Finally, A Place In The ‘League’: RAE 2008

Britain is obsessed with league tables. They are everywhere, and everything linked to intellectual efforts seems to be encompassed within some sort of league classification. Academia makes no exception. Here we have got the notorious RAE (Research Assessment Exercise), a gruesome, expensive and not particularly transparent peer review assessment across disciplines, which is carried out once in several years. The previous RAE had been in 2001, at a time when we did not exist yet, so for a while we had to live without the precious ‘ratings’ that other departments were able to boast about.

In the fall of 2007, three years into our existence, we made our very first submission, to the RAE that was to take place in 2008. Once the material for assessment was sent in, a long wait followed: it took more than a year from the moment we submitted for the results to come out. Yet, the ‘moment of truth’ finally arrived when, on 18 December, we received word from the University about our preliminary results. It was definitely an uplifting moment: it only took a quick glance over the nearly presented tables showing the performance of individual units across the University, to realise that we had not only done well; our results were the best across all listings! The Grade Point Average we had achieved was the highest one for the University, at 3.35. 50% of our work was rated ‘world class’ or 4*, and the rest was marked as 3* or 2*, making it all of international importance and standing. This was better than any other discipline, both in arts and sciences.

As we learned later on, this was also the best score achieved by any academic department across Scotland. What was particularly remarkable was that, being staffed by only four lecturers and one senior academic, we had managed to achieve results that were higher than the results of departments populated by numerous professors. Alas, the University opted not to list our achievement in the press release it issued on the day, foregrounding the achievement of other units instead; the senior managers that had created our programme did not send any word of congratulation either. It appeared that our stellar results were more of an embarrassment than a cause of joy for the University. Still, the results spoke for themselves. We were vindicated by the grades assigned in the context of a nation-wide peer review.

At last, we had some indication on our position in the ‘league’, even if it was not an easy task to figure out where we stand precisely. Film Studies is still treated as a nascent discipline in the UK and no dedicated panel of assessors is attached to it (Film Studies does not even figure on the list of graduate degrees compiled annually by The Guardian). Some Film Studies departments had submitted to the panel on media and communications (where the University of East Anglia achieved the highest score), while others had gone to the drama and dance panel (we did that, along with the University of Warwick, who achieved the highest score here). Having compared our results across all the RAE tables that seem to be of relevance, we estimate that we now rank in third position among the Film Studies departments in Britain, immediately after UEA and Warwick. As more and more details of the assessment become known, we realise that the most important score for us is the 100% 4* that the panel has awarded us in assessing our ‘research environment’ – a recognition of work in the context of the Centre for Film Studies, and a source of motivation to keep up the performance.

Dina Iordanova
Professor and Chair in Film Studies

Second Chair In Film Studies Appointed:
Prof. ROBERT BURGOYNE

It is an interesting thing, looking at our last Newsletter (Fall 2008). It opens up with a report by our Visiting Professor, Robert Burgoyne, who taught at our MLitt degree over three weeks in October 2009. Less than half a year later, and here I am, writing a piece about Burgoyne’s appointment to our second Chair in Film Studies. Did we plan it? No, not at all. It simply happened. To be more precise: the fabulous town of St. Andrews did it. Robert came and fell in love with the place, with the gorgeous West Sands, with the beautiful sky over the North Sea, and with the old ruins – as he testifies in his newsletter article.

And then the opportunity came about. It was a matter of fortunate timing and of Robert’s growing appreciation of the advantages of our programme. As you can see from the photograph that shows him in front of the Cathedral ruins in town, he seems to have found a place that suits him particularly well, given his interest in film and history. He is now planning to leave his residence near Moto-town and the big car manufacturers in Detroit and swap it all for our quaint medieval town.

Robert Burgoyne’s work on film and history (Bertolucci’s 1900: A Narrative and Historical Analysis, Film Nation; The Hollywood Historical Film) and on semiotics (New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics: Structuralism, Post-Structuralism, and Beyond) is likely to synergise with the work of colleagues who are already based at our department, as well as with the work of colleagues in our established Schools of History, Classics, Modern Languages, and International Relations. His recent interest in international epic cinema is taken up by colleagues like research associate Ruby Cheung, teaching fellow Seer Ba, and Dina Iordanova, who are all contributing chapters to a forthcoming edited volume that Burgoyne is putting together as part of the American Film Institute series. Prof. Burgoyne has also indicated he is particularly interested in developing the MLitt programme, which, he believes, would be a key attraction to a host of American students who would like to experience the best in European film studies. Robert Burgoyne is joining us is January 2010, and we are looking forward to his arrival.

Dina Iordanova
Professor and Chair in Film Studies
June 2009 will finally see the publication of my book, *Beauty and the Beast: Italianness in British Cinema* (Intellect Books). This book has been years in the making, as I developed it from my PhD thesis on the representation of Italy and the Italians in British film history. The book focuses on the ways the Italian Other has been systematically used in British cinema, and indeed generally in British culture, to help define the boundaries of British identity. Notions of Italianness found in British films are not created in a vacuum, but rest on a pool of ideas and stereotypes which are deeply rooted in British society: from the revenge tragedy to the Romantics, from the various waves of Italian immigration to WWII, British cultural history has dynamically engaged with ideas of Italy as a fundamental foil to British national identity.

The book offers an overview of these historical roots, before concentrating on three specific periods in British film history: the 1940s, the years from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s, and the 1980s. These three periods have been chosen because of their exceptional richness in the output of cinematic Italianness, and also because of the special challenges they presented in terms of British national identity and self-representations. The 1940s are probably my favourite period: in these years Italy’s relationship with Britain underwent exceptional transformations, from Mussolini’s 1941 declaration of war to the 1943 Italian surrender, to the following Italian rehabilitation and subsequent immigration to Britain. Yet throughout this decade, alongside propaganda films and newsreels, British cinema persisted in its representation of Italy as an exotic fantasy land, a place for self-expression and passionate adventures, exemplified by such wonderfully bizarre costume dramas as *The Madonna of the Seven Moons* (Arthur Crabtree, 1944). The 1950s brought dramatic changes to Italy’s international status, as Italian cinema and design began to signify glamour and style: accordingly, British cinema cast Italian actors as icons of continental allure, though still imbued with the fundamental Italianness of old. A good example is *Summer Madness* (David Lean, 1955). In those same years, a crisis of masculinity in Britain fostered the use of images of the Italian man on screen, in the negotiation of a new approach to gender roles. Ambivalent, new representations of British manhood often depended on an Italian Other for their effectiveness, as it happens in *Hell Drivers* (Cy Endfield, 1956). Finally, the 1980s saw the advent of Thatcherism, and of a deeply divided British nation struggling to formulate and re-formulate concepts of nation and identity; once again, cinematic Italianness helped to represent and articulate cultural debates on the meaning of Britishness; no films did it better than the heritage ones. *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (Charles Sturridge, 1991) brought these representations into a new decade.

The book does not claim to be an exhaustive survey of Italianness in British cinema: rather, it aims at highlighting patterns of representations and their meaningful place in film history.

Elisabetta Girelli
Lecturer in Film Studies

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**Publishing @ St. Andrews Film Studies**

Back in 2004, when I was trying to figure what a good programme in Film Studies should look like, I made a note to myself that it should be one that is linked to some form of publishing, be it a periodical or a book series. Just think of the achievements of Glasgow (associated with the journal *Screen* over the years or Nottingham (with *Scope*), or of cases like Amsterdam, where Thomas Elsaesser launched his respected series *Film Culture in Transit* with the University of Amsterdam Press, or, more recently, of Chicago, with Tom Gunning’s series.

The time seems to have finally come for us to try venturing into publishing as well. We tried different models recently. For example, on-line publication of current writing. This can be seen at *CinemaSalon: Thoughtful Film Criticism*, the web-site established by Will Brown (http://cinemasalon.ning.com/) or at my own blog, *DinaView* (www.DinaView.com). Or books published through the use of pr Grim-on-demand services like Blurb: my recent small monograph *New Bulgarian Cinema* (2008) was put out this way and allowed me to bring out an extended study that was originally commissioned for an edited publication that was then postponed for an indefinite period of time (and is still not scheduled for publication ...).

The best publishing model for now, however, seems to be the one which we developed in collaboration with the Reprographics unit at the University. With their assistance, we are launching the series St. Andrews Film Studies and putting out two titles in 2009.

*Moving People, Moving Images: Cinema and Trafficking in the New Europe* is a collaborative effort of Will Brown, Dina Iordanova and Lesha Torechin. It will appear in the Fall of 2009 (ISBN 978-1-906678-03-6). The study focuses on the current cycle of films that play upon global anxieties about trafficking. Like their subject, the essays in this volume cross national borders to reflect on recent films that depict white slavery, drug trafficking, and undocumented labour. The volume considers films by internationally renowned directors such as Amos Gitai (*Promised Land*), the Dardenne Brothers (*Lorna’s Silence*), Nick Broomfield (*Ghosts*), and addresses the work of esteemed local auteurs such as French Magrebin Merzak Alloauche (*Tamanrasset*), Serbian Zelimir Zilnik (*The Fortress Europe*), and Slovenian Damjan Kozole (*Spure Purt*). A range of documentary and activist films on the topic are also considered, as well as examples from the realm of popular genres, such as *Taken* (Pierre Morel, 2008) and *Transiberian* (Brad Anderson, 2008).

The *Film Festivals Yearbook*, the inaugural volume of a series of annual publications, is dedicated to the *Festival Circuit* (ISBN 978-1906678043) and is published in May 2009. The volume makes inroads into the new field of film festival studies and focuses on the dynamics of the film festival circuit, including the roles of individual festivals as nodes on this complex network and the cultural policies that shape channels of film exhibition and distribution. Edited by Dina Iordanova with Ragan Rhyme, the volume includes essays by Marijke de Valck & Skadi Loist, Janet Harbord, Charles-Clemens Rüdling, Rahul Hamid, Kay Armatage, Ruby Cheung, Ma Ran, David Stocum, Mark Cousins, Nick Roddick, Dimitris Kerkinos, William Brown, as well as texts by the editors. The volume can be ordered from the *Dynamics of World Cinema* website (www.st-andrews.ac.uk/worldcinema) and from Amazon.co.uk. St. Andrews Film Studies publications are distributed internationally by Wallflower Press.

Dina Iordanova
Professor and Chair in Film Studies
My Visit to the Korean Film Archive

In July, I had the opportunity to visit the new site of the Korean Film Archive (KOFAC) in Seoul. Formerly situated in the south-east part of Korea, next to the Seoul Arts Centre, the new KOFAC site can now be found in the north-west outskirts of Seoul, inside a newly developed Sang-am Digital Media City (DMC). I was never a fan of big cities (especially after five quiet years in Scotland) but entering the DMC area was a new and pleasing experience. Amongst barren land, the construction of skyscrapers of massive scale was underway. I tried to visualize the impressive metropolis of digital technology that will be finished in a few years time. I also realized how ironic or appropriate it is that the new Korean Film Archive should be there (inside another equally massive building called Cultural Contents Centre).

KOFAC has four main parts: the Cinemateque, the Library, the Korean Film History Research Centre and the Korean Film Museum. Cinemateque KOFAC consists of three screens, the largest one holding 328 seats. The programme they offer is quite interesting, showing both popular and obscure films from different countries for free. At the time of my visit, a number of Korean monster films were screening, from Monster Yongguri (Kim Ki-duk, 1967) to The Host (Bong Jun-ho, 2006).

The library, the heart of KOFAC, is where I spent most of my time searching through shelves of theses, film magazines and books. It boasts a lending/viewing facility where one can borrow DVD/VHS and watch in individual stations (about 40 seats in total). One thing that struck me was the digitalization process of the older Korean films that KOFAC undertakes. More than 100 rare Korean films are currently available in VOD form. This means one can access rare films that do not have a DVD release like Housemaid (Kim Ki-young, 1960) or the oldest surviving Korean film Crossroads of Youth (Ahn Jong-hwa, 1934) and view them comfortably in their own time on a computer screen for the shocking price of 20 pence! This is also a public-friendly library where anybody can register and use without membership fee.

The newest addition to KOFAC is the Korean Film Museum, which opened in May this year. This white dome structure stands on the middle of the foyer. As I entered the museum, I was amazed by the multi-screen ceiling decoration that illustrates certain highlights of Korean cinema, a structure created as if to prepare oneself for entering the world of Korean cinema. Inside, the museum’s collections are highly relevant and informative. For example, I learned that the first Korean film festival was held on 26th November, 1938 (there’s a little something for all my colleagues hungry for film festival trivia). And I saw rare still clips and props from the silent films Arirang (Na Un-gyu, 1926) and Sinmechung (1937). It was at this point that I realised how ignorant I was of Korean cinema as I walked through the impressive collection chronologically ordered to follow the history of Korean film.

As a PhD student working on Korean historical drama (sageuk), I was especially delighted to come across the temporary exhibition entitled ‘Space of History, Space of Imagination’. It showed plans of production design (from pencil sketches to 3D CGI images) and actual props from Blood Rain (Kim Dae-seung, 2005) and Forbidden Quest (Kim Dae-woo, 2006). These helped visitors understand the processes of recreating the past as well as recognize the historical research and imagination on the part of filmmakers. The highlight of the exhibition, however, was the reconstructed room of Madam Cho as featured in Untold Scandal (Lee Je-yong, 2003) (see picture) which included her extravagant makeup case, embroidered wardrobe and silk cushions all decorated in rich colours. For me this exhibition symbolizes much about South Korea’s obsession with the past and its coming to terms with it, but, at the same time, it arguably cashes in on the fetishisation of Korean national heritage.

Locating the origin seems to be a hot topic in Korean film academia at the moment (it is no coincidence that a lot of current research focuses on films from colonial times). This is perhaps prompted by the discovery in Chinese and Russia film archives of Crossroads of Youth, the oldest surviving Korean film. To celebrate this recovery, KOFAC held special screenings of the film conducted in the way audiences would have seen it at that time, with live music accompaniment and a byunsa, a commentator who would help audiences understand the film. Due to the shortness of my visit, I was not able to attend any of these screenings held in July. Instead by walking inside the reconstruction of Wongaksa theatre in the film museum, I tried to imagine what it would have been like for film audiences in the early 20th century. Built in 1902, the theatre is modeled after Rome’s Coliseum with red brick walls and accompanied by a Korean-influenced copper roof. This quintessential landmark of early Korean film history was burnt after 1914 only to be rebuilt later as a proper film theatre. With many traditional cinemas closing down due to the spread of multiplexes, the reconstructed Wongaksa suggests a forgotten tradition, leaving an imprint through a replica which reflects KOFAC’s desperate efforts at recovering a Korean film history as equally troubled as the nation’s political and social past. Too much time has passed, too much has been lost and my visit left me with a distinct feeling of sadness, yet it also provided inspirations; a feeling of duty and a new perspective on what it means to be a student of Korean films, which makes me wonder about what contribution I can make. Please see http://www.koreafilm.or.kr/ for further information on KOFAC.

Yun Mi Hwang
PhD student in Film Studies
In March 2009 two events were organised at University of St Andrews to reflect the rise of postcommunist cultural production. We were first treated to a roundtable discussion hosted by the Institute of Middle East, Central Asia and Caucasian Studies (MECACS), which was then followed by a conference of the day and a half with a various invited speakers; postgraduate papers were delivered.

The MECACS roundtable discussion was organised by Sally Cummings from International Relations (University of St Andrews), who herself gave an introduction to Central Asian cinema production. The two other discussants, Dina Iordanova (Centre for Film Studies, University of St Andrews) and John Cunningham (Sheffield Hallam University), gave introductions to the cinema of Balkan and Central Europe respectively. The question the roundtable planned to explore was: What, if anything, remains post-communist in the cinemas of Central Europe, the Balkans and Central Asia? And although we never found a definitive answer, the event revealed a wide range of concerns that cinema of the area is faced with; concerning cinematic infrastructure, assimilation or differentiation, global interconnectedness and inspiration, nationalism of crossing past imperial and colonial borders.

When the discussion was drawing to a close, the question was raised about whether we could, or indeed should, consider the Russian film Nochnoy dozor/Night Watch (2004) as a Kazakh film, in which both the director and the scriptwriter are Kazaks. This brought into play the issue of re-establishment of former political and economic power centres in Europe, Russia or China.

The following AHRC-funded Postcommunist Visual Culture and Cinema Conference raised the question of the postcommunist period being a shared experience. Hosted by the Centre for Film Studies and the Centre for Russian, Soviet and Eastern European Studies, the conference was organised by yours truly with the aim of starting a new network of young scholars working in the field of postcommunist visual studies. We had low expectation with regard to prospective parties, but have received an overwhelming response. In the end, 30 postgraduates managed to travel and present their work, and 3 gave presentation from Skype. They came from far afield, from Russia and Albania to Slovenia and Michigan.

The tenacity, academic spirits and exuberance of the people that came to present demonstrate that the field is vibrant and very much alive. The participants arrived late Friday afternoon where they were offered an introductory lecture by Andrew Baruch Wachtel (Northwestern University, Chicago). The opening lecture was followed by Jasmin Van Gorp (University of Antwerp), who elaborated on the difficult position of the postcommunist cultural production researcher as an outsider, problematic data gathering and dependence on interviewees. Both Wachtel's general account of the postcommunist shifts in cultural production and Van Gorp's reflections gave us food for thought, as we made our way to the conference dinner and the screening Gagam Napiri/ The Other Bank (dir. George Ovashvili, 2009) at the local cinema.

The next day, it was the turn of the postgraduates and four invited speakers to present. The morning session began with Brain McNair (University of Strathclyde), who was followed by Ib Bondebjerg (University of Copenhagen). McNair dwelled on the image of Russia in Western media, arguing that the image of the uncontrollable Russian bear was experiencing a come-back. Bondebjerg, on the other hand, concentrated his talk on new German cinema culture and the rise of 'Easterners' in films, something that Good Bye Lenin! (2003) and Das Leben der Anderen/The Lives of Others (2006) can testify to. These relevant presentations were followed by the first of two sessions of postgraduate panels, which covered a wide range of topics including the role of the artist, representation of history, virtual reality, national culture, city, museums and media culture. All were related to the notion of being postcommunist.

The afternoon session too began with two invited speakers, Fiona Björling (University of Lund) and Ewa Mazierska (University of Central Lancashire). Björling continued the topic of images of Russians, but from a mode of self-representation. She drew on a wealth of forms, from photography, documentaries to video art, to elaborate on aesthetics and ethics in the 'Russian' way of visual representations. Mazierska delivered an account of different approaches that have been employed to the field of Eastern European cinema; she was, as she mentioned, "the one speaker" that could not claim to be on unfamiliar territory with postcommunist cinema. Her writings have, I am sure, inspired many of the attendants of the conference, as well as the thinking about the postcommunist as cross-cultural and mutual to the region.

As the conference ended, before rushing off to the pub for more discussion, we managed to conclude the event with the promise of continuing the work of carving out the significance of the term postcommunism. Along with the participants of the conference, we are currently running a new network, which we hope will have an impact on how we approach the field in the future. Both events, the roundtable and the conference, show that the study of the aftermath of communism is vital in understanding what is happening globally today in terms of politics and economics.

Lars Kristensen
PhD student in Film Studies
The International Film Festival Workshop 4 April 2009

This workshop, the first major public event arising from the Dynamics of World Cinema research project led by Professor Dina Iordanova, marked a concerted beginning to a more systematic application to film festivals of what I would call the institutionalist approach to cinema studies.

It posed the central question for an institutionalist approach: even as cinema today is undergoing great challenges from Internet use, electronic games and other competing sources of mass entertainment and engagement, film festivals continue to multiply; attendances continue to climb; and investment continues to increase.

Film festivals have long been a mainstay for a diverse, dynamic world cinema connected to eager and responsive audiences. The workshop featured some impressive research into the history of the major festivals, focusing on the Big Three (Cannes, Venice, Berlin), reminding us that they played important political and national profiling roles.

Notwithstanding the digital age we live in now, and perhaps because of some of its privatising effects, the attractions of ‘liveness’ continue to flourish, and film festivals provide intense, communal experiences valued by a growing numbers of cineastes. Janet Harbord focused on this aspect of the festival in a sophisticated meditation on the phenomenology of the time-limited, discrete event that is the festival.

I argued that film festival ‘liveness’ was both contrapuntal to the asynchronous nature of film (it is a recording of events which have taken place elsewhere and at another time) and generic in that film festival studies should be embedded in a wider focus on festivals as such. This would bring into focus the fact that film festivals, like festivals generically, are place-marking activity, invested in by burgeoning numbers of cities, towns – some of vanishingly small proportion – all of which are increasingly interested in announcing their status as culturally savvy and prepared to invest and to trigger further investment. It seems as though a festival is as necessary in any given town council’s repertoire as roads, rates and rubbish!

A central fact of the film festival phenomenon is that its political economy is not driven by powerful distribution muscle, as the film industry itself is, but by myriad and growing numbers of civic councils, arts and tourism government agencies, states, provinces, regional authorities, private philanthropy, commercial businesses at a local more than a multinational level, and of course box office. The research hasn’t been done yet, but it would be very interesting to know what worldwide film festival cumulative revenues are and their full range of sources. I would hazard a guess that the proportion sourced from the film industry itself would be very small.

As Dina Iordanova argued in her paper for the workshop, the film festival circuit is not really a circuit at all in the sense of a distributional pathway. It is poorly coordinated (festivals compete for as much as coordinate their acquisition of product) and there is no effective overarching body responsible for developing a circuit (FIAPF - the International Federation of Film Producers’ Associations – has become less rather than more effective in seeking to play this role). While some of the largest festivals run ‘markets’ where buyers and sellers come together, there is very little financial incentive for filmmakers having their films run the gauntlet of the festival ‘circuits’ in terms of prize money, and this kind of exposure for your film may in fact harm your chances of icing an actual distribution deal.

So, what we see here is a huge and growing, but cumulatively uncounted, investment in film outside the film industry as such, from sources that see in film a vehicle for cultural signage, intense social gathering, good conversation – in short, civic life. How much this can, and should, be coordinated better (we are seeing the beginnings of such coordination at the grassroots level through online festival sites such as withoutabox and BSide), with better financial returns for filmmakers themselves, is a matter for the future, and for future research.

Stuart Cunningham

Visiting Professor for Dynamics of World Cinema
Director at ARC Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation
Queensland University of Technology, Australia

Website of Dynamics of World Cinema:
www.st-andrews.ac.uk/worldcinema
MeCCSA Conference in Bradford, UK

In January, 2009, I participated in the conference held by MeCCSA, (the Media Communications and Cultural Studies Association). Scholars from all over Britain and Europe convened in the highly appropriate site of the National Media Museum to present papers, films, and workshops on the subject of media and culture.

My panel, initially titled ‘Environment’ was re-titled ‘Sustainability’ to the satisfaction of the panelists, the chair, and the audience. I presented on new research concerning cinema and the representation of economic human rights. There are inherent challenges to such an endeavour: economic rights simply do not inhabit the popular imagination with the vivid presence of political and civil rights abuses. Moreover, the systems violating these rights frequently operate invisibly, leaving the human cost—extreme poverty—to appear as natural misfortune rather than systemic injustice. Nevertheless, there are a growing number of films that have risen to this challenge, not only to educate, but to mobilise change. The other panelist, Einar Thorsen, outlined the phenomenon of bloggers from the Antarctic and their valuable role in publicising problems associated with climate change. Ultimately, both of us were preoccupied with the sustainability of our ecosystems, environmental or social, and with the sustainability of representative strategies: How do we make these issues urgent? And how do we maintain them in the public imagination?

The rights theme had emerged earlier in the conference with a first night screening of The New Ten Commandments, an omnibus feature-length documentary exploring the subject of human rights through a Scottish Lens. Filmmakers involved in this celebration of the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights include Kenny Glenaan, Irvine Welsh, Tilda Swinton and Nick Higgins. Dr Higgins, who is not only a filmmaker but also a lecturer in Visual and Cultural Studies at the University of Edinburgh, was in attendance to answer questions. Later in the conference he participated in a practice session for filmmakers and scholars.

The overall conference provided an embarrassment of riches, with 7-8 panels running concurrently over the three days, and a few plenary sessions to boot. Among the plenary speakers were Matthew Fuller (Goldsmiths), who presented on the dynamic and growing field of Software Studies; Diane Negra (University College Dublin) who explored the recent trends in ‘chick-flicks’; and Laura Mulvey, who posited flapper films as the 1920s ‘chick flick’.

The panels themselves covered a wide variety of subjects and methods. The depth and strength of the panels far outweigh the space of a newsletter so I offer only a few highlights: A panel on television encouraged analysing formats and schedules as well as the representations onscreen (Iain Bard, Andrea Esser, Elke Weissmann) Discussions of masculinities and the body provided the thread between lively papers on the television programme Dexter (Alexia Smit) the documentaries Murderball and Black Sun (Thomas Austin) and the strange sport of bodybuilding (Adam Locks). Meanwhile, a panel user generated content (UGC), led by Claire Wardle (Cardiff), suggested we need to think more specifically around the term, UGC, an umbrella term that risks losing the nuance of the interactivity on display: is a radio call-in show functioning in the same way as a YouTube page? I look forward to further output from Dr Wardle’s AHRC-BBC funded project.

The MeCCSA conference provided a valuable opportunity for European media scholars to interact and share information. My only hope for next year (apart from the magical ability to watch concurrent panels) is to see a greater Film Studies contingent: this is an ideal place to forge new research projects and collaborations.

Lesiu Torchin
Lecturer in Film Studies

The UK meets Germany: A Forum for Young Leaders
Institute for Cultural Diplomacy, Berlin 23rd – 27th March 2009

At the end of March I had the great opportunity to travel to Berlin to attend a forum on cultural diplomacy in German-British relations. The main aim of the forum was to get students and young professionals from different cultural backgrounds involved in projects, encouraging the cultural exchange between Germany and the UK (e.g. film festivals), in order to break down stereotypes and further tolerance and understanding on both sides.

During the weeklong forum talks were given by many inspiring speakers, involved in both the political and cultural aspects of the German-British relationship, such as Jan Techau (Director, Alfred von Oppenheim Centre for European Policy Studies, The German Council on Foreign Relations (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik)), Dr h.c. Gebhardt von Moltke (Chairman of the Governing Board, Deutsch-Britische Gesellschaft; Former German Ambassador in London; Former Permanent Representative of Germany to NATO) as well as Mark Donfried (Founder and Director of The Institute for Cultural Diplomacy). Besides it included visits to the German Foreign Ministry and the British Embassy were the participants were able to get an impression of the everyday workings of these institutions. The evenings were filled with various entertaining activities encouraging exchange amongst the participants, such as a German-British pub quiz, the attendance of an English theatre production in Berlin, as well as a group dinner.

The forum concluded with group presentations towards which the participants had been working throughout the week, in which ideas and concepts for possible cultural exchange events and programs were presented.

Overall the forum offered an interesting new way of studying events, such as film festivals and acknowledging their influence upon international relations, and also provided a great insight into possible future careers with a Film Studies degree (e.g. at an international cultural organisation).

Maria Wittek
MLitt student in Film Studies
QUEER CINEMA GROUP

Since last semester I have been running an informal Queer Cinema discussion group, responding to demand from our students, many of whom are extremely interested in the topic. However, the group has been open to everybody in the university, all staff and students, and it’s been particularly nice to have people from other faculties and departments attending our meetings. The group has met about every two weeks, each time to watch together a film and have a discussion afterwards; on some occasions, we have also circulated a critical text or article beforehand, for those who were interested in getting deeper into the topic. The film list has been deliberately eclectic; I was keen to show the breadth of such a category as ‘queer cinema’, and I am aware that we only started to scratch on the surface of what is a huge pool of interesting films. Hopefully we’ll continue our exploration next year!

Some of the films we watched addressed the subject of alternative sexualities and sexual identities in cultural contexts quite removed from our own: for example, we screened Fire (Deepa Mehta, 1996), which is set in India and focuses on a love story between two married women. We also watched Before Night Falls (Julian Schnabel, 2000), a biopic of the Cuban novelist Reinaldo Arenas, persecuted because of his homosexuality. Some other films, however, were classics of queer cinema, and I felt it was especially important for students to get to know them: we started the screenings with Victim (Basil Dearden, 1961), a crucial film in the history of queer representations, starring Dirk Bogarde in the first positive gay role to appear on British screens. In fact, we watched other important British films too, such as My Beautiful Laundrette (Stephen Frears, 1985) and Maurice (James Ivory, 1987), two great examples of queer narratives in the independent and heritage film categories. Among all the films we watched, I simply had to include one of my favourite films of all times: Dog Day Afternoon (Sidney Lumet, 1975). Overall, the Queer Cinema group has been a great experience.

Elisabetta Girelli
Lecturer in Film Studies

Acceptance to 2009 Society of Cinema and Media Studies Conference in Tokyo

This year the Society of Cinema and Media Studies, the leading organization in the field, will host its 50th annual conference in Tokyo on 21 to 24 May, surrounding the theme “Mobilizing the Future/Screening the Past.” Like previous years, the Department of Film Studies at University of St Andrews is one of the best represented institutions. Four PhD students and one research fellow from the Department of Film Studies at University of St Andrews have been accepted to present their papers. This indicates our stimulating research environment in which postgraduate students and staff members are active in developing a record of presentations and success in their pursuits.

Lars Kristensen will present his paper "Nomad (2005) and Mongol (2007) in Epic Transnational Straightjackets" in the Post-Soviet Russian Cinema panel. Yun-hua Chen and Serazer Pekerman are going to tackle representations of personal and collective history in cinema of different contexts in their panel "Deterioritualizing the Past: History, Deleuze and Cinema" with their papers titled "Layered Space and Folded Time in Three Times (2005)" and "Memory-Space as the Smooth Battlefield of Deleuze and Guattanarian War Machine". In the panel "Asian-Pacific Cinemas: Distribution and Reception" Dr Ruby Cheung and YunMi Huang will present their papers "From The Warlords to Red Cliff: The Politics of Film Promotion in the Asia-Pacific and the Diasporic Chinese Online Fandom" and "Contested History and Reception of East Asian Martial Arts Epics" respectively.

Yun-hua Chen
PhD student in Film Studies

Italian film festival comes to St Andrews

A little bit of Italy will arrive in St Andrews this May when the town plays host to its first ever Italian Film Festival. The special event will see Italian film goddess Alida Valli, Orson Wells and Scottish actor Douglas Henshall take to the cinema screens of St Andrews in a new event organised by the University's Centre for Film Studies. The festival programme will provide a unique opportunity for fans of both cinema and all things Italian, with a series of film screenings and special events around town.

The Festival (1-3 May 2009), organised by Dr. William Brown, lecturer in Department of Film Studies at University of St Andrews, is part of a nationwide, touring festival that takes in Edinburgh, Glasgow, London, Dublin, Manchester, Dundee, Inverness, and now, for the first time, St Andrews. This event is organised by the Italian Film Festival UK, in conjunction with the Istituto Italiano di Cultura in Edinburgh, and with support from Scottish Screen and the National Lottery. The first ever St Andrews leg of the event is additionally supported by the University's Centre for Film Studies, Fife Council, Scottish Screen and Russel Trust Development Awards.

Post-Soviet Russian Cinema panel. Yun-hua Chen and Serazer Pekerman are going to tackle representations of personal and collective history in cinema of different contexts in their panel "Deterioritualizing the Past: History, Deleuze and Cinema" with their papers titled "Layered Space and Folded Time in Three Times (2005)" and "Memory-Space as the Smooth Battlefield of Deleuze and Guattanarian War Machine". In the panel "Asian-Pacific Cinemas: Distribution and Reception" Dr Ruby Cheung and YunMi Huang will present their papers "From The Warlords to Red Cliff: The Politics of Film Promotion in the Asia-Pacific and the Diasporic Chinese Online Fandom" and "Contested History and Reception of East Asian Martial Arts Epics" respectively.

Yun-hua Chen
PhD student in Film Studies

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Film on the Catwalk: Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Study Day in Costume Cinemas
13th May 2009

This year’s annual study day, funded by University of St Andrews Gradskills, will focus on film costume. Prof. Stella Bruzzi, who has written extensively on costume and fashion in cinema, will be our keynote speaker. Her talk will examine “the re-use and modification of the New Look in mid-1950’s Hollywood as the most widespread means of representing classic and arguably traditional femininity in these films. The films to be discussed principally fall within the genre of melodrama and will include: Magnificent Obsession, Rear Window, All that Heaven Allows and Tea and Sympathy. The paper will also make reference to later nostalgic portrayals of the 1950s such as Far From Heaven and the hugely successful television series Mad Men.”

Following her talk there will be two panels. The first panel will be chaired by Dr David Martin-Jones. In this panel postgraduate students and lecturers from the Centre for Film Studies, Dr Will Brown, Canan Balan, YunMi Hwang and Dave Fleming will explore the various approaches in film costume research. There will be paper presentations on film costume ranging from popular Korean Costume Dramas to Prosthetic Costume, from the early days of cinema to contemporary mainstream films.

The second panel will be a round table discussion and will be chaired by Dr Elisabetta Girelli. The discussion will mainly focus on the three films: ZouZou (Marc Allégret, 1934), The French Lieutenant's Woman (Karel Reisz, 1981) and Flowers of Shanghai (Hai Shang Hua, Hou Hsiao-Hsien, 1998) all of which will be screened before the day. The round table will start with short clips from the chosen films and brief introductions by Dr Saer Ba, Yun-Hua Chen and Serazer Pekerman.

Serazer Pekerman
PhD student in Film Studies

Professor Stuart Cunningham Visiting St Andrews: A 30+30+30 Experience

World-renowned media scholar, Professor Stuart Cunningham of Queensland University of Technology, flew from Brisbane in Australia to St Andrews at the beginning of April to join the Dynamics of World Cinema team for a whole month to discuss the pressing issues of the global distribution of film. This trip was initially quite tiring for the Cunninghams (Stuart, his wife Jo, son Hugo and daughter Vivien) as they had to fly 30 hours from Brisbane to this seashore town in Scotland. As if a perfect match with the early arrival of summer, Stuart’s trip soon proved to be much of his delight and of course a fruitful gain for St Andrews Film Studies due to Stuart’s presence.

During the 30 days of visit in St Andrews, Stuart’s timetable was compactly scheduled. First, his timely visit coincides with the International Film Festival Workshop held on 4 April, the first of its kind in St Andrews. Stuart was thus invited to moderate one of the workshop sessions with Nick Roddick (aka Mr. Busy from Sight & Sound). Though claiming himself as being not an expert in festival, Stuart helped facilitate discussants’ talk about film festivals as distribution and exhibition networks and called for the need to grow the research agenda of film festivals in different areas of concern. Stuart’s opinion was agreed by our discussants who are themselves experienced researchers in festivals from various fields such as academia, journalism, and festival programming (see p. 5 in this newsletter for a detailed report on the International Film Festival Workshop).

Yet the festival workshop is only an overture of Stuart’s visit. One of Stuart’s missions in St Andrews was to bring his expertise and insights to share with the Dynamics of World Cinema team. The team had intense meetings over the four main areas of research, namely global blockbusters, the festival circuit, the diasporic distribution, and the Internet-enabled dissemination of film. This culminated into Stuart’s talk on 28 April on the Internet-enabled film distribution, an area of research interest that Stuart has been exploring over the past 10 years. The talk also signified the latest trend in film studies. Entitled ‘Rates of Change: Online Distribution as Disruptive Technology in the Film Industry’, the paper explored how digital distribution has changed drastically the way in which film industry operate in recent years. With the empirical findings from over 220 websites which offer digital distribution of film (and other screen) content, Stuart concluded his talk with insightful remarks about the convergence of IT-innovation culture and the mass media content culture; as well as the co-evolution of the market and non-market sectors.

Stuart’s visit to St Andrews came to a close towards the end of the month and yet it was definitely not the end of our exchanges, but the commencement of another stage of collaboration between St Andrews (in particular the Dynamics of World Cinema team) and Stuart. Before Stuart and his family embark on another 30 hours of flight to return home, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Stuart for his invaluable exchanges with us all in St Andrews!

Prof. Stuart Cunningham

Ruby Cheung
Research Associate at Centre for Film Studies
Dynamics of World Cinema Project