



Open Library of Humanities



Part of the Ubiquity
Partner Network



Open Library of Humanities

PRIDE REVISITED: CINEMA, ACTIVISM AND RE-ACTIVATION

How to Cite: Vaughan, A 2020 Performing *Pride*: Re-enactment, Queer Identity and the Performance of Solidarity. *Open Library of Humanities*, 6(1): 24, pp. 1–20. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16995/olh.321>

Published: 30 June 2020

Peer Review:

This article has been peer reviewed through the double-blind process of *Open Library of Humanities*, which is a journal published by the Open Library of Humanities.

Copyright:

© 2020 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

Open Access:

Open Library of Humanities is a peer-reviewed open access journal.

Digital Preservation:

The Open Library of Humanities and all its journals are digitally preserved in the CLOCKSS scholarly archive service.

PRIDE REVISITED: CINEMA, ACTIVISM AND RE-ACTIVATION

Performing *Pride*: Re-enactment, Queer Identity and the Performance of Solidarity

Adam Vaughan

Solent University, UK

adam.vaughan@solent.ac.uk

This paper will investigate, analyse and comment upon the various layers of performance in *Pride*. An intertextual discursive approach, which will encompass the film *Pride* itself, contemporary historical footage and critical reception, will be used to address how multiple examples and definitions of performance combine within and outside of the film text to create meaning and encourage activism. Two performance theories will be applied.

Firstly, the work by philosopher and linguist, J.L. Austin, defined certain utterances as 'performative' (for example "I do" spoken during a wedding ceremony) because in saying what the person is doing, they perform that action. Secondly, Erving Goffman's research into the centrality of performance traditions in everyday social life remains influential nearly sixty years after it was first published. Applying these two theories to *Pride* allows the complex layers of performance in the film to develop.

As a result, this paper will focus on certain themes: performative activism where gay pride marches and the miners' strikes are reconstructed and, therefore, commemorated; musical performance and how it is used to create solidarity and a sense of community; and performative identity related to lesbian and gay identity (of which the performative process of 'coming out' is a part). The discussion will conclude that in these ways, through performative acts, the film is 'showing' an audience what political protest and acceptance 'looks like' and how it should be promoted.

'[N]o social group can afford to ignore the importance of cinema ... [for it] has acted as a repository of images of how people are and how they should be, images that are both produced by and help to produce the general thought and feeling of our culture.'

Richard Dyer (*Gays and Film*, 1977: 1)

As summarised by Dyer, as well as being mass products of entertainment or niche texts to shine a spotlight on an event or issue, films provide social templates for audiences to guide them on how best to perform their identities. This 'repository of images' that cinema can curate is dependent on the time and place the film was made and will therefore reflect the dominant ideology of its contemporary social and cultural space. Those who conform to this hegemony exercise the most control over what these images look like and how they should be interpreted. This means that for social groups who are not part of the dominant ideology, who are marginalised according to their gender, ethnicity, class or sexuality, it can be difficult even finding images of themselves in films and, when such representations do exist, they are often produced in order to reassert the dominant ideology.

Pride (dir. Matthew Warchus, 2014) is a film set in Britain during the 1980s under Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government, and is centred on two such marginalised groups who were the target of police harassment, media demonisation and legislative discrimination: homosexual men and women, and striking miners. Based on a script by Stephen Beresford, the film is the true story of London-based activist group Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM), and their fundraising and eventual trip to the Dulais valley in Wales as a show of solidarity between the two unlikely allies during the year-long miners' strike from 1984 to 1985. What emerges from viewing the film is the significance that performance – and its various definitions – plays both in the diegetic world of the narrative and also how extra-diegetic forms relate to our everyday activities. Some examples that will be expanded in my analysis of the film include: the 'Pits and Perverts' benefit concert that LGSM organised for the miners, the performative acts of social activism in the organised marches, the actors' portrayals of 'real life' people, historical re-enactments and other

theatrical ways of displaying the self. By interrogating how these different layers of performance interact within the film, this article aims to deepen our understanding of how *Pride* addresses the spectator to use its repository of images to further their acceptance and tolerance toward marginalised identities and as inspiration for how to mobilise and engage in meaningful social protest.

Different Types of Performance

Firstly, it is necessary to define how the terms 'performance' and 'performative' will be used in the analysis of *Pride* as they are frequently used interchangeably. However, for all their similarities, there are some key differences.

'Performative' is often defined as an adjective to describe something as having the qualities of a dramatic performance. However, I will be adopting British philosopher and linguist J.L. Austin's formulation of the 'performative utterance', which modifies the term into a verb. As detailed in his *Philosophical Papers*, Austin explains that the performative utterance is a phrase which both describes an action and performs that action and is different to the 'constative utterance' which merely describes an action (1970: 235). Examples include the bride and groom saying, "I do" at a wedding, or "I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth" as a bottle of champagne is smashed against its side because 'in saying what I do, I actually perform that action' (Austin 1970: 235).

James Loxley provides a succinct discussion of the implications that performative utterances have in the wider social sphere:

Austin points up the way in which our utterances can be performative: words do something in the world, something that is not just a matter of generating consequences, like persuading or amusing or alarming an audience. The promises, assertions, bets, threats and thanks that we offer one another are not this kind of action; but nor are they the linguistic description of non-linguistic actions going on elsewhere: they are actions in *themselves*, actions of a distinctively linguistic kind. They are 'performed' like other actions, or take place, like other worldly events, and thus make a difference in the world; it could be said that they produce a different world, even if only for a single speaker and a single addressee. (Loxley 2007: 2)

It is the emphasis on the action during the spoken act that is significant here. So, saying "I do" is not just a description of the act of marriage, it is also precisely 'doing marriage'. It is the activity brought into existence through the speech act. And as these descriptions suggest, performativity is also concerned with a performance framework. In this way, a wedding ceremony casts the bride and groom as the main characters, the church altar as the stage and the congregation as the audience. However, the performative is not just limited to speech. For Stella Bruzzi, who writes about documentary production specifically, filmmaking can be performative because the films' specific 'truths' are only expressed at 'the moment of filming' (2006: 10). In this formulation, the film camera capturing what appears before it is equivalent to the performative utterance, bringing the filmed images into being.

For sociologist Erving Goffman, most if not all social interactions rely upon dramaturgical practices if they are to be successfully negotiated. In his seminal text from 1959, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman proposes a series of conclusions drawn from primary case-studies in which he observed people adopt theatrical prerequisites during everyday activities. It will be useful to summarise some of these here for how they can be identified as influencing the making of *Pride* and an audience's response to the film.

Firstly, during an ordinary meeting, an individual converses with another person or group of people. The former adopts the role of (social) actor and the latter his or her audience. Goffman states that during the interaction the individual will both *give impressions* and *give off impressions* (1969: 14). For example, let us say that the individual has agreed to meet another person to apologise for something. They say, "I'm sorry". The impression the individual *gives*, through the words and tone that is spoken, is that they are remorseful and want to reconcile with the other person. However, the individual is stood with their arms folded in front of them, which *gives off* the impression that the apology is not entirely sincere (Vaughan 2018). What this demonstrates is that, similar to a spectator attending a play, at least two streams of information are available: the speech/dialogue and body language/physical performance.

Directly related to impressions *given* and *given off* are Goffman's two formulations of what he calls 'front', divided into 'personal' and 'setting'. This constitutes 'the expressive equipment of a standard kind intentionally or unwittingly employed by the individual during his (sic) performance' (Goffman 1969: 32). Personal front can include 'insignia of office or rank; clothing; sex; age; and racial characteristics; size and looks; posture; speech patterns; facial expressions; bodily gestures; and the like' and are thus related to aspects of the individual themselves (Goffman 1969: 34). Setting, on the other hand, involves décor and objects that establish the space in which the individual conducts their social performance (1969: 32–33). As can be seen, these two types of 'front' find their parallels in the theatre and cinema with 'personal front' corresponding to an actor's costume and make-up and 'setting' including all aspects of the *mise-en-scène*. What Goffman's work into social performance and Austin's theories of the performative exemplify is that 'ordinary social intercourse is itself put together as a scene is put together, by the exchange of dramatically inflated actions, counteractions, and terminating replies [...] All the world is not, of course, a stage, but the crucial ways in which it isn't are not easy to specify' (Goffman 1969, p.78).

Social performance is something that all of us do on a daily basis. However, for members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ+) communities, where daily social events occur within heteronormative society, how we conduct ourselves, and the personal front and settings we employ to represent our identities, can be of profound importance in avoiding harassment and persecution. Goffman includes homosexuality in his later work on social stigmas; that is, a marker which disqualifies an individual from full social acceptance (1990: 9). He describes these as being 'reflexive and embodied' and so identified and communicated by the person through bodily expression via 'stigma symbols' (1990: 59).

These symbols of a marginalised identity for lesbians and gay men have developed over time, but could include covert markers like *Polari*, a form of slang which emerged in Britain out of eighteenth and nineteenth century theatre and circus contexts. It was adopted and adapted by the gay community 'for reasons of self-protection, secrecy, and statement of common identity' (Cox and Fay, qtd. in

Whittle 1994: 110). Other stigma symbols could include drag queens and kings, particular forms of dress or effeminate behaviour in gay men as markers assumed by LGBTQ+ communities. On the other hand, some symbols have been forcibly applied to these communities based on historical oppression, such as the pink Star of David for gay Jews in German concentration camps during World War Two. As such, and depending on where and when the individual is, an LGBTQ+ person will need to constantly monitor their stigma symbols. This means that visibility is an important factor for how he or she negotiates daily social interactions and could go from total concealment of their identity or a more militant stance which draws attention to a stigmatised identity in order to change social and political perceptions (Goffman 1990: 139). Gay Pride marches around the world are such an example.

For a range of critics, like Diana Fuss, Judith Butler and Richard Dyer, who write in different critical contexts, performance is an indelible factor in LGBTQ+ experience and is related to the epistemological uncertainty inherent in identity. Fuss asks:

How does one know when one is on the inside and when one is not? How does one know when and if one is out of the closet? How, indeed, does one know if one is gay? The very insistence of the epistemological frame of reference in theories of homosexuality may suggest that we cannot know – surely or definitively. Sexual identity may be less a function of knowledge than performance, or, in Foucauldian terms, less a matter of final discovery than perpetual reinvention. (Fuss 1991: 6–7)

Similarly, Butler posits the “I” and “lesbian ‘I’” constituted through repeated performances (Butler, qtd. in Fuss 1991: 18). In all of these examples, performance is central to expressions of LGBTQ+ identity precisely because stigma symbols are usually not immediately visible on the site of the body and so ‘coming out’ will likely be a continual process for the person. Consider this example: an individual moves town and starts a new job leaving those friends and colleagues who knew of their sexuality. They are then introduced to their new workmates, but for that time, to this new ‘audience’ they are – in a heteronormative society – assumed to be straight

and consequently back 'in' the closet. This perpetual 'coming out' necessitates the reconstruction of the (performative) closet and also highlights the importance of the spectator in the process (Vaughan 2018).

This discussion of different critical interpretations of performance demonstrates the term's multi-faceted nature. Often restricted to the theatrical realm, performance also has a role to play in how we manage identity down to the specific speech acts that help shape the world around us. The rest of this article will identify how the filmmakers of *Pride* organise a language of performance and how this addresses the spectator.

Performance in *Pride*

Performance in the film *Pride* can be loosely grouped into two interrelated categories. These are 'diegetic' and 'extra-diegetic'. Diegetic describes those performance elements that occur within the film's narrative space. These include the actors' performances (sometimes as 'real' people involved with LGSM and the Dulais valley pit), re-enactments of events directly related to the story based on contemporary photographs or documentary footage, and narrative events which explicitly involve song and/or dance performance. Extra-diegetic, meanwhile, refers to types of performance that are not directly related to the world of the film, such as in the making of the film and how it has been used or interpreted by spectators as a catalyst for their own 'coming out' stories or for political activism. How each of these elements interact and the effects they produce contribute to what I will call *Pride's* 'performative activism'.

I will begin by examining the film's diegetic performance elements. Firstly, the film features both actors playing 'real' people, showing fictionalised aspects of their personal stories, and some characters who have been invented specifically for the film. Mark Ashton (played by Ben Schnetzer) was a gay rights campaigner, Communist Party member and one of the founders of LGSM along with Mike Jackson (Joseph Gilgun). Jonathan Blake (Dominic West) and his partner Gethin (Andrew Scott, Blake's 'real life' partner's name was changed in the film) owned the Gay's the Word bookshop in London, which served as the group's meeting place. Paddy

Considine plays Dai Donovan, a Welsh miner from Onllwyn in the Dulais Valley who invites LGSM to his village as thanks for their fundraising. Hefina Headon (Imelda Staunton) chaired the committee in Onllwyn and was ably supported by Siân James (Jessica Gunning), a miner's wife who would go on to become a Labour Member of Parliament. Depending on one's knowledge of the story, these performances can act as a point of comparison for the viewer to evaluate how accurate the actors' portrayals are. For instance, in contemporary activist videos from the period, such as *Framed Youth: The Revenge of the Teenage Perverts* (1983) and *All Out! Dancing in Dulais* (1986), some of the people mentioned above appear, thus inviting us to compare Schnetzer's uncanny ear for Ashton's Northern Irish lilt and the determination of spirit Gunning captures in her performance as Siân James.

James Naremore applies Goffman's theories of social performance to acting in film and finds there to be a logical overlap:

In its simplest form [...] acting is nothing more than the transposition of everyday behavior into a theatrical realm. Just as the language of poetry is no different in kind from the language in a newspaper, so the materials and techniques used by players on the stage are no different in kind from those we use in ordinary social intercourse. This may explain why the metaphor of life as theater is so ubiquitous and convincing. After all, in daily activity we constitute ourselves rather like dramatic characters, making use of our voices, our bodies, our gestures and costumes, oscillating between deeply ingrained, habitual acts (our "true mask") and acts we more or less consciously adopt to obtain jobs, mates, or power. (Naremore 1988: 21–22)

What Naremore highlights here is the collapsing of social and theatrical forms of performance where an individual possesses an index of behaviour traits and physical mannerisms - Goffman's impressions 'given' and 'given off' - that can then be utilised by the trained performer.

The performance of 'real' people is just one of the more obvious types of performance in *Pride*. However, the film also performs and, in so doing, commemorates

history. Writer Stephen Beresford tracked down the various people involved with LGSM and the mining community that they supported. In the process, he was able to source photographs of events and even lines of dialogue from contemporary videos to include in the film (see Kate Kellaway's article 'When Miners and Gay Activists United: The Real Story of the Film *Pride*', *The Guardian*, 2014). As a result, key scenes in the film's narrative have a direct connection to pieces of historical 'evidence'. For example, this can be seen in the climactic Gay Pride parade in 1985 where villagers from the Dulais Valley travelled to London to support those members of LGSM who had helped them through the year-long strike and ended up marching side by side at the front of the parade.

As can be seen in the photograph taken at the 1985 Gay Pride march¹ and **Figure 1**, period details such as costume, design of the LGSM banner and even facial expressions are recreated from archive photographs and reproduced in the fictionalised film. Furthermore, for any viewer who has seen the short film *All Out!*



Figure 1: Depicted in *Pride* (2014). Moviefail.com, licensed under CC BY-NC-SA. <https://moviefail.com/?s=pride> [Last accessed 11 June 2020].

¹ 1985 Gay Pride. Photograph by Colin Clews. *Vice.com*. https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/exqzp4/jonathan-blake-lgsm-pride-923 [Last accessed 11 June 2020].

Dancing in Dulais (1986) they will recognise Ashton's comments on the need to fight for other marginalised groups' rights, not just gay rights, and that the miners' strike has a direct effect on gay people because everyone uses the energy that coal creates; these comments are repeated almost word for word in *Pride*. But what are the effects created from such an approach?

Re-enactments are one way for us to reconcile personal memory with historical events, and cultural media are crucial to how this occurs. For some theorists, 'history itself is a media event' and 'the media are part of the on-going process, which turns events into history' (Adelmann 2008/9: 47). In this way, our experiences of history arrive already 'pre-packaged' and mediated by photographic technology, television, text books or videogame simulations. For Marita Sturken, the fact that our responses to historical events are cultivated by representations in other media should not be seen as problematic; rather, they allow us to critically analyse and debate wider issues related to how we identify with the past:

The camera image is fundamental to this process of exchange between memory and history, and popular culture often incites us as viewers to acquire memories through our exposure to various cultural products. Personal and cultural memory does not reside in a photograph or film image so much as it is produced by it. (Sturken 1997: 66)

Claire Monk and Amy Sargeant, writing about the British historical film, note that many of these texts treat 'the represented past [as] specifically modern in its political and social resonance' (2002: 4). Viewed in this way, the messages contained in *Pride* are given added significance in light of British politician Jeremy Corbyn's leadership race in the Labour party. Additionally, viewed post-Brexit, the story's themes of support, solidarity and political mobilisation have an even greater relevance. It is also true to say that the film commemorates this moment in British history by bringing a relatively unknown story into the British cinematic mainstream. However, equally true is that film in general is capable of telling history in the present tense. In this activating of history, *Pride* provides a performative representation of the events being depicted.

When meeting the LGSM members during the research stage, Stephen Beresford tracked down Jonathan Blake who showed him the photograph of one of the more unbelievable segments from *Pride* (Kellaway 2014). The photo depicts Blake leading the dancing at the Dulais welfare hall during one of LGSM's trips to Onllwyn (**Figure 2**). Here we see a gay man performing his homosexual identity in front of a largely (presumably) heterosexual audience in a small Welsh mining village. In the film, Dominic West as Jonathan Blake recreates the event to Shirley and Company's "Shame Shame Shame" (**Figure 3**). This is among the first of many instances during the film where the narrative halts for a performance act to take over. In this example, the effect created is to unite the previously divided groups of LGSM and the Welsh committee group with the rest of the villagers; the way the sequence is filmed is particularly significant.

The scene begins with the Welsh miners and the LGSM activists and local welcoming committee sitting at opposite ends of the town hall. On noticing this,



Figure 2: Jonathan Blake (centre, foreground) at welfare hall in Dulais. Photograph. People's History Museum, Manchester, UK, LGSM archive. Reproduced with permission from People's History Museum.



Figure 3: Screenshot of Dominic West as Jonathan Blake in *Pride* (2014).

Hefina marches up to a group of the men and demands that they go over to talk to “a lesbian or gay”. Meanwhile, Jonathan is dancing with a group of the local women. Siân explains to Jonathan that he is the first man to ever grace the dancefloor. It is at this moment that Jonathan vows to “show them what they’re missing” by breaking into an extended dance routine. Cinematographer Tat Radcliffe utilises handheld cinematography mainly in medium shot and close-up as we follow Jonathan down from the stage where he has just requested that the DJ play Shirley and Company. This more intimate shooting style contrasts with the largely static shot compositions previously used which mirror the two groups’ differences. As Jonathan’s routine continues, the action cuts to reaction shots of the male onlookers who, gradually, move from shock to enjoyment. The diegetic track begins to mix with Christopher Nightingale’s complementary non-diegetic score which drowns out other sounds within the scene. We are now completely engrossed in Jonathan’s performance which is given added emphasis through the use of slow-motion. These various techniques build to a crescendo with Jonathan mincing down the dining tables knocking glasses and plates over as he receives a standing ovation from everyone in the hall. “God! I miss disco”, he declares.

This moment of queer performance that encourages community finds its counterpoint later in the film when Mark is again speaking in the town hall. After a rousing speech in which he pledges to do more for the striking miners, a local woman begins singing “Bread and Roses”. A union song based on a poem by James Oppenheim, it originated from a textile strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts between January and March 1912, in which many women workers succeeded in changing their working conditions through industrial action; as a result, it has become synonymous with the experiences of women in trade unions (Robert J.S. Ross 2013: 61). More women join in with the song by providing the harmony; they are then followed by the men. Similarly to Jonathan’s dance, a non-diegetic backing track is introduced in order to lend the sequence added emotional resonance.

Notably, at the end of the song, two young men opposed to LGSM coming to their village enter the hall shouting their dissent. However, it is significant that the cheers of the crowd drowns them out. Therefore, this sequence of communal singing and Jonathan’s earlier dance routine are examples where performance is aligned to performative solidarity in order to connect seemingly incompatible people and identities, and to combat those who challenge it. Other examples include the ‘Pits and Perverts’ benefit concert with a performance of “Tell Me Why” by Bronski Beat (including glimpses of a thoroughly convincing body double of Jimmy Somerville), and the group chanting of “Solidarity Forever” by Pete Seeger and Billy Bragg’s “There is Power in Our Union” as activist anthems that bookend the film. In each case, song and dance functions as a way of bringing people together, with music having a long-established history in the workplace and trade unions, both to increase productivity and to improve working relations (le Roux 2005: 1106–1109).

In any event, these are performance acts that are performative of solidarity. As Diarmaid Kelliher has written, this became a necessary approach for LGSM to bridge the differences between them and the Welsh mining community:

LGSM’s attempt to create a new way of relating partly relied on an appeal to likeness. While the solidarity of many other groups was based on the common interest of the working-class, LGSM had to take a different approach. By

providing an understanding of oppression that highlighted the commonality of experience between mining and lesbian and gay communities, they sought to undermine divisions between class and sexuality-based politics. (Kelliher 2014: 248)

As we have seen throughout this analysis of the film's performance elements, be that the actors' portrayals, historical reconstruction or re-enacting performance from the real story, this 'appeal to likeness' becomes a key discursive framework with which to understand the film's appeal and address to its audience. Additionally, due to the centrality of overt performance in the film, it is unsurprising that *Pride: The Musical* was reported to be in early talks shortly after the film's release, which adds an even more pronounced performativity to how this story will be enjoyed in the future (see D. Wyatt's article 'British Film Pride set for West End Musical', *The Independent*, 2014).

So far, I have investigated what I have called *Pride's* 'diegetic' performance elements. However, 'extra-diegetic' performance, those features that exist outside of the film text, are equally intriguing and provide additional evidence of how the film organises the performative as an essential way of understanding its narrative and message, as well as how we come to understand our own performance of identity in everyday life. For example, the making of the film, and its promotion, both feature occasions when history begins to repeat itself.

Matthew Warchus, the director of *Pride*, explains that as he and his crew began scouting locations to be used in the film, travelling around South Wales, he became increasingly aware that they were recreating the same trips made by LGSM in 1984–5 (Warchus 2014). Added to this, some of the real people from the story were cast as extras in the film's concluding 1985 Pride march and for the film's London premiere at the Electric Ballroom – where the 'Pits and Perverts' fundraiser had been held thirty years earlier; the cast, crew and some of the real people from the story performed a street march outside the venue (Kellaway 2014). These examples demonstrate the further collapse of clearly defined historical events and film events. They emphasise the performative nature of everyday life, where identity is constructed and performed in order to be maintained and defined.

However, the way that spectators engage with the film can have equally intriguing implications. Judith Mayne defines spectatorship in terms of 'how film-going and the consumption of movies and their myths are symbolic activities, culturally significant events' that can continue once the viewer leaves the cinema (1993: 1, 2–3). Filmmakers and their films can therefore organise various modes of address to spectators in order to encourage certain responses, even if these may be adapted, challenged or ignored completely by viewers. *Pride*, however, seems to have proven effective at galvanising a renewed interest in the history of LGSM and the miner's strikes based on the number of meetings arranged after the film was released. Could it be then that the film's performative address to spectators, which shows individuals declaring lesbian and gay identities as well as political protests, related to the fact that performance is an indelible feature of everyday social interactions, has prompted them to 'use' the film in certain ways to understand their own identities and/or relationship with history?

This may be a bold claim, and one that is difficult to categorically prove, but understanding *Pride* as an extended historical re-enactment that performs events from the past, that therefore effects and revitalises this history, can allow us to appreciate the film's extra-diegetic appeal. Ivone Margulies addresses the performative characteristic of re-enactments in her 2003 anthology, *Rites of Realism*. She explains that referential genres (including re-enactments) 'create representations beset by competition with prior images' that then 'vie to adequately represent a given reality' (Margulies 2003: 5). Margulies continues, writing that re-enactment is not 'enlisted in the retracing of past events but rather in the production of redemptive images and public examples for future action. The consciousness-raising appeal of these biographical re-creations lies in this on-screen repetition, which I define as a form of exemplary realism' (2003: 15). As such, the repetition of images taken from historical archives and their treatment in a work of cinematic fiction can 'lead the subject to a different order of consciousness' with the 'screened life provid[ing] a corrective mirror or a model for social action' (Margulies 2003: 217):

The narratives discussed here invoke a moral dynamic in which the very act of repetition becomes relevant, not because it copies the original situation,

providing its best and closest illustration, but because by repeating it produces an improved version of the event. Inflected by a psychodrammatic (or liturgical) belief in the enlightening effects of literal repetition, re-enactment creates, performatively speaking, another body, place, and time. At stake is an identity that can recall the original event (through a second-degree indexicality) but in so doing can also re-form it. (Margulies 2003: 220)

This other 'body, place, and time' can equally be understood in *Pride* as the actors' performances of 'real' people and historical events, as well as the film spectator's viewing context. If *Pride* can be considered as an extended performative historical re-enactment, then a comparative discourse is introduced through the use of archive images to bookend the film. The spectator is thus invited to compare these images with what they see. Published extra-textual documents of photographs of the 'real' incidents allow this engagement with history to continue after the credits have finished rolling. As a way to conclude, I wish to approach how the film has been used for people to define their own identities by examining diegetic and extra-diegetic 'coming out' examples.

Conclusion

The film has prompted many personal reactions, in large part because of the impact it had on so many lives and being a relatively recent period in British history. Some personal reflections draw attention to the film's accurate recreation of the feeling of solidarity from the time (Joannou 2016: 111). However, when visiting conferences and symposiums on the topic of gender and sexuality, I have been struck by the number of people who have mentioned *Pride* as an instrumental text in their 'coming out' stories and those of people they know. Of course, the film itself has a coming out narrative within it in the fictional character of Joe (George Mackay). Joe is the audience's guide through the film's story. We encounter the first Pride march through his eyes before he, almost accidentally, becomes involved in the LGSM movement. He hides these aspects of himself from his family before deciding to move permanently to London after his parents discover that he is gay. Joe's coming out is also an 'outing'

of his involvement with LGSM when his parents find the stash of photographs and newspaper clippings of his activism in a scene that affirms the personal-as-political.

At the end of the film, there is a sense that Mark Ashton passes the torch to Joe, with this fictional character representing the film spectator and the social injustices that still need to be addressed through activism. The film deftly acknowledges this when Joe runs away from his repressive Bromley home to live with Steph (Faye Marsay) in London. Upon entering a pub to meet his friend, Joe spots a young man sat awkwardly alone at a table. This version of himself that resembles the Joe seen earlier in the film reinforces the cyclical activist narrative at the same time as it provides a further layer to the character's own sense of self and the changes he has undergone.

Cliff, played by Bill Nighy, is another character who 'comes out' in the film. In a touching scene, Cliff is sat with Hefina in the town hall kitchen preparing sandwiches for a function. It is filmed in one take with the two characters sat front-on on either side of the frame. After a period of silence, seemingly working up the courage to tell his friend, Cliff quietly says "I'm gay". Hefina pauses buttering some bread for a moment and then says that she has known for many years before both of them carry on preparing the spread, a slight smile of acceptance playing across both of their faces. The continuation of their mundane task, and the fact that it is represented in one unchanging image, lends this momentous moment in Cliff's personal narrative an 'ordinariness' and the sense that his perception by Hefina has not changed.

It should be noted that the act of coming out bares similarities to Austin's performative utterances. To say, "I am gay" or "lesbian" or "transgender" is to describe one's identity and to bring it into a state of conscious awareness for the LGBTQ+ person and whoever it is they are telling. Dyer explains the social significance and particularly cinematic effect of the process when he writes that coming out 'is making visible something that is not merely invisible but also deemed worthy of extermination. It is dangerous, moving and dramatic, the stuff of a good picture' (1990: 249). Fuss continues by describing its links to in/visibility:

To be out, in common gay parlance, is precisely to be no longer out; to be out is to be finally outside of exteriority and all the exclusions and deprivations

such outsiderhood imposes. Or, put another way, to be out is really to be in – inside the realm of the visible, the speakable, the culturally intelligible. (1991: 4)

For the LGBTQ+ viewer of *Pride*, to see a story of acceptance and support performed onscreen has clearly encouraged some to engage in their own coming out stories. For myself, shortly after seeing the film with my best friend, I made the decision to come out to them. It is my contention therefore that *Pride* is able to do this because of the centrality of performance and the performative to its narrative. As such, it is showing an audience what tolerance and compassion, as well as political strikes and protests, 'look', 'sound' and 'feel' like through various types of performance. Finally, then, *Pride* constitutes its own 'repository of images' that commemorate and celebrate the events and people depicted and the values for which they stood.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

References

- Adelmann, R** 2008/9 The Visual Potential of History: Images of the Past in Film, Television and Computer Games. *Journal of Social Science Education*, 7/8(1/2): 46–55. Available at: <https://www.jsse.org/index.php/jsse/article/view/441/438> [Last accessed 4 June 2020].
- Austin, J L** 1970 *Philosophical Papers*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Bruzzi, S** 2006 *New Documentary: A Critical Introduction*. 2nd ed. Abingdon; New York: Routledge. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203967386>
- Butler, J** 1991 Imitation and Gender Insubordination In: Fuss, D 1991 *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*. New York: Routledge.
- Dyer, R** 1977 *Gays and Film*. London: BFI.
- Dyer, R** 1990 *Now You See It: Studies on Lesbian and Gay Film*. New York: Routledge.
- Fuss, D** 1991 *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*. New York: Routledge.
- Goffman, E** 1969 *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press.

- Goffman, E** 1990 *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. London: Penguin.
- Joannou, M** 2016 The Miners' Strike and Me: A Very Personal Response to *Pride*. *Women: A Cultural Review*, 27(1): 107–113. Available at: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09574042.2015.1122485?src=recsys&journalCode=wcr20> [Last accessed 4 June 2020]. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09574042.2015.1122485>
- Kellaway, K** 2014 When Miners and Gay Activists United: The Real Story of the Film *Pride*. 31st August 2014. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2014/aug/31/pride-film-gay-activists-miners-strike-interview> [Last accessed 28 February 2018].
- Kelliher, D** 2014 Solidarity and Sexuality: Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners 1984–5. *History Workshop Journal*, 77(1): 240–262. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dbt012>
- le Roux, G M** 2005 Whistle While You Work: A Historical Account of Some Associations Among Music, Work, and Health. *American Journal of Public Health*, 95(7): 1106–1109. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2004.042564>
- Loxley, J** 2007 *Performativity: The New Critical Idiom*. London: Routledge. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203391280>
- Margulies, I** 2003 *Rites of Realism: Essays on Corporeal Cinema*. Duke University Press: Durham and London. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822384618>
- Mayne, J** 1993 *Cinema and Spectatorship*. New York: Routledge. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203326824>
- Monk, C and Sargeant, A** 2002 *British Historical Cinema: The History, Heritage and Costume Film*. London: Routledge.
- Naremore, J** 1988 *Acting in the Cinema*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Ross, R J S** 2013 Bread and Roses: Women Workers and the Struggle for Dignity and Respect. *Working USA*, 16(1): 59–68. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/wusa.12023>
- Sturken, M** 1997 Re-enactment, Fantasy, and the Paranoia of History: Oliver Stone's Docudramas. *History and Theory*, 36(4): 64–79. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/0018-2656.00031>

- Vaughan, A** 2018 Performative Identity in Contemporary Biographical Documentary. Unpublished thesis (PhD). University of Southampton.
- Warchus, M** 2014 Why I Made a Romcom about Gay Activists and Striking Miners. 21st May 2014. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2014/may/21/matthew-warchus-pride-gay-activists-miners-strike> [Last accessed 28/02/2018]
- Whittle, S** 1994 *The Margins of the City: Gay Men's Urban Lives*. Aldershot: Arena.
- Wyatt, D** 2014 British Film *Pride* set for West End Musical. *The Independent*. 16th September 2014. Available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/news/british-film-pride-set-for-west-end-musical-9735563.html> [Last accessed 28 February 2018].

Filmography

- All Out! Dancing in Dulais**. 1986 [Short video]. Multiple director/producers. UK: LGSM.
- Framed Youth: The Revenge of the Teenage Perverts**. 1983 [Short video]. Directed by Trill Burton et al. UK: Gay Video Project.
- Pride**. 2014 [Film]. Directed by Matthew Warchus. UK/France: Pathé.

How to cite this article: Vaughan, A 2020 Performing *Pride*: Re-enactment, Queer Identity and the Performance of Solidarity. *Open Library of Humanities*, 6(1): 24, pp.1–20. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.16995/olh.321>

Published: 30 June 2020

Copyright: © 2020 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.



Open Library of Humanities is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by Open Library of Humanities.

OPEN ACCESS