

	Open College of the Arts		
	Tutor report		

Student name	Keith Greenough	Student number	416177
Course/Module	Visual Studies 1	Assignment number	4

Dear Keith

Many thanks for the latest assignment. I thought this was a really solid piece of work and you had chosen good theoretical texts and an appropriate case study through which to examine the ideas and issues.

Feedback on assignment

I think it is particularly interesting that *Forbidden Planet* was linked at the time to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. I could be cynical and suggest that this provides the film with a sort of respectable 'clothing' in that it could be compared to and thus its credibility raised by this sort of association! This has often been the argument in relation to images of the nude, which is an applicable topic for this part of the course. Hence the difference between 'the naked' and 'the nude' as established by John Berger, which I think still holds true.

So many historical paintings of female nudes were in reality intended for male consumption, and not of an intellectual sort, but by 'dressing' them up in allegory or mythology, all was made correct and erudite. One of the classic examples I always think is Cabanel's *The Birth of Venus*



which really is a quite absurd painting, with the nude apparently floating on the surface of the water as if it were a firm material, but with the tell-tale positioning of her body and the veiling of her face – all classic ways of making the female nude both available and non-threatening. (Unlike Manet's *Olympia* – interestingly from the same year of 1863 – which caused uproar because it broke all these unspoken rules).

I thought that the connection to the unconscious was an interesting concept to consider particularly in connection to your comment concerning Morbius. Of course in the context of the film this would provide yet another way for the 'heroic rescuers' to demonstrate their rationale and logical dominance over this character. This dominance then easily slides across to his daughter Altaira.

It's interesting too that Morbius is 'sacrificed' within the film but his daughter is not. Again this is a gendered decision and one frequently seen in this type of film and in this period. Not only is the female stereotyped, but the male also.

I thought that you clearly set out the issues you would examine and these linked together well. The acceptance at the time that all protagonists would be white is interesting, and I am sure this is a reflection of society at the time, and not just in America. As you say this does resonate with colonialism, and thus with power and definition of the colonized as 'other'. The use of Dyer was perfect and the parallel with the other 1950s film was appropriate. Viewed now, these distinctions do appear very crude.

In the film the notion of 'otherness' could be transferred to the unconscious, and thus to Freudian ideas. The idea of rationality overcoming chaos was very important, and of course this themes in films of the 1950s and 1960s can very much be linked to the context of the Cold War, where the threat of imminent catastrophe was so powerful. A further connection can be made in that it was uncertain as to when that catastrophe might occur and in what form. In some ways people have argued that the Cold War was more frightening than an actual war, precisely because it could not be visualized.

I thought you also made good comments about the contrast between the orderly control of the Americans (representing their race and country) counterposed against the disorderliness of the unknown. The supposed superiority of the white colonisers is thus established in its power to be organized, take orders and act in a controlled manner. All of this can of course also be linked to the growing Civil Rights movement in America.

Your arguments concerning the viewer's approach to Altaira was thorough and thoughtful, and as you say, the viewpoint of both men and women can be seen as accommodated. She is both aspirational and desirable, in the context of the day. Her passivity is also vital (as with the *Stepford Wives*, as an extreme example). I think it is so interesting the way in which such women were presented often scantily clad and yet at the same time innocent! It's a neat trick to pull off! It makes me think of the

recurrent cliché in horror films where the female lead character, inexplicably, always appears to be running around either in her nightclothes, or at the very least in shorts and a skimpy top. There are other echoes too, of the contemporary romantic novels of the day – the ‘nice’ outcome for Abrams and Altaira would have fitted the bill perfectly.

Finally – ensure that your bibliography is set out in alphabetical order.

I’ve had a look at the material on your blog and it all looks solid. Interesting to see you mention Hitchcock’s *Vertigo*. I think there’s a programme on sometime soon about Hitchcock’s relationship with his leading women, and how he dominated them – especially in *The Birds*. Laura Mulvey would have a field day with him. In *Vertigo* the female lead is the classic mix of innocent blonde and temptress.

I’ve given you a deadline of about 3 months, but we’re fine for time.

I hope you have a lovely Christmas, and all best for the New Year.
Pauline

Tutor name:	Dr Pauline Rose
Date	19 December 2012
Next assignment due	30 March 2013