

Justice in the risk society: Barthes goes to Hollywood

Hollywood cinema is rarely acknowledged as an important counterpublic sphere which works to firstly, stimulate a critical and inclusive dialogue on the nature of risk of/from crime; and secondly, facilitate a deliberative engagement with questions of 'justice'. And yet, in the post 9/11 period, a series of futuristic films take seriously the implications to 'justice' of intensified surveillance in liberal democratic societies faced with different kinds of risk. Fictional filmic representations of futuristic technologies for responding to crime, especially those based on identificatory and predictive capacity, disseminate ambivalent discourses of both horror and hope. Box office successes, such as *Minority Report* (2002), *Paycheck* (2004) and *A Scanner Darkly* (2006) may (simply) be entertaining as 'action-packed' science fiction thrillers, but they also create a hyperreality which allows us to glimpse alternative frameworks of risk-management which, ambiguously, reflect both authoritarian and libertarian perspectives on systems of 'justice', law enforcement and punishment in a 'risk society'. Through an analysis of these films, and drawing on Barthes' notions of *jouissance* and the enigmatic, this paper will explore the critical, subversive and disruptive possibilities of the simulated worlds of 'Hollywood justice' paying particular attention to how they work to destabilise and scrutinise the conceptual scope and empirical instantiation of 'risk' as well as challenge its ethico-political meaning in contemporary life.

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