

Hypervisibility II: Homosexualities in Contemporary Francophone Visual Cultures

Hypervisibility II: Homosexualities in Contemporary Francophone Visual Cultures,
University of Stirling, 25- 27 June 2008

A report by James N Agar, University College London

This international bilingual conference was co-organized by Dr Florian Grandena of the University of Ottawa, Canada, and Dr Cristina Johnston of Stirling University's French Department. The organizers are to be congratulated for assembling a geographically diverse line up of speakers from nine countries (delegates represented universities from Austria, Canada, England, France, Germany, Israel, Scotland, South Africa and the USA) and for fostering a friendly atmosphere in which papers, questions and discussions took place in both French and English with only a small amount of translation required between the languages for non-French speakers.

As its title suggests, this was the second such conference on 'Hypervisibilities' in relation to visual representations of non-normative sexualities within the Francophone context. The first conference took place at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada, in June 2006 (also organized by Florian Grandena). It was refreshing to see intellectual continuity around the thematic of the conferences and that the Stirling conference continued the good work begun in Montreal. An equally positive sign for the enduring critical interest in the subject of the conferences was that while some speakers in Stirling had spoken and/or been present in Montreal, Stirling also attracted many new voices who had not attended the Montreal event. In the spirit of ongoing critical enquiry, the organizers hope to proceed to some publishing initiatives based on the two conferences thus far and to build on the emergence of critical mass around the subject by organizing a third conference around a similar set of themes and issues, probably in Ottawa, Canada, in 2010. In the current UK research and funding climate, it is refreshing to see international cooperation successfully fostering collaborative interdisciplinary projects which, however, recognise and respect the traditional role and place of lone scholarship within the critical study of cultural outputs. The majority of papers at Stirling represented the fruits of the latter kind of research.

The format of the conference followed a structure which allowed participants to attend all sessions. The three plenary speakers were allotted an hour for their respective presentations with 15 minutes for discussion and questions following each keynote talk. All other panels consisted of three 20 minute talks which were grouped according to a common thematic or formal/generic interest (queer narratives I and II; contemporary images; images of the body; queer families; intimate images I and II, and; gay *auteurs*). Each panel also had time for discussion and debate built into this structure. As such, the conference allowed for a wide variety of topics and approaches to be addressed, and refreshingly the focus was not *exclusively* on the medium of the full length fiction film. Papers also discussed film shorts,

DIY video, effects of recent developments in new digital media (internet, YouTube, ipods etc), television, performance art, magazine culture (Dr Bharain Mac An Breithiún [University College Falmouth, UK] delivered a fascinating analysis of the commodification of gay body images in *Têtu* and *Kaiserin*), and porn. Structured around panel sessions rather than parallel sessions also added the benefit of allowing participants to forge links across different panels and thus to perceive and discuss interesting shifts *and* continuities between diverse genres and media.

Despite the impressive breadth covered by the programme, there remained a preponderance of papers considering aspects of visual cultures related mainly to the arenas of the masculine and metropolitan France. Notwithstanding some notable exceptions to this broad trend, it will be interesting to see if future Hypervisibility conferences are able to broaden their appeal to increasing numbers of participants discussing women *as well as* men, the extra-Hexagonal *as well as* France, and the non-normative beyond *as well as* within the boundaries of gay (male) and lesbian issues. Within this last area, and despite the use of both 'queer' and 'gay' in panel titles, the conference never fully got to grips with teasing out the differences, distinctions and tensions between such terms and their potential uses both in and beyond France. While this is not a criticism of the Stirling conference in and of itself (no single conference can hope to cover all aspects of ever proliferating non-normative experiences and cultural outputs), it does suggest that the organizers are correct in thinking that continued work and further reflection within *and* beyond the broad areas addressed at Stirling are required.

Before commenting on some of the details of the papers presented, it is worth foregrounding that the Stirling conference also incorporated two sessions which diverged somewhat from the more typical conference fare of presentation of academic research. First, two of the conference participants, Matthieu Sabourin (Concordia University, Canada) and Elia Eliev are practising artists rather than academic post holders. Each presented slides and videos of their own visual works, commenting on the contexts of production, aspects of reception and their own responses to their work. Sabourin's work incorporates the use of bodily secretions, drawing spectators' attention to ponder the cultural and bodily associations of these while also provoking questions about the interrelations of production and consumption in modern culture generally and in relation to his own art installations particularly. These latter often involve their own consumers' performative complicity in the production of the art-event itself. His presentation of his work addressed the interplay of the other in the self (and vice versa) and the notion of fluid and malleable elements which become fixed in cultural processes and products, this process shadowing the power relations aiming to fix lived experiences and practices within a constricting taxonomy of homo/hetero sexual definition. Eliev is a multidisciplinary artist based in Canada who has exhibited widely there and, currently, in Chile, South America. He discussed how his works, which fuse photography, video and sculpture in a provocatively queer performance style, make of his own body an artistic resource which parodies and questions some of the sexualized and gendered signifiers of both modern life and modern art. As such his own work engages critically and productively with trends in modern art which foreground the links between seriousness, theatricality, gender and sexuality. Aiming to force spectators to question ideologies of masculinity, in particular, his work aims to force reactions of both desire and repulsion. It was interesting to see the art works of both performers and illuminating to listen to their own presentations of their work. It was, equally, noticeable that as performers engaged in cultural production more than academic cultural criticism they seemed steadfastly uninterested in the kinds of sexualized categorization which might be applied to some kinds of art, shunning the notions that their own work was gay art or queer art as opposed simply to art and resisting,

equally, any notion that such epithets might be attached to them as artists. While the addition of practising artists in the conference programme was welcome, their own presence perhaps limited the extent to which delegates were wholly prepared to respond vocally (with either desire or repulsion) to the works presented.

The second novelty of the Stirling conference was to have a whole session devoted to issues of university teaching rather than (just) research, even if the former is informed by, and based on, the latter. The session focused on teaching AIDS narratives through film and featured brief presentations of teaching experience in this field by James Agar (UCL, UK), Dr Darren Waldron (University of Manchester, UK), and Wemar Strydom (North-West University, South Africa). Agar outlined experience of student responses to a final year undergraduate course focused on AIDS in France and to a comparative literature seminar on AIDS narratives, arguing that cinema, in particular, provides a fertile base from which to analyse the interaction of cultural creativity, theory and activism in relation to the regulation of sexuality in the era of AIDS. Waldron outlined how he would construct a course focused on AIDS and French screen studies and discussed what he imagined some student responses might be. He also foregrounded the importance, in the Francophone context, of attempting to include material which might reflect the geo-political and social specificities of different responses to AIDS in, for example, Francophone Africa and the Caribbean. In response to these two brief presentations there was much discussion of potential films which might constitute a corpus for study within this domain (including films by Collard, Vecchiali, Téchiné, Carax, Chereau). Further discussion also centred around films (such as Chereau's *Son frère/His Brother* [2003] and Ozon's *Le Temps qui reste/Time to Leave* [2005]) which feature stories of dying, death and mourning in relation to gay characters suffering from terminal illnesses other than AIDS, a point which the films are at pains to repeatedly point out. Strydom outlined the very different context in which he works in South Africa, discussing the acute difficulties faced in successfully engaging academics and students around AIDS due to perceived prejudices about its links with certain forms of sexual activity and identity. He also commented on some of the visual material used (leaflets, flyers etc) in South Africa to advertise local alternative medical practices and beliefs which further complicate the ease with which studies of cultural objects such as films might be able to contribute to knowledge about AIDS. A vibrant, lively discussion ensued about the complex notions of the potential and/or necessary social and political (ir)responsibility of practitioners in higher education in relation to AIDS. The addition of a session focused on teaching in relation to the research base of the majority of other contributions was widely felt to be a positive step. It certainly proved to be a session which generated lively and illuminating discussions and debates.

Professor Lucille Cairns (University of Durham, UK) delivered the opening plenary of the conference in which she deftly analysed the depiction of inter-female desire and sexual activity in the films of Quebecoise *auteur* Léa Pool. Cairns argued that Pool's work, and attitude toward her own work, demonstrates a mobile subtlety with regard to notions of identity and belonging, suggesting a certain reductiveness with regard to the label 'lesbian'. Cairns demonstrated, with examples drawn from *Emporte-moi* (1999) and *Lost and Delirious/Les Rebelles* (2001), that Pool's works overlap with some of the potential sense/s of 'queer' performativity, linked by critic Julianne Pidduck to the very notion of cultural hypervisibility, and to resistance to hegemonic forms of sexuality and identity politics.^[1] Cairns also analysed the depiction of triangulated relationships in Pool's works, linking this to queer subversions of images of the traditional couple (whether straight or gay) and discussed

her sense of how Pool's works visually inscribe lesbianism while erasing the lexical field of its own representation.

Forms of identity performed on screen which do not conform to conventional labels but instead aim to queer, modify, transform and question the mainstream were also addressed in the plenary of Jean-Pierre Simard (Université Jean Monnet – Saint Etienne, France) who commented on the changing visibility of queer issues in France, and the shifting senses of tolerance toward these. Simard discussed *Wild Side* (Lifshitz, 2004) and *Chouchou* (Allouache, 2003) in this shifting context, films which feature transsexual and transvestite characters. His paper chimed well with the paper of Brigitte Rollet (University of London Institute in Paris, France) who also spoke about *Chouchou* in relation to a filmic tradition which figures the transvestite (only) as a figure of fun to be laughed at. Rollet focused on the notion of a masquerade which might complicate the binary identificatory systems of man/woman and homo/hetero and lauded, despite the French context of Republican universalism, destabilising forms of visibility of minorities (gay, lesbian, beur, for example) within French cinema. Rollet argued for a reading of such films which stress the multi-hybridity of shifting associations between gender, ethnicity, sexuality and nationhood rather than more mainstream works which tend not to put in question the stereotypes which they rely on.

Relating transvestism to a comic performance tradition and changing popular attitudes to sexuality since the 1980s was also the focus of Nelly Quemener's paper (Université Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris III, France). Quemener analysed a series of one-women TV shows (Gad Elmaleh, Eli Semoun, Florence Foresti, Muriel Robin) which have heightened the visibility of (homo)sexual imagery and issues (transvestism and coming out for example) within popular culture. Discussing, in a different context to Rollet, the issue of subverting (or not) stereotypes of gender and sexuality, Quemener focused on notions of the excessive and parodic performance which might at once redefine codes of visibility in relation to homosexualities while also perpetuating normative forms of binary categorization. This paper linked well with that of Fabienne Rose (Concordia University, Canada) who analysed instances of televised gender passing (passing oneself off as of a different gender than that suggested by anatomy). Rose discussed examples from reality TV shows and analysed the intersections of the visual medium as informing constructions of identification in relation to televised 'confession', adapting ideas drawn from the work of Foucault to the focus of his own paper. As with others, Rose's paper problematized the notion of both normative and binary forms of gendered and sexual identification. Such an approach and focus was also evident in Isabelle Gavillet's (Université Paul Verlaine – Metz, France) discussion of representations of polygamous marriages on French television.

Pascal Génot's (Corsica University) probing discussion of *One Night Stand* (Emilie Jouvét, 2006: <www.onenightstand-lefilm.com>), France's first experimental/lesbian/trans/porn movie radicalized further the urgencies of formal and thematic probing of varying normative identificatory categories. Génot presented the film in relation to the rejection of the industrial values of the 'mainstream' porn industry, outlining the sense/s in which the film can be seen as 'post-porn' by blocking categorising impulses in spectators and by foregrounding a documentary style. He also, interestingly, cast the film in relation to notions of community and 'family', arguing that it was made for specific viewers and – due to a legal contract – not shown outside of LGBT contexts. Génot's paper provided a good background for the final plenary delivered by Dr Nick Reese-Robert (University of Bristol, UK). Drawing on material from his forthcoming book *French Queer Cinema* (Edinburgh University Press), Reese-

Roberts delivered a richly illuminating analysis of the emergence of queer DIY video. His talk melded discussion of the underground, albeit not necessarily *avant-garde*, material in relation to a pre-history of non-mainstream video and film work in France (incorporating, for example, the work from the late 1970s of Guy Hocquenghem and Lionel Souzak). Contextualized likewise in relation to issues within contemporary film theory such as post-punk aesthetics, new digital media (DVD, internet, facebook, eg) and the notion of 'post-cinema', Reese-Roberts' presentation also suggested that his analysis of the film marks a wider shift within academic research from a traditional film studies perspective to a wider sense of screen studies. His talk also discussed some televisual examples (such as *Beurs Appart*: <http://beursappart.com/>) of non-normative representations, foregrounding the importance of community funding for collectivist works which tend to play on and parody clichéd images of contemporary *banlieue* masculinities. This final area in particular opens up areas ripe for further research and further visibility within the academy – the nexus of relations, also alluded to by Rollet at this conference, between nationhood, ethnicity and gender/sexuality, the interplay between postcolonial and queer contexts and theory.

Numerous other papers presented an array of discussions of different filmmakers, films and visual images of gay male experience. Florian Grandena focused on the work of Olivier Ducastel and Jacques Martineau, arguing that their works present images of multiple authentic desires and suggesting that same-sex relations increasingly infiltrate images of the Republican family (perhaps most clearly evident in the formal and thematic textures of *Drôle de Félix* [2000]). Grandena also discussed how Ducastel and Martineau set themselves aside from other contemporary *cinéastes* often associated with a high-brow *auteur* tradition (figures such as Lifshitz, Ozon, Honoré) by proclaiming themselves to be gay filmmakers interested in gay 'positive images' and the possibilities of gay integration. As such, Grandena suggested, they and their work often fall foul of a tradition of snobbery with regard to (gay) cinema studies which often foreground supposedly more serious work. Families and family relations which are complicated by the same-sex desires of members therein were also discussed by Bernd Elzer (Trier University, Germany) in his reading of Jean-Marc Vallée's French Canadian dramatic comedy *C.R.A.Z.Y.* (2005). Elzer argued that the embedded narrative of same-sex desire, often overlooked in responses to this film, is inextricably linked to central themes such as masculinity and religion and is shown to emerge at a similar time to an emergence of a specifically Quebecois national identity. This film was also one of the mini corpus (along with *Le Confessionnal* /*The Confessional* (Lepage, 1995), *Son frère* and *Le Temps qui reste*) discussed by Dr Jorge Calderón (Simon Fraser University, Canada) in relation to 'fratrie', sibling relations. In this talk, Calderón demonstrated the link in these films between sibling relations and death, arguing that in these examples since one of the siblings is gay and one of the siblings dies in each film (though not always the gay one) there is a dialectic between sibling relations and death which itself plays a significant part in the construction of gay identity within these films. Calderón also discussed how these films raise ethical questions about belonging, how to belong within a family, nation without reinforcing exclusions of others.

Dr Renaud Lagabrielle (University of Vienna, Austria) discussed gay adolescents on film, in particular the representation of coming out stories in Lifshitz's *Presque rien* /*Come Undone* (2000) and *Comme un frère* /*Like a Brother* (Alapetite and Legann, 2003). Lagabrielle analysed a series of oppositions within and between these two films (heterosexual – homosexual; La Boule – Paris; loose fitting T shirts – tight T shirts) suggesting that the latter film reinforces a series of clichés about contemporary gay men in Paris (and how they look/dress). He suggested that this work of Lifshitz tends more to celebrate the male form

(especially the body of actor Stéphane Rideau, a point also discussed by Agar's paper on the work of Gaël Morel) and the pleasures of the body in a more complex narrative trajectory than a straightforward coming out structure. Lagabrielle's discussion was contextualized in relation to the kinds of images and 'models' which such films might offer to young spectators in terms of identificatory possibilities in their own real lives.

Professor Bill Marshall (University of Stirling, UK) discussed André Téchiné's *Les Témoins* (2007), contextualising the film in relation to Téchiné's wider corpus and within the context of other cinematic responses to AIDS. He analysed the relational and provisional nature of identity in Téchiné's works and, in relation to *Les Témoins* specifically, commented on the move away from an individual and autobiographical testimony about AIDS which had been evident in earlier French responses (one thinks of Collard and Guibert, for example), toward an engagement with subcultural/gay identity politics, a departure for Téchiné's works. Marshall's paper also discussed individual and collective memories and their interconnections, within a theoretical framework incorporating both Bakhtin and Deleuze, in order to pose questions about the 'community of memory' which might be implied and implicated in and by Téchiné's film. James Agar's paper on the works of young director Gaël Morel traced Morel, as actor, back to an earlier Téchiné film, 1993's *Les Roseaux sauvages*, in order to cast forward the influence of Morel's character's coming out in that film in Morel's own subsequent films, as director. Agar drew parallels from the earlier Téchiné film in relation to the depiction of gay desire in Morel's *A Toute vitesse/Full Speed* (1996) and *Le Clan* (2004) via the TV film *Premières neiges* (1999). He also commented on the *auterist* tendencies of Morel's films, often using a 'family' of actors in various films (Rideau and Elodie Bouchez being two who starred with Morel in *Les Roseaux sauvages*), for example, while also suggesting that his films are more populist than those of Ozon, Lifshitz and Honoré. His analysis outlined the shifting continuities of Morel's emerging corpus, commenting on the celebration of semi-naked male bodies in the films.

There were three papers on varying aspects of the work of François Ozon. Evelyne Szaryk (Dalhousie University, Canada) discussed the portrayal of intimacy in Ozon's work, suggesting that while intimacy is made visible it is one which is suffused with irony, an intimacy which makes spectators smile. This was presented in relation to a series of oppositions which Ozon's work both presents and breaks down: the tragic and comic; classical and contemporary; serious and not. Dr Gilad Pavda (Tel Aviv University, Israel) analysed Ozon's film short *Robe d'été/Summer Dress* (1996) in relation to a bi-curiosity which foregrounds pleasurable identificatory fluidity in a film marked by campy theatricality. Pavda suggested that this Ozon work disrupts a wide range of conventional codes of gendered and sexual behaviour and performance and is best viewed as an eroticized political allegory which parodies and subverts prevalent forms of socio-sexual definition. Dr Darren Waldron's illuminating and entertaining paper analysed the construction of the figure of Ozon as star director amongst spectators and Ozon fans. Waldron's work analyses reception through email correspondence and msn conversations and here he outlined and analysed the investments which certain viewers make in particular images of the director as (gay? queer?) icon. His work fuses a theoretical interest in the sociology of cultural capital with work on fan cultures and qualitative reception studies within the context of star and celebrity cultures. Waldron's paper provided a provocatively rich complement to the close readings of other specific films and forms of imagery which other papers explored and was a timely reminder of the extent to which (all?) spectators project and invest their own desires in what they watch and see and how they respond to this process.

While this conference is testimony to the existence of a rich and ever proliferating diversity of materials within visual cultures which relate to non-normative forms of sexual desire and being, whether or not this *really* equates with widespread hypervisibility remains open to further question and exploration. A growing field of study is evident and beginning to be mapped, avenues of research have emerged, paths are being followed, in this event to Stirling. The journey of critical navigation and speculation must now continue.

[1] Julianne Pidduck, 'After 1980: Margins and Mainstreams', in Richard dyer (ed.), *Now You See It* (2nd edition, 2003), pp. 265-94.

Television without Borders: Transfers, Translations and Transnational Exchange

Television without Borders: Transfers, Translations and Transnational Exchange, University of Reading, 27-29 June 2008

A report by Alexandra Simcock, Lancaster University, UK

Marking the final event in the Department of Film, Theatre & Television's AHRC funded project, "British TV Drama and Acquired US Programmes, 1970-2000", Television without Borders stood apart from other academic conferences by virtue of its friendly atmosphere and rewardingly inclusive structure. Not only did the conference include speakers from the fields of television production and audio-visual archives, it also incorporated appealing and informative additions to the usual structure of keynotes and parallel sessions. Supplementing the many interesting papers was an archive panel, as well as a production panel, a book introduction, and a workshop on the uses of making lists. These discussions were evenly spaced amongst the parallel sessions, which covered some issues of media convergence, but focused largely around themes of globalisation and transnational flow, encompassing television from many different national contexts, both contemporary and historical.

Introducing the themes for the conference, Jonathan Bignell (University of Reading) presented three diverse case studies in his keynote address concerning "Place and Space: Television migrations, hybrids and transnational identities". First discussing production of filmed TV drama series at Elstree, during the late 1950s and 1960s, before moving on to consider European animation imports on British TV, and finally the BBC, and other broadcasters', use of Samuel Beckett's plays, Bignell drew attention to the situated, and also shifting, nature of conceptions of "here versus there" and "us versus them". Jeffrey Miller (Augustana College) then provided an interesting take on these conceptions through an analysis of the Anglo-American television relationship presented by the curious history of *Spooks* (2002-) in the US, in the light of what many commentators have understood as its American equivalent, *24* (2001-). While these drama series evidence notable thematic and stylistic similarities, Miller discussed the key ways in which they speak to their national origins. He noted, for example, differences in character relationships (the cooperation of the MI5 agents, versus Jack Bauer as a "technologically-supersized American Western hero"), as well as markedly different approaches to the depiction of torture (represented as a functionally, as well as ethically, dubious technique in *Spooks*, and a heroic technique – in the right hands – in *24*).

In the "History, Genres and the Transnational" panel session that followed, the theme of place and space was taken up by Juan Francisco Gutiérrez Lozano (University of Malaga) in a well-received paper discussing the success of the Canal Sur Televisión (Andalusian regional channel) programme *Se llama copla* (*It's called copla*). The programme provides a new twist on the music talent contest format by using the "copla" – a traditional type of folk song, linked to flamenco, but which has been historically criticized and rejected for its associations

with, and exploitation by, the Francoist dictatorship, in television and cinema of the 1950s and '60s. Gutiérrez Lozano thus presented *Se llama copla* as an interesting example of a new coexistence of the traditional and regional with a popular, global and apolitical TV format, suggesting popular culture's ability to overcome older negative political associations.

Part of the same panel, Derek Johnston's (University of East Anglia) paper on "The BBC versus Science Fiction" likewise took a historical perspective on TV genres, exploring the tensions between the BBC's public service mandate and the associations of surface spectacle and infantilism attached to the term "science fiction" – a term imported into Britain from the USA. Johnston outlined the problems of identifying BBC "science fiction" programmes prior to the 1950s, when different generic labels were employed – a methodological concern that was also raised in Cathy Johnson (Royal Holloway) and Rob Turnock's (Royal Holloway) paper discussing the EU-funded project, Video Active, which is creating online access to over 10,000 items of television content from archives across Europe (encompassing eleven different countries, with eleven different languages). Explicitly pan-European and comparative in its aims, the Video Active project raises the question of how we can compare digitised television content if the terms of genre classification vary between nations, as well as between different historical eras. Johnson and Turnock outlined some of the ways in which these issues have been addressed in the project – by, for example, providing contextual material to accompany the "metadata" (catalogue and production information) and programme content, and by making selection criteria transparent.

The excitement, concerns and debates around issues of access to, and comparison of, television content and metadata, continued with the archive panel – where Dalida van Dessel (Sound and Vision, Netherlands), outlined Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision's role as one of the largest audio-visual archives in Europe, and one of the core partners in Video Active. For those interested in American broadcasting, Karen King (National Public Broadcasting Archives, USA) provided an overview of archival resources (academic, museum, broadcast, and station) available to academics and members of the public in the US, while Andy O'Dwyer (BBC Audiovisual Archives) discussed some of the technical and practical limitations of archiving, as well as the cultural and heritage drive, and EU initiatives on access, which may well help to improve public access to national, and smaller, collections.

This concern for cataloguing, comparing and analysing was complemented by the later book introduction, and balanced by the production panel, scheduled for the final day of the conference. Introducing the forthcoming Wiley-Blackwell volume, *A European Television History*, the book's editors, Jonathan Bignell (University of Reading) and Andreas Fickers (Maastricht University), briefly outlined the focus of each of the chapters (written by leading television scholars, many of whom were present at the conference), which range from the topic of early TV, to that of TV audiences, and includes a section on the location and holdings of European television archives. Bignell was careful to emphasise how this new volume represents a step forward from other studies of European TV. Rather than dealing in turn with different national industries (a chapter on France, followed by a chapter on Germany, with a different approach, and so on), it picks up the call for a truly comparative approach, organising the discussion of different TV histories around a shared agenda – a set of common questions, themes, and methodological reflections. Fickers then went on to observe several recurring tensions in the development of TV, before discussing lessons learned from the book project, future challenges, and future strategies. In particular he noted a need to put TV, and media generally, on the agenda of "general" historians, and called for

the continuation of fruitful collaboration with archives – such as is occurring with Video Active.

Paul Kerr (London Metropolitan University/documentary producer) and Tony Garnett (World Productions) composed the production panel. With a unique perspective spanning academia and the television industry (with a background as a producer/director, series producer and executive producer specialising in arts and history documentaries for the BBC and Channel Four), Paul Kerr related his experience of the challenges of producing documentaries for multiple markets. Tony Garnett, famed as a writer and producer for *The Wednesday Play* (1964-70), but with a long list of more recent credits to his name, then related the challenges of producing drama, rather than factual programming, in the era of globalisation. Extolling the virtues of culturally specific dramas that resonate all over the world for their very specificity, such as *The Sopranos* (1999-2007), Garnett took the opportunity to emphasise the importance of the single-writer's vision (even if this vision is then executed by multiple writers). Co-production is dangerous to personal vision, and drama made-by-committee, he suggested, could only become the bland TV equivalent of fast food. Perhaps retaining a strong sense of "here versus there" and "us versus them" is needed to create "good" drama: in Garnett's opinion the more international you try to make your production, the less it will resonate. In discussion afterwards, however, the question of whether there have been any creatively fruitful examples of co-production was raised – with the suggested example of *Rome* (2005-07) provoking contrary opinions amongst delegates from different sides of the Atlantic.

Together these speakers constituted a lively and entertaining panel discussion, nevertheless, for me, perhaps the most exciting session came with the earlier "Uses of Making Lists" workshop. Here Julia Hallam (University of Liverpool), Lez Cooke (Manchester Metropolitan University), Patricia Holland (University of Bournemouth), and Elke Weissmann (University of Reading), each related their own experiences of making lists in their research, whether to explore regionality, genre, or to map production and scheduling more generally. What I found incredibly valuable about this session was the way that it brought together the key theoretical and methodological issues raised throughout the conference. Pat Holland, for example, drew attention to the constant struggle of television scholars to balance the huge wealth of TV history and TV productions against the specificity of individual meanings. This sense of the individual programme within a flow is highlighted, she suggested, when thinking about different cultures, and this should remind us that we can never take our object of study for granted – it is constantly changing and we have to take account of this, whilst keeping in mind pragmatic limits. We must, therefore, be reflexive in our work, and realise the importance of trying to take account of the whole output, however impossible this is. This highlighting, by each of the speakers, of our need and our desire to expand the canon, and to grasp the flow specific to television (and also of the huge challenges of doing this given the practical limitations of studying television), led to a discussion focussing on the question of how all of this useful work of listing can be disseminated, and brought together more effectively, whether through traditional publications or an online database. Given the wealth of expertise in the room, Elke Weissmann suggested we take advantage of this opportunity to produce our own (contact) list of those interested in advancing this kind of project. Rarely does a conference feel this inclusive, as well as this practically and actively useful.

The final keynote address fell to solely Michele Hilmes (University of Wisconsin, Madison), as the other scheduled speaker, Stephanie Marriott (University of Stirling), was unfortunately

unable to attend. Hilmes did not disappoint, however, with a well-considered presentation, which revisited the notion of authorship by inflecting it historically within the context of the long-standing transnational exchange between the UK and the US. Without reviving any romantic conception of the author, Hilmes considered the reciprocal influences on British and American creative practice, arguing that transnational flow is about more than just the exchange of programmes – it also involves flows of policy, practices and personnel. This analysis culminated in the assertion that what we might consider to be national is actually the product of transnational adaptation and resistance.

This was an appropriate closing remark to a thought-provoking conference, which had begun by drawing attention to the complex and shifting nature of concepts of "here versus there". Those who have enjoyed the events organised as part of the "British TV Drama and Acquired US Programmes, 1970-2000" project, might be disappointed that the series has ended, but we can be sure that the debates and the research around these issues will continue. As many of the papers highlighted, there is still much to be done – not least the expansion of the canon, and our knowledge of television output, through making lists.

Obsession and Addiction

Obsession and Addiction, Kingston University, 9-11 July 2008

A report by Louis Bayman, King's College, London

This three-day international conference held at Kingston University met with the purpose of discussing three main questions: Is obsession all-consuming passion or pathological deviance? Is addiction an irresistible lust for pleasure or a chronic self-destructive disease? And what is the relationship between obsession, addiction and the arts?

Organised within the School of Performance and Screen Studies, the conference as a whole took shape around this last point, the relationship between obsession, addiction and the arts, as a standpoint from which to consider questions around passion and pathology, pleasure and disease. The ultimate achievement of the conference then was to understand wider cultural phenomena through the changing ways that cultural phenomena have themselves understood pathology.

The artistic treatment of obsession and addiction was understood by the conference primarily in the narrative arts of film, literature and to a lesser extent television. In interdisciplinary terms, very few papers combined studies of both film and literature, but the themes which dominated tended to concern both areas: how addictive behaviour is represented, the questions of social responsibility/commentary or moralism their representation entails, and, in terms of less direct commentary, the relationship of artistic style to the obsessive and addictive experience. All these topics were elucidated in the opening keynote address by Dr. Kevin McCarron (Roehampton University) entitled 'Crepuscular Enchantment: Addiction and 'Style'.'

McCarron discussed the profusion of addiction narratives in contemporary non-fiction, such as James Frey's *A Million Little Pieces*, which he spoke about at length. He argued that contemporary addiction narratives reject the rhetorical flights with which classics such as *Confessions of an Opium Eater* convey the attractions of addiction. Instead, modern addiction narratives are distinctly Puritan, gaining an approving reception with the extent to which their authors reject hedonism. Their rejection of stylistic experimentation is thereby a repudiation of the pleasures of addiction in favour of a satisfactory progression of problem, solution, and success (measured not only in emotional but also in financial terms). By noting this moralistic social attitude to addiction, McCarron explicitly stated what remained implicit throughout the conference, which was that the artist's role is to abdicate social responsibility in preference for the pleasures of the artistic rendering of addictive states.

More controversially, he separated addiction off as only one specific aspect of compulsion and dependency, arguing that only ingestion of foreign bodies on which the user becomes chemically dependent can be described as addiction, thereby excluding gambling, sex, and even the talking cure itself – to take three other topics dealt with as addictive in various other papers. Several papers presented research on the relationship of language to clinical practice and diagnosis, but the daily practice of clinical psychology did not feature as strongly as

social and stylistic questions. The film studies papers however often relied on psychoanalysis, and in particular the interpretive frameworks of Freud, Jung and Lacan that have been so important for theories of identification in narrative film.

The more psychoanalytically-based papers centred around how compulsive behaviour pathologises the cinematic processes that produce affect, desire, and the gaze. Dr. Diane Arnaud (Université Paris Diderot 7) thus spoke of the dream sequences that are part of the compulsion to dream in *La Science des rêves/The Science of Sleep* (Michel Gondry, 2006) and the pornographic videos that form a sexual compulsion in *L'Histoire de Richard O/The Story of Richard O* (Damien Odoul, 2007) which use, respectively, animation and video. The drive towards these imaging techniques creates an ironic self-reflexivity which posits artistic creation itself as a tussle between asserting intellectual control and creating affective conflicts. Dr. Suzanne Barnard (Duquesne University) applied notions of the uncanny and of fetishism to David Lynch's *Inland Empire* (2006). She described Lynch's famed Surrealism in this film as presenting an obsessional subjectivity by structuring the gaze to create objects that are a disavowed and fetishised 'Other'. Prof. John Izod (University of Stirling) discussed Anna's (Nicole Kidman) obsession in *Birth* (Jonathan Glazer, 2004) with a boy who claims to be her late husband. Her growing conviction that the boy really is her dead husband results from trauma, and her inability to move from grieving to mourning, but is also a constructive conflict of two exclusive worldviews. Her obsession lies in her entrapment within a view of herself and the boy as two distinct, injured psyches, and an attempt to reach an opposed view, of themselves as psyche itself 'manifest as bodily presence', a view germane to some Eastern religions and incorporated into psychoanalysis by Carl Jung.

On the question of style, Mr. David Lengyel (Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle) traced a development of the artistic use of obsession from classical Hollywood narrative into postmodernism. In *Bigger Than Life* (Nicholas Ray, 1956), Avery's (played by James Mason) drug addiction is a reaction to the restrictions of bourgeois normality. Thus as with Ahab in *Moby Dick* the obsession to access unknown territories is, in Lengyel's words, a pretext to talk about American society. Moving on then to the pathological case of Monica Vitti's character Giuliana in Michelangelo Antonioni's *Il Deserto rosso/Red Desert* (1964), a classical Hollywood narrative driven by psychological causality is eschewed, paving the way for the rejection of narrative evolution that a post-modernist filmmaker like Darren Aronofsky makes in *Requiem For a Dream* (2000). Here, fragmentation – in editing style and narrative as well as in psychology and society – is characteristic of drug addiction, and dependency is simply a hopeless situation without possibility of progress to resolution.

Ms. Lucy Bolton (Queen Mary College, University of London) argued for the obsessive pathology at the heart of Audrey Tautou's character Angélique in *À la folie...pas du tout/He Loves Me, He Loves Me Not* (Laetitia Colombani, 2002) as highlighting an obsessiveness common to the rom-com genre. For the first half of this film, the generic tropes of the rom-com present a picture of a sweet and caring young woman, until the revelation that she has barely met the object of her affections. This causes a re-evaluation of her behaviour as psychotic and ultimately violently hate-filled. Yet the crux of Bolton's argument was that the rom-com heroine as embodied by Meg Ryan or Tautou herself in her earlier *Amélie* (Jean-Pierre Jeunet, 2001) frequently displays fixated attachment to her love-object and violent ill-will towards her rivals. Thus, the inversion of the genre's tropes of lighthearted romance in *He Loves Me* only makes explicit how close the infatuation of the heroine in the rom-com is to the 'bunny-boiling' obsession of the figure of the monstrous feminine.

The papers that could be described as film history all charted changes in Hollywood's approach to addictions. Dr. Simon Brown (Kingston University) questioned the idea, proposed by DeMist, an organisation against smoking in films, that smoking in Hollywood is still used to make men look tougher and women more glamorous. Male smoking is now either the province of bad guys, or, as in Keanu Reeves' character in *Constantine* (Francis Lawrence, 2005), linked directly to lung cancer. Female smoking is a shorthand for neurosis, and the only return to the images of the past is when a sense of historicity is needed, such as the nostalgic atmosphere of bygone days that smoking creates in films like *Good Night and Good Luck* (George Clooney, 2005). Meanwhile, Mr. Paddy O'Neil (Kingston University) described the ascendancy of cocaine to become the drug of choice in late 70s Hollywood, going on to make regular appearances in films from the 80s and itself providing a template for the kind of adrenaline-fuelled rush of 80s cinema epitomised by *Top Gun* (Tony Scott, 1986). Mr. Bryan Brown (Southern Illinois University Carbondale) discussed the effect of the Hays Code on Hollywood's ability to depict drug use, arguing that although the code was primarily a system of self-censorship that producers were already applying before its institution in the thirties, its relaxation in the second half of the fifties saw a liberalisation of attitudes that marked Hollywood's 'first attempts' at realistic depiction of drug use.

These three main strands, of psychoanalysis, style/genre, and film history, correspond to three of the main areas of film studies and show that while the conference topic was original it was also one that has been relevant in various ways to a wide sweep of film and film theory. The interdisciplinarity there are many similarities between the ways that film and literature are currently studied, in particular in questions of style, genre, and social relevance, although psychoanalytical interpretations seemed almost exclusively to be a preoccupation of the film scholars at the conference. The conference raised further possibilities in the direction of interdisciplinarity, in particular in the incorporation of more from psychology, such as whether artworks have been useful or relevant in clinical psychology for example in the use of art therapy. The atmosphere amongst delegates throughout the conference was highly enthused and the lines of contact and research it brought are unlikely to end here.