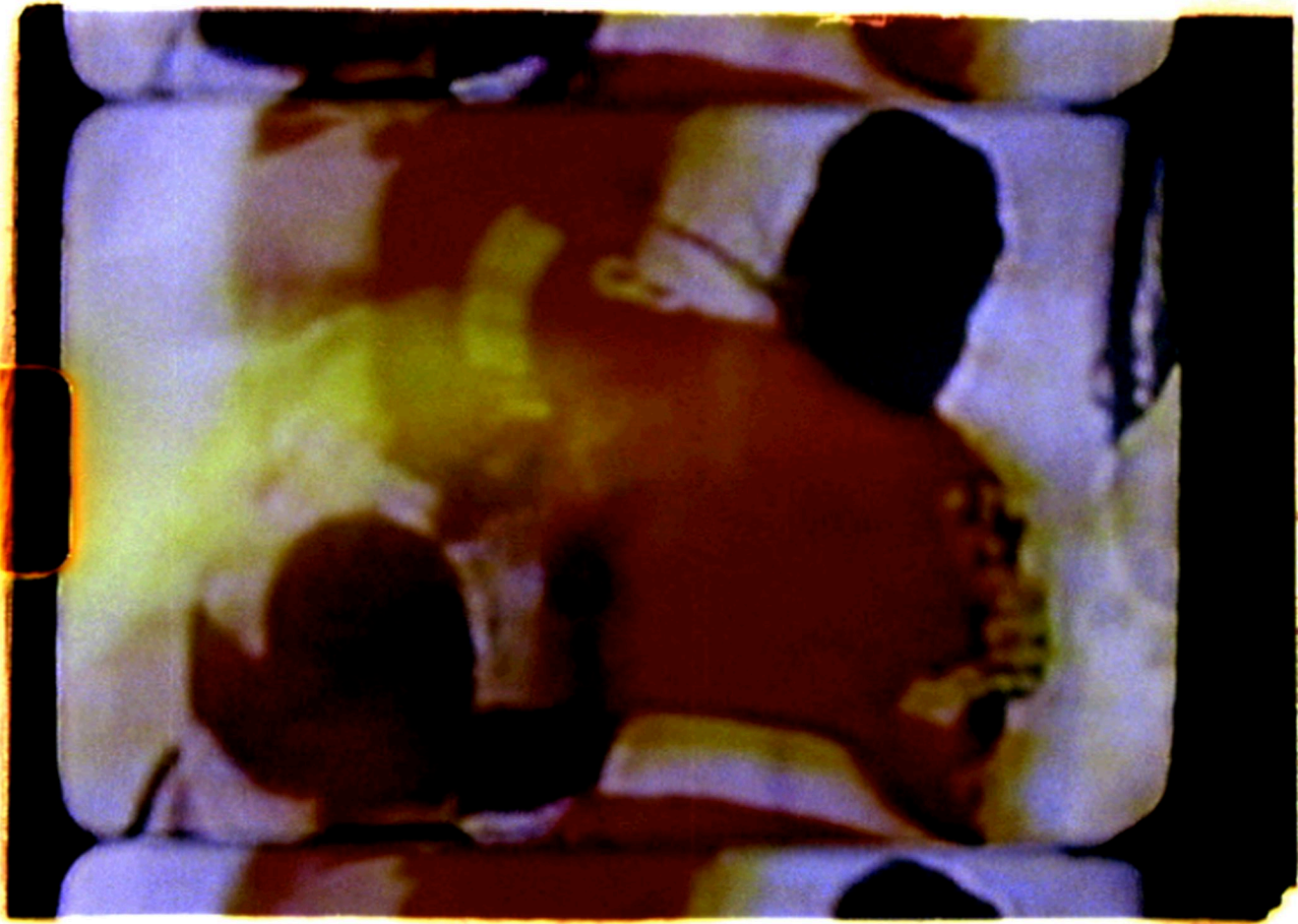


MEAN

That Republic was a deceptive model of perfection. It might be realized by some dictator, but it could only function as a machine functions—mechanically. And machines function mechanically only because they are made of dead inorganic materials. If you want to express the difference between an organic progressive society and a static totalitarian regime, you can do so in one word: this is art.

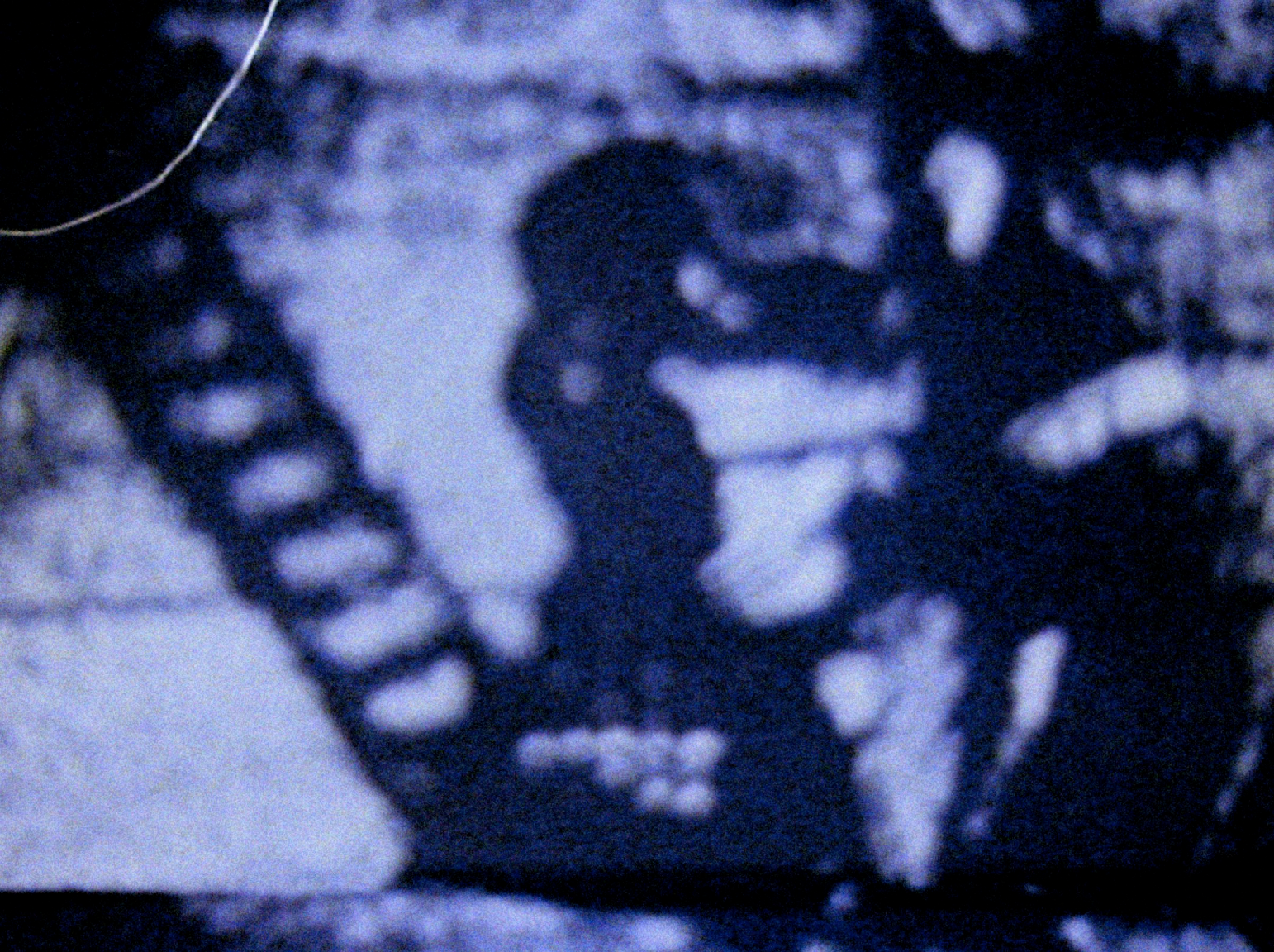
— from JOURNEY THROUGH UTOPIA by Marie Louise Berneri.

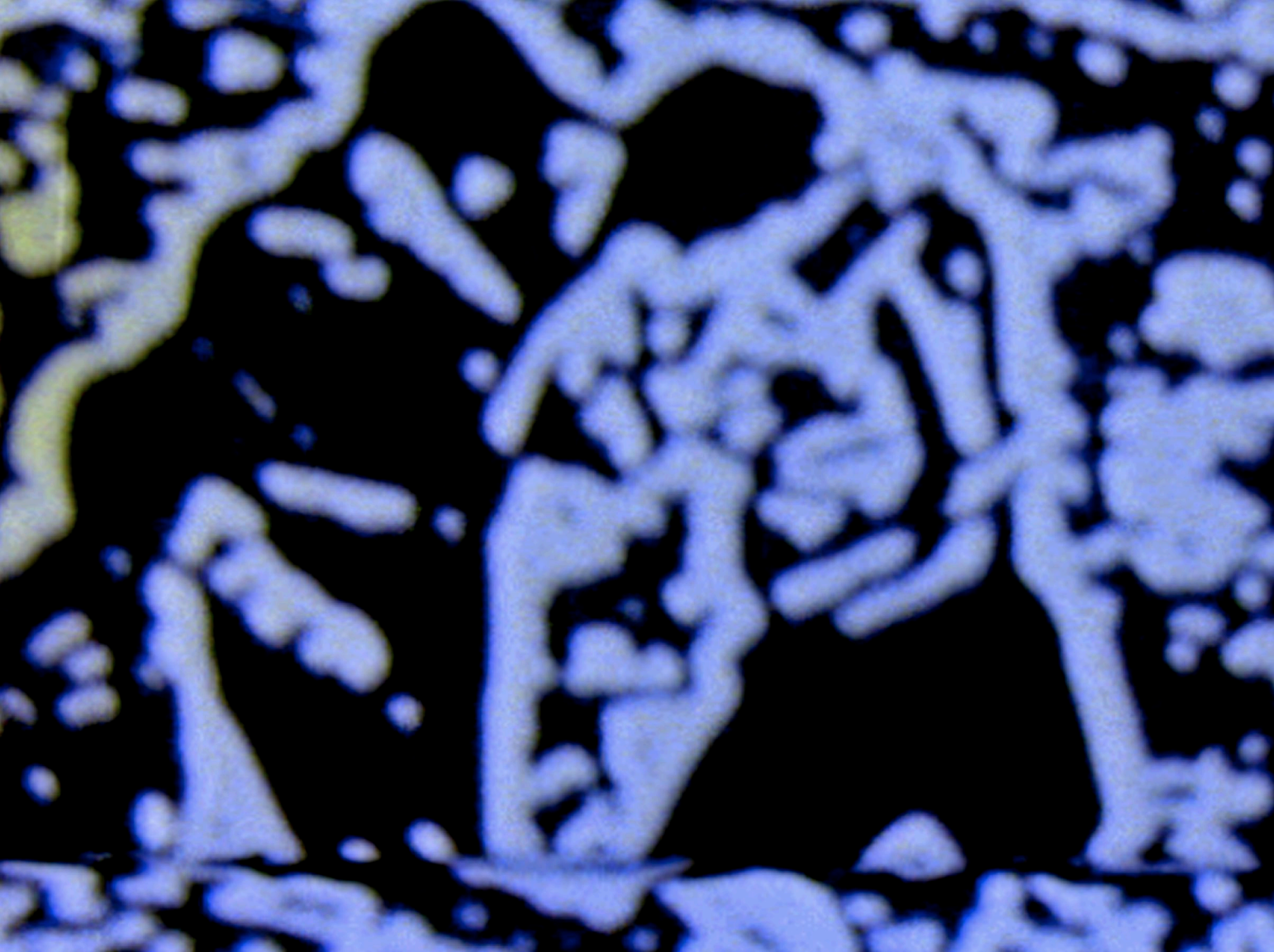


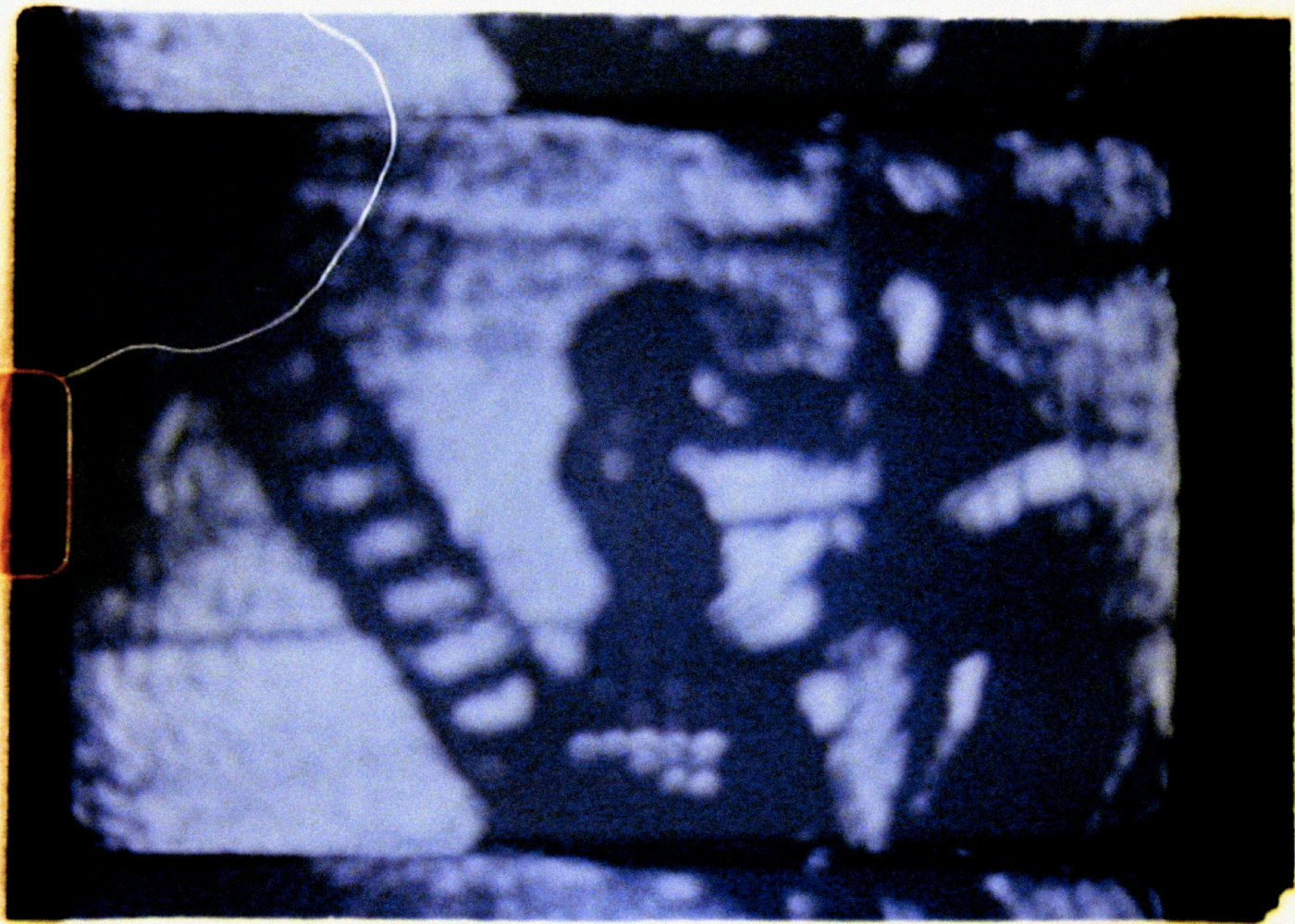














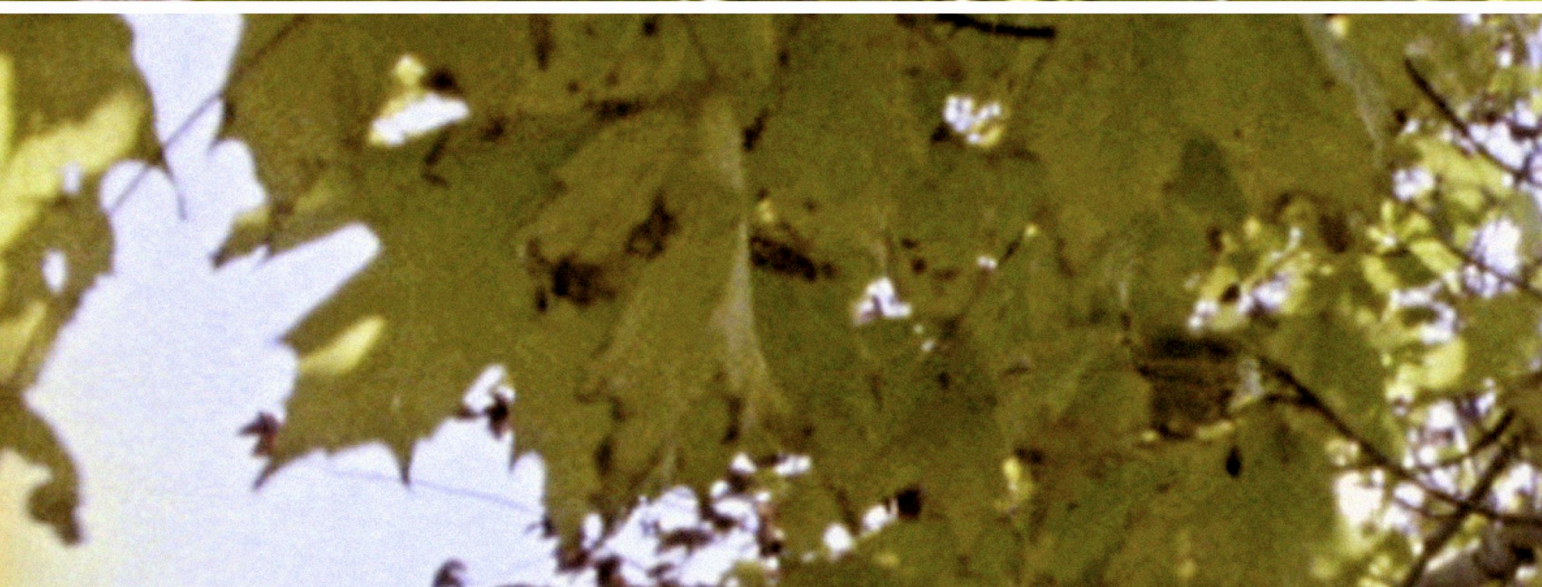
















MEAN

Conn in 2008:

I made MEAN in 2006-7 as a commission for the Liaison of Independent Filmmakers of Toronto. It was part of their 25th anniversary project, Film Is Dead! Long Live Film! The moment they asked me to take part I thought of shooting hockey fights off of a TV set with Super 8 film. This developed into an idea for a diptych, two Super 8 film frames set into one 35mm film.

The hockey fights in the first frame were from low grade VHS tapes of old TV broadcasts that I bought through the internet. It turns out there's a web-based subculture of hockey fight fans who discuss their favourites and trade clips. There are two main categories of fights, the larger one being the worker-fighters who are going through the motions. But the web fans seem to be most excited by the special fights where one player genuinely humiliates the other, where psychological domination is more important than physical, and where the total emotional disintegration of the loser is the best result.

The second film frame is of foliage beside the Don Valley Parkway that I shot with Kodak's new Tungsten Super 8 stock. I didn't think until after I'd finished the film that these were maple leaves, half

of them diseased from the traffic nearby. During filming and editing I was focussed more on the sky, the type of light, and the leaves' movement.

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MEAN is screened in cinemas as a film and looped in galleries as video, and eventually I'll post it on the internet in micro format. I made the work to be scalable, hoping it would function in a wide range of size and place. I learn by watching how my work changes in different contexts.

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One of the most important things about MEAN for me is that it was my first collaboration with the composer Oscar van Dillen. He lives in Rotterdam and we traded video and audio files for 6 months. I think artist films have as much in common with music as with fiction filmmaking. So when I edit I try to imagine that I'm 'hearing' the footage, as if the moving visuals are part of a song as much as they're part of a movie.

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The title of this film is a pun, mainly to do with the heightened levels of meaning we attach to national identity, gender, religion, sports teams, and even to art genres and media.



Clive Holden

2008