

WATCHING**POLITICS**

an interdisciplinary symposium on the impact of visual culture on politics

**Hosted by the Institute of Advanced Study
and the Department of Film and Television Studies**

University of Warwick

31 May 2013

KEY CONTRIBUTOR – 10:00-10:45, Room A0.28

“It won’t be Iraq they remember me for will it?”:

Tony Blair and Dramatisations of The War on Terror

Professor Stella Bruzzi, University of Warwick

PANEL A – 10:45-12:15, Room A1.27

THE WAR ON TERROR AND REPRESENTATION

A Politics of Affect? Brian de Palma’s *Redacted* – Dr Nikolaj Lubecker, St John’s College Oxford

Brian de Palma’s *Redacted* (2007) is an ambitious film. It aims to deliver a vigorous critique of the second American war on Iraq, and an analysis of the role played by media in this war (TV, internet, home videos and footage from surveillance-cameras), while remaining a piece of popular filmmaking capable of reaching a large public.

Drawing on Georges Didi-Huberman’s recent study of Bertolt Brecht’s montages of World War 2 photographs (*Quand les images prennent position* (2009)) and Judith Butler’s analysis of the post-9/11 media landscape in *Frames of War* (2009), I will argue that de Palma establishes a montage of different types of ‘image-material’ in order to destabilise the (visual and discursive) frames that determine the field of visibility in times of war. Ultimately, this destabilisation also affects the film itself, and I shall therefore propose that de Palma’s film must be read as a *symptom* of the debates it engages, rather than a cool critical reflection on war and images. This, I conclude, is not necessarily a problem for the anti-war message of the film: occasionally *Redacted* seems incoherent, artificial and manipulative, but these ‘weaknesses’ allow de Palma to create a powerful and very unpleasant viewing experience that convincingly communicates his outrage at the war.

Dr Nikolaj Lubecker is a Fellow at St John’s College (Oxford), where he teaches French and Film Aesthetics. He has published two monographs on French literature and thought (the first on Stéphane Mallarmé, the second on the relationship between literature and politics from Surrealism to Roland Barthes), an edited volume on xenophobia in European culture, and a number of articles on contemporary European directors such as Lars von Trier, Claire Denis, Bruno Dumont and Siegrid Alnoy. His current research concerns what I call ‘The Contemporary Feel-Bad Film’, and it includes chapters on Dumont, von Trier, Gus van Sant, Lucille Hadzihalilovic and Harmony Korine, among others.

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Perspectives on the War on Terror on British Television - Joseph Oldham, University of Warwick

This paper analyses how the War on Terror was presented, narrativised and debated on British television over the period 2001-2010 across multiple programme forms, drawing principally upon a survey of *Radio Times* listings and research in *Broadcast*. Narratives of the ‘war’ have tended to be bookended by acts of terrorist violence; 9/11 was ritually commemorated by a strand of retrospective documentaries every September, whilst programming such as the spy series *Spooks* (BBC1, 2002-11), the docudrama *Dirty War* (BBC1, 2004) and even the role-playing series *Crisis Command* (BBC2, 2004) looked prospectively towards the possibility of future violent catastrophe

and the need to avert it. Cumulatively, such programming has been criticised for erasing historical and political processes, thereby allegedly supporting the government's official perspective. Yet there existed a parallel lineage of alternative War on Terror programming adopting more critical perspectives, including documentaries (e.g. *The Power of Nightmares*, BBC2, 2004), docudramas (e.g. *The Government Inspector*, C4, 2004) and conspiracy thrillers (e.g. *The State Within*, BBC1, 2006). This paper offers a broad overview of how television worked through the issues of the 'war' across these two strands, discussing some notable shifts and ways in which they can be seen to respond to each other.

Joseph Oldham is a postgraduate student in the Department of Film & Television at the University of Warwick, and is currently developing a PhD thesis entitled 'Serial Narratives of the Secret State on British Television'. His research interests include British television history, British cultural history, spy and clandestine fiction, and paranoid aesthetics and narratives. He is the author of the forthcoming article "'Disappointed Romantics": Troubled Heritage in the BBC's John Le Carré Adaptations' in the Journal of British Cinema and Television (publication date TBA).

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Zero Dark Thirty and The Politics of Torture – Nike Jung, University of Warwick

Situating Oscar contender *Zero Dark Thirty* within the resurging US torture debate, I argue that the film challenges our judgment on the history and legacy of US foreign and security policies under George W. Bush, as well as their partial continuation by the Obama administration.

Director Kathryn Bigelow has defended her style as "journalistic" while also maintaining her right to creative license. What results from the film's narrative and aesthetic strategies? Is it indeed "neutral" or objective? Does the film normalize torture, as Slavoj Žižek has claimed? What would that demonstrate?

Rather than evaluating the film according to historical accuracy, I suggest to consider it as substantiation of the contemporary *zeitgeist*.

The U.S. torture discussion continues to be demarcated by a historical amnesia that frames U.S. relations to torture exclusively as a response to the 9/11 terror attacks. *Zero Dark Thirty* also employs this explanatory framework: An auditory collage of factual 9/11 distress calls is followed by fictional torture sequences. These evoke but do not name the infamous Abu Ghraib scandal, which only broke when the attempted suppression of the images failed. The particular combination of footage and fiction not only couches torture narratively but also makes a visceral appeal of justification to the spectator by triggering the (re-)experience of 9/11.

Nike Jung is a first-year PhD student at Warwick University's Department of Film and Television. Her research concerns the Imagination of Torture in Contemporary US and Chilean Cinema. She studied Comparative Literature, American Studies and Cinema Studies in Berlin, Paris, and New York and worked at an editorial company in Berlin and for a documentary filmmaker in Chile.

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PANEL B - 10:45-12:15, Room A0.28

THE POLITICS OF IMAGES IN IMAGES OF POLITICS

Visibility and the Public Sphere: Appearing as a spectator-citizen – Dr Katy Parry, University of Leeds

This paper seeks to address the traditional inclinations of suspicion and disregard towards visual images encountered in political studies, arguing for a rethink on a number of unhelpful but resilient binaries regarding the relationship between imagery and politics: superficiality versus depth; emotional appeal against reason; symbolism over realism; and the passive spectator contrasted with active citizen. Drawing on notions of 'visibility' (Dayan 2013), and the 'amplified' public sphere (Nanabhay and Farmanfarmaian 2011), I consider how different dimensions of mediation (including medium, genre, modality) invite us to evaluate the expressive capacities of visual artefacts. Images are only one element in the interdiscursive recipe of what we term 'visual media' (Mitchell 2005), but it is linguistic elements that have so far attracted the lion's share of rigorous analytical attention.

It is perhaps in politics 'from-below' that we can note the most exciting developments and fruitful scholarship in this research area: the sousveillant practices of protestors; the virality of satirical videos that politicians' spin-doctors can only dream of emulating. Drawing on recent examples, I note that such mediated images also interact with the 'pictures in our heads' (Lippmann 1921), the mental images which guide how we place ourselves within social spaces and political structures.

Dr Katy Parry is Lecturer in Communications Studies in the Institute and Communications Studies (ICS), University of Leeds, where she teaches on political communication, visual communication and media and war. She has authored and co-authored journal articles in Journal of Communication, Media Culture & Society, Sociology Compass, British Journal of Politics and International Relations, Media, War & Conflict, and Television and New Media. Before joining ICS, Katy was research associate for the AHRC-funded 'Media Genre and Political Culture' project at the University of Liverpool, analysing current affairs programming across a range of non-news broadcast, web-based and print media genres. This project, led by Kay Richardson and John Corner, has led to a number of co-authored articles and a monograph entitled Political Culture and Media Genre: Beyond the News (Palgrave Macmillan 2012).

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10 o'clock Live and the study of mediated political communication – Professor Kay Richardson, University of Liverpool

This talk will focus on trends in British mediated politics, with specific reference to the discursive features and civic project of Channel 4's late-night show, 10 O'clock Live.

The study of mediated political communication has quite rightly had a strong focus on journalism and current affairs, with a key issue being that of where the power lies – with the state authority of the politicians or the cultural power of the media. More recently, attention has turned to the relations between politics and entertainment media, as well as to the interface between online/social media with traditional mass media. Westminster MP Nadine Dorries' venture into the Australian jungle for I'm A Celebrity Get Me Out Of Here is a recent and controversial example of how audiences encounter politicians in media genres 'beyond the news'. Whilst Celebrity is clearly entertainment-led, with politics well in the background, to the point of invisibility, there are other

formats where civic values are at least as important as those of entertainment. 10 O'clock Live, which ran for two seasons, was a British attempt to operate in this territory, and merits critical attention for that reason.

Kay Richardson is Professor in Media and Communication at the University of Liverpool. Along with John Corner and Katy Parry, she has recently published Political Culture and Media Genre: Beyond the News (Palgrave 2013), a book about the mediation of politics beyond the remit of journalism, spanning the major forms of contemporary public media in broadcasting, in print and online. She has published widely on mediated communication with particular reference to the language of mediated politics.

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The “telegenic politician”? Why Nick Clegg won the 2010 UK Party Leader Debates – Professor Andrew Tolson, De Montfort University

This paper will offer a detailed analysis of strategies of mediated political communication used in the UK 2010 televised party leader debates. In particular it will investigate the claim that Nick Clegg used “telegenic techniques of mediated address” (Parry and Richardson 2011) which created the electoral phenomenon of ‘Cleggmania’. This is analysed by comparing and contrasting the forms of verbal address used by Gordon Brown and David Cameron, as well as Clegg, and includes observations about the television coverage, in particular the relations between forms of spoken discourse and visual practices of editing and camerawork. I argue that Clegg’s so-called “telegenic” qualities had nothing to do with his physical appearance or “body language” but rather his exploitation of a ‘participation framework’, fundamental to the successful performance of broadcast talk.

Andrew Tolson is Professor of Media and Communication at De Montfort University, Leicester. His previous publications include Media Talk: Spoken Discourse on TV and Radio (Edinburgh University Press 2006). He is currently editing an international volume on Media Talk and Political Elections in Europe and America (Palgrave Macmillan 2013) in which the paper presented here appears as a chapter.

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KEYNOTE SPEAKER – 13:00-14:00, Room A0.28

Spectacle vs Screenplay: Watching, Writing and Wrestling with Political Movies
Dr Ian Scott, University of Manchester

PANEL C - 14:00-15:30, Room A0.28

THE REPRESENTATION OF THE POLITICAL PAST IN CINEMA

Old and New Struggles: Interrogating the Legacy of May 68 in Contemporary French Cinema – Dr Douglas Morrey, University of Warwick

The events of May 1968 are typically regarded as one of the most significant political moments in post-war French history. Curiously, though, they have received relatively little representation in French cinema. During the events themselves, cinema, like most other industries in the country, shut down and it is sometimes suggested that the anti-climactic end to the May movement does not lend itself to dramatic representation.

In the last decade or so, however, a number of French films have returned to 1968 and begun to interrogate the legacy of the events. This paper looks at two recent films, *Born In 68* (Nes en 68, Ducastel and Martineau, 2008) and *Something in the Air* (Après Mai, Olivier Assayas, 2012) which document how the political ideals of May were pursued, modified and sometimes abandoned in the years and decades that followed. While *Something in the Air* was widely praised in the French press, however, *Born in 68* was all but ignored when it wasn't dismissed as ridiculous.

The reception of these films is revelatory of the largely unchanged prejudices of the French film press. *Après Mai* was received as a major work by an international auteur, encouraging biographical interpretation and comparison to Assayas's earlier works. But *Born in 68* also partakes of an authorial project, Ducastel and Martineau's ongoing, collective exploration of queer experience in France. The disproportionate reception of both films reveals two important blind spots in the French cultural appropriation of May 68: first, the continued, unchallenged predominance of an individualist concept of authorship, which the May movement had vigorously challenged; and second, for all the rhetoric of 'sexual liberation', a disappointing ignorance and embarrassment when faced with homosexualities.

Dr Douglas Morrey is Associate Professor of French at the University of Warwick. He is the author of Jean-Luc Godard (Manchester University Press, 2005) and the co-author of Jacques Rivette (Manchester University Press, 2009) and is currently developing research on the legacy of the New Wave in French cinema.

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The Spectacular Failure of Darryl F. Zanuck's *Wilson* (1944) – Hannah Graves, University of Warwick

Darryl F. Zanuck's lavish biopic of Woodrow Wilson would be a complete commercial failure and became his greatest professional disappointment. Following *Wilson* from his days as President of Princeton University through to the end of his second term in office Zanuck felt that *Wilson* (1944), 'by revealing, dramatically, the tragedies of World War I, which led, invariably, to the tragedies of World War II,' would 'affect public opinion,' swaying audience to Zanuck's own internationalist view.

Although warmly received in the liberal press, *Wilson's* bid for prestige political entertainment never lived up to its expectations: financial, critical or political. Much of that failure hinged on unknown Alexander Knox's effete and cerebral performance of the president as a thinking-man and *Wilson's* own political legacy.

Using archival records of the OWI, Zanuck's memos and Alexander Knox's personal papers, this paper will chart the political intentions for *Wilson* and consider the reasons for its failure contextualised within Zanuck's wider career as a long-time producer of social-conscience films and bio-pics. In turn, it will offer comment on the ways in which Hollywood has re-deployed historical political moments for present political influence and the expectations for the aestheticisation of political figures and the American heroic type.

Hannah Graves is a PhD candidate within the Department of History at the University of Warwick. Her thesis charts a history of mid-century Hollywood's heroic liberal protagonists of social conscience filmmaking and the careers of the producers who were determined to bring them to the screen.

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Spectres of the Margin: Showing the Unshown and Unshowable in Historical Accounts of Political Events - James Harvey-Davitt, Anglia Ruskin University

Cinematic representations of *the political* are generally concerned with depicting directly the militarism, the activism, or the technocracy, related to state governance. This is not a feature solely of the mainstream (from Frankenheimer and Pakula, to Stone, to Clooney) but is an international and arthouse tendency (as shown in recent films by Assayas and Bellocchio). How can those excluded from the formal practices of the state – whose presence in the background is deemed irrelevant in most fictions – have their subjectivity restored through a film? This presentation explores the way in which cinema itself has a political function.

Some filmmakers, who have lived through the transition from one politics to another (such as from Communism to neoliberalism, or some such other compromised form) have developed innovative approaches to confronting the daunting, taboo subject matter, of the events which instigate or summarise ideological change. With reference to Jacques Rancière's reworking of the relationship between politics and aesthetics, I focus particularly on films by Pablo Larrain, Jia Zhang Ke, and Cristian Mungiu, in order to explore the political potential attached to their aesthetic approach: the stakes of affording a voice to those who should have spoken, but were incapacitated.

James Harvey-Davitt is a PhD candidate at Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge. His research considers the ideas of Jacques Rancière in relation to the political aesthetic activity in the work of some contemporary filmmakers. Broaching rich diversity in films by Jafar Panahi, Pablo Larrain, Charlie Kaufman, and Nuri Bilge Ceylan, this approach takes up the challenge of reviewing the spatial possibilities for new subject-formation, in a climate within which 'the political' has come to mean both nothing, and everything but. He has presented work on politics and cinema at conferences at University of Nottingham, University of Birmingham, University of Bristol, and Anglia Ruskin University, and is scheduled to present on a panel on Ranciere and cinema, at NECS 2013 Conference on Political Media in Prague.

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PANEL D - 14:00-15:30, Room A.127

POLITICS AND NEW MEDIA/POLITICS OF NEW MEDIA

"I am Barack Obama, President of the United States: Ask Me Anything":

Using Reddit.com as Platform for Social Media Campaigning – Dr Annika Richterich, University of Siegen

When Barack Obama announced his participation in Reddit's *Ask-Me-Anything* subsection on 29th of August 2012, the message circulated rapidly among various social media.¹ Only three hours before answering users' questions on Reddit, he informed via Twitter: "Hey, everyone: I'll be taking your questions online today. Ask yours here". This status update was also meant to serve as a verification of the president's identity on Reddit. Additionally, a picture of Obama sitting in front of his laptop was provided. By the time he was online, the website experienced record-breaking user traffic and the server was temporarily overloaded.

The questions stated by Redditors ranged from "What's the recipe for the White House's beer?" to "What are you going to do to end the corrupting influence of money (...)?". This paper will provide a critical analysis of the questions raised by users and elaborate on Obama's choice of questions to answer. Thereby it will discuss issues and topics which have been considered to be of strategic

relevance for the assumed target group of Redditors and were expected to have a positive influence on Obama's electoral campaign. In this sense, the AMA represents an example of discursive politics, tailor-made for a specific media platform. Moreover, it will reflect on users' euphoric reaction to Obama's understanding of a visual (meme) culture which defines itself through insider knowledge.

To give an example, Obama's concluding statement "By the way, if you want to know what I think about this whole reddit experience – NOT BAD!" references an internet meme and indicates a strategic effort to present himself as an internet-insider. The paper will elaborate on the thesis how political appeal is not only generated through topical content, but by signaling affiliation to an online (sub)culture.

Dr Annika Richterich has recently completed her PhD in Media Studies at University of Siegen, Germany. She has studied Media Culture and Economics in Siegen, and Sociology at the University of Auckland. Currently, she works as a postdoctoral researcher and lecturer at the Graduate School "Locating Media" (University of Siegen). Her research interests include issues in net-cultures and netpolitics, social news media, and media usage for political communication and protest movements.

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Superheroines in Hijab: American Rightwing Bloggers respond to the Islamic Transmedia Franchise, *The 99* – Dr Rachel Mizsei-Ward University of East Anglia

The 99 are a superhero franchise created by Naif Al-Mutawa, and features superheroes from different countries, who work together to solve problems and help people. Al-Mutawa production company is based in Kuwait and material featuring The 99, including comics and a cartoon programme, are exported globally.

When the American children's television station The Hub announced that it would be showing the The 99 cartoon in 2010, American rightwing bloggers responded critically to the decision. Although the cartoon had not yet been aired, bloggers based their opinions on images from the official website and the comic book. A major source of criticism was the three superheroines depicted wearing *hijab*. The bloggers complained that children watching the cartoon would be exposed to dangerous Islamic ideas including *hijab* and *Sharia*; and that parents would not realise the potential dangers. The anti-Islamic criticisms from what were a minority of bloggers, were sufficiently vocal that The Hub pulled the cartoon from its schedules, despite its success in other territories. This paper will explore the bloggers reactions to the images of these superheroines and consider why the bloggers found *hijab* a problem when many popular American superheroes wear masks.

*Dr Rachel Mizsei-Ward has completed her PhD at the University of East Anglia. Her research looks at cross platform franchises, transmedia and licensing between film, television and games. Other research interests include Asian cinema, particularly Hong Kong popular film, horror, blaxploitation, cult cinema and game adaptations. She has spoken at conferences including the British Association of American Studies conference, Cine Excess and the International Gothic Association Conference. Rachel has contributed an essay on the film *Underworld* and the role-playing setting *The World of Darkness* to the edited collection *21st Century Gothic* and has a forthcoming article on Barack Obama as the Joker in *Comparative American Studies*. She is currently working on an edited collection about superheroes outside of America.*

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'YouTube, Children, and Storytelling in the Syrian Uprising: Videos as Discourse and Their Power to Politicise Audiences' – Jennifer Quigley-Jones, University of Warwick

This paper offers a theoretical lens for the study of videos as discourse and their potential to politicise audiences. The proliferation of videos produced and consumed on YouTube has allowed videos to act as powerful narrative tools for telling stories. Many studies have focused on storytelling in revolutions through a focus on creation of symbols, but in order to appreciate the continued presence and impact of symbols, there needs to be a closer focus on audience response. This paper builds on debates about the place of images in Visual Culture and discourse, forwarding a perspective based on intertextuality. The second half of the paper offers an empirical application of this theoretical argument, through an assessment of children as symbols in the current Syrian uprising, both internationally and domestically. The country is in a state of civil war, over 70,000 people have been killed (more than 5,000 children), and there are over a million refugees. This paper offers an assessment of the symbolic portrayals of children by activists, humanitarian campaigns, and pro-government forces through the medium of YouTube and videos.

Jennifer Quigley-Jones is a History and Politics finalist at the University of Warwick. She spent her second year at the University of California, Los Angeles and was an Intern at the Center for American Progress, National Security division in Washington DC. She is attending Harvard as a Kennedy Scholar later this year and will be completing a Master's in Regional Studies of the Middle East.

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PANEL E – 16:00-17:30, Room A0.28

TELEVISION POLITICS

"There Now Follows...": Continuity and Change in British TV Party Election Broadcasts to Women – Dr Simon Cross, Nottingham Trent University

The story of the British party election broadcast (PEB) from 1924 is inextricably linked with a paternalistic vision of broadcasting central to the new developing politics of mass participation. When the PEB on TV literally comes into focus in the early years of the BBC's post-war monopoly TV service, broadcasting was still dominated by Reithian public service ethos. Like public service broadcasting itself, the PEB on TV survives though both have become entwined with forces of commercialisation. This paper considers the durability of the PEB on TV, illustrating continuity and change in segmented televisual appeals to women viewers/voters vis-à-vis changes in the British public service broadcasting ecology such as regional broadcasting on ITV and recent fragmenting of terrestrial TV audiences.

*Dr Simon Cross is Senior Lecturer at Nottingham Trent University, UK. He is the author of *Mediating Madness: Mental Distress and Cultural Representation* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) as well as numerous articles including mediated politics.*

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Vote for Me: the ordinary voice and popular political media – Professor Heather Nunn and Dr Anita Biressi, Roehampton University

This paper will explore two highly charged media moments which brought together popular media and high politics and raised questions of race and asylum, prejudice, whiteness and class.

In 2005, with the General Election forthcoming, ITV broadcast the reality series *Vote For Me* in which ordinary people issued simple manifestos which could be tested by public vote. Overseen by the current affairs team, the show aimed to increase public interest in democracy. Would-be candidates were grilled by breakfast TV and political journalists and filmed undertaking typical political tasks such as doorstep canvassing, meeting the press and engaging in phone-ins. One short-listed candidate, Rodney Hylton-Potts, promoted unalloyed anti-immigration views. His tag-line was that he had secured the ‘cabbie’s vote’. As a self-styled ‘people’s politician’, Hylton-Potts went on to win and provoked a storm of negative media coverage.

On 28 April 2010, in the shadow of another General Election, PM Gordon Brown stopped to talk with Rochdale woman Gillian Duffy, a long-term Labour supporter. The conversational tone shifted when Duffy vigorously challenged Brown on his management of the then-collapsing economy, crime, community and eastern European immigrants. Once off-camera Brown was inadvertently recorded telling an aide that Duffy was ‘a disaster’ and a bigoted woman.

Both of these encounters raise provocative questions about the role of the ordinary people in the public sphere and how ordinary voices become the fraught site of political and media negotiation, recognition, attempted co-optation and contestation.

Heather Nunn is Professor of Culture and Politics at the University of Roehampton, UK. She is Director of the Centre for Research in Audio-visual Cultures at Roehampton. Her research interests include political communication, formations of gender and class, documentary and factual television and images of childhood and young adulthood. She is the author of Thatcher, Politics and Fantasy (2002). Her publications written with Anita Biressi include Reality TV: Realism and Revelation (2005), The Tabloid Culture Reader (2008) and Class and Contemporary British Culture (2013).

Dr Anita Biressi is Reader in Media Cultures at the University of Roehampton, UK. Her research interests include crime and the media, media spectacle, tabloid journalism, class and culture. She is the author of Crime, Fear and the Law in True Crime Stories (2001). Her publications written with Heather Nunn include Reality TV: Realism and Revelation (2005), The Tabloid Culture Reader (2008) and Class and Contemporary British Culture (2013).

Making sense of politics – Dr Richard Wallace, University of Warwick

Ever since *Yes Minister* appeared to lift the lid on the processes of political stagnation, television comedy has frequently been used as a reference point for political commentary by various media outlets. The recent adoption of phrases such as ‘omnishambles’ – coined by the writing team of *The Thick of It* – in both political commentary and debates in the House of Commons demonstrates the way in which the distinction between the fictional political world and the reality of politics has become increasingly blurry, especially in the mind of the general public.

This paper will address the way in which political satire on television has frequently been used ‘to make sense of’ genuine political incidents. Examining, in particular, the media response to Gordon Brown’s ‘bigot-gate’ blunder during the 2010 General Election campaign, I suggest that as well as serving a comedic satirical function, political satire such as *The Thick of It* is often also used as a method of orientation. As a result readers, viewers and listeners often find themselves being guided

through the genuine political landscape by a fictional television programme, the uncanny prescience of which seems to mark it out as a suitable point of comparison.

Dr Richard Wallace is an Associate Fellow in the Department of Film and Television Studies and a Research Fellow in Oral History in the Institute of Advanced Study at the University of Warwick. He has research interests in film and television documentary, mockumentary and political satire.

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PANEL F – 16:00-17:30, Room A1.27 **READING FILM AND TELEVISION POLITICALLY**

The Queen: the politics of old age and the recuperation of the monarchy – Dr Josephine Dolan, University of the West of England

This paper aims to explore some of the ideological work of Stephen Frears' political biopic, *The Queen*. In doing so it extends the scope of the 'political' by exploring an intersection between the hegemony of the British monarchy and the politics of 'old age'.

In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson suggests that the decline of monarchy is a general trait of modern nationalism. However, Britain runs counter to this general trend and its discursive construction of the monarchy as a centuries old continuity that transcends the vagaries of time and the fortunes of economic and political shifts plays a key role in securing nationalist hegemonies. However, the link between the monarchy and British nationalism is contested, in the late 1990s as many as 50% of Britons were expressing republican views. Yet, the ostensible national 'joy' at Queen Elizabeth's diamond jubilee celebrations in 2012 indicates that the monarchy has recovered from this low point (or high point for those of republican persuasions), suggesting that the rehabilitation of the monarchy in British public opinion is one of the most successful hegemonic moves in recent decades.

Whilst, that rehabilitation has played out in a web of global media interfaces that are virtually unfathomable in their complexity, it is possible to isolate specific examples of popular media texts that both exemplify, and contribute to, such recuperative processes. One such is the 2006 political biopic, *The Queen*. The film is set in the turbulent week following the death of Princess Diana. With a newly elected Tony Blair in power, the film maps the highly politicised struggle for public opinion as it played out between 'Westminster' and the 'Palace' and 'the media'. Following the work of Custen on Hollywood biopics and Paget on British televisual 'true' stories, it is possible to recognise how the film produces a public memory that explains and legitimates the 'remote' attitude adopted by Elizabeth II. Indeed, this legitimation is rendered consensual by the alignment of the left, via a sympathetic Tony Blair, with this 'hardworking and dedicated woman'. But additionally, as this paper argues, sympathy for the queen, and hence the monarchy, is elicited through the film's effacement of power and privilege effected by an insistence that Elizabeth is just an 'ordinary' grandmother. To put this another way, the politics of old age are employed to write out the politics of institutionalised power and to align the politics of Westminster with the politics of the 'Palace'.

*Dr Josephine Dolan is a senior lecturer in Film Studies at UWE, Bristol. An internationally recognised scholar in Ageing Studies, she is co-editor (with Estella Tincknell) of *Aging Femininities: Troubling Representations* (2013); a founder member of WAM (Women, Aging, Media) research network; an expert advisor to ENAS (European Network of Aging Studies) and NANAS (North American Network of*

Aging Studies). Her main research interests are British cinema, gender and aging, and most recent publications include: *The Queen: the bio-pic, ageing femininity and the recuperation of the monarchy* *Aging Studies in Europe*, volume 2, 2012; *Firm and Hard: Gender, old age and Hollywood's Gaze* 'in *De-Centring Cultural Studies: Past, Present and Future of Popular Culture* José I. Prieto-Arranz et al (eds.) Newcastle, Cambridge Scholars Press. (forthcoming 2012); *Femininity and Feminine Values* *The International Encyclopaedia of Communication (on-line)* (forthcoming 2013); *'Smoothing the wrinkles: Hollywood, old age femininity and the pathological gaze'*, *The Routledge Companion to Media and Gender*, (eds.) Cynthia Carter, Linda Steiner and Lisa McLaughlin, Routledge (forthcoming 2014).

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Everyday Stories of Global Capitalism: Crisis Film and the Image of Embedded Finance – Dr James Brassett and Dr Chris Clarke, University of Warwick

Recent years have seen a rise in popularity of documentary films on global economic crisis. Titles like *Inside Job*, *Capitalism: A Love Story* and *Four Horsemen* have crossed over from standard social movement audiences to mainstream circulation. The popularity of such films presents a dilemma for critical International Political Economy (IPE). On the one hand, such films play an important educational function. Indeed a critical pedagogical tone can be identified, where concepts such as 'financialisation' and 'depoliticisation' are developed in 'everyday contexts'. Thus, in political terms, the potential for public engagement mirrors much that critical IPE values. On the other hand, however, such films also partake in the *political economy of critique*, i.e. the marketability, profitability, and branding of certain lines of critical argument. In this sense, everyday stories of global capitalism have become an important – if ambiguous – element in 'its' very performance, fostering reflexivity and a capacity for normative (re)production. By exploring this tension, this paper seeks to unpack the image of 'embedded liberalism' presented in the crisis films and suggests that while potentially serving as a form of critical pedagogy, the reimagining of global capitalism is curtailed by the poverty of the binary of 'embedded/disembedded' finance.

Dr James Brassett is Reader in International Political Economy in Politics and International Studies here at Warwick, and Dr Chris Clarke a postdoctoral research fellow also in the same department.
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The complexity of the racialised political hero in apartheid and post-apartheid SA film – Dee Marco, University of Warwick

This paper addresses the racialised representation of the masculine hero through paying particular attention to the process of reconciliation in South Africa's recent past. In particular, this presentation will attempt to show how the thematic tropes of the racialised masculine hero and the rainbow nation rhetoric go hand in hand and how they are dealt with in post-apartheid films such as *Goodbye Bafana* (2007). The film is about Nelson Mandela on Robben Island and focuses on the precarious relationship he has with a prison warden, James Gregory.

Since the end of apartheid, film has gained momentum in terms of how it represents images and narratives of and about nation and historical legacies. Through analysing *Goodbye Bafana*, I show how the construction of this history of apartheid through to post-apartheid is a critical component in the development of South African film. I also highlight how the images of Mandela further mythologise him as a God-like hero in the South African and international imagination alike. Images and representations of Mandela in films, more than any other cultural medium, contribute to shaping his political legacy and *the* grand narrative that will be known by generations to come.

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Before attending the University of Warwick, Dee completed an Honours and Masters in Media Studies at The University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. Her broad research interests encompass memory studies, representation, race studies, and feminist studies. She also places emphasis on the need to remain aware of the post-colonial through the commonalities and disjunctures between scholarship of or from the diaspora and from "home", wherever this may be.

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