In the Frame - Fleetingly: revisiting Kracauer

Siegfried Kracauer, University of Birmingham September 13-14 2002

A report by Janet Harbord, Goldsmiths College, University of London, UK

In *History: The Last Things before the Last*, Kracauer described his project as "the rehabilitation of objectives and modes of being which still lack a name and hence are overlooked and misjudged" (Kracauer, 1969: n.p.). To a great extent, this concept of "rehabilitation" ("to restore privileges or reputation") underscored the main thematic of the conference, to locate Kracauer on the map of critical thought as one who has been both overlooked and misjudged. Certainly the history of late publication and translation of Kracauer's work bears testimony to a fundamental neglect in Anglophone cultures at least. As Graeme Gilloch notes, even in Germany, Kracauer's work has far less circulation than his contemporaries of the postwar period, Benjamin, Adorno and Horkheimer. Perhaps, as Gilloch suggests, Kracauer's troubled relations with his contemporaries provided a filter through which his work has become placed, antagonistically and problematically, as the optimistic reading of mass culture as distraction.

Yet, already this sense of Kracauer as optimist sits uncomfortably with his later post-war work. Indeed, any retrospective of Siegfried Kracauer's work has to deal with the volume and the duration of the writing, stretching from the early Weimer essays to the latter postwar work on Caligari and film theory. Whilst this provides a rich archive of achievement for contemporary scholars, the conceptual framework shifts as the critical focus moves across objects and decades, denying Kracauer any singular philosophical or disciplinary "home". Over the two days of the conference there emerged many Kracauers, dependent in part on the disciplinary position of the reader/speaker, which ranged from German Studies, Cultural Geography, Cultural Studies, to Psychoanalysis and Film Studies. There were also differences between those using Kracauer to read contemporary phenomena, and those concerned with Kracauer as an historical figure. Erica Carter's paper provided an example of the latter, a return to the moment of Weimer cinema to effectively question the narrative formation of German Film Studies, asking whether Weimer cinema is part of a specifically national psychology or conditioned by a broader modernist movement. Through a reading of aesthetics, Carter describes an ideological struggle over the cult of distraction, the glittering surfaces and facets of mass culture that capture Kracauer's contemplative eye. On the one hand, she positions Kracauer's reading of distraction as an ethical response to mass culture, a reading that renders the surface of culture a complex moving skein of phenomena which refutes integration into a system of "natural" thought. On the other hand, aesthetics rendered as beauty allows the image to be appropriated into a system of national harmony, a stabilising force for collective experience. In so doing, the aesthetic cleaves open a space between the broad social imperative that puts aesthetics to work as an integrative political force, and the philosophical nuances of Kracauer's work, teasing out other experiential possibilities for collective viewing.

Other papers located in the earlier historical context of Kracauer's work sought to create links with other contemporary thinkers and cultural practitioners. James Donald's paper "Three Responses to Popular Culture in the 1920s" juxtaposed Kracauer's reading of cinema with other historical interventions by Dorothy Richardson and John Reith. Where Richardson was interested in the possibilities of cinema for women entering public space, Reith's protectionist stance evolves into an interest with the public ceremony of culture. Through a re-inscription of the historical context, Donald re-centres performance as a common fascination for all three figures in relation to cinema.

In a similar move to connect disparate historical discourses, Jan Campbell provided an account of Kracauer in terms of the influence of Freud. Whilst Kracauer's theory of the mass ornament positions his concerns with the collective, a social psychology, Freud is known largely in terms of a more individualistic path detailed through a series of case studies worked through the paradigm of the Oedipal complex. Yet, Campbell makes the case for a mutual concern with the collective prevalent in Freud's work on group psychology. The unconscious processes of capitalism are common concerns for both writers, each detailing the splits and sublimations effected by an engagement with the conditions of early twentieth century culture. Campbell finds overlap in Kracauer's reading of a sentimental yet detached engagement of audiences with the mass ornament, split off from embodied engagement, and Freud's work on mourning and melancholia. For Freud's sense of melancholia as a detached state of being, unable to attend to the past and its losses, presents a similar picture of a collective psychology, alienated from an embodied response to the world. In a larger historical perspective Kracauer's survival beyond Freud allowed for revisions to his thesis; where Kracauer had read optimistically the possibility of an audience's recognition of alienation in the relationship to mass culture (in for example his essay "The Cult of Distraction"), his later work abandons such hope. In the later book *From Caligari to Hitler* (Kracauer, 1974), the mass ornament is simply the aesthetic abstraction that mobilised an extreme political culture.

John Allen in the field of cultural geography and Frances Guerin in film studies have both appropriated Kracauer for the analysis of more contemporary culture. Allen's paper worked with the premise that both cultural geography and Kracauer share a concern with the phenomenology of everyday life. In Kracauer's work we find a fascination with the familiar, with the surface, but not as a way into any account of depth, rather as an engagement with the world in its layered and changing multiplicity. In a reading of the renovated site in Berlin of the Potsdamer Platz, Allen reads the space through a Kracauerian lens, finding pathways through space both scripted and open, routed via merchandise and consumer points, caught in the hybrid texts of private-public space. Taking a different kind of text, the documentary *The Thin Blue Line* (1988), Frances Guerin makes a case for Kracauer's "Theory of Film" to read as documentary. In a paper entitled "Concepts Without Theory", Guerin returns to "presuppositions that have gone out of fashion", namely the notion that documentary film can lay bare a sense of reality. Mixing up the definitions of reality, Guerin argues that Kracauer's work presents us with a complex and contradictory concept of reality which, in film terms, is neither simply recording nor revelation but both. Lifting concepts from Kracauer, rather than applying theory, was itself suggestive of Kracauer's refusal of organic totalities, universal standpoints, and his embrace of the contingent, shifting nature of analytical work. Or, as it was neatly summed up in the discussion that followed, Kracauer continues to entice us with a way of writing that does not always return to structure.

The round table discussion (David Rodowick, Graeme Gilloch and John Allen), threw these different approaches and interests into relief by asking, why Kracauer, and why now? David Rodowick unravelled the questions by posing another, how is it that Kracauer asks us to think about a philosophy of culture? He does so, according to Rodowick, by transforming both terms. Philosophy through Kracauer's lens, is no longer abstraction, totality, universal but a specific social analysis, whilst culture is both in the detail of everyday life and the overbearing presence of the systems of mass culture. Through this definition of Kracauer's terms, current theoretical concerns with the local, the contingent, the layered complexity of human practice, resonate Kracauer's project and perception. For Kracauer, the debate continued, the surface is not a material to be pierced, revealing levels of truth, but a dynamic, mobile form, implying movement, connected to the contortions of capital but keeping definition on the move. In terms of film specifically, Kracauer's sense of an endless flow of life, ungraspable and indeterminate, is captured and contained fleetingly by the frame. Film, like the modern subject, represents a point of historical intelligibility but only as a fragmented, discontinuous comprehension. Fittingly, the over-riding sense of Kracauer from this conference is of a writer glimpsed through the keyholes of particular historical moments, changing shape and position, defying any attempts at a fixed and tidy obituary.

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Lucky Him!

The Importance of Being Arthur: Representations of Men and Masculinity, 1954-1963, University of Surrey, Roehampton, 13-14 July 2002

A report by John Young, University of Nottingham, UK

The "Arthur" whose importance is alluded to in the title being Arthur Seaton, protagonist of *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960), this was a very tightly focused conference in terms of both the historical period and of the specifically British masculinities under discussion. Two broad types of representations of British masculinity -- the Angry Young Man, and the homosexual -- tended to recur. Indeed, the opening keynote speaker, Dan Rebellato, in combining both, neatly set the tone for much of what followed in his not unpredictably titled presentation, "The Importance of Being Martha". Here, he focused on a sequence from *Look Back in Anger* (1958) in which Jimmy Porter and Cliff, with a vigorous music hall turn, disrupt a staid rehearsal for a "well-made play" featuring Alison's friend, Helena. The outraged theatre director is clearly coded as gay in his clothing (cravat, suede shoes) and demeanour at a time when, lest we forget, homosexuality was still illegal. (The Wolfenden Report which recommended decriminalisation was still a year away in 1956 when *Look Back in Anger* was first performed).

The heightened, because unmentionable, intensity of the coding that characterised what remained a largely secret society is an indicator of just how merited the current level of interest in homosexuality during this particular historical moment is, even if, between them, the AYM and the homosexual tended to dominate the conference overall. Other manifestations of masculinity did find their way into the conference however, including non-WASP British masculinity in, for example, Caribbean fiction, the role of changes in art school education in forming masculine identity, the "protean masculinity" of Peter Sellers, and Albert and Harold Steptoe. I was eagerly anticipating the paper on "Fiery Fred: Fred Trueman, Yorkshire Cricket and the Politics of Masculinity" -- unfortunately, the presenter didn't turn up.

Apart from one session in which three panels ran concurrently, there was a choice of two panels per session, as well as five keynotes and, to end the Saturday, an appropriately timed special guest appearance by none other than Alan Sillitoe. (An accomplished speaker, his was an entertaining if dilatory trawl through the two decades, from first faltering attempts at writing in 1930s Nottingham to post-war invalidity and exile in Majorca and numerous publishers' rejection slips, that culminated in the publication of *Saturday Night…*). Many speakers were coming from a literary studies perspective, though, with fields as disparate as ethnography and musicology also represented, as well as a number of speakers from film, media, and cultural studies backgrounds, there was a healthy interdisciplinary mix. The tight focus of the conference meant that some key texts tended to crop up repeatedly. The variety of approaches however, meant that, say, *Lucky Jim* (1957), *This Sporting Life* (1963), or *Room at the Top* (1959) was discussed in reconfigured contexts that facilitated a much broader and more interesting range of perspectives. It was also possible to productively follow certain thematic threads across a range of presentations.

There were no panels devoted specifically to papers with a film studies angle, so I inevitably missed some, including the above-mentioned on Peter Sellers in *The Wrong Arm of the Law* (1963). Of those I did catch, I was particularly impressed by Melanie Williams's paper on Hardy Kruger, one of several German actors to appear in popular British-made films in this period. These stars paradoxically reflected Britain's shifting reassessment of Germany as an economic ally in an era when other British box office hits included the likes of *Reach For The Sky* (1956). A clip from the comedy *Bachelor of Hearts* (1958)(which could be loosely summarised as *A Yank At Oxford* (1938) remade as *A Kraut At Cambridge*) showed Kruger in a rapid-fire montage of seduction scenes, each one a sly, shorthand parody of available models of British masculinity (the Angry Young Man, the beat, the debonair dandy, the ton-up boy…). The complexities of cultural exchange here, for me, suggested some useful potential directions for these areas of research. Martin Hunt's paper on the same panel was less narrowly focused but the parts that discussed representations of National Service in the British cinema of the period were, for me, particularly thought-provoking.

Being so heavily concentrated on British cultural production, the overwhelming majority of academics present being British came as no real surprise. There were delegates from as far afield as Finland, Japan and the US however, which helped to offset the potential insularity of such a project. As one whose first direct encounter with the likes of John Osborne was being confronted by disagreeable, cantankerous ageing *enfants terribles* in newspaper features and TV chat shows, leading to puzzlement at how they could once have been considered radical, it was an eye-opener to discover the level of enduring international interest in the writing of this period. That Kingsley Amis had once been funny was a revelation of similar impact.

Following Sillitoe's talk, Saturday night was given over to a 1950s Quiz. My teammates were barely sentient by the end of the 1970s, so it was down to me (four years old in 1960) to virtually single-handedly drag us to the heights of mid-table mediocrity, being no match for the Andy Medhurst posse, the latter fresh from the characteristically entertaining and incisive dissection of "Kenneth Williams: The Meaning of Queening" that had preceded Sillitoe. But then, their "reward" was to get up and sing (my memory has mercifully blotted out the actual song. Thank you memory). It was a novel and innovative conference feature, however, as well as being stimulating and fun.

The conference was organised superbly in every respect. It took place over a weekend of glorious July sunshine, which made the brilliantly white Georgian architecture that housed the conference a still more stunning environment. Hardly an Angry Young Venue, then, a writer more churlish than this Agreeable Old Crone might harrumph, though the flat above Jimmy Porter's sweet shop in an unnamed Midlands town has probably since been demolished in any case. There was talk, during the closing plenary, of a compilation of the best papers from this conference being published. If this comes to fruition, it could well be an important intervention into the study of various aspects of British culture and cultural politics, that would be essential for scholars of this historical period as well as those who are concerned with representations of masculinity in other contexts.

Reading the News: Audience Responses to September 11th Media Coverage

After September 11: TV News and Transnational Audiences, An International Symposium, Stanhope Centre for Communications Policy Research London, England, 9-11 September 2002

A report by Matthew Adams, Open University/Nottingham Trent University, UK

The conference gathered together media professionals and executives, journalists, academics, broadcasters, anchormen and women and researchers to discuss media coverage of September 11th as well as subsequent events, and audience responses across the globe. The conference started with Robert Fisk's fierce polemic against US imperialism and the media's slavish reflection of it. Did September 11th change the world? No says Fisk, but Bush has since in his "response" to the attacks, which have amounted to an attempt to reshape the Middle East to meet vested interests, under the thinly veiled guise of an international war on terror. Fisk's attack was most ferocious in describing the media's seat in the international ride since Sept 11th -- beside, and often resting in the lap of, Bush and his allies. He is scathing about the gutlessness of the western media, most pointedly in their tendency to ask the "what and where" of events, but not "the why". Nowhere is this more apparent, Fisk claimed, than in the recent "slippage" that has occurred in the identity of a terrorist threat -- the cap has passed from Bin Laden, almost silently, to Saddam. Fisk's elaborations culminated in an account of contemporary Western journalism as self-absorbed and cowardly. The aim of journalism should be, in a succinct definition, "to monitor the centres of power". *Why* this seemed not to be the case, particularly post-September 11th, was not convincingly explained here or in the following debate; laziness, desire for acceptability and routine half-suggested. Overall, Fisk's address was a grand beginning, and his trenchant critique of some media tendencies seems justifiable. It lacked at least a considered footnote however, acknowledging that there are consistent alternative media voices to be found to the ones disparaged by Fisk. Overlooking these voices in public debates and addresses, however against the tide and isolated they may be, only contributes to their invisibility, and thus, their marginalisation.

Shireen Mazari continued the polemic, focusing on the Western media's heightened reliance on stereotypes post-September 11th. Particularly pertinent was her claim that the media tended to portray September 11th and the ensuing conflict as religious issue, or more specifically, an Islamic-fuelled one. Her insistence that Islam is not a unifying principal, and using it as a blanket term distorts the agendas of various groupings and obscures fundamentally political problems with a naturalised religious context was convincing, supported by some selective newsroom interviews at the time. This brimmed over into an implication that Islam was simply not an issue. While it is of course unwise to use terrorism as a stick to beat Islam as a whole with, the reviewer would argue that it would still be of value to reflect on the role of Islam in the September 11th attacks and related issues. It is undoubtedly a dimension necessary to contemplate in this case, without reducing Islam to terrorism or vice versa.

Annabelle Sreberny's address was a highlight, drawing from a range of sources to grapple with a prescient sub-text of media coverage post-September 11th: how do "we" now understand the world? She argued, in a rare positive note, that journalism had become more reflexive in trying to understand this question; she utilised examples from popular journalism where writers have struggled, often emotively, to impose sense on world events post-September 11th by constructing an array of collective identifications. The new desire for an expression of who "we" are, Sreberny argues, is a desire to reassert a collective sense of security. Consequently, an effective public sphere has emerged in which many voices were heard, stumbling over one another in a relational milieu which for once acknowledged an emotional dimension.

Fusing Elias and Klein she tried to account for journalistic expressions of collective identity. She found, in her selection of examples of reflections upon September 11th by authors, that a sense of "we" was in continual collapse and reconstruction, identifying with various "selfings". For Sreberny, this amounted to a possibly post-traumatic scramble around for a sense of "who we are", as new uncertainties propel individual accounts to impose shifting, complex, and contradictory versions of "we" upon narratives. These are often tied into hegemonic discourses of othering, but her indication of an effective public sphere emerging to resource this imposition suggested some room for optimism against the tide of the day thus far. The theme of the day seemed to be that most of the dominant media narrations following September 11th , with some honourable exceptions, cast Islam and Muslim communities in the role of suspect "other", at the expense of an informed, contextualised account.

The first of the afternoon's papers, presented by Andrew Hoskins and Megan Skinner, focused on the role of television narratives in establishing a historical framework for events. Flagged up was the increasing salience of "liveness" or real-time mediation. This amounts to a level of reflexivity which means that broadcast information about an event feeds-back into that event as it unfolds, becoming implicated in its development. This is a fascinating take on the impact of liveness, and raises all sorts of questions about how events such as 9/11 will be understood historically.

The evening debate, which seemed potentially fruitful, had a panel of executives from the BBC, Al-Jazeera and CNN taking questions from the audience. They defended their practices as pragmatic, increasingly global, immediate and neutral, defending any perceived bias as untrue, and decontextualisation a result of the pressures of newsroom practices. There was some insight generated into the pressures of modern news management, but views on the panel seemed to be entrenched and repeated, whatever the issues from the floor, and it was a little disheartening to see meaningful dialogue failing to be established in the space between, instead two opposing discourses played out until time ran out.

Day Two's keynote speaker was Thomas Eriksen. An energised and engaging speaker, he made an entertaining attempt at locating September 11th using existing social theory, and offered the suggestion that we are living through a time of various tensions located in identity politics, and stemming from the global post-colonial fall-out. He noted a deepening of a West/Islam binary due to mutual stereotyping which accelerated rapidly post-September 11th. The rest of the morning continued with accounts of how dominant British and U.S. media narrations have failed to provide a truly inclusive and representative story following September 11th, reinforcing ethnocentric understandings of world events and sharpening the a polarity of identification for a variety of global audiences. The extensive amount of audience research carried out was presented in the afternoon, covering a good range of

interviewees: Turkish and Palestinian diasporas, Arab Muslims in Cardiff, and white rural English folk to name a few. Many of these audiences were reported to be aware of, and have felt let down by, media narrations of events, in ways reflecting the dominant themes of the conference, particularly in relation to CNN, Sky and the BBC. On other occasions, the stereotyping of "others" seemed to be informing some audience opinion, though in contradictory and complex ways.

The final day was devoted to ways of improving practice in the media, and getting alternative voices heard. Bashy Quraishy's keynote address lingered upon a continuation of previous themes, reiterating the view of a dominant media as unresponsive and partisan. His ten suggestions for promoting inter-cultural thinking among journalists were obvious enough, urging for objectivity, reflexivity and balance. He went on to be critical of intellectualism in an abstract sense, and urged intellectuals to help "us" in improving the media, seemingly unaware that activism and intellectualism are not always mutually exclusive, and setting up some unhelpful binaries of his own.

The rest of the day was devoted to accounts of some fascinating and innovative practices which have and could be taken up by media centres and pressure groups. Reynald Blion, Terry Williams, Mekonnen Mesghena and Ed Klute, representing a variety of institutions, fielded a range of illustrative and purposeful practices. Training asylum seekers in media skills, establishing contact databases and incorporating them into existing journalistic sources, providing alternative daily stories to local news outfits, establishing networks in amongst diasporic groups and establishing newsletters as a basis for developing alternative news frames are a handful of the suggestions made, many of which are actively being taken up. This was a good way of grounding the conference in concrete practices, and of use in improving media narrations in the direction of recognising differences, offering meaningful contexts, and hopefully moving beyond reliance upon narrations of othering which obscure complex social realities, a reality admirably reflected in this well-organised conference.

Overall it was clear that dominant media narrations in the West had failed to adequately represent the aftermath of September 11th in a way which was acceptable to many audiences, promoting and maintaining crude binaries of Islam and the West. There were many noticeable exceptions however, and audiences were seen to navigate in many complex ways amongst these narrations, only partially reproducing them in their own accounts, as reflected in a common cynicism towards media motives and messages.

Trading Culture and Change for the Global Menu

Trading Culture: A Conference Exploring the "Indigenous" and the "Exportable" in Film and Television Culture, 18th-20th July 2002, Showroom Cinema, Sheffield, UK (http://www.bftv.ac.uk/conf.htm)

A report by Sarah Perks, Manchester Metropolitan University, UK

I recently read that our British national dish was no longer curry but instead to be found in Chinese and Thai restaurants. Sweet and Sour, and Lemon Chicken, have replaced the Indian favourite Chicken Tikka Massala as our food of choice. The point behind it is that none of the above dishes are authentic, or "indigenous" in their native countries. They have adopted different ingredients and been renamed for their export to the West. I did wonder however, if the conductors of the survey had just ignored the prolific (American) burger bar in this instance. Whilst our food habits make the case for a multi-cultural globalisation (although its not a new trend), I suspect our viewing habits tell a different story. Whether something similar does exist for film and television cultures was open to more academic musings at the Trading Culture conference on the 18-20th July 2002. A first time "listener", I found the conference well organised and well housed in the independent Showroom Cinema near Sheffield train station. Despite the event's rather ambiguous title, this actually opened it out into a wide range of multi-disciplinary interpretations that led to a rewarding, comprehensive conference. The combination of industry, policy, representation and aesthetics offered further proof of the importance of their joint consideration in cultural debate.

The opening plenary introduced the topic from two different perspectives, Internet communication through BBCArabic.com and the film and television industries of India. Although interesting, the Internet really demands its own conference as a complex interactive media, transecting boundaries differently to film and television. India, however, is certainly a popular destination for contemporary film studies, and even the popular media has a current penchant for all things "Bollywood". Professor Manjunath Pendakur's "Global Currents in India's Film and Television Industry", examined the industry during last ten years, inseparable from the country's tensions with globalisation, modernisation and communalism. In film, India's popular cinemas (particularly Hindi) have reached the West, finding global audiences through a loyal non-resident Indian audience. Conversely, it is the period of India's worst communal violence since Partition, the rise of right-wing politics sitting uncomfortably alongside the rise of Indian's global culture. As patterns of cinema attendance change, the audience remains loyal to the domestic product, one that homogenises India into a country of upper class Hindus. The market for film and television has become global with foreign companies buying distribution rights (Sony), forming alliances (B4U), and even foreign government promotion (Dubai). The television industry has had an equally eventful decade, the national channel *Doordarshan* shaken by the launch of Murdoch's *Star* empire, transmitted by satellite from Hong Kong. The digital age has brought increasing commercialism with rival cable operators emerging to cover everything from war to film

music to sport. The debate on exporting Indian film and culture is still very much open, as a much needed popular alternative to Hollywood I suspect it will become an increasingly popular subject for film and television studies.

Following India (a personal favourite) I choose a global route through the conference, principally enjoying illuminating papers on Australian, Thai, Jamaican, Scottish and Brazilian cinemas. A historical approach to representation and national identity pervaded the seminars I found most engaging, particularly in regard to British Cinema. Despite my usually self-confessed negative attitude to British cinema I attended two very interesting seminars on the subject -- Steve Chibnall and Andrew Higson's papers on British film exports and Nation and Regions: A UK Case Study.

"Rule, Cool and Ghoul Britannia: Varieties of the British Cinema Export Brand" was an entertaining premise on marketing structure in the 1930s to 60s. The strength of the paper was the acknowledgement that export success was obtained through a variety of images, not just a stereotypical "heritage" construction. At the same time, the lack of strength of a unique brand identity of British National Cinema causes its own distribution problems, a situation unlikely to change in the era of co-productions and ethnic filmmaking. Andrew Higson discussed the export of what Chibnall would call "Jewel Britannia", quality heritage films of the 1980s and 90s. These "cross-over" films, sandwiched between mainstream and art-house, were shown to be profitable with relevant marketing and a platform release. The strategy changed in the 1990s however, with "surprise hits" finding the audiences and "marketed cross-overs" losing them. The flops of 90s heritage films such as *Mansfield Park* (1999), *House of Mirth* (2000), and *The Goldfish Bowl* (1999), was partly a result of new production and distribution methods failing, linked to the Major companies' absorption of the Indies. The "blur of indigenous and exotic" found in these films is balanced by the financial and often physical presence of America (mainly US actresses). The issue of Hollywood's appropriation of indigenous culture continues to be an important site of tension for cultural theory and the understanding of globalisation.

"Nations and Regions: A UK Case Study" was about film development and policy in Britain. Again the seminar was well balanced and explored the anxiety behind divisions of regional and national culture. The optimism of Northern Ireland and the success of Scotland's industry met with Wales's lack of confidence. Regionalism was presented appropriately enough by Yorkshire, stressing that encouraging producers to come to Yorkshire was easier than selling local stories. Credit is due to the Northern Ireland Film Commission's display of new technology, a large image archive from historical newsreels to contemporary short films. As a whole, the case study illustrated the increasing fragmentation of national identity (in this case British) into regional identities. These identities often struggle to find space on local and global stages, battling with Hollywood stereotypes of Britishness.

My report marginalises the television, policy and trade aspects of the conference, of which I felt there was a significant proportion of interest in. The issue of fair trade and the WTO's General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) were important topics, both threatening government policies to ensure cultural diversity. To confess, I did also overhear a lament that television studies was coming in second place to the more prominent film studies. Television studies sought to readdress the balance however, seeking increasing independence from media and film. "Copycat TV in Asia and the Pacific: Issues and National Findings" was discussed by a fascinating Australian research team on the export of television formats. Carefully defining the format in legal and industry terms, the highlight was definitely the case

study of the Chinese *Survivor*. Adapted to fit the PRC's rhetoric, the show painfully stressed its social and cultural significance against the Western style of sensationalism. As a Mancunian, I long to see *Joy Luck Street*, the Beijing soap opera on the official format of *Coronation Street* (my head fills with unanswered questions on this).

The final plenary rounded up the conference themes, though there are few conclusions in such a complex subject. Professor Geoffrey Nowell-Smith ended with the provocative twist that perhaps cultures are not traded at all. Goods are actually what are traded and furthermore, what exactly is the relationship of culture to a commodity? There may be dangers in continually identifying consumption with culture. Like British food manufacturers, those of film and television attempt to reduce indigenous cultures into simple, more palatable, signifiers for export profit. There is also a need to rethink Hollywood's situation through its accommodation of others cultures and the need to understand demand as well as supply. To summarise, an excellent conference on an important theme, my only negative being that the audiences for the seminars (well, the ones I chose anyway!) were often too small.

Rethinking the Cinematic World

"World Cinemas: Identity, Culture, Politics", University of Leeds, 25-27 June 2002

A report by Rob Rix, Trinity & All Saints, Leeds, UK

Comprising six plenary papers and almost fifty contributions to panels, this conference was ambitious in scope and intense in pace, offering an exhilarating ride around the world of film, and at the same time an opportunity to reflect on what the term "world cinema (or cinemas)" might mean in the age of mass media globalisation. With around a hundred delegates, and speakers from well over a dozen countries, the conference was truly international. National and regional cinemas addressed in depth during the sessions ranged from Senegalese to Quebecois, and the film industries of India, China, Latin America, the USA, Africa, Australasia, France, Germany, Spain, Italy and the UK among others were subjected to close scrutiny and broad discussion across the various panels, not all of which can be mentioned in this review. Organised by the School of Modern Languages and Cultures, and with inputs from the Institute of Communication Studies at Leeds, the conference combined approaches to film studies associated with language degree courses. For example the analysis of films as texts and as representations of specific societies and cultures was combined with others deriving from media and cultural studies, including the analysis of films as ideological products and the study of film industries and movements.

Dudley Andrew of Yale opened with a call to produce an atlas of maps of world cinema, at the same time as scholars should continue to study and teach what he referred to as "strong" films, which both speak for and speak back to their specific situations. In relation to film studies, he addressed the question of a canon (and possibly alternative canons), and stated that systematic theory, and ways of choosing and reading films that "carry you to the edge of theory", were necessary in film courses. In the "semi-plenaries" that followed, Bill Marshall (Glasgow) gave a clear account of Quebec cinema in transnational contexts, and Ravi S. Vasudevan (Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi) took up the theme of mapping and delineating the trajectory of world cinemas as they have evolved historically. In the case of India, the maps would have to include all the markets and areas of the world influenced by Indian cinema since the 1930s and 40s, including North Africa, the Middle East, the former Soviet Union, China and South East Asia; also, the diaspora multiplex market accounts for one-third of the prints of Bombay films, which go to the US, Canada and the UK, amounting to an "evacuation of the Indian imaginary." Equally, Indian cinema has absorbed and adapted genres and styles not only from Hollywood, but also from cinematic movements and conventions world-wide. As a globalizing nation India is moving from a state-supported film industry to one based on enterprise, with a huge variety of domestic genres that belie simplistic notions of the indigenous national industry providing stereotypical local forms.

In the parallel session, Keith Reader (Glasgow), Lúcia Nagib (Campinas) and Graham Roberts (Leeds) explored the theme of fluid identities, in papers on cross-dressing in recent French cinema, utopian images of the sea in Brazilian cinema, and Italian-American identity in Scorsese's cinema, respectively. In the following panels on national identity Teresa Hoefert

de Turégano explored "north-south" co-productions and the question of cultural identity being both enabled and potentially disempowered by film production in poorer countries being dependent on outside funding. She also drew an interesting if unresolved parallel between world music and world cinema. Sarah Barrow (Anglia Polytechnic University) followed with an excellent paper on the last 30 years of cinema in Peru, a country where film activity (in the absence of an industry) is always in crisis, not least because of political upheaval and corruption. One conclusion was that the requirements of co-production partners often lead to a "dumbing-down" of content. In the alternative panel on "Screening Homosexuality", Alberto Mira (Oxford Brookes), Song Hwee Lim (Leeds) and Baris Kilicbay (Gazi) explored ways in which the cinemas of Spain, China/Hong Kong/Taiwan and Turkey, respectively, portray "gayness" in the absence of a common national construction of gay community culture.

The second day began with a fascinating in-depth analysis of the post-war drive by the USA to promote images and products of America world-wide through Hollywood films, by Pamela Church Gibson (London College of Fashion). Beginning with the 1945 McMahon Report and to Will Hays's dictum "Every foot of American film sells a dollar of American produce", she went on to reveal how Hollywood, by attracting film professionals from abroad, helped to retard the development of film industries in their countries of origin. US policy contrasted with the UNESCO Report (1948) on film, TV and radio, which called for a regeneration of cinema production in different countries worldwide. She ended by referring to the recent Selfridges "Bollywood" month as a bizarre twist, in which the Indian film industry is used to sell Western fashions to Western consumers. Her presentation led to a lively discussion, with Dudley Andrew pointing out that the USA was not alone in the promotion of image and products through film, as France was just as explicit in its drive to use cinema to "sell" France during the 1940s. Ravi S. Vasudevan contributed an important distinction between "high" and "low" globalisation, in that the latter both imprisons desire and erases difference, so that what is retailed to the world poor is the "fiction of brand" (e.g. fake *Nike* trainers) as the consumer in this case is driven by a "desire for anonymity" (so as to evade caste identification, for example).

Sharing this plenary was Peter Evans (Queen Mary College, London), whose elegant paper on "Buñuel's Outsiders" traced the stylistic and thematic miscegenation in the films of this archetypal exile. Buñuel created hybrid spaces out of a new world (Mexico) interpreted through the dream aesthetics of surrealism, and populated these "picaresque maps of squalor" with outsiders of race, nationality or gender. There followed an excellent panel on stars and stardom, opened by Hideaki Fujiki (Nagoya University) on "Star Formation in Japan's Early Cinema: Gender Performance and Sexual Image", tracing the move from theatrical conventions (*kabuki* and *shinpa*) to Westernised constructions of gender and sex in film performance. As film embodies concrete objects, the very medium necessitated female actresses to play female roles, in contrast to the stylised cross-dressed actors of traditional theatrical forms. This change brought with it new definitions and management of gender and sexuality in Japanese culture.

Guy Austin (Sheffield) and Stephanie Dennison (Leeds) analysed the complexities and contradictions of ethnicity and sexuality in the cases of Isabelle Adjani and Sônia Braga, drawing out their respective conflicting iconologies as white star with marked ethnicity associated with AIDS, and white star identified as mulatta and gay icon. These were well researched and well delivered papers. Austin scrutinised the construction of Adjani as the white maiden, an image shattered by the revelation in the 1980s that her father was Algerian.

Later the press was to remobilize the association of the actress labelled by *Paris Match* as "la première grande star beure" with notions of purity and radiance. Dennison examined the contradictions and excesses inherent in Braga's personification of the transgressive and carnivalesque elements of Brazilian popular culture and identity, despite her apparent whiteness.

In the panel on "Crossing Borders" Rachel Dwyer (SOAS) returned to Hindi film to trace the shifting of genres since the turn of the millennium; while the 1990s were dominated by musical romance, the new century began with a flurry of historical/nationalist movies such as *Lagaan* (Ashutosh Gowariker, 2001). Taking up issues raised earlier by Vasudevan, she asked whether a Hindi film can be truly global, for while it might be seen in almost every country in the world, it would still appeal mainly to diaspora groups. Asu Aksoy (Goldsmiths) compared three road movies set in Turkey, pointing out that Fatih Akin's *Im Juli* (2001) celebrates the migratory capacity of millions of transnational citizens in Europe, thus representing and answering for diaspora communities. The road opens and links two spaces, making available transformative experiences such as crossing borders. Marco Cipollini (Brescia) examined the Latin American road movies *El viaje* (Fernando Solanas, 1992) and *Central do Brasil* (Walter Salles Jr., 1998), both of which involve the quest for a missing father.

In the panel on "World Cinema and Hollywood" Mark Allinson (Royal Holloway) looked at genre switches in *La Vita é Bella* (1997) and *Dancers in the Dark* (2000), in which European parodies of Hollywood genres serve to make the spectator suffer as comedy turns to pathos and tragedy, while Lisa Shaw (Leeds) revisited the Brazilian *chanchadas* that also parodied Hollywood in blatant comic spoofs. Matthew Lazen (Harvard) also contributed a paper on the new violence in French film, asking whether this reflected the realities of modern day France or whether it merely imitated Hollywood use of violence in order to attract box-office success. Richard Dyer (Warwick) ended the second day with an entertaining lecture on serial killers in the movies, paying special attention to Italian *gialli* films, and analysing different constructions of the trope internationally, concluding that perhaps serial killers are a Northern White thing, both in cinema and in reality.

The final day began with panels on "Postcolonialism", "Language and Music" and "Popular/carnival versus elite". Keith Richards (Wake Forest) spoke on Pasolini's and Hopper's spurious utopianism when making films in exotic locations. David Robb (Queen's Belfast) and Evelyn Preuss (Yale) gave equally interesting papers on carnivalesque culture in the films of Chaplin and Valentin, and in East German cinema, respectively. The final plenary was shared by Alec Hargreaves (Loughborough/Florida State) who discussed ethnicity in contemporary French cinema, and Michael Chanan (University of the West of England), who surveyed the diversity of Latin American film cultures. Noting the shifting ground from political commitment to the re-adoption of genres previously disparaged (especially melodrama, but also sci-fi and horror), Chanan surmised whether the hybridity and syncretism inherent in Latin American popular culture had made it postmodernist *avant la lettre*, and reminded us that cinema has always had globalising tendencies. All in all, the conference was stimulating and challenging, and lived up to its ambitious title.

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