

American Studies in the 21st century

British Association for American Studies Annual Conference, 15-18 April 2004, Manchester Metropolitan University

A report by Catherine Mills, University of Nottingham, UK

This year's BAAS conference was described by its organisers as having the most ambitious programme to date, a fact those who attended the conference can attest to. Any reduction of this conference to one central theme is, therefore, made impossible due to the sheer number and range of papers presented. There were, however, three themes that were returned to again and again throughout the conference in many different guises -- canon formation, national identity and the transnational. Novelist Bharati Mukherjee signalled the importance of these three themes in her keynote address. In her words immigration has become "the hot button for redefining American national identity". Mukherjee went on to state that through her novels she challenges the American literary canon, acknowledging not only America's influence on her identity but also the transformative powers of herself and other non-European immigrants like her on America.

An early panel entitled 'The Anxiety of Influence: Contemporary Responses to the American Canon' further explored this idea of reformulating the literary canon. Each of the three panellists examined the interaction between now canonical poets such as Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson and contemporary poets such as Mark Doty and Susan Howe. Sally Connolly (University College London) highlighted in her paper the expectation Whitman placed on his poetic inheritors to continue the work he started and the competitive relationship this set up between Whitman and later American poets. She then went on to argue that Doty sidesteps this competitive relationship, taking up instead the oblique relationship of nephew to Whitman's uncle. Rob Stanton (University of Leeds) interestingly explored the influence of male editors and critics on Emily Dickinson's poetry through an examination of Susan Howe's reading of Dickinson's poetry. Stanton argued that deliberate and significant spacing and structure in Dickinson's work were ignored or subsumed by conventional patriarchal ideas of what poetry was. Stanton then went on to trace the interaction between Howe and Dickinson. Finally Catherine Martin (University of Sussex) continued this analysis of Howe's work through a comparison between Howe and the poet Robert Duncan. Emphasising "poetry as space where things come back", Martin explored the relationship between history and poetry. The issue of whether American poets are reflective enough was raised in the question time and the idea that looking back is seen as potentially dangerous in the American literary world was suggested.

The next panel, 'Race, Resistance and the Transnational' certainly embodied at least two of the three themes of the conference. Alan Rice (University of Central Lancashire) introduced the work of contemporary artist Lubaina Himid. Describing Himid as one of Britain's foremost black artists Rice went on to explore Himid's representation of her African ancestry and the links she makes between Britain and the slave trade. Through his analysis of the work *Cotton.com* (Manchester Cube Gallery 2002), Rice emphasised the interaction between

Manchester cotton workers and the slaves who produced the cotton. Throwing some light on the significance of Manchester as a venue for an American Studies conference, Rice discussed the Lincoln statue placed in the heart of Manchester's city centre in terms of a transatlantic gesture of solidarity. In this way Rice emphasised the transnational focus of Himid's work. James Miller (King's College London) in a slight change of focus examined James Baldwin's "The Fire Next Time". Miller argued that Baldwin's essay might be viewed as a re-inscription of African-American experience, a means of inserting African-Americans into American culture and history. Martyn Bone (University of Copenhagen) combined both the national and the transnational in his exploration of Patrick Neate's *Twelve Bar Blues*. Highlighting what Robert Gross calls "a transnational turn in the field", Bone asked if regional fiction had also taken a transnational turn in American Studies? Bone went on to suggest that transnationalism might be a means of overcoming Southern exceptionalism.

The Journal of American Studies lecture which rounded off Friday 16th also continued in this revisionist vein. Presented by Professor Philip Morgan (Johns Hopkins University) and entitled "'To get quit of Negroes' George Washington and Slavery", the lecture explored in Professor Morgan's words "the very familiar yet elusive figure" of George Washington. Professor Morgan gave an interesting and even-handed account of Washington's changing relationship with his slaves. Emphasising the close and complex relationship Washington had with his slaves (the anecdote of Washington purchasing some of his slaves' teeth in order to transplant them into his own mouth was a slightly bizarre example of this), Professor Morgan argued that Washington experienced no epiphany over slavery. Rather it was a slow gradual process that led to Washington's decision to free his slaves on his death.

Saturday 17th was dominated by considerations of race. The first panel 'New Perspectives on African American Women's Writing' was one of the most interesting panel sessions of the conference. The first speaker Tessa Roynon (University of Warwick) explored the interconnections between Toni Morrison's *Love* and the Classical tradition, suggesting that Americans can be seen as neoromans. Roynon went on to argue that *Love* demonstrates the dangers of mythologising the past and Morrison's attempt to destabilise dominant American culture. Owen Robinson (University of Essex) continued this argument in his consideration of Toni Morrison's *Paradise*. Robinson examined the narratives of history in *Paradise* and Morrison's exploration of the construction of history, as well as the dangers and pitfalls of such a process. Robinson's interpretation of Patricia Best's history project was especially interesting. In his view the project can be seen as her attempt to write herself into the history of the town, just as through *Paradise* Morrison is attempting to write herself and the African-American community in general into the history of America. The last paper turned to a more aesthetic consideration of Morrison's *Paradise*. Presented by Keren Omry (Goldsmiths College, University of London) the paper was entitled "Paradise and Parataxis: Adorno and Free Jazz in Toni Morrison's *Paradise*". Within her paper Omry constructed a unique theoretical approach to the text which combined the stylistics of Free Jazz (Omry cited John Coltrane's album *Accession* as an example) and Theodore Adorno's concept of parataxis. Omry argued that Morrison subverts traditional binaries within *Paradise* constructing a new organising principle, that of multiplicity. Deconstructing hierarchical notions of syntax through a "parallel parataxical structure" Morrison refuses to privilege any moment in the text over any other moment. This leads to circular almost spiral structure which, Omry argued, Morrison uses to undermine the possibility of a linear singular narrative: a narrative such as the founding fathers, one of the dominant mythological discourses of America.

Leading on from this panel was a roundtable discussion group also entitled "New Perspectives on African-American Women's Writing". Panel members included Elizabeth Boyle (University of Sheffield), Mae Henderson (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill), Duco van Oostrum (University of Sheffield), Jenny Terry (University of Warwick) and Rachel van Duyvenbode (University of Sheffield). Widened to include all African-American writing discussion centred on the question of canon and asked what *is* the tradition of black writing in America? Respondents highlighted the focus on the novel in the teaching of African-American writing, and suggested that practicality and expense for students were important factors taken into consideration when formulating modules. Participants then went on to explore previously less privileged areas of criticism in African-American literature, such as class and sexuality. Alan Rice (University of Central Lancashire) cited the focus on constructions of masculinity within Toni Morrison's work as an example of these previously neglected areas of study. Finally the movement in more recent years within the study of African-American writing towards a transnational and intercultural approach was highlighted and celebrated.

Saturday's proceedings ended with the Eccles Centre Lecture "*Maybe nothing ever happens once and is finished*": Some Notes on Recent Southern Fiction and Social Change", presented by Professor Richard Gray (University of Essex). Exploring the idea of the South as product Professor Gray identified Southern literature as "improvisational", stating that making up identity was a prominent theme in Southern fiction. In line with the three themes of the conference (canon, national identity and the transnational) Professor Gray explored the influence of recent immigrants from South East Asia, specifically Vietnam, on Southern fiction. Identifying writers such as Lan Cao, Susan Choi, and Robert Olen Butler, Professor Gray examined this new subsection of Southern literature in some detail and suggested that this new generation of writers have adopted a traditional Southern standpoint within the United States, that of "the outsider with insider information".

Sunday 18th, the last day of the conference began with a discussion of the construction of masculinity in the panel 'American Masculinities: Boxers, Cowboys, Cheats and Convicts'. A full and lively panel despite the early morning setting, Julie Sheridan (Trinity College, Dublin) started off proceedings with her examination of masculinity and hierarchy within the works of Joyce Carol Oates. Structuring her paper's theoretical framework around the sport of boxing, Sheridan cited Joyce Carol Oates' essay "On Boxing" as extremely influential to her argument. Sheridan went on to discuss Oates' use of boxing, and the hierarchies contained within the sport, in order to deconstruct the idea of the male physique as a stable foundation upon which to formulate masculinity. Luigi Fidanza (Manchester Metropolitan University) applied Judith Butler's theories of the construction of gender to Cormac McCarthy's works, specifically *Cities of the Plain*. Fidanza explored the performativity of masculinity through a close examination of McCarthy's cowboys. Jamal Assadi (The College of Sakhnin for Teacher Education) continued this theme of performativity in his consideration of Saul Bellow's *The Victim*. Finally Howard Cunnell (Institute of United States Studies, University of London) examined the construction of a hyper masculinity in Edward Bunker's *Dog Eat Dog*, arguing that a "pared down" masculinity acts as a shield and survival mechanism for male convicts as well as ultimately shaping these men's identities in the long-term.

The conference ended on a topical note with Professor Peter Nicholls' (University of Sussex) reflection on American poetry as a form of resistance to war entitled "Wars I Have Seen: Problems for Twentieth-Century American Poetry". Professor Nicholls commented on the speed and volume of American poets who responded to the Iraq war and George Bush's War

on Terror, before going on to a detailed examination of American poets', such as Ezra Pound, and their complex relationship to war within their poetry.

Despite the seriousness of the topics under discussion during these four days the social side of the conference was far from ignored. The atmosphere of the entire conference was one of sociability and friendliness and some of the most interesting conversations took place over a pint (or three) back at the hotel bar. All in all this year's BAAS conference was a great experience and I look forward to the 50th anniversary conference next year in Cambridge.

Atlanta 2004: The State of Cinema Studies

Society for Cinema and Media Studies, March 4-7, 2004, Omni Hotel at CNN Center, Atlanta, USA

A report by Liza Palmer, Cape Fear Community College & University of North Carolina at Wilmington, USA

What better venue for the 2004 conference of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies (SCMS) than the CNN Center in Atlanta, Georgia? For an event so concerned with the inner-workings of media, the unofficial -- yet indisputable -- locus of news and media in the United States is a fitting locale, indeed. The setting served to invigorate the conference proceedings, and lent a certain intensity and relevancy to the works that were presented over the four-day convention.

This most recent conference of SCMS featured an ambitious line-up of panels, papers, roundtable discussions, film screenings, and scholarly interactions. This year's organizers noted the marked increase in the number of proposal submissions, making the acceptance rate significantly more competitive and exclusive. Likewise, much of the SCMS literature cited an unprecedented number of papers and panels on issues of media, as opposed to cinema; however, the program showed no lack of scholarship in the area of film studies. Rather, the emphasis seemed to be more upon film and cinema than in previous SCMS conferences -- a happy circumstance for all cineastes in attendance.

A conference of SCMS's size can be an intimidating prospect, given that it spans four days, with over fifteen sessions, each session consisting of at least five panels. The possibilities are endless, but time is at a premium. And, it seems, that SCMS in particular has the tendency to schedule similarly themed panels and events at conflicting times (for instance a panel entitled, 'Black Documents: African Americans and Early Television Programming' was timetabled against a unique screening of *The Dawn at My Back: Memoir of a Black Texas Upbringing*), which can be frustrating to the eager attendee. This having been noted, the overview this single author can offer of such a large and varied conference is undoubtedly selective and narrow.

A much-anticipated panel was 'Guys and Gals: Hollywood Stars in the Early Sound Era'. So seldom do scholars explore star studies -- particularly stars of the classical Hollywood era -- in any great depth, that it was refreshing to see this panel on offer. Christina Lane (University of Miami) presented on the inimitable duo, Myrna Loy and William Powell, perhaps best known for the *Thin Man* series. Lane's paper, "An Ode to Perfection: Myrna Loy and William Powell as Wife and Husband", was interesting to hear. She drew on a variety of sources -- both contemporary and more recent secondary texts -- but, overall, lacked a serious engagement with the films themselves, a telling weakness given such a wide body of films the team made together. The following paper, by Timothy Connelly (Syracuse University), entitled, "Forsaking All Others: Robert Montgomery and the Articulation of Heterosexual Masculinity in the Early 1930s", was a welcome addition to the rather sparse scholarship on this overlooked Hollywood star. However, it suffered from similar problems as the earlier

paper, and would have benefited from more textual analysis of key scenes from the films. But criticisms aside, this panel was a pleasure, if only for the opportunity to celebrate classical Hollywood cinema and stars with other fans.

A definite highlight of the conference was the panel 'At the Vanguard of French Cinema', organized by Tim Palmer, of the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. Palmer's paper, entitled "Stylistic Brutality: Gaspar Noé and *Irréversible*", offered a cogent stylistic analysis of the violent tendencies of the recent cinema of France. Interestingly enough, Noé's controversial film was the subject of a second, later panel presentation by Eugenie Brinkema of SUNY, Buffalo, entitled, "Rape and the Rectum -- Bersani, Deleuze, Noé". Lucille Cairns (University of Stirling) presented her paper, "Lesbian Desire in Recent French and Francophone Cinema". As the title suggests, the scope of Cairns' thesis was undeniably ambitious; indeed, her allotted fifteen minutes was hardly enough to scratch the surface of her topic and she struggled to keep within her limit. However, she gave a fascinating glimpse of what one hopes become a larger project. Her treatment of Francophone films, in particular, was a vital contribution to the scholarship on international cinema. Another notable presentation on this panel was given by Charles Michael, of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Michael's paper, "Taming the Beast: Integrating Martial Arts into Contemporary French Action Films", was an innovative consideration of the far-flung impact of Hong Kong action cinema. His research proposed that such recent French films as *Brotherhood of the Wolf* are modelled after the action cinema aesthetic in order to broaden their appeal and locate new markets. All in all, this was one of the strongest panels, featuring interesting and consistent research-oriented papers.

Along these same lines was a separate panel, 'French Cinema and Globalization', chaired by Graeme Hayes of Nottingham Trent University. Hayes' paper, "Regulating Multiplexes: The French State Between Corporatism and Globalisation", was a historically based investigation of the upsurge in the number of multiplexes outside city centers in France, and the controversy that surrounds this current trade practice. Another sharp presentation was that given by Jonathan Buchsbaum (Queens College/CUNY), "After GATT: The Revival of French Cinema". His paper offered a concise overview of the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) agreement and how it has (negatively, for the most part) affected French cinema. So good were the first two papers -- those authored by Hayes and Buchsbaum -- that it was hard for the subsequent presentations to measure up. But, overall, this panel was an admirable addition to the SCMS conference, and was among the impressive number of panels on national cinemas. Panels such as this occur thanks in large part to the caucuses and special interest groups (for example, the French/Francophone Special Interest Group) that advocate for and sponsor cutting-edge and underrepresented areas of film and media studies. One can only trust that more groups will be formed, and consequently continue to bring such quality panels to light in SCMS.

A final panel of note was the timely 'Truth, Memory, History: The Films of Errol Morris', organized by Charles Musser of Yale University. Musser's paper read more like a work-in-progress, but was interesting nonetheless, given the subject matter. But the real standout of the panel was Jonathan Frome, (University of Wisconsin, Madison), who offered a paper striking not only for its researched arguments but also for the controversy it inspired among attendees. Frome assumed a refreshing anti-theory stance in "False Histories: Uncertainty, Truth, and *The Thin Blue Line*", positing that there is a prevailing sense of truth within Morris' films despite the seemingly open-ended nature of his filmic investigations.

There were several prominent film screenings during the conference, most notably that of Ross McElwee's eagerly awaited documentary of the tobacco industry of North Carolina, *Bright Leaves* (2003). Given the immediate surroundings of the South and Atlanta, the special presentation, "Screenin' the Blues: Films from the Delilah Jackson Collection," was particularly apt. A great disappointment, though, was the cancellation of the tribute to Stan Brakhage, listed initially on the pre-conference program but omitted upon final publication. One can only hope that the passing of one of the great figures of cinema -- for, indeed, his impact was felt far beyond his avant garde contexts -- will be noted at a later conference.

In closing, the 2004 SCMS conference was a marvel of planning, scholarship, and camaraderie. It is always enjoyable to witness and celebrate a shared love of cinema with friends and colleagues. Indeed, the only sincere regrets to be had were the panels missed because of conflicts or simply exhaustion. If the 2004 conference is any indication of what to expect, then the 2005 SCMS conference in London, England, is certainly an event to look forward to with enthusiasm. For more information, visit: http://www.cmstudies.org/conference_index.html.

Interrogating Post-Feminism

Interrogating Post-Feminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture, The University of East Anglia, 2-3 April 2004

A report by Rebecca Feasey, Bath Spa University College, UK

The call for papers for the 'Interrogating Post-Feminism' conference stated that "some of the most vibrant recent work in media studies research explores the increasing proliferation of popular cultural texts which seek to construct and address women as consumers" and that "the notion of post-feminism, has [...] been a staple feature of this proliferation" (<http://www.uea.ac.uk/eas/postfeminism/call.htm>). More importantly however, is the fact that "there still exists little consensus or clarity about what it really means and what its relationship with feminist scholarship should be" (<http://www.uea.ac.uk/eas/postfeminism/call.htm>). It was this idea of clarity and consensus that motivated the conference papers and panel discussions through a range of debates ranging from the significance of the action babe to the role of the queer eye. The conference organisers at The University of East Anglia made it clear that they wanted to encourage papers that would develop existing work on the relationship between second wave feminism, femininity, post-feminism and popular cultural texts, texts ranging from film and television to videogames and the internet.

Although delegates were unable to reach any concrete conclusion or consensus about the meaning of the term post-feminist, the conference was a resounding success as a diverse range of papers considered the significance of this much-contested idea as it makes sense for a contemporary debate about feminism.

The high-profile plenary sessions introduced some of the key themes, which are routinely discussed in relation to the idea of post-feminism, as it is understood in a wider debate about the second wave and the significance of popular culture. Charlotte Brunsdon questioned whether feminist critics continue to write and re-write the same article in a consideration of social and sexual empowerment for women today, an article which takes a popular text such as *Buffy: The Vampire Slayer*, *Sabrina: The Teenage Witch* or *Xena: Warrior Princess* in order to validate the principles of feminine beauty and consumption practices for the contemporary feminist in a discourse far removed from the second-wave generation.

Angela McRobbie went on to question why it is that the representation of the feminist is so despised in contemporary popular culture, and Kathleen Rowe Karlyn offered a fascinating insight into the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy as it illustrates a desire for a humanism that transcends categories of difference such as gender and race by "re-throning that tenacious old king, the white male" (<http://www.uea.ac.uk/eas/postfeminism/programme.htm>). Although these papers were fascinating in themselves, what was most significant in the opening session was the recurring idea of generational conflict between the second-wave feminist and her contemporary counter-part, as it is evident both within society in general and within academic feminism in particular.

While the plenary speakers introduced some of the key themes to the conference as they related to a consideration of generation, the longstanding negative representation of the feminist, the significance of consumerism and the role of the popular, the conference programme opened out to a fascinating and enlightening range of panel sessions. Conference delegates could choose between sessions such as: 'Post-Feminism Armed and in Action', 'Film and Television Violence in the Post-Feminist Frame', 'Domesticity in the New Millennium', 'The Politics of the Chick Flick' and 'Sex Work in the Age of Post-Feminism' to name but a few. The problem here however was that with so many inspiring papers on offer the delegates were often torn between panels. However, rather than feign annoyance here, it is worth noting that the debates and discussions about specific papers and particular panels were so vocal and impassioned that delegates were able to partake in discussions and a consideration of papers beyond the seminar rooms and into the post-panel receptions.

Although some of the papers were more entertaining than others (Steve Cohan's paper offered a balance of education, information and sheer entertainment as he considered the role of *Queer Eye for a Straight Guy* in a debate over the politics of post-feminism), all of the speakers were well-considered and thought-provoking, providing useful points of reference throughout the conference. Although one might suggest that renowned theorists such as Charlotte Brunsdon and Sarah Projansky would obviously provide an interesting area of debate and discussion in the plenary sessions, I would suggest that some of the most enlightening papers actually came from the smaller panel sessions.

The session entitled 'Post-Feminism, Youth Culture and Teen Audiences' was one such panel. This session was made up of three presentations, by Rachel Mosley, Hannah Sanders and Sarah Banet-Weiser respectively. Mosley's paper "Teen Witch Revisited" offered a debate around her existing work on glamour, witchcraft and the domestic sphere; Hannah Sanders' "Living a Charmed Life" considered the politics of the long-running wicken series, *Charmed*, for a teen audience and Banet-Weiser's "Gender, Feminism and Nickelodeon" looked at the role of the children's television channel in a wider feminist context of girl power. This panel sparked a fascinating discussion of the role of popular culture, consumerism and girl power for young female audiences in a way that saw not only particular programmes such as *As Told By Ginger* and *Charmed*, but entire schedules offering contradictory messages to their audience about their power and place in contemporary society.

What is most interesting about this conference however, was not simply the introduction to the term post-feminism or the ensuing debates about the relationship between the second wave and contemporary feminist politics, but the fact that the conference itself was part of a larger project, a project which aims to develop a web site devoted to the subject of gender, popular culture and post-feminism. Therefore, irrespective of whether you presented at, attended or have not as yet come across the conference itself, it is worth noting for anyone interested in gender, film or cultural studies that there is a plan to develop a web site that will: disseminate information about the project; provide a forum for debate for scholars who do not normally have the opportunity to exchange ideas, make available a bibliography and annotated resource guide of relevant materials both popular and scholarly and feature case-studies that describe, analyse and invite discussion on aspects of post-feminism in contemporary popular culture.

In this way, the web site will, as the conference did before it, become an invaluable meeting place for scholars in this fascinating and underdeveloped field of enquiry.

Postgraduate Travels and Travails

Journeys Across Media (JAM) forum, 23 April 2004, Department of Film, Theatre and Television, University of Reading

A report by Iris Luppá, Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College, UK

The 'Journeys Across Media' (JAM) conference for postgraduate students successfully entered its second year at the Department of Film, Theatre & Television at the University of Reading. The focus of this year's forum was the significance of medium specificity and hybridity within film, theatre, television and new media studies. The event, traditionally organised by research students in the Department, provides an excellent opportunity for postgraduate students to present aspects of their research within an informal and friendly environment. Eight panels and extended lunch and coffee breaks enabled the thirty-plus delegates from a range of UK and international Film, Drama and Media Studies Departments to exchange ideas, and, unsurprisingly, swap familiar stories of the highs and lows of conducting doctoral research.

Panels were divided under the strands of 'Texts', 'Audiences' and 'Institutions' and organised in such a way that delegates were able to either follow their own research interests or go on an intellectually stimulating 'journey' across media forms. Significantly, the very notion of a 'journey across media', inviting delegates to explicate new relationships and convergence's across media forms, lies at the heart of the JAM postgraduate conference.

Dr Jonathan Bignell (University of Reading) chaired one of the early panels on questions of adaptation, entitled 'Reworkings'. The first speaker, Matt Barber (University of Exeter) presented a paper on the representation of the American president in film and television. Comparing the title sequences of *The American President* and *The West Wing*, Barber argued that whereas the film presents portraits and images of real former Presidents (leaving out more problematic candidates such as Nixon), the television series is characterised by the absence of historical footage. Instead, Barber argued, the title sequence of *The West Wing* presents the audience with fictional characters whilst simultaneously placing President Bartlet (Martin Sheen) and his team into the reality of current Whitehouse affairs, which has implications not only for our grasp of the various narrative strands of the series, but of American history as a whole. The relationship between images and mythological representations also played a part in Mark Broughton's (University of Birkbeck) paper "Louis Mazzini's Postcard: the genius loci of *Kind Hearts and Coronets*". Broughton highlighted the interesting convergences between the protagonist's characterisation and the representation of landscape in the film, which, Broughton argued, affect one another in a way that has not been analysed sufficiently in writings on the film so far. Finally, Kirsten Law (Sheffield Hallam University) also concentrated on issues of visual representation in her discussion of Marleen Gorris' film adaptation of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*. Law gave an interesting insight into the medical background of shellshock as a form of male hysteria and proceeded to discuss the dramatisation of the protagonist's hysteria in both the novel and its film adaptation. Law drew attention to Woolf's use of multiple perspectives and how this strategy is recreated

in Gorris' film through the use of camera and voice over. A stimulating discussion ensued at the end of the presentations, brought to conclusion by the chair, who emphasised the convergence between the three papers in that they focussed on the ways in which static images get re-mobilised, affecting our understanding of characters and narrative in an emphatic, though often overlooked manner.

In a panel dedicated to 'New Media' Normah Mustaffa (University of Cardiff) discussed the implications of the effects of web page designs on online newspaper readers, suggesting that tabloid designs increase memory on retrieving online news compared to standard designs. Gareth Longstaff (University of East London) outlined the ways in which gay male audiences use online classified adverts to "activate transgressive identities, which are ambivalent in their visibility and potentially subversive in their representational form." In her paper "Why is cheating in computer games a key site?" Beverly Newman (University of the West of England) raised interesting questions surrounding the practice of cheating in computer games in relation to issues of authorship, production and notions of the passive spectator.

On the 'Intertextuality' panel, speakers debated issues of intermediality in theatre, ranging from a discussion of a cross-media performance by the Japanese theatre company Gekidan Kaitaisha, presented by Jodie Allinson (University of Glamorgan) to an analysis of different kinds of intermediality in Sheila Yeger's *Variations on a Theme by Clara Schumann*, outlined by Ivana Brozic (University of Reading). Also on this panel, Yuna de Lannoy (Birkbeck, University of London) discussed the dramatisation of Noh theatre and renditions of Shakespeare plays in the films of Akira Kurosawa.

A panel on 'Ski-Fi/Horror/Fantasy' featured Anthony Enns (University of Iowa) speaking on "The horror of media". Tracing the history of horror film narratives that engage with media technologies as a potential threat to humans, Enns then proceeded to link this concept to ideas in contemporary media technologies. Drawing on the work of Marshall McLuhan, Enns suggested that if the human body can be regarded as the site where technologies inscribe themselves, then notions of individual subjectivity are challenged. Therefore, he argued, "consciousness is shown to be nothing more than an effect of media, as these technologies essentially determine what kinds of information are capable of being perceived and stored". In his thoroughly researched paper "Star Trek the Motion Book Series Phase II: the text that conquered the world by accident", Dave Hipple (University of Reading) examined the redevelopment of *Star Trek* during the 1970s. In his paper, Hipple highlighted the ways in which other media, such as books, an animated series and a film contributed to *Star Trek's* renewed popularity ten years after the cancellation of the series. Also on this panel, Tim Langer (Technical University of Berlin) discussed "Aspects of enunciation in *The Lord of the Rings*". Langer examined moments in part one and two of the trilogy, where Jackson succeeds in adapting characteristic elements from the book to the screen, thus challenging received ideas about the enunciative limitations of film adaptations from literary sources. Using close textual analysis, Langer instead highlighted the potential of mise-en-scene and camera work to produce complex meanings.

'Theorising Media Practice' featured three papers by research students involved in critical practice. Christos Prossylis (University of Middlesex) spoke on his use of modern technologies in the staging of Greek Drama. Prossylis proposed the use of "high-tech modern techniques as 'living beings', as one more actor on the stage". Aparna Sharma (University of Glamorgan) set her discussion on "Navigating through the hybrid" in the context of her own film practice and research on Homi Bhabha's notion of the cultural hybrid. Also on this panel

Elisabeth Coulter-Smith (University of Central England), who discussed her research into the moving image in relation to hypertext, hyperbolic mapping and other multimedia elements.

In the afternoon, a panel on 'Authorship and politics' featured presentations by Toni-Lynn Frederick (University of Reading) and Katerina Loukopoulo (Birkbeck University). In her paper on "Humour in Woody Allen's *Anything Else*" Frederick discussed Woody Allen's profound engagement with the Holocaust through the use of humour, thereby raising wider questions about representations of the Holocaust in film, and moreover, the comedy genre. In her paper on "Production Hybridity", Katerina Loukopoulo presented a section of her in-depth study of the collaboration between the Arts Council and Channel 4 during the 1980s. This led to a lively discussion of the relationship between the government and the BBC, Channel 4 and Channel 5 in contemporary British Television culture.

In 'National Cinemas', speakers discussed issues of production, distribution and reception in Finnish cinema (presented by Pietari Kämpää, University of East Anglia), Indian Diasporic Film (Roopa Saini, Goldsmiths) and Welsh cinema (Mark Woods, University of Glamorgan).

The last panel of the day, 'Television- politics and identity' examined issues of political, cultural and ideological encoding in television genres. The first speaker, Jiska Marita Engelbert (University of Wales), raised important questions about 'preferred readings' in the context of encoding and decoding television news. On the same panel, Jenna Pei-Suin Ng's (University College, London) paper "'I still haven't found what I'm looking for': Deconstructing the hybridity of the docudrama", focused on the ambivalence of the concept of docudrama and the inherent contradictions between dramatic fiction and journalistic reportage in this genre. Priya Virmani (University of Bristol) presented a thoughtful analysis of the ways in which the situational decoding (by a British Asian audience) of the most popular Indian soaps on pan-Asian channels leads to forms of idealised cultural identifications.

In her closing speech, Lib Taylor, Head of Department, thanked all speakers and delegates for the high quality of research and academic rigour that permeated the day. She hoped that delegates would stay in touch, fostering links between research active departments. She also thanked the two conference organisers, Simone Knox and Sara Steinke, for their hard work and professional organisation of the day, a sentiment that was shared by all present. The JAM conference pack included a list of speaker's email addresses, which will enable all delegates to stay in touch, thus ensuring that postgraduate research activity