

Free essay on the act of killing; movie and politics

[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)



Films play a big role in the representation of society, in the cultural, political, and social scenes in society. Various genres of the film act to different effect in the society, with some providing educative insights, political activism in film, entertainment, all depending on the nature of the film. Film has found use previously as a tool through which directors and activists have utilized in the portrayal of historical events; the intention being to present the occurrences in as much a real way as to have an impact on their targeted audience. Historical events are often mucked by unpleasant occurrences, which the public works to either preserve in their collective memory, or discard it into oblivion as a fragment of memory to an event that never occurred. The relevance of such events either politically, socially, or otherwise to a society determines the way they wish their memory handled (Nichols, Bill. pg 72-89). The role of the film in portraying such events is thus shaped by the nature and the intended impact and role the film is expected to play extending the literature on such events. The use of reenactments, for instance, have been frowned upon as appropriate methods of depicting past events by criticism that the participants are aware of cameras rolling thus inhibiting their true depictions when the cameras are not in their focus. As Bill Nichols notes in his article ' Documentary Reenactment and the Fantastic Subject' the use of documentaries, according to (Robert Drew, et. al.,) ' who proclaimed everything except what took place in front of the camera without rehearsal or prompting to be a fabrication, inauthentic. Observational or direct cinema generated an honest record of what would have happened had the camera not been there or what does happen as a result of the camera recording people who know they are being filmed (Nichols, Bill. pg 72-89).'

The attitude of the film making as an art, which needs defined methods, and restricted definitions as to its credibility have diffused with the proliferation of video cameras and the liberty of individuals to make and distribute videos and images freely. This liberalization is the main shackle that the film industry has been rid of, and that has enabled the creation of films in the depiction of contemporary and historical events in a manner that is as true as the maker would wish it be. The limitation in the classification, therefore, helps in making of a society that is free to express its history as a recreation, a narration, or a playing out of the events in the film. This paper seeks to espouse how films work as a tool for cultural remembrance or cultural amnesia in consideration of the Indonesian anti-communist purge, Afro-Caribbean Diaspora, and the French Algerian decolonization. Further, the paper shall utilize specific movies depicting these events and how the film makers have used them as means to engage historical specificities of events, worked as a medium in creating collective memories, and to work through collective traumas.

Common guilt memory and a view at the future is one of the many themes that emerge in films depicting historical injustices. In the Afro-Caribbean Diaspora, the mark of the scourge of slavery stills remains in the people that suffered this untold injustice. Slavery, an injustice that happened in the Americas and the Caribbean in the 1500s to the 1800s is depicted poignantly in the movie 12 years a slave. The movie uses fiction to re-enact the events that happened in the times, thus reviving debate on the subject and motivating the recollection of the injustice among the populations of the Caribbean's and the Americas. The main character in the movie, Solomon, is

a free man before his capture. He, however, endures hardship and mistreatment at the hands of his owners in the plantations he is sold. The other star actor in the movie, Patsey, is a black woman who shows immense will and strength of character enduring the struggles she is subjected to by her slave master. The use of these characters to play fictional roles in events they were not part of is an attempt at transposing them into the shoes of the actual slaves preceding them, and acting out their [pain for the benefit of the whole society. The scourge of racism is absent in the Caribbean's in modern times, however, the use of film to reenact these events helps in healing the rifts that occurred by availing the public a chance at reflection, and deterrence from the repeat of similar actions.

The movie 12 years a slave deviates from the documentary The Act of Killing in several important aspects. The movie uses recreation of events that may not have occurred, or dwells in a general depiction of events that the Africans were subjected to in the slave plantations while the documentary uses the actual perpetrators of the murders to re-enact the killings on themselves in reversed either roles or other actors. The documentary affords the actors, and in this case the perpetrators of the killing a chance to re-live their crimes and experience the emotion that guided them in their killings. By this feature, the documentary attempts at pointing out the wrongness of their actions to them by making them live them again. This leads the lead actor, Congo, who presently enjoys celebrity status for his conceived liberation of Indonesia to reveal that the events haunt him and he uses drugs and music as a distraction from the nightmares that haunt him. Further, the populace of Indonesia is afforded the chance to view the events with a

neutral eye which similarly leads to a re-evaluation on the appropriateness of the killings that happened in the Indonesian communist purge. The newspaper worker who admits of his oblivion to the killings during their happening reveals that indeed the killings were wrong and that he would not have condoned them if he had viewed them in a different light. This instance reveals the collective amnesia that the populace of Indonesia has adopted to these events relegating them to the back of their collective memory as a slight historic event. They do this without acknowledging that there were rights of individuals that were broken, and innocent lives taken in unwarranted circumstances.

The act of killing is a movie based on the Indonesian mass murders of perceived communists and extremists by the government in the 1950s to the 1960s. It is based upon the re-enactments of the actual perpetrators of the murders, whom the director succeeds at portraying in the film, making them grow in their previous characters as murderers, and showing the journey that Indonesia has taken in regularizing the murderers into cult heroes. Their cult hero status masks their atrocities and elevates them to celebrity status despite their wrongdoing. The events of the Indonesian mass murders occurred after the ascension to power of a new government led by the Generals Nasution and Suharto. The violent capture of power executed by the generals continued after their ascension, where they recruited millions of youths/ gangsters to commit mass murders of communists and perceived enemies of the government ranging from intellectuals to religious leaders. The protagonist in the movie, Anwar Congo is regarded as a hero in his native Indonesia. His acts and those of his group are viewed upon as the

liberating lights of the Indonesian people. A worker in a newspaper company exemplifies this oblivion the Indonesian populace regards the murderers with when he muses on how he could not have noticed the killings going on right under his nose. The reality is that; indeed he noticed; the paper worked for supported the killers by fabricating evidence and publishing lists of purported communists lined up for execution. The problem being; he was the unwitting participants guided by a public euphoria against the said communists to see the injustice committed. The extreme sycophancy that guided the commission of these murders is exhibit when one of Anwar's neighbors and extremist murderer re-enacts the scene where he had his stepfather killed. He is dragged out of the house amidst screams by his family, murdered in cold blood, and dumped in the street. The re-enactment of this scene shows the existence of a memory of the event, at least in the closest participants, that is Congo and his neighbor whose father in law was killed. This memory, which is revived by the film, is assumed presently in various ways amongst the Indonesians in the individual involvement, in the killings. The presumption that a person was either a sell out or a communist leading to their execution following the orders of a corrupt army with sights at consolidating power led to the loss of many individuals. The young man who participated in the killing and burying of his own relation would not have chosen to if the situation were to be played out presently. Hers shows increasing remorse as the scene advances up to the point of breaking down. The facade of heroism at having 'liberated' the country of communism is broken down by the power of memory and contemplation evoked by the documentary.

Decolonization was an act that proved hard for the French to accomplish. Their policy of administrating their colonies was that of assimilation where the colonies they acquired were to be treated as extensions of the motherland France. This approach did not work well in part due to the resistance of the assimilated people and in part due to the French way of imposing their authority on others that were not an appealing prospect for many of the assimilated nations. Algeria, a North African country was one of the French colonies in the African continent. While many of the decolonization efforts achieved between France and her subjects occurred peacefully, the decolonization process in Algeria included a long and protracted war in which the settlers in the colony wished to preserve it despite the wishes Paris. This conflict between the settlers and the anti-colonial forces in Algeria produced one of the longest and protracted independence wars waged by a subdued territory over their colonizers. In the analysis of this conflict, one battle that emerged is the infamous battle of Algiers where the colonialist wishing to defend the empire clashed with anti-colonialist drawn from the Arab native population of Algeria. The movie 'Injustice and Conflict Escalation in the Battle of Algiers' recreates the events at the battle of Algiers, helping in showing the level of conflict and the tensions that played out leading to the conflict. Front de Liberation Nationale (FLN) was the one of the radical movements that pursued the removal of French colonialists from their territory. In the movie, the directors portray a young man Ali La Pointe, who acquires his radical traits while incarcerated. He rises among the ranks in the movement and becomes among the leaders of the Front de Liberation Nationale. On the French side, the key figure is

played by Lieutenant-Colonel Mathieu. The movie recreates the situation experienced in Algeria during the war for independence. The Algerians shows the enduring spirit of the liberation movement in fighting for their freedom. In one instance, the film shows the extreme force that the French used in silencing the movement. While Ali La Pointe is in jail, he witnesses the beheading of an Algerian revolutionary. This act is exact mirroring of the excessive force that the French used in quelling the rebellion of the Algerians. The resolve of the Algerians which led to their ultimate freedom, instead of killing their spirits, more Algerians were motivated to join in the war. This resolve is mirrored in the movie by the act of Ali La Pointe who radicalized after witnessing the beheading of a revolutionary.

The three historical events discussed in the paper continue to live among the various communities involved in it. The Indonesia communist purge illustrated by the documentary ' The act of killing' shows a community that is oblivious of its past, reveling in their perceived prosperity, while their regime and prosperity are built on bloodshed and injustice. The movie ' 12 years a slave' shows a community that identifies the mistakes they made in the past and are willing to make amends and move forward to the future. The movie in this case acts as a social relic serving to remind the society of their dark past and the risk they hold in slipping back to the dark days if they are not vigilant and aware of their past. The movie ' Injustice and Conflict Escalation in the Battle of Algiers' shows the historical injustices suffered by the people, the continuity in denial of one party to any wrongdoing. The movie is, therefore, an increase in the wealth of awareness of a hostility that existed, with its resolution still not arrived at with some French colonialists continuing

to hold the idea of the Empire as feasible.

Movies in this evaluation are seen as important tools in the enrichment of social relations by depicting the past in ways vivid and relevant to the social fabric created out of the historical occurrences of the society. Film therefore is useful in remembrance of the past, evaluation of the present in relation to the past and in determination of a better future devoid of the evils and injustices of the past.

Works Cited

Nichols, Bill. " Documentary Reenactment and the Fantasmatic Subject." CHICAGO JOURNALS 35 (2008): 72 89. <http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.1086/595629?uid=3738336&uid=2&uid=4&sid=21103870194723>. Web. 5 Mar. 2013.