

Liverpool Film Seminar

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Every year, Liverpool Film Seminar invites six 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.

Professor Lucia Nagib (University of Reading)

The Politics of Slowness and the Traps of Modernity

In this lecture, I will re-evaluate the diachronic, evolutionist model that establishes the Second World War as a watershed between classical and modern cinemas, and 'modernity' as the political project of 'slow cinema'.

I will start by historicising the connection between cinematic speed and modernity, going on to survey the veritable obsession with the modern that continues to beset film studies despite the vagueness and contradictions inherent in the term. I will then attempt to clarify what is really at stake within the modern-classical debate by analysing two canonical examples of Japanese cinema, drawn from the *geidomono* genre (films on the lives of theatre actors), Kenji Mizoguchi's *Story of the Late Chrysanthemums* (*Zangiku monogatari*, 1939) and Yasujiro Ozu's *Floating Weeds* (*Ukigusa*, 1954), with a view to investigating the role of the long take or, conversely, classical editing, in the production or otherwise of a supposed 'slow modernity'.

By resorting to Ozu and Mizoguchi, I hope to demonstrate that the best narrative films in the world have always combined a 'classical' quest for perfection with the 'modern' doubt of its existence, hence the futility of classifying cinema in general according to an evolutionary and Eurocentric model based on the classical-modern binary. Rather than on a confusing politics of the modern, I will draw on Bazin's prophetic insight of 'impure cinema', a concept he forged in defence of literary and theatrical screen adaptations.

Anticipating by more than half a century the media convergence on which the near totality of our audiovisual experience is currently based, 'impure cinema' will give me the opportunity to focus on the confluence of film and theatre in these Mizoguchi and Ozu films as the site of a productive crisis where established genres dissolve into self-reflexive stasis, ambiguity of expression and the revelation of the reality of the film medium, all of which, I argue, are more reliable indicators of a film's political

programme than historical teleology.

At the end of the journey, some answers may emerge to whether the combination of the long take and the long shot are sufficient to account for a film's 'slowness' and whether 'slow' is indeed the best concept to signify resistance to the destructive pace of capitalism.

Biography:



Lúcia Nagib is Professor of Film and Director of the Centre for Film Aesthetics and Cultures at the University of Reading. Her research has focused, among other subjects, on polycentric approaches to world cinema, new waves and new cinemas, cinematic realism and intermediality.

Lúcia Nagib is the author of *World Cinema and the Ethics of Realism* (Continuum, 2011), *Brazil on Screen: Cinema Novo, New Cinema, Utopia* (I.B. Tauris, 2007), *The Brazilian Film Revival: Interviews with 90 Filmmakers of the 90s* (Editora 34, 2002), *Born of the Ashes: The Auteur and the Individual in Oshima's Films* (Edusp, 1995), *Around the Japanese Nouvelle Vague* (Editora da Unicamp, 1993) and *Werner Herzog: Film as Reality* (Estação Liberdade, 1991). She is the editor of *Impure Cinema: Intermedial and Intercultural Approaches to Film* (with Anne Jerslev, 2013), *Theorizing World Cinema* (with Chris Perriam and Rajinder Dudrah, I.B. Tauris, 2011), *Realism and the Audiovisual Media* (with Cecília Mello, Palgrave, 2009), *The New Brazilian Cinema* (I.B. Tauris, 2003), *Master Mizoguchi* (Navegar, 1990) and *Ozu* (Marco Zero, 1990).