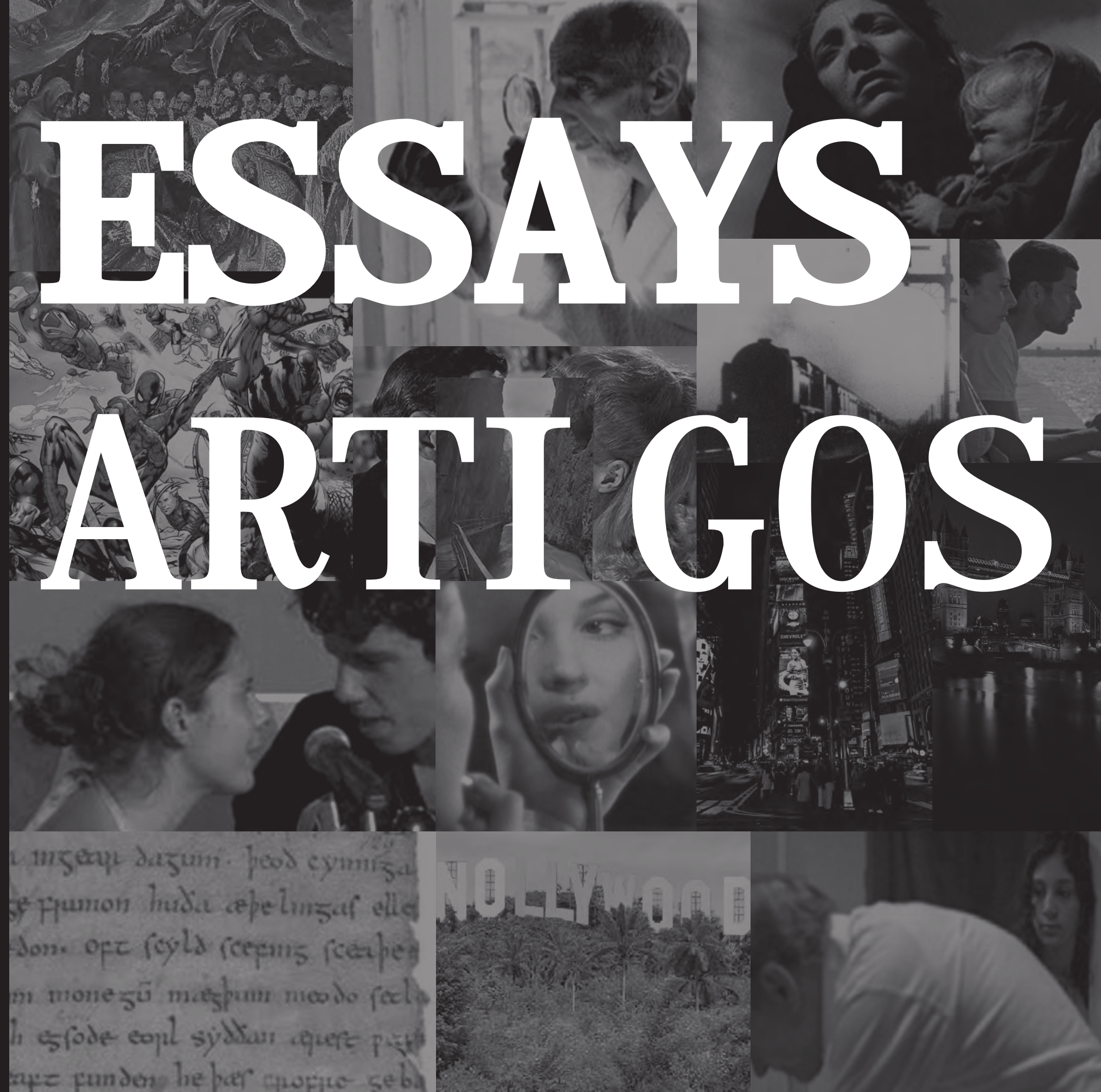
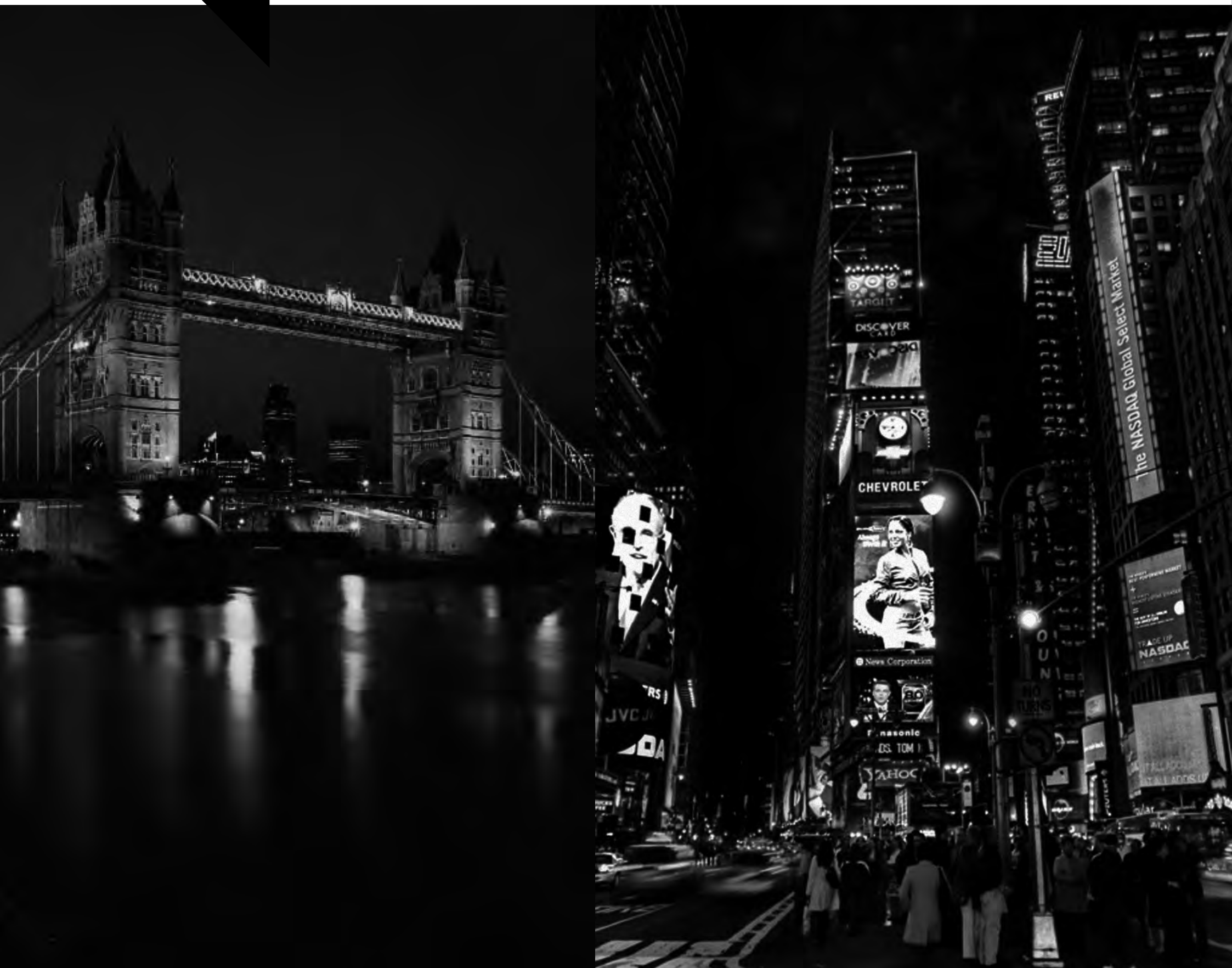


ESSAYS ARTTIGOS



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THE

FLICK EFFECT: THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE CINEMATIC CITY TO NARRATIVE ADVERTISING

by
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This paper is the result of an observation of the proliferation of marketing and branding techniques relating to global cities, in which cinema seems to play a central role. Although not the result of an empirical endeavour, the paper suggests that in the evolving media landscape, in which the cinema and promotional industries seem to have an increasingly symbiotic relationship, global cities are reinforcing and re-constructing their symbolic power (brand images) through cinema. This paper inspired the theme for my doctoral research project, in which I assess cinema's contribution to the symbolic construction of the global city.

The global cities are most often discussed in the context of financial power (see, for example, Friedmann, 1986; Sassen, 1991 and Beaverstock, Smith & Taylor, 1999), whereby these cities handle the majority of the world's financial transactions. Although very much a part of these cities' identity, the focus on financial power seems limited, given the cultural role these cities play. Cinematic representations featuring the global cities are abundant and the connection between cinema and the symbolic power of the city seems to be accelerating and evolving. The importance of culture appears even more relevant in an era when western global cities are relinquishing a great deal of financial power to emerging centres in the global south, like China, India and Brazil. Symbolic power, linked to branding, is defined by Bourdieu (1985, p. 16) as having both cultural (representational) and economic elements. This dual-focus is highly relevant to cinema, which is both a mode of artistic and cultural representation, and a large, profit-making global media industry.

In my doctoral research, I approach the symbolic power of the global city as a cinematic construction, identifying the ways in which the cultural output of the cinema industries, cinematic representations, enhance, re-articulate and re-construct the global cities' identity. Given cinema's pervasiveness, global reach, appeal and large profit-making potential, it seems logical that cities should use the medium to construct and publicise their offerings. However, the multitude of representations of particularly the global cities, constructing them as both desirable and at times undesirable locations, problematises this seemingly straightforward relationship.

It is precisely this conflictual element, which is of great interest. In my doctoral research, I explore the ways in which cinematic representations re-articulate, sustain and re-construct the symbolic power of the global cities. It is precisely the convergence of a variety of agencies, like governments, city planners, branding agencies, commercial enterprises and indeed cinema, which work together to 'sell' these cities and commercial products, to the world.

THE FLICK EFFECT: THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE CINEMATIC CITY TO NARRATIVE ADVERTISING

Abstract

Certain images have become embedded in the everyday lifeworld, becoming part of the 'taken for granted' visual spectacle so prevalent in our fluid, globalising world. It is this very idea of embeddedness through which persuasive power is exercised, causing us to act and think in normative ways. Cities are integral cogs in this machine of embeddedness, embodying brand imaginaries and inspiring products which supersede the confines of their political and conceptual borders. It is precisely the Parises, Londons and New Yorks of the world which regularly exert this symbolic and often hegemonic power, using their 'brand reputations' to sell themselves and, perhaps more significantly, (luxury) products associated with their auras. But how did London, Paris and New York come to be brands in their own right, commanding such prized positions in the global imagination? In this paper I will discuss what is arguably the most powerful reproducer of city images, cinema, and its contribution to embedding and making normative the iconicity associated with these cities, an iconicity which is often taken for granted in the contemporary world. I will use, amongst others, examples of narrative television advertisements which have clear roots in the cinematic tradition, using the cities associated with the brands to express an element of desirability and superior quality. Audrey Tautou as Amélie Poulain and for Chanel (Paris); Jude Law as Londoner Alfie and for Dior Homme Intense (London), are but a few examples of the pervasiveness not only of the broader cinematic tradition, but precisely of these cinematic cities and their associated personalities: their auras. Ultimately, I will suggest that cinema's contribution to intuitive and embedded ways of thinking about certain cities and their associated commercial products as objects of desire, rather than leading to a fluid repository, serves only to reinforce a normative visual (cinematic) and, by association, consumer culture.

Keywords: Cinema, City, Consumer, Advertising, Visual

Introduction

Cities, like commercial products, are the focus of marketing and branding efforts. Beyond obvious examples like the well-known 'I ♥ NY' campaign, imitated in a variety of cities across the globe, agencies appear increasingly to use 'embedded' imagery and tacit techniques to create awareness of city brands, associating cities with certain products, events and even people. In other words, cities are bestowed with *brand identities*. 'I ♥ NY' is therefore not simply a catchy slogan; it is representative of the images and impressions of the city as a physical and a metaphorical space. Certain cities, notably London and New York, also global cities (see Sassen, 1991) have their positions firmly engrained at the top level of urban hierarchies (for example, the Globalisation and

World Cities Research Network at Loughborough University in the UK). These cities, showcased heavily in the global media, have overcome the boundaries of their physical confines, enhancing their iconic nature. Indeed, their mediated images are perhaps more pervasive and more evocative than their physical selves. In the contemporary world, individuals are very often bombarded with visual reminders of these cities and their attributes, persuading them to consume either the cities themselves or their associated products. The 'branded city' is therefore a normative concept, linking certain, well-known cities with various 'brand promises', often of high quality or 'iconic' attributes and experiences.

That the above cities are continuously at the top tier of the 'global urban hierarchy' (Brenner and Kell, 2006, p. 3) speaks to their strong presence in the global media. Though a vast array of cultural, economic and historical factors have contributed to the rise of these cities, it is essential to acknowledge the role of the global media in the last century which, through numerous iterations over a plethora of platforms, have enhanced these cities' claim to the top level. In this paper, I assess the advent of the 'branded city' from a cultural-historical approach, exploring specifically the role of cinema and its contribution to normative representations of the symbolic power of these cities. Though not the result of an empirical endeavour, this paper is based on research I am currently carrying out for a larger, empirical project. The uncritical and 'taken for granted' stance which normativity entails, is precisely the starting point for understanding the proliferation of the image of these branded (and cinematic) cities into the global media. As consumers, we are tempted by the perfumes of Paris, the fashion of London and the cosmetics of New York, because these 'brands' are desirable and suggest superior quality: appending 'Paris', 'London' or 'New York' to a commercial brand is intuitively more lucrative than appending 'Nairobi', 'Brussels' or 'Tashkent'. Chanel Nairobi, Burberry Brussels and Donna Karan Tashkent likely evoke entirely different sets of images compared with those evoked by the cities in which these commercial brands are actually based. London, Paris and New York are therefore cities which Anholt (2010) would class as those which 'have brand images' (p.11)

Although the two are separate entities, it seems that the cinematic city and the branded city are now being explicitly and intentionally merged, creating a hybridised city identity. This explicit merger should be seen as the culmination of a cumulative process, emphasising the centrality of the cinematic mode of representation in the portrayal of the city space. The symbolic value of that which we today class as a 'city brand' has been constructed over time in, amongst others, the medium of cinema. This is particularly relevant in the assessment of narrative (cinematic) advertising, in which certain cities play starring roles in the promotion of high-end or luxury goods. In this paper I suggest that this phenomenon is likely linked to the genealogy of cinematic representations of certain cities, contributing to (and reinforcing) a standardised, normative visual and consumer culture.



The Branded City

There is a plethora of media representations of city brands and, at times, those involved in both the promotion and analysis of these cities often provide blatant reminders of their presence on a variety of platforms. The proliferation of rankings systems and global city indices, for example, have pointed to the consistently favoured status of the world's 'global cities': London, New York, Paris and Tokyo. The Globalization and World Cities (GaWc) Research Network at Loughborough University, UK is arguably one of the most comprehensive of such rankings guides, placing the above cities in the 'Alpha++' (London and New York) or Alpha+' (Paris and Tokyo) (top) categories, giving them 'super brand' status. In their study of the branding of the Spanish city of Granada, Luque-Martinez and Muñoz-Leiva (2005) highlight the importance that cities place on benchmarking, concluding that '[c]ities and territories need to analyse what their potential is in order to be able to compete in the international environment using their differentiation' (p. 422). In spite of efforts by many other cities to join the global cities in the 'Alpha' category, the above locations form an élite club of 'super brands' which appears to be virtually impossible to penetrate. Anholt (2010), provides a useful way in which to understand the concept of city branding: '...[T]here is a big difference between observing that places *have brand images*... and claiming that places *can be branded*...Place branding... observes the former but does not claim the latter' (p. 11). Pervasive imagery ('*brand images*'), in particularly imagery provided by cinematic representations, therefore seems central in the practice of city branding.

Repetition and Normativity

The recent focus on the experiential elements of production and consumption (see Pine and Gilmore, 1999, and their concept of the 'Experience Economy') has to a certain extent transformed the ways in which we consume cities. The effects of the media in cultivating particular 'ways of seeing' through, as shall be discussed, repetition, and its effect on the global mediascape, brings forth the notion that the *practices* of everyday life are in some ways being transformed by this emphasis on experience (Pine and Gilmore, 1999, p. 12). As the narratives and images of everyday life have in some ways become rooted in mediated representations, especially in the developed world, the efforts of city branding agencies risk being lost in the seemingly endless repertoire of media-generated texts and images available to society at large, whereby those texts are constituent parts of the recent trend of *experiencing*, rather than simply *consuming*. This phenomenon is expressed in Silverstone's (2006) claim regarding the 'taken for granted' nature of the media's output, in which he emphasises that '...the need for doubt falls away, for the invitation is to accept the world as it appears on the screen, an appearance which is, for all its superficial variety, ubiquitous, eternal and, to



Anholt suggests that *long-term* repetition, perhaps in a subtle manner, through efforts like product placement and hosting global events, is more likely to solidify a city's reputation in the global consciousness, than short-lived marketing campaigns.

Agencies concerned with city branding are therefore at the mercy of media proliferation, forcing them to create, for example, campaigns and product tie-ins which aim to circumvent the constraints brought about by '...media clutter...' (Olson, 2004, p. 68). Cities are now bestowed with *personalities*, allowing individuals to interact with them on the level of imagination, creating long-lasting bonds between individuals and places. The often strong *emotional* characteristics granted to cities (for example, love, hope and dreams) with which individuals may connect, are central to mediated representations of the city. This focus on emotion, is linked to branding. Brands, according to Olins (2003) '...have become a social and cultural phenomenon with the most extraordinary strength and power...Branding...is largely about involvement and association; the outward and visible demonstration of private and personal affiliation' (pp. 11-14). Holt (2004) augments Olins's (2003) definitions, describing branding as a '...psychological phenomenon which stems from the perceptions of individual consumers...what makes a brand powerful is the collective nature of these perceptions; the stories have become conventional and so are continually reinforced because they are treated as truths in everyday interactions' (p. 3). Holt's point is crucial: brands are powerful when their 'stories' (narratives) are treated as *collective* truths in everyday life: they become 'taken for granted' and eventually 'normalised' through mediated representations. The concept of emotion is discussed in greater detail in the cinematic city section of this paper.

Raban (1974) asserts that '[t]he city as we might imagine it...is as real, maybe more real, than the hard city one can locate in maps and statistics, in monographs on urban sociology and demography and architecture' (p. 10). Raban's (1974) imagined city is paralleled in the more modern concept of the branded city, which Anholt (2010) emphasises is an embedded entity, one which may not necessarily alter its position by way of simply applying commercial branding techniques. '...[C]ities and regions that are lucky or virtuous enough to have acquired a positive reputation find that everything they or their citizens wish to do on the global stage is easier: their brand goes before them, opening doors, creating trust and respect...' (p. 4). Branding efforts, Anholt (2010) argues, become less relevant, at least in the short term: it is the embedded image and reputation of a place which gives it a competitive edge (p. 5). This is a striking notion which, apart from seeming to discredit some of Anholt's previous work (see Anholt, 2003), brings to light a theoretical tension: how do strong ('iconic') city brands exist if short-term city branding efforts are largely ineffective? How do cities become '...lucky or virtuous enough to have acquired a positive reputation on the global stage...' (Anholt, 2010, p. 4)?

I suggest that the moving, visual representations provided by cinema are likely central to the advent of the 'city brand', insofar as the 'city brand' is a product of repetition and its effect on the

all intents and purposes, real (although...it is nothing of the sort)' (p. 51). Anholt (2010) assesses whether this 'taken for granted' nature of media output has any consequences for the efficacy of city branding campaigns:

If you repeat a slogan frequently enough, people will end up recognising it...Whether it actually has the power to alter their opinions and their behaviour towards [a city]... is quite another matter...[I]n city after city...marketing campaigns are cheerfully sold to governments, and billions of dollars of public money are spent producing them and placing them in the media, where they disappear without a trace' (Anholt, 2010, p. 3).

collective memory. Cinema provides a platform through which to construct images of certain cities, through access to large, global audiences and, in recent years especially, by using product tie-ins, cross promotions and a variety of digital and non-digital platforms.

The Cinematic City

The cinematic city has since the late-nineteenth century had a large hand in the ability of a city's image to transcend its cultural and physical characteristics and its geographical boundaries. Indeed, as Durham (2008) notes, '...the cinema, at the very moment of its inception, became the primary and the most popular reproducer of images of the city' (p. 179). Repeated and standardised representations of certain, cinematic, cities therefore became extremely popular through their recurring use in mainstream cinema over time. The growth of cinema as a global media industry and the centrality of the city to cinematic representations, have likely played a large role in the global proliferation of the cinematic city. Barsam (2007) notes that '...movies are so thoroughly integrated into our daily lives that we often simply take them for granted...' (p. 2). Applying this logic, the cinematic city itself, a highly pervasive concept, is therefore also likely to be taken for granted. Indeed, certain cities, particularly the global cities, become benchmarks according to which other cities are evaluated: this is an exercise in the articulation of the power of normative images and perpetuating a hegemonic understanding of the hierarchical positioning of these cities. Cinema seems to play a key role in this process.



Power

If we approach power in Castells's (2009) terms, whereby the standardisation of mainstream, western media (in this case cinematic) representations in global markets leads to an unbalanced construction of meaning in the collective imagination, we can see the importance of cinema as a global media industry, in its contribution to these uneven power relations.

Power is exercised by means of coercion (or the possibility of it) and/or by the construction of meaning on the basis of the discourses through which social actors guide their action...Institutions may engage in power relationships that rely on the domination they exercise over their subjects' (p. 10).

The exercising of power in the context of the cinematic city should also be seen as a multi-step process, involving three distinct but inter-related realms: the geo-political space ('place' as a territorial construction, for example, as a constituent part of a state or empire); the cultural-industrial space ('place' as articulated through various forms of mediated representations, like cinema); and the market space ('place' as a commercial product or brand, developed from and alongside the geo-political and cultural-industrial. Place in this space is intangible and not necessarily confined by its political or physical borders). This tripartite deconstruction of the history of 'place' as a representational notion is linked to an historical trajectory in which certain places are represented more frequently than others, resulting



in a standardisation of representations in mainstream western cinema. These cities tend to be the global cities (see Sassen, 1991). Friedmann (1986) notes that the global cities ‘are centres for the production and dissemination of information, news, entertainment and other cultural artefacts’ (p. 156), thereby commanding large amounts of influence in the portrayal of the world to the world, enhancing the symbolic power of these cities. Bourdieu’s (1985) discussion of symbolic goods typifies the notion that even cultural goods command vast amounts of (economic) power: ‘Symbolic goods are a two-faced reality, a commodity and a symbolic object: their specifically cultural value and their commercial value remain relatively independent although the economic sanction may come to reinforce their cultural consecration’ (p. 16). In other words, there is a significant link between (cultural) symbolic value and economic value, whereby the former becomes entrenched in the latter in the market economy (particularly in Pine and Gilmore’s (1999) Experience Economy). The global city is therefore the seat of *symbolic power*, defined by Thompson (1995) as ‘the capacity to intervene in the course of events, to influence the actions of others and indeed to create events, by means of the production and transmission of symbolic forms’ (p. 17). Cinema is a particularly useful medium through which to explore, at the representational level, the symbolic construction of the branded city. Hesmondhalgh’s (2007) analysis of the cultural industries provides a succinct articulation of the implications of the power wielded by the media industries, with a particular reference to film and other

forms of audio-visual representations: ‘Films... contribute strongly to our sense of who we are, of what it means to be...an African or an Arab, a Canadian or a New Yorker...’ (p. 3). Films provide a form of discursive, persuasive power, elements of which, due to their widespread popularity, have become key elements in global popular culture. Returning to Castells (2009), this level of embeddedness is representative of an asymmetrical two-way power relationship, in which ‘...there is a certain degree of compliance and acceptance by those subjected to power’ (p. 11). The ‘taken for granted’ (see Barsam, 2007) nature of cinema itself contributes to this asymmetrical relationship, whereby normative representations of iconic, global cities like London and New York are dominant. Cities with strong cinematic identities also offer strong location brands; it seems far from coincidental that the world’s global cities also happen to be some of the world’s most recognisable cinematic cities. Although the literature on global cities emphasises the centrality of financial power in articulating their symbolic power (see, for example, Friedmann, 1986; Sassen, 1991 and Beaverstock, Smith & Taylor, 1999), I believe that further empirical research is needed to assess the role of the media, in particular cinema, in the construction these cities as symbolically significant. Through its moving, visual representations, cinema has played a major role in the creation of, in Anholt’s (2010) terms, ‘cities which “have brand images”’ (p. 11). Emotion Cinema has undoubtedly provided and continues to provide an unparalleled repository of moving city images, influencing the ways in which individuals understand and interact

with certain places. Jansson’s (2002) concept of mediated ‘spatial phantasmagoria’, which stipulates that one’s experiences in a place or one’s impressions of a place (irrespective of whether one has travelled to that place) are often influenced by prior media consumption, including films, becomes a key factor in understanding the profound effect the ‘cinematic city’ has on the city itself (see Jansson, 2002). Taking this idea a step further, Bruno (1997) suggests that ‘[t]he image of the city ends up closely interacting with filmic representations. The streetscape is as much a filmic “construction” as it is an architectural one’ (p. 12). Bruno’s (2007) later work addresses the idea of movement as a tool of the imagination, both in the literal and figurative senses. Movement, Bruno (2007) argues, is an emotive process, triggering various thoughts and feelings which ultimately determine the individual’s interaction with the city space. ‘Motion...produces emotion, and, correlatively, emotion contains movement’ (Bruno, 2007, p. 14). The very term ‘movie’ (‘moving image’) connotes the notion of the journey, transporting the viewer through the cinematic landscape which in many instances is an urban setting. Cinematic (e)motion is tantamount to the creation of an imaginary and interactive space, corresponding to Hemelryk Donald and Gammack’s (2007) understanding of the complexities brought about by the cinematic representation of cities. ‘...[T]he image of the city exceeds the schematic and emotional mapping of its literal geographical and environmental features, and combines at an imaginative level with...cinematic...expressions of its sensuality...’(p. 9). This interpretation suggests that the city is an intangible, symbolic and imaginary space. Through the construction of emotive city narratives, filmmakers may be likened to contemporary city branders, for whom cinematic (e)motion becomes a selling point and a method by which to construct a brand identity.

Repetition

The explicit merger of the cinematic and branded city identity points to a form of collaboration between industries which is in response to a cumulative articulation of the cinematic city identity. Repeated cinematic representations of western cultural trends, often situated in certain, western, often global cities, tend to dominate. Hemelryk Donald and Gammack (2007) assert that this is an intangible, ‘intuitive’ notion which, in part at least, is attributable to the cinematic city and contributes directly to the conceptual realm of branding.

Many films are set in New York, Chicago and San Francisco...Those same cities are hyper-brands...At the same time Bombay...is the urban centre of the other global film player; India...But Bombay has no place brand, and very little popular recognition as an urban entity outside of its immediate Indian population and diaspora (p. 15).

This is evidenced by, for example, the ‘taken for granted’ nature of well-known city brands, in that even unflattering cinematic representations of the city space do not detract from their symbolic power. For example, films which highlight New York’s problems with crime (*The Taking of Pelham 123*), London’s problems with immigration (*Breaking and Entering*) and Paris’s problems with racial integration (*La Haine*), instead of diminishing their ‘iconic’ cinematic/brand identities, somehow seem to enhance them, perhaps as a result of pervasive imagery portraying these cities in a positive light.

Cinema’s role within global culture is undeniably pivotal. ‘In just over a hundred years, movies have evolved into a complex form of artistic representation and communication: they are at once a hugely influential, widely profitable, global industry and a modern art—the most popular art form today’ (Barsam, 2007, p. 2). The synergies between cities and film studios are becoming ever more apparent, whereby setting a film in a certain city may be attractive to filmmakers as the city itself may possess a great deal of symbolic power. Woody Allen’s *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* (2008), is perhaps signalling the move towards a new trend in city branding: that of reciprocity. The film, which presents a romanticised version of the cities of Barcelona and Oviedo, was funded in part by the Barcelona and Catalán local and regional governments (‘Allen Film Funding Angers Spanish’, 2007). Barcelona is used to sell the film whilst the film is simultaneously used to sell Barcelona. This symbiotic relationship between the film and promotional industries is evidence of the evolution of the Experience Economy, mentioned above, in that the role of experience is taking a more prominent position in the representational genres (see Pine and Gilmore, 1999).

The Cinematic-Branded City

In the past, the cinematic city and the branded city, though intrinsically linked, were treated as separate disciplines, with the former belonging to the world of art and the humanities and the latter belonging to the world of management and commercial practices. The conflated practice of city promotion through film and, perhaps more significantly, film promotion through the city, rather than challenging the notion of the city as a commercial product, in fact re-positions the *city* as a filmic product through ‘product placement’, whereby the contribution of Hollywood and the larger global industries have a hand in the use of certain cities as a selling point. The blurring distinction between the cinematic and branded cities seems to be a result of the current state of the cultural industries in general, in which convergence and synergies are becoming increasingly common. In *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* (2008), the use of a ‘superstar’ director, Woody Allen, and an all-star Spanish and American cast, serve to delineate Barcelona’s aspiration to ‘city stardom’. Barcelona’s inoffensive, sun-soaked cityscape appears to be equally desirable for the filmmakers, which is evident in the use of the city’s name in the film’s title.

Beyond the Silver Screen: Narrative advertising

There is some evidence suggesting a merger of the cinematic and branded cities which are now often indistinguishable as a result of the proliferation of the global media and corporate synergies in branding and marketing strategies, in which cinema—and therefore these cities’ cinematic identities—plays a pivotal role. Some examples of this phenomenon are discussed below. The ‘cinematic-branded city’ is at times rearticulated in non-cinematic genres and is presented as an object of desire or value. This is highly evident in narrative advertising, whereby certain cities play ‘starring roles’ alongside well-known actors in promoting luxury products which at times have no direct relation to the city on screen. The city serves as the backdrop and enhances the high value associated with the product being promoted, whereby the lighting, shots and style seem to create an air of desirability. The product is often left ambiguous until the very end of the advertisement, leaving the film star and the city, the secondary products, in the foreground. There exist many examples of this phenomenon, including, amongst others, advertisements for high-end fragrances, fashion, cosmetics and even financial services.

A notable example is New York-based credit card company American Express, which chose to feature Kate Winslet and the Camden Town district of North London to publicise its product in a global advertising campaign. The advertisement shares many commonalities with cinema, in terms of both style and substance. Apart from its clearly voyeuristic, cinematic style, Winslet is featured making explicit references to her past film roles, using Camden Town, whose outdoor market is London’s fourth most popular tourist attraction (Williams and Wolmar, 2003, ¶ 1), prominently in the foreground. For those viewers perhaps not acquainted with the area, Winslet’s enlarged face is plastered on a red London double-decker bus towards the end of the advertisement, immediately preceding the mention of the product being promoted (the American Express card). This iconic, visual reminder of London suggests the city’s central role in the narrative of the advertisement. The parallels between cinema and branding are in this case highly prevalent and the exercising of the normative understanding of London’s prime position as a cinematic-branded city, which serves to heighten the sense of desirability being communicated. According to American Express, who launched the campaign in 2004 in the US, ‘the campaign positions the key attributes of the brand to reflect the Company’s tradition of service and integrity, while redefining membership for today’s affluent, high-spending customers’ (‘Kate Winslet Latest Addition to Global “My Life My Card (SM)” Communications Campaign from American Express’, 2005, ¶ 5). Here the explicit link between the product, the actor and affluence framed visually by London, a ‘superstar’ city. This makes links explicitly the cinematic and branded city in today’s consumer society. Cinema’s contribution to intuitive and embedded ways of thinking about certain cities

like London and their associated commercial products as objects of desire, rather than leading to a fluid repository, serves only to reinforce a normative visual (cinematic) and, by association, consumer culture. That a New York-based company chose London and a British film to promote its product in the US market is telling of the intuitive ‘pull’ or symbolic power possessed by London as a cinematic-branded city. This example of the city’s cinematic and branded identities culminates at the economic realm, confirming Bourdieu’s (1985, p. 16) concept of symbolic power as having both economic and representational qualities.

Conclusion

In this paper, I suggest that the links between the cinematic city and the notion of city branding, are in need of further, empirical research. There is evidence to suggest that this link is evolving, particularly in the trend of narrative advertising, in which the cinematic city’s identity is often re-articulated as a desirable product. The city is used to sell high-end goods and services, like cosmetics, clothing and even financial services. Furthermore, industry evidence suggests that cities and cinema are enjoying an ever expanding symbiotic relationship in which financial reward is seen as reciprocal, whereby cities benefit from global exposure whilst films benefit from the symbolic power already possessed by certain cities. As this paper is not the result of an empirical endeavour, though based partly on empirical research currently being carried out for a much larger project, it would be impossible to draw any firm conclusions. Instead, this paper should be seen as a critical ‘first assessment’ of changes seeming to take place in the cinema and promotional industries. The extensive representations of the global cities in cinema, one of the largest global media industries, are suggestive of the medium’s key role in constructing and possibly enhancing these cities’ symbolic power. As cinema continues to transcend the silver screen, penetrating the digital and promotional worlds, the evolving role of the medium in enhancing the global cities’ symbolic power or brand platforms, is in need of further scholarly attention.

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