Generic confluence as the art of ideological peddling: *Attack the Block* (Joe Cornish, 2011)

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> British genres are more than an abstract system of formulas, conventions, and codes that are universally applicable. National identity, social history, and ideology play a central role in their formation.[1]

In genre theory, the concept of hybridity is mobilised very frequently, unlike that of confluence[2] though the latter might prove more adequate to apprehend certain films. Hybridity is a concept that percolated from biology to postcolonial studies[3] before being used in film studies in association with genre mixing,[4] although Janet Staiger thinks the word should be reserved for "true cross-cultural encounters", "films created by minority or subordinated groups that use genre mixing or genre parody to dialogue with or criticize the dominant"[5] in keeping with the postcolonial legacy of the phrase. Just as hybridity has generated its own critique in postcolonial studies,[6] the concept of generic hybridity is also problematic within the scope of film studies according to Allen.[7] Hybridity is ambivalent and even paradoxical since

[1] Marcia Landy, *British Genres: Cinema and Society, 1930-1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 11.
[2] See Catherine Bernard**,** "Introduction: Trying to Define Literature's Confluences," *Études britanniques contemporaines* [online], 52 | 2017, http://journals.openedition.org/ebc/3511, and Martina Allen, "Against 'Hybridity' in Genre Studies: Blending as an Alternative Approach to Generic Experimentation," *Trespassing Journal: an online journal of trespassing art, science, and philosophy*, "Genre", no.2 (Winter 2013): 4, http://trespassingjournal.org/Issue2/TPJ_I2_Allen_Article.pdf.
[3] For more, see Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2007 [2000]), 108-111.
[4] David Duff (ed.), *Modern Genre Theory* (Harlow: Longman, 2000), 6; Raphaëlle Moine, *Cinema Genre* (translated by Alistair Fox and Hilary Radner) (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 122-126, 155-168.
[5] Janet Staiger, "Hybrid or Inbred: The Purity Hypothesis and Hollywood Genre History" in B.K. Grant (ed.), *Film Genre Reader III* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003 [1997]), 196-197.
[6] See, for example, Robert Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995), Pieterse Nederveen, "Hybridity, So What? The Anti-Hybridity Backlash and the Riddles of Recognition", *Theory, Culture and Society* 18.2-3 (2001): 219-245.
[7] Allen, 3-13.

it perpetuates an essentialist model it is supposed to deconstruct.[8] Even though the concept was reworked from its original scientific, genetic meaning into a cultural approach to reverse what used to be part of the reactionary discourse of colonial racism (racial impurity) into a progressive and positive condition of change and creativity (transgressive crossing, subversive multiplicity), notions such as hybridity and hybrid implicitly keep referring to binary, albeit contested, fixed constructs "as the two poles are still understood as oppositional in nature. In other words: the concept of 'hybridity' is thinkable only in connection with its opposite – that of 'purity'".[9] Hybridity posits the distinctness of biological or literary categories as a precondition for its existence and the formation of hybrids. Yet, despite the initial heterogeneity of the crossbreeding operation it results from, the finished or final product, the hybrid, – whether it is a living creature, a postcolonial literary work or a film – is a fusion, a syncretic mix that comes as a homogeneous whole (in that it cannot be undone). Because of the blurred definition and thereby classification of cinema genres, the concept of hybridity reaches its limits, losing its supposedly subversive appeal, and almost becomes irrelevant – every film being a hybrid of some sort. As such, Allen's conclusion about generic equivocality seems to echo Derrida's famous conundrum ("genres are not to be mixed"[10]) arising from his reflections on "the law of genre" because, ultimately, all genres are impure and therefore mixed. That is why Allen favours instead the concept of generic blending,[11] a cognitive process related to the viewer's reception and production of world-constructions owing to the genre schemata (i.e. building blocks of cognition more than generic markers *per se*) he/she perceives. This spatial and functional reconfiguration also holds a sociopolitical and ideological dimension because when films become "blended spaces", they offer opportunities for cross-space mapping/recoding that can lead the viewer to reconsider his/her own expectations on and off screen.

> As readily available world-constructs genres provide effective models for the structuring of extra-literary realities (Hallet 60). This presents the true political dimension of generic experimentation, because a text's failure to adhere to our generic expectations leads to the foregrounding of these expectations, which renders them accessible to rational critique. Moreover, the discrepancy between generic expectations and textual actualizations may result in the adjustment of our genre schemata and therefore ultimately also to a revision of our understanding of extra-literary realities.[12]

[8] Sarita Malik, "The Dark Side of Hybridity: Contemporary Black and Asian British Cinema" in *European Cinema in Motion, Migrant and Diasporic Film in Contemporary Europe*, ed. Daniela Berghahn and Claudia Sternberg (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 132-134, draws the same conclusion about the hybrid films she studies. "These cinemas appear to be producing their own kinds of essentialism and are therefore vulnerable to the homogenising forces which hybridity is presumed to subvert".

[9] Allen, 8. Although she does not mention him, she echoes Paul Gilroy who contested hybridity because it presupposes illusory anterior states of purity. Paul Gilroy, "Black Cultural Politics: an Interview with Paul Gilroy by Timmy Lott", *Found Object*, no.4 (1994): 46-81; *Between Camps* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000).

[10] Jacques Derrida, "The Law of Genre" (translated by Avital Ronell), *Critical Inquiry*, "On Narrative," The University of Chicago Press, vol. 7, no.1 (Autumn 1980): 55, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1343176.

[11] Allen derives the phrase from "conceptual blending" by Charles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 1, 12.

[12] Allen, 14. She notes that genre evocation is often enough to lead the viewer to reinterpret what he/she sees although that does not necessarily lead to genre attribution. Sometimes, the protagonist may give the impression of being in a different genre than what the viewer perceives (as in *Taxi Driver*), the discrepancy adding to the ideological subtext. That example also shows the inadequacy of the concept of hybridity since the film is clearly a blend of the western and the thriller but not a hybrid.

Deliberately deviating from or thwarting generic expectations may thus affect world-views that can in turn affect genres in a repeated blending process, bearing in mind that blending genres can help debunk some reactionary or conservative tropes of one given genre by confronting them with those of another, subversion stemming from the destabilisation of familiar, so far unquestioned schemata/codes.

Beyond the debate over whether or not hybridity necessarily leads to fixity and essentialism, and therefore runs the risk of becoming a useless concept in terms of filmic generic experimentation, an undeniable fact to take into account is that these studies often overlook the collective dimension that is also involved in the process of identity formation, especially in terms of social classes. Most of the literature stemming from postcolonial or film studies resorting to the concept in both a thematic and formal way tends to focus and reflect on an individual's hybrid identity, sometimes related to notions such as in-betweenness.[13] The conclusion is often a celebration of individuals' multiple identities and diversity in a multicultural society i.e. a racial and/or cultural approach. "There is a danger that some accounts of hybridity banally celebrate everyday cultural mixing, instead of analysing the relations of power which produce social differences and political antagonisms."[14] Even though hybridity has been referred to by sociologists such as Stuart Hall,[15] the concept is never really mobilised to apply it to social groups in a classist perspective, probably owing to its inherent problematic status. Depending on how you look at it, any given society is as much a syncretic whole as a juxtaposition of various elements that retain their idiosyncrasies. A hybrid society therefore does not seem a fitting label to describe the mingling of its different social strata, it being more about a coexistence than an amalgam of its parts, and even a transclass individual is never a hybrid of his/her class of origin and adoption as clearly shown by the works of De Gaulejac and Jaquet.[16] Generic blending as defined by Allen thus seems all the more interesting an approach since one key aspect of British cinema is its persistent interest in the nation, social history and ideology as made explicit by Landy's epigraph. Just as the latter establishes a clear connection between the formation of British genres and politics, Allen argues that generic blending is a better way than hybridity to apprehend how some films may resort to cross-space mapping/recodification as a sort of really subversive political tool, notably in the field of collective representations. The definition and various uses of the word "blend" seem to support the idea of a symbiotic relation between generic and social blending. Compared to mixing, blending adds a qualitative aspect to the combination (as in cooking, "to mix different types of sth to produce the quality required", and by extension "to combine well with sth, to look or sound better together" according to the Oxford dictionary). A society in which people can blend supposes harmony, a society in which contact with the Other does not necessarily lead to fusion but can lead to emulation and everyone giving their best. To explore that generic and social parallel further, I would suggest the use of the word and concept of confluence. Confluence is a much more dynamic, fluid and transient process than hybridity (which morphologically refers to a state) or even hybridisation (which is restricted to the

[13] See, for example, Daniela Berghahn and Claudia Sternberg, or Yosefa Loshitzky, *Screening Strangers, Migration and Diaspora in Contemporary European Cinema* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2010).
[14] John Scott and Gordon Marshall, *Oxford Dictionary of Sociology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009 [1994]), 328.
[15] Stuart Hall, "Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities" in A.D. King (ed.) *Culture, Globalization and the World System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1993), 41-68; "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" in J.E. Braziel and A. Mannur (eds.) *Theorizing Diaspora* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005 [1990]), 233-246.
[16] Vincent De Gaulejac, *La Névrose de classe* (Paris: Payot, 2016 [1987]); Chantal Jaquet, *Les Transclasses ou la non-reproduction* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2020 [2014]).

moment when the crossbreeding operation is conducted) due to the movement and instability of the water currents' point of junction from which the phrase originates. It builds on the concept of genre blending that befits the ever-elusive boundaries of cinematic genres through its association with the idea of concurrence, and also applies well to a more socially-oriented definition through that of convergence.

Along this line of thought, one can argue that *Attack the Block* (Joe Cornish, 2011) is a perfect example of that generic/social confluence. It singles itself out from the cycle of late 2000s and early 2010s British films known as hoodie horror that culminated in the riots of summer 2011. This cycle of films that officially opened with *Eden Lake* (James Watkins, 2008)[17] often used several horror sub-genres (survival, slasher, home invasion, found footage, etc.) and was deemed reactionary because it presented young people from council estates as amoral and bloodthirsty monsters, in line with political and media campaigns of that time (antisocial behaviour, Broken Britain). As such, these films match the definition of genre mixing and hybridisation according to David Duff[18] in that they combine several genres to form a new subgenre. But although they did play on their generic hybridity to put this supposedly reactionary stance into perspective,[19] the confluence of several traditionally more distinct genres is what really opens up new and more subversive perspectives in a film such as *Attack the Block*. The film was presented as a science fiction comedy in which aliens land on a south London estate on Guy Fawkes Night. With its main characters forced to cooperate to get out of a besieged, enclosed place before finding a form of redemption in their heroic resistance, *Attack the Block* is also inspired by genres as varied as the western, the thriller or the action film.[20] But, although comedy is indeed the general tone of the film, the latter essentially blends science fiction, with a horrific tinge because of the presence of creatures, with banlieue cinema[21] to better debunk the clichés associated with a certain British youth and present to a wider audience – and therefore less likely to be already converted – a discourse usually found in social-realist cinema. This film therefore sits at the confluence of two great British cinematic modes of storytelling: science fiction and social realism.[22] And just like water currents

[17] Johnny Walker, *Contemporary British Horror Cinema: Industry, Genre and Society* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 90.
[18] Duff, xiv.
[19] For more on this cycle of films, see Anne-Lise Marin-Lamellet, "Mad, Bad and Dangerous to Know? Hoodies in Contemporary British Horror Cinema," *Angles: New Perspectives on the Anglophone World* [Online], 10 | 2020, http://journals.openedition.org/angles/453.
[20] Sarah Ilott, *New Postcolonial British Genres: Shifting the Boundaries* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 162, even sees a use of film noir codes in the opening scene.
[21] This loose equivalent for urban drama or estate film is adapted from the French since there seems to be a subgenre in French cinema. Carrie Tarr and Carole Milleliri, "Le cinéma de banlieue : un genre instable," *Mise au Point* 3 (2011), http://map.revues.org/1003?lang=en#ftn16. Joe Cornish speaks of "gang movies" but the films he mentions generally take place in American inner cities (*The Outsiders, Rumble Fish, Streets of Fire, The Warriors)*. He also stresses the importance of *Kidulthood* "because it showed that there was a market for the urban milieu." Holly Pyne, "Joe Cornish on *Attack the Block*," *Short List*, 8 May 2011, http://www.shortlist.com/entertainment/films/joe-cornish-on-attack-the-block.
[22] In Simon Jablonski, "Joe Cornish Discusses *Attack the Block*," *The Quietus*, 16 May 2011, http://thequietus.com/articles/06254-joe-cornish-interview-attack-the-block , Joe Cornish explains: "The tone of the film overall is supposed to be 50% kitchen sink realism and then 50% escapist 80s style adventure movie". In Catherine Shoard, "SXSW 2011: Joe Cornish on aliens, hoodies and *Attack the Block*," *The Guardian*, 14 March 2011, he adds: "It kind of does what Mr Spielberg was doing with *ET*. Those dinner scenes are kind of like a Ken Loach film, and then this little alien pops up. Yet it's still realism." Reviews evoke the social dramas typical of British cinema. "When Sam is simmeringly angry with Moses, and tells a police officer that she has no intention of being forced out of her home by a bunch of thugs and bullies, she could almost be in a gritty social-realist picture. *Attack the Block* looks a little like Michael Winterbottom's film *Wonderland*" says Peter Bradshaw, "*Attack the*

flow together, genres thus run in parallel through the film rather than merge/mix (as in a hybrid), this generic confluence being used by the director to call for a social confluence thereby also referring to the more figurative sense of the word as a coming together, in that case of a motley crew of characters who are not expected to mix so much as to blend and blend in, i.e. being able to stand together as a united nation without forsaking their social identity for all that.

Generic confluence

What seems to define generic confluence is the overt nature of the deconstruction of generic expectations in the blending process, which is part and parcel of its ideological critique (against the more seamless, unaware[23], and at times ambivalent one of hybridity). Director Joe Cornish has always made his intention clear about deconstructing the clichés associated with young people living on council estates by playing with cinematographic codes and sociocultural stereotypes.[24] *Attack the Block* manifests this desire as early as its pre-credits sequence in which the camera that scrutinises the dark immensity of the universe first operates a descending crane shot to follow a meteor attracted by Earth's gravity. The latter quickly merges with the fireworks and other firecrackers used on Guy Fawkes Night on London council estates, rendered by a long shot on a tube entrance and a tracking shot along the increasingly narrow and dark street that leads to the estate where the rest of the film takes place. This celebration being known for the excesses it generates due to its carnival spirit, the spectator can expect a context of rioting that is quite typical of banlieue films with, additionally, a possible allusion to *Flame in the Streets* (Roy Ward Baker, 1961), one of the first British films to address social and ethnic tensions in London's inner cities that also takes place on 5 November. After a sequence that combines a ground level shot and a crushing high-angle shot of Sam, the camera lingers on the shadows of the silhouettes that follow her while firecrackers make the atmosphere even more electric. An explosion frightens the young woman. The framing that alternates point of view and handheld camera (she is seen from behind) then the quick shot/reverse shot with various depths of field immediately build up tension. A gang of hooded youths stands at a distance on the pavement. Silent intimidation begins with light touch as the youths pass her by on their bicycles and then the dreaded assault takes place with, among other things, a close-up of the shiny blade of the knife held by Moses, the gang leader. The scene therefore uses all the tropes of hoodie horror. However, the blue-green neon lights that bathe

Block – Review," *The Guardian*, 12 May 2011, http://www.theguardian.com/film/2011/may/12/attack-the-block-review. This is not surprising because hoodie horror and more generally the new wave of British horror are characterised by this use of social realism according to M.J. Simpson, *Urban Terrors: New British Horror Cinema 1997-2008* (London: Hemlock Books Limited, 2012), 13.

[23] The word is used by Moine, 20.

[24] See the comments available on the DVD (OPTD2013) and all the interviews given for the promotional campaign. As an example, here is what he explained about the origin of the film in his director's note: "I thought that they [the youths who had mugged him] looked weirdly cinematic. They looked like ninjas or bandits in a Western. The bikes they rode looked a bit like something out of *ET* or the hoverbikes in *Return of the Jedi*. The slang they used felt a bit like Nadsat from *A Clockwork Orange*. And I thought, 'Here's a setting that has only been used for depressing social realism, and actually there's the toolkit for an action adventure here.' I started thinking about what would have happened if that mugging had been interrupted by the kind of thing that only happened in American movies when I was a kid. What if ET had actually landed at that moment in time? What if it was an aggressive ET? […] With *Attack the Block*, I wanted to do the kind of thing that American directors did in suburbia in the Eighties. But in the present day, in my suburbia: south London." Joe Cornish in Holly Pyne, http://www.shortlist.com/.

the neighbourhood already connotes the sequence with a supernatural aura and science fiction definitely enters the film with the crash of the meteor on the car parked at the very place of the assault.[25] Therefore, even if Moses's first reaction is to steal what he can in the smashed car and then chase his attacker without knowing that it is an alien, all the tropes of the banlieue film – hoodie horror often offering a hyperbolic vision of them – will be re-coded by science fiction, as confirmed by the lettering and lighting chosen for the title that closes the sequence while the camera operates an ascending crane movement to go up into the sky, which also allows *Attack the Block* to remain a comedy thanks to its parodic aspect.[26]

Recodification is first perceptible in the characters' clothes, including the infamous hoodie which symbolises in itself the reorientation of the spectator's gaze that is requested. Throughout the film, the layers of clothing worn by the main characters are intentionally gradually removed in order to better reveal the young people hidden behind so many stereotypes and prejudices. The goal is obviously to give a face and a name, in one word an identity, to these young people usually defined by their "uniform"[27] (and their habitat). Moses's gang is therefore initially presented in an archetypal way: five silhouettes that barely emerge from the darkness, with hoods pulled over their heads, their faces hidden by scarves that only reveal hateful eyes, and of course close-ups on their trainers. Their names actually appear in a brief shot in the form of tags at the beginning of the film but no one (Sam just like the viewer) then pays attention to what seems to be vandalism typical of these neighbourhoods, owing to this obsession with stereotypes.[28] Nevertheless, the few close-ups on snoods or scarves give more of a desperado or ninja look to these young people (a theme later reinforced by the sword used to defend themselves with also a reference to *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977), without the laser, during the moped charge).[29] Even if they are still connoted as bad boys, these markers already take the protagonists out of the cliché of young people living on council estates. We even see Jerome's school uniform sticking out of his big jacket. When they decide to fight against the alien invasion, the hood swiftly pulled over head takes on a new meaning and becomes a sign of determination, like a samurai or karateka who knots his headband before the fight. Moses's khaki parka that was once used to hide drugs and money from his trafficking gives him, after the arrival of the aliens, the look of a freedom fighter, especially since the hitherto taciturn leader presents, even in an awkward and laconic way, a

[25] The diegetic or extra-diegetic music that mixes hip-hop and electro reminiscent of John Carpenter's soundtracks mixed with modern classical music à la John Williams also smoothens the transition from one genre to another by, for example, ending a rap song with a much colder sound that announces the science-fiction theme of the next scene. Over the course of the film, the use of hip-hop and reggae reinforces its social subtext, such as the end credits song ("*Youths Dem Cold*" by Richie Spice). It develops its urban side despite the increasingly invasive presence of creatures, whether through the gangsta rap that the local gangster Hi-Hatz listens to or produces, or the old school rap that Brewis, the student who fantasises about street culture, likes.

[26] The release of the film in 2011 allows it to symbolise not only the culmination of the hoodie horror cycle but also that of banlieue films, and, as for the end of each cycle or formula, parody prevails over serious genre. "It hit cinemas at a time when an intense cycle of 'Broken Britain' social problem films were exploring crime among groups of disenfranchised youth." Dylan Cave, "Why I Love *Attack the Block*," *BFI*, 3 March 2015, http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/news-bfi/features/why-i-love-attack-block.

[27] Walker, 86, also uses the phrase between inverted commas.

[28] This shot places the film in the genre of urban drama as noted by Cave: "This emerges in the neat but never laboured homages spotted in the early parts of the film: a shot of gang member names sprayed in graffiti as shotgun-like effects explode on the soundtrack evokes early 90s 'new black cinema' like *Boyz n the Hood* (1991) or *Juice* (1992)."

[29] The allusion to Samurai cinema or Kung Fu films is not to be excluded: rappers like the Wu Tan Clan have made albums referring to *The 36th Chamber* (Chia-Liang Liu, 1978) for example and the sleeve presented them as faceless hoodies.

political vision of the fate awaiting young blacks on council estates ("the government bred these creatures to kill black boys"). The editing also highlights this evolution by moving from a series of frantic close-ups of clothes and weapons to a much calmer pace with long frontal or circular tracking-shots that flatter the budding heroism of Moses who is almost literally laid bare, letting his vulnerability emerge when he expresses regrets.[30] His friends undergo the same evolution, including Pest who takes off his two hoods/caps and three trousers to have his leg treated after being bitten by a creature, thus revealing his graceful body as a cute teenager proud to be a "granny magnet" as written on his t-shirt in the last sequence. During the scene of apology to their victim, all the members successively benefit from a close-up on their face that emphasises their guilt. This individualisation (the fragmentation of the shots breaks the homogenisation of the bloodthirsty gang/pack) and this humanisation allow the viewer to reconsider his/her opinion. The hoodie, a class marker that does not say its name,[31] is at the centre of this reconfiguration since, while the young aggressors finally take theirs off, Sam, after putting down her respectable English lady's pea-green coat, picks one up before getting out of Ron's flat and helping Moses to get rid of the creatures. A close-up in the last sequence shows that Moses even lost one of his trainers during the final explosion.

Topography is also used to play with the different levels of analysis of the film, generic blending giving birth to a form of cross-space mapping[32]. Some shots of the council estate where the story takes place thus reveal that each tower block or alley bears the name of a great British science fiction author. For example, the high-rise where the heroes live is the Wyndham Tower as a tribute to John Wyndham whose novel *The Day of the Triffids* was adapted into a film in 1962 by Steve Sekely. The estate that fences in and crushes, the oppressive brutalist architecture that is so much disparaged in urban dramas or presented as a source of anguish in hoodie horror films[33] here turns into a bunker or a protective fortress that young people, who know it inside out, can use to eliminate or at least lose the enemy. The "shithole, the craphole, the ends" becomes a source of pride to protect from the invader ("This is the block and nobody fucks with the block!") and the estate symbolises a social bond that has weakened in the rest of society, a true community solidarity, since various relatives' or neighbours' flats are used as temporary shelters for the group. The glimpsed interiors also confound the viewer's expectations by debunking the cliché of the decrepit and unlivable sink estate since the flats are rather cosy and redolent of family happiness, far from the broken homes put forward by the Cameron government with its concept of Broken Society or by urban dramas. Similarly, the trope of the absent father figure in

[30] The shot of Moses coming out of the lift echoes that of Hi-Hatz but the change of weapon (a sword instead of a revolver) affects genre evocation: the gangster is sent back to the banlieue film cliché while Moses is endowed with an aura reminiscent of samurai or ninja films.

[31] The proof is that the few hooded young people from more bourgeois backgrounds, thus identified because of their relative wealth, their posh accent and their university experience, are not perceived as a threat but as nice losers who dream of being as cool as estate kids (like Brewis).

[32] Fauconnier and Turner, 41-42. This is the generic space created by the blending of "input spaces" that are genre-related world-constructs. In the film, the input spaces are those of banlieue film and science fiction.

[33] The council estate becomes part of the British tradition of "uncanny landscapes" that serve as a backdrop for science fiction or horror films. Peter Hutchings, "Uncanny Landscapes in British Film and Television," *Visual Culture in Britain* 5, no.2 (2004): 27-40. Ro McNulty, "'Because You Fear Them': On Citadel, class and 'hoodie' horror," 9 February 2016, http://emptyoaks.com/2016/02/09/because-you-fear-them-on-citadel-class-and-hoodie-horror/, notes about hoodie horror: "it seemed a given that council flats rather than castles would become the real estate of choice for the new Gothic."

banlieue films is thwarted:[34] Biggz has a rather authoritarian father since, off-screen, his voice alone is enough to make his son comply and take the dog out as requested. The omnipresent tower block is itself located at the confluence of genres and becomes a blended space. Filmed exclusively at night, this often hated symbol of the lowest type of British council housing becomes, thanks to ascending or descending crane shots and extreme low-angle shots of the yellow lit windows and the white beams of the spotlights at its top, a kind of flagship or mothership that the director compares to *Alien*'s Nostromo (Ridley Scott, 1979) in the DVD commentary and which is also reminiscent of the monolith in *2001, A Space Odyssey* (Stanley Kubrick, 1968) as its facade sometimes seems to be only a vertical surface. The film suggests this topographical reconfiguration by using each location twice, before and after the alien invasion.

The presence of the creatures also allows the film to recodify the behaviour of the hoodies because these bad boys prove very useful against the invasion of predatory aliens. The violence of young people that frightens in urban dramas or even terrorises in hoodie horror films is thus requalified. Antisocial acts such as the use of scooters on walkways are a way to escape the enemy. Mobile phones used for happy slapping, symbolised here with the photograph of the first alien killed, become essential tools to organise rescue operations or plan attacks, in addition to being used to call relatives to prove that hoodies have families. The predatory or even killer instinct – perceptible in the early scene of the killing of the creature in the shack that can only be heard until its death, which is typical of hoodies' "pack" attacks/mugging – becomes an asset for survival: Moses uses his flick knife to defend himself against the first creature that lands in the neighbourhood. The nemesis embodied by these creatures who select their victims (those who are covered with the pheromones of the first creature killed) also leads him to meditate on the consequences of his actions and to find a form of redemption.[35]

Just as the use of science fiction in a banlieue film setting puts the tropes of hoodie horror into perspective, the use of comedy in a science fiction context is another way to alleviate the fear generated by council estates. For example, the film mocks the media's obsession with knife or gun culture, without denying the fascination that guns and crime can exert on these young people, since the only one to own a gun on the estate is Hi-Hatz, the gangster, the others having only water or paintball pistols. Following the injunction "let's get tooled up", the weapons collected by these youths to face the invasion are more a hodgepodge than an urban guerrilla arsenal. The dog, Pogo, is neither a bulldog nor a pit bull but a small mongrel who is quickly devoured by one of the creatures. The recurring presence of the secondary characters Probs and Mayhem, nine-and-a-half-year-old wannabe gangsters who look six, introduces comic relief by keeping the film in the world of childhood. This is reinforced by the scooters and BMX bikes used by the teenagers in their chases of aliens that allude to *E.T.* (Steven Spielberg, 1982) and deflate the cliché of big SUVs or fancy cars seen in banlieue films. Ron's remark when the gang rushes out of his flat to fetch weapons ("Quite sweet really, aren't they?") suggests that all this is just childishness. And, in the end, Sam's discovery of Moses's Spiderman quilt recalls his young age.[36] Pest, who wants to play the big tough guy with Sam, screams in pain as soon as she touches his

[34] The trope was noticed by Carrie Tarr, "Masculinity and Exclusion in Post-1995 Beur and 'Banlieue' Films," in *The Trouble with Men: Masculinities in European and Hollywood Cinema*, ed. Phil Powrie *et al*. (London: Wallflower Press, 2004), 110-112.

[35] Joe Cornish explains in his DVD commentary: "No mugging, no alien. He wishes it down. Horror is moral. Not gratuitous and indulgent."

[36] The director insists in his commentary that Moses is only fifteen. Sam's aggression is the gang's first crime, they are still immature and far from the cold and bloodthirsty monsters usually depicted, which allows not to absolve

wound. The reference to Parkour, a style of street sport popularised by *Banlieue 13* (Pierre Moral, 2004) and whose devotees' agility often reinforces the fear inspired by hoodies (as in *F.*, Johannes Roberts, 2010), is here used to show that all council estate youths are far from having the necessary physical abilities to perform these feats, even if in case of emergency, they can occasionally take the plunge so as not to end up devoured by the creatures. The language level used serves the same purpose. The film contrasts the youths' colloquial speech with Sam's full-on slang or even vulgar register. The posh nurse who keeps swearing thus contributes to deconstruct the cliché of illiterate and disrespectful young hoodies. The sometimes impenetrable estate vernacular is a trope of banlieue films.[37] This is probably why, in *Attack the Block*, the youths' dialogues are based on about fifteen frequently repeated words (they were sometimes put forward on promotional posters) as if the film was an invitation to decode certain aspects of this estate slang by contextualisation, to better prove to the viewer that it is not fundamentally different, that mutual understanding remains possible.[38]

Generic confluence therefore enables characters to get away from genre-specific clichés, on the one hand by placing these council estates youths in a science fiction context, on the other by bringing a parodic touch to all these blended genres.[39] That is why *Attack the Block* can be seen as a tribute to a number of genre films because it is partly a pastiche of its mostly American models. Its intertextuality is underlined by different types of quotation: that of titles or characters in the dialogue (Gollums; *Gremlins*, Joe Dante, 1984; *28 Days Later*, Danny Boyle, 2002; *Ghostbusters*, Ivan Reitman, 1984); that of their tropes (false scares as when Jerome grabs Pest's leg, the lighter that does not light up, the solution given in an earlier scene by a television show that went unnoticed, the creature that breaks through a door to bite someone's calf, the victim dragged by the legs, walking among the enemy without being noticed, the population that looks up at the arrival or attack of aliens as in *War of the Worlds*, Steven Spielberg, 2005, etc.); and that of some classic shots or scenes (such as when Moses drags the first alien, like Captain Steven Hiller, played by Will Smith, in *Independence Day*, Roland Emmerich, 1996 or the way Hi-Hatz is eviscerated by creatures like Captain Rhodes played by Joseph Pilato in *Day of the Dead*, George A. Romero, 1985). That is also why a kind of ironic distance or comic detachment pervades the whole film. Some dialogues clearly echo certain tropes of banlieue or science fiction films by playing on ambivalence. For example, the negative view of the stereotypical way in which the media portrays these young people is here consciously addressed by the characters.[40] Conversations in Sam's or Ron's flats, where cannabis smoke loosens tongues, allow young people to

them but to understand them. In the *Guardian* (Shoard), he adds: "There are lots of brilliantly crafted movies which I couldn't have made this movie without but which, for me, are a little bit morally unsettling. That do demonise these kids. These are children we're talking about, and children make mistakes; they test the boundaries of the world. They can come from a shitty place with a limited amount of choices."

[37] For Tarr and Milleliri, it is one of the "formal elements that contribute to make these films true cultural testimonies". (my translation)

[38] Conversely, the film discourages the imitation or adoption of this language by the wealthiest classes through Brewis's rebuffs, the lack of authenticity always having harmful consequences (the commodification of a subculture, class contempt hidden behind the "poor is cool" game-playing).

[39] As Michael Leader, "*Attack the Block* – Review," *Den of Geek*, 27 April 2011, http://www.denofgeek.com/movies/7234/attack-the-block-review, notes, this is perhaps the film's greatest achievement: "*Attack the Block* dares to see the urban working class not as a launchpad for 'issues' or social realistic drama, but as potential characters for a highly entertaining genre film."

[40] Tarr, 110-112. Milleliri also includes it in the list of tropes of the banlieue film that seeks to go against media clichés by presenting the story of a mixed and socially dominated community with a deep sense of injustice facing multiple deprivation, political indifference, police violence and contempt from the rest of the population, in relation to what she calls the black American ghetto film.

hold a self-reflexive or even metafictional discourse on the perception they are subjected to in certain media and sections of the population ("This ain't got nothing to do with gangs, or drugs, or rap music, or violence in video games."), although the film also highlights their obsession with money, brands and celebrity, by-products of their addiction to reality TV. Their constant intertextual references to war films or Fort Knox can be understood in an intra or extra diegetic way: either it is simply a question of showing their taste for this subculture and emphasising their fascination with violence, or the film seeks to show its parodic side by reminding the viewer that the heroes of this kind of films are often military or equivalent super-combatants and never juvenile boys-next-door. But it nevertheless makes them symbolically access this status.[41] In any case, the goal seems to be to blur the viewer's expectations.

Social confluence

This parodic dimension born out of generic confluence ultimately makes it possible to convey *sotto voce* a social discourse[42] because this formal recodification is the pivot on which the reconfiguration of content is based. Genres are "schematised world-constructions" that come with a certain number of expectations/assumptions. So by blending them and foregrounding "the deliberate disappointment of, or confrontation between, [these] generic expectations,"[43] *Attack the Block* can stress the exaggeration that usually prevails in these films and, by bringing the characters out of generic clichés, the viewer is also taken out of his/her rut and possible prejudices.[44] The use of aliens which are the product of cross-space mapping between the banlieue (inner city) and science fiction (outer space) genres[45] is a truly subversive, ironic and parodic way not only to displace the source of anxiety that hoodies usually represent onto these super-predators but above all to question the very notion of monster that is so often used to qualify council estate youths on and off screen. The editing is thus ironic when Sam, who has just been attacked, and her neighbour complain in an insisting way about these young "monsters" by pouring out all the usual media clichés and the film immediately cuts to a shot on the creature that has just landed in the neighbourhood as if to say "youths are not monsters, *this* is a monster". Similarly, the first attack on the gang by a male creature is filmed as the inversion of the pre-credit mugging scene. This time, they are the preys that try to peer through the darkness and only see what they believe to be eyes staring at them. Aliens have always signified malaise in a given society (the Red Scare

[41] Simpson, 64, explains: "Squaddies have featured prominently throughout the history of British horror and sci-fi […]. They are emblematic of the British response to danger. America, in both reality and Hollywood, responds to threats with overwhelming firepower and massive invasion forces. The UK sends in a squad of well-trained men armed with little more than a beret and a Bren gun."

[42] Simpson, 113, notes: "Great horror movies comment on the world. Great comedies do likewise. Both genres exaggerate – only slightly – to explore the human condition and, when they are of a time and a place, to hold a mirror up to that world". Generic confluence thus allows *Attack the Block* to achieve this goal.

[43] The quotes come from Allen, 10, 12. She adds: "we only become aware of the blended character of a construction when we come across surprising twists, logical inconsistencies or structural clashes."

[44] This is not easy, as shown by the reaction of some critics who did not appreciate this generic blending, finding it in bad taste because of its supposedly immoral result. David Gritten, "*Attack the Block*, Review," *The Telegraph*, 12 May 2011, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/filmreviews/8510145/Attack-the-Block-review.html, speaks of a "genre mash-up marked by jarring tonal shifts." Ben Walsh, "*Attack the Block*," *The Independent*, 13 May 2011, http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/reviews/attack-the-block-15-2283089.html, explains "the late-night mugging that sets up Joe Cornish's (postmodern mash-up) debut film is tricky to get over. It skews your judgement of the BMX-riding teenage hoodies (the film's 'heroes') at the centre of the action."

[45] This cross-spatial mapping was used more or less consciously by the producers who oppose "inner-city vs outer space" in their poster catchphrase.

in the United States, the decline of the British Empire, the fear of the nuclear bomb, patriarchy in crisis in the United Kingdom, the allegory about Apartheid in South Africa, etc.).[46] In this film, the monster is double or rather offers a mirror effect. These simplistic and primitive beings alternately compared to apes (gorilla, orangutan), bears, dogs, but also inspired by werewolves dear to the director's heart,[47] without visible eyes but with phosphorescent fangs and a CGI ink-black fur that, just like black holes, absorbs all light, are a parodic literalisation of the supposed monstrosity of council estate youths as they are represented in the media ("yobs, thugs, sick, feral, hoodie, louts, heartless, evil, frightening, scum, monsters, inhuman and threatening"[48]) and in a society where the fear of young people is actually the fear of the poor coupled with the fear of blacks – hoodies initially emerged from the hip-hop movement so they are assumed to be black while chavs are their white counterparts. The recurrent speculation about the definition of this species can be interpreted as an ironic reference to media debates that continue to deny the humanity of hoodies. The comments of the gang members on the darkness of these beasts purposefully underline the premise of the film ("That's black, too black to see / that's the blackest black ever fam / blacker than my cousin Femi!").[49] But by externalising monstrosity, the film makes it possible to dissociate this stigmatising view of working-class youth. By opposing marginalised and rejected categories of the population – often "othered" in the media and some horror films – and a much more extreme form of the Other since it is truly inhuman, the film downplays these young people's dangerousness (notably with the insertion of brief rather gory shots) and thereby reintegrates them into humankind. In this, *Attack the Block* stands as the perfect reverse of hoodie horror films like *F.* or *Heartless* (Philip Ridley, 2009) in which young people are first shown as human beings before becoming monsters. Contrary to the darkness of the creatures, Moses's gang symbolically brings light wherever they go through the corridors of the building (unlike their antagonist Hi-Hatz, the only real human monster in the film who embodies the Prince of Darkness). And Sam, first tempted to leave alone to escape her attackers, quickly finds herself in the dark, which convinces her, after a brief moment of reflection during which the beasts can be heard howling in the distance, to finally go back to them. This scene, which echoes the initial aggression but in reverse, signals the film's tipping point, situated exactly in its middle: the source of fear has changed ("Wherever you're going, I'm going with you" she says).

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[46] Sarah Street, *British National Cinema* (London: Routledge, [1997] 2001), 76, 95. See also Linnie Blake, *The Wounds of Nations* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), 9: "Horror film is uniquely situated to engage with the insecurities that underpin such conceptions of the nation; to expose the terrors underlying everyday national life and the ideological agendas that dictate existing formulations of 'national cinemas' themselves." She sees in British horror films of the end of the millennium "a range of British heroes doing battle with malevolent spirits, demons, dragons, and themselves in their exploration of gendered national identity, now marked by increasing political apathy and a loss of faith in the democratic nature of the British parliamentary system" (13).

[47] Joe Cornish in Holly Pyne, http://www.shortlist.com/, explains: "Another film I watched on video again and again was *An American Werewolf in London*. The thing that's fascinating is that it's one of the most brilliantly satirical and perceptive films about London, even though it was made by a foreigner. And it was a Hollywood B-movie transposed into London. It's a comedy horror in the very truest sense […]. It's real before it's fantastic. The priority is the scariness and the reality." He was also inspired by the wolf in *300* (Zack Snyder, 2006).

[48] This list of recurring terms was compiled by the Echo group and Women in Journalism based on more than 8,000 articles about British youth. Fiona Bawden, "Hoodie-winked," *The Guardian*, 9 March 2009, http://www.theguardian.com/media/2009/mar/09/media-news; Richard Garner, "'Hoodies, Louts, Scum': How Media Demonises Teenagers," *The Independent*, 13 March 2009, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/hoodies-louts-scum-how-media-demonises-teenagers-1643964.html.

[49] For Ilott, 162-163, the creatures are a parody of the descendants of the immigrants of Brixton where the film takes place because they are seen as invaders by the local population (a sort of reverse colonisation).

In fact, the evolution of Sam's perception of monstrosity shows this gradual journey towards the complete dissociation between monsters and council estate youths. First, the monsters are the youths as pointed out by the dialogue between Sam and her neighbour, then by her reaction in the police van in which her recoil is accentuated by the camera when she discovers Moses, the monster in a cage. The aggressiveness of Dennis, who came to free him and is filmed like one of the monsters lurking around them, frightens her as much as the beasts. This terror is still present in the scene set in her flat, during the intrusion of the gang (reminiscent of home invasion), where Dennis still aggressively asks her why she does not like the neighbourhood without realising that he is one of the main reasons. Then, the monsters symbolise more generally the evils of the neighbourhoods where they prowl, perceived as real cut-throat areas by the rest of the population because of the media, but also by their own residents who are tired of insecurity and drug-related crime (hence perhaps the hidden reason for the very localised invasion that puzzles the youths: "This ain't London wide, this is localised. / What kind of alien out of all the places in the whole wide world would invade some shitty council estate in South London? / One's that looking for a fight!"). The wire-mesh or reinforced doors of Tia's and a neighbour's flats signal that the residents are the first victims of this social monstrosity that consists in abandoning them to their fate. The two sides are represented by Sam, who plans to move out because the neighbourhood is unsafe, and Pest, who cannot see the difference between the alien invasion and his daily life ("Walking round expecting to get jumped at any moment. Feels like just another day in the ends to me"). Finally, the monsters are totally opposed to the young people that Sam is happy to join as the latter are human after all. After surviving an attack together, she understands that they were telling the truth ("There's worse things out there than us tonight, trust. We're on the same side now, get me?"). But, ironically, she must be accepted by them, thus discovering the humiliation of social rejection. Arguably, she now is the monster, in the etymological sense, the one who is singled out because she is the alien/stranger to the group.[50]

Apart from the alien creatures, the film seems to show that the real monsters are the local gangster and the police. The way Hi-Hatz grabs Moses by the arm is reminiscent of that of the creatures, especially since, in another scene, the youths think they see him when it is actually a creature. As for the police, they are perceived as more dangerous than the creatures by the youths, even though their comment is ironic. The policemen are symbolically linked to the predators when a siren blares as the creatures chase Moses in the final sequence. Those who finally arrive on the premises emerge from the smoke of their grenades like the creatures before and they share with them the denomination of "beast". The youths had nicknamed the first creature "the beast of Brixton" and the rap of KRS-One (*Sound of Da Police*) that Brewis listens to goes "This is the sound of the police, this is the sound of the beast". So everyone is someone else's monster. The association of the police with monsters is also the result of generic confluence. The distrust of the police, and more generally of institutions, typical of the proletarian milieu and directly related to banlieue film, here finds another justification because, in genre films that often advocate an anti-governmental ethos, the cavalry often arrives late or is even completely counterproductive (think, among many examples, of George A. Romero's antimilitarism). This is why, in *Attack the Block*, young people repeatedly complain about police harassment ("they arrest us for nothing already"); why Ron the dealer, who observes the situation with binoculars from his flat (as in zombie/infected films), is pleased to see no blue light in the neighbourhood; why Moses refuses to let Sam call the police when they understand that this is an alien

[50] The term alien is of course polysemic since it means both foreigner and extra-terrestrial. For those who may find that it is not glorious for young people to have to be compared to extra-terrestrial creatures to regain their status as human beings, they should remember that the film largely adopts Sam's point of view.

invasion (just as Pest refuses to go to the hospital for treatment) because the officers would only be one more problem to solve; and why Moses, not averse to conspiracy theories, even thinks at one point that the creatures are sent by the government to eradicate council estate youths who do not kill each other fast enough. The two genres therefore come together to put the state on trial because it is seen as repressive and unjust since it attacks the weakest without being able to protect them from a greater threat.

By putting young people who are often dehumanised face to face with truly inhuman creatures through a generic blending of the monster figure, this film sits at the confluence of genres to better encourage that of identities in a non-revolutionary but humanist discourse.[51] In a multicultural society where inequalities are widening and ghettoisation tends towards the diffluence of communities, *Attack the Block* insists on the benefit that the country could reap from a true convergence of the nation's vital forces. It is interesting to note that when the monsters arrive, they damage the car of student Brewis's father and, later, a police van, in other words the middle class and the institutions. Additionally, they attack very specific targets, so much so that they could be seen as an embodiment of fate or divine retribution or at least of authorial intervention in that they appear as social avengers. Those who perish in the goriest way are thus the policemen (who are distracted because they are too happy to have arrested the one they believe to be the gangster) and the real villains or "human monsters" of the film namely Hi-Hatz and his henchmen,[52] that is to say those who refuse this reconfiguration and remain frozen in the clichés of the banlieue film. Quite significantly, the authorities deny the existence of extra-terrestrials and persist in believing, despite mounting evidence, that all the problems they face are the work of young people in the neighbourhood. The late intervention of the police (with a helicopter chase) maintains the urban character of the film even after the alien invasion until its conclusion with the arrest of the youths in the epilogue, as policemen are convinced that all this chaos is only one more night of riots on the estate. This attitude reveals their conditioning and the implacable nature of the institutions, but their denial of reality leads to their downfall. Unlike Moses who evolves throughout the film, Hi-Hatz, his *doppelgänger*, remains a true cliché of an irredeemable gangster, the embodiment of gangsta bling with his fascination for money, weapons and rap that he listens to at full volume in all circumstances. In contrast, two members from the group led by Moses are killed but these deaths are filmed in a less horrific way. Even if the director seems to think that these deaths occur randomly, Dennis noticeably dies just after reiterating his distrust of Sam while the other youths are rather of the opinion to unite against their new common enemy. As if form followed content, the film then seems to show the dead-end in which class contempt (which works both ways in its "us vs them" perception of society) can precipitate society. The violent blow delivered by a creature against the door of Sam's flat where they have all taken refuge is what puts an end to the class war that reigns within the group expressed with many jibes and wisecracks on both sides. The tensions stirring the United Kingdom would find their solution if the supposed foreigners/aliens acknowledged their proximity and similarities, not going on a space odyssey but just as long and difficult a journey nonetheless

[51] The film does not go so far as to explicitly state that hoodie horror is above all the product of a social horror caused by the ideological system in place. However, the suggested confrontation between supposed and real monsters is already in itself a way of mocking the hyperbolic nature of some films and, consequently, the moral panics they are the reflection of.

[52] There is no excessive idealism in this film, as noticed by Chris Tookey, "Hoodies you want to hug: A teen gang fights aliens in the best monster movie since *Shaun of the Dead*," *The Daily Mail*, 13 May 2011, http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/ reviews/article-1386562/Attack-The-Block-review-The-best-monster-movie-Shaun-Of-The-Dead.html: "*Attack the Block* strikes a refreshingly happy medium, neither demonising nor glorifying them [hoodies]."

successfully undertaken by Sam and the youths. Sam is no longer considered a total stranger by the young people when she tends to Pest's leg but she takes time to accept them. Her reaction to Pest's commentary, which could go along the criticism of the film as seeking to overlook the initial aggression, is there to remind the viewer that the term hero is still, at this point in the film, usurped and that a purely individual relationship is not enough to create a healthy society ("He mugged me. / Yeah but afterwards she fixed my leg and we saved her from the monsters so we're mates now and it's all sweet. We're heroes, innit? / Five of you and a knife against one woman? Fuck off!"). Excuses are not enough and it is only after saving each other's lives – which gives rise to a general presentation: everyone has left their social stereotype (us/them) and has become an individual – and especially after Moses's sacrifice to save the whole estate that Sam no longer considers them strangers and defends them against the police: "Those boys over there, the ones you're arresting, I know them. They're my neighbours. They protected me." It is indeed the idea of community and solidarity that the film seeks to develop around the hard core of Moses's gang by including individuals from other social classes (Ron, Brewis, Sam). Incidentally, the film takes a dig at do-gooders who like to help strangers on the other side of the world but do nothing for those who are their neighbours, like Sam's partner who volunteered in Africa. In this call for civil and social harmony (neighbourliness "going towards" vs alienation/alien nation "making foreign"), those who remain distant and individualistic are punished while those who develop a collective spirit beyond social differences are saved or even redeemed. The extraordinary circumstances thus reveal the worth of Moses and his neo-proletarian friends who, thanks to the help of the representatives of the lower-middle class Sam and Brewis, manage to save their tower block, a microcosm symbolising no less than the nation. Moses's name is chanted by neighbours since, after a heroic chase filmed in slow motion, he blew up all the monsters, escaping death by grabbing a flag, the Union Jack, hanging from a balcony. The film therefore also reconfigures a trophy often waved by the racists of the neighbourhood into a symbol of national renewal where the young black man is no longer "the evil Other"[53] but is in line with the British heroes of yesteryear in war films or Ealing comedies,[54] while keeping a psychological complexity that makes him definitely human (capable of evil as well as good). The character of Moses is the catalyst for this generic and social confluence since his evolution from marginal/criminal to have-a-go hero corresponds, beyond the story attached to his biblical name (a reluctant saviour and liberator of his people) to the trope of the unlikely hero of science fiction, an ordinary character caught in extraordinary circumstances that reveal him to himself. As such the word "remake" takes on its full meaning both cinematographically and politically. In a neoliberal society that has sought to "reclassify" certain people as "abject" leading the latter to resist this dehumanising approach by an "attempt to remake themselves"[55], *Attack the Block* does the same thing as the ideology it struggles against but with a reverse goal. By subverting the principle of the

[53] As mentioned by Mark Featherstone, "'Hoodie Horror': The Capitalist Other in Postmodern Society," *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, vol.35, no.3 (2013): 178-196.

[54] According to Bradshaw, "*Attack the Block* draws on the classic science-fiction model such as *Independence Day* and the siege drama – Carpenter's *Assault on Precinct 13* – but there's also something very innocent and English here, something reminiscent of the 1947 Ealing comedy *Hue and Cry*." For Tookey, "There are inevitably echoes of *Shaun of the Dead* fighting off that unwelcome incursion of zombies in Finsbury Park, but the notion of uniting classes and races to resist a common enemy goes back to the heyday of Ealing comedy."

[55] Imogen Tyler, *Revolting Subjects: Social Abjection and Resistance in Neoliberal Britain* (London: Zed Books, 2013), 73-74, 211-214. She explains how neoliberalism seeks to deprive certain sections of the population of their citizenship by reducing them to the state of abjection. The film takes the opposite approach by seeking to reintegrate these "revolting subjects" into the nation.

monstrous other ("[that] may be deployed to serve dominant ideologies of class and nationhood"[56]) thanks to genre blending, it gives its characters the opportunity to "remake" themselves or reinvent themselves as science fiction heroes, which allows it to emphasise their human side.

Attack the Block is therefore both a point of junction for various genres and people. Though some might view the film as a monstrous hybrid (i.e. the abnormal and artificial union of two species/genres),[57] the idea is rather to subvert spectators' expectations of a genre by blending it with another, hoping to translate that revisionism/reappraisal into the extra-filmic reality of British society. Generic blending in *Attack the Block* thus contributes to the "politics of genre"[58] in asserting its wish to challenge or even influence its spectators' world-view.

[56] Blake, 142.
[57] Although he ultimately goes against it, Derrida, 57, refers to the potential law of genre as a norm to respect, a line of demarcation not to cross because "one must not risk impurity, anomaly, or monstrosity".
[58] Allen, 14.