

Film in American Studies 2002

British Association for American Studies Annual Conference, University of Oxford, 5-8 April 2002

A report by Jude Davies, King Alfred's College Winchester, UK

At BAAS conferences, one is used to finding gem-like film analysis glinting among interdisciplinary investigations of North American history, politics, and culture. This year, paradoxically, work on film was less ubiquitous but more prominent, almost all of it concentrated into two panels, both of them focused entirely on cinema.

The theme of the first, "Hollywood: Politics on Film", was articulated by the three panellists in contrasting ways. A paper by Wendy Toon, "From Hitler to Herbie: The Forgotten Relationship between Nazis and Hollywood's Loveable Bug of the 1960s", concentrated on the VolksWagen Beetle's pre-history as Hitler's KDF-Wagen and its post-war development, before juxtaposing advertisements and brochure material from Nazi Germany and the 1960s USA. The latter comparisons pointed up some surprising similarities, which Toon offered for general discussion. Clearly part of a larger project of cultural history, the paper stimulated reflection on the means by which automobiles have been accorded a measure of affectivity that can efface the material circumstances of their origination and production.

In contrast to Toon's detailed history, Andrew Pepper offered epochal speculations on Hollywood and globalization. Pepper identified a recent trend in Hollywood history movies shaped by contemporary ideologies of the USA as the privileged site of the integration of difference, ideologies which are themselves conditioned by globalization as a Westernizing process. This argument was exemplified by reference to films such as *Amistad* (1997) and *The Patriot* (2000), which, Pepper suggested, invoke but foreclose a political dimension through their airing and resolution of historical grievances without changing existing relations of power. While the general shape of these contentions is quite familiar, Pepper outlined a useful agenda for future work in the area, rightly drawing attention to the significant issue of filmic representations of social change, framed by reference to notions of democratic agency via Bauman and Žižek.

Completing the panel, and located conceptually between these micro- and macro-histories was Brian Baker's sparkling account of *Dirty Harry* (1971) as a dramatisation of a contemporary crisis over state power, "Harry's Dick: Siegel and Eastwood's *Dirty Harry* and Nixon's America". Invoking Foucault's account of the confession as a ubiquitous cultural practice embedded in power relations, Baker contextualised key scenes of the film with respect to then-recent juridical debates over confessions resulting in the Escapido ruling and the 1966 Miranda decision, which formalised the reading of rights on arrest as a means of protecting the citizen. By an expert reading of the film's climactic scene set in Candlestick Park football stadium, Baker showed how *Dirty Harry* inserts itself into this debate, firstly by making manifest the hidden violence involved in extracting the confession, and then by leading audiences to accept its necessity, and the necessity of further violence. Baker then

went on to show how Harry/Eastwood's behaviour in a later scene, when called to explain his actions in front of the District Attorney, prefigured Richard Nixon's own manipulation of speech and silence, notably his explicit appeal to a "silent majority" constituted against the East Coast liberal establishment, feminism, and the Civil Rights movement. This was an exceptionally successful paper, pulling together a wealth of suggestive ideas, and making a fully convincing and very precise case for positioning Eastwood's performance of masculinity with respect to contemporary discourses not only of gender and sexuality, but also politics and the confession. A lively discussion subsequently filled out this trajectory by reference to the film's situation in San Francisco, with its symbolic reference to California under the governorship of Ronald Reagan.

A second panel "The City in Film" reflected contemporary interest in a topic that preoccupies Americanists and film scholars alike. Both papers successfully bridged disciplinary differences. Deborah Lovatt (Nottingham Trent University) gave a supple and multifaceted reading of "The Aesthetics of Astonishment in Alex Proyas's *Dark City*", highlighting the ways in which in Proyas's film the "other" of the city is no longer the country, but the beach. This was followed by a *tour-de-force* two-hander by Douglas Muzzio and Thomas Halper (Baruch College, CUNY), who promised a critical account of "The Reel City: Images of the American City in Movies, 1896-2001" and delivered a breakneck but always controlled overview not only of significant films but also of trends in criticism. It would be foolish in the extreme to attempt a summary -- instead it is worth highlighting two of Muzzio and Halper's general conclusions: first, that the city is constantly structured metaphorically (the city as state of mind); and second, that what Walter Benjamin called the "porosity" of the city, its aleatory qualities and openness to juxtaposition, is rarely represented in mainstream American cinema.

Not strictly on cinema, but nevertheless a related highlight of the conference was the session on post-war US photography, featuring Martin Padgett (University of Wales, Aberystwyth) on Paul Strand, Neil Campbell (University of Derby) on Robert Frank, and John Beck (University of Newcastle) on the eco-politics of contemporary landscape photography. The attention of all three to the cultural politics of visual representation would be of interest also to those working on film, and all three benefited from transatlantic and internationalist perspectives: Padgett refocused Strand's reputation via his late photographs of Hebrides islanders, Campbell looked behind the celebratory frames of Franks's famous collection *The Americans* to investigate alternative representations of the nation both there and in his less prominent work, and Beck demonstrated the eco-political resonances of recent photography of the landscapes of military testing grounds.

Although the streaming of panels into parallel sessions was exemplary -- a tribute to the Rothermere Institute and the BAAS Conference Committee -- at times an embarrassment of riches meant that interesting papers had to be missed. In this category it is worth recording ongoing work on fiction and film by Edward Abramson (University of Hull), presenting on "Fitzgerald, the Jews and Hollywood", and Mike Gray (Essex University) on "Watching Faulkner and Film in *Sanctuary*".

From Literature to Film and Back

NEMLA's Thirty-Third Annual Convention, April 11-14, 2002, Toronto, Canada

A report by Michelle E. Moore, State University of New York at Binghamton, USA

This year, the Northeast Modern Language Association held its thirty-third annual convention in Toronto, Canada from April 11th to the 14th. Scott Stoddart, the NEMLA's Executive Director, and Rocco Capozzi, of the University of Toronto, organized the event. The convention is usually a literary one and provides a forum for some of the best scholarship in the modern languages. However, this year's venue, Toronto, is a more international and culturally prominent place in which to stage the conference, than the cities chosen in past years. The organizers decided to take advantage of the city's cosmopolitan flavor and annual film festival by declaring that his year's conference would have a special emphasis on film. The unforeseen result of this emphasis was that the entire conference had a new bent toward popular culture. For the first time, film, popular culture, and literary subjects seemed to successfully coexist. The result was a far more interesting conference than those held in previous years.

The convention schedules up to fifteen sessions concurrently, for two days, which makes it impossible to give a typical overview of the conference. On the plus side, this schedule makes it possible to find something interesting to attend during any given session. On the negative, conference goers find it difficult to schedule breaks and meet with other participants and are exhausted at the end of the first day. Because of the sheer size of the well-attended conference, one meets new people at each session and sometimes never sees them again. While the conference itself drew a large number of participants, it seemed that the panels were sparsely attended. Perhaps, this had something to do with the scheduling I previously mentioned, or perhaps the excellent location beckoned conference-goers outside into the city.

Three films were shown over the convention's three nights. *Tar Angel (L'Ange de Goudron)* by Denis Chouinard provided the first evening's entertainment, but was not fully attended because most conference-goers had not yet arrived. The second night centered around Catherine Annau's award-winning 1999 documentary *Just Watch Me: Trudeau and the 70s Generation* and its discussion of bilingualism in Canada. Because it followed the general reception, the film sparked interest among conference-goers who did not normally consider film to be their main subject. The Women's Caucus sponsored the final night's screening of Michèle Cournoyer's animated film *The Hat* as well as several other short films. While these films represented a strong attempt by the NEMLA to focus on film for the duration of the convention, a large contingent of the conference-goers seemed not to be particularly interested in the screenings.

Professor Linda Hutcheon's keynote address did not address film directly. Her multi-media talk entitled "Adapter/Abductor" concentrated on ways of rethinking authorial intent in art. Because she chose opera as an example, she did propose new ways of thinking about the intersections of performance and narrative within the literary field. It seemed strange that the

convention did not have a keynote speech about film, since this was to be its main focus. Unfortunately, Hutcheon did not take the opportunity to address potential intersections of literary and film studies to a large group of traditional literary scholars.

The conference's emphasis on film appeared mainly in the type of panels and papers chosen for this year's event. Many excellent papers and panels demonstrated the ease with which literary and film studies can converse. Some panels, like "Literary and Cinematographic Representations of the Contemporary Maghreb: Voices and Images from Home and Abroad," chaired by Salah Moukhlis, announced their intentions in their titles. Others, like those sponsored by the Society for Critical Exchange on "Representations of Violence and Aggression," were subtler. Roberta Millikin presented "Hair Imagery and Violence in the Depiction of Holy Women," alongside Raymond Rice's "From Hamlet to Hannibal: Revisiting the Act of the Revenger's Madness." The panel on "Passing in Contemporary Culture," chaired by Lori Harrison-Kahan from Columbia University, included papers on Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby* and the implications of "passing" in contemporary Hollywood. The range of topics presented prevents one from drawing generalized conclusions about a "typical" paper or panel. However, all of the panels seemed to point to the staggering array of possibilities opened up by juxtapositioning film and literature.

I found the strength of this year's conference to be the panels that moved between film, literature, and popular culture without apology or explanation. More should include panels that break traditional boundary lines between the disciplines. Much can be learned by combining the traditional film conference with the traditional literary conference. The foreign language panels provided an excellent forum with which to engage with newer subjects and methods. In particular, the series on "Post-German Unification Responses in German Films and Media" chaired by Barbara Mabee, Elke Segelcke, and Dagmar Wienroeder-Skinner brought together an interesting group of topics and presenters. Papers covered subjects as diverse as Jill E. Twark's "When *The Wild West* Becomes the 'Wild East': Post-Reunification German Film Comedies", Margit Sinka's "Scripted Unifications: Televised Representations of the 3rd of October," and Cecilia Novero's "Gender Trouble as Gender Trouble in Thomas Meinecke's *Tomboy* or Performing the Novel's Boundaries."

In addition to the array of literary panels, the conventions also offered a plethora of choices for the film scholar. Some panels concentrated on reading the work of national or authorial films, like the panels on Iranian Cinema, Hispanic Drama, R.W. Fassbinder, and Peter Greenaway. But the majority took up the problems of reading representation in the visual arts. Even the literary panels seemed to converge around this theme of visual representation. The two panels, "Why Jenny, as I watch you there," explored the dynamics of voyeurism and exhibitionism in Victorian Literature. It was particularly interesting to hear conference participants give explanations of the gaze that did not rely solely on Laura Mulvey's seminal theory. For example, Elizabeth Abele's panel on "(Affirmative) Action Hero: New Girls in Town" included a paper by Marlo Edwards on "Pamela Anderson and the Female Action Hero". She rereads Pamela Anderson's action character as both complaint with and resistant to the traditional male-oriented gaze and script. Because of the mix of disciplines, presenters were given great latitude in their uses of the theory and some, like Edwards, came up with interesting mixtures.

If the conference had one theme that tied everything together I would argue that it was not film, but border crossing. A large number of panels addressed rebellion, deviance and transgression and subtly revealed the conference's true undercurrent. For example, Antonio

Cao's panel, "Transgression, Power and the Construction of Identity in Spanish Golden Age Drama," addressed the theme directly. Some presenters addressed literal border crossing by examining refugee literature and filmmakers; others, like Yasmin Degout in her paper, "Decolonizing Voices in Film: Reading Post-Colonial Subjectivity in *Sugar Cane Alley*" took the post-colonial approach to reading borders. It is also interesting to note the widespread use of the word "new" in panel and paper titles and the amount of time given to "reconceptualizing" the "death" or "ends" of traditions.

On a final note, the NEMLA convention has always been marked by a tone of friendly respect for the academic scholarship produced and presented by its membership. But, poor panel attendance can be debilitating for both audience and presenters. The conference should be held over three days, which would allow for the same number of panels to be spaced over a longer period of time. This would allow participants to attend more panels and lead to livelier discussions.

The Long Revolution?

Media in Transition 2: Globalization and Convergence, May 10-12, 2002, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge MA

A report by Anita Biressi & Heather Nunn, University of Surrey, Roehampton, UK & Middlesex University, UK

The second Media in Transition conference was organised by the Comparative Media Studies (CMS) Programme at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and directed by William Uricchio. The central goal of the conference was to explore the context, meanings and implications of media globalization and convergence. Nearly 150 speakers from around the world contributed towards a genuinely enquiring and open debate about the future directions of media convergence and its political, ethical and social consequences.

Two plenary sessions marked out important areas of debate and provided common points of reference for the sessions that followed. The opening plenary moderated by David Thorburn (MIT) chose to scrutinise the term "globalization" assessing its historical validity and its pertinence to different contemporary experiences of media production and consumption. James Carey (Columbia University) set the scene, using Raymond Williams's notion of the "long revolution" as a metaphor through which to understand globalization's historical development since the eighteenth century. Carey's talk usefully located the debate in economic terms, charting the steady decline, and sudden fluctuations, in transaction costs of moving people, ideas and goods within cultural and economic markets. He asked one of the persistently raised questions throughout the conference -- how can we maintain the advantages of globalization (travel, communication etc.) -- without sacrificing democratic ideals and national identities?

MIT's Arundhati Tuli Banerjee's presentation constituted an indirect response to this question. She was asked to consider the specificity of Indian media today and to evaluate the influence of US and European mass media. Banerjee noted how in India television has evolved into the new globalist discourse and that since the Gulf War, in particular, CNN has overtaken the BBC as the model for news delivery. More broadly, she also described the unfolding of a "pan-Indian aesthetic" in which the hyperreal recreation of ancient Hindu India sits side-by-side with soaps and Western popular cultural forms. In this context, Banerjee suggested, the terms "global" and "modern" may be regarded as "co-valid" descriptors for a particular and distinctive sensibility. For Banerjee, the specificity of Indian media, its themes, topoi, images, music and so on, suggest that the concept of "hybridity" still offers the strongest point of entry into an understanding of the nuances of the Indian experience. The implication here is that new, but distinctive and sympathetic, national identities may be forged together and enhanced with the advantages afforded by globalization.

John Hartley's (Queensland University of Technology) contribution emphasised globalization as a cultural rather than simply economic form. He advocated a move away from criticism of global mass media and the "wrong brand of politics" that demonises conglomerates as dangerous empire builders towards a greater understanding of how the distribution of media,

e.g. films, is controlled. Hartley highlighted the benefits of "plenty," stressing the advantages of consumer choice in an open market place and the sharing of cultural forms via global media delivery. He argued for a need to acknowledge the diminishing importance of the "public sphere" notion of citizenship and its substitution by a citizenship organised around consumption -- which he referred to as "DIY citizenship." His over-riding point was that the one-way flow of American products into unwary markets was not a useful model of understanding of the processes or experiences of globalization.

The second plenary held the following day was moderated by William Urrichio. This session usefully provided evaluations by media practitioners and professionals of current and future trends in the industry. Richard Miner from OrangeImagineering, vice president of research, described Orange's aim to provide wirefree delivery of content in the telecommunications industry in order that mobile phone users could receive sports updates, news, games and so on. New developments could include a handset that identifies a radio music track and then offers the user the opportunity to order the CD online. His talk, however, also pinpointed a real disjunction between the sophisticated intentions of R and D professionals and the actual practices of end-users -- 50% of callers to Orange's helplines are asking how to turn their phones on rather than trying to understand the latest in WAP technology.

Christopher Pike from SONY, on the other hand, demonstrated just how sophisticated end users can be when they really want to engage with media content. Pike outlined the hugely successful *Dawson's Desktop* project, which demonstrated the potential for transmedia story telling. SONY produced an online series tied in to the popular youth drama *Dawson's Creek* which successfully combined marketing and entertainment. The *Desktop* sustained fans' interest by filling in between episodes, providing email, chat, bookmarks and a backstory that provided in-depth character knowledge that fostered a "cult" engagement with the series. SONY worked so closely with the scriptwriters that they could anticipate events, introducing tangential characters and events that influence the show's television content. The introduction of the first Emmy Award for Interactive Media signals the industry's recognition of the power of transmedia storytelling. Pike's description of how SONY co-opted the programme's pre-existing fan groups into the promotion of the new online show was also highly instructive and, inadvertently perhaps, raised serious questions about the future autonomy of fan cultures.

Danny Schechter, journalist, documentary film maker and the founder of the online alternative news channel mediachannel.org offered a more sceptical view of the choices on offer through the development of new technologies. He argued that it is not digital revolutions but political revolutions that democratise countries and that consumers should regard the "choice" of information on offer with suspicion. News discourse, in particular, is highly managed and highly proscriptive and consumers need to work hard to find alternative accounts of news events.

The range of debates initiated in these plenary discussions intersected effectively with the huge variety of research presented in the streamed panels. Issues of identity, belonging and difference appeared in panels including Nation, Gender and Race, Contesting Identities, In Search of the Global, Globalization, Technology, Identity, and European Regional Identities; media and education featured in panels including Intellectual Property, Education and Technology and Promotion and Development.

Television as the quintessential technology of globalization featured heavily in discussions. In the Television: History, Technology, Influence panel James Schwoch (Northwestern University) fascinated listeners by tracing the links between television, telecommunications and American cold war diplomacy. His archival research revealed schemes in the 1950s to build global TV networks that would also operate as conduits for US propaganda and psychological warfare. Journalist and academic Ramez Maluf (Beirut Institute for Media Arts) discussed the impact of satellite broadcasting on Arab audiences and Mari Paredes (University of Massachusetts) tracked the uneven development of the digital transmission format, thinking through the implications of the events of September 11th 2001 and its aftermath for the broader diffusion of digital capitalism. The Reality TV panel included papers on reality TV, classed identities and the public sphere (Ferenc Hammer, Open Society Institute Budapest) and original research by Janet Jones (University of Wales) on the changing relationship between audiences and narratives in interactive formats.

Discussions of films and the film industry appeared in a number of panels and ranged from analyses of work by John Sayles (Hamilton Carroll, Indiana University) and Peter Jackson (Harmony Wu, University of Southern California) to assessments of genres such as horror cinema (Steven Schneider, Harvard) and Japanese adult videos (Dixon Wong, University of Hong Kong and Yau Hoi Yan, UCL, London). The Bombay film industry came under scrutiny by a number of delegates including Monika Mehta (Ithaca College) who argued that the processes of globalisation helped to foster Hindi commercial cinema, the Indian state and the Indian family and Anne Ciecko (University of Mass-Amherst) who examined new technologies and the construction of the global film star.

Most delegates posted their full papers on the conference website ensuring that speakers could present their key points in ways that were accessible to listeners from very different professional backgrounds (available at <http://cms.mit.edu/conf/mit2/>). CMS's commitment to open debate was also in evidence through the Communications Forum on World Media and Monopolies featuring John Hartley, Danny Schechter and Ingrid Volkmer (Kennedy School of Government Harvard) which was held on 9th May. This event, the multimedia "tele-journeys" exhibition which accompanied the conference and the BollySpace Interactive Dance Project which performed on the first night were all free to the public. Overall, the conference served as a highly valuable forum for both an open exchange of ideas and as a meeting point for academics and those in innovative media industries; as such it should be a real spur to further debate about media globalization: its formation, characteristics, processes and future directions.

Preserving the Beloved: The Archive, the Funeral, and the Trash Bin

Born to be Bad: Trash Cinema from the 1960s and 70s, 17-19 May 2002, University of California, Berkeley and Pacific Film Archive

A report by Dan Leopard, University of Southern California, USA

A few days prior to attending the *Born to be Bad* conference, my wife's aunt died. What I had conceived as a weekend devoted to scholarly discussions of exploitation cinema and trash aesthetics quickly became two days of zipping back and forth between the conference and the funeral -- which was held an hour north of Berkeley in Fairfield, California. Each event -- conference and funeral -- echoed the other; the underlying assumptions that ground the discourses of Trash Cinema fused with those that inform the discourses of mourning. At the conference, I listened to panelists theorize the particularity of their trash cinematic object, while at the funeral I listened to complementary figures -- children, relatives, and friends -- evoke the specificity of their lives with the deceased. The palpable emotional weight of the funeral provided contrast to the intellectual sophistication of the conference. Consequently, what follows traverses multiple discourses -- that of fandom, the academy, and the mortuary -- while attempting to situate these discourses in reference, and deference, to the body of the deceased and to the discarded objects that constitute Trash Cinema.

The *Born to be Bad* conference offered two days of scholarly panels devoted to a variety of histories, theories, and filmmakers associated with Trash Cinema. These panel presentations were accompanied by three evenings of film screenings at the Pacific Film Archive (PFA). On opening night, the PFA screened George Kuchar's *Corruption of the Damned* (1965) and *Color Me Shameless* (1967) as well as Herschell Gordon Lewis's *Color Me Blood Red* (1965). On subsequent evenings, the PFA screened William Rotsler's *Agony of Love* (1966), Stephanie Rothman's *The Student Nurses* (1970), and Jamaa Fanaka's *Welcome Home, Brother Charles* aka *Soul Vengeance* (1975). Steve Seid, a curator at the PFA, introduced Lewis's *Color Me Blood Red* by suggesting that this was probably the final screening of this particular print, as the saturated reds envisioned and produced by the filmmaker were beginning to fade to pink. Seid's introduction highlighted the endangered status of many of these films, raising the question of how to appropriately save cultural and historical works of art that were originally intended as ephemera. This tension between the archive and the trash heap informed most of the scholarship presented throughout the conference.

At the opening panel entitled "NY Trash," Joan Hawkins, author of *Cutting Edge: Art Horror and the Horrific Avant-Garde*, presented a paper focusing on the cinema of transgression from the late seventies. Hawkins argued that filmmakers such as Nick Zedd and Beth B. provided a model of oppositional cinema in response to the dominant art-house and avant-garde cinemas of the 1970s. She concluded her presentation with a gross-out clip from a Zedd film in which a man with a gaping head trauma performs a ventriloquism routine. The image summarized her position in that it caused conference attendees to gasp and then break out in

laughter -- a distinctive response that characterizes the aesthetic of the trash cinema fan. The fan is capable of enjoying the shock and degradation of the image, incorporating the repulsive material into the controlling gesture of the guffaw.

Immediately following the "NY Trash" panel, I drove to Fairfield to attend the funeral. In stark contrast to the shocking-funny corpse of Zedd's film, the body in the coffin at the service remained inert -- absent of personality but retaining the mark of the deceased. No longer the beloved, but merely the form of the beloved, the corpse embodied for those at the funeral the history of emotional connections that is the substance of family and friendship. Meant for the ground and the sacred act of burial, in marked contrast to the dumping of films deemed anything but sacred, the body of the deceased serves a purpose not dissimilar to that of the filmic object of marginal cinemas. For the fan, the attachment to the cinematic object is wrought with emotional significance similar to the love and attention evoked by the beloved.

Several funeral goers sobbed uncontrollably as the coffin lid was closed. These mourners, closest to the deceased, desired one more moment with the body -- all that remained that signified their devotion and attachment. Similarly, at an obviously divergent yet evocatively tangential emotional locus, the Trash Cinema fan seeks to merge with the beloved object, a favorite film, by embodying it in the form of knowledge about the history of production and distribution of the beloved object. Simultaneously, the knowledge of these micro-details traces another history -- the history of the subject's engagement with the beloved object. While in life, the beloved returns, or at minimum responds to, our affections -- in death and in media, the beloved remains mute, casting shadows of what was and what could be.

Back at the conference on Sunday, there seemed to be an implicit tension between the fans, with their love of individual filmmakers and beloved films, and the scholars, who have a parallel love for the genres and auteurs of trash cinema but also attempt to maintain an intellectual distance from the purity of fan compulsion. While the scholars were careful to position trash cinema within existing film studies discourse (many scholars and fans alike finding recourse to a casual form of auteur theory), there seemed to be a need on the part of the academics to acknowledge that intellectual engagement has at its base a vivid emotional, unconscious impulse. This academic compulsion perhaps serves to emphasize the authenticity of fandom from which many of the academics sought to gain credibility.

The panel on collecting and exhibition, introduced by conference organizer Tamao Nakahara, underscored an additional point of contention between those who collect obscure films for the sake of archiving and those who exhibit obscure films for the sake of a paying audience. Elliot Lavine, Programmer of the Roxie Cinema in San Francisco, commented that the death of the repertory movie house coincides with the ease of renting obscure exploitation films at the local video store. He relayed the story of a San Francisco video store clerk who always stocked up on films screening at the Roxie because he knew that patrons would rent these films after having seen them advertised on the theater's calendar. Xavier Mendik and Ernest Mathijs, two collectors and archivists, exemplified the type of fans who, in their desire to possess individual films and an exhaustive collection, at once preserve Trash Cinema while remaining blind to the viewing habits and desires of the average moviegoer.

At the closing response session, Linda Williams responded to Eric Schaefer's keynote address on the transition from one reel pornography to full-length feature hardcore by screening a short arcade reel she had found at the Kinsey institute. Williams said that she had been baffled by what this reel demonstrated regarding the conventional history of pornographic

cinema. The short film started with two women, naked, lying on a bed masturbating themselves and each other. Schaefer responded to Williams's question concerning the reel's genre, by identifying it as a "beaver" film and offering 1968-1969 as possible dates of production. Williams acknowledged that this was what she had initially thought, but then she asked Schaefer, and by extension all of us in the room, to explain the final minutes of the reel. We watched as, at the conclusion of the reel, a penis entered the frame and fellatio ensued.

Upon the entrance of the penis onscreen, Williams asked Schaefer what his revised date for the film would be. Schaefer responded that he would have to see the edge code numbers to determine when the print was struck, but that he would probably guess around 1971-1972. There followed a discussion of the film in the context of Schaefer's hardcore historiography of the previous day as the blow job continued onscreen before the audience. This struck me as the quintessential moment of the conference -- two renowned film scholars discussing the historical significance of transitional films and edge code numbering while an apparently bored actress performed fellatio on a disembodied penis. To paraphrase Williams's famous theorization -- melodrama makes you cry, horror makes you scream, and porno makes you historicize.

This moment made explicit the fear that many fans of Trash Cinema have regarding their beloved objects -- that the films of the great trash auteurs will be castrated, neutered, rendered distant by scholars. This realization evoked for me my own experience at the funeral: the elevated rhetoric of the husband's eulogy, the agonized shrieks of the deceased's deaf-mute best friend, and the unrecognizable Wurlitzer organ rendition of "Amazing Grace" all appeared as if lifted from a "bad" movie, and I was tempted to read each through the ironic gaze of Trash Cinema scholarship. But for each of the funeral's participants these gestures of emotion represented a deeply felt expression of desire, affection, and loss. Similarly, for Trash filmmakers, their work represents an attempt, perhaps failed, to realize a particular vision and to express that vision to the world -- not to make Trash. As Elliot Lavine reminded the audience, most filmmakers set out to make the best movie possible.

Reframing the Frontier

Society for Cinema Studies Conference, 2002, in Denver

A report by Mark Tjarks, Hawaii Pacific University, USA

The two *Scope* SCS conference reports that preceded my own provide contrary models for going about such an awkward task. Two years ago, Sean Griffin of Southern Methodist University (US) was able to draw a stark contrast between the doom and gloom of the 1999 Conference and the "dawning of a new millennium" attitude of the 2000 Conference. For last year's Conference, Matt Hills of Cardiff University (UK) began with a well-crafted disclaimer that his report could only provide an incomplete and "rather idiosyncratic" account. Regarding a summary of "the wide ranging program" of the 2001 SCS Conference, he concluded that he had "spectacularly failed to capture" it. I will, like Hills, begin with a disclaimer that I can attend to no more than my personal observations based on a very narrow slice of the conference's offerings; however, I *will* examine the program to project beyond my experience and offer the reader a larger picture of the Conference and its vision of the frontier of cinema studies.

Despite the obvious pitfalls, I begin with the rather risky assumption that, as the lines of a pendulum swinging in a seemingly random motion will eventually fall into a pattern and yield a coherent image, one can imagine the motion and state of the Society of Cinema Studies by following the verbal swings, twists and turns of a selection of panels, workshops, screenings and discussions. Over the long weekend, I observed repetitions of certain terms and themes that created patterns across the Conference's variegated landscape. Along with the golden oldies, such as "desire," "authorship," Bazin, "*avant garde*," and a plethora of "posts-," there were recent old favorites, such as "reality TV," "virtual media," "hyper media," and "hybrid media." My favorites in this vein, however, presented by Janet Wasko in a paper on new media distribution were "lean forward technologies" (entertainment delivered through desktop computers) and "lean back technologies" (entertainment delivered through televisions, which encourage viewers to lean back on the couch).

Edward Branigan of the University of California, Santa Barbara observed in his presentation that there are at least fifteen radial meanings (highly contextualized variants) of the word "frame," and the ones we choose, in part, dictate the methodology of our inquiry and so delimit our findings. This caution notwithstanding, I will place the Conference's program into four rather abstract frames: i) technological, ii) physical, iii) economic, and iv) practical.

i. Technology: "New Media"?

Even two years ago Griffin noted that the Society's discussion of "new media" had shifted from hyping its threat to deflating its promise. The Society's growing comfort with digital technologies was suggested by a plenary title that challenged participants to rethink "Cinema Studies in a 'New Media' Age" but softened this challenge with quotation marks, as if the challenge of new media were primarily semantic. If so, "Society of Cinema Studies" is aptly named to absorb "new" media. The inclusive mood of the Society was demonstrated by the

recent initiation of the Television Studies Interest Group and, not coincidentally, twelve panels this year that focused on *television* and five others that gave *film* and *television* equal billing. There were also two panels that referred to *video*, nine panels that addressed the broad category of *media*, and fifteen panels that took up the plenary's challenge to discuss *digital* or *new media*.

Of the new media panels I attended, "tv.com: New Media and the Moving Image," chaired by Conference Program Committee member Henry Jenkins of MIT, was the most in demand, far exceeding the confines of its forty-seat room. I and a dozen or so other participants were lucky enough to find a place on the floor; most latecomers or panel interlopers simply opened the doors, sighed and shut them again. Although the interests of the panelists were wide ranging, they delivered a coherent message: new media are not radically new nor are big changes around the corner. Because digital projectors cost upwards of \$165,000 and half of the top ten movie chains are facing bankruptcy, Janet Wasko concluded that the shift to digital technology in movie theaters is unlikely to move forward at breakneck speed. The delivery of traditional cinema through the Internet or cable television VOD, which she derisively called "video on delay," was also being held up by difficult negotiations between major studios, cable companies and Internet subscription services.

Dan Harries of Middlesex University contended that most new media ventures do not offer truly interactive experiences that integrate the activities of viewing and browsing, what he called, "viewsing." Rather they offer parallel media experiences, the interactive element of these hybrid media generally limited to participating in polls to decide what happens to a character or exploring links to paratextual information. (Ironically Harries's illustrations of new media were shown through a slide projector, for lack of digital media technology at the Conference). The "tv.com" panel told the story of a Hollywood that developed new media as global oil companies' develop alternative energy sources: at best, as a hedge against an uncertain future, at worst, as a subterfuge. William Boddy of Barch College, CUNY accused the big media conglomerates of using new media ventures to reestablish control of the intellectual property that has been leeching out through the Internet. He went so far as to suggest that these corporations wished ultimately to do away with fair use laws that protect academics' use of media texts.

ii. Physical Frames: Embodied Cinema

Many papers fetishized the physicality of cinema, its music, sound, film frames and space, but especially its star bodies. There was a paper on tattoos in Peter Greenaway's *The Pillow Book*, another on female bodies in Chinese martial arts films, one on bodies walking to music, several on exploitive and pornographic uses of bodies, and three entire panels devoted to "celluloid" masculinity. There was an especial wealth of material on celebrity topics, such as fandom, celebrity ideology, the queering of stars and star bodies as texts. Regarding the latter, Kirsten Pullen of Colorado State University provided a fascinating discussion of the unique paths Zsa Zsa Gabor, Elizabeth Taylor and Sophia Loren took from sex "kittens to crones." At the end of the same panel, Elizabeth Haas took skillful aim at the recent Hollywood mini-trend of putting female stars with thin, idealized "Hollywood" bodies into fat suits (e.g., Courteney Cox Arquette in *Friends*, Julia Roberts in *America's Sweethearts* and Gwyneth Paltrow in *Shallow Hal*). Although Paltrow stated that "every pretty girl should" have the experience of being seen as fat in public to know the anguish they feel, Haas called into question the motives of these stars' beefing it up as well as the spin these movies attempt to put on Hollywood's representation of the female body.

iii. Economic Frames: Authorship, Licensing and Globalization

The 2002 Conference demonstrated that the SCS is as dedicated to exploring the material conditions of the production, distribution and consumption of media as it is in examining media as texts and communication. There was a panel on "The Business of Television," a couple more on Hollywood's self promotion and another pair on the issues of authorship and intellectual property. A slew of others focused on the globalization of television and movie production and consumption. Unfortunately, my direct experience of these offerings was limited to the new media panels already discussed.

iv. Practical Frames: Pedagogy and Politics

There were several panels on teaching within the Academy, focusing on topics from pornography to intellectual property to the "pedagogical potential" of a variety of new media. Another popular phrase at the SCS conference was "outside the Academy," such as careers in cinema studies "outside the Academy" and the establishment of media literacy "outside the Academy." The message was that cinema studies is not an academic discipline but a study connected to a constellation of practical concerns.

The primary practical concern addressed at the Conference was the politics of cinema. Stephen Prince, who spoke at a discussion on screen violence a year ago, participated this year in a workshop on violence and another on censorship of violence. However, the most ubiquitous images of violence in the media the previous year, those of the September 11th attack on the World Trade Center, were not substantively addressed at the conference, I suppose because final proposals were due soon after the event.

A large audience was garnered to listen to a workshop on "Feminist Film Theory: History, Progress and Process," which was followed by a passionate debate with the audience regarding the role of film theory, especially psychoanalytical film theory in feminist criticism. Although there were some harsh words shared, there seemed to be a consensus developing towards defining feminist criticism less by its theoretical principles than by its political practice. Jane Gaines of Duke University, 2001 recipient of an Academy Film Scholars Program Grant, argued for a feminist film theory that was self-critical, plurivocal and that had an empirical basis. As one audience member observed, though few panels at the Conference were marked as feminist, many feminist theorists and practitioners were doing their work under the banners of post-colonialism, queer studies, experimental cinema, etc.

Moving beyond "Theory" was a broad theme at the Conference. It was, for instance, echoed in a workshop on "Writing and Teaching Outside the Canon" chaired by Hilary Radner of the University of Notre Dame and reflected in the Conference's generally eclectic offering of topics. Although smaller venues were reserved for panels with cultural, post-colonial or feminist foci, from my observations these panels were very well attended and produced some of the most vigorous and thoughtful dialogues. The influence of the Asian Pacific American Caucus could be seen in seven panels on cinematic representations of Asian Americans and a variety of Asian cinemas. I was particularly impressed by a panel on "Post-Colonial and Indigenous Media" which drew a number of insightful parallels between the way Australian, Pacific, American and Caribbean colonizers have represented indigenous peoples. There were also screenings and workshops sponsored by the Middle East Caucus, the Latino/a Caucus, the Queer Caucus and the Caucus on Class, as well as workshops on European, African, and Jewish Cinema.

Conclusion

The Conference was full of "intersections," "converging disciplines," "hybrids," "links," and "bridges." Denver, site of the first gold rush to the West, was an apt location for the conference, for if cinema scholarship were likened to a Hollywood genre, it would be a Western, depicting a frontier with legendary open spaces, though its landscape is, as the West was, hotly contested. The 2002 SCS conference brought together pioneer aestheticians and philosophers, nomadic anthropologists and historians, quixotic entrepreneurs and activists, as well as settler culturalists and critics. Ever present was the voracious appetite of cinema studies for any horizon within sight, any parameter within earshot. The Conference took for its subject film, television, video, digital media, new and even future technologies; the production, marketing, and consumption of these technologies; and the pedagogy and politics of the resulting cinematic representations. *Hubris* aside, this is the proper scope of cinema studies, which has always been defined by its interminable quest to define itself. According to Noel Carroll (1996), "it is a mistake to consider cinema a medium since movies have always exploited and will always exploit the available technology" (38). Cinema studies can only continue to remap the volatile front between the evolving technologies of representation and the evolving cultures that construct/are constructed by these technologies.

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