The End of the Beginning

In March Dr. Julian Stringer delivered a paper on the subject of film festivals, which proves to be an important yet underdeveloped area within Film Studies. Stringer discussed issues such as who festivals 'were for,' how audiences are interpertated by festival rhetoric, as well as some of the diverse functions film festivals perform.

Stringer, from the University of Nottingham, concentrated upon Nottingham’s own ‘Shots in the Dark’ festival between the years of 1991 and 2000.

April saw the departments first ‘home fixture’ with visiting Professor Graham Petrie delivering a talk to assembled guests entitled “A German Director in 1920s Britain: E.A. Dupont From ‘Variety’ to ‘Piccadilly.’” Graham examined Dupont’s career in order to establish whether or not through his connection with the ‘Eurofilm’ project the director was able to transfer any stylistic or thematic concerns from his German work into his British films.

The final seminar of the term was delivered by Professor Christine Geraghty from the University of Glasgow and examined the translation of Tennessee Williams’s plays to the screen. Geraghty examined how many of William’s adaptations to the screen are considered successful by literary critics, and flagged some of the issues arising around translations from stage to screen including the application of terminologies such as ‘melodrama.’ Geraghty’s seminar also engaged with the impact films such as ‘A Streetcar named Desire’ (1951) and ‘Cat on a Hot Tin Roof’ (1958) had upon the conventions of 1950s cinema.

Overall the series proved to be very successful, with both staff and students from various levels and departments attending the seminars. Yet more speakers are already booked for the next academic year and this list looks set to grow further as we begin to plan for the next session. Information about the Tuesday night seminars and the upcoming summer conference can be found on our department web site.

On behalf of the entire Film Studies department I would like to wish you all a pleasant summer and we hope to see you all here sometime in the future as either guests or speakers.

David Fleming (ed).

Links:
St Andrews Department of Film Studies:
http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/modlangs/filmstudies/
Conference programme:
http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/modlangs/filmstudies/events/conferences/programme.htm
Acting English?

Studies of British cinema suggest, with unfailing regularity, that John Mills was an English Everyman. When the actor died on the 23rd April 2005 – St George’s Day – the newspapers followed suit, hailing him as Englishness incarnate. But what exactly is an English Everyman? And how do you get to be one? Those were the questions that bothered me every time I read that Mills embodied the nation. Why Mills? What was it about his body, his screen persona and his style of acting that made him resonate with cultural conceptions of Britishness in general and Englishness in particular? Eventually I had to do something about this, and my conclusions about how Mills became a national icon and the linchpin of middlebrow cinema can be found in John Mills and British Cinema: Masculinity, Identity and Nation.

Mills was a wonderful subject for study. His screen career began in 1932 and he was still playing leading men in the 1960s. Although most commonly remembered as the archetypal hero of the Second World War, he acted in nearly all the genres of British cinema, appearing in musicals, comedies, costume dramas and crime thrillers. In addition to this, Mills was remarkable because he played across the class barrier. Unlike most leading actors of his generation, he was comfortable playing both the working and the middle classes, and his representations of both categories were deeply reassuring to a nation shaken by the Second World War. Mills was a small man, with a smooth, youthful face and large, vulnerable eyes. His style of performance was naturalistic and understated. Manifest in this low-key, ordinary body, the working classes appeared trustworthy rather than threatening, while figures of authority seemed democratic and approachable.

Mills's body, then, goes some way towards explaining why it was he, rather than any of the taller, stronger, more obviously virile male leads of the mid-century years who came to embody Englishness – but he was also an accomplished actor. John Mills and British Cinema contains detailed readings of key British films, including The Way to the Stars, Great Expectations, Scott of the Antarctic, Ice Cold in Alex and Ryan's Daughter. These films reveal that Mills's embodiment of English masculinity was so successful for so long because it managed to combine continuity and change. The subtle mutations that can be traced in his performances tell a story not just about acting, but also about the ways in which the nation was changing. Mills, then, was indeed 'acting English', and his performances articulate the changing values and ongoing anxieties of twentieth century British culture.

Gill Plain
John Mills and British Cinema: Masculinity, Identity and Nation by Gill Plain is published by Edinburgh
St Andrews Student film recognised by Cannes International Film Festival

There was fantastic news this term for Art History student Marisha Mukerjee who was informed that her latest short film *The Beholder* had been included in the Cannes International Film Festival’s Short Film Corner. Mukerjee is currently in her fourth year at St Andrews and has been a prolific contributor to University Theatre and Film scenes during her time here as a student. Mukerjee, who has been described as ‘a rising new star’ is originally from Ohio and was *The Beholder’s* Executive Producer. She is due to be joined in Cannes between the 17th and 28th of May by the film’s assistant Director, St Andrews graduate, Naomi George. Mukerjee and George are well-known figures around the St Andrews performing arts scene, having both held key committee positions in the student’s mermaids and Rouge productions. Mukerjee most memorable contributions include a successful outdoor production of Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* set amidst the ruined castle grounds of St Andrews and a successful feature entry in last Spring’s Half Cut Film Festival entitled *The Composer*. Also a keen actress, Mukerjee played Judy Shepard in *The Laramie project* at the Crawford Arts Centre last November as well as fulfilling the dual roles of producer and performer in the sell out Vday productions of *The Vagina Monologues. The Beholder*, directed by Aidan Elliot met great critical acclaim when released earlier this year and is set to become yet more successful after screening at Cannes and competing against other short films from around the world. The film will also be competing for the attentions of large distribution companies who can offer greater opportunities by releasing the winning film to greater and more diverse audiences. Mukerjee hopes that this experience will augur a promising and interesting new phase in her career, stating: “This is an exciting opportunity for any young filmmaker trying to launch themselves into this difficult and highly competitive industry. I hope to make the most of my time in Cannes, and hopefully this will just be the first step towards greater things yet to come.”

Mukerjee intends to move to Bombay after graduating this summer where she will take up position as an assistant director within the Bollywood film industry and is set to begin a series of exciting projects between the film industries of India, Hollywood and the UK. Ultimately Mukerjee hopes to release her first feature length film within three years, but her next project is directing a short film starring Rebecca Bond called *The Host* due for release later this year.

David Fleming

Hollywood Star Lauded by University!

In the month of May the University announced the esteemed recipients of the University’s honorary degrees and this year included Hollywood Film Star Michael Douglas. Actor and Producer Douglas, who is a regular at golfing events in St Andrews is set to receive a honorary degree from the University. Douglas’ Hollywood resume includes a series of powerful performances and leading roles in some of Hollywood’s most successful films including *Basic Instinct*, *Fatal Attraction*, and my own personal favourite *The Game*. Douglas’ previous honours include winning two Oscars; Best Actor for his performance in Oliver Stone’s *Wall Street* and a Best Picture for *One Flew Over The Cuckoo’s Nest*. St Andrews’ Principal Dr. Brian Lang commented that the University is “honouring Michael Douglas in recognition of his outstanding contribution to film... This event will be all the more timely given the forthcoming, official launch of the University’s Department of Film Studies.” Degrees and honorary degrees will be presented on the occasion of this summer’s graduation between 20th and 23rd June.

David Fleming
SCMS Conference Report
2-5 MARCH 2006; VANCOUVER, BC – CANADA

This year’s conference of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies (SCMS) was held in Vancouver. As always, the sheer scale of the event makes it impossible for any report to offer anything but a (very) partial vision: fifteen panels were running at any given time slot in what were four very busy days, including a mix of caucuses meetings, panels, plenaries and special screenings. Whereas the European location of last year’s conference (London) facilitated the attendance of European delegates in high numbers, and a clear stress on “European” debates in plenaries and panels, this year’s return to North American territory equally determined the choice of topics. The theme of the conference, “Media and the Americas” was fittingly explored in two plenaries: one given by indigenous documentary filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin (“Abenaki: People from where the sun rises”), and a round panel about media across the Americas conducted by Stephen Prince, Michael Curtin, Michele Hilmes and Yeidy Rivero. Issues of historiography in cinemas from the Americas and Asia featured prominently in the programme. I will concentrate however on two other thematic threads that came up consistently throughout the conference, and to which two staff members of the University of St Andrews—David Martin-Jones and myself—contributed with papers: debates around issues of gender, and a renewed engagement with film aesthetics & theory.

Gender topics were covered from a variety of perspectives intersecting with issues of race, nation, class, media, the local and the global. Some of the most interesting contributions revolved around allegories of resistance and intervention in nationalist and historiographic discourses by women filmmakers from Muslim countries. Two different panels allowed for comparative approaches to Tunisian, Moroccan and Egyptian cinemas: one on “North-African cinemas: aesthetics, politics, and economy”, and another one “Global perspectives on women and the cinema”. The latter gave me the chance to listen to highly innovative research papers presented by Kay Dickinson, Sachiko Mizuno, and Lori Morimoto about the role of women as directors, subjects of representation, and active audiences of localised film practices and histories in Cairo, Tokyo and Hong Kong, whereas my own presentation focused on feminist approaches to the European historical biopic; a very engaging discussion ensued. Another panel on “Women directing and other forms of difference” (with papers on Lois Weber, Thornton’s Adynata (1983), Dunye’s The Watermelon Woman (1996), and women’s cinema as art cinema in connection with recent work by Deepa Mehta) was equally productive in analysing the political and aesthetic implications of women directing at the margins of the system. In general, panels looking at the discursive strategies deployed by independent cinemas, transnational cinemas, and new media showed a greater level of renovation and experimentation in their approaches than panels focused on issues of representation in mainstream film and television products. The latter nonetheless provoked a great deal of stimulating discussion about the currency and dominance of the language and images of post-feminism in the mainstream.

The thread on film aesthetics and politics was strong throughout. Coinciding with the publication of his book Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity, David Martin-Jones presented on the topic of time and narrative in South Korean cinema within a panel on “Deleuze and “Other” Cinemas”. Other panels opened new avenues of exploration on vision and sound (“Screen Variations and ‘Surround Sound’”). It should be noted the to return centre stage of terms which have been more or less absent of the debates in Film and Media Studies for decades: beauty and affect (discussed in the panel on “Post-auteur Auteurs”), cinephilia and the new digital images (in “The work of cinephilia in the age of CGI reproduction”), classical film theory and pictorialism, as well as the multiple meanings of emotion in historical and theoretical contexts (in “The moving picture: cinematic motion and emotion”). A closing workshop on “Philosophical and Theoretical Concepts of Illusion in Film and Media” neatly consolidated this trend, not without showing a certain split between the contrasted approaches of North-American and Germany-based scholars. Absorption versus illusion and the genealogy of these terms in Film Theory were featured in interventions by Philip Rosen and Mary Ann Doane, whereas the debates on a genealogy of illusion through the lens of classical philosophy, psychological theories and the trans-mediafication of the avant-garde were explored by Christiane Voss, Robin Curtis and Gertrud Koch respectively. In spite of the choices imposed on the attendee by the huge volume of research work presented each year, SCMS continues to be an incomparable forum for transcontinental dialogue and cutting-edge work.

Programme available at: http://www.cmsstudies.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=50&Itemid=104

Belen Vidal
Inaugural Postgraduate Conference a Success

On May the 9th the Centre for Film Studies successfully hosted its first Postgraduate Conference which was organized internally by the postgraduate students themselves. Under the supervision of Dr David Martin Jones the organization was very well co-ordinated and supported by the entire Department. The panels and discussions concluded with an informal lunch served in the Film Studies Boardroom. Delegates attending the conference included academics and students from the School of Modern Languages. Not all participants came from St Andrews though and speakers included Maria del Carmen Garrido Horinos, a visiting student from Spain who is currently studying at University of Jaen and shares an academic enthusiasm for film.

The papers demonstrated a wide range of interest in film studies and were divided into two panels: “Cinema at Europe’s Periphery” and “World Cinemas”. Papers delivered in the “Cinema at Europe’s Periphery” panel drew attention to the reconsideration of widely accepted histories and theories of Europe’s peripheral filmic cultures in their post-imperial era. Vlastimir Sudar offered an interesting take on the examination of Balkan Cinema by investigating the relationship between self-harming, kara sevda (‘black love’) and cinema. Lars Kristensen’s paper offered a link between post-colonial theories and the popular Russian film Brat 2 (Aleksei Balabanov, 2000), by proposing a political reading of the national discourse that was created in the film. In the same panel I attempted to provide a historical panorama of the culture surrounding early cinematic spectatorship in Istanbul and thereby criticize the current conventions of Turkish film history.

The second panel “World Cinemas” was more diverse than the first and on the whole concentrated upon cinematic narrative tools such as hallucination and linguistics devices and also engaged with representations of gender roles. David Fleming opened the panel delivering a paper on the cinematic use of drugs. In his paper Fleming applied Derridian theories that the “brain is the screen” to 1960s American LSD-cinema. Maria del Carmen Garrido Horinos, with her background in English Philology, examined Hitchcock’s cult film Psycho and emphasised the feature of cinema as a learning resource in the teaching of a second language. Focusing on one particular film Hollywood Hong Kong (Fruit Chan, 2001), Ruby Cheung underlined the manner in which cinematic gender roles can be transitional and interpreted within politics. Finally, studying in both the departments of Spanish and Film Studies Jennie Holmes discussed how contemporary Spanish cinema could inquire (or “queer” as she puts it) traditionally heterosexual spaces such as “family” and “home”.

The first Film Studies Postgraduate conference gathered postgraduates coming from different backgrounds and interests in cinema. This occasion offered an opportunity to develop better understanding of each other’s work, and maybe more importantly, gain an awareness of the role of cinema plays as an important international medium among young researchers in the field.

Canan Balan
Half Cut Film Festival 2006

Rouge productions successfully ran another Film Festival this year proving that the annual event continues to go from strength to strength. In the past, The Half Cut Film Festival has proved to be an excellent forum for the learning and honing of filmmaking skills and provides an invaluable opportunity for first time filmmakers to publicly screen their work. Past events have proved to be an invaluable experience and stepping-stone for student filmmakers such as Marisha Mukerjee and Naomi George (report in this issue) who demonstrate how this event can be used as both a crucible and springboard for young filmmakers wishing to gain experience and pursue further careers within film and media.

This year the hugely popular event commenced with a well orchestrated VIP champagne reception and opening ceremony before the screenings. The screening sessions again boasted a wide variety and diversity of short film types. This year’s entries were predominantly of a high standard and played to a large audience composed of staff, students, their friends and families.

Some of the more memorable films this year hailed from the comedy genre with both Utopia and House receiving the majority of the night’s guffaws and laughs. E.I. was one of the most successful films utilising the documentary mode and could be interpreted as a protest film investigating a perceived unethical investment that took place in St Andrews during November of 2005. As well as these more traditional examples of filmmaking, the competition was also open to animated features with Paradise Island proving to be one such film. This comedy utilised plasticine animation to relate its light and funny story and was so expertly executed that some audience members expressed a desire to re-see the film, saying it “is the type of film that you could happily watch and giggle at time and time again, which is a rare feat even for professional filmmakers, let alone a bunch of students!”

Perhaps the most original and humorous entry this year though could be recognised in the film Paddys: a laugh out loud film depicting a simple scene where an Englishman, Irishman, and Scotsman enter a bar and get served. The originality behind this film stems from its unique style of narration which conformed to a pastiche of a DVD extra-feature ‘cast & crew’ commentary: the three actors taking on the extra-diegetic role of ‘star commentator’ describing the ‘art’ and offering behind the scenes insights that lie behind/within the filmic image.

By far the longest film of this year’s festival was the horror movie Call with its surprise plot twist ending. This film eventually went on to win a prize on the night for Best Film. After the event the overall feeling was that Half Cut had run smoothly and was a huge success: indeed, audience members, filmmakers, and organisers could already be heard expressing their excitement and anticipation for next years Festival.

David Fleming

CINEFEST 2006

Cinefest, which is held in Syracuse, New York State for four days in mid-March each year (for some mysterious reason in the middle of the State’s snow belt in one of the worst months of the year) is one of a number of festivals specialising in silent and early (pre-1950) sound cinema that have proliferated in the United States over the past few years, two of the best-known being Cinecon in Los Angeles in September and Cinevent in Cincinnati in May, though there are numerous smaller ones lasting only a weekend such as in Rome, New York State, and elsewhere.

Now in its 26th year, Cinefest was originally closely associated with the late William K. Everson, who provided many of the films shown in the early years from his extensive private collection of what were often the only surviving prints of otherwise “lost” films. Since his death the festival has been run by a group of local enthusiasts called “The Boys and Girls from Syracuse”, who have maintained the connections established previously with private collectors and archives such as the Library of Congress, the George Eastman House and the British Film Institute. The films are shown on 16mm in the convention hall of a local Holiday Inn, though on Saturday mornings participants are bussed for 35mm screenings to a 1920s picture palace called the Landmark Theatre, that was saved from demolition at the last minute a few years ago and is slowly being restored to its former glory in which every square inch of foyer, corridors, auditorium and ceilings is decorated in Asian and Arabic motifs. This year, unfortunately, due to a change of the normal dates of the festival, the Landmark was unavailable because of prior booking by another group, but it will certainly be on the schedule again in future years. Film screenings begin each day at 9am and run almost continuously, with minimal breaks for lunch and dinner, till around 1.50 the following morning—for those few
with the stamina to survive that long. Piano accompaniment for the silents is provided by Phil Carli, Gabriel Thibadeau, John Sweeney, and others well known for their appearance at Pordenone and similar venues worldwide. Participants include academics, archivists, collectors, broadcasters such as Leonard Maltin, and—probably the majority—sheer enthusiasts for the medium. A "dealer's room" offers second-hand books for sale, posters, stills and recorded soundtracks, and a host of videos and DVDs, the majority obviously pirated or copied from television, though reputable outlets such as Kino and Milestone are also represented. As—in common with Pordenone—the same people tend to attend year after year, the festival becomes a social occasion as well and the opportunity to meet old friends.

So, what about the films? Most were American or British, though this year's schedule included Paul Leni's 1921 Backstairs and Marcel L'Herbier's 1928 L'Argent was scheduled but withdrawn at the last minute. Highlights included Frank Capra's Submarine (1928), an extremely impressive work, made well before he shot to fame with It Happened One Night. Though similar in theme to Raoul Walsh's The Cockeyed World (1929), his follow-up to the far better What Price Glory?, with Victor McLaglen and Edmund Lowe reprising at tedious length their love-hate professional and sexual rivalry, Capra's film was far more intelligent and sophisticated. The Man from Yesterday (1932), starring Claudette Colbert and Charles Boyer, also with a World War I theme, involving a soldier reported killed in battle who turns up several years later after his wife has remarried, though derided by critics at the time as reworking a well-worn theme, proved surprisingly fresh and even moving. The gorgeous Frances Dee appeared in two films, the romantic comedy Coming-Out Party (1934) and the melodramatic The Strange Case of Clara Deane (1932), while the now unjustly forgotten Dorothy DeVore provided amazing stunt-work, obviously influenced by but comparable to Harold Lloyd, in the 1924 Hold Your Breath, with hair's-breadth escapes as she clambered over the outside of an office block, clinging to window sills with her finger tips. Karl Brown, better known as one of D.W. Griffith's cameramen, turned to directing in his later career; his 1937 Michael O'Halloran, though not a patch on his 1927 masterpiece Stark Love, shown at a previous Cinefest, was an entertaining treatment of a much-filmed subject. A minor curiosity, An Adventuress (1920), also known as Isle of Love, gave a rare opportunity to see the actress Virginia Rappe, remembered now only as the unfortunate victim in the Fatty Arbuckle rape/murder scandal, co-starring with Rudolph Valentino.

Some twenty other features—thrillers, musicals, melodramas and Westerns among them, and almost all of them worth seeing—rounded out an exhaustive, and exhausting, programme. Though I must confess, not only to not always surviving the after-midnight screening, but to dozing off on occasion during a film, I can blame it all on jet lag; next year, arriving by train from Canada, I will be wide-awake throughout.

Graham Petrie

THE TRANSTATIONAL IN IBERIAN AND LATIN AMERICAN CINEMAS

31 MARCH – 1 APRIL 2006.

Organised by Peter Evans (Queen Mary, University of London), Chris Perriam (University of Manchester) and Isabel Sartoalla (Roehampton University), at the INSTITUTE OF GERMANIC AND ROMANCE STUDIES, LONDON, UK

In spite of last-minute changes in the programme, this bilingual two-day conference was impeccably run and provided a productive forum of discussion about the new aesthetic, political and economic configurations affecting Hispanic cinemas in the wider global networks—as well as new modes of re-thinking the "national" in Peninsular and Latin-American Cinema histories in the light of transnational frameworks. This latter aspect came through clearly and elegantly in the keynote address by Lucia Nagib on 'Utopian Pan-Americas' and the transnational aesthetics of Soy Cuba (Kalatozov, 1964) and Terra am Transe (Rocha, 1967). Historiographic approaches were also present in papers on the impact of Hollywood in Spain as represented in El sexto sentido (Sobrevila, 1929) and El misterio de la Puerta del Sol (Elias, 1929), and in an investigation of the road movie in modern and contemporary Spanish cinema. Otherwise, the debates mostly focused on contemporary filmmaking, and the urgency (as well as the degree of usefulness) of the conference's title concept to address the new geopolitical configurations affecting these cinemas.

The thematic organisation of the panels and the debates they generated go on to prove that the concept of the transnational is now more than ever facilitating the convergence of approaches between methodologies that have traditionally characterised the work of Hispanists (involving issues historical context, cultural representation and film auteurs), and the stress on the theoretical, and the generic that is rather the province of Film Studies (exceptions apply). The panel in which I participated ('Audiences, reception, and perceptions' in Spanish cinema from the 1920s to the contemporary) alongside Andrew Ginger and Jay Beck was a good example of this crossover. The crisis of the national has, paradoxically, both undermined and rein-
forced traditional concepts such as genre and authorship, as a panel devoted to the transnational production and reception of horror films, and papers about multi-cultural identities in Todo sobre mi madre (Almodóvar, 1999), palimpsest textuality in Hable con ella (Almodóvar, 2002), Ken Loach’s Land and Freedom (1995) and in the English-language films of Isabel Coixet demonstrated. As the title of the conference more or less suggests, there is still a clear divide between research looking at Latin American cinema (several papers dealt convincingly with the aesthetics of contemporary Latin American film and its strategic positioning in the global market, as well as particular cases such as Peruvian and Argentinian cinemas), and to Spanish cinema. Most papers situated themselves on one side of the Atlantic, rather than exploring the increasing convergence (where production and distribution are concerned) that both sides are experiencing. However, papers examining the transnational reception of El espíritu del diablo (Del Toro, 2001), deploying a comparative focus on Argentinian and Spanish cinemas, and assessing the transatlantic movements of actors addressed this issue. The dominant strand of social realism in Spanish cinema resurfaced through the screening of several short films sponsored by the Instituto Cervantes about immigration and multiculturalism in contemporary Spain. A notorious (and perhaps symptomatic) absence was Portuguese cinema, as well as that of scholars working in Spanish and Latin American universities. Little discussion was devoted to the new technologies and modes of production facilitating the economies of trans-financing. Instead, aesthetics and cultural issues derived from the circulation of actors, directors and genres dominated the panels. Although the threats and possibilities presented by Hollywood lurked in the background of the debates, they did not dominate in the discussions. The conference clearly showed that the core meanings and implications of the term ‘transnational’ are still shifting. The national, rather than the transnational may remain, however, the dominant term of reference as long as the study of Iberian and Latin-American cinemas is split across the divide established by the use of Spanish or English as languages or research, as well as by the separation between Modern Languages and Media/ Film disciplines in the Anglo-American academia.

Belén Vidal

programme available at: http://igrs.sas.ac.uk/events/

This year’s event continued the “Channel Crossings” theme of the 2005 festival—the interaction between British and Continental European film in the late 1920s, a period in which the major European film industries (British, German, French and Italian in particular) exchanged or combined resources and talent in an attempt to compete with the overwhelming influence of Hollywood. Perhaps the best-known participant in this exchange, from today’s perspective, was Alfred Hitchcock, who learned his trade at the Ufa Studios in Germany, and whose recently restored and re-assessed Downhill (1927), starring 1920s heartthrob Ivor Novello, was one of the festival’s highlights. Novello also appeared in the much under-rated The Constant Nymph (1928) directed by one of the stalwarts of the British industry of the time, Adrian Brunel. Hungarian born Michael Curtiz is best known in film history for his work in Hollywood during the 1930s and 1940s, with such classics as Casablanca and The Adventures of Robin Hood. His silent films made in Austria during the 1920s are slowly being rediscovered and the festival screened the 1926 Anglo-Austrian melodrama The Road to Happiness (following on from The Golden Butterfly the previous year) and a fascinating extract from the elaborately staged epic Moon of Israel (1924). Other films of interest included The Beloved Vagabond (1922), a British-Netherlands adaptation of John Galsworthy’s once famous play, The Skin Game (1920), which compared favourably with Alfred Hitchcock’s sound version from the early 1930s, and the British-German co-production The Alley Cat (1929), starring the then-popular Mabel Poulton and directed by Hans Steinhoff. This particular festival is unusual in mingling film screenings with scholarly presentations by experts in the field and topics ranged from documentary footage of European cities in the pre-First World War period, through relations between the British film industry and the French Pathé company in the same period, the French Film d’Art, “Grand Guignol in Clapham”, and an examination of silent film scripts and the technical detail they contained. A special presentation by Luke McKernan brought together all the surviving footage of Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee in 1897, following the procession as it made its way, filled with elaborate pomp and ceremony, through Central London. David Robinson provided a short history of the London Film Society of the 1920s and 1930s, which championed the Soviet Films of the 1920s and the German Expressionists, and Gerry Turvey showed an extraordinary film of FrederickBurlingham’s “Descent into the Crater of Vesuvius”, made in 1913. My own contribution, called “The Three Informers” looked at Liam O’Flaherty’s 1925 novel, “The Informer”, the German director Arthur Robison’s British-made adaptation from 1929 (made both as a silent and a part-sound film), and John Ford’s better-known 1935 Hollywood version which, surprisingly perhaps, turned out to be the most “political” and pro-IRA of the three. Meanwhile the presentation acquired an unexpectedly topicality as it followed closely on news headlines of the murder of a present-day IRA informer in Ireland.

Graham Petrie