In the Shadow of Empire

In the Shadow of Empire: The Post-Imperial Urban Imaginaries of London and Paris, 17 May 2008, University of Warwick

A report by Christopher Meir, University of the West Indies, St Augustine

"In the Shadow of Empire" was an ambitious, interdisciplinary event that sought to accomplish a number of distinct yet interrelated intellectual goals. The most immediate of these was to bring together scholars working in Film Studies and Cultural Geography in the hope of initiating a dialogue between the fields and to move towards new ways of thinking about spatial representation in cinema. The event also hoped to test the usefulness of the category of the post-imperial, a term that could potentially both supplement and offer an alternative to the postcolonial in critical discourse. With these goals in mind, organiser Malini Guha (University of Warwick) assembled eight speakers from various fields to share their research on London and Paris, former centres of empire and two of the most frequently filmed, visited and written about cities in the world.

The day began with a keynote address by Ginette Vincendeau (King's College, London). In a paper that combined autobiography with an eclectic survey of films ranging from the 1960s to the present day, Vincendeau provided an overview of screen representations of Paris's Gare du Nord underground station. Here Vincendeau argued that though it is perhaps the most important of all stations in the Parisian mass transit system for those living in the city, Gare du Nord has never been a location that springs to mind as particularly iconic or familiar to cinemagoers. Beginning with this apparent unfamiliarity, Vincendeau's talk went on to show that the station has been an important location in many films including Jean Rouch's contribution to the portmanteau film *Paris vu par* (1965), and contemporary films such as *Amelie* (2001) and *Les Poupées russes* (2005).

Looking over the ways the station is depicted in such films, as well as more recent television news coverage of clashes between police and youths from the *banlieue* suburbs (which have become virtual ghettos for generations of immigrants and their children), Vincendeau argued that divisions of class and race underpin the ways in which the station is physically structured as well as the ways it is represented across her corpus. Her analysis here focused on middle-class transcontinental love stories, such as *On connaît la chanson* (1997), which take place on the upper levels of the station, where the Eurostar arrives into Paris. Whilst it is on television that we see the simmering racial and class-based tensions of multicultural France are lurking 'below stairs' on the lower-level RER platforms used by Parisian commuters that have acted as flashpoints for some of the rioting that has plagued the nation in recent years. Such tensions are not wholly lacking in the more mainstream films Vincendeau examined, as even in seemingly apolitical films such as *Amelie*, she argued, there are sometimes glimpses of the denizens of the banlieues making their way into the centre of Paris.

Vincendeau's address was followed by a panel of papers concerned with London and Paris in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the period most closely identified with the formal end of

empire in both Britain and France. Roland-François Lack (University College, London) gave a paper, co-authored with Karen Alexander, that comprehensively documented the appearance of black men and women in Paris-set films of the *Nouvelle Vague* and those set in the 'Swinging London' of the 1960s. The paper covered both relatively well-known films (*Chronique d'un été* [1961] and Godard's *One Plus One* [1968], for example) as well as more obscure titles such as *Two Gentlemen Sharing* (1969) and *My Baby is Black* (1961), and in doing so it provided an eye-opening exposition of the extent to which post-imperial shifts in urban demographics were being registered in contemporary films.

Ben Highmore (University of Sussex) provided the panel's second paper, "Free Cinema's London: A City of Strangers." Here Highmore re-examined the titular period, showing how migration was in some ways at the heart of the movement. Focusing especially on Robert Vas's *Refuge England* and the ways in which the aesthetic tenets of Free Cinema lent themselves to both depictions of a changing London and expressions of urban alienation, Highmore provided a fresh look at what has become one of British cinema's most canonical periods.

The day's second keynote address came from David Gilbert (Royal Holloway), who gave a wide-ranging talk on 1960s London that analysed trends in architecture, urban planning and fashion photography in the decade. Moving the day squarely into the field of cultural geography, Gilbert's talk sought to locate post-imperial change in the development of two areas in 1960s London: Piccadilly Circus (held by many to have acted as the "heart" of the Empire) and, secondly, Chelsea's Carnaby Street and Kings Road, both key streets for West End fashion, consumerism and youth culture.

Exploring the history of Piccadilly Circus in the days of high Empire and then analysing various plans to redevelop the area in the post-war period, Gilbert demonstrated the ways that attitudes towards Britain's changing place in the world consciously and unconsciously shaped the public debates regarding how to modernise one of London's most iconic areas. Moving from Piccadilly Circus to Chelsea, Gilbert's examples changed from landscape and architecture to fashion photography and storefronts. Here Gilbert pointed out the ways in which the politics of imperial decline were reflected in trends that incorporated and pastiched native wares from the former colonies, especially those of India and Africa. Gilbert also pointed out instances of imperial attitudes being perpetuated throughout this period and beyond, in doing so providing numerous examples of blatantly Orientalist magazine covers and photo shoots.

The day's second panel consisted of papers by Maurizio Cinquegrani (King's College, London) and Paul Newland (University of Exeter), papers that collectively moved the historical focus out of the immediate post-imperial period while also expanding the frame of reference to include even more diverse media texts. Cinquegrani's paper was structured around a comparative analysis of a number of London landmarks as seen in actuality films of the early cinema period, during which time the Empire was at its peak, and then later in British feature films made in the 1980s, the decade most associated with the realisation at home of Britain's waning influence in the world. By presenting images of iconic locales such as Euston Road and Tower Bridge as seen in reverential newsreels on one hand and overtly socially critical works such as *High Hopes* (1988), *The Long Good Friday* (1980) and *Riff Raff* (1991) on the other, Cinquegrani provided a succinct overview of changing attitudes towards landmarks that invariably outlast the original contexts in which they were erected.

Paul Newland's paper dealt with London's East End as seen initially in the novel *Brick Lane* and the film made thereof, and then in a number of other East End-set novels from the 1990s and 2000s. Given the changing ethnic make up of the neighbourhoods of the East End, Newland was interested in analysing the ways in which various writers and film-makers portrayed London as a city of immigrants. Looking at *Brick Lane*, Newland showed how film and novel depicted the East End and central London in sharply different manners, casting the former as claustrophobic and repressive while the latter is seen as being as foreign and exotic to those who live in the city as it is to tourists on holiday. Discussing the impact of another trend in the makeup of East End neighbourhoods, Newland then outlined the ways in which the East End has been depicted as a land of gentrification and encroaching "yuppiedom" in novels such as *City of the Mind* by Penelope Livey and *Look at it this Way* by Justin Cartwright, novels which within their critiques of the destruction of working-class communities depict immigrant communities as marginal and peripheral to those communities.

The event then concluded with reflections on the day's papers from Alastair Phillips (University of Warwick), and Bill Schwarz (Queen Mary, London). Schwarz focused his rejoinder on the terminology underpinning the event. Beginning with an anecdote regarding Enoch Powell's fears of what the infamous MP called "the thing", a euphemism for ethnic "disorder" occasioned by a change in Britain's place in the world, and moving through contemporary examples such as the replacement of a London monument in Parliament Square to abolitionist Charles Buxton with a statue of Jan Christian Smuts, a leading architect of the apartheid regime in South Africa, Schwarz made the case for the continuing need for the use of the term "postcolonial." Concluding that many in Britain have still not entered the period of "the post-imperial," and likely never would, Schwarz argued that the need to continue the project of decolonizing the world was as important as ever. This argument was buttressed by numerous references to the work of West Indian novelists and thinkers including Samuel Selvon and Franz Fanon, who wrote about global "disorder" in ways that were markedly different from the way Powell used the term.

Phillips used his rejoinder to assess continuities and differences amongst the day's papers, especially as regarded urban space in cinema. Crucial to the analyses of urban space on offer on the day, Phillips argued, was the motif of 'flow' and movement between spaces and historical moments. Phillips contrasted this theme with that of fragmentation, a theme that is often said to be at the heart of postmodern representations of the city. Commenting on the day's historical themes, Phillips joined with Schwarz in questioning the periodicity of the post-imperial, closing with the thought that the research presented at the event showed that we still have not arrived at a 'post-imperial' moment and that the legacy of the empires of western Europe can be seen and felt all around us.

As noted above, "In the Shadow of Empire" was an ambitious event and it was perhaps inevitable that it could not achieve all it sought to do. There were, for instance, distinct imbalances to be seen in the subject matter of the papers as well as the approaches of the speakers. There were only two papers that dealt with Paris, with London occupying most of the day's conversations. Similarly, for an event that hoped to bring together the fields of cultural geography with film and television studies, it should be noted that only two speakers were active in the field of cultural geography (Gilbert and Cinquegrani), with the rest working mainly with film, television and media studies. Finally, the event did not provide a consensus on the usefulness of the term 'post-imperial' in either field.

Of these three complaints, only the first should be seen as a shortcoming that affected the day's outcomes. There simply was not the degree of comparative discussion that would have been offered if there was more work on Paris presented. There was, however, a great deal of illustration on offer of the extent to which film and television studies and cultural geography can learn from one another. Discussions following on Vincendeau's paper, for example, gravitated towards theories of mobility that underpin current thinking on architecture and urban space, while other papers focused discussion on the ability of cinema to act as a photographic record of changing cityscapes as well as a record of the attitudes that accompany such representations, effectively demonstrating that films can sit productively alongside the sort of materials analysed by Gilbert in his keynote address or the novels discussed by Newland and Schwarz. In this regard, the event succeeded in offering a fresh intervention in the burgeoning field of cinematic city studies, one which continues to be dominated by the paradigm of Benjaminian modernity theory.

Though some of the speakers, as well as a number of the delegates at the event, expressed reservations regarding the idea of the 'post-imperial' as a term that could rival 'postcolonial' as a theoretical model for the period under discussion, this should not be seen a shortcoming in the design of the event. Instead, the debate that surrounded the proper terminology for examining western Europe after the age of empire served to showcase how provocative the ideas that underpinned the conference were. Calling into question a paradigm as familiar as the postcolonial was an achievement that was very much in keeping with what the papers presented on the day sought to do with London and Paris. It is thus the event's most significant accomplishment that participants will likely never look at Trafalgar Square, the Eurostar system or The Tate Gallery the same way again, just as they may never think of cinematic cities or postcolonial theory in quite the same way.

New Developments in Stardom

New Developments in Stardom, 22 March 2008, King's College, London

A report by Laura Sava, University of Warwick, UK

The one-day conference organized at King's College, London, by Jonathan Driskell, Olga Kourelou and Julie Lobalzo rallied academics from fields as diverse as film and television studies, sociology and literary theory around questions related to a perceived discursive transformation in star studies, mainly having to do with the increased currency of the term "celebrity". What makes the conference a valuable addition to this research area is first and foremost the sagacious exploration of the very idea of novelty and change, proving that its organizers, when choosing the title and the thematic range of the conference, were mindful not only of the topicality and of the continuing momentum of the issues under discussion, but also of the perils attendant on an uncritical use of terminology. Thus, delegates were told by Jonathan Driskell at the official opening of the conference that one of the questions addressed head-on would be whether what we are witnessing with contemporary stardom is a "fundamental shift or a superficial change" and that the event was meant to both expand and bring more precision of focus to an already established field of inquiry.

The newly developed department of film studies at King's College was for more reasons than one a most appropriate host for the event. The choice of the topic bespeaks a desire to publicly endorse a certain direction of research, since, to use Ginette Vincendeau's words in the inaugural speech, work on stardom and popular cinema is the type of work the department wishes to be identified with. Furthermore, both Richard Dyer and Ginette Vincendeau, members of the department and chairs of the keynote talks at the conference, are well known for their contributions to star studies and their presence guaranteed a highly auspicious context. The judicious assortment of papers and the impeccable organization were also conducive to fruitful discussions. The conference consisted of two keynote papers and four panels (TV Stardom, Contemporary Film Stardom, Non-Cinematic Stardom and Celebrity) in sets of two parallel panels.

In addition to being a perfect follow-up to the outline of the basic aims of the conference, the first keynote address delivered by Su Holmes (University of East Anglia) was also eminently suited to set the stage for the subsequent papers and discussions. After denouncing the sometimes facile rhetoric of change that informs many of the recent debates around celebrity, especially the ones that are encountered in the popular press, Holmes went on to argue for the necessity of being "specific about the idea of change." The author's caveat was exemplified as the paper progressed and it homed in on the need to utilize a historical analysis of audience response in order to better understand the subtle shifts of emphasis in the conceptualizations of stardom and celebrity. Holmes drew on Joshua Gamson's distinction between a meritocratic narrative of fame and the manufacture of fame in order to shed light on the complex interplay of different competing explanations of celebrity and stardom. In order to illustrate her point, the author convincingly examined the critical reactions elicited by the 1950s British TV show *This is Your Life*, viewed at the time as a pinnacle of "sensationalism, emotionalism and personalization," a show which, by today's standards, constitutes an

example of television at its most reverent and discreet. Not only have the criteria for value judgments changed considerably, but also, more surprisingly, our definition of devices such as the close-up suffered modifications. Far from implying that approaches to stardom are impervious to change, Holmes purported to show that when a turnabout is identified, the claim should be buttressed by a close historical reading of the evidence at hand.

In keeping with the avowed intention of the conference to depart from a strictly cinematic understanding of the star phenomenon and to map the current developments of the concept, the second keynote speaker, David L. Andrews (University of Maryland), tackled the particularities of stardom in sport. The author postulated the existence of a degree of objectivity inherent in the sport performance and used the athletic achievement as a yardstick for what he called a "loose typology" of public sport figures that included sport stars, sport celebrities and sport parasites, differentiated by their sport aura (effective, residual or reduced to a vague association with sport events). He proceeded to analyze examples of how a "promotional identity" in sports is constructed outside the confines of the sport performance itself, placing the mechanics of sport celebrity at the intersection of economic, technological, social and political contingencies. The keynote papers epitomized two of the main stakes of the conference: on the one hand, a refined critical recasting of the concepts involved in star studies and, on the other, the awareness of challenges coming from domains other than film and television.

The panel dedicated to contemporary film stardom showcased three papers that, although very different in approach, were all committed to revealing the impact of stardom on the marketing and reception of films and the complex dynamics between stars and audience. The paper presented by Neil Archer (Cambridge University) was a riveting investigation into the reconfiguration of stardom effected by the new forms of interaction between fans and texts. Operating with the concept of "participatory culture" made famous by Henry Jenkins in *Textual Poachers*, Archer scrutinized the work of Simon Pegg in relation to the reinvention of fandom brought about by new technologies. Pegg's work became, in his reading, representative of a "cinema of recognition" in which "textual scanning" and the ability to spot cultural references determines the involvement of the audience with the star. Anders Marklund (University of Lund) attempted an overview of the use of stars in commercially successful European films selected from seven countries and spanning the interval 2000-2007. Tom Whittaker's (Queen Mary, University of London) paper centered on Javier Bardem's screen persona, seeing it as defined by physicality, be it a celebrated physicality or an undermined one. Whittaker foregrounded Bardem's performance in *Los Lunes al sol/Mondays in the Sun* (2002), a performance that confronts us with what Richard Dyer would call a "problematic fit" between the star image and the film character. The excessive weight of the character in the ideological interpretation Whittaker gave of the performance is meant to throw into crisis the working-class male identity, by signaling "the redundancy of male strength in a post-industrial society," "the political impotence of the present" and the shift from the body as a site of production to a site of consumption.

The first paper of the Non-Cinematic Stardom panel smoothed the transition towards discussions of stardom and celebrity that went beyond the realms of cinema and television, by bringing into play the notion of "transmediality". Sarah Thomas (University of Warwick) focused her paper on Peter Lorre's appearances on American radio between 1940 and 1954, demonstrating that radio functioned as an "alternative performative arena," responsible in part for the perpetuation of the horror star persona of the actor. The percentage within Lorre's cinematic career of horror roles could not by itself account for the immense popularity of his

star persona, associated almost automatically with the horror iconography, hence the incentive to look elsewhere for explanations of the lingering appeal of this construct. The radio broadcasts that featured Lorre as either guest star, host or actor, were thus elevated in her reading from ancillary information on Lorre the film actor to privileged points of access to the understanding of an unconventional and interesting star. Rachel White (University of Westminster) contributed a paper on the problematic absence of female stars on the indie music scene. White applied a blend of feminist and queer methodology to excerpts from the music press (*New Musical Express*, *Melody Maker*, *Select*) referring to the lead singers of Oasis, Suede and Elastica, in order to build a case for the construction of a norm of stardom ("a male star with a male following") that limited to the point of exclusion the participation of women. The panel was ended by Grace Sui Sum Wong (University of Queensland) who used the example of celebrity writer Salman Rushdie to raise questions about the nature of literary fame. The paper chimed in with the agenda of the conference in that it drew attention to the specificities of a certain type of stardom. In the particular case of literary stardom, it has been argued that a form of concealment of the publicity devices is often employed as a means of counteracting accusations of elitism or, alternatively, over-exposure, which makes Rushdie once more a sensitive case in point.

The panels parallel to those I attended added further dimensions to the analysis of contemporary stardom and celebrity. In the TV Stardom panel, James Bennett (London Metropolitan University) provided a critical insight into the debates surrounding the television personality as well as an analysis of Alan Titchmarsh's televisual image, deliberately eschewing the category of stardom in television, stressing the marked differences extant between TV personalities and film stars and privileging notions of authenticity and ordinariness. Helen Warner (University of East Anglia) considered the case of *The O.C*'s star Mischa Barton in relation to her onscreen role Marissa Cooper, highlighting the conscious effort put into keeping the two apart fashion-wise, evident through the show's intertextuality. Veronika Munk and Andrea Vinczai (University of Pecs) analyzed the results of a poll conducted online about Hungarian celebrities, trying to assess the impact of the "tabloidization" of the media on the people's attitudes towards the new stars.

The Celebrity panel assembled papers on celebrity charity channeled by the UN through the "Goodwill Ambassador" initiative, seen as yet another attempt to capitalize on the celebrity power (Charlotte Wolters, University of Western Ontario), on the self-promotional practices of Jordan and Peter that evince the hierarchical overturn of charisma and talent in favor of high visibility and obstinate selling of a brand (Hanna Kyllönen, University of Sussex) and, finally, on the photographic and television work of Alison Jackson that uses celebrity look-alikes in order to problematize aspects of celebrity culture (Amy Sargeant, University of Warwick).

The conference was successful in accommodating a wide variety of approaches to stardom, as well as in making them concur on the necessity to question received notions and draw ever subtler distinctions. Despite the fact that the output was inevitably uneven in critical ambition, the conference proved that star studies is a research area that can command a lot of attention, inspiring discussions about its foundational texts as well as about emergent trends.

Child and Teen Consumption Conference 2008

Child and Teen Consumption Conference 2008, 23-25 April, Trondheim, Norway

A report by Jacob Smith, University of Nottingham, UK

The third international conference on multidisciplinary perspectives on child and teen consumption lived up to its name. The conference was truly international, featuring attendees from the US, UK, and the Scandinavian nations, as well as from Cameroon, Chile, Congo, Croatia, Egypt, Estonia, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Israel, Mali, Japan, Italy, Portugal, Tunisia, and Turkey, among others. The conference also lived up to its claims to combine disciplines, with faculty from the fields of cultural studies, child research, business, marketing, psychology, sociology, film and media studies, and law. Overall, this event made clear that children's culture is a rich and growing area of study that combines the analysis of media, economics, society and government policy; making it a particularly outward looking, and vital area of media studies. Some larger themes emerged over the course of the proceedings, with important discussions based around several key questions: what is the child? What is consumption? What is the role of regulation and education in the context of the emerging digital, multiplatform and global media?

Inspired in part by recent historical work on childhood, some presentations posed the question: what is consumption and how does it relate to the child? In the opening plenary, Ragnhild Brusdal gave a talk entitled, "Small Emperors in an Affluent Society," in which the child was defined in terms of family consumption. Brusdal argued that it is increasingly the birth of a child that constitutes the family, not marriage. Further, parenthood jumpstarts the process of consumption, and so the family is largely constituted by acts of consumption, which bring the child into a consumer culture even before it is born. Further, parenting in wealthier nations becomes more and more a matter of consumption. Brusdal also made reference to the role of media celebrities in amplifying the conspicuous display of child fashions. The increase in divorce rates means that children tend to have multiple sets of grandparents, and so consumption for the child is multiplied: for one child, five car-seats might be purchased, one for each parent and grandparent. As fathers take on more and more parenting duties, specialty products – such as the "diaper dude" camouflage diaper bag for fathers – also increase consumer spending on children. Such a context makes clear that concern about children's consumption must be tied to adult consumption. Further, Brusdal made the point that if parents all over the world consumed in this manner, it would be an ecological disaster.

Gary Cross continued some of this line of inquiry with his plenary talk, "Children as Valves of Adult Desires." Cross' primary thesis was that children have tended to function as a discursive site of adult ambiguity about consumerism and modernity. Cross referred to an ongoing contradiction in US society, where the abhorrence of controlled markets combines with a desire for a simple life of controlled desires. For example, the prohibition of alcohol represented a struggle between a culture of constraint and unlimited markets. Solutions to

these tensions have tended to confine the market to the public sphere versus the private, to restrict certain "bad" goods, and to protect "innocent" consumers. In all cases, that struggle ends up focusing around children, who then function as a valve for adult desires. Cross also addressed the importance of children's consumption for adults, who have grown bored of their own consumer purchasing and want to re-enact the "innocent delight" of consumption via their children. Cross illustrated with the example of Christmas gift-giving, which was previously an adult-centered celebration. Overall, Cross argued that the debate about children's consumption helps adults to cope with change, and obscures confusion over the adult role in consumption. More recently, the lines between adult and child culture have become less distinct. As proof Cross described recent Adam Sandler films in which the star plays a child-like father-figure.

Cross is a historian, and some of the most productive panels engaged with the conference topics through historical investigation, asking such questions as, when did children's consumption begin? In her talk, "We should Be Allowed to Relax the Same as Adults: Young People's Opinions about Comics, 1938-1955," Carol Tilley described the debate over comic books amongst librarians in the 1940s and 1950s. Jacqueline Reid-Walsh gave a particularly illuminating talk on "Toy Theatres and the Creation of the Young Male Consumer in 19th-Century Britain." Her analysis of 19th-century paper toy theaters and their tie-ins with stage and children's books, demonstrated that media scholars need to look at issues of spectacle, synergy and "convergence culture" before the digital.

Other talks at the conference engaged with the question, what is the child? Barbro Johansson gave a talk entitled, "Subjectivities of the Child Consumer – Beings and Becomings," in which she interrogated the assumption that adults are human "beings" and children are human "becomings": that is, unfinished, unknowing, and less than whole. She argued that children and adults are always potentially beings and becomings depending on the situation. Daniel Cook added to this discussion with his talk, "Commercial Enculturation." Cook offered a critique of the term "consumer socialization," which has been associated with a narrow view of both child and consumption, characterized by a process in which children acquire skills, and are associated with discrete ages and stages, moving from incomplete to complete, unknowing to knowing. Cook questioned the assumption that there is a clear end point to this process in adulthood, since such theories lack any theory of the adult, assuming for example that adults (unlike children) will make rational consumer choices, based on price. In its place, Cook offered the idea of consumer enculturation, describing the variety of ways in which children come to know an embedded culture of consumption. This conception still notes changes but does not tend toward teleology, allowing multiple ways in which children become embedded in a world of goods and meanings.

One of the most pressing questions being asked at the conference had to do with the role of regulation and education in the contemporary digital mediascape. Janet Wasko's plenary "On-Line Kids Sites: The Latest Commodification of Kids' Culture" provided a political economy approach to websites directed to the child audience. Her main focus was the "Neopets" website, which was founded in 1999, and has recently been bought by Viacom for $160 million. Called the "stickiest site in the world," the average time spent on the site is six hours, making it second on the net. 57% of its users are female and 60% of its revenue is derived from advertising. The approach to "immersive advertising" used by Neopets causes concern amongst some parents and critics as a form of stealth product placement. For example, there is a Disney Theater in the Neopets landscape, as well as "advergames" that amount to market research for sponsors. Further, Wasko argues that the site powerfully increases the

commercialization of youth, play, and fantasy, and naturalizes the commodifcation of childhood. For Wasko, a consumer ideology is reinforced through neopet games that have to do with banks, buying items, and even gambling. Wasko argued that this was an example of new technology being harnessed to commercial purposes, and she pointed to the importance of media literacy, and critical voices in debates about regulation since the kind of advertising found on the Neopets site is difficult to regulate.

Issues of regulation in a post-cable, global media environment also came to the fore in a panel discussion with figures from the government, industry and academy. A prevalent opinion was that there was still an important need for regulation of children's media and advertising to children, but traditional approaches were often insufficient. Regulation can't cover all aspects of media consumption in a multi-platform world, and so a "max-mix" approach was suggested, that would scatter regulatory efforts across platforms, and expose stealth marketing techniques. David Buckingham added a call for positive regulation: that is, not just keeping children away from things (i.e. through filtering software), but ensuring their access to information.

Across many discussions, an emphasis was placed on the crucial importance of media literacy education in addition to regulation. Ellen Seiter's plenary, "Playing Moviemaker: Educational and Consumer Markets for Youth Aspiring to the Creative Industries," brought a particularly fresh perspective to issues of media education. Seiter talked about her experience working at the University of Southern California, which is famous for its film production program. Drawing on this experience, as well as her investigation of primary school media programs, Seiter noted that media arts programs in schools avoid any discussion of labor: a vitally important omission in a context in which jobs are extremely scarce, and digital rights debates are raging (see the Writer's Guild strike). Seiter called for more of an emphasis on issues of labor in the cultural industries in order to broaden students' understanding and to help them to make rational career decisions in an extremely competitive and insecure industry.

The key debate around which discussions of regulation took place had to do with television ads for high fat, sugar and salt foods (HFSS). The UK is one of two countries to have banned such ads, with Ofcom placing a total ban on ads for HFSS foods to children under 16. Thus media marketing is blamed for the obesity epidemic, with the danger being that the focus on ads takes attention away from other, more pressing social issues. Vebjorg Tingstad described her on-going research into this issue in her talk, "Discourses on children, obesity and television advertising in the context of the Norwegian welfare society." She described how the HFSS debate represented an interdependence of panics involving childhood, food, and the media: i.e. the perfect storm in regards to moral panic. David Buckingham's talk, "The Appliance of Science: The Role of Research in the Making of Regulatory Policy on Children and Food Advertising in the UK," illuminated the role played by academic research in the lead up to the UK "evidence based" policy decision. Buckingham traced the changing positions of researchers, and showed how tentative findings were picked up by policy-makers. Buckingham argued that there was a danger of using regulation as a precautionary principle; based on potential risk and unproven danger, and that while the policy allowed the government to "talk tough" on the media, it doesn't address more important topics.

Buckingham took up these issues in his closing statements, stating that there was a tendency to displace complicated social problems onto something simple, and attribute blame to children's consumption. Policy makers wave flags by focusing on the media, but oftentimes avoid other issues. Complex issues are thus reduced to single cause-effect questions.

Regulation in such a context can actually be dangerous and distracting, blaming only marketing or advertising for what is a deeper question: the elephant in the room being capitalism itself. The public debate only talks about capitalism in terms of advertising or consumption – particularly children's consumption, but there is a need to put all the aspects of social and economic life together; to address the broader social context in which such activity occurs. As the conference as a whole demonstrated, this requires in part, a view to history; to an understanding of earlier developments in consumer capitalism, as well as a view beyond simplified understandings of "evil marketers" and "innocent children." Crucially, there is a need to listen more closely to what children actually say and feel and their own consumption; to look at children's perspectives; to investigate the pleasures, benefits, and promises of rebellion in children's consumption. Earlier in the conference, a panelist had relayed a comment from a friend who wondered how conference-goers could examine the commodification of childhood and not be frozen with outrage. Buckingham nicely wrapped up the conference with a pithy statement of purpose: what we need, he said, is actually less outrage and more understanding.

Screen Studies Conference 2008

Screen Studies Conference 2008: Sound and Music in Film, TV and Video, 4-6 July 2008, University of Glasgow

A report by Faye Woods, University of Reading, UK

This year's Screen Studies Conference caught a current wave of academic interest in music, sound and the screen, whether we call it "sound studies" or perhaps "screen sound," as sound takes its place alongside the well established study of music in visual media – be that film or the growing examination of television, video games and advertising. These areas have been the focus of recent high profile conferences, from last September's "Sound, Music and the Moving Image" at the University of London to University of Leeds and Brunel University's "Film and Music Conference," now in its fourth year and the regular presence of film music at the conference of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM), hosted at the University of Glasgow in September 2008. Add to this recently-launched journals such as *Music, Sound and the Moving Image* (Liverpool University Press) and *The Soundtrack* (Intellect) and we have an exciting growth area of scholarship.

In its breadth and scope – at over 40 panels and well over 100 papers presented, it was even bigger than last year – Screen demonstrated the multitude of possibilities in the study of "Sound and Music in Film, TV and Video," which formed this year's theme. The conference illustrated the variety of ways that attention to sound and music can illuminate analysis of areas such as national identity, performance, industry and genre, from early cinema, to television to amateur and "expanded cinema." In doing so it contributed to the wrestling of the discipline from the grip of the classical film score, which had, until recent years, dominated for so long.

Screen's continued importance in a year of competing conferences was demonstrated by the presence of established film music scholars such as Claudia Gorbman (University of Washington), Stan Link (Vanderbilt University), Jeff Smith (University of Wisconsin-Madison) and Will Straw (McGill University). However, beyond these big names it was evident from the wealth of papers from young scholars that the field has encouraging potential for growth in the coming years. Yet whilst the conference's theme dominated the panels, there was also space for non-sound related discussion with panels covering transnational television, Edwardian short films, Deleuze, and Latin American, Asian and Spanish cinemas. With so much interesting work on show there were often frustrating clashes of panels with the perennial Screen problem (particularly as it grows ever bigger each year) of not being able to see everything you wanted.

The conference was bookended by plenaries which all in some way examined the role music plays in elements of character and subjectivity. Whilst Claudia Gorbman closed the weekend with a paper focused explicitly on "Subjectivity and Film Music" and the movement of diegetic and non-diegetic music to express this, playing on the filmic expression of the way we can play music in our heads, Stan Link opened the conference with an entertaining plenary focusing on "Nerds and the Musical Visibility and Whiteness." Examining the role

of the filmic nerd in moments of music performance in films such as *Revenge of the Nerds* (1984), and *Napoleon Dynamite* (2004) Link related the nerd's "outsider" status and these moments of personal success in unexpected performances to the nerd's rejection of mainstream "cool." In particular, popular cool's aping of black culture, with a resulting focus on the nerd's whiteness – through the distance between their performative white body and the black musical accompaniment – and their embracement of said nerdom. Will Straw continued this underlying theme of character subjectivity in his plenary, which looked at the curious profusion of credit sequences that featured men "Driving in Cars With Music." Distinctly "modular" in their use of nearly completely non-diegetic popular music tracks, their foregrounding of credits, and lack of narrative action, Straw explored the role these sequences played in the establishment of setting and characterisation.

During Saturday morning's panel "Connecting Film and Music," Jeff Smith rexamined a foundational issue of film music scholarship in his paper "Bridging the Gap: Reconsidering the Border Between Diegetic and Nondiegetic Music in Film." Constructed in part as an "answer" to Robynn Stilwell's article "The Fantastical Gap Between Diegetic and Non-diegetic" (2007) – which was referenced in papers throughout the weekend, including Gorbman's closing plenary – Smith argued for a return to the basic questions of distinction in analysis of this border. He questioned the received analytic tools or cues that ascribe sound and music to either side of the boundary or 'gap', and in the process challenged what we constitute as "diegetic" music. In engaging with Stilwell's attention to the audience's phenomelogical experience of this relationship, Smith made a good companion to Carole Lyn Piechota's (Wayne State University) paper "Touching Sounds: On the Audio/Visual Passage in Contemporary Cinema". Piechota focused on the pleasures of a film's popular musical moment - particularly central to films of "pop-fiction" directors such as Spike Jones, Sophia Coppola or Wes Anderson - which subsumed aesthetic and narrative to music in an "audio/visual passage." Arguing that these sequences offered affective pleasures for sophisticated viewers now familiar with a complex music/image aesthetic, Piechota suggested that the emotional and sensory reaction the songs and visuals prompted stimulated subjective responses unique to each viewer. As such she questioned how much control the filmmaker had in audiences' own felt responses to these moments.

Audience reaction also played a part in Stephanie Piotrowski's (University of Exeter) paper "Silver (Screen) Beatles: The Transition from Pop Stars to Musicians in *A Hard Day's Night* (1964) and *Help!* (1965)," however here it was the relationship between fan and band in filmic musical performance. Part of an entertaining panel on "Pop Music on Film", Piotrowski demonstrated through close analysis of music sequences how the two films constructed the band's relationship with its fans – welcoming and actively participating in the former, distanced and obstructed in the latter – and linked this to *Help!*'s place in a transitional moment in the Beatles' career as they moved towards more introspective songwriting and a focus on musicianship. Justin Smith's (University of Portsmouth) paper "Come on Let the Good Times Roll: The Rise of the Cross-over Market and the Origins of MTV Aesthetics" continued Piotrowski's British focus in an analysis of 1970s "nostalgic" youth films such as *That'll Be The Day* (1973). Smith highlighted the role of soundtrack sales in the success of these British 1950s-set films (a well documented aspect of US films depicting the decade) and drew attention to biographical element of these stories of young men coming of age in the pre-60s period. The paper also provided a welcome balance to the domination of US "nostalgic" teen films in analysis of popular music and film – and illustrated the British films' undercutting of this nostalgia with uncomfortable "realism". However, a potentially fruitful analysis of the distance between this British

'realism' and the US rock n roll soundtrack was frustratingly absent. Like Smith, Laurel Westrup (UCLA) presented a film which re-presented US rock music and images of 50s cool in a local context, in her paper "Japanese Zombies Reanimate Rock 'n' Roll: The Strange Case of *Wild Zero* (2000)." Tying the panel together, Westrup's analysis of this rock-band film – featuring Japanese band Guitar Wolf rather than the Beatles – demonstrated how it quoted heavily from rock and roll and punk, alongside cult film culture, in order to construct Guitar Wolf within a musical canon of defiant hipness.

Sunday morning saw a fascinating panel entitled "Mixing it Up: Visualisation and Synaesthesia" composed of a trio of at first glance unlinked papers on light shows, Chris Doyle, and VJs, which ultimately tied together different approaches to "cinema" and the multi-sensory relationship present in this experience. Gregory Zinman's (New York University) paper "Forms of Radiance: Reading the Joshua Light Show Through the Bauhaus and Paracinema" examined the psychedelic light shows combined with live music which took place at the turn of the 70s in a New York rock theatre, arguing for an understanding of the experience as "paracinema." Detailing the live communal construction of these multi-layered images produced to music, he placed the shows within the field of "expanded cinema" rather than the synaesthesia of "visual music" as they have previously been labelled, and as part of a cinematic experience that worked towards an opening up of perceptual experience. Sensory experience also played a part in Rosalind Gault's (University of Sussex) paper "Sound, Image, Shrimp: Christopher Doyle's Transnational Synaesthesia," which read the cinematographer's densely visual directorial debut *Away With Words* (1999) as an expression of cultural dislocation communicated through the sensory impressions. This was tied to Doyle's own connections with Far Eastern theatre and colour theories, as characters communicated through splashes of sensory expression and narrative was subsumed to sensory experience. Michael Piggot (University of Warwick) brought together strands of both these papers in his paper "The Film (remix)," which explored the live act of VJing as a convergence of sound and image. Arguing that this media form drew on both the history of visual accompaniment to live performance and film artists such as Oskar Fischinger's attempts to visualise music, Piggot presented the VJ as creating an audio visual spectacle in the live mixing of found or newly created images to music. Like Doyle's film, these performances, such as Peter Greenaway's live remix of his *Tulse Luper* (2003) film trilogy, jumble and reduce film's narrative flow, refocusing attention on the hybrid centre ground of sound and cinema.

In the well-attended panel "From a Whimper to a Bang" Helen Hanson's (University of Exeter) paper "The Ambience of Film Noir" highlighted the value of sound study to genre analysis in an exploration of the relationship between sound and settings in film noir, moving discussion of the genre away from the focus on its visual stylistic. Linking the progression of sound technology to aesthetic expression, Hanson demonstrated the role of music and sound in the communication of the genre's threat of criminality and sexuality. James Lyons (University of Exeter) continued the panel's overall focus on industrial and aesthetic analysis in a fascinating paper "I want my MTV Cops: Watching *Miami Vice* (NBC 1984-89) in stereo." Lyon's paper illustrated the relatively untapped potential in the study of television music, which was seen elsewhere in Stand Beeler's "Out of Sync and Out of Time: Anachronistic Popular Music in Television" and Mark Brownrigg's "What the Soup Dragon Didn't Eat: Vernon Elliot's music for *The Clangers* (1969-74)." Moving beyond the widespread dismissal of Miami Vice in terms of its "MTV" aesthetics, Lyons highlighted the show's, particularly its music's, role in NBC's aggressive stereo sound commissioning and broadcasting strategy during the mid-80s. Through its combination of action and music,

broadcast in stereo sound, the show allowed the network to court young upscale males and the early adopter demographic, creating a market for its parent company RCA's stereo television sets. Yet Lyons also tied this industrial analysis to excellent aesthetic analysis, making his audience look afresh at the show's (in)famous use of Phil Collins's "In the Air Tonight", illustrating the close ties of music to the show's narrative. In doing so he effectively brought together the strands of industrial and aesthetic analysis that too often are divisive in analysis of popular music on the screen.

Lyons' discussion of men driving to music echoed Will Straw's opening plenary, illustrating the bridges between television and film analysis that a discussion of music can offer. Such links between disciplines were seen throughout the conference, with the strong interdisciplinary focus demonstrating the breadth of the field. Video and film art sat alongside classical Hollywood, television alongside experimental cinema, whilst pop music, avantgarde, electronic and jazz were valued as much as classical. The language of the musicologist, which can often be a barrier to non-music scholars was little seen in the panels the author attended, illustrating how the field has opened itself up to the non-musically trained and has immeasurably benefited from it. The diegetic/non-diegetic barrier continued to be fruitfully mined in a range of papers and whilst composers – be they avant-garde, classical or pop – remained central figures of analysis, sound and voice in performance represented a significant growth area.

Screen's increased size has made it close to unwieldy, with delegates spread across so many panels a minority suffered from a lack of audience discussion, making it difficult to grasp any overall scholarly consensus emerging from the conference, whilst non-plenary panels in the large lecture hall suffered from its peculiar acoustic and lack of intimacy. Yet this size also offered a range of pleasures, with sound and music scholars able to pursue their particular interest solely or expand their range, whilst non-music scholars had plenty to occupy them outside of the conference's themed panels. Screen's size allows it to welcome scholars from a range of disciplines, which is particularly fruitful in a cross-disciplinary area such as sound and music. The standard of papers was markedly high, from scholars both new and established, giving the author great faith in the future of studies of screen sound and music.

Cultural Borrowings

Cultural Borrowings: Appropriation, Reworking and Transformation, 19 March 2008, University of Nottingham

A report by Neelam Sidhar Wright and Stella Sims, University of Sussex, UK

Amongst the scores of standardised postgraduate conferences on offer to PhD researchers, occasionally one comes along with a bit of character, a refreshingly biased interest in specific textual forms, and a distinctive desire to tease, provoke and challenge its participants. The Cultural Borrowings conference (sponsored by MeCCSA, AHRC and ADM-HEA) was such an event, ambitiously featuring two plenary sessions, nine panels and thirty-eight speakers, all presenting work on a unique range of subject areas including Adaptation, Musical Sampling and Copyright, Postcolonialism, Ideology and Ethics, and Historical Appropriation. Predominantly postgraduate-led, the event brought together researchers from across media and cultural studies, film and television, literature, anthropology, music, new media and sociology.

Opening the event, Professor Christine Geraghty's (University of Glasgow) keynote address entitled "Adaptation and Faithfulness: a Case Study of How Not to Discuss Appropriations" was a comprehensive and multi-faceted exploration of the complexities of such a study. Asserting that concepts of adaptation are not "new," she historicised adaptation using a clip from an early silent film version of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. Her discussion focused on the importance of analysing the adaptation *itself* rather than just relative to an "original," and the limitations of adaptation theory in terms of imagining what the audience thinks, asserting the critical significance of examining the reception and response of viewers of adapted works. She also noted the poor film-analysis skills of many established adaptation theorists, emphasising the need to prise the subject away from literature and rein it back into film studies. While Geraghty's critical discussion could have somewhat perturbed those postgraduates in the audience who were about to present on the subject, it in fact provoked and encouraged delegates to spend the remainder of the day debating and reflecting on the various ethical positions and metholodologies on show.

Guest speakers and established academics Dr. Ian Hunter (De Montfort University), Dr. Lee Marshall (University of Bristol) and Professor David Hesmondhalgh (University of Leeds) were also a highly supportive presence, with an equally provoking plenary session. Two of the guest speakers focused on music – an ontologically unique topic with regards to questions of authority, which seemed to dominate the conference's papers and panels. Marshall looked at historical appropriation in relation to contemplating the return of Bob Dylan (his reinstated stardom, artistic survival or curious immortality), whilst Hesmondhalgh looked at issues of cultural ownership, asking the important question: Who does culture belong to? Exploring the movement of black-founded music into white (where black musicians remain relatively invisible), he reminded us not to forget the politics of theft at stake in such forms of cultural appropriation. Contrastingly, Hunter looked at the subject from the perspective of the 'Jawsploitation' film – viewing several post-*Jaws* horror films as colonised imaginations of

the shark in Steven Spielberg's original monster-movie classic – the film which he suggested may have initiated the blockbuster sequel.

While each conference panel engendered much stimulating debate, there was a friendly atmosphere overall which fostered the confidence of those postgraduates (including ourselves) who were relatively inexperienced with conference paper-giving. In one of the first panels on "Sampling, Copyright and Culture," speakers boldly addressed the history, politics and legal problems posed by sampling, covering and reappropriating music tracks, songs and forms. Justin Morey (Leeds Metropolitan University) explored timely questions about what copyright is doing and whether it is serving the artist/consumer or instead stifling originality and the freedom to make musical "collages" of samples in order to transform them and make new meanings. His paper, "The Death of Sampling – Has Litigation Destroyed an Art Form?" addressed the impact that strict policing of musical copyright has had on sample-based music since the late 1980s. Careful to define his term 'creative sampling', Morey used a number of case studies – playing clips from artists such as Public Enemy, Mase and NWA – to focus on the limiting impact of such legal restrictions on creative production. In contrast, in "Reappropriating Jazz: The Construction of Jazz Rap as High Art in Hip-Hop Music," Justin Williams (University of Nottingham) examined the sampling of jazz in the hip-hop sub-genre of "jazz rap" and its resulting high-art discourse in the hip-hop community. Investigating the production contexts and media reception of jazz rap, he emphasised how the sub-genre was influenced by the mainstream perception of jazz as high art historically and in the 1980s. Co-opting jazz's connotations of art and heritage, jazz rap has used such associations to create distance in the stratification of hip-hop genres and other subgenres such as gangsta rap.

During the second conference session, the panel on "Visual Culture" offered a doubly diverse forum, embracing the interconnections and appropriations between art and advertising, cyberpunk and film, horror and camp, and international imitation between hip-hop graffiti artists. Rebecca Cobby's (University of Nottingham) paper, "' I am African', 'I am Gwyneth Paltrow': Quests for Universalism and the Controversy of Appropriation in African American Visual Culture" was particularly thought-provoking, exploring concepts of universality between white and black identity and experience. Moving from a discussion of Keep A Child Alive's "I am African" advertising campaign – featuring Hollywood stars dressed up as "Africans," to artist Carrie Mae Weems' art installation "The Hampton Project" – this was a compelling paper which explored the politics and controversies of visual cultural appropriation across racial lines. Meanwhile, Darren Elliott's (Royal Holloway) paper, "Queering *Carrie*: Appropriations of a Horror cinema icon" was an ambitious attempt to explore the multiple ways in which Brian De Palma's film has been appropriated and parodied by queer culture through plays, "drag", and references in queer cinema. Particularly provocative was his exploration of the themes of gender, HIV/AIDS, pleasure, misogyny and masculinity through an examination of Charles Lum's experimental short film *Indelible* (2004) which integrates scenes from *Carrie* (1976) with a hardcore porn film, *LA Tool and Die* (1979). Collectively, the papers in this panel did well to demonstrate the variety and multiplicity implicated in the term "cultural borrowing."

A third panel dealt with the important issue of our cultural fascination with borrowing and re-examining the past, entitled "Reworking the 1950s/60s." Papers included a discussion of the appropriation of Bach, Bergman and the Beatles in Christopher Munch's *The Hours and Times* (1991) and the persistence of spatial re-appropriations and re-significations of the ubiquitous American suburb in recent films such as *Pleasantville* (1998), *The Truman Show*

(1998) and *Happiness* (1998). However, the panel suggested that aside from academic readings of cultural borrowings, there are also social factors which need to be addressed for a thorough understanding of the meaning of such practices. Furthermore, Sarah Baker's (University of East London) accomplished paper, "Distinctive and Effortless? The Value of Retro Style of Lifestyle Television" focused on retro-home makeover episodes of lifestyle programmes *Changing Rooms* and *Grand Designs* to argue for the impact of social, cultural and aesthetic judgement on the definition of retro-style in material culture. Asserting the importance of cultural capital and class on the discourses of retro employed by these two programmes, Baker reminded us that despite the apparently exciting and symbolic "freedoms" that cultural borrowing allows, there are crucial economic and class factors which impact on how and what we can appropriate.

The Cultural Borrowings conference also offered a platform for scarcer forms of textual appropriation. For example, the panel uncomplicatedly titled "Remakes" refreshingly engaged with more exceptional varieties of cinematic remaking. Although diverse in their approaches, each of the papers motioned a *re-imagining* of the film remake. James MacDowell's (University of Warwick) close analysis of Gus Van Sant's 1998 pseudo-plagiarisation of Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) revealed the inadequacies of current remake theory, particularly its disinclination to address the uncanny phenomenon of the shot-for-shot remake. As a complete contrast, the panel's accompanying papers dealt with the equally under-explored phenomenon of cross-cultural Bollywood remakes. Maria Seijo-Richart (University of A Caruña) provided a textual comparison between *Dead Poets Society* (1989) and its Indian unacknowledged-remake *Mohabbatein* (2000) in order to argue for universal values. Furthermore, the panel discussion that followed rightfully challenged some of the assertions made, prompting the question of how we provide evidence of a loss of aura, or monitor the changing responses and perspectives of the spectator from original to counterfeit, and back again.

Further innovation was provided in one of the conference's closing panels entitled "Found Footage." Drawing connections with spectres, death and the séance, Emma Cocker (University of Nottingham) enabled us to consider archival materials as "ghosts of the past" in relation to "prosthetic memory" in her inspired attempt to combine fine arts theory and film studies methodologies. This paper was complemented by Elijah Horwatt's (York University) subsequent discussion on media ventriloquism and re-edited archival-footage or "recycled cinema." Offering several insightful examples of populist (often political) avant-garde online found footage media, Horwatt questioned the double role of the archivist as simultaneous *plagiarist* and *auteur*. Sergio Dias-Branco's (University of Kent) paper similarly explored new meanings and inventive playfulness through reproduced stock footage, this time vis-à-vis studying borrowed sounds and archival images in music videos. Most notable was his analysis of Cat Power's video "Maybe Not" (2005), consisting of a montage of clips of people falling off buildings, appropriated from several classic and contemporary film sequences. Finally adding to this discussion was James Whitfield's paper "Friendly Teasing: Comedic Uses of Found Footage and the Question of Value." Whitfield confirmed the productive capacities of found footage in mainstream media through his case study of the American cult TV show *Mystery Science Theatre 3000,* in which each episode, an archived 'bad' movie is played out in its entirety whilst being affectionately mocked and commented upon by the show's lead characters. Through its pseudo-improvised dialogue, the original films are re-contextualised in a rhetoric of humour, leading to the production of new viewing experiences and communities. Each of the papers lead inevitably to a lively panel discussion querying what exactly we mean by "found" in the term "found footage." Do we

imply something once lost in the margins, now reeled back into the mainstream? Or does the term signal the "finding of new meanings?"

Ultimately, the Cultural Borrowings conference (somewhat utopian in its attitude) signalled a new era of dialogism in adaptation and appropriation studies. It felt like a celebratory attempt to move texts beyond fidelity, encouraging us to finally learn to look at difference rather than sameness. Cultural appropriation was generally viewed as a liberating act, posing new questions and problems, and providing new meanings and experiences. Key lessons learnt included conceptualising the adaptation text as not a "whirl" but a less-arbitrary "layering" of references, and being more attentive to the heightened performativity of these unique forms of secondary text. The event usefully highlighted key areas of neglect, such as the adaptation of places and locations, the need to problematise the hierarchy of mediums (particularly with regards to viewing literature as industry), questions of power and property, and placing our discussions in the much overlooked context of audience reception.

New Directions in Turkish Film Studies

New Directions in Turkish Film Studies Conference IX: Cinema and Reality, 2-4 May 2008, Kadir Has Üniversitesi, Istanbul

A report by Jenna Ng, University College London, UK

The ninth in a conference series dedicated to Turkish cinema, "Cinema and Reality" covered the broad spectrum of analysing, investigating and interpreting realism and reality in the moving image. With most of the papers focussed on Turkish cinema or its cinematic history and traditions, the event was not only an exploration of the difficult and continually evolving issue of realism in film theory, but also instrumental in shedding light on new directions and angles in the study of Turkish cinema. In that sense, the conference ably straddled both its theoretical and cultural outposts, such that one productively and effectively enriched the other.

Organised by and held at the campus of Kadir Has Üniversitesi, the conference opened with a screening of Ismail Necmi's film, *Should I Really Do It?* (2008), followed by a Q&A discussion with its director. A self-confessedly deliberate blending of fiction and documentary, *Should I Really Do It?* follows Petra, a Turkish woman living in Germany (before moving back to Turkey), through her process of reconciling herself to her twin sister's death from cancer. Although occasionally dragged down by excessive exposition (mostly via Petra's extensive and not-too-subtle sessions with her therapist), the film remains a poignant introspection of Petra's grief and, beneath the laconic flatness of its docu-story, an emotional thematic interweaving of birth and death, dream and reality, life and change.

After a warm welcome note by Prof. Dr. Deniz Bayrakdar, Dean of Communication Faculty (Kadir Has Üniversitesi), the first panel began with a paper by Cağla Karabağ (Hacettepe Üniversitesi), "Realism in Nuri Bilge Ceylan's Films," on dream and realism in three of Ceylan's films—*The Village*, *Distant* and *Climates*—the first of a number of papers in the conference to engage with (i) Ceylan; and (ii) reality and dreams. Arguing that film realism can be achieved even via the depiction of dreams, her position built upon Selim Eyüboğlu's (Sinema Akademisyeni) suggestion, using Lacanian and Zizekian thought in her paper, "The Juncture the Reality Collapses," of a reality in dreams which is "more real than reality." The psychological aspect of realism was continued in Tarık Aktaş's (Maltepe Üniversitesi) paper, "Mental Journeys in Reality," which extended the thread of subjective belief in reality to other media forms, principally YouTube videos, surveillance cameras and simulation machines. Finally, Brian Bergen-Aurand (Nanyang Technological University, Singapore) brought an alternative angle to the discussion in his paper, "Seeking Other Memories in the Films of Derviş Zaim." Bringing together, via Levinas's ethics of representation, the dualism of ethics (the said versus the saying) and, via Gilberto Perez, the dual-time of cinema (the seeing versus the seen), he questioned the ethics of prioritising the present in cinematic representation and spectatorship. Linking these dualisms to the tasks of history ("to justify the present") and memory ("to justify my existence"), Bergen-Aurand's presentation reminded us that there is a larger import in registering the temporality of the image, and that its peculiar

ontology of pastness and presentness opens it up not only to time but also ethical consideration.

The second panel extended the discussion to broader aspects of Turkish culture and history. Filiz Uygun Yüksel's (Kadir Has Üniversitesi) paper, "Vasfiye, Asiye and Belinda as Representations of Reality…," discussed the depiction of family unity in the three Atif Yilmaz films, *Adi Vasfiye* (1985), *Asiye Nasil Kurtulur* (1986) and *Aaah Belinda* (1986). Yeni Film Dergisi (Marmara Üniversitesi), in "The Reality of Istanbul in Turkish Cinema," presented on the cinematic representations of Istanbul, specifically in the three frameworks of (i) small, bourgeois culture; (ii) immigration; and (iii) a new urban society in the global world. The third paper, "Reflections of Islamic Lifestyle on the Movie Screen," by Özlem Avcı and Berna Üçarol and Kürşat Kızıltuğ (Mimar Sinan Üniversitesi), underscored the complexities in negotiating depictions of Islam and Islamic lifestyles on film, particularly in terms of the classic tensions between the old and the new, the traditional and the modern, and between state and religion. This panel was particularly instructive in leading one not only to think about the general idea of films in terms of their contexts, but also, in my appreciation as a foreign observer, of the study of cinema within the broader social, historical and cultural tapestry of locale. Throughout the presentations, I was acutely aware of the local scholars' placement of cinema in the profundity of their own geography and culture, in turn ramping up my awareness of both my remoteness as well as critical distance. What I took away most from the panel was a deep and first-hand appreciation of the multi-variegation of scholarly overture, coloured by our cultures, backgrounds and heritages, a newfound respect for the intricacies of a multi-lingual, multi-cultural approach (so sadly ripped of all credibility by the ravaging pluralisms of postmodernism) and a conviction that everyone should go to a foreign, non-English conference at some point in his/her career for the richness of this experience.

The first paper of the third panel, "Am I in a Film?," by Jalal Toufic (Kadir Has Üniversitesi), turned up the most fascinating presentation of the conference. Toufic presented four atypical human conditions and aligned them, in various creative and thought-provoking ways, to salient cinematic characteristics. The four conditions, with the corresponding cinematic feature in parenthesis, are: (i) Lapses of consciousness—epilepsy, schizophrenia, LSD trips and "undeath" (editing); (ii) Freezing/ immobilisation—death, dance and, extrapolating from human condition to the natural world, event-horizons of black holes (frozen frames); (iii) Kinematic vision—acute psychosis, migraine disorders (stills); and (iv) Positive/negative hallucination (matting and keying in cinema and television). In drawing these relationships between the mechanical and the organic, Toufic presented challenging perspectives not only on technology and biology but also *physis* and *techne*. The other paper of the panel, "Realism, Allegory, and Arabic Cinema" by Anwar Massout (Carleton University), gave a persuasive and detailed analysis of Abdellatif Abdelhamid's *The Night of the Jackal* (1988), focussing on the realist techniques of the film, including its camera work, acting, gestures and mannerisms of its rural characters.

The evening ended with a bright light in the form of Dudley Andrew's (Yale University) evening keynote, "Tracking the *Cahiers* line from Bazin to the Digital." With characteristic grace and perspicacity, Andrew dissected André Bazin's well-known ontology thesis (fundamentally spelt out in Bazin's "The Ontology of the Photographic Image" essay)—the "axiom" of cinema's fundamental rapport with reality—by rallying his analysis around the two key tenets of (i) trace; and (ii) ellipsis. With respect to trace, Andrew lent particular insight to Bazin's ontology theory by linking Bazin's thoughts to a wider circle of scholars such as Sartre, Malraux, Benjamin and, eventually, Derrida (and, in relation to Sartre,

producing a slide from a page of Bazin's own copy of *L'Imaginaire*, which Andrew possesses, to show how Bazin had read the French philosopher! Talk of an impeccable method). With respect to ellipsis, Andrew elaborated on the role of loss and subtraction by which Bazin understands cinema—the essential filter by which we might project "something fuller" onto the image. Finally, the last few minutes of his keynote—a lot less than I would have liked—were spent tying up Bazin's ideas of latency and the hidden to digital cinema today, principally through commenting on *The Red Balloon*. Andrew's concluding implication that cinema's purity shines through not via reality or technology but through being pulled by the human imagination will surely warm the hearts of depressed Luddites. Like Bazin's own essays on cinema, Dudley Andrew's keynote was gracious and optimistic, choosing to inspire and exhilarate, to use cinema to enchant, and then again to re-enchant.

Day 2 began with Emanuel Jannasch's (Dalhousie University) paper, "Embodied Information and the Design of Reality," which discussed our access to reality via the tensions of the degradation of textural information in materials made by modern machines against the formal richness imparted by handmade artisanal craft. Ahmet Gürata (Bilkent Üniversitesi), in his paper, "Continuity vs Theatre Film: Emergence of Realist Aesthetics in Turkish Cinema," outlined a fascinating historicity of realism in Turkish cinema over three eras—(i) theatrical actors/staging (1914-1938); (ii) the transition period (1938-1952); and (iii) the filmmaking period (1952-1963)—by comparing their stylistic features through markers such as average shot length, shot scale, camera movement and point-of-view shots. "Acting and Reality in Cinema," by Selma Çekiç (Beykent Üniversitesi), discussed the role and harmonisation of acting with the other formal elements of the moving image to show reality in cinema, while the final paper, with possibly the most intriguing title of the conference, "The Real is Far Beyond the Giant Mountain in the Land of the Inferential Past Tense" by Tül Akbal Süalp (Bahçeşehir Üniversitesi), examined levels of time and space in the films of *Who Killed Shadows* (2006), *Waiting for Heaven* (2006) and *Ulak* (2008), particularly in terms of the self-reflexiveness and self-awareness of the "inferential past tense."

The second keynote of the conference, "Grierson Plus v. The Post-Documentarians: Theories of Documentary as Dead or Triumphant," by Seth Feldman (York University), traced the documentary tradition from "the discourse of sobriety" to after the postmodern divide. The first part of the keynote focussed on the familiar theories of documentary and reality, which Feldman covered with both detail and panache, including discussions of films by Flaherty, Grierson and Vertov. However, Feldman reserved his most fascinating material for the second half, in which he discussed documentaries with digital effects, such as *Climate Earth* and *Walking with Dinosaurs*, linking the mutability of the digital not only to Lev Manovich's toolbox of ideas but also to a radical re-reading of Vertovian application in our constant dialogue and negotiation with image and reality. Feldman concluded his keynote by contemplating on the pernicious effects of reality TV on documentary which, he argues, shifts the discourse from reality, digitality and postmodern doubt to the "practice of documentary,""the use of documentary as rhetoric" and the exposure of "rhetoric as rhetoric."

The penultimate panel of the day featured three papers which examined Turkish cinema squarely within the history and social reality of Turkey. The first paper, "About the Cinemas of Lütfi Akad, Metin Erksan, Yılmaz Güney and Yeşim Ustaoğlu: Reality, Historical Heritage, Continuity and the Dialectics of Break" by Zahit Atam (cinema historian), discussed the realist philosophies of the Turkish directors in his title, arguing for the humanism in the aesthetics and intentions of their works. In "Looking at the Military Coup of 1980 in Cinema and Social Reality," Eda Çatalçam (Kadir Has Üniversitesi) demonstrated

impressive historic vision by connecting the military coup of 12 September 1980 to the 1 May 2008 riots in Taksim Square (remember the conference began on 2 May; she presented on 3 May), remonstrating that the films of the 12 September coup were insufficient in both strength and material to offer any coherent unity or identity of the Turkish people. The third paper, "Military Coups in Turkish Cinema and Their Reflections on Social Reality" by Sumru Yıldırım (Izmir Ekonomi Üniversitesi), similarly criticised the unrealistic and incomplete portrayal of the 12 September coup in the films *Hoşçakal Yavin* and *Leoparin Kuyruğu*; implicit in her criticism is also a charge that directors have both social and artistic responsibilities to portray the coup in its historical purity. Through both latter papers, I am, again, struck by how deeply Turkish cinema is entrenched in its social and historical fabric, if in this case only in terms of how much the 12 September coup has affected the country's artistic life.

The last panel of the day, "Between Turkey and Germany," focussed on the films of Fatih Akın, one of the most successful Turkish directors in the circuit today. Tuna Yılmaz and Gül Kaçmaz Erk (Izmir Ekonomi Üniversitesi) examined Akın's ambivalences between his Turkish and German cultures in four of his films: *In July* (2000), *Crossing the Bridge* (2005), *Head-on* (2004) and *Edge of Heaven* (2007). In the second paper, Melis Behlil (Kadir Has Üniversitesi) rightly charges that Akın's diasporic cinema is too complex to be analysed within a single paradigm, opting instead to examine Akın's work through multiple prisms, first of Istanbul in his films as (i) homecoming; (ii) tourist destination, fraught with its beautiful and exotic Orientalism; and (iii) film location; as well as of the multi-faceted identities of Akın as (i) of German-Turkish heritage; (ii) filmmaker; (iii) cinephile and (iv) DJ. Yeşim Burul Seven (Istanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi), in "Images of Reality, Imagining the Real: Transnational Documentaries and Reality," discussed the realism of documentaries in portraying the lives of foreign immigrants, focusing on the personal and the intimate. In "Mapping By Means Of Filmic Reality: Fatih Akın's New Europe," Deniz Bayrakdar (Kadir Has Üniversitesi) argued in a fascinating paper that Akın suggests "a new Europe", one which transcends its borders into a more complex, more abstract construct. In particular, she compares this construction of Europe in Fatih Akın's *Edge of Heaven* against Lars von Trier's *Europa*, concluding that Akın's filmic mapping of European geography is one that is more hopeful and optimistic than von Trier's dark, tragic and suffocating portrayal. The final paper of the day, "Where Does the Reality Stand Master and Where Does the Subject? Fatih Akın as a Cosmopolitan Director," Özge Özyılmaz (Istanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi) underscores the Orientalism in Akın's films, arguing for the need of an open, intellectual and prejudice-free stand in understanding the world.

There was a final morning session on the last day of the conference ("Purified Reality: Images of the City in Yeşilcam" by Aslı Kotaman (Kadir Has Üniversitesi); "Sharpening the Reality and the Mind: Upward Mobility/Class Suicide Representations in Yeşilcam and Social Memory" by Evren Barın Eğrik (Beykent Üniversitesi); and "Postmortem for Yeşilcam" by Savaş Aslan (Bahçeşehir Üniversitesi)," which I did not attend as the translators were unavailable for the session. Nonetheless, the first two days of the conference provided me with profound insight not only to Turkish cinema but also its traditions and the cultural, social and historical fabric in which it is ensconced.

In summary, the conference was tremendously successful: it formed an excellent forum to expand academic thought and discussion on Turkish cinema, and it was impressively well-organised, with guides stationed at the university entrances to escort us to the lecture hall, a good supply of UN-esque headsets for translations by professional translators who worked

tirelessly through the conference, name plates which were swiftly changed after every session, endless bottled containers of still water, dedicated IT technicians, and even a thoughtful goody bag with souvenirs from the university. On the social front, there were frequent coffee breaks and cocktail sessions in the evening which provided opportunities for the requisite conference mingling; the foreign delegates were also very kindly taken out to dinner on both nights of the conference by the Turkish scholars, including a very memorable and authentic experience of Turkish cuisine on the final night, where friendships and networking circuits were forged in the midst of all the drinking and dining.

Most of all, though, it was the city and the people which counted most: Istanbul is truly the most hospitable city I have visited, and everybody I met in and out of the conference were invariably warm, friendly and gracious. It was not without a wrench when I finally headed back to grey and rainy London, leaving behind the graceful spires, the misty panorama at the waterfront, the glint of the Golden Horn.