Early on a chilly and unexpectedly dry morning on November 10, a small crowd of delegates and presenters began to gather outside the beautiful Byre theatre in St Andrews in preparation for an AHRC funded conference entitled *Cinemas, Identities and Beyond*. The conference witnessed yet another successful collaborative effort between the Department of Film Studies in St Andrews and the Department of Theatre, Film and Television Studies at the University of Glasgow, which together form a vibrant hub for Film Studies within Scotland. The conference which was organised by Post Graduate students for Post Graduate students aimed to create an interdisciplinary, collaborative forum for researchers currently studying in the field of film. The event aimed to foreground the investigation of cinematic depictions of identity and attracted presenters from all around the UK. Alongside students of Film Studies there were also participants from television and cultural studies, language, comparative literature, anthropology, and area studies amongst others. Presenters were organised into four panels that were to be convened by renowned and prolific film scholars that included Dr. Dimitris Eleftheriotis, Prof Christine Geraghty, Prof Andrew Higson, and Dr. Laura Rascaroli.

The aim of the conference was to explore issues of cinematic identity, which is currently one of the most contested and thought-provoking contemporary subjects within the field. As a dominant and penetrating cultural form, presenters were asked to provide papers that addressed how cinema shapes the manner in which we interpret issues pertaining to both identity and space. The papers selected directly addressed how issues of identity are constructed and consumed in line with cinematic representations, narrative conventions, film form, industry issues, and other socio-political factors related to cultural production and consumption.

A considerable collection of strong and insightful abstracts were originally received which organisers eventually whittled down to a final sixteen. From these, four panels of four presenters were arranged that demonstrated a broad range of approaches to the analysis and understanding of different forms of world cinema.

Prof Dina Iordanova, Director of the Centre for Film Studies, got proceedings started at around 9.00 am by welcoming everyone to St Andrews and offering some opening remarks that served to officially get the conference underway. Then, Guest of Honour John Caughe, Professor of Film and Television Studies at the University of Glasgow and Chair of the AHRC Research Committee, took to the floor to discuss the future of Film Studies and AHRC funding.

The ever helpful staff and management of the Byre Theatre provide a fantastic and quirky venue for the conference that boasted some excellent conditions and equipment for the conference. The theatrical venue offered a large cinematic screen at the front of a moody and stage-lit auditorium as well as a wonderful restaurant and public area for refreshments and further discussion. These enviable facilities allowed everyone involved to stay inside the bright and spacious building and avoid having to venture outside on what was otherwise a wet and overcast day. We extend a big thank you to all our friends at the Byre that looked after everyone so well.

D.H. Fleming (ed)
Cinemas, Identities and Beyond

Original Call for Papers

The exploration of identity is one of the most contested and thought-provoking contemporary subjects. As a dominant and penetrating cultural form, cinema conditions and shapes the manner in which we interpret issues of identity and space. Our understanding of representation, narrative conventions, film form, industry issues and a whole host of other socio-political factors related to cultural production and consumption powerfully define our ever changing ideas of identity. Successful applicants will use film in their work as a means of understanding and interpreting issues of society, culture, and identity. We will interpret the conference theme broadly. Papers exploring the following areas are particularly welcome:

- National, regional, and transnational cinemas and identity
- Time, space and signification
- Non-mainstream cinema practices and identity
- Cinema and gender

- Globalisation, transnationalism and cinemas
- Media imperialism
- Cinemas and cultural politics
- Soap operas and reception
- Migrant and diasporic cinemas

- Aesthetics and cinematic identification
- Early cinema and modernity
- New media and digital cinemas
- Western film theories and cross-cultural paradigms
- Cinemas and stardom
- Linguistics and cinematic formalities
- Sound and music
- Genres and interpretations
- Media synergies
The buzz of the crowd in the auditorium settled down as the first panel took to their chairs and the theatre lights were dimmed in preparation for the presentations.

The emphasis of the opening panel was on transnational identities and cross-cultural representation, which the conference in general also pushed to the forefront. Yael Friedman (University of Westminster) initially presented and in this exciting paper examined Israeli-Arabs as a minority within the Israeli, whose interstitial mode of filmmaking searches for both a cultural and a national identity. Following this strong and insightful start to the conference Hui Miao (University of Birmingham) then presented a paper which highlighted the work of Chinese Fifth Generation filmmakers through a postcolonial perspective, where cultural specificity can lead to a more equal cross-cultural understanding. Third, Miriam Ross (University of Glasgow) emphasised incidents of transnational denial and erosion of the language difference in the circulation of films as 'national' products. And finally Mary Ainslie (Manchester Metropolitan University) explored the functioning of the Other in Thai horror movies by examining representations of the monstrous Chinese. In his comments to the papers, Dimitris Eleftheriotis (University of Glasgow), voiced pessimism at the current obsession with transcultural identities. According to Eleftheriotis, the danger consists in loosing sight of the, at time, very painful experiences that triggers the cross-cultural and transnational movement, such as human trafficking and migration from war, hunger or torture. The word "camp" poses one thing in Film Studies and another for the Darfurian refuge in Sudan. In the same vein, transculturalism is in danger of losing its link to the 'origin', and thereby also its powerful ideological fuel. The role of languages is one of the elements that have taken the back seat in this discourse. It is telling that of the four panellists only Hui Miao assumed the position of the 'native' researcher giving her the ability to speak of cultural specificity and essence. The three other presenters, to various degrees, assumed the position of the outsider looking into an area, and in some ways their approaches resembled Anthropology more than Modern Languages. This is not to be cried but coalesced.

Overall the panel provided insightful and stimulating food for thought and served to get the conference off to a strong start. The discussions generated by the papers provided an interesting accoutrement to the morning coffee.

Lars Kristensen
Panel two was probably the most diverse of the conference, analysing films from countries such as Germany, Turkey, Yugoslavia, Spain and the United States.

Delivered by Iain Robert Smith, the first presentation was on the remakes in Turkish popular cinema of the 1960s and 1970s. Focusing particularly on the Turkish version of The Exorcist (William Friedkin, 1973) the paper offered to look into the cultural hybridisation created by the religious and economic factors. Seytan (Metin Erksan, 1974) was a low-budget movie whereas The Exorcist was made with considerably larger investments. Both films could be perceived as attempts to attract the masses and entertain them. Yet, as a remake produced in a different cultural context Seytan contained dissimilar religious references which led to a “cultural hybridisation.” However Smith elaborated more on the cross-cultural exchanges and avoided establishing essential differences between two religions and cultures.

Vlastimir Sudar selected three films from both Yugoslavia and Turkey-Germany to examine the way in which the ‘Balkanic’ tradition of Romanticism was revived. Sudar revealed that, the ritualistic self-harm scenes accompanied by music in I Even Met Happy Gypsies (Aleksandar Petrović, 1967), When Father Was Away on Business (Emir Kusturica, 1984) and Head-on (Fatih Akin, 2004) illustrated a particular mood created by the mixture of pain and pleasure. Such mood, known as Karasvada, was a shared poetical notion in the Balkans and refers to heartache and unrequited love.

The final two papers engaged in the cinematic representations of space and time. Revisiting Certeau’s theories on the relationship between storytelling and cities Tom Whittaker worked on the movements in the city. Whittaker’s work on the representation of gypsies, migrants, marginal lives and petty crimes in Carlos Saura’s Deprisa deprisa (1980) showed how “telling a story” and “walking through the city” contribute to the visual reading of the city as text. A journey through space was also the subject of the film investigated by Gracia Ramirez, who examined David Lynch’s The Straight Story (1999). By following Bakhtinian approach of the representation of space and time, Ramirez explained that this ‘untypical’ film by Lynch reveals the struggles and contradictions of the present American identity.

As the academic convenor of the panel Laura Ras-caroli emphasised in her comments, by travelling through spaces as diverse as Turkey, the Balkans, Spain and America, the notions of identity are seen as omnipresent contradictions pervading the core of contemporary existence.

Canan Balan

Vlastimir Sudar displays scenes of ritual self harm
Panel Three

The third panel of the conference gave us the opportunity to explore a wide range of approaches to questions of identity in different national cinemas. This panel took the audience on a cinematic journey through both time and space; first examining the dress and gadgets of Neo in the *Matrix* (1999), then following with an examination of the Pusan International Film Festival, before taking a short trip through 60s and 70s Greece with Irene Papas, and finally turning back to 90s US cinema and examining the films of the Coen brothers.

First speaker Sarah Gillian, a part time PhD student in Media at Hartlepool College is currently writing a PhD thesis entitled ‘Gender, Clothing and Identity in Contemporary Cinema’. In her paper, Sarah examined the use of clothing in contemporary cinema to create discourses of gendered identity as performance, drawing on feminist approaches to spectator theory, costume and stardom.

Second was SooJeong Ahn, a PhD student at the University of Nottingham who is currently doing a PhD on film festivals. In her paper she explored the way in which the Pusan International Film Festival has claimed ‘Asian Identity’ as its main focus evoking its geographic proximity to the rest of Asia in order to be ‘global’ beyond the nation-state.

Third was Olga Kourelou, a part time PhD student in the Film Studies Department at King’s College, London. Olga is currently working on her PhD thesis on female stars in post-war Greece. Here she presented on the various roles Irene Papas played in screen adaptations of Greek tragedies in 1960s-70s and examined what these revealed about women’s position in Greek cinema and society as a whole, as well as what notions of ‘Greek-ness’ Papas promoted internationally.

The final speaker on this panel was Stefano Baschiera, a PhD student at the National University of Ireland, Cork. Stefano is researching a PhD on the construction of space in Italian New Wave cinema of the 1960s-70s. In his paper Stefano analysed the representation of houses and domestic spaces within the cinema of the Coen brothers, with references to genre and iconography, he drew upon specific examples from films such as *The Big Lebowski* (1998). Here he distinguishes between homes that somehow still attempt to preserve the traditional family values and characteristics and other homes that fully denote a perceived identity crisis.

Panel convenor Christine Geraghty then engaged with the papers and offered some useful feedback before opening the floor to an inquisitive audience.
Panel Four

Lynn Hibberd from the University of Stirling presented the first paper in this panel which was entitled ‘Scottish Identity at Scottish Screen.’ Here in an interesting presentation she examined the recent trend in Scottish filmmaking to opt for commercial rather than cultural value in filmmaking and examined a perceived contemporaneous tendency in Scottish film to produce texts rich in personal expression rather than those that focus upon social criticism. Using the recent Scottish-Danish Advance Party project Red Road (2006) as an emblematic example, Hibberd argued that it was the films universality that helped the film gain recognition and secured it a Cannes selection.

Jack Newsinger, a 1st year PhD student at University of Nottingham then delivered a paper entitled ‘Identity Policies: Culture, Commerce and Identity in Regional Film Cultures in England’, which examined trends and discussed regional filmmaking in North East England. Newsinger noted the manner in which the identity of these regions historically developed and discussed a tension between a socially and politically motivated, experimental and "independent" filmmaking practice, and dynamics towards "mainstream" values and working practices in these regions.

Christina Burns, a 1st year PhD student at the University of Edinburgh, followed with her paper on ‘Provincial Revival: Regional Realities in German Documentary Cinema’, which argued that German cinema currently engages with diverse issues of new and emerging regional identities in the post-wall era. Predominantly examining documentary modes and film style, the films in question tend to tackle contemporaneous political issues and grant them absurd humour treatment. Burns managed to illustrate these ideas through examples drawn from such films as Ich kann' kein, Allein unter Heteros (2003) and others.

Kishore Budha, a final year PhD student at the Institute of Communication Studies, University of Leeds, presented the panel’s final paper which was entitled ‘Market Reforms, Nationalism, and War Films – a Case for Historical Continuities’ and which suggested a possible way forward for the Indian film industry by examining the reception of contemporary war films in India via English language newspapers. He analysed how these articles focused ‘nationalism; state, economies, and cinema; and aesthetic criticism of form and style.’

Prof. Andrew Higson, head of the School of Film Studies at the University of East Anglia, then summarized the entire panel and their engagement with the regional/national identity negotiation, transnational hybridity, and cross-cultural contamination. He commented positively on the panels’ interest in policy debates, political economy, critical discourse reception, and encouraged the speakers to investigate the industry elements of film studies further. He also offered tips of effective and engaging presentation skills and reminded us all of the importance of a strict 15 minute schedule.

Yun Mi Hwang

Christina Burns: Regional Realities in German Documentary
Notes from an Accidental Techie

We were the voyagers of the CIB conference. Our one day mission: to boldly go where few arts students had gone before – namely the technician’s booth at the Byre theatre. Confronted with an array of buttons, switches and levers not dissimilar to the bridge of the Starship Enterprise, a slight feeling of trepidation began to appear like the proverbial Klingons on the starboard bow. Thankfully, with a room full of very prepared speakers, and the Byre’s very own techie captain, Drew, once we took the houseslits down, the threat was neutralised and we continued at warp speed through a dazzling galaxy of papers and responses.

Transported from the tranquil shores of St Andrews through the space-age setting, we encountered myriad stories of shifting identity positions, from the abolition of the home in the films of the Coen brothers, to the questioning of ‘slum-bound Scottish misrablism’, to a seemingly paradoxical Islamic Exorcist, to monstrous Chinese ‘Others’ in Thai horror movies, and many more. Along the way, we also met other travellers exploring new realms, for example in Christina Bruns examination of the assumption by outsiders of regional identities in German documentary film. It was not only regional and national identities which were navigated throughout the day. The reinvention of a consumerist identity for men, not plagued by the allegedly ‘feminised nature of beauty’, was considered by Sarah Gilligan’s analysis of the phallic imagery of technology, particularly mobile phones, in the Matrix series of films.

Finally, Kishore Budha’s paper brought us round to the theme of war films as depicting both external and internal conflict. Luckily for us, whilst there was light friendly fire occasionally exchanged during the response sessions, we completed our journey unscathed and greatly enriched by the experience.

As to the lessons learned from our voyage? Personally, although perhaps not overtly expressed, the lingering feeling that a separation of politics from identity, particularly that which is portrayed on screen, may at times be desirable, but is very often difficult to achieve. So, to paraphrase another intrepid explorer, Buzz Lightyear, - To Cinemas, Identities and Beyond!

James Stedman

On Screen: Iain Smith shows a Turkish Star Trek

Christmas Greetings from St Andrews

In this, our second ‘Christmas Edition’ of this Centre for Film Studies Newsletter we would like to take an opportunity to extend a warm Seasonal greetings to all our friends and colleagues around the world. Indeed, this newsletter now circulates to over 400 academic institutions world-wide and boasts a very diverse readership. So, on behalf of Dina Iordanova and all the staff and students here at the Film Studies Department may we wish you all a Merry Christmas and all the best for the upcoming New Year. May we also take this opportunity to thank all the esteemed guests who managed to come along to St Andrews throughout the year as presenters at our Seminars and our Cinema at the periphery and CIB conferences as well as all our friends and delegates who attended our various events and screenings. We hope to see you all here again very soon and look forward to welcoming new guests to our ‘wee department and toun.’

David Fleming (ed)
My Experience as the CIB Main Organiser

‘CIB’ shouldn’t be mistaken as the third episode of MIB (Barry Sonnenfeld, 1997) as it was the acronymic nickname we coined for the first Postgraduate-run academic conference among PhD students from St Andrews and Glasgow; although I do admit that my experience as main organiser did have significant parallels and threw up certain exciting challenges which were comparable to those of fighting against the ‘scum of the Universe’ in MIB.

One of the comparable challenges between the Men in Black’s job and my own organising task was in the tight time constraints and demands. Initially, Dina, my PhD supervisor, encouraged me at around this time last year to put together a proposal and apply for AHRC funding for a postgraduate event. The reason was simple: it’s a worthwhile experience to inscribe some landmarks in my PhD life and career. I still remember Dina and I had a meeting over this proposal on Christmas day of 2005 at an informal Christmas gathering and it’s fair to say that our discussion was a sweet dessert after a welcome and delicious Christmas meal. Later, after further comments from Dimitris, my other CIB advisor from Glasgow and academic guests at the conference, I sent off a proposal to the AHRC by mid-January. I was worried about our chances of success as my research around funding opportunities alerted me to the tough and cut-throat competition that was out there. Luckily though, on one morning in early May when I habitually checked my email account I found a short but powerful email from Dina saying ‘WE’VE GOT IT!’

So there I was, feeling thrilled but also anxious about the impending workload as I was also planning to focus on writing up my doctoral thesis on contemporary Hong Kong Cinema at the time. But I assured myself it would prove to be a fun and worthwhile project and one worth getting heavily involved in. Dina’s call of going ahead simply buzzed in my head non-stop and Dina eventually gave me some tips on how to play around with and rearrange my limited time allowance and suggested getting a co-organiser from St. Andrews who was both capable and willing to take on such an unpaid job. My colleague David Fleming initially came to mind and he gladly agreed to take the task on board. Dina then further recommended pursuing two other co-organisers from Glasgow University and so the equally efficient Philippa Smith and Katharina Lindner were suggested by Dimitris and they both agreed to come on board and help share out much of the workload associated with the conference organisation.

The first group of people we approached were our academic guests, all renowned and prolific film scholars that included Dr. Dimitris Eleftheriotis (Glasgow), Professor Christine Geraghty (Glasgow), Professor Andrew Higson (UEA), and Dr. Laura Rascamill (National University of Ireland, Cork). Thankfully they all accepted my invitation to be on our panel conveners and to comment upon the papers presented on the day. I also approached Professor John Caughie at this time (head of AHRC research committee), one of the ‘busiest men on Earth’ as far as I know, and he agreed to be our Guest of Honour on the day and to offer everyone invaluable advice and pointers for applying for research funding and grants in the future.

We then sent out our first call for papers at the end of June, which was followed up by another at the end of July. Fearing a lack of response due to summer vacations and related absences I was elated to find when our deadline arrived (18th August) that my mail box was overflowing with over 40 abstract submissions. Together with some late arrivals the CIB conference received in total a staggering 47 abstracts from candidates hailing from all across the UK! Between the two institutions we finally whittled down a short list of a final 16 papers that were to be presented on the day to an ‘official’ audience of over 60 people (on the day some non-registered guests appeared after seeing and hearing press-releases relating to the CIB conference) from St. Andrews and its neighbouring regions.

Although it was not my first time organising an event like this, as I was in the corporate communications business before pursuing my PhD study, the time constraints placed on this conference (and me as a 3rd year PhD student) made it a particularly nerve-racking task. I was indeed very very lucky to have people around me willing and ready to help me unconditionally and offer moral support. I am also grateful to have expanded my knowledge base and build up my network during the course of the past year thanks to this conference.

Post event, words still fail me but I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude and thanks to all our guests and organisers; especially to John, Dimitris, Christine, Andrew, and Laura!

I would also like to name and thank the following people from the Centre for Film Studies at St. Andrews: Dina (Professor Dina Iordanova), David (Dr. Martin-Jones), Belén (Dr Vidal), Elisabetta (Dr. Girelli), Karen Drysdale (our efficient department secretary) and my fellow post-graduates David Fleming (my co-organiser), Cahan Balan, Nagisa Hikono, Jennie Holmes, Yun Mi Hwang, Lars Kristensen, Serazer Pekerman, and James Sedman without whom I couldn’t have managed this event. I would also like to thank my co-organisers from the University of Glasgow, so a big thank you to Philippa Smith and Katharina Lindner.

Ruby Cheung

The Woman in Black addresses the conference