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Media Across Borders. The First International Conference on the Localisation of Film, Television and Video Games

University of Roehampton, London, 9 June 2012

A report by Sylwia Szostak, University of Nottingham, UK

What happens when global TV formats travel around the world? How can game content be carefully adapted to local expectations? How can we deconstruct the concept of the global and investigate how it is employed in different locales? How can we theorize the localization of media across borders more appropriately? How can we improve connections between industry and academia? These were some of the questions raised during the first international Media Across Borders conference organised by the University of Roehampton as part of the broader Media Across Borders network, which is funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council as part of its Translating Cultures programme. The conference provided a valuable and timely platform for the exchange of academic ideas, research findings and practical experiences of over fifty scholars working on the theme of localization of film, television and video games. The conference consisted of a series of parallel panels covering the localization of television formats, film adaptation across national borders, adaptation across media platforms, amateur subtitling and dubbing, managing cross-cultural products, and localizing video games for the world.

The day's first panel, "Aspects of Localization," chaired by Jeanette Steemers (University of Westminster), began with Lothar Mikos's (HFF Konrad Wolf) paper "Global Media between Localization and De-Localization." As academia more often than not approaches the international circulation of programme formats through the prism of localization and the local adaptations, Mikos's paper emphasized that formatting is in fact as much about de-localization as it is about localization. Television formats localize in the sense that they create a programme with the potential to be produced in multiple locally relevant incarnations. However, at the same time formats are, to a large extent, determined by processes of de-localization, because their structure and look need to be created in a manner that can be applied anywhere and thus be universal. Similarly, for Mikos, de-localization is an equally important consideration in scripted series and serials. With reference to recent or current American TV shows, Mikos argued that such programmes can be de-localized by placing some events or episodes in locations that are not specifically referenced, as is the case with *The X-Files* (Fox, 1993-2002), *Heroes* (NBC, 2006-2010) and more recently *Touch* (Fox, 2012- present). Others can be de-localised through being situated in fictive, imaginary locations – such as *Weeds* (Showtime, 2005-

2012), *The Simpsons* (Fox, 1989 – present), or *Desperate Housewives* (ABC, 2004-2012).

The following presentation by Kate Edwards from Englobe Inc., entitled "Content Culturalization and the Battle for Public Mindshare," concentrated on localization of video games. Edwards is the founder and principal consultant of Englobe Inc., a Seattle-based consultancy for content culturalization. As someone who deals with the fundamental challenges of cross-border media as part of her work, Edwards spoke passionately about conflicts that arise between those who produce video game content and those who regulate its consumption in local markets. According to Edwards, the issue of adjusting to particular locales is crucially important and can often determine the game's success or failure in a given market. What was particularly interesting about Edwards's paper was her proposal of the term "culturalization," as opposed to localization, as a more appropriate way of theorizing how video game content can be adjusted to local contexts. She viewed localization as a late stage process in a development cycle, which leaves little room for a thorough and effective adjustment to local cultures. Conversely, she framed culturalization as an emerging process by which game content is more carefully adapted to local context beyond mere linguistic translation, and that takes into consideration locale-specific sensitivities. Culturalization, as devised by Edwards, thus allows multicultural gamers to engage with a global product in potentially more meaningful ways. In order to make game content not only locally understood but also locally relevant, she distinguished two phases of content culturalization: reactive and proactive. Reactive culturalization refers to the removing of potentially problematic issues; as an example Edwards described the game *Fallout 3*, which included a creature called a "Brahmin," a mutated, 2-headed Brahman bull. The presence of this creature made the title inaccessible to the consumer market in India, because Brahman cattle are considered sacred to the Hindu religion. Revising this one aspect would have made the game viable for the Indian market. Proactive culturalization, on the other hand, involves adding elements that allow gamers to perceive the game as something local in nature, or at least locally relevant.

Heidi Keinonen (University of Tampere, Finland) ended the second panel on "Cultural Adaptation" with her paper "Formatted Authenticity: Genre, National Culture and the Finnish Version of *Connected*." Keinonen's paper concentrated on the Finnish programme *Iholla*, which is based on an Israeli format, *Connected* (developed by Armoza Formats). Keinonen highlighted the generic hybridity of the adaptation: the original Israeli programme is located in the category of factual programming while the Finnish adaptation avoids any clear-cut generic categorization. This situation is rather unusual in the format business, where the genre rarely undergoes transformation in the adaptation process. Keinonen went on to discuss how the adaptation challenges the national identity instead of perpetuating it, as is often the case with format adaptations. *Iholla* features

Finnish women living in the Helsinki area, but all of the participants come from different, non-Finish backgrounds: one is half-Turkish, another half-American. One has a Spanish father living in Estonia, and another one's mother is half-Indian. As such, the show does not perpetuate the traditional image of "Finnishness" but rather points towards a new formulation of Finnish national identity. *Iholla* is therefore a case study that challenges our idea of what happens when a format is adapted.

The lively roundtable discussion on "The Universal and the Local" that started the afternoon session, also chaired by Steemers, brought together scholars working with media in a transnational perspective. Jean Chalaby (City University, London), Simone Knox (University of Reading), Miriam Stehling (Leuphana University, Germany) and Elke Weissmann (Edge Hill University) engaged in a discussion of how best to define and theorize the complex concepts of local and universal. Knox observed that while transnational flows of screen media have rightfully gained scholarly attention—and while the concepts of context, heterogeneity and difference are now at the center of academic discussion—the idea of the universal should not be neglected. For Knox, the more we examine media across borders, the more likely we are to encounter something that remains constant. Careful critical engagement with the universal can, according to Knox, offer the opportunity to develop useful multi-disciplinary conceptual frameworks, in which the universal and the local can be understood as conceptually intertwined and not exclusive.

The focus of the conference was on the establishment of new disciplinary and interdisciplinary methodologies to account for localization of media content across borders and across platforms. The conference revealed that the now popular terms of global and local are in fact quite problematic. In order to better investigate the nature of concepts such as universal and global, we need to deconstruct them, to unpick the layers of meaning and see how they can be applied in different locales and contexts. This event thus emphasized the importance of individual perspectives in different conditions and highlighted the need to communicate across not only academic disciplines but also across personal backgrounds, contexts and locales. The conference demonstrated that in order to theorize those concepts more appropriately, more attention should be paid to how the global, the universal and the local work in specific national and temporal contexts, highlighting the importance of a transdisciplinary approach and of different cultural, economic and social settings.

The international and cross-disciplinary nature of the conference stressed the necessity to appreciate the differences that exist between markets in various countries, where media production and cross-border interactions are shaped not only by local policy and politics but also by history, as many papers in the conference illustrated. Several speakers expressed a deep appreciation of a media product and its cross-border life as a negotiation between all those involved in its production and later distribution. Steemers reminded the audience

that industry professionals are also part of the audience, and the academic approach to media products needs to take account of this nuance rather than relying on the supposed industry/audience binary.

The organizers of Media Across Borders fulfilled their goal of creating a space for knowledge transfer between the academia and the industry in bringing industry professionals into a dialogue with an impressive list of academics. Alongside Englobe's Kate Edwards., invited industry professionals included BBC Worldwide's Joerg Bachmaier and Discovery Communications Europe's Robert Meeger, all of whom actively participated in discussions in the academic setting. This type of exchange between scholars and industry professionals is still relatively rare in academia, but the establishment of closer links between industry and academia can contribute towards more empirical research findings, allowing both parties to understand aspects of their work from new perspectives. This is probably the biggest contribution of the conference: it engaged with the topics of media localization in ways that can benefit the treatment of concepts such as the local, universal and transnational both theoretically in the area of media studies and practically within media industries.

Cinema of Intimacy and/or Intimacy of Cinema: The Seventeenth International SERCIA Conference

University of Burgundy, Dijon, France, 5-7 September 2012

A report by Amanda Konkle, University of Kentucky (USA)

The Seventeenth International SERCIA Conference featured eighty speakers from twelve countries, with the conference's nineteen panels and two keynote speakers advancing varying definitions of intimacy and deploying these readings of intimacy in a wide range of contexts. Speakers discussed an impressive array of cinematic styles, including silent cinema, the classical Hollywood style, documentary films, independent and underground cinema, and contemporary cinema, probing the ways in which style affects representations of intimacy. Several papers also investigated new technologies for engaging with film, such as smartphones, with speakers focusing on the ways such technologies alter the film/spectator relationship as well as relationships among spectators. Scholars examined intimacy in relation to a gamut of themes, including death, the family, interiority and exteriority, and the psyche, and engaged with critical issues of race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, and the body, demonstrating the relevance of intimacy studies to multiple areas of inquiry. Papers also explored wider aspects of film study, such as genre, spectatorship, acting and stardom, sound, and visual aesthetics, further developing the field's methods by providing templates for studying intimacy in relation to these established arenas of consideration.

The conference's key themes, as well as potential modes for exploring them, were outlined in Thomas Elsaesser's (University of Amsterdam/Weimar) keynote speech, "Touch and Gesture: On the Borders of Intimacy." Defining intimacy as a condition that implies its own negation and always suggests the imminent possibility of shame, Elsaesser emphasized the tension inherent in intimacy between the public and the private, speaking of intimacy as a kind of border. Moreover, according to Elsaesser, the current interest in intimacy in film studies reflects a "symptomatic shift" suggestive of, among other things, the increasing prevalence of phenomenological and haptic approaches to film analysis primarily based on the work of Vivian Sobchak and Laura Marks. However, Elsaesser warned that this new focus on the tactile sensations associated with film viewing risks eliminating attention to the symbolic elements of cinema. This symptomatic shift is also occasioned by the rise of what Tim Palmer has called "brutal intimacy" in the cinema of extremity in France and Europe including, for example, some of the recent grisly work of Gaspar Noé, Catherine Breillat, and Claire Denis, and the contrary movement to treat genre conventions without irony in the cinema of sincerity in the US, particularly in the work of Wes Anderson. Finally, the symptomatic shift toward the study of intimacy in American cinema indicates an interest in spectatorship embodied in the

continued movement towards audience studies, especially those concerned with registering viewer responses to film experiences.

Elsaesser's keynote addressed two subjects that resonated throughout the conference panels: first, the need to investigate the effect of applying the notion of intimacy in various relations and contexts; and, second, the need to investigate modern forms of intimate engagement with cinema engendered by new viewing technologies as well as the innovative appropriation and manipulation strategies online film consumers use. Many attendees noted, during the question and answer session, that while we can locate "intimacy" in any viewing experience, it is important to attend to the relational and contextual aspects of intimacy. To that end, the conference panels studied intimacy in various eras and locales, highlighting numerous cinema-viewing experiences. The panel "Intimacy and Film Genre in the Classical Era," for example, investigated intimacy in Hollywood sound films. Grégoire Halbout (Université Paris Diderot) discussed the effect of censorship on expressions of intimacy in screwball comedies. Constrained by the Hays Code, these films could express intimacy only through fast-paced "indirect speech." Brenda Austin-Smith (University of Manitoba) investigated "Intimate Affects" in relation to senior-aged women and the classical Hollywood melodrama. Through interviews, Austin-Smith found that viewers of these melodramas remembered them as presenting strong heroines enduring difficult situations. These viewers, facing the Depression, World War II, and post-war reconstruction, identified intimately with these heroines and thus took comfort from the films.

Other panels addressed the ways various elements of a film's composition communicate intimacy. A panel on "Acting and Stars" discussed intimacy in relation to screen performances, star biographies, and star impersonations. Virginia Blum (University of Kentucky), in "Imitations of Love: Screen Actress Performances of Intimacy," suggested that star texts contribute to presumed viewer intimacy with stars. This presumed intimacy affects viewers' engagement with the films, as they seek correlations between the on-screen image and the off-screen persona. In some cases, as outlined in Clara Juncker's (Danish Institute for Advanced Studies) "Marilyn Close-Ups: America's Blonde Venus in Gay Culture," this presumed intimacy even encourages the viewer to appropriate the star's image to make political statements, as is the case with Marilyn Monroe imitations and impersonations. Two panels on "Intimate Voices and Sounds" suggested that voice, dialogue, and music communicate intimacy to viewers in ways the image cannot. In fact, as Raphaëlle Costa de Beauregard (Université Toulouse Le Mirail) argued in "Intimacy Shared in Laughter and Tears: *Brief Encounter* (David Lean, 1945) and *The Seven Year Itch* (Billy Wilder, 1955)," the aural elements of films often contradict visual elements in ways that provide greater access to the depiction of the "imaginary nature of intimacy." Costa de Beauregard suggested film sound links the spectator and the film situation, allowing the spectator to identify with the intimacy depicted onscreen. Finally, a

panel on "Looks and Kisses" interrogated the aesthetic components of cinematic identification (such as point-of-view shots). In "The Intimate Gaze: (Deviant) Uses of the Subjective Camera in *Lady in the Lake* (Robert Montgomery, 1947) et *La Femme défendue* (Phillipe Harel, 1997)," Christophe Gelly (Université Blaise Pascal) contrasted the use of the subjective viewpoint in these two films, suggesting that viewers identify with the looks of onscreen agents through subjective shots attributed to characters.

Several speakers considered the physicality of intimacy and the emotionality of intimate relationships. Marc Vernet's (Université Denis Diderot) keynote speech investigated the complicated family relationships in the Triangle films of 1915-1917, particularly those of D.W. Griffith. In these films, Vernet noted, the children either rescue the parents or the parents kill the children. Vernet's analysis suggests that war affects depictions and understandings of familial intimacy in unique ways. Other papers on the family supported Vernet's proposition that families provide a composite of security and oppression, safety and danger. Panels on "The Intimacy of Death" and "The Cinematic Body and Body Horror" further addressed the relationship between intimacy and embodiment. Speakers also engaged issues of self-intimacy as explored by films. Papers on autobiographical films and biopics investigated the ways in which films express a particular character's desires and motivations through camera angles, points of view, and sounds. Papers engaging Lacan's concept of "extimate" considered ways films depict exterior expressions of the interior self. Alain Cohen (University of California, San Diego) noted the parallels between psychoanalysis and the cinema: both study interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. Furthermore, according to Cohen, in on-screen depictions as well as in lived experience, intimacy is always transgressive and always risky.

While the conference speakers attested to the inconclusive nature of these deliberations on intimacy, the conference raised several important areas for continued study of intimacy and cinema. Many presenters discussed intimacy as situated on the borders between public and private, interior and exterior, closeness and violence, and comfort and embarrassment. The ways films negotiate these border spaces offer exciting possibilities for future studies of intimacy. Moreover, speakers agreed that we need to continue to develop definitions of intimacy that apply to various cinematic contexts, including those concerning filmic representation as well as the viewing experience. Martine Beugnet (Université Paris Diderot), who presented on "Miniature Pleasures: On Watching Films on an iPhone," especially encouraged attendees to be alert to innovative artistry arising from new technologies, including the "art of the miniature." Beugnet and other speakers addressing new cinematic technologies encouraged the continued study of technological innovations, including 3D, as well as new means for viewing cinema, such as digital downloads and online mash-ups and tributes. In illustrating methods for studying intimacy, dissecting intimacy's relational nature, and probing the ways changing viewing technologies

alter our relationships to films, this conference proved that the study of intimacy and the cinema is a rich terrain that necessitates further investigation.

Living British Cinema Presents the Film Finances Archive

Queen Mary, University of London, 12 October 2012

A report by Aoife Sheehy, Queen Mary's, University of London, UK

An afternoon with the Film Finances Archive saw the first public viewing of the archival material owned by Film Finances, Inc., a provider of completion guarantees to banks and other investors for thousands of films from 1950 to the present day. The presentations and accompanying exhibition showcased just some of the archive's collection of material relating to the production of independent British films since 1950. The event was organised by Charles Drazin and Lucy Bolton of Queen Mary, University of London, who run Living British Cinema, an organization that promotes the appreciation of British film culture and history. This event was Living British Cinema's first of the year, and was attended by academics, Queen Mary students, and the general public.

The formal presentations began with a brief introduction by Lucy Bolton, followed by a show-reel prepared by student Mitchell Harris, encompassing many of the films that would be discussed later, including *The African Queen* (1951), *Cabaret* (1972), *Zulu* (1964), and particularly, *Dr. No* (1962). Charles Drazin then outlined the history of the work of Film Finances, focusing on the idea of "the unsung hero." Drazin's hero was Film Finances founder Robert Garrett. Attendees saw clips of films Garrett produced in the 1930s and heard a condensed biography of his life and relationship to British film. The founding of Film Finances in 1950, according to Drazin, was a response by Garrett both to the financial crisis in the British film industry in the late 1940s, but also a spark of genius from a film producer in solving the conflict between creativity and finance by the offering of completion bonds to independent filmmakers in order to keep the banks happy. From its inception, Garrett and Film Finances existed, in Drazin's words "at the point where money and art meet."

Drazin told us about stories and characters from archived correspondence between Film Finances employees and figures such as Michael Powell, who was initially scathing but eventually won over by the efficacy of Garrett and his company. He touched on the possibilities for scholarship offered by the archive by tracing the history-through-production-reports of Terence Young and other creative figures supported by Film Finances from *Paratrooper*/*The Red Beret* in 1953 to *Dr. No* in 1962. The Bond connections made through the event were both timely, considering the 50th anniversary of *Dr. No*'s release, and pertinent to Drazin's own research into the relationship between Film Finances and the first James Bond film, published in the book A Bond for Bond (Film Finances,

2011). A secondary theme of treasure and treasure-hunting also emerged. All speakers presented the wealth of research possibilities offered by the archive as priceless treasure awaiting discovery by members of both the academic community and industry.

A series of reports were then given by the team who have been working on the archive for the past year, compiling an inventory and beginning the process of assessing the archive's full extent. Firstly, Schuyler Ransohoff (Film Finances Inc.) championed the archivist's own "unsung hero" with "John Croydon: The Voice of the Archive." Croydon was an analyst for Film Finances who reported on the feasibility of the company taking on a project, often using just three documents: a script, a shooting schedule, and a projected budget. For Ransohoff, Croydon's letters, choice quotes from which included comments on the impossibility of controlling penguins, form a "running commentary" on British film production during some of its most interesting and fruitful years. Selected letters and pre-production reports by Croydon were offered as supplementary material for attendants to take with them as kind of treasure-hunting teaser.

"A Case Study from the Archives: Joseph Losey," given by Olivia Parkes (Film Finances Inc.), traced a narrative from Losey's relationship to Film Finances since he began to make films in Britain after being blacklisted in Hollywood. Parkes echoed Drazin in highlighting the importance of the archive in revealing how the industry and its creative minds actually worked, and further emphasized the "limitless" academic applications of such knowledge. Archival material on Croydon and other's reactions to Losey and Harold Pinter's *The Servant* (1963) shed light on how truly shocking the film was at the time, giving a sense of reality to what those studying such films understand from historical knowledge. John Croydon's exhibited report on the pre-production documents of The Servant includes his assessment of the script as "Awful! Or at least to me." Parkes' presentation could only touch on the story of Joseph Losey and Film Finances, but in her conclusions she commented on the multitude of studies that could be done on the many ways in which the "unsung heroes" of Film Finances helped to (in Croydon's words) "keep things bubbling on" in the British film industry.

Wes Fleuchaus closed the afternoon's presentations with a brief talk on his experience and the logistics of working with the archive. Here the theme of treasure hunting came to the fore, as Fleuchaus described receiving archival material in string-sealed brown boxes. He directed attendants to particular parts of the exhibition, including production telegrams from the set of *Zulu* and shared his own Archive highlights, including a sinking African Queen and Katherine Hepburn falling in a river. His concluding remarks noted that although the Archive offered "personal narratives," due to the private nature of the

documents and Film Finances, Inc's ongoing industrial activities, only the most "benign and positive" correspondence was selected to display.

The event organisers chose to offer an informal reception rather than panel Q&A, which allowed attendants to browse the exhibition and approach the archivists directly with their questions. The exhibition, enjoyably perused with wine and tapas, included the pre-production documents that John Croydon and others used to make their feasibility reports, storyboards, correspondence from the set of *Dr. No* (including worried reports of Terence Young's spending habits), and a certificate of congratulations to Francis Ford Coppola on completing The Outsiders on schedule and within budget. Charles Drazin's work on Film Finances and *Dr. No* was available for perusal, and photocopies of selected reports by John Croydon were offered to attendants to take with them.

The informality of the reception allowed academics, students and others to discuss the presentations and exhibition without the pressure of formulating questions, and contributed to an atmosphere of inspiration and excitement about the Film Finance Archive's possibilities and the figures who dominated the presentations—Garrett and Croydon—who many attendees had never or hardly considered before. Ransohoff, Parkes, and Fleuchaus are taking the exhibition on tour, and Charles Drazin continues his research; this connection between a private archive and academics promises a great deal more treasure-hunting, the uncovering of more heroes, and an entirely new resource for the study of British film history.