

Institution: Anglia Ruskin University
Unit of Assessment: 36 Communication, Cultural and Media Studies
Title of case study: Public dissemination to challenge and illuminate cultural values and social assumptions around 'cinesexuality'
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>On the basis of the research in her book <i>Cinesexuality</i> (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), Patricia MacCormack gave nine public lectures at Treadwell's bookshop in London (2009-2011) to 450 people in total, rethinking traditional ideas of gender, identity, feminism and occultism in cinema. All nine lectures sold out. She also appeared on 16 DVDs being interviewed or as interviewer, explaining and distributing key concepts from <i>Cinesexuality</i> that question how we watch as gendered viewers, and what licit and illicit paradigms constitute transgression and the politics of cinematic pleasure. Impact occurred via:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Increasing public understanding of the relationship between image and spectator with reference to identity, alterity and ethics; 2) Enabling public participation with themes in contemporary philosophy that validate multiple subject positions, and encourage social inclusion and equality through creative practice in film and other arts, as consumers and producers.
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The primary research underpinning public impact was MacCormack's monograph, <i>Cinesexuality</i> (Ashgate, 2008). Research for this was conducted at Anglia Ruskin, where MacCormack has been employed since 2001, first as a lecturer, then a senior lecturer, and now as Reader. The research began with a series of articles (see Section 3) initiated in 2006 that sought to deal with issues of spectatorship differently via Continental Philosophy, feminism and queer theory in order to study the impact of cinema on the constitution of alternate identities. Through this goal, the ethical impact of how images are received, and how this reception can extend to a more ethical operation of social inclusion for different subject positions through art, was analysed. Two articles cited in Section 3 were adapted and in 2007-8 the rest of the monograph was completed, before it was published in 2008. It was funded by a prestigious AHRC Research Leave Award (£23,000). Key findings included the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How we watch, rather than what we watch, is capable of constituting an openness to difference, which translates to openness to other subjects, that can affect social policy; • Art, while occupying a fictive space, is real in its capacity to alter ideologies and actions in the social sphere; • The relationship between desire and the cinematic image – what MacCormack terms 'cinesexuality' – allows spectators to contemplate the ways they watch in an ethical operation of self-reflection, thus making them accountable active viewers rather than passive spectators. <p>Through eight chapters (85,000 words) various issues that extended beyond cinema studies were also challenged. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The connectivity between cinema and all art, beyond the discretion of medium; • The redundancy of genre; • Challenges to concepts of 'perversion' and 'normativity' in reference to desire and its relationship with identity through what can be considered examples of 'extreme' perversion; • The necessity of feminism, queer theory and other philosophies of alterity as they can be translated into daily life beyond both spectatorship and academics. <p>MacCormack's book is highly regarded. Catherine Grant chose <i>Cinesexuality</i> as academic book of the week in <i>The Times Higher Education</i> (18 Dec 2008), calling it an 'ambitious and avowedly experimental work on film spectatorship ... in which meanings of gender, sexuality, propriety and subjectivity are problematised'.</p> <p>Joanna McIntyre in <i>M/C Reviews</i> said: 'It is easy to foresee the importance of this book as a defining text. Scholars of film, feminism, queer theory, post-structuralist theory and philosophy will</p>

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no doubt tease out the complexities of MacCormack's work throughout the coming years to discover multiple applications and possible expansions'. (<http://reviews.media-culture.org.au/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=3411>).

Cinesexuality has formed the basis of journal articles, such as Tim Huntley's 'Abstraction is Ethical: The Ecstatic and Erotic in Patricia MacCormack's *Cinesexuality*' (*Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies*, Issue 8, June 2010).

In Anglia Ruskin's External Assessment Exercise in 2012, the External Assessor gave the book a 4* rating. (This can be provided by the HEI on request). This provides evidence of the book's esteem.

3. References to the research

1. Patricia MacCormack, *Cinesexuality* (Aldershot: Ashgate 2008). This is included in REF2.
2. Patricia MacCormack, 'A Cinema of Desire: Cinesexuality and Guattari's Asignifying Cinema.' *Women: Special Issue on Guattari and Feminism* 16 (3), Winter 2005/6. This is available from the HEI on request.
3. Patricia MacCormack 'Cinemasochism: Time, Space and Submission.' In D.N. Rodowick, ed. *The Afterimage of Gilles Deleuze's Film Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009). This is available from the HEI on request.
4. Patricia MacCormack, 'Masochistic Cinesexuality'. In Mathijs, E. and Mendik, X eds. *Alternative Europe: Eurotrash and Exploitation Cinema Since 1945* (London: Wallflower and New York: Columbia UP, 2004). This is available from the HEI on request.

4. Details of the impact

i) Increasing public debate of issues of gender, social inclusion, power relations and the ethics of spectatorship through widely distributed DVDs

As a result of their engagement with *Cinesexuality*, four directors and producers invited MacCormack to appear talking about the themes that were addressed in *Cinesexuality* on DVDs intended for a wide public audience. These films are often associated with issues of violence, masculinity and are rarely perceived through a feminist frame. Because of MacCormack's participation, viewers of these DVD extras were impacted by radically alternate ways of thinking about (i) meanings within the films and (ii) how they watched these films in relation to gender and power dynamics.

The DVDs included:

- The 13 films of Jean Rollin (2009, 30,000+ unit sales), and *Burke and Hare* (2010, 2000 unit sales) and *Daughter of Darkness* (2010, 3000 unit sales) from Redemption Films (UK and US distribution);
- *Suspiria* (2009) Nouveaux Pictures release (UK and US distribution, 1400 unit sales, UK and European distribution);
- *Video Nasties: The Definitive Guide* (2009) (UK, US and Australian Distribution, repeat screenings on The Horror Channel, 5000+ unit sales). This DVD has the additional impact of reflecting upon and affecting future censorship debates and regulation;
- *Maitresse* (BFI, 2012). (UK distribution, approx. UK sales 2000 units).

ii) Challenging public understanding of stereotypes of gender and desire by drawing (in art practice and script consultancy) on *Cinesexuality's* address to the shift from spectatorship as dialectic to baroque

MacCormack's was commissioned, on the basis of *Cinesexuality*, by the Whitechapel Gallery in

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London to act as script consultant on the Gonda film project, directed by Ursula Mayer (2009). This film premiered on 12 April 2012. (<http://www.art-agenda.com/reviews/ursula-mayer%E2%80%99s-gonda/>). MacCormack wrote the script for the second part of the Gonda trilogy, *Pheres*. This was filmed in October 2012. MacCormack's script drew on philosophical ideas from *Cinesexuality* to reorient traditional concepts of the relationship between gender, performance, image and identity that directly ask the audience to become accountable for their own practices of spectatorship, the key claim which underpins *Cinesexuality*. *Gonda* has been downloaded 12,000 times and *Pheres* has been downloaded 5000 times. *Pheres* is still showing as an installation at 21er Haus in Vienna (13 Oct 2013 –12 Jan 2014) so viewer numbers are rising (<http://www.euromuse.net/en/exhibitions/exhibition/view-e/ursula-mayer>).

iii) Increasing public understanding of concepts related to feminism, cinema and the social impact of art through public lectures

MacCormack increased public understanding of the above issues through a series of public talks, including the lecture series at Treadwells, and through participation in public arts festivals.

Treadwell's is a London bookshop that specialises in esoteric books, and for 10 years has been running workshops, events and public lectures that draw participants from all walks of life and all areas. Past presenters have included academics and students but also politicians, people in legal studies, art practitioners, activists and others. Treadwell's aims to draw together those who would not ordinarily converge to share ideas and disseminate theories and practices in a direct attempt to create impact between audiences and individuals and expose ordinarily closed worlds such as academia, public policy and art practice to the entire community to foster exchanges and developments. Presenting at Treadwell's is by invitation and entry to each lecture costs the public between £7-15. There were 50 places at each of MacCormack's talks, all of which sold out. These people came from many areas of public life. They included artists, medical and legal professionals, public workers, and students of various disciplines. MacCormack's talks increased their understanding of the ethical relation between art and experience as it translates to mediation between different subjects. In her talks on cinema, occultism and the esoteric, MacCormack drew attention to a neglected strand through the lens of feminism, focusing on sexuality and the social demonization of alterity, and thus addressing issues of social inclusion and cohesion.

In addition to the lecture series, MacCormack also spoke about her research at a range of public festivals. These included:

- *Abandon Normal Devices Festival of Cinema and Digital Culture*. Manchester, October 2010. MacCormack was a paid interviewed speaker at this event, which was attended by approx. 120 people. The festival utilised MacCormack as a guest to conduct interviews based around challenges to gender in cinema. This increased the level of public debate about the perception of gender as performative and learned, and publicly challenged opinions based on biological essentialism which have been detrimental to social equality and inclusion;
- *Spill Festival*. Barbican. London. April 2011. MacCormack was a paid interview panel guest speaker at this event, which was attended by approximately 40 people. This festival panel focused on and discussed one chapter of *Cinesexuality* ('Zombies without Organs'), for 40 members of the public, increasing their understanding of the significance of feminine sexuality in the burgeoning popularity of zombie culture in various media, including film, television, art, music and popular culture.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. Owner *Treadwell's Books* London has provided a letter outlining MacCormack's talks.
2. Commissioner for extras on DVD releases for the British Film Institute has provided a letter

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outlining McCormack's input.

3. Festival organiser for *Abandon Normal Devices (AND)* Festival, Manchester 2010, has provided a letter outlining MacCormack's role.

4. Session organiser for *Spill* Festival, Barbican London 2010, has provided a letter outlining MacCormack's role.

5. Artist and director of *Gonda I* and *II*, has provided a letter outlining MacCormack's role.