

ARTICLE

Re-Mediated Mann: The Re-Mediation of Public Figures and Events in *The Insider* and *Ali*

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ABSTRACT

Critical attention on Michael Mann has concentrated on his crime dramas such as *Heat* (1995), *Collateral* (2004) and *Manhunter* (1986). This paper analyses two of Mann's films that depict historical figures and events, *The Insider* (1999) and *Ali* (2001). The representation of actual figures makes these films distinct within Mann's oeuvre.

The Insider presents the tobacco industry whistle-blower Jeffrey Wigand and the events surrounding his TV interview, while *Ali* depicts the career of Muhammad Ali. Key to these films is the presentation of figures that have already appeared in various media forms. This paper explores the *re-mediation* that the films perform, discussing the questions raised by re-representation. In doing so, the paper responds to critics such as Derek Paget who disparage the representation of true events in media. The paper therefore engages with arguments around a discursive approach to history.

Mann is an *auteur* both in film and television, and the influences of both media appear in his films. The paper discusses the presentation and consumption of public figures, be they sporting icons or unwitting celebrities, and the meaning of particular emphases and valorisation. Star studies are also a consideration, as the presentation of Muhammad Ali is also a presentation of Will Smith. When events are re-mediated, what position towards the event is taken? These are the questions that the paper addresses.

KEYWORDS

Mann, mediation, public figures, history, discourse

Within the oeuvre of the writer/producer/director Michael Mann, *The Insider* and *Ali* are somewhat anomalous. While all of Mann's films feature committed male protagonists, an expressive *mise-en-scene* and a fluid yet deliberate visual style, *The Insider* and *Ali* perform a distinctive representation of events and persons that have already been in the media, a re-representation that I term *re-mediation*. This re-mediation is not found in *Heat*, *Collateral* or *Manhunter*, although it does occur in Mann's most recent film, *Public Enemies*. This paper argues that, through their re-mediation, *The Insider* and *Ali* participate in the postmodern discourse of re-writing history. This discourse is performed by the films' re-mediation through narrative and stylistic techniques. Three particular areas for discussion are subjectivity, meaning of events on an individual and a supra-individual level, and the films' highlighting of the cinematic medium.

In their study *American History and Contemporary American Film*, Trevor McKrisken and Andrew Pepper argue that ‘history itself remains tantalisingly available but ultimately unfathomable’ (2005, p.178), because history has no definitive account due to multiple accounts. Furthermore, within historical narratives a variety of emphases are found. Nonetheless, the historical document gives the impression of a definite article, an authoritative treatise on the events of the past. An example of a media document is the interview conducted by Mike Wallace on the CBS news magazine programme *60 Minutes* with Dr. Jeffrey Wigand, that was broadcast 4th February 1996, or Marie Brenner's article ‘The Man Who Knew Too Much’ (1996, online ref), upon which Michael Mann and Eric Roth based their screenplay. Similarly, Muhammad Ali appeared in multiple interviews, his fights were televised and have been recorded for subsequent broadcasts, including documentaries such as *When We Were Kings* (Leon Gast, 1996), while there are various books written about his life, including one that follows many of the events dramatised in Mann's film, *Muhammad Ali's Greatest Fight: Cassius Clay VS the United States of America* (Howard L. Bingham and Max Wallace, 2001). Such texts as these present themselves as an accurate record of the events that they describe, but these records are problematic.

Michel Foucault argues that written history ‘deliberately elides the manifest discontinuities of history, subverting them into a seamless continuum’ (Paget, 1990, p.163). In his book *True Stories?*, Derek Paget argues that this continuum protects written history from critical analysis, as history is presented as ‘idealised and unitary’ (p.163). The range of documents that exist in relation to public events like those mentioned above highlights the problem with this unitary view. While eyewitness accounts of events can be gathered, it is physically impossible to question every party that was present: the thousands of fans who saw Muhammad Ali fight George Foreman in Zaire in 1974; the various crew and technicians present when Jeffrey Wigand's interview was filmed in 1995, the employees at Brown & Williamson and CBS. Even when multiple accounts are gathered, the processes of writing, filming, editing and broadcasting result in a story that has been mediated into the ‘seamless continuum’, generally for the purposes of presentation and consumption. The various documents of public events such as those surrounding Wigand and Ali result in different accounts with varying emphases. By analysing this disparate set of documents, ‘a discourse’ of history (Paget, p.163), rather than a definitive version, can be identified. This discourse features many different participants, all with particular agendas, and is therefore open to ‘cultural analysis just [like] any discursive practice’ (Paget, p.163). What are the agendas of different writers? What is the intended audience for publications? In the case of re-mediated texts, such as *The Insider* and *Ali*, questions are raised by the adapting of events into narrative Hollywood cinema, a cultural form that carries particular expectations and conventions. In particular, both films create for the viewer expectations of veracity: since they are dramatisations of ‘actual’ events, a concern exists to present the ‘truth’.

Both of these films can be classed as ‘True Stories’, a generic form that Paget discusses at length in his book of the same name. Paget's left-wing study broadly criticises the practice of dramatising actual or historical events, as he classifies them as a perpetuation of capitalist hegemony. Paget discusses in detail the ‘myth [of] ‘objective information’ (p.19), with which ‘True Stories’ declare their validity, and in so doing, perpetuate the hegemonic ideology. The manner in which ‘True Stories’ operate is to present information seemingly without bias, agenda or goal. In so doing, the ‘True Story’ ‘anchor[s] populations in a unified view of the world’ (Paget, p.19), the view of the status quo which, for Hollywood productions certainly, is western capitalism. Yet the actual existence of a narrative means that it has been subjectively influenced by the artist or crafts people involved in its production. With film, the

event is mediated by screenwriter, cinematographer, director, editor and distributor. In the cases of the films under discussion here, the creative personnel dramatise documents as well as events, all of which place the finished product at a considerable distance from the original event that is dramatised. For a film such as this to make a statement of objectivity is the 'myth' against which Paget rails.

Neither of the films under discussion in this essay however make a pretence of objectivity. Rather, both films re-mediate the 'actual' events of their narratives through the experiences of their protagonists, Jeffrey Wigand (Russell Crowe) and Lowell Bergman (Al Pacino) in *The Insider*, and Muhammad Ali (Will Smith) in *Ali*. The protagonists' experiences are largely conveyed through the films' styles, which give the viewer an impression of the characters' positions through restricted information, rather than through a suggestion of an objective totality.

The restricted view is largely conveyed through subjective film style, including but not restricted to point-of-view shots. Although the POV gives an impression of subjectivity, both films use further techniques to express the perceptions of the individual characters. George Wilson argues that 'the concept of a POV shot [is not] strictly coextensive with the concept of a shot whose visual perspective is personal' (2006, p.87) – although the POV may show what a character sees, it does not express the character's *experience*. Rather, Wilson discusses 'impersonally subjectively inflected shots' (p.87), shots that convey the experience of the character not simply by taking the character's position, but through other means that result in a partial release of information to the viewer. Such shots abound in *The Insider* especially.

The subjective inflection of *The Insider* begins with the very first shot, which is a POV of nothing determinate. The viewer is struck by an immediate mystery that goes to the heart of the cinematic medium and continues throughout the film – *what* is being *seen* here? Over the course of *The Insider*, both characters and viewers will be asked to question what they see. Various critics have drawn attention to this opening shot:

The first shot ... is deliberately bizarre and disorienting, meant to take us into a world where our normal assumptions and perceptions are interrogated. (Wildermuth, 2005, p.152)

Similarly, Christopher Sharrett describes the shot as indicative of the characters' inability to see 'through the events of the story' (2001, p.261). Steven Rybin goes further, praising the shot:

The shot is stunning: as a cinematic device ... it can use small amounts of such first-person technique effectively. (2007, p.135)

The first person technique goes beyond the initial POV, as the reverse shot reveals that the initial image was of a blindfold. Yet this answer to the first visual question serves to raise more questions. Why is a blindfold being worn and where is this person, subsequently revealed to be Lowell Bergman, going? The subsequent sequence of shots reveal that he appears to be travelling in a Middle Eastern warzone. This sequence maintains Bergman's position of ignorance as well as that of the viewer, therefore equating the viewer's experience with that of the character with means other than the initial POV.

The subjective inflection continues throughout the film, and the introduction of Jeffrey Wigand conveys his experience through sound rather than image. A medium long shot pans across a party, people in white laboratory coats talking and laughing. Although their actions are clear, they cannot be heard, and the silence aligns the viewer's position with that of the out-of-focus face that enters the right of the frame. As Wigand's face comes into focus, so does his reflection, his only companion in his position behind glass, detached from the happy party. The transparent barrier enhances the sense of removal first suggested by the party's silence. The reverse shot makes the voices of the party audible, while Jeffrey is seen through the glass, packing up his desk, unnoticed. Wigand is leaving because he has been fired from the tobacco company Brown & Williamson, and as the film progresses, the undefined threats from B&W are also expressed by subjective inflection.

The initial threat appears when Wigand is summoned to a meeting with B&W CEO Thomas Sandefur (Michael Gambon). Menace and paranoia are suggested through the film's claustrophobic cinematography, editing and mise-en-scene. Aside from Wigand himself, none of the figures in the sequence are seen in their entirety. Sandefur never stands up, only the top part of his body is seen, and the other two men in Sandefur's office appear only in fragments. These fragments constitute a disembodied and obscured force that threatens and surrounds Wigand. He can never see the threat entirely, and nor can the viewer, raising again the question of what is being seen. The obscured view continues through the film, the threat only appearing in fragments, yet fragments that continually trap and harass Wigand.

As Sandefur and Wigand talk, the shot/reverse-shot pattern begins over Wigand's left shoulder and Sandefur's right, but as Sandefur speaks, the camera pans from Wigand's left to his right, and the following cut places the camera at Sandefur's left shoulder. The shot positions the head of Sandefur's lawyer (Gary Sandy) in the background behind Wigand, trapping Wigand between the two men as the lawyer delivers a terse threat:

LAWYER

If we arrive at the conclusion that you're acting in bad faith, we would terminate, right now, payouts under your severance package, you and your family's medical benefits, and commence litigation against you, Mr. Wigand.

The tightness of the shots enclose the viewer much as Wigand himself is harangued: when Wigand responds to the lawyer, he appears in extreme close-up. His furious retort to Sandefur is accompanied with Wigand standing up, seemingly an act of assertion and a reclamation of dominance. Yet Wigand's head and upper torso are sliced out of view by the frame. His endeavour to escape from B&W is prevented by the medium of the film itself – in trying to escape, he is cut in half. Nor is his exit from Sandefur's office seen – it does not matter where he goes, B&W still enclose him.

Although the scene features no POV shots, the sequence is entirely inflected from Wigand's perspective, the viewer drawn into Wigand's experience through the impersonal subjectively inflected shots. Similar scenes appear in *Ali*, especially in that film's final act set in Zaire that concludes with Ali's climactic contest with George Foreman. Most explicitly, the viewer experiences an insight in Ali's fight strategy. Some way into the fight, one of Foreman's blows catches Ali in the head, and Ali's hearing is distorted, the shouts of the crowd vanishing from the soundtrack. A point-of-view shot pans across the spectators, but focuses upon a man listening to a radio. The significance of this man, and Ali's engagement with others, will be discussed later, but the point-of-view shot occurs *after* the sound of the crowd

has ceased. The viewer is drawn into Ali's position first aurally, then visually, and the subjective inflection continues. During Round Eight, there is a clinch between Ali and Foreman, during which there is a cut to a close-up of Ali's face. In this close-up, the lighting of the shot is suddenly subdued which suggests an internal moment, and in this moment Ali decides to act. The music track 'Tomorrow' appears on the soundtrack as Ali suddenly strikes Foreman twice in the head. Ali unleashes a series of punches that cause Foreman to stagger, reel and finally fall. The blows are loud on the soundtrack, emphasising their importance, as does the slow motion action as Ali's torso untorques to deliver the final decisive right. Much like the scenes in *The Insider*, these subjectively inflected shots present the scene from the protagonist's position.

The subjective inflection of scenes like these raises problems with Paget's claims of objectivity. The films use subjectivity as their mode of address and present the experiences of these individuals rather than objective historical documents. Through their subjective presentations, however, the films do express what Paget describes as an 'individualised foreground' (p.12). Within this foreground, the major historical events in which the characters operate are merely background and the endeavours of individuals are privileged in 'True Stories'. This accusation is hard to deny, as the broader issues of the Civil Rights movement in *Ali* and the implications of corporate responsibility and public health in *The Insider* receive little attention. By focusing upon individual protagonists through subjective inflection, the films pander to 'an audience still apparently hooked on the concept of the Individual as Essence' (Paget, p.124). As 'True Stories', the films validate individual endeavour as being the 'True' way of life.

The 'Individual as Essence' is especially obvious during a scene in which Ali practices his boxing skills on a rooftop. In the distance behind him, fires can be seen, suggesting riots or looting. The social turbulence of the film's period is literally background, as Mann valorises the endeavours of the individual. Indeed, as Paget notes, another narrative form is unlikely to be used: 'most film...makers seem to assume no issue can be understood unless mediated through a Representative Individual with whom the audience can identify' (p.124). An analysis of *Ali* in relation to the Civil Rights movement or activists such as Stokeley Carmichael is likely to be disappointed, as the film actively avoids participating in the debates of the time. At best, Ali appears representative of a cultural concept of 'the Sixties', a term which 'denote[s] the agglomerations of cultural elements, political meanings, and other associations that have come to be attached to the temporal periods' (David Marcus 2004, p.207, n.1). As a representative of 'the Sixties', Ali appears as the personification of a concept of defiance and struggle. But his struggle is depicted as largely individual – he must suffer the revocation of his boxing licence and the stripping of the heavyweight championship, due to his refusal to enlist in the US armed forces. The film follows his quest to regain the championship and overcome such individual opponents as Joe Frazier and George Foreman, rather than the public difficulties of black people in America during the 1960s.

Similarly, *The Insider* focuses upon the personal losses of Jeffrey Wigand as B&W take legal action against him. Also prominent in the film are the betrayals of Lowell Bergman as CBS decide not to broadcast Wigand's interview. The films present individual stories that have wider ramifications, but those ramifications receive little screentime. The subjective inflections of both films emphasise the individual even further. Paget argues that emphasis upon the individual correlates with the principles of capitalism, so through the personalisation of history, both films express the 'Truth' and maintain the ideology of western capitalist

hegemony. Paget's condemnation of popular entertainment goes further, to accuse 'all cultural production' as being loaded with 'values that elsewhere surface in right-wing pronouncements about Country, Home and Family' (p.144). But through their re-mediation, both *The Insider* and *Ali* challenge such an accusation.

Although their valorisation of the individual is in accordance with capitalist hegemony, *The Insider* and *Ali* do cast a critical eye upon that hegemony by highlighting problems within western capitalism. The 'right-wing pronouncements' that Paget argues are present in the cultural products of Reagan-era America were still present during the Clinton and Bush periods, but the emphasis upon 'Country, Home and Family' are not endorsed in either film, as ambiguity and alternatives are instead apparent.

As an employee of Brown & Williamson, Jeffrey Wigand had the benefits of capitalist success, including a large house and good medical coverage for his family. After he is fired, the Wigands move into a smaller house as Jeffrey takes a teaching job. But due to his testifying in a Mississippi case against the tobacco industry, threats and pressures are exerted upon the Wigands until his wife and children leave him. Jeffrey is therefore reduced to a rumpled, unkempt figure, sitting alone in a hotel room, marking his students' papers. He has rejected a capitalist institution and consequently loses the products of that institution, including life with his family. *The Insider* therefore does not endorse family as a refuge. If one pursues a crusade against American capital, the products of home and family may be lost. Therefore, *The Insider* presents problems with individual endeavour, as well as valorising it. This ambiguity is the film's discursive approach to history. One can commit to individual endeavour, but such action may lead to isolation and misery when the hegemony is rejected.

The hegemony that Wigand rejects and subsequently opposes is 'the disembodied simulacrum of the culture, the hyperreality that is Baudrillard's trope ... that inevitably kills meaning and society' (Wildermuth, p.8). Within the corporate simulacrum, there is no exchange, just the acceptance of the image. Wigand's family cannot be maintained because it is part of the simulacrum, without meaning and therefore unsustainable once Wigand engages in meaningful exchange. His exchanges are initially with Lowell Bergman, and their discussions show Wigand the opportunity he has, that Wigand has the power to change people's minds. Becoming a teacher demonstrates this route for Wigand as well – he performs meaningful exchange with his students. Furthermore, Wigand wishes to perform meaningful exchange with many other people: his interview on *60 Minutes* will disseminate his knowledge about tobacco companies to a wide audience. There is no gain beyond the exchange – by giving him their attention, and him giving them information, the meaning of Wigand's action is complete. This is the goal of responsible journalism that Bergman believes in, and that Wigand participates in.

The emphasis upon Wigand learning this new goal from another man suggests the film's gender politics. Jeffrey's wife Liane (Diane Venora) proves a fair-weather companion, part of the simulacrum with whom Jeffrey cannot exchange meaningfully. Bergman appears as a positive alternative, suggesting that 'true' exchange is between men, not men and women. This enforces the hegemony of male dominance, and indeed maleness and masculinity are recurring concerns throughout Mann's oeuvre. In *The Insider* Wigand learns a better way to live from another man, which implies that his wife was part of a false existence for him.

Home and family are not endorsed in *Ali* either, as Ali rejects his first wife Sonji (Jada Pinkett-Smith), remarries, and then has an affair which he does not hide from his second wife

Belinda (Nona Gaye). The significant relationships that Ali maintains are those with other men, such as sports commentator Howard Cosell (Jon Voight), trainer Angelo Dundee (Ron Silver), photographer Howard Bingham (Jeffrey Wright) and motivator Bundini Brown (Jamie Foxx). Ali's children with Belinda appear briefly as well but no emphasis is made upon them, the film skirting on quickly to Ali's next fight. The elliptical narrative does not linger on any of Ali's interpersonal relations long enough to suggest a judgement of him, indeed this collection of impressions create an ambiguous presentation of the boxer. In their discussion of the film, Trevor McKrisken and Andrew Pepper draw attention to this ambiguity:

[T]he film will not, as Lee's *Malcolm X* sought to do, attempt to explain Ali ... in such a way as to rule out perhaps contradictory ways of understanding him. (p.178.)

Rybin observes that it is common for the biopic to 'elide various details from the depiction of each subject's life' (p.151), but *Ali* takes this trope further, 'effectively withholding .. clear-cut reasons that explain why ... Ali acts or thinks as he does' (McKrisken & Pepper, p.182). Ali preaches as a devout Muslim, yet the Nation of Islam rejects him, but he forgives it under his own terms. He replaces the women in his life with little regard for their well-being. His paramount concern could be for the heavyweight championship, but he relinquishes that rather than accept the military draft. Simplistically, Ali's main interest is himself, supporting the sense of individualism upon which capitalism is built. Therefore, the film can be read as supporting the hegemony of western capitalism that Paget rails against, and also presents a male-dominated hegemony.

A large part of Paget's criticism of media products is the lack of interest drama has 'in issues and events at a supra-individual level' (p.26), i.e. at a level beyond the individual. However, Ali's relationship with the 'People', of whom he regards himself as the 'Champion', is a recurring concern, present throughout yet never fully explained. The public also maintain an importance in *The Insider*. This supra-individual benefit can be found in the original mediation of the events, such as Wigand's interview and Ali's multiple TV appearances, but the re-mediation that the films perform emphasises the importance of these benefits. A significant part of the films' valorisation of the individual is the protagonists' engagement at a supra-individual level – the protagonists of both films are committed to 'supra-individual' benefits. Wigand and Bergman seek to increase public knowledge, and although the reason for Ali's commitment to 'the People' is not explained, his importance as an icon in the film is highlighted.

In an early scene, Ali declares that he will be 'the People's Champion'. The shot places him in the centre of the frame, surrounded by the black inhabitants of Harlem. He is graphically shown as representing 'the People', which for the purposes of this argument refers to underprivileged black people. At first these are people in America, but over the course of the film, 'the People' become an international demographic. The adoration they demonstrate indicates the significance of public perception, and Ali's own choice to respond to and reward the investment that 'the People' have in him.

This importance becomes more apparent in the final act of *Ali*. Ali jogs through various areas of the Zaire capital Kinshasa, passing murals that depict him punching the tanks and disease that threaten the people of Zaire. A horde of children accompany him, chanting 'Ali, boma ye! Ali, boma ye!' This translates as 'Ali, kill him', and the murals also show Foreman lying

beaten, very small behind the mammoth figure of the triumphant Ali. Close-ups of Ali's face express his appreciation of the regard these people hold him in, the diegetic chant reduced to a low volume as the non-diegetic music track 'Tomorrow' plays, which is used again during the subjectively inflected climax of the fight. The final image of Ali in the film is of him on the second rope, brandishing his victory to his fans, who form the backdrop for his triumph. 'The People' remain a presence as the end credits roll over images of celebration in the streets of Kinshasa. The film's style links Ali's victory with a celebration of others – his victory takes place at a supra-individual level.

Ali delivers 'the positive charge an image in popular culture can inspire' (Rybin, p.166). *The Insider* is less celebratory of its heroes' success in getting the interview aired, indeed Bergman asks his wife Sharon Tiller (Lindsay Crouse) 'What I win?' Although both films valorise their protagonists' endeavours, they also demonstrate that their heroes' pursuits are limited. Paget disparages *Cry Freedom*: 'Sitting in the cinema's powerful darkness ... we are invited to identify ... with a Courageous White (who is *fighting back*)' (p.27). The black protagonist of *Ali* might suggest a different response to Mann's film, but within the capitalist hegemony, the historical figure of Muhammad Ali is re-mediated through the star persona of Will Smith. As a movie star, Smith has built a career of heroism and triumphing over the odds, in such films as *Bad Boys* (Michael Bay, 1995), *Independence Day* (Roland Emmerich, 1996), *Men in Black* (Barry Sonnenfeld, 1997), *Enemy of the State* (Tony Scott, 1998) and *Wild Wild West* (Barry Sonnenfeld, 1999), his career progressing after *Ali* with *I, Robot* (Alex Proyas, 2004), *The Pursuit of Happyness* (Gabriele Muccino, 2006), *I Am Legend* (Francis Lawrence, 2007), *Hancock* (Peter Berg, 2008) and *Seven Pounds* (Gabriele Muccino, 2008). So Ali's triumph over George Foreman at the film's climactic battle, that represents Ali's overall triumph over adversity, can be read as simply the movie hero besting his antagonists.

There are problems with this victory however. The film ends with Ali triumphant and the people of Zaire celebrating, but supertext informs the viewer that Ali lost and won his title again in 1975, and that he divorced his then-wife and re-married again. His victory over Foreman was not the end of his story, though it is the end of the film's narrative. The film also draws attention to the transience of Ali's victory, through the use of a freeze-frame. Ali stands on the second rope, arms raised in victory, in communion with the 'People' he has proclaimed himself the champion of. That image is frozen, indicating the temporality of this victory – it is brief and will not last. So although the film may present a simplistic valorisation of the individual's ability to triumph over adversity, it acknowledges that such victories are moments in time, not an ending to adversity altogether.

Ali's freeze frame not only acknowledges the temporality of the events that it depicts, it also highlights the cinematic medium and the limitations of that medium. *The Insider* explores this idea further, with the contradiction at the heart of Bergman and Wigand's endeavour to get Wigand's interview aired. Within the disembodied simulacrum of the culture, 'information is presented by media that [the public] are not allowed to respond to' (Wildermuth, p.8). Although Wigand and Bergman wish to spread the word, their use of television to do so presents their story in a form that does not allow response or exchange. Without exchange there is no meaning, and the interview is one of many images on TV that are without meaning in a media-saturated world. During an early discussion, Wigand speaks pessimistically about his interview and does not expect it to change anything, and when it finally airs, the only reaction seen is mild interest from viewers at an airport lounge. Meaning is lost in media, the film's pessimism suggests, implying that the entire crusade waged by the film's valiant outlaws was futile.

There is further evidence of the limitations of meaning in media, as *The Insider* itself is limited by its status as a capitalist media product. Interestingly, the film draws attention to its own medium and demonstrates an awareness of the myth of objective information. When Wigand first explains in detail that tobacco companies have known and exploited the addictive effects of nicotine for decades, he is being interviewed by Mike Wallace for *60 Minutes*. The scene cuts between the reactions of Bergman and other CBS employees to Wigand's revelations, close-ups of Wigand and Wallace, and close-ups of TV monitors showing Wigand talking. Wigand's final appearance in the film is another close-up of a TV screen broadcasting his interview to the public, after Bergman has waged a renegade campaign to get the interview aired.

This emphasis upon the *televising* of Wigand's interview, rather than him simply revealing the information, demonstrates the re-mediation of the film. It is not revealing this information itself, although there were doubtless viewers of the film (like me!) who were unaware of the interview, but the film's attention is not upon the explosive nature of this information. To do so would be beyond its dramatic remit. The film derives its drama from the actions of its characters, rather than the impact of Wigand's revelations. Such impacts are treated as unfilmable, as before the end credits, supertext informs the viewer that following the events of the film, the tobacco industry settled the lawsuits filed against it in 50 states for \$246 billion. But even before this information appears, which is beyond the scope of the film, *The Insider* has already acknowledged its own inability to leave the confines of media production.

Although *The Insider* criticises aspects of capitalist hegemony, there is no pretension that such hegemony can be rejected by a film, which is itself a capitalist product and therefore contained by the corporate entities which form the antagonists of the story. In the final scene, Bergman informs Wallace that he has resigned from CBS because the trust between source and journalist has been violated. Steven Rybin has drawn attention to this ending, commenting that, as Bergman leaves:

The camera itself remains inside CBS, perhaps Mann's admission that, as a Hollywood filmmaker, he can never place himself wholly outside; the camera pans away from Bergman, and the screen fades to black. (Rybin, p.148.)

Bergman's departure is to a place the film cannot follow, although the supertext informs the viewer that Bergman 'now' works for PBS and the Graduate School of Journalism at the University of California at Berkeley. Just as the freeze frame demonstrated the transience of Ali's triumph, so the containment of the camera within the institution of media presents the limitations of narrative film.

Nonetheless, the films are not so pessimistic as to suggest they can do *nothing*. Wigand's interview was broadcast on *60 Minutes* in 1995, so by dramatising this event, the film is not making a new historical record. Rather it is working 'towards a sense of history' (Paget, p.162), scrutinising an historical event for its own purpose, which is the valorisation of the individuals involved, but also a demonstration that such scrutiny is possible. Much as *Ali* showed ambiguity about a public icon, declining to present him in clear terms, so *The Insider* draws attention to scrutiny. Brown & Williamson did issue legal proceedings against Jeffrey Wigand, CBS did broadcast an edited version of Wigand's interview, until the *Wall Street Journal* published the same information and the *New York Times* lambasted CBS for its actions (Ehrlich, 2004, p.142). History need not be accepted without question, events can be

reviewed, re-evaluated and re-mediated. *The Insider* may valorise the crusading scientist and journalist, and *Ali* emphasise the crusade of the ‘People's Champion’, but these emphases are themselves demonstrations that particular interpretations can be made. The films may be media products made for consumption, but that need not neutralise the re-mediation that they perform.

In a meeting with Wigand, Bergman tells the scientist that once he goes on television, ‘nothing will ever be the same again’. While this sentiment appears naïve, what it suggests is a non-unified view of the world. *The Insider*'s tagline warns that ‘Telling the truth can be hazardous’, and the film dramatises the hazardous *uncertainties* of truth-telling. Similarly, *Ali*'s tagline instructs the viewer to ‘Forget what you think you know’. History need not be accepted without question. *The Insider* does valorise the crusading scientist and journalist, and *Ali* emphasises the crusade of the ‘People's Champion’, but these emphases are themselves interpretations. These interpretations are the films' participation in the discourse of history. The films have a limited space in which to participate in this discourse, contained as they are by running time and their status as commercial products. But through their re-mediation of events, their very status as films, that *The Insider* and *Ali* raise their own questions, but often leave the viewer to decide the answers.

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