

# Liverpool Film Seminar

2011 – 2012 series

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Every year, Liverpool Film Seminar invites experts to deliver a series of talks. Topics vary greatly and the series does not focus on a specific aspect of film. Instead, a range of genres and approaches are celebrated, from historical reach to the internet's impact on cinematic material.

Below you'll find a list of speakers and topics from the 2011 – 2012 series:

**Professor Robert Burgoyne (University of St Andrews)**

**Ethics and Politics of the Body in *The Hurt Locker* and *Paradise Now***

Of the many cinematic forms that can be described as body genres, the war film is clearly a defining example, drawing its most memorable scenes and its most intensive cultural meanings from the way the body, both as agent and patient, as living and dead, is depicted. Situated in the shadow zone between organic life and national purpose, between sacrificial object and agent of sovereign violence, the body of the soldier conveys in visceral form a vision of history produced from intensive sensual impressions.

In the contemporary period, however, the imagery of the body in war – its ethics and its politics -- has been transformed by dramatic shifts in the forms of combat. What Edward Luttwak calls the new “postheroic war” -- continuous war without contours -- has created a particular challenge for film, displacing the theme of the “body at risk” from its position of central importance.

In this talk, I explore *The Hurt Locker* (2008) and *Paradise Now* (2005) as films that reframe the imagery of embodiment in the new wars and conflicts of the 21st century. Engaging the central questions of present day warfare, both films foreground the ethics and the politics of the body in contemporary conflict settings.

## Biography:



Robert Burgoyne is Professor and Chair of the Department of Film Studies at the University of St Andrews. His work centres on modes of historical representation in film, with a particular emphasis on themes of embodiment, affect and cultural memory. His recent publications include *The Epic Film in World Culture*; *Film Nation: Hollywood Looks at U.S. History*; and *The Hollywood Historical Film*. He is currently working on the history of the war film, with a special focus on the “body at risk” as an emblem of generational memory.

## Professor Hilary Radner (University of Otago)

### Neo-Feminism and the Girly Film: Gender and Genre in Conglomerate Hollywood

Why does Hollywood make so few films for women? Why do the few that are made operate within such a limited band? Films such as *Pretty Woman*, *Romy and Michele's High School Reunion*, *Legally Blonde*, *Maid in Manhattan*, *The Devil Wears Prada*, *Sex and the City: The Movie*, testify to the rise of a narrative format, which following on from Charlotte Brunsdon, I will call the "girly" film. Borrowing from female friendship, "career girl," and romantic comedy plots, the genre, if it can be described as such, revolves around the concerns of an unmarried woman, an ambitious "striver," defining herself as much through consumer culture as romance or work.

The needs of Conglomerate Hollywood in terms of pre-established awareness and product tie-ins encouraged this emphasis on consumer culture within the woman's film. Consequently, a neo-feminist paradigm, which highlights consumer culture as important dimension in feminine identity, has become increasingly the dominant perspective within movies addressing a female audience. Instead of lamenting the loss of second-wave feminism, this presentation will explore why another perspective, neo-feminism, which is more compatible with neo-liberalism, has proven more influential, offering insight into the resulting widespread discontent among feminist-oriented scholars and audiences who are seeking more than "labels and love" in a film experience.

#### Biography:



Hilary Radner is Professor of Film and Media Studies in the Department of History and Art History at the University of Otago. Her research interests revolve around understanding the representations of gender and identity in contemporary visual culture, particularly in terms of how these evolve over time in relation to second wave feminism. She has published numerous articles and book chapters on cinema, visual culture and gender: these range from film melodrama, make-up, fashion photography, and women's magazines to, more recently, the woman's film, New Zealand fashion, Hollywood film genres, New Zealand cinema, World Cinema and French cinema. Her books include two monographs on feminine culture and subjectivity: *Shopping Around: Feminine Culture and the Pursuit of Pleasure* (Routledge, 1995) and *Neo-*

*Feminist Cinema: Girly Films, Chick Flicks, and Consumer Culture* (Routledge, 2010). She is also a co-editor of six volumes: *Film Theory Goes to the Movies* (Routledge, 1993); *Constructing the New Consumer Society* (St. Martin's Press, 1997); *Swinging Single: Representing Sexuality in the 1960s* (University of Minnesota Press, 1999); *Jane Campion: Cinema, Nation, Identity* (Wayne State University Press, 2009); *New Zealand Cinema: Interpreting the Past* (Intellect, 2011); *Feminism at the Movies* (Routledge, 2011). Current projects include *The Blackwell Companion to Contemporary French Cinema* (with Michel Marie, Raphaëlle Moine, and Alistair Fox), a monograph on romantic melodrama in Hollywood cinema, as well as a long-term project on the woman's film in national cinema.

Peter Krämer (University of East Anglia)

**The Politics of Independence: Jane Fonda, The China Syndrome and Anti-nuclear Campaigning**



## Professor Ginette Vincendeau (King's College, London)

### **Gamine, sex bomb, dumb blonde: Brigitte Bardot as comic star**

This illustrated presentation examines a relatively unknown, yet crucial aspect of Brigitte Bardot's career. While Bardot is known for her sexually transgressive roles in melodramatic films such as *Et Dieu ... créa la femme/And God Created Woman* (1956), *La Vérité* (1960) and *Le Mépris/Contempt* (1963), half of the 43 films in which she appeared were comedies, including some of her most popular at the French box-office. The talk explores the different 'ages' of Bardot as comic star, from impish gamine to 'dumb blonde', and reflects on both the problematic interaction of sexuality and comedy, and the potentially liberating value of comedy for highly eroticized stars such as Bardot.

### **Biography:**



Ginette Vincendeau is Professor of Film Studies at King's College, London. She has written widely on popular French and European cinema and is a regular contributor to *Sight and Sound*. She is the author of *Pépé le Moko* (BFI, 1998); *Stars and Stardom in French Cinema* (Continuum, 2000); *Jean-Pierre Melville: An American in Paris* (BFI, 2003), and *La Haine* (I.B. Tauris, 2005).

Her collection of essays, *Popular French Cinema, From the Classical to the Transnational* will be published by I.B. Tauris in 2011. She is currently writing a book on *Brigitte Bardot* (BFI/Palgrave) and *Cinema Under the Mediterranean Sun: Provence, Marseille and the Côte d'Azur on Film* (I.B.Tauris). Ginette Vincendeau is also the editor of *The Encyclopedia of European Cinema* (BFI/Cassell, 1995) and co-editor, with Susan Hayward, of *French Film: Texts and Contexts* (Routledge, 1990 and 2000), with Alastair Phillips, of *Journeys of Desire, European Actors in Hollywood* (BFI, 2006) and with Peter Graham of *The New Wave: Critical Landmarks* (BFI, 2009). She has just co-edited (with Alastair Phillips) *The Blackwell Companion to Jean Renoir*.

## Professor Bill Osgerby (London Metropolitan University)

### **Your Town Could Be Their Killing Ground...: Exploitation, “Otherness” and Transgression in the 1960s Biker Movie**

Released in 1966 and billed as ‘the most terrifying film of our time’, *The Wild Angels* laid the way for a slew of low budget, lurid and gratuitously violent movies based around the exploits of marauding motorcycle gangs. This paper explores the nature and significance of this seldom discussed film genre. In their pageant of transgressive machismo, it is argued, the 1960s biker movies conjured with themes of an uncontrolled ‘Otherness’ whose unrestrained lusts and sneering disaffection set it beyond the pale of mainstream culture. Informed by the ‘carnavalesque’ traditions of exploitation cinema, however, the biker genre’s treatment of these themes was avowedly ambivalent. On one level the bestial depravity of outlaw bikers was presented as chilling evidence of a societal order in a state of collapse. But, in other respects, the biker movies revelled in their anti-heroes’ flouting of mainstream tastes and conventions. Ribald and bawdy, the 1960s biker film delighted in tweaking the tail of conformist sensibilities.

Rather than reading the biker movie as an ‘oppositional’ film genre, however, the paper argues that it was a site of conflict and contradiction. While many mainstream cultural norms were certainly flouted in biker movies, they also affirmed many of core values of American popular conservatism. In particular, the biker genre configured the outlaw motorcyclist as a pioneering frontiersman – a ‘last American hero’ who embodied the distinctly masculine and conservative themes of rugged, autonomous individualism.

#### **Biography:**



Bill Osgerby is Professor in Media, Culture and Communications at London Metropolitan University. He has published widely on modern American and British media and cultural history, with particular emphasis on the areas of gender, sexuality, youth culture, consumption, print media, popular television, film and music. His monographs include, *Full Throttle Cinema: Hollywood, Subculture and the Biker Mythology - A Study in Cultural History* (I.B. Tauris, 2007), *Biker: Style and Subculture on Hell's Highway, Guildford, CT* (Lyons Press, 2005), *Youth and the Media* (Routledge, 2004), *Playboys in Paradise: Masculinity, Youth and Leisure-Style in Modern America*, (Berg/New York University Press, 2001) and *Youth in Britain Since 1945* (Blackwell, 1998). He has also co-edited *Action TV: 'Tough Guys, Smooth Operators and Foxy Chicks'* (Routledge, 2001).

Dr Frank Krutnik (University of Sussex)

### **Killers on the Kilocycles: Radio Noir and the Movie Adaptation Series**

Fed by the ongoing fascination with *film noir* as well as old time radio (OTR) connoisseurship, the concept of radio noir has been gaining an increasingly high profile in recent years. This research seminar examines one of the key forms of US radio noir, the popular movie adaptation series of the 1940s and 1950s. I will explore the range of such programs, the institutional negotiations they involved between broadcasters, the film industry and advertisers, and the problems that beset the attempt to translate Hollywood films into an exclusively audio medium, focussing in particular on several adaptations of the 1944 film *Laura*.

### **Biography:**

Frank Krutnik is Reader in Film Studies at the University of Sussex and is the author of *In a Lonely Street: Film Noir, Genre, Masculinity* (1991), *Inventing Jerry Lewis* (2000) and, with Steve Neale, *Popular Film and Television Comedy* (1990), as well as numerous articles in critical anthologies and leading screen studies journals. He is editor of *Hollywood Comedian Comedy: the Film Reader* (2004) and co-editor of *Un-American Hollywood: Politics and Film in the Blacklist Era* (2007). He is currently working on a monograph on radio noir.

## Pamela Church-Gibson (London College of Fashion)

### **Cinema in Peril: Stardom, Celebrity Culture and Luxury Brands**

This paper will continue the arguments that the author has developed in her recent research. She suggests that the only way to understand the changes in contemporary culture is through an interdisciplinary approach, that looks *sideways* across every aspect of visual culture at a new intermingling of images, and which confronts the reasons for this changed landscape – not just the phenomenon of celebrity culture itself, but the worrying alliance forged between celebrity and the fashion industry, in particular the global luxury brands. There is a new tranche of work on ‘celebrity studies’ and, indeed, a new academic journal of the same name; it does not however look at the nature of the new alliances, which have, in fact, created this new dominance and ubiquity of celebrity culture.

This paper – as befits a Film Seminar – will look at the way in which the new power and centrality of celebrity and fashion actually affects not only the content and the casting of contemporary mainstream cinema; arguably, it now dictates what films can be made, and whether or not they achieve widespread distribution. The existing theories around ‘stardom’ need to be reworked. It will focus on Anglo-American cinema and ‘celebrity’ – obviously, Hindi cinema has extraordinarily powerful ‘celebrities’ who can and do dictate style across the Indian sub-continent and within the Hindi diaspora. However, the power of these celebrities is limited to those particular spheres of operation. One of the most disturbing factors of contemporary celebrity culture is its very whiteness, and the fact that it has created yet another form of western imperialism.

### **Biography:**



Pamela Church Gibson is Reader in cultural and historical studies, Course Director of the MA in Film and Fashion at the London College of Fashion, and Principal Editor of the refereed journal *Film, Fashion and Consumption*. She has published extensively on film, fashion, fandom, history and heritage.

Edited anthologies include *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies* (OUP, 1998) and *More Dirty Looks: Gender, Power, Pornography* (BFI Publishing, 2004). She recently published *Fashion and Celebrity Culture* (Berg, 2011) and two essays on the ‘celebrification’ of the contemporary art world, in *Look at Me: Celebrity at the Venice Biennale* (eds. Sich & Schieren, Arnoldsche, 2011) and *The Artist as superstar: Tracey Emin and Paolo Vezzoli* in the anthology *Art and Fashion*, ed. Marco Pedroni, Milan (forthcoming).

Her next project will look at the targeting of 'young adult' women, the schisms this has caused within contemporary feminism, and the extraordinarily lucrative nature of the 'franchise films' and linked merchandise aimed so successfully at this particular demographic.