From Hong Kong to Scotland:
The Leverhulme Trust Funds Visiting Professor Mette Hjort.

It is hard to imagine how my three-month stay at St Andrews as a Leverhulme visiting professor at the department of Film Studies could have been more pleasurable or fruitful. St Andrews is quite simply one of the most welcoming and gracious institutions I have ever had the privilege to work for. I have encountered kindness and helpfulness at every turn, from colleagues within and outside the department.

There's an incredible energy associated with Film Studies at St Andrews, and a real commitment to building something truly unique. It was a pleasure to be able to hear colleagues, from St Andrews and elsewhere, present their ongoing research at the regular Centre for Film Studies seminars, and to learn about the many different initiatives that have been successfully undertaken to secure external research funding, to develop consortia, to bring art cinema to St Andrews, among many other things.

One of the great pleasures of being at St Andrews was the opportunity to teach a graduate course on various aspects of transnational cinema as part of the new MLitt in Film Studies. The course drew a wonderful mix of enrolled and auditing students, and these students came from all corners of the world—Nigeria, Korea, Taiwan, Turkey, the USA, Greece, Sweden, and the UK. Many had fascinating backgrounds as film practitioners and thus a very helpful basis for discussing the issues we were trying to understand. All of the students were highly motivated, incredibly hard working, and thoroughly committed to the course, and by the time I'd met with them twice I knew that I could look forward to some very productive and truly memorable discussions. I feel that I've met some remarkable young scholars at St Andrews, and I shall look forward to following their careers over the years to come.

Another very rewarding aspect of my stay has been the opportunity to travel around the UK in connection with talks. My colleagues at St Andrews generously shared their UK networks with me, and as a result I was able to present my research at three universities in Scotland (Stirling, Edinburgh, and Glasgow), at four universities in England (UEA, King's College, Warwick, and Southampton), and at one university in Wales ( Glamorgan). I was met with extraordinary hospitality throughout, and it was a privilege to meet scholars whose work in many cases I had been reading or hearing about for years. The research I presented focused on the so-called Advance Party project, a transnational collaborative initiative involving Denmark and Scotland, and I profited enormously from the thoughtful and generous responses of people who have been following developments in film and media in the UK for a long time. Congenial conversations at receptions and during dinners often led to thoughts about future projects and possible collaborations, for which I am also very grateful.

I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to a lot of people to the scholars who kindly wrote in support of the Leverhulme application, to the colleagues who thought to bring me to St Andrews in the first place, to the Leverhulme foundation, and to all those who welcomed me to their departments. This is no place for a list, and so I’d like to conclude simply by saying that I hope that many old and new friends and acquaintances, from St Andrews and elsewhere, will find their way to Asia and to Hong Kong in due course, so that I and my colleagues at Lingnan can repay their kindness. Keep in touch, and see you in Tuen Mun and Sai Kung!

Mette Hjort
From St Andrews to São Paulo: David Martin-Jones visits the University of Campinas, Brazil.

In July of 2007 I was privileged to be invited to give a keynote paper at the 16th Congresso de Leitura do Brasil, a major international conference drawing over five hundred speakers at the University of Campinas (Unicamp), São Paulo. I presented a paper based on my recent monograph Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity (Edinburgh University Press, 2006). The paper explored Gilles Deleuze’s philosophical work on cinema, critiquing and developing his conclusions as to the reasons for the emergence of the time-image in various international cinemas after the Second World War, in particular by examining the way narrative time is used to construct national identity. Giving the paper was a very interesting experience, not least because it required a translator to interpret my ideas into Portuguese for the assembled audience. This was a first for me, the major advantage of which, I soon discovered, was that the inevitable time-delay that it introduced provided me with crucial extra thinking time when answering difficult questions from the floor!

Also speaking on the same day was the well-known Brazilian artist Alexandre Orion, whose urban artistry explored the borderlines between reality and the virtual world, as he photographed people interacting with his striking street murals in the course of their everyday lives. This ensured that very diverse discussions were held over lunch, investigating the usefulness of Gilles Deleuze’s philosophy in examining art, artistry, everyday life, education, cinema, and so on. There were also some extremely interesting panels given by Unicamp’s large body of postgraduate students working on Deleuze, particularly by students in the faculty of education. Under the guidance of Professors Antonio Carlos Amorim and Silvio Gallo they are examining education as an event, and the ramifications of this for the ways in which we conceive of ourselves as social subjects. From the productivity of the faculty of education at Unicamp alone, it seems extremely likely that this area will be of increasing interest to scholars of education – and indeed, any number of related disciplines – in the very near future.

Prior to the conference I spent a week working as a visiting professor in the faculty of education, on the programme. Conexões Gilles Deleuze – Filosofia – Arte – Educação. I taught classes on Deleuze and cinema to postgraduate students from such diverse disciplines as education, literature, philosophy, psychology, natural history, biology, ecology, geography, and public health. It was a thoroughly stimulating intellectual experience to see how work on Deleuze and cinema could cross over borders in this interdisciplinary context.

Also rewarding was the excellent turnout and interest of the students. As someone who has always worked in the UK, it was eye-opening to encounter a different educational system in a context where the majority of postgraduate students are engaged with the material through a genuine lifelong love of learning, in spite of the pressures of work, family and other financial commitments. My first lesson was that classes rarely, if ever, start on time. A scheduled 9 am start usually means a 9.30 start. As one student joked with me: “In Brazil, the times 9 and 9.15 do not really exist!” As I acclimatised, however, I realised that the students were more than keen to discuss the intellectual matters that my work raised at length in the second half of each session, be it in the classroom, over coffee or at lunch. At times they were so enthusiastic that the class took on a life of its own, the lesson plan or lecture giving way to a very welcome and free flowing discussion instead.

For the students on the programme, most appealing of all was definitely the session on Bollywood cinema, which followed a screening of Dilwale Duhania La Jayenge (1995). With popular Indian cinema not as yet making much of a splash in Brazil (where there is not a major South Asian diaspora to constitute the same kind of markets for Indian cinemas there is in, say, the US, UK or Canada) this was an extremely novel experience for many of the students. They embraced the Bollywood film form with good humour, and were genuinely intrigued by the questions it raised concerning Deleuze’s categories of movement-image and time-image, and indeed, the limitations of his apparent Eurocentrism. I also taught classes on Deleuze and national identity in a number of different national cinemas, and was most pleasantly surprised to find out more about the possibilities of Brazilian films for further work on Deleuze and cinema.

Most memorable of all my experiences during my stay was the Brazilian welcome that I received, and the hospitality shown to me by both the staff and students at Unicamp. I soon lost count of the number of lunches and dinners we shared, not to mention trips to the pub, shopping, and on two occasions, wonderful Samba nights. All of this was made possible by the kind invitation of Professor Antonio Carlos Amorim, to whom I owe a great debt of thanks, both for reading and valuing my work, and for inviting me to Unicamp to discuss it further with his students and colleagues.

David Martin-Jones
Wrapping Up AHRC's Balkan Project

There is more to the cinema of the Balkans than Emir Kusturica, and the large AHRC grant which I received back in 2002 enabled me to work toward highlighting other aspects of the region’s cinematic heritage. The funding came through to the University of Leicester where I was working at the time. We appointed a post-doctoral researcher, Margit Rohringer from Vienna, who had organised panoramas of Balkan film for Kultur Kontakt, and who was to work on documentary cinema from the region (her monograph is forthcoming from Cambridge Scholars Press). A PhD student, Vlastimir Sudar, also began work – he recently defended his thesis on Serbian director Aleksandar Petrovic, thus becoming the first doctoral graduate of our new programme at St. Andrews.

Overwhelmed with the administrative challenges that became prevalent in my life after the move to St. Andrews in 2004, I carried on with the Balkan project, and somehow managed to publish articles here and there. Most of all, I continued watching ‘across borders,’ seeing over 500 films from all countries in the region, and on the way becoming quite familiar with the faces of various Greek, Turkish, Yugoslav, Romanian, and even Albanian stars.

Some memorable trips took place during the final years of the project – I spoke of Balkan cinema at festivals in Thessaloniki, Dourmenez, and Wiesbaden, and gave talks at places like Istanbul and Florence. *Cinema of the Balkans*, the edited collection featuring essays on 24 select films from the region, was published by Wallflower in 2006. It was a project that took quite an effort to put together, given the extremely limited access to films and the difficulties in finding knowledgeable contributors who would also be fluent in English.

In the final year, the AHRC informed me that they are sending my way a windfall of another ten thousand pounds for additional dissemination. I had only three extra months to spend the money. So, without a second thought, I ventured into organising the publication of a *Cineaste* special supplement (Summer 2007) which we produced with the involvement of more than fifteen new scholars who had emerged since the time I first began work on Balkan cinema. It was no longer so difficult to find people who would write good English essays on the current cinema of the region. Balkan cinema was finally becoming a legitimate subject of study and interest...


Dina Iordanova

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Anglo-French Cinematic Relations Conference

University of Southampton

14-16 September 2007

Southampton played host to some forty academics from around the globe for this conference, which forms part of a wider, AHRC-funded research project into the cinematic relationship between Britain and France over the last 75 years, and which is being conducted by Southampton’s Lucy Mazdon and Catherine Wheatley.

Keynote speakers included Robert Tombs, a history professor from the University of Cambridge, who gave a fascinating and wide-ranging introduction to the long-standing rivalry between Britain and France—and to the stereotypes that each nation has of the other. Professor Ginette Vincendeau, from King’s College, London, who provided an insightful and often humorous analysis of the depictions of the French resistance in *Allo ‘Allo* and the recent adaptation of *Charlotte Gray* (Gillian Armstrong, UK/Australia/Germany, 2001); and Professor Sarah Street, who gave a superb talk on the links between the English New Wave and the French *Nouvelle Vague*—in particular the use of Simone Signoret in films such as *Room at the Top* (Jack Clayton, UK, 1959) and *Term of Trial* (Peter Glenville, UK, 1962). A further twenty-five speakers contributed papers to the conference. Topics ranged from distribution and exhibition in each country, cross-Channel censorship, the reception of French film criticism in the UK (and vice versa), the overlapping histories of British and French film festivals, cinema clubs and cinema houses, images of France in advertisements on British television, British audience’s expectations of and reactions to French films, Anglo-French co-productions, and the reception and influence of the *Nouvelle Vague* in Britain. Selected papers from the conference should appear in a forthcoming collection of essays.

As part of the conference, I chaired a most informative panel featuring papers on Henri Langlois, the film criticism of Raymond Durgnat and the reception of Humphrey Jennings’ films in France. As part of a panel on British and French stars, I also presented a paper on the cross-Channel work of Charlotte Rampling, Kristin Scott Thomas and Juliette Binoche.

The event was an enormous success and ran without hitch—credit to the organising team of Doctors Wheatley and Mazdon and their friendly band of postgraduate helpers.

William Brown
Europe and Its Others: Interperceptions Past, Present, Future

The Institute of European Cultural Identity Studies, situated here at the University of St Andrews, is a magnet for students and scholars interested in linguistic and cultural studies. The Institute, comprised of the modern languages departments and associates throughout the University (e.g. Film Studies), aims for the collective study of identities that are “represented, expressed and modeled” in European national cultures. The conference was supported by Mundus Masters (Erasmus) and The Society for Latin American Studies, which helped explain the diversity at the conference and the large contingency of guests from Latin America. For many guests, this event granted a first opportunity to visit Scotland; but this did not prevent them joining in and enjoying a traditional Scottish Saturday night Ceilidh.

The Film Studies department was represented by Dr Belén Vidal and Dr Elisabetta Girelli, who chaired separate panels on history and memory. Cinematic topics remained popular throughout and ranged from presentations on Kieslowski’s White and Haneke’s Code Unknown to the filmmaking of Fatih Akin. Yours truly also made a contribution to the panel, Where the Borders Lie, which examined Europe through its neighbours and, in particular through Russian narrativ. A highlight of this panel was the screening of Minna Rainio’s and Mark Roberts’ Borderlands, which projected onto three separate screens, investigates the Finnish-Russian border through splicing interviews of people from both sides along with depictions of the actual geographical border. After the screening artist and filmmaker, Minna Rainio, elaborated in her presentation on what were — for her — the key issues surrounding how people living near these borders construct different narratives, despite only being as far apart as 400m at times. The Finnish-Russian border is in this regard quite different from the fluctuating Alsatian border, which was the subject of the opening talk given by Prof. Thomas Elsaesser. Being from Alsace suggested that one was always in occupied territory, but entailed a trusting of the Other: which was something Prof. Elsaesser encouraged us to do. The ability to incorporate the Other into oneself is the task that cultural production currently faces, but which only happens on rare occasions at present. One strongly felt that Elsaesser wanted to move the study of identity further, arguing that academia’s affection with identity seemed to have shifted to the study of representation.

Contrary to this, in the final discussion of the conference, Prof. Paul Gifford (director of the hosting Institute) raised a storm by suggesting that Christianity has the potential to define a European identity. This was robustly rejected on the grounds that it would be too simplistic and too much in concordance with Samuel Huntington’s The Clash of Civilisations argument. Huntington’s claim, surely, does not advance the study of identity — national cultural or linguistic — in a European context that is complicated with definition problems. In fact the only common-demeanor for a European identity would be its infinite qualities. As the papers of the conference indicated, Russia, Turkey, Africa, the Americas, or Diasporas from within Europe all have a sizable stake in composing a European identity.

Lars Kristensen

Cinema and Cultural Engagement: Bringing Art House Films to St Andrews

This October, the Centre for Film Studies launched its new series, ‘Cinema and Cultural Engagement’. Through the programme, made possible by a Russell Trust Development Award, the Centre has been bringing art house films to St Andrews — a community contribution recently reported on by the BBC. With the cooperation of the local New Picture House Cinema, whose bid to the UK Film Council signalled interest in exhibition options beyond Hollywood, we have booked such films as The Yes Men, a documentary about political pranksters; Eros, an omnibus collection of films on sex and love by Wong Kar Wai, Steven Soderbergh, and Michaelangelo Antonioni; and Daratt, Mahamat-Saleh Haroun’s meditation on revenge and reconciliation in post-civil war Chad. The fall season concludes with a screening of Jean-Pierre Melville’s classic L’Armée des Ombres/Army of Shadows, whose recent theatrical re-release won this 38-year old film a position on critics’ lists as one of the ten best of 2006! Programming for the spring series is in progress. Our wish list includes Abderrahmane Sissako’s Bamako and Jan Švankmajer’s Lunacy.

Leshu Torchin
Visions of Struggle: Women’s 
Filmmaking in the Mediterranean 
International Symposium held at 
Wellesley College, MA 
November 2-3, 2007

This two-day symposium took place in one of the best-known women’s colleges in the United States—Wellesley College, in the Boston area—under the impeccable organization of Flavia Laviosa, Senior Lecturer at the Department of Italian Studies. What are the possible meanings of the Mediterranean as a geopolitical space of discourse for women’s cinema? In which ways may women’s filmmaking be still considered the product of different kinds of struggle? Participants addressed these central questions in panels organized around geographical and cultural areas, such as the Balkans, Spain, France, Italy, the Maghreb and the Middle East (sections on independent and experimental filmmakers in Greece and Turkey were also programmed, but sadly had to be withdrawn due to unforeseen circumstances). The ultimate achievement of the symposium was that it opened avenues for discussing connections, themes and trends across these national and regional boundaries, especially in the closing round table.

The symposium opened with an illuminating keynote address by Yosefa Loshitzky, who proposed a highly critical account of the nationalist narratives underlying the politics of belonging in contemporary documentary filmmaking in Israel. Further interconnections between nation, war, activism and gender politics were highlighted in the interventions of Marguerite Waller, Katarzyna Marciniak and Aniko Imre. Their panel examined the discursive strategies of transnational documentaries looking at sex-trafficking and war crimes against women in the Balkan region, as well the subversive articulation of lesbian identities in post-socialist cinema and experimental video work coming from Eastern Europe. The discussion around women’s cinema in France (Carrie Tarr), Italy (Aine O’Healy) and Spain turned to examples of contemporary commercial filmmaking. From the Mafia film Angela (2003), to the claustrophobic drama Dans my Peau/In my Skin (2002), or the social-problem film Te doy mis ojos/Take my Eyes (2003), it became apparent that Western European films made by women have managed to bring issues of gendered violence to the centre of mainstream culture through the narratives and forms characteristic of art and popular cinemas. My own presentation on two films by Spanish filmmakers (Take my Eyes and The Secret Life of Words, 2005) revolved about the narrativisation of trauma within the structures of melodrama in films that attempt to reach a wide audience within and beyond national boundaries and specialist circuits of exhibition. Discussion moved on to themes of practice, representation and the everyday experience of women filmmakers dealing with the consequences of war and former colonial occupation in the Maghreb and the Middle East, in papers that examined films and video work from Algeria and Tunisia (Florence Martin), Lebanon (Lina Khatib) and Palestine (Kay Dickinson).

The discussion was enhanced and enriched by two parallel events that took place before and alongside the symposium: an extraordinarily timely exhibition on Global Feminisms hosted by the campus-based Davis Museum and Cultural Center, and a Film Festival organised by faculty and students, including screenings of all key films under discussion in the symposium (which allowed me to catch the Israeli documentary My Terrorist, by Yulie Cohen-Gerstel (2002) and the Algerian film Rachida, directed by Yamina Bachir-Chouikh (2002)). Last but not least, the symposium included the world premiere of the 2007 film Maria’s Grotto, a powerful documentary about honour killings in Palestine by Ramallah-based filmmaker Buthina Canaan Khoury. Khoury’s eloquent intervention on the need for denunciation of and legislation on the tribal practices of honour killings in Palestine was one of the high points of the event. The account of her activities as a woman filmmaker in conflict zones also contributed strongly to the ongoing discussion about the specificity of women’s experience, and its reverse side: the increasing normalisation of women’s activities as media professionals, especially in the Arab world.

Participating in this symposium as guest speaker was a rare privilege and an extremely rewarding experience, as it was meeting the enthusiastic Wellesley students and faculty in both this research forum and in the classroom. Events such as this make clear the wide reach of transnational women’s studies, as well as the liveliness and urgency of the debates around women’s filmmaking, feminism, nation and regionalism.

For more information, visit:  
http://www.wellesley.edu/Italian/FLaviosa/ 
VisionsofStruggle/index.html

Belén Vidal
Movie Making in Montevideo

In July 2007 I took a trip to Montevideo, Uruguay, with Soledad Montañez, a colleague from the dept of Spanish here at the University of St Andrews. Whilst there we attended the Primer Encuentro de Cine Nacional at the Uruguayan national image archive.

Sandwiched between the economic and geographical giants of Brazil and Argentina, the small country of Uruguay (population c 3 million) is not usually associated with filmmaking. However, in recent years the international festival hits El viaje hacia el mar (2003) and Whisky (2004) have finally put Uruguay on the world map of cinema, with Whisky in particular winning two awards at Cannes, and theatrical and DVD distribution with Artificial Eye. The event, then, was extremely timely. It brought together industry insiders in a public forum to discuss the future of Uruguayan cinema, and gave the public a chance to see more of recent Uruguayan cinema in a concentrated burst. Events took place in both the capital of Montevideo and the tourist resort of Punta del Este, places now familiar to audiences worldwide having recently appeared in Michael Mann’s Miami Vice (2006), standing in for Cuba, Columbia and Geneva!

For an academic audience the most interesting of all the events was a round table discussion on the future of audiovisual education in Uruguay, in which professors from the various public and private institutions in Montevideo gathered to discuss greater collaboration in the fields of audiovisual education and training. If successful this may lead to a grass roots advancement of filmmaking in Uruguay. With participating film director Alvaro Buela (Una forma de bailar (1997), Alma mater (2004)) discussing the recent growth of a new generation of filmmakers, the proposed collaborative venture could potentially lead to the growth of a Uruguayan New Wave.

In addition to the events organised by the national archive, we interviewed writer and director Guillermo Casanova (El viaje hacia el mar). We learned of the difficulties faced by aspiring directors in Uruguay, where the lack of continuity to production in a relatively young national cinema means that every film is made as though it were the first one ever. Budgets are minuscule (El viaje was made for approximately US$500 000) with money often scraped together from various national and private funding sources, and completed with favours drawn in from all quarters. There are also difficulties to overcome in post-production. Although production and editing can be completed in Uruguay, sound and the final negative require that the film be taken to nearby Buenos Aires for completion, leading Casanova to compare Uruguay – in terms of filmmaking at least – to a province of Argentina. Indeed, despite El Viaje’s international success on the film festival circuit, due to the South American economic crisis, Casanova has not profited from his efforts. Cinema in Uruguay, then, is a labour of love.

Yet despite these hardships, interesting and innovative films are being produced in Uruguay, like the recently released El baño del Papa. Should conditions continue to improve along with the economy there will soon be more discussion of this youngest of national cinemas.

David Martin-Jones

Visual Representations of Iran

A conference, film season and photographic exhibition that aim to interpret and theorise visual representations of Iran in ethnographic, documentary films. In recent years, there has been a steady growth in, and global recognition of, the innovative qualities of Iranian cinema and visual arts. Yet, at the same time, Iran occupies an ambiguous place in the imagination of the West. As a field of academic inquiry, contemporary Visual Anthropology opens up a range of possibilities for examining the ambiguities that surround the imaginations and representations of Iran.

Drawing from the broad spectrum of theoretical approaches that span the poetics and practice of filmmaking, photography as well as the art and politics of representation, Visual Anthropology poses a series of questions that may be the basis for dialogue and debate over images of Iran between scholars from a variety of disciplines. A four day programme (13-16 June 2008) will investigate these issues within the context of a conference, a film season and a photographic exhibition (the exhibition will remain on view after the conclusion of the four day programme).

Enquiries and additional information and details www.st-andrews.ac.uk/anthropology/iran
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Darth Vader from the Block: Director Alex de la Iglesia Visits St Andrews

The Center for Film Studies, the Spanish Department and the Consulate of Spain in Edinburgh sponsored the screening of two films and a visit by Spanish director Alex de la Iglesia. Born in 1965, de la Iglesia gained cult status with *The Day of the Beast* (1995), and his *La Comunidad* (2000) earned many prestigious awards in the international film festival circuit. The event began with a free public screening of his 2004 film, *Ferpect Crime* on the 27th April at the School III lecture theatre. The film, a comedy involving murder and jealousy set in a department store, was warmly received by students. On Monday the 30th, Alex de la Iglesia was himself present for the screening of *La Comunidad*, at the New Picture House Cinema near the department. The film is a black comedy where neighbors in a tenement block play games of deceit and betrayal in an attempt to secure the hidden fortune within the building. The screening was a great success, with roars of laughter constantly heard rising from the aisles, especially during moments when the film made playful references to *Star Wars* and *Psycho*. The excitement continued into the Q&A session where the director engaged charismatically and humorously with the audience and offered insights and anecdotes including a funny secret about Carmen Maura’s shower scene. De la Iglesia stated that he was very pleased to see so many students in the audience and shared stories about his childhood and various inspirations for filmmaking. The director also talked of recently wrapping up the shoot for his eighth film, *The Oxford Murders*, a thriller starring John Hurt and Elijah Wood. He told the audience the difficulties he faced working with a major studio, and related a litany of stories in a distinctive de la Iglesia style humour. Alex de la Iglesia’s visit to St Andrews organized by Belén Vidal (CFI) was truly an exciting, informative and entertaining opportunity for lovers of cinema, both students and locals together, and I hope to see more of these events happen in the future.

Yun Mi Hwang

The Edge of Heaven
the Bitter Tears of Hanna Schygulla
the Hope of Tuncel Kurtiz

Recently awarded the best screenplay at European Film Awards in Berlin and Cannes, *The Edge of Heaven* premiered in London last November. The screening was then followed by a question and answer session with the director, Fatih Akin. *The Edge of Heaven* is the second film of the “love, death, evil” trilogy (Head-On stands for love) and narrates three stories of two mothers, two daughters, one father and his son. These characters are all inter-connected even though they live in different countries and fail to come together throughout the entire two hour running time. Indeed, the film displays a thematic concern around issues of absence and lack. The absence of the mother who is searching for her daughter, and the absence of the daughter who is searching for her mother may indeed work to emphasize the absence of God: the idea emerging through a series of coincidences that serve to keep them apart. Furthermore, the lack of women’s liberty, freedom of speech, homes for kids, and the lack of ethnic/cultural tolerance form the complex socio-political context of the narrative. The film’s political engagement also covers issues surrounding the European Union, the affects/effects of the Chernobyl disaster and the loss of loved ones in the Maras massacre (where many people of the oppressed religious sect, Alevis, were killed by fundamentalists in 1978). Such broad concerns do not appear to dominate the storyline but rather seem to be subtly acknowledged within certain details by those sensible to the issues.

The casting, as pointed out by the director himself, reveals Akin’s interest and influence from both Turkish and German cinemas, and particularly those of Yilmaz Guney and Rainer W. Fassbinder. Tuncel Kurtiz (the Turkish father) was a famous Yilmaz Guney actor and acted in *Duevar* (1983), *Suru* (1978), *Umur* (1970), *Hudutlarin Kanunu* (1966), *At Avrat Silah* (1966). On the other hand Hanna Schygulla (the German mother) is recognisable from Fassbinder films such as *Angst vor der Seele auf* (1974), & *die Ehe der Maria Braun* (1979) and *die Bitteren traten der Petra von Kant* (1972). The beginning of the film appears to be familiar to fans of melodrama; a prostitute, ‘the fallen woman’ involved in a marriage that offers a potential for a more decent life, but the husband actually turns out to be a more sinister character than he initially appears. *The Edge of Heaven* may also be discussed in relation to *Lola Rennt* (1998), with its multi-plot structure and utilisation of coincidence and chance encounters. However, *The Edge of Heaven* contrastingly utilises coincidence to prevent and pervert possible encounters (with these missed opportunities causing more anxiety for the characters). One significantly repeated scene entails a shot of several coffins framed from the same angle, with the same props, in the same location. The striking point here is that the first coffin belongs to Ayten’s mother who dies in Germany and is buried in Turkey, whereas the second one belongs to Ayten’s lover, who dies in Turkey but is buried in Germany. The two fail to meets throughout the film, yet their corpses are boarded/landed at the same airport. Such coincidence and repetition remain outwith the knowledge of characters within the diegesis and is rather left for an attentive audience to acknowledge or notice.

These filmic references seem to be accompanied by various cultural references. The human rights activist and the rock musician Kazım Koyuncu who died of cancer last year is commemorated in the film via his songs, and a diegetic conversation about the Chernobyl disaster also works to indicate a historical/cultural context. Akin, after the screening, declared that he had wanted to work with Koyuncu earlier in his *Crossing the Bridge: Sound of Istanbul*, but was unable to. One burning issue raised during the question and answer session centred around Akin’s statement about being unwilling to undertake national service in the army. Akin repeated a previous declaration on this issue and argued that even if his Turkish citizenship might be cancelled as a result, or that some movie theatres in Turkey may boycott his film, he continued to demonstrate a strong connection with Turkey that goes far beyond mere citizenship papers.

Canan Balan
Eastern European Cinema: My trips to Prague and Tallin

The cinema of Eastern Europe is one of my main fields of interest, so I was extremely lucky to get the opportunity to go first to Prague (my favourite city in the world), and then to Tallinn, to carry out some research and attend a conference. My Prague trip was made possible thanks to funding from the Royal Society of Edinburgh, under a bilateral scheme with the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic. I spent almost two weeks in Czech heaven, in September, meeting film scholars and exploring archives at Charles University and FAMU. FAMU is the legendary film school which produced most of the directors of the Czechoslovak New Wave, so to actually be there was thrilling. At FAMU I was granted access to public and private film archives, which was a real gift, especially as many key Czechoslovak films are still unavailable in Britain with English subtitles. The staff at both Charles University and FAMU were incredibly friendly and helpful, even personally taking me to a dvd shop where I could buy rare films; and, last but not least, I sat in the very same room which Jiri Menzel used to occupy when he was Dean of FAMU...to be near the ‘aura’ of the director of Closely Observed Trains was a truly iconic moment! The visit afforded an extremely productive exchange of ideas with my Czech colleagues, and it has laid the foundations for future collaborations. I hope to be back in Prague soon!

In October I went to Tallinn, the Estonian capital, for a conference organised by the Art Museum of Estonia; the theme of the conference was ‘Via Transversa: Lost Cinema of the Former Eastern Bloc’. It was an extraordinary experience for someone who, like me, is just starting to explore the rich cinematic heritage of Eastern Europe; I was there to give a paper, but the best part of the conference was to listen to the variety of speakers, and to try to absorb the huge amount of information at my disposal. It was also great to meet in person some leading scholars of Eastern European cinema, as there were speakers from Latvia, Russia, Hungary and other former Communist countries. My paper, in a way, was a rather bold move for a conference so exclusively focused on Soviet cinema: I presented a comparison between an ‘Eastern’ film (my beloved Closely Observed Trains, directed by Jiri Menzel in 1966) and a ‘Western’ one, a British New Wave production called The L-Shaped Room (Bryan Forbes, 1962). I looked at spatial relationships in these films, and how they are employed to construct subversive, anti-authority texts. Both my paper and the conference in general have greatly helped me to finalise another project, a panel on Space and Place in Eastern European Cinema, which I will chair at the forthcoming SCMS conference in Philadelphia.

Elisabetta Girelli

Pordenone Silent Film Festival 2008

After 8 years in Sacile, Giornate Del Cinema Muto returned to its hometown of Pordenone this year. The logistic problems encountered by the Pordenone venue now being satisfactorily resolved, the historic venue easily hosted hundreds of film historians, academics, post-graduate students, critics, filmmakers and silent film enthusiasts from all around Europe and North America.

This year’s themes included “The Other Weimar”, a complete retrospective of Rene Clair’s silent films, Wladyslaw Starewicz’s coloured animations, the Hungarian National Film Archive’s release of silent films to celebrates its 50th anniversary, Haghe Film’s recent discovery of “Early Bible Lands Films” and “Films on Social Issues” from the American film archives. My personal highlight remains the Bible Lands Films full of amazing scenes of Bethlehem and Nazareth captured by the enigmatic nineteenth century cameraman Albert Kirchner. Kirchner was discussed as a mysterious char-

acter who whilst producing iconic slides for the Catholic Church was know to be simultaneously shooting erotic films and striptease scenes. The programme of “the Other Weimar” films aimed to expose the neglected German silents that have to date eluded much critical attention and are often excluded from art history canons. The continued screening of the complete David W. Griffith’s collection also continued this year with an examination of his 1921-1924 works. Among the seven features screened, Orphans of the Storm benefited from a live accompaniment from the Orchestra Sinfonica del Friuli Venezia Giulia under the direction of Timothy Brock.

I was personally able to be part of the Collegium this year, where major silent cinema scholars and archivists presented lectures and arranged workshops for a select number of post-graduate students. Overall, the festival offered an invaluable locus for post-graduate networking and was defined by well-organised programmes and a full week of thought-provoking ideas and conversations.

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