Location London: abstracts

Robert Murphy (De Montfort University) ‘An American in London: Jules Dassin and *Night and the City*’

*Night and the City* (1950) was early incorporated into the cannon of classic American film noir. Its title, its doomed, flawed protagonist played by Richard Widmark, its expressionist lighting, made it an iconic film noir and images of Widmark and the treacherous night-club owner played by Francis L. Sullivan feature on the cover of editions of Borde and Chaumeton’s *Panorama du film noir américain 1941–1953* (1955). The fact that it was shot in London, that it was based on a successful British novel and that most of the cast and crew were British was ignored.

This paper examines Dassin’s extraordinary achievement in recreating – albeit on his own terms –Gerald Kersh’s vision of London as a city of dreadful night. He makes use of an impressive array of night-time locations of bomb-shattered London to presenta corrupt world where innocence is a fatal flaw and money buys only unhappiness, making *Night and the City* – along with *Brighton Rock*, *Temptation Harbour*, *Odd Man Out*, *The Third Man* and *They Made me a Fugitive* – a cornerstone of British film noir.

Philip Horne (University College London) ‘Placing *Peeping Tom*’

This paper will attempt to situate Michael Powell’s *Peeping Tom* (1960) partly by visiting and reflecting on some of its locations; partly by reading it against some of the London prostitution scare films of the period - Alvin Rakoff’s *Passport to Shame* (1958) , Terry Bishop’s *Cover Girl Killer*(1959) Arnold L. Miller’s *West End Jungle* (1961); and partly by thinking about the film’s curious combination of localised specificity and abstraction.

Maureen Thomas (University of Cambridge) ‘Do I See You?  London Mirror’ (on London in Bollywood cinema)

In 2013, popular Hindi cinema celebrated 100 years of Mumbai-based production, which is considered to have started with the release of Dadasaheb Phalke’s silent feature-film, *Raja Harishchandra*, in 1913. 2013 saw Bollywood’s first 3D movie, Remo D’Souza’s *ABCD: AnyBody Can Dance*. How has what the International Business Times (May 03 2013) calls ‘the largest film-making entity the planet has ever seen ... producing about 1,000 films annually (about double Hollywood’s output)’, used England’s capital city as a location? This exploration briefly considers some movies from the Yash Raj Studios which feature London.

Karolina Kendall-Bush (University College London): ‘Location Limehouse: Visiting the Streets of London’s Lost Chinatown’

Perusing the pages of the cinema location website *Reel Streets* (www.reelstreets.com) in search of Limehouse movie locations, one encounters plenty of bombsites and newly built housing estates (*Sparrows Can’t Sing*, 1962). There are no traces, however, of the Chinese quarter that had once made this dockside area of east London famous, and which had defined its cinematic depiction from the 1910s to the onset of Second World War. In this paper I go in search of London’s lost Chinatown. But rather than taking to streets that now efface the past existence of this Chinese community, I take to the screen.

Limehouse’s pre-war cinematic incarnations were almost all created in the studio. The elaborate sets of *Broken Blossoms* (D.W. Griffith, 1919), *The Sign of Four* (Maurice Elvey, 1923), *Piccadilly* (E.A. Dupont, 1929) and *Limehouse Blues* (1934) were often less inspired by Limehouse as it was, as by the district imagined by late nineteenth and early twentieth-century authors and journalists. Analysing cinematic Limehouse between 1919 and 1939 next to written accounts of the area in travel texts and the press, this paper therefore examines the extent to which it was ever possible to ‘locate’ cinema’s Chinese Limehouse on the streets. Reflecting on the recent attempts of film enthusiasts and historians to map London’s movie locations, this paper therefore asks what happens when the only place those locations really exist is upon the screen.

Richard Koeck (University of Liverpool), on the Cinematic Geographies of Battersea

This presentation will introduce an AHRC-funded research project conducted by the Universities of Cambridge, Liverpool and Edinburgh in partnership with the Survey of London. The project is entitled: *Cinematic Geographies of Battersea: Urban Interface and Site-Specific Spatial Knowledge* and studies how Battersea has been portrayed in film in the 20th century. This presentation will focus on the methods of research and public engagement, using a digital database and geo-locative media applications.

Aileen Reid (Survey of London, Bartlett School of Architecture), ‘Battersea in Film: a Case of Location Anxiety?’

The Cinematic Geographies of Battersea project explored the contrast posited by Jonathan Raban (Soft City, 1974) between the Soft City of "illusion, myth, aspiration and nightmare" of the cinema and the Hard City "that one can locate on maps, in statistics, in monographs on urban sociology and demography and architecture", such as the capital’s official urban history, the Survey of London. My presentation explores the anxiety sometimes evident in writings on film when Hard and Soft City become tangled (for example when "real" locations in film are identified), and suggests that this anxiety might just be misplaced.

Chris O’Rourke (University College London) ‘In the Streets of Film-land: Locating London’s Cinema History’

There has been renewed interest in the spatial dimensions of cinema in recent years, including the spatial aspects of cinema-going. Digital research tools like geographic information system (GIS) software promise new ways of teasing apart the relationship between cinema and place, but they also present new challenges. This paper will share some initial findings from research into the geography of cinema exhibition in London in the 1910s and 1920s. I will discuss some of the practical and methodological questions involved in locating London’s early cinemas, and show how GIS is helping to explore film’s place in the life of the city.

Thomas Christiansen (Danish Film Archive): ‘Mapping Early Films: Copenhagen as a Case’

Thomas Christiansen, curator of the Danish Film Archive, has been putting early Danish films online, and ‘mapping’ them onto the locations where they were filmed, contributing towards a cinematic map of the city in past times. He is project leader for the European Film Gateway, an initiative for creating a single entry point for digitised European film heritage and secretary-general of the Association of European Cinematheques.

Preview screening of *Another London*, a film written and presented by architectural historian Robert Harbison, introduced by the director Ektoras Arkomanis.

*Another London* is a film about architecture and urban space, which takes the viewer to various journeys in the history of the city: Baroque London, with St George-in-the-East and Greenwich Royal Naval Hospital; places that are marginal, not only geographically, but also in human consciousness, such as the isle of Dogs and Deptford Creek; and the most prominent topographical and temporal thread, the river, which has always been tied to the city’s vicissitudes. *Another London* narrates stories with figures such as Hawksmoor, Conrad, Voysey, Le Notre and others as protagonists, but also captures the people that today inhabit the markets and high streets of London and give the city its colour.

Angelina Karpovich (Brunel University): ‘Jacob Richter’s London’ (on Lenin in London)

‘Jacob Richter’ wasn’t a real person. This was the name used by Vladimir Lenin (itself a pseudonym) when he lived in London in 1902-1903. Sixty years later, a Soviet television crew came to London to “follow in Lenin’s footsteps”. The resulting 45-minute documentary, *Lenin in London*, provides a unique cinematic perspective on London and its inhabitants.

Among the major sites of Lenin’s European exile, London received the least attention from Soviet biographers. The problem was partly geopolitical: unlike the Soviet allies Poland, Czechoslovakia, and East Germany, the socialist-leaning France, the resolutely neutral Switzerland, or the hyper-diplomatic Finland, Britain had no political incentive to commemorate Lenin’s stay through memorial plaques, renamed streets, or museums.

At the same time, the late 1950s and early 1960s brought revelations about the Cambridge spy network, through which Soviet intelligence had reached deep into the British establishment. The relationship between the two countries became ever more distant and mistrustful (despite the fact that a certain idea of England, distilled from the works of Shakespeare, Conan Doyle, Agatha Christie, Lewis Carroll, and A.A. Milne, enjoyed consistent popularity in the Soviet Union).

Thus, while Lenin’s sojourns in France, Poland, and Switzerland received extensive attention from Soviet filmmakers in both fiction and documentary, and all other Lenin-related European locations prompted multiple books and articles, *Lenin in London* was the only detailed examination of Lenin’s time in London, his impressions of the city, and his supposed legacy within it.

*Lenin in London* is both a unique cultural artifact and an extraordinary ideological construction. Its portrayal of 1960s London attempts to combine the expected tourist clichés (double-decker buses, rain, pubs, Hyde Park, British Museum), with standard Soviet propaganda (hardships faced by the working class, struggle against imperialism, and fond memories of Lenin). This paper will assess the extent to which *Lenin in London* succeeded in its complex aims.

Eleni Liarou (Birkbeck): ‘London’s Modern Babylon: Film, Memory and Public History’

This paper explores how footage taken from *Vanishing Street*(1962), a documentary shot in and around Hessel Street in London’s East End, has travelled  through different media (contemporary film, TV, internet), taking on new meanings as it is re-experienced by new audiences.

 Two key thematic and methodological strands will be discussed to assess the ‘journey’ of the film’s footage:

1. Film as recovered memory and public history: how does the footage function as a memory trigger for audiences to talk about issues of local and family history, migration and urban movement?

2. Recycling film memory: in which contemporary media has footage from the film been used and to what purposes? If non-fiction archive film is customarily used for its spare parts, what are the implications of this practice for the life of film itself and its own memory?

Martin Brady (King’s College London) on *The Vanishing Street*

Hessel Street in the East End is the subject of Robert Vas’s 1962 documentary *The Vanishing Street*. Although the famous Jewish Street market did indeed vanish, the street itself did not. This presentation looks at redevelopment, modernism, and the after-life of Hessel Street (recorded in Martin Brady’s *Hessel Street*, 2007).

Ian Christie (Birkbeck): ‘Drab Streets: London Crime Scenes’

Unlike any other national cinema, British filmmaking begins with scenes of violent crime in the streets (in 1895!) and London-based crime has continued to play an important role in subsequent decades of production. Typically, the setting is drab or anonymous, but occasionally iconic. This will be a preliminary overview of the range of London crime scenes on screen.

Les Roberts (University of Liverpool): ‘‘Locating the City in Film: Navigating the Archive City’

In this paper I follow two interrelated trajectories: the first is to explore the question of ‘*where* is the city in film?’ in which I discuss the ways in which moving image geographies are the product of multiple spatialities and considering some of the implications this has in terms of defining the ‘city in film’ as an object of study. The second part of the paper extends this discussion to consider practical examples of two *cities* in film – Liverpool and Bologna – drawing on projects that have both sought to map, in their different ways, what Ed Dimendberg (2004) refers to as ‘the extra-cinematic precincts’ of  the cinematic city.