rejas's arms only to recoil in hatred once she realizes that he is the captor of her beloved leader. Her reaction - she spits in his face - shows that Rejas, like Marcella, Jody, Dil and Phuong, have been deceived by the chameleon-like and seductive body of the terrorist.

The Threatened Body of the Terrorist

<10> There is a cinematic tradition in which the terrorist has been portrayed as a not unsympathetic figure, made tragic through historical circumstances and capable of self-sacrifice. This is evident in *Odd Man Out* (1946), *Patriot Games* (1992), *The Jackal* (1997) and *The Devil's Own* (1997) [4]. The possibility of any sympathy or identification with the threatening figure of the terrorist will vary according to audience perception of the specific political context depicted in each film, which in turn is dependent on the sensitivities of the prevailing cultural climate. Murray Smith's *Engaging Characters* (1995) debates the extent to which elements such as perspective and point-of-view may influence how an audience regards a character's behavior. Smith makes a distinction between alignment and allegiance, alignment being "the systematic regulation of narrative knowledge" and allegiance the "moral evaluation of characters by the spectator." (83) Alignment here includes attachment, i.e. the extent to which the film offers viewers the protagonist's experience of the fictional world and provides access to the protagonist's subjectivity. While acknowledging that alignment and allegiance are "mutually influential" (222) Smith is keen to assert their relative autonomy: "what counts is what is revealed by the alignment, not the mere fact of it" (223). In the case of *Cal* and *The Crying Game* the narrative alignment falls squarely on the 'reluctant' IRA protagonist both through attachment and access to subjectivity. However, in *The Dancer Upstairs* and *The Quiet American* the spectator is attached to those who are affected by or seek to prevent terrorist atrocities. The lack of attachment and alignment with the terrorists in these films serves, on one level, to pathologize the activists. Yet the extended exploration of sexual or romantic relationships involving the terrorist in *The Dancer Upstairs* and *The Quiet American* complicates, as it does in *The Crying Game* and *Cal*, the viewer's estimation of this figure.

<11> In *Cal*, it is Cal's increasing attachment to Marcella that threatens both his life and his liberty. Instead of leaving the locality, Cal stays and while he talks of leaving for England, his reluctance to leave the house on the Morton's property leads directly to his capture. Yet here as in *The Crying Game* "the central characters - the lovers - enjoy a degree of complexity, the characters who stand in for 'politics' are stripped of all except their malignance" (Hill 1988, 182).

<12> While Fergus is adept at concealing his real identity in London, there are aspects of life in the city that he misreads. The world of signs and gestures within the bar where he meets Dil is one beyond his understanding, as he fails to grasp the significance of the drag performances staged in this gay bar. His mere presence in the bar leads others including Dil to believe that he is aware of the

sexual possibilities of the bar's clientele: "I thought you knew" and "what were you doing in the bar if you didn't know" (*The Crying Game*). *The Crying Game* foregrounds the 'fact' of Dil's penis as a shocking revelation for Fergus and indeed for the audience. Dil's naked body forms a threat to Fergus's sense of himself and his sexuality, and in full retreat from this spectacle he hits Dil and runs to the toilet to be sick. Back in his room, Fergus dreams of Jody smiling at him, highlighting his, and the audience's, re-evaluation of Jody. When Dil's life is threatened by Fergus's former IRA comrades, and he is pressured into participating in one of their missions, his actions puzzle and upset Dil. In an attempt to comfort Dil, Fergus reveals his involvement in Jody's death and Dil ends up threatening to kill him in revenge. The romantic relationship with Dil thus dissolves Fergus's anonymity and leaves him vulnerable both to Dil and to Jude, who each threaten him with a gun at the film's climax.

<13> Pyle, like Fergus in *The Crying Game*, shows a desire to behave in an old fashioned and gentlemanly way in his dealings with women, and also in his homosocial relationship with Fowler as seen in his decision to inform Fowler of his intentions regarding Phuong. Pyle's idea of a "proper" relationship involves marriage and he views Phuong and Fowler's relationship with distaste. His projection of moral correctness and vitality contrasts with Fowler's opium-smoking and deception of Phuong regarding his existing marriage to a woman in England. Pyle's wholesome appearance masks the threat he poses to ordinary Vietnamese people. In keeping with this aspect of his character, Pyle frames his feelings for Phuong within the context of liberating her from a corrupt European colonial influence (Fowler). As Fowler reflects at the beginning of the film: "I should have realised that saving the country and saving a woman would be the same thing to a man like Pyle" (*The Quiet American*). Phuong is thus an embodiment of Vietnam, the country Pyle wishes to Americanize and thus save. In the cinematic presentations of these terrorists there is a paradox: integrity in personal matters combines with a duplicitous terrorist agenda. Pyle seems to profess a moral approach to sexuality at odds with his secret involvement in state terror. Despite his precautions and performance of the role of concerned aid worker, Pyle's association with Fowler and Phuong reveals his participation in violent subversion, and Fowler's jealousy becomes an important factor in Pyle's murder by the Communists.

<14> The terrorist in all four films inhabits two worlds, the world of everyday life and the world of their secretive organisation. However, each film suggests that while the terrorist is part of a community there are also aspects of that community that they do not understand. Cal gets to see the private family life of the man he has killed. In *The Crying Game* Fergus and Jody talk about the relative merits of cricket and hurling as sports, Fergus dreams of Jody playing cricket and later Dil is disguised in Jody's cricket clothes. Jody and Dil are playing a "foreign game", a game whose rules Fergus remains ignorant of for much of film. Similarly when Pyle in *The Quiet American* initially visits the bar where Phuong used to work as a dancer, he mistakes it for a brothel and he seems to misunderstand the relationship between Phuong and Fowler as one of simple exploitation. There is a telling episode in *The Dancer Upstairs* where Rejas and Yolanda sit in a café guessing which photographs on the wall are criminals and which are victims or policemen. Both are mistaken in their guesses half the time and Rejas concludes rather prophetically "half the people we meet we get wrong" (*The Dancer Upstairs*), pointing to a lack of perception or insight that makes the terrorist vulnerable to the people they meet, particularly in terms of sexual desire. It is Yolanda not Rejas who does not allow their relationship to become physical because she is unwilling to involve herself with a married man; she is too "moral" to have an affair with Rejas but has been "seduced" by Ezequiel and his group.

Queer Bodies of Terror

<15> On one level, the films' plots neutralise the threat posed by the terrorists' bodies through the identification, imprisonment and surveillance of these bodies. On another level, the threat of sexuality as destabilising and deceptive remains for the audience. As Joe Cleary points out:

These narratives represent a strange amalgam of allegorical romance and domestic realism in which a political tale of the national romance kind and an anti-political tale of escape into domestic privacy are often combined or overlapped - with the former usually being superseded, overwritten, or finally cancelled by the latter (115).

While Cleary persuasively identifies the marginalisation of the political in these films, he underestimates the significance of these films' handling of their erotic narratives [5]. A focus on the bodies in these cinematic representations of the terrorist reveals the extent to which these films problematize notions of normative gender and sexuality, in ways that have important political resonances. The realm of the erotic and romantic becomes something unpredictable, transformative and potentially dangerous, not a set of simple relations between unchanging identities.

<16> The desired bodies of Phuong, Yolanda, Dil and Marcella are the means through which opposing male groups interact. This demonstrates the way male-male relations are persistently articulated through triangular relations involving a woman; in each film - although to a lesser extent in *The Dancer Upstairs* - desire for a 'woman' derives not solely from her personal qualities, and seems also to originate from a prior opposition or rivalry between men (Sedgwick 1990, 15; Sedgwick 1987, 21-27). Cal's obsession with Morton, like Fergus's with Jody, Fowler's with Pyle and Rejas's with Ezequiel, is safely projected onto the "female" body that can be loved by each male antagonist "in a way they couldn't love each other" (Jordan 1993, viii). What is interesting is the way in which heterosexuality becomes problematic as each terrorist's desire seems misplaced: Cal's desire for the widow of a policeman, Fergus's for a man, Yolanda's for a policeman, Pyle's for a woman whose lover will betray him to his death. Moreover Fergus, Rejas and Fowler each attempt to protect the "women" they love, whose bodies are equivalent in the cold eyes of the terrorist to those murdered, maimed, mutilated and sacrificed for political goals [6]. Rejas's attempt to purge his country of depravity, embodied in the figure of this terrorist with a skin disease, seems concomitant with his need to free the women, like Yolanda, who have become erotically and politically seduced. In a mirror image of this Pyle's own acts of political subversion are connected to his plan to "free" Phuong from Fowler.

<17> The terrorists' abilities to engage in violent activities or to threaten the public are removed at the conclusion of each film: Cal, Fergus and Yolanda are imprisoned, while Pyle is killed. The other terrorists within these films are also barred from further acts of violence, because they have been either killed or imprisoned. Cal's body is notable for the frequency of its passive suffering, with Cal the frightened object of violence and threats of violence from his IRA comrades, loyalist street gangs and security forces. He actively pursues Marcella for his own reasons, whether inspired by desire or guilt; however, other than his involvement in Morton's death, Cal is subordinate in all his relations. The political and sectarian struggles are played out on his body, complicating any reading of masculine behaviour and the body. As well as the more obvious use of the female body as an object of competing male projects, Cal also makes the male body the passive locus on which antagonistic forces impact. Cal's "feminised" masculine body is traumatised by violence and without the capacity for reassuring displays of strength, power and threat.

<18> As John Hill points out in relation to Cal in his essay "Images of Violence" (1988), and which also applies to *The Crying Game*, the trajectory of the passive IRA member submitting to his death/incarceration is a mode of tragedy, where the initial death functions as an 'error' or sin that will stymie any of hope of the romance plot being fulfilled and that must be expiated by suffering (prison/violent death). Like Fergus, Cal is marked by ambivalent behaviour in relation to his IRA comrades and functions as what Joe Cleary terms "the reluctant accomplice" to the aggressive operative Crilly who did the actual shooting (131). Cal's pursuit of Marcella anticipates Fergus's pursuit of Dil and in a similar manner to *The Crying Game* the romantic plot is interspersed with dream sequences involving the dead man. In addition to the reversal of the initial hostage scene Fergus later becomes the captive threatened at gunpoint, Fergus allows himself to be imprisoned and punished in an act that both atones for his involvement in Jody's death and also serves to protect Dil. However, while sharing with Cal some of the guilt and inner turmoil caused by the effects of terrorist violence, Fergus can still project images of masculine threat in the cause of defending a female, as shown when he repels the unwanted male advances of Dave toward Dil and his threat of violence to his employer when the latter insults Dil. It is possible to read such behaviour as enabled by Dil's apparent femaleness.

<19> The revelation of Dil's anatomy is a shock to Fergus's sense of his own sexual identity, but not his masculinity. However, this event inaugurates Fergus's transformation into a more passive figure in the film, pressured into helping the IRA. This passivity is physically registered when he is burnt by a cigarette and punched by Peter, and is subject to Jude's aggressive sexual advances when she grabs his groin. In fact, Fergus becomes the object of competing "female" attention and desire from Jude and Dil. This triangular relationship culminates in the climactic gunfight which takes in aspects of sexual jealousy as Dil confronts the female body that seduced Jody and led to his death: "She used those tits and that cute little arse to get him, didn't she? Tell me what she wore" (*The Crying Game*).

The way the film puts different bodies to work in what have been understood as gendered roles ultimately tends to denaturalize conventional expectations of how bodies behave. Fergus and Dil's relationship presents the non-symmetrical relationship between biology, gender and sexuality. On one level, they continue to perform conventional gender identities, but punctuated by ironic and comic references to Dil's body. This relationship between a transgendered person and a straight man defies easy categorization as either straight or queer. Dil's appearance at the end of the film as a glamorous woman in the drab prison setting suggests the enduring legacy of the film's subversive take on gender relations. Hill notes that at this point of the film the political in terms of Northern Ireland seems to have faded as a focus (1998, 92), however as we have shown the socio-political questioning of gender, sexuality and domesticity continues to resonate.

<20> Unlike Cal and Fergus, Pyle is a self-justifying agent of terror who unsuccessfully resists retribution. As in the other films under discussion, the body plays a key role, floating in the water in the film's opening shot and forming the film's central enigma: who is the person and how did they get there. In contrast to Joseph Mankiewicz's 1957 film that departed from Graham Greene's novel in portraying Pyle (played by real-life war hero Audie Murphy) as an honest American businessman uninvolved in the bombings and thus an innocent victim of sexual intrigue, Philip Noyce's 2002 version shows Pyle's political and romantic activities as the source of his murder. Fowler's betrayal of Pyle appears to stem from both jealousy and revulsion at the latter's key role in the bombing. Pyle's dead body signifies the dangers of homosocial bonding and questions whether the male-male relations that maintain patriarchy derive from shared masculine values after all. Pyle presumes integrity on Fowler's part and underestimates the potential of jealousy to provoke violence. While being extremely dangerous, Pyle as the film's symbolic American is simultaneously portrayed as perhaps immature or unsophisticated in love. Despite his conspicuous projection of a strong masculine presence in the film and his display of heroic qualities, saving Fowler's life during an encounter with Communist rebels, there is a clear connection between his political zealotry and sexual innocence or immaturity.

<21> In common with the other films, the conclusion of *The Quiet American* resonates with the shocking transformation the central romantic relationship has gone through. Fowler's reunion with Phuong bears the traces of their involvement with Pyle: Phuong admits that she misses Pyle and Fowler apologizes to her, although Phuong does not understand why Fowler does so. The love that Fowler feels for Phuong has been changed by his betrayal of Pyle to the Communists and so the heterosexual and homosocial desire in the film ultimately becomes linked to very negative forces. The uneasiness that thus permeates Fowler and Phuong's relationship is underlined by Fowler's remarks about Vietnam at the end of the film "they say that there is a ghost in every house, and if you can make peace with him, he will remain quiet" (*The Quiet American*). Pyle is "quiet" but has become the disembodied ghost that haunts Fowler and Phuong, filling them with disquiet just as Jody and Morton haunted Fergus and Cal.

<22> Like Cal and Fergus, Yolanda is imprisoned; however, she is unrepentant and rejects any contact or help from Rejas. The detective's decision to secure light for Yolanda's cell costs him any chance of high political office and signals the collapse of hope for securing political change and for romance. *The Dancer Upstairs* portrays the inability of Rejas to counter the affection Ezequiel inspires in his female followers, indicated earlier in the film by Yolanda's rejection of the bourgeois role of mistress. Yolanda's refusal suggests her desire for new sexual and gender arrangements opened up by the political revolution sought by her terrorist organisation. This further attests to the questioning of heteronormative life and the domestic in the film, particularly apparent in the depiction of Rejas's unhappy marriage.

<23> Yolanda is not shown on screen after her arrest and her absent body is replaced by Rejas's daughter as the focus of his attention. The film ends with Rejas watching his daughter dancing as if she, in some way, represented Yolanda before she (and by association his country) became corrupted. This transfer of emotional investment to the pre-sexual and pre-political body of the child may function as a source of consolation in the face of the failure of politics and romance, although a fragile and temporary one given the terrorists' use of children and young women in their campaign of violence.

Conclusion

<24> The frequent intertwining of desire and terrorist narratives in the films discussed typically places the romantic relationships at the centre of their explorations of political conflict. *The Siege* (1998) by contrast is notable for its resistance to a successful romantic plot; in fact CIA agent Sharon Bridger's lover Samir turns out to be a suicide bomber. Samir's trajectory from the domestic role of protected, suffering, passive victim to the "masculine", assertive one of politics and violence mirrors Fergus, and especially Cal's, development in the opposite direction, demonstrating a consistent polarity at work in cinematic presentations of terrorists. Samir's body, especially its blurring of distinctions between feminine and masculine behaviour, is all the more threatening because unlike the other terrorists discussed it is unthreatened by the world of romance and desire in which it duplicitously operates. Although *The Siege* does not portray a full-fledged romance between FBI agent Anthony Hubbard and Bridger, they grow increasingly intimate as the film progresses. Hubbard repeatedly attempts to get Bridger to turn Samir over to his agents, but she refuses and the sense of a love triangle between these three figures is articulated in the film by Hubbard's Lebanese-American deputy who remarks "The three of you really do make a lovely couple" (*The Siege*) [7]. Referring to a tangled web of CIA involvement in the Middle East, Hubbard asks Bridger if she is sure she knows whom she is sleeping with, and the film connects these two aspects of "sleeping with" connoting both sexual relations and strategic alliances with foreign paramilitary groups. The film charts Hubbard's attempt to coax Bridger away from involvement in ethically dubious "covert operations" and from Samir, but he is not wholly successful in this and his final victory over both the terrorists and a military usurpation of civil power comes only after her death at the hands of Samir. The subordination of the romance plot to the resolution of political conflict between Hubbard and the autocratic General Devereaux, who has assumed military control of Brooklyn, tends to confirm Cleary's wider argument concerning the apparent incompatibility of successful political resolution on the one hand and emotional and sexual fulfillment on the other [8]. It is only through the jettisoning of the romantic that *The Siege* can orchestrate a reassuring conclusion of the political problem of how to deal with terrorism.

<25> As we have seen *Cal*, *The Crying Game*, *The Quiet American* and *The Dancer Upstairs* tend to portray romance and desire as depoliticising influences and *The Siege* in a comparable way presents them as generally incompatible with or a distraction from a sustained analysis of political issues. *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (1985) by contrast, based on Manuel Puig's novel (1976), is notable for the way sexuality itself becomes the primary political focus of the film. The film foregrounds the humanity, honor and humility of the terrorist figure, Valentin Arregui, within a brutal penal system that seeks to punish, interrogate and torture him. His qualities make Valentin a "real man" and "saint" in the opinion of Luis Molina, his homosexual cellmate, and necessitate that the viewer distinguishes between the terrorist as criminal and the terrorist as freedom fighter (Cleveland 2004, 82-4). From the perspective of the prison authorities, although it is incarcerated Valentin's body is threatening in so far as it symbolizes the wider terrorist menace posed by his group. While we see Valentin's body tortured and poisoned in the film, in addition, as in the other films discussed, his body is threatened by the complex world of love and romance that Molina and his stories represent. Like Marcella, Dil and Phuong, Molina offers love, domesticity and human kindness that both intimidate and attract the terrorist figures (with the exception of Samir). Moreover, despite an initial hostility towards his cellmate, the intimate and sexual relationship that develops between Valentin and Molina offers the terrorist a taste of the domestic happiness he has renounced for his political cause and does not appear to compromise his masculinity or sexuality. Interestingly, it is this queer relationship which Valentin sanctions that mitigates the actual threat posed by Molina, who was originally placed in Valentin's cell in order to gain information for the authorities about his terrorist associates. Whereas the other films considered here conclude with the punishment of the terrorist's body, *Kiss of the Spider Woman's* final scene presents a dream of an apolitical domestic sphere of happiness and sexual fulfillment as Valentin dreams before death of escape into the sunset with the woman he loved, and also traces the politicization of the subject through sexual desire [9]. Unlike the other films discussed romance here is a path toward political engagement in reality not the dream of a space outside political conflict. The affection Molina feels for Valentin transforms him in the eyes of the authorities from a sexual deviant, who may have his uses, into the threatening body of the terrorist [10]. Having been shot while trying to get a message to Valentin's comrades, Molina refuses to cooperate with the police and they surmise that he was "more deeply involved than [they] suspected" (*Kiss of the Spider Woman*). Molina's transformation from an understanding of himself in relation to a depoliticised fantasy world of romance, to seeing himself as a threatened and threatening body subject to state punishment and brutality is the primary dramatic and ultimately political trajectory of the film. Although Molina's sacrifice is for Valentin and not his revolutionary cause, it is a political act that validates and legitimises his sexuality and his dead

body opens up the possibility, closed within the other films discussed, of an alignment of the political act and the sexual/romantic cause.

<26> In conclusion, the interaction of romantic and terrorist plotlines in *Cal*, *The Crying Game*, *The Quiet American* and *The Dancer Upstairs* has generally resulted in a move of focus away from politics towards personal relationships with the effect however of problematising supposed sexual and gender norms and questioning established heterosexual relationships. The failure of *The Siege*'s central romantic relationship can therefore be read as a necessary condition of the film's more fully developed political narrative, rather than an unrelated factor. While we have explored the effects of this prevalent model of portraying the terrorist in contemporary cinema, especially in relation to gender and sexuality, *Kiss of the Spider Woman* remains an important exception to these films' shared configurations. In this film by contrast the intertwining of the romance and terrorist plots evades the either/or paradigm of the personal and the political and ultimately reveals the emergence of a potential unity of political and sexual dissidence.

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Notes

[1] According to Richard Ingram, writing in the aftermath of 9/11, the Terrorist has become a virtually meaningless word and only has signification for propaganda purposes. For writers like Ingram, terrorism is usually not applied to "those thought to be 'on our side' or at least to have a good cause" (Ingram 2001): these figures are guerrillas, revolutionaries and freedom fighters. Noam Chomsky in his work *9-11* has also drawn attention to the rhetorical use of the term terrorist to discredit the person(s) described: " Everyone condemns terrorism, but we have to ask what they mean... I use the term in the literal sense and hence condemn all terrorist actions, not only those called 'terrorist' for propagandistic reasons..." (Chomsky 2001, 91). In this essay, we use the term terrorist to signify those figures in recent films who in an organised and systematic way bomb, kidnap and assassinate to further their political or social causes. Our use of the word "terrorist" is not intended to convey automatic denigration of a particular political cause but rather to draw attention to the secrecy surrounding the paramilitary agent's identity in the films under discussion and the important role this secrecy plays in the effect their violent actions have on others. The ability of the terrorist to commit acts of violence and remain unidentified is a key factor in the generation of terror in the public mind, and is a central aspect of our analysis of contemporary cinema. [^]

[2] See 'An Interview with Neil Jordan', *Irish Independent*, 30 October 1992. This motif is also evident in *Patriot Games* in which the female terrorist (Annette) seduces and murders the brigade commander of the IRA, Jimmy O'Reardon. [^]

[3] See Edge 173-86; Lurie 51-62; Giles 8-9. [^]

[4] These films all deviate from the stereotype of the terrorist as the psychopathic, heartless killer by presenting terrorists who display human and sympathetic characteristics. The films gesture towards a world beyond conflict where the friendship, common humanity and decency of the terrorist can be fully actualised and the political and the personal need not collide (Crewe 114). In *Patriot Games* the political becomes subordinate to the familial: Sean Miller forsakes terrorism to avenge his younger brother (Paddy) who is killed by CIA agent Jack Ryan. Miller's revenge is to target Ryan's family and Ryan's central goal to prevent him, thus the film underlines the sanctity of familial bonds and of the domestic space. As Gibson asserts, "Miller becomes the avenging terrorist, his homosocial love for his dead brother perverted into a homoerotic obsession with Ryan and a need to destroy Ryan's super-heteronormative life" (Gibson para. 18). In *The Jackal* the terrorists and former lovers Declan Mulqueen (an IRA sharpshooter) and Isabella Celia Zancona (a Basque Separatist) are contrasted with the professional, materialistic and brutal assassin, the Jackal: they are "fire, all passion" while he is "ice" and has "no feeling, nothing." [^]

[5] In *The Devil's Own*, New York cop Tom O'Meara vents his fury at house guest Rory for endangering his wife and daughters on discovering that Rory is really the fugitive terrorist Frankie McGuire; yet the film also gestures towards the possibilities of peace in the shape of the domestic family scenes in which Tom is Rory's father substitute. *The Jackal* ends with both terrorists expressing their desire to retreat from the political into a domestic realm of marriage and children: Isabella tells Mulqueen that she is happy now that she can close her eyes and no "dead faces" come to wake her. [^]

[6] In *The Jackal* the IRA terrorist is accused by the Jackal of not being able "to protect his women," referring to his former lover Isabella, the ex-KGB agent Major Valentina Koslova, America's First Lady - the real target of the Jackal's assassination attempt - and the young girl Maggie whom he takes prisoner in the final scene. Interestingly, it is Isabella who finally kills the Jackal in revenge for his role in the death of her and Mulqueen's unborn child. [^]

[7] As Philip Jenkins points out in *Images of Terror: What We Can and Can't Know about Terrorism* (2003) "It was thought imperative to have a sympathetic Arab character among the heroic investigators" (159). In fact, the Lebanese-American deputy's emotional reunion with his teenage son who has been released from internment performs a similar function to Rejas's emotional attendance at his daughter's performance: re-orienting the film from romantic to paternal love. [^]

[8] *The Siege* presents a strong ideological rivalry between Hubbard and General Devereaux with Bridger forming a mediating ('bridging') role between them, having participated both in Hubbard's law enforcement investigation on the one hand, and in covert military operations abroad of the illegal type endorsed and practiced by Devereaux on the other. Early on Bridger is discovered by Hubbard holding a suspect in a basement who seems to have been tortured and he arrests her. Bridger is also present later on when Devereaux tortures a prisoner to death, despite Hubbard's protests. Hubbard consistently operates within the law, obtaining warrants before acting and castigating his deputy when he assaults Samir. The federal agent's defense of the rule of law flies in the face of Devereaux's assumption of military power over Brooklyn and the use of mass internment and torture to protect against terrorism and the film ends with his arrest of Devereaux and the re-establishment of legal norms and the end of their abuse by the general. Hubbard's rejection of illegal actions sees him triumph over both the terrorist and the autocratic General. The film's endorsement of police/federal power portrays the CIA/military pursuit of the terrorists as both unethical and counter-productive, in that the shadowy world of sponsorship of fighters overseas has led to a threat against New York and the infiltration by Samir. [^]

[9] In *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, Valentin experiences weakness and helplessness in prison because he is unable to protect his fellow revolutionaries. He fears being spoiled (feminized) by Molina's kindness, believing the revolutionary/terrorist must place the struggle before personal pleasure. Like *The Crying Game*, this film complicates distinctions and binaries between the personal and the political, femininity and masculinity, and reality and fantasy. In his life before imprisonment, Valentin chose the cause over his love for Martha, who asked him to leave the movement; now he doesn't want Molina to "act like a woman," afraid that

kindness, sensitivity and love will make him forget his cause. Consequently Dil, together with Molina and Martha (the woman Valentin imagines escaping with as part of his fantasy at death) can be seen as Spider women who offer a domestic world of food and comfort to the terrorist. Dil tells Fergus "See I was always best looking after someone. Must be something in the genes" (*The Crying Game*). [^]

[10] There is a sense in this film that Molina takes on Valentin's identity, remarking "I feel like I wasn't myself anymore as if somehow I was you" (*Kiss of the Spider Woman*). [^]

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