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Displacement and condensation: interpretations of the representation of British working class men on screen in the 1970s

The 70s produced a range of seminal and disturbing British films such as *Performance* (Cammell/Roeg/1970) *Get Carter*, (Hodges/1971) *The Squeeze* (Apted/1977) and *Scum* (Clarke/1979) which were uncompromising in their representations of cynicism and brutality in the relations between working class men.

This paper aims to explore the relation between the emergence of these representations on screen and the upheavals between the government and the trade union movement during the 1970s, considering the possibility that although not represented cinematically, the trade union movements display of power during the 70s which moved beyond mere wage bargaining, for instance the use of secondary picketing to support migrant women workers during the Grunwick Strike, made a significant impact albeit negative, on the representations of male working class characters during this period. My research into British crime films reveals two contrasting interpretations; that representations of crime in popular feature length films on the one hand fill a gap where representations of films about unionized labour struggles could have been and on the other that representations of crime films and criminal gangs could also be read as allegories for the British government during this period.

My basis for this exploration will be following on from the assumption that texts and discourse often become the sites of displacement or condensation and redistribution of values. I will be comparing and discussing the mirror image interpretations of gangsters/crime films as allegories through discussing extracts from a selection of the films and putting the production of the films into a wider political and social context of the 1970s.