



Three-D

Issue 5/6 (September 2005)

Forum on G8 and Live8

Julia Hall on academic publishing

Karen Ross on the politics of conferences

Hollywood radicalism investigated

Ros Brunt: Max Weber and cultural studies

MeCCSA postgraduate conference

Details of Leeds 2006 conference

News on MeCCSA/AMPE merger

In early July, trying to figure out what to make of the Live8 concerts, the G8 protests, and the media coverage of both, I asked MeCCSA members for their views. Much of this double issue is devoted to the responses. Some of them also register what happened in London during and after the G8 summit. The effects of the bombings and attempted bombings, and the implications of their coverage by the media, will no doubt take many months to digest. Was it just me (as newspaper columnists are wont to say) or was *The Sun's* headline 'one down, three to go' the day after the shooting of an innocent Brazilian man, a new low in British journalism? If anyone is doing research on the aftermath of the July attacks, we would very much like to hear about it.

Elsewhere, amongst other items, Ben Dickenson writes about his new book on radical politics in Hollywood,

Ros Brunt provides some intriguing reflections on a Weber classic, and Julia Hall of Sage lifts the lid on academic publishing in the MeCCSA area – a refreshing effort to provide some transparency about institutions that have such a big role to play in shaping research and teaching in the contemporary academy. Look out too for final details of the next MeCCSA conference, to be held in Leeds in January.

The next issue should be with you in March. My grateful thanks once again to Di Harris for laying out, photocopying and distributing this newsletter. Good luck to all readers of *Three-D* for the new academic year.

Dave Hesmondhalgh
The Open University

Academic Publishing

Ten Questions Answered by **Julia Hall**

1. Are academic Publishers only interested in text-books these days?

This is more or less true depending on the publisher in question. It's certainly true of the major US textbook presses, like Pearson and McGraw-Hill. On the other hand, there are some independents and some smaller university presses, which publish quite narrowly-focused scholarly work. The picture is more nuanced for the commercial academic presses like SAGE, Routledge and Blackwell (and the major university presses which have come to closely resemble them). Over the last decade or so these publishers have changed gear and placed greater emphasis on books written with a strong pedagogical intent, but not exclusively so. At SAGE, for example, we are committed to the idea of publishing the best thinking by the best scholars. In all cases, however, we look for books which are 'market focused' – we are a commercial publisher after all.

2. Don't publishers like edited collections any more?

Again, this is more or less true. Publishers are happy to

consider market-focused collections, but because of the changes in the market place, publishers can no longer contemplate publishing conference proceedings or collections of edited pieces which fail to cohere. In some cases the edited collection is the perfect publishing vehicle – if, for example, the field is an emergent one. In the late 90s SAGE successfully published a number of edited books on new media.

3. Are US Publishers more open to publishing scholarly research?

Again, this is true in some cases. As already noted US textbook publishers are only interested in core introductory texts. In comparison to the UK however, the US market is simply enormous. There are many more universities and many more scholars and students. Historically US academic institutions have also been wealthier. As a consequence, the specialist academic presses and many of the US university presses, are able to successfully publish more narrowly-focused and specialist titles.

4. How can I square my professional needs as an academic with my publishers' commercial objectives?

The RAE has clearly had a major impact on research output, but the impact on publishing is less tangible. The emphasis on market-focused publishing is in direct contrast to the RAE's emphasis on the publication of scholarly research, and this has made it harder to successfully negotiate academic priorities and commercial objectives. However, it's by no means impossible: books can be market focused and scholarly at the same time.

5. How can I get my Ph.D published?

This is a hard one. The Ph.D thesis is far from being market-focused. It is written with a distinct, scholarly, purpose, and with a specific audience of supervisors and examiners in mind. Its address, content, style and purpose are entirely scholarly. Beginning academics can waste many months and much energy trying to place their thesis with an academic publisher, whereas in most cases they would be best advised to seek publication in the form of journal articles.

6. Which publisher should I go with?

Publishers have different strengths and operate according to different business models. As a first step you should approach the publisher whose booklist and profile most closely matches the book you have in mind. A publisher is highly unlikely to take on a book in an area in which they don't have an established presence. If in doubt, phone the publisher first and ask to have an informal chat with the commissioning editor. Then, if you like what you hear, ask them in what form they'd like to receive your proposal: most publishers have specific proposal guidelines.

7. Is it okay to submit a proposal to more than one publisher at once?

Yes, but please inform all the relevant parties and don't make it a contract race. You might expect to work with the same commissioning editor over a number of years on a number of different projects, and all relationships work best when they are built on mutual trust and respect.

8. Why can't I find my book in the bookshop?

The distribution chain has undergone a quiet revolution in recent years. Whereas in the past individual book-sellers decided what to stock and what not to stock, the

larger chains now operate a system of central buying, which means that they have less flexibility to respond to local interests and local authors. The larger chains are, of course, interested in maximising their revenue for each shop, and this has had a direct impact on the length of time a book is kept on a shelf, and the range of books stocked. New titles are prioritised, and cooking and gardening win out over textual analysis – even in so-called academic bookshops. Of course, while bookshops stock fewer titles, Amazon offers academics and students unrivalled access to just about every book currently in print.

9. How can publishers justify the number of new journals?

It's often suggested that the increase in new journal titles is a direct consequence of the RAE. This isn't true. Journals like books need to be market-focused. A fair few new media and communication studies journals have been launched in the last decade or so, but this is a consequence of an expanding market, not the RAE. Compared to other disciplines, the field is a young and dynamic one. As new sub-fields have emerged over the years, (new media, journalism and visual culture), the space has been created for new forums for debate to emerge.

10. Will electronic delivery change the face of academic publishing?

Without a doubt it will, but on what timescale and in what ways isn't easy to predict. Certainly, electronic delivery has revolutionized journal publishing. The emphasis now is on usage, rather than on the absolute number of subscribers. Whereas in the past a library might have had one copy of a journal in its collection, now that same journal can be accessed by an entire university population or even consortia of universities. Electronic delivery has opened up new markets and enabled publishers to grow their journals business in ways that they could hardly have predicted five years ago. What impact all this will have on books is hard to tell, but the new business models that are being developed in the journals market will inevitably have an influence on the books business in years to come.

Julia Hall is Editor for Media and Communications at SAGE Ltd.

MeCCSA members consider the cultural significance of media coverage of G8 and Live8

David Lee: Momentum without longevity?

Because power increasingly functions in global networks, largely bypassing the institutions of the nation-state, movements are faced with the need to match the global reach of the powers that be with their own global impact on the media, through symbolic actions. (Manuel Castells)

In 2005 Africa has a place on the political agenda unprecedented in recent years. The Make Poverty History [MPH] campaign, culminating in *Live 8*, took single-issue political campaigning to new levels, bypassing traditional methods and employing digital technologies and the power of celebrity culture with overwhelming effect. The immediate impact has been undeniable. An estimated 2 billion people watched *Live 8*, 27 million signed up for the text-message campaign, and 225,000 marched in Edinburgh. At the G8 summit at Gleneagles, following intense public pressure, leaders agreed to take action on Africa, promising a \$50bn aid package, universal access to anti-HIV drugs in the continent by 2010 and full debt cancellation for 18 countries. Relying on grass-roots bottom-up participation, facilitated through the viral power of digital networks, MPH succeeded in mobilising public opinion through innovative methods, suggesting a powerful new paradigm for political engagement in the digital age. However, although clearly effective at mobilising support, its sustained long-term impact has yet to be proven. After creating a ‘flash moment’ (political scientist Joseph Nye’s term) of participation and media interest, how effective will MPH be in generating long-term political commitment to transforming Africa’s troubled social and economic fabric, and dealing with the underlying issues? Will poverty indeed be made history, or will the network dissipate as quickly as it came together?

The emergence of new forms of global activism using the internet is one of the defining political phenomena of recent years. In an era of increasing political disengagement, low voter turnout and an uncoupling of

individuals from what Robert Putnam calls ‘associational civic life’, paradoxically there has been a remarkable upsurge in local grassroots activism with international aims. Many of these pressure groups have used cyberactivism – the internet, digital video and audio, mobile telephony – to disseminate information and to campaign, bypassing mainstream media and leading to mass street demonstrations. The internet is ideally suited to activism. Cheap, easy to use and flexible, it gives protesters an alternative to mainstream media discourse. Strategies such as co-ordinating global demonstrations and posting background information, as well as using ‘hacktivism’ techniques such as email ‘jamming’, ‘electronic sit-ins’ and ‘automatic’ campaigning, are becoming staple features of 21st-century activism. As such the internet has allowed campaigners to bypass traditional mainstream media forms and processes of dissemination, to forge international networks and create new modes of political communication.

MPH shares the principles of networked campaigning seen in movements such as Stop the War Coalition (STWC) and Jubilee 2000, but fuses them with the spectacular effects of traditional mass media. These digitally-driven campaigns have much in common with techniques of modern marketing, building momentum through texts, email and, crucially, the use of celebrities to push the message:

- Grass-roots: These campaigns all originated with small committed groups determined to use new technology to generate support within a relatively short time.
- Simplicity: Relying on a simple message and a deadline helps generate a sense of urgency.
- Celebrity endorsement: Celebrities make the message more marketable, more ‘fun’.
- Participation through digitisation: Mass participation is encouraged through email and texts.

- Quick fix: In contrast to the slow, frustrating nature of everyday politics, these campaigns promise immediate, transformative change.
- Individualisation: Most importantly, using digital communication means people can get involved directly.

The concern is that this is politics as consumer culture, offering easily digested messages in order to maximise impact and be heard above the roar of the mainstream mass media. No doubt this helps raise people's consciousness about vital issues. However, these campaigns have thus far all failed to achieve their stated objectives. This raises the question: can they begin to deliver solutions to problems, rather than loudly drawing attention to them but leaving the practicalities to existing institutions? STWC managed to mobilise 2 million in London alone to march against the war in Iraq. But on 20th March 2003 air strikes announced the start of the invasion. Jubilee 2000 committed itself to eradicating world debt by the year 2000. However, Africa still

transfers almost \$15 billion dollars a year to the West as payment on external debt. The jury is still out on the long-term success of MPH, but inevitably the signs of political compromise are in the air. Perhaps this isn't a problem. After all, it seems cynical to look for the negative when so many positive results have been achieved. But will there be a backlash as people realise the reality doesn't match up to the rhetoric? Do such campaigns make it seem too easy, suggesting that global change can occur as quickly as digital networks can communicate? Tackling poverty requires the creation of long-term political aims, goals and structures, and a wider awareness of issues that require dedication and persistence to resolve. How much patience will the I-Pod generation have when they realise poverty can't be made history in the time it takes to fire off an email?

David Lee is currently researching a PhD at Goldsmiths College, London. In 1998 – 2003 he worked in independent television production and at the BBC, specialising in current affairs and documentaries.

Christos Giovanopolous: Fear politics, democracy and the anti-G8 protests

Siege, mayhem, chaos, violence, rampage and nightmare: some of the words used repeatedly by the Scottish press to describe the days of action against the G8 summit, to the extent that the word 'terror' was the only one still available from this vocabulary of fear to describe the 7/7 terrorist attacks in London the following day. Any comparison between the two 'threats', the anti-G8 protesters and the suicide bombers, falls short, leaving exposed (among other aspects) the manner and tactics that both local press and the police used against the participants in the week-long events.

Apart from the broadcasting by the media of minor events resulting from heavy-handed police tactics, the demonization of the anti-globalisation demonstrators was a permanent (and in some papers dominant) feature of local media coverage, and was aimed mainly at isolating the post-'Make Poverty History' protests from the local community.

The distinction between two categories of protesters, the 'joyful and peaceful' who belonged to the 'Make Poverty

History' mainstream on one hand, and the 'ill-mannered anarchists' who wanted to disrupt the usual pace of life in Edinburgh on the other, was a common strategy shared by police and local press alike. The distinction between the 'Make Poverty History' basis of *Live8* on the one hand and the G8 gathering on the other helped this separation to be achieved.

What was different this time, apart from the number of police personnel which outnumbered many times that of the protesters, was that the label 'anarchists' was broad enough to include anyone who wanted to demonstrate at Edinburgh or Gleaneagles between the 3rd and 7th of July. The emphasis by the press was not on the isolation of a small number of 'anarchists' that 'hijack' peaceful demonstrations, a version of a story used only for the 'Make Poverty History' coverage. The line had been drawn between the charities' and *Live 8* initiatives on one side, and active resistance actions, groups and networks which targeted the G8 policies on the other.

This divide and rule policy was embraced by people like Sir Bob Geldof, and it entrenched divisions when what

was needed was unity and coordination for more effective pressure. By following the lines drawn by the media, which diverted the public interest from the real issues, and by blaming primarily the media-constructed 'anarchist threat', Geldof once more confirmed, as Bono before him had previously done in Genoa, his hostility to a mass movement and, in doing so, he offered his support to the G8 notion of a safer world.

The parallel between the 'war on terror' in global world politics and the emphasis on 'safety before democracy' in internal politics is apparent and direct. Within this frame, the choice 'either with or against us', was used as a control mechanism against the dissidents, people not co-opted by the G8 voices. Civil rights and democracy were tested and often suffocated within police cordons.

However, headlines like: 'We will be very lucky if no-one is killed today' (*Evening News*, 6/6/05) or 'some (demonstrators) came from as far as Italy' failed largely to establish terror and hostility between the protesters and the local population. For the majority of people no separation occurred between them and the 'foreigners' who came to demonstrate or among the different sorts of protestor. On the contrary they were united by a common aim and enemy: the G8 leaders.

Sir Bob Geldof made explicit the side he chose to join by labeling those who confronted police in Edinburgh a "bunch of losers" (reported by Will Self, *Evening*

Standard, 11/7/05), and by stating that "those people do not even have a political agenda" (*Evening News*, 6/6/05), thereby claiming his exclusive right to the anti-G8 agenda.

Despite the mass character of *Live8*, the issue of democracy and people's participation and representation in media and publicity-based events surfaces once more. This is especially so when celebrities try to monopolize the right to speak on behalf of 'the voiceless'. Independently of their will, their 'publicity for change' politics, largely due to their media based nature, shows a lack of respect for the autonomous will of ordinary people, assigning them the role of extras in media orchestrated shows aiming to demonstrate the power of civil society.

The discourse of safety and order targeted those seeking to formulate a different counter-G8 agenda, with demands outside, but not in contrast with, the 'Make Poverty History' frame, without the need of any mediators and representatives. The participation of a number of activists of the African anti-globalisation movement in many of the anti-G8 events was much closer to, and representative of, the real struggles of the African people against poverty.

Christos Giovanopoulos is a journalist for the Greek journal *Aristera* and a postgraduate student in Film and TV Studies at the University of Westminster

Emma Hughes: Make Poverty History versus violent anarchist extremists?

As the first day of the G8 summit ended, I sat on a pavement in Auchterarder (the small town neighbouring the Gleneagles Hotel) with thirty other people from the eco-camp in Stirling. The protest had finished a few hours ago and we were all that was left of the marchers. As we waited for our bus home the mood was subdued, most of us sat in silence exhausted from a night of walking and the excitement of the march. One man switched on the radio as the headlines were being announced. "...And in Auchterader tonight", came the newscaster's voice "anarchists are still

rampaging down the main street. Several shop windows have already been smashed and there are fears that the violence may escalate". Immediately people's attention was caught "Which street?" we looked about us craning necks, "Where? Up the road? How many shops have been smashed?" The answer was none. There were no riots, no broken windows and the only possible anarchists left were us.

As someone whose job it is to analyse the media I feel I should have been less shocked at the disjuncture

between reality and the representation of it, yet to look around and actually witness the difference first-hand was shocking. I have no idea how the media got hold of the story, whether it was the fault of an unscrupulous journalist or an unsubstantiated rumour, but what it confirmed to me was the media's willingness to believe, their eagerness to take a well-worn narrative and run with it. "Anarchists? Being violent? Were they dressed in black and throwing bricks? I expect so – they're anarchists after all!" Of course violence is a part of the Global Justice Movement, but it's only a minor part. The media's representation of all protestors as violent, black-hooded youths is now boringly predictable.

Throughout my week in Scotland I came up against several serious misrepresentations of the protests. What shocked me more than this though was my own susceptibility to media narratives even when my own experience countered what was being reported. So, when we heard the news announcing riots in Auchterarder my first reaction was to look for those riots. Another example occurred when I was reading a newspaper. On the front were pictures of the violent scenes from Stirling with anarchists apparently setting woodland on fire. Yet this did not happen. As someone later pointed out to me the picture was of "The Beacons of Dissent". This involved protestors collecting dead wood to build "beacons" in the hills surrounding Gleneagles to warn the G8 leaders they were not welcome. I knew all about this event before I read the newspaper article but I'd been unable to recognise the picture for what it was. The media's power to define an event, even when your own experience counters it, was forcefully brought home to me.

Not all the coverage was as bad as these two examples, but I felt there was a problem with reporting which could be found in almost all newspapers. This was the tendency to reduce protestors to two types: peaceful law-abiding Make Poverty History marchers and violent anarchist extremists. What this view fails to recognise is the interesting shades of grey in between. Many protestors, myself included, felt very uncomfortable marching under the MPH banner. Although I certainly couldn't disagree with its demands for debt cancellation and better aid, there were several elements I was less

happy with: its love of celebrity, its refusal to discuss the Iraq war and perhaps most importantly its focus on lobbying the G8 rather than marching against it. In my opinion the G8 is an unaccountable and illegitimate institution, one whose very existence I object to. My concern with the MPH march was that rather than questioning the power that the G8 holds we were inadvertently legitimising it. I feel that eight leaders should not have the power to make decisions on behalf of the world; just asking those leaders to use their power for good is not enough.

The media's representation of all protestors as violent, black-hooded youths is now boringly predictable

I was certainly not alone in these views and protestors felt the need either to march explicitly against the G8 at Auchterarder or to disrupt the summit by joining one of the road blockades. People who took part in these actions were willing to enter confrontational situations and risk arrest, but this does not mean they were all dressed in black and throwing rocks. The stereotyping of anyone who stepped outside the MPH box was highlighted by the *Daily Telegraph* quoting Bob Geldof: He

ridiculed the so-called anarchist clowns with 'white painted faces' who thought they could 'cause world revolution by standing on top of park benches and hitting police'. The Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army, whom Geldof labels 'losers', created one of the most creative forms of protest I've ever experienced. Dressed in clown outfits they used humour instead of violence and often helped to diffuse tension between protestors and the police. Yet in Geldof's version they become pathetic thugs who are worthy of nothing more than ridicule.

Many people chose not just to participate in the Blair-approved MPH march but instead to challenge the G8 with more organic and disruptive forms of protest. The media coverage failed to grasp that dissent does not mean violence. There are many ways to fight for the end of poverty. Geldof does it his way and we should be allowed to do it ours.

Emma Hughes is a Research Associate at Cardiff University. She travelled to Scotland as part of the South Wales Against the G8 Coalition.

Peter Mills: Did Live8 change the world?

Can a song change the world? That's the big, dumb question I ask students in the first session of my degree course on popular music and dissent. Some say of course it can: my life is strongly influenced by the music that moves me. Some say of course not: people, politics, policy, and revolutions change the world. Music may indeed be mere vibrations, good or otherwise, on the still air, and transcribed music is never going to amount to a postable manifesto. Yet as the course proceeds students find causes to think anew of both initial views.

In *Live8*'s case we are talking about collective responses, about a coalesced expression of common will above and beyond that of a mutual interest in, say, U2. Music provides a rallying point, moves people, energises them. Live Aid changed people's views about what pop music could do, and what it was for, but there's all the difference in the world between July 13th 1985 and July 2nd 2005. In '85, the exact nature of what happened was opaque at the time while the cultural significance of *Live8* was so heavily stressed it could barely exist as a 'live event'. Contrast the urgent nowness of '85 ('Send us the money, now!'), the unlearned lyrics scribbled on the back of Elvis Costello's right hand) with the planned spontaneity of '05 ('It was twenty years ago today', Geldof's reprised raised-fist salute); paradoxically the advanced flagging up of collaborations took some of the steam out of the showpieces. (Having said that, I found the Pink Floyd reunion strangely moving, but that may well have been the drink.)

So to borrow from another artist who wasn't invited to the party (he wouldn't have come: he'd have been washing his hair) what difference does it make? It makes some; the G8 would have happened anyway but the issues considered therein would almost certainly have been less prevalent in the minds of those busy with the everyday. Soundtracked by popular song, the G8, and the key issues, became part of the everyday. Is that not worth doing?

The billing controversy seems to a large extent a non-issue: I'd question the view that the bill in London should have been skewed in favour of African acts: the idea was to use the currency of popular music celebrity to attract as much attention as possible to the event and

thereby the issues which provoked and precipitated the event. Malcontents such as Damon Albarn and Andy Kershaw, both of whom have done very nicely out of the world music industry, know perfectly well that the event they wished to see actually happens every summer down by the riverside in Reading: it's called WOMAD. As it happens, I listened to the Eden Project concert on Radio Three; it was superb and musically streets ahead of much of what took centre stage in Hyde Park, but that's not the point. *Live8* was not connoisseurial; it was about getting as many people as possible to pay attention for as long as possible.

Has it changed anything? Any impact it may have had was at least in part drained away by the events of July 7th; people's attentions and the media focus were elsewhere. But the impact can also be longer-lasting – this is part of the cultural power of music; no matter how dire or cynical the motives of the makers, the listener makes meaning and encodes the music and the music floats free, to embody significance and investment of an emotional nature which far outweighs the financial kind. This is how music, regardless of genre, survives commodification. *Live8* was in part saying something absurdly simple: poverty is bad. It was also attempting to articulate something far more complex: that is, that the individual has the ability to do something about the way the world is, and that the current set of circumstances are not a given, fixed and impregnable. The ability to deliver such a message is true of all music in my view, be it Vaughan Williams or Velvet Revolver; music not only embodies or represents or encodes or signifies change: it is change. Music exists in a permanent state of revolution. *Live8*'s key slogan was 'We don't want your money: we want you'. This is harder to give, more revolutionary in effect: in James Brown's phrase, 'a revolution of the mind' is both required and facilitated by music. And that's why I'd argue, and my students might too, that, yes, a song can, and will, change the world.

Peter Mills is Senior Lecturer in Media and Popular Culture at Leeds Metropolitan University

Lise Watson: Live 8 – a very personal view from Canada

From the moment the recent *Live8* concerts organized by Bob Geldof were announced on May 31st, 2005 the African music community in Toronto was abuzz. Individually and collectively we mused over whether this could or would have any positive effect on the real or imagined Western worldview of Africa. Toronto's African media railed against Geldof for the absence of Africans in the line-up. And like Cameroonian journalist Jean-Claude Shanda Tonme, some felt insulted for Africans at being treated yet one more time in such a paternalistic fashion. We collectively cringed as we thought of the likely self-serving motives of many participants.

As a white Anglo-Canadian academic, journalist and fan of African music, I can offer no final answers to the debate about *Live8*. What I can give you are my personal impressions of this spectacular media event.

Where *Live8* was concerned, mainstream media in Toronto first chose to focus on the race between the cities of Toronto and Barrie to host the concert. In the end, Barrie emerged victorious and the preparations were under way. Media attention then shifted to the list of performers. When the line-up was announced and a large number of aging rockers were counted, snide remarks were made throughout the media suggesting that '70s singer Anne Murray must not have been available. As in other participating cities, the cast was suspiciously white at the outset. But rumours soon circulated that two local African acts would be added, Somali rapper K'naan and the African Guitar Summit. Up until this point this was almost a 'non-event' for me, and likewise for most Africans in Toronto. Suddenly though my interest increased dramatically: I know these musicians well, and have been following their careers for years.

The big day arrived and I perched myself in front of my television as the broadcast of the Barrie concert began. I

was impressed with leftie folk legend Bruce Cockburn's performances of "Call it Democracy" and "If I had a Rocket Launcher", very nearly nodded off during Bachman Turner Overdrive, and I must confess, enjoyed Deep Purple's revival of "Smoke on the Water". I privately winced at the thought of my beloved African Guitar Summit following such a rocking performance but when MCs Dan Ackroyd (of *Saturday Night Live* fame) and comedian Tom Green came on stage to

introduce the musicians, a thrill went through me that I can barely describe. Who could ever imagine a Blues Brother (Ackroyd) using the Ghanaian name Theo Yaw Boakye in a sentence and better yet pronouncing this name correctly? It was a proud Canadian moment indeed.

The group making up the African Guitar Summit, initially brought together in 2004 by public broadcaster, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, to record a landmark self-titled CD, is composed of immigrants from Madagascar, Guinea, Ghana, Kenya, and Burundi. They are an extremely talented collection of guitarists, singers and

percussionists, who until the special recording project, had had limited exposure in this country. And even after the release of this fine CD, their celebrity was limited to the CBC and campus or community radio stations. *Live8* was their first national broadcast on a private television station and it held much promise.

The performance was cut short, but nevertheless, I was bursting with pride for these men of such extraordinary talent, and the justly deserved recognition they were finally getting. And as if that was not amazing enough, the grand finale of the Barrie-fest, featuring Neil Young, was yet to come. Young, who performed for the first time since recovering from a brain aneurysm and the death of his father, is much beloved in Canada, and there surely was not a dry eye in the crowd as he crooned. The rest of the day's performers crowded on stage at the end

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of his songs, and there amongst this group of Canadian music royalty, were Ghanaian highlife singer Theo Yaw Boakye, Ghanaian drummer Kofi Ackah, Malagasy guitarist Donn  Robert and Somali rapper K'naan singing their hearts out on "Rockin' in the Free World". I couldn't help grinning from ear to ear for hours after. In speaking with them later, I found that thankfully, these musicians too found it to be a very positive experience.

In hindsight, yes, *Live8* could have been the perfect occasion to give voice to the innumerable brave African musicians who for years have been sending a message to their people and the world about both the struggles

and great strengths and beauty of Africa. It was a missed opportunity for a real dialogue for Africans about Africa. In the end, we can only hope that justice someday will come to that continent.

Lise Watson is the publisher of Toronto World Arts Scene (TWAS) Magazine and a regular contributor to CIUT 89.5FM's Global Rhythms. She was a member of the Board of Directors of community organization and producers of AfroFest, Music Africa, for many years. In February of 2006 she begins a doctoral research degree at the University of Westminster in the area of World Music and Radio in Britain.

Phil Drake and Andy Miah: 'The final push' – Live8 and celebrity in Scotland

The problem was not that nothing much happened in Scotland on the day the G8 political summit opened but that, very soon, too much was happening elsewhere. We arrived in Edinburgh around noon on the 6th July, the first day of the G8 summit and after the morning news reported trouble in areas of Stirling.

The city seemed quiet at this time, and we gradually made our way to Princes Street. We were expecting a call to tell us the outcome of London's bid to host the Olympic Games in 2012. At 12.46pm – the precise moment when the announcement was due from Singapore – we gave up waiting and called a friend who confirmed London had won. Princes Street, by this time, was closed off. It did not appear that there was trouble or, if there was, it had been 'contained' by the many police officers. All that was audible were the banging of drums and crowd noise, and glimpses of people through the police line.

Meanwhile, people strolled in and out of Starbucks on Princes Street, oblivious to the banners, whilst others took snaps of the police. Dotted around the street were amateur video-crews from around the world – unofficial media, reporting back on events. It was quite a different picture from a few days before, when the Make Poverty History march took place along the same street and people thronged around the city. It felt more unsettled, although safe enough. In fact, apart from a few high

street shops that were boarded up, the city did not seem so different.

At the Final Push event at Murrayfield Stadium, Edinburgh's *Live8* concert, the two Bs (Bob and Bono) would mount their final stand on the eight Gs. It was a relatively grim day, at times pouring with rain, in contrast to the week earlier at Hyde Park, London. After getting into the stadium and receiving a free Scottish flag to wave for the cameras, the concert was started by a kilted Lenny Henry and local flag-waving favourites, The Proclaimers. The gig, timed not to coincide with the other *Live8* concerts but with the first day of the G8 meeting at Gleneagles, held many memorable moments, very few of which were the performances.

Once again we had celebrities taking the moral high ground over political issues. A ballot box wielding Bono, symbolically endowed with the people's vote, spoke dramatically about the moment of history and movingly about global poverty (cue: cheering from the crowd) and then about his meeting with George Bush (cue: predictable booing). As each celebrity hit the stage – a mix of mainly British and US celebrities that included Peter Kay, Patrick Keilty, George Clooney, Susan Sarandon, Eddie Izzard, Davina McCall and, of course, the bands with Bono, Midge Ure and Bob Geldof – they all urged the crowd to hold the politicians at G8 to account. A historic day, they said. Even George Bush was listening, they said.

Celebrity has been much on our minds recently as we've been organising a conference on the subject. The events around *Live8* and G8 seem to offer an interesting mixing of the political and celebrity spheres, where distinctions between the two appear to be collapsing. Last year Bono told the UK Labour Party conference that Tony Blair and Gordon Brown were the 'Lennon and McCartney' of politics.

On June 29th this year the cover of Scotland's biggest selling tabloid, the *Daily Record*, was headlined 'The G9' with a picture of Bob Geldof. The legitimacy of celebrities to speak with our mandate about political matters seems to be taken as given in the popular, celebrity-fixated news press. There's nothing entirely new in this, of course, but as the work of John Corner and John Street has demonstrated, the construction of the political persona – or the personalisation of the political – increasingly intertwines politicians with the celebrity elite.

So is it a problem that people were listening to celebrities? Do celebrities perform a public service in bringing politics to those traditionally excluded from political discourse? Or does the personalisation of news, focussing on celebrities as politicians and politicians as celebrities, skew media coverage of political issues whereby the public are 'represented' through the symbolic action of celebrities?

Something has to be said here about the finger-clicking. Chris Evans and Davina McCall choreographed the crowd to click their fingers every 3-seconds, just as Brad Pitt, Madonna, George Clooney, David and Victoria Beckham and many more had done on the promotional videos for *Live8*. We were soon a coordinated crowd clicking our fingers until we were told that the BBC had enough footage for TV. The mass clicking became a symbolic event emptied of personal significance, led by celebrities and recorded to be played back for television news. The biggest cheer of the day came with a video recording of Nelson Mandela, played to the crowds and misleadingly reported by some of the media as if it was a

live appearance. Not that anyone objected, of course: the crowd understood the need for television coverage and willingly played the media game.

Yet during the G8 summit it seemed that the media construction of events – whether the smashing of the window of a fast-food outlet in Stirling or a local policeman's collision with a mountain-biking George Bush (giving new meaning to the phrase, 'a b(r)ush with fame') – did not quite tally with first-hand experience. In Glasgow, various theatres produced performances

inspired by politics and galleries exhibited G8-reactions, offering wall space for anyone to post their commentaries. These local events, connected to the G8 alternative proceedings, garnered little media coverage, so you would not have heard much about them in the press. Inevitably, and despite the influx of celebrities and mega-events, the G8 has been quickly forgotten in Scotland. Both the London Olympic win and the G8 meetings quickly became relegated to the inside pages of subsequent days news, as the catastrophic events of the London bombings brought home that there is little more important to the media than homeland security. Even celebrities with a message, it seems.

Do celebrities perform a public service in bringing politics to those traditionally excluded from political discourse?

G8 / Final Push Images:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/56103050@N00/page2/>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/25272992@N00/sets/691839/>

Celebrity website:

<http://www.celebrityculture.net>

Phil Drake is Lecturer in Film & Media Studies at the University of Stirling and Andy Miah is Lecturer in Media, Bioethics, and Cyberculture at University of Paisley. In September 2005 they are organising an international conference on Celebrity Culture at the University of Paisley and editing a forthcoming special edition of the journal *Cultural Politics* on the politics of celebrity.

Details can be found at www.celebrityculture.net.

2006 Joint Annual Conference at Leeds Metropolitan University on Friday 13th – Sunday 15th January

The second joint annual conference of MeCCSA and AMPE brings together two leading media subject associations serving the tertiary sector. As well as a packed programme of papers, panels, plenary speakers and screenings, the AGMs of both associations will be held during the conference.

The conference takes place over 3 days at the Carriageworks Theatre and Arts Centre, starting on Friday with a welcome reception at a nearby civic venue co-hosted by Vice Chancellor Simon Lee and Leeds City Council.

Confirmed plenary speakers include an impressive line-up of international scholarship and professional expertise, reflecting the concerns of both associations' memberships. Keynotes include:

- the media historian, Michele Hilmes (University of Madison-Wisconsin), examining the history of British influences on US broadcasting
- Fan Hong (University of Tsinghua, Beijing) speaking on current developments in journalism within the Chinese media
- the social/cultural theorist Nick Couldry (London School of Economics)

Unfortunately the renowned film director Mike Hodges has recently withdrawn from the programme, but a replacement is being sought. Other speakers taking a plenary platform will include representatives from OFCOM and the AHRC to invite debate about current issues in communication policy and media research

within the UK and beyond. Papers and panels so far accepted cover a broad range of different kinds of research in media analysis and media history, cultural studies and social theory, media and teaching practice, new media and enterprise. There will be sessions dedicated to the MeCCSA Women's Network and the MeCCSA Postgraduate Networks. The conference will also feature a new screening of previously unseen Mitchell and Kenyon silent film from Leeds and Yorkshire, with a live commentary and music accompaniment, sponsored by the Louis le Prince Centre at the University of Leeds. The successful BBC2 series and BFI's DVDs did not cover all the material archived and Yorkshire material is still being accessed and researched (should be almost as interesting as their Lancashire material – Lancastrian ed). Conference delegates will be able to view footage not seen on a big screen since Edwardian times, together with informed commentary from experts in this field.

The extended but now 'hard' and absolute deadline for proposed papers, presentations, workshops and screenings is 30th September 2005. Proposals should be submitted in the form of 300–500 word abstracts. Panels can only be accepted with abstracts for each contributor.

Email: p.cook@leedsmet.ac.uk

Further details: 0113-283-3120,

www.leedsmet.ac.uk/as/cs/ and www.meccsa.org.uk

and www.ampe.co.uk or contact: **Dr Lance Pettitt at** L.Pettitt@leedsmet.ac.uk

Stephen Cushion and Vicky Ball report on the Second MeCCSA Postgraduate Conference

"It was an excellent conference, really one of the best that I have been to" (Professor Greg Philo).

When one of the most important voices in media and cultural studies over the last 20 years heaps such praise on a conference, you know it's been a success. With over 50 papers presented, close to 90 delegates attending the 2-day event, and five senior figures in the field speaking at the event, the second MeCCSA postgraduate conference held at the Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies exceeded all expectations. We believe it shows that a real demand exists for postgraduate events and activities. The conference brought together an eclectic mix of students and papers,

from as far away as Ulster, Glasgow and Norwich.

Pornography, Shakespeare and *Midsomer Murders* may have seemed unlikely bedfellows in one of the opening panel sessions entitled 'Taste and Value in Media Texts'. But each paper was based on how media texts are valued and 'legitimatised' by audiences and scholars. The cultural capital of texts was continued in the panel "Revisiting the past". Three papers interested in how national identity informs and shapes media content examined The mythology of King Arthur, Spanish and Irish cinema and the reporting of GM crops. Meanwhile, speakers in the "Creation and Innovation" panel looked at specific ways of reshaping the creative industries,

with media literacy and the information society debated. Panelists in “Democracy and newspapers” looked at newspaper readers and the way public opinion is represented in national, regional and local press, in England, Scotland, Brazil and Germany.

The first day of the conference also saw the first of three plenary sessions. Professor Justin Lewis (Cardiff University), Professor Máire Messenger-Davies (University of Ulster) and Dr Ernest Mathjis (University of Wales, Aberystwyth) gave advice and many anecdotes on making the transition from doctoral research to full-time academic in British, European and American universities. There were lively debates on publishing, teaching and surviving a PhD!

“Negotiating Femininity” explored female identity in relation to media representation and education. “Fear and media” looked, primarily in the context of 9/11, at how media texts report fear and, in turn, help perpetuate it. Some papers in “Producing texts” used ethnography to analyse news and sport journalisms as well as the design process of film, while one paper used content analysis to demonstrate how the public service ethos has declined in TV programming since 1984. In more optimistic spirit, “The BBC and interactivity” panel looked at how new media has been used to engage and represent citizenship.

After overnight rain, thunder and lightning, delegates woke to the choice of four very interesting and different panels. In “theoretical interventions” there were debates on the aesthetics of contemporary art, the semiology of election broadcasts and the concepts used to understand national identity. By examining horror films, wonder-women and computer games, another panel focused on “The role of the body in media texts”. Speakers in the panel “Case studies of films” went beyond the conventional focus on Hollywood subject matter by looking at African cinema, how human rights are captured on the big screen, and the authorship of the Australian director, Peter Weir, before he moved to the USA. Finally, speakers in the “politics of the BBC” panel looked at BBC radio in Northern Ireland as well as the histories of BBC sitcoms and documentaries. Panelists debated the relative merits of public service broadcasting today, referring to the Reithian goals of fostering a common, collective, social good.

Director of the Glasgow Media Group, Professor Greg Philo, picked up on the Reithian impulse to educate audiences, by examining how the news media report on particular issues. Referring back to the classic book *Bad News*, the methodology used to examine how journalists

reported the coal strikes in the 1980s was explained. Professor Philo suggested that journalists often reported dominant accounts of the world, from establishment-led institutions, and that this limited the way journalists understood a range of social issues, as well as influencing television audiences who interpreted their understanding through this narrow ideological prism.

The last panel sessions were a fitting end to a conference full of diverse interests. While “Online communities” looked at how the Internet can empower and facilitate citizenship, “New media and regulation” looked at the role the government and regulators, in a variety of countries, can play in developing policies to enhance this relationship. “Reading Texts” analysed and deconstructed television comedy, matrimonial representations and newsreel coverage in the second world war. Each showed how ‘communities’ were imagined through media texts. Finally, “National identity in local and global media” continued this theme but in different cultural contexts, from how photojournalism constitutes African refugees to the way Irish cinema is repackaged and sold to global audiences.

In the last plenary session, Professor Bob Franklin gave a truly inspirational lecture on why and where to publish. Drawing on 5 years’ experience of editing the journal *Journalism Studies*, he advised how PhD chapters could be turned into several journal articles, and encouraged PhD students to contact journal editors to suggest ideas for potential articles. The conference ended on a real high thanks to the energy, humour and advice in Professor Franklin’s session.

Last year we wrote that we wanted to ‘reach out and make a difference to the wider postgraduate community’. This conference managed to bring together and showcase the emerging talent of media, cultural and film studies scholars. But we refuse to rest on our laurels. Sustaining this postgraduate community and ensuring it meets the needs of every student in the field are our principal goals. Our next conference is provisionally booked at Ulster University and preparations are already underway for a presence at the MeCCSA conference in Leeds. Both near the end of our PhD experiences, we not only feel proud of helping to create something new and exciting but confident that it will continue to evolve.

Stephen Cushion is in the Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies; Vicky Ball is at Queen Margaret University College, Edinburgh.

Talks open between MeCCSA and AMPE

Christine Geraghty

Following the clear decision of the AGM, members of the Executive Committee have begun talks with AMPE representatives about the possibility of developing a single institution to represent HE staff in our disciplines. Two meetings have been held and while clearly there are delicate matters to sort out the approach has been very positive by all concerned. We agreed that we don't want to get bogged down in rules but to provide a framework that will give effective representation and which will not need to be changed every time another organisation is interested in joining. We agreed that membership should for the moment generally be insitutional but with provision for individual membership. We have begun to review what needs to be done at the centre and how we can continue to sustain the work done in sections, networks and subcommittees. AMPE has obviously raised the question of how those working in practice areas are encouraged to join the organisation and contribute to the development of policy. We are committed to the notion that people would join one organisation, not just a part or section of it but we need to translate that intention into more formal constitutional proposals. The group working on this will meet again on September 23rd and, fingers crossed, we are certainly at the moment on course to make recommendations to the AGMs at the conference in January.

Consultations on BFI Library

Christine Geraghty

Some of you may have been contacted by consultants who are writing a report about the BFI library. The initial proposal to seek a partner in HE was withdrawn following a meeting with representatives from AHRC, British Library, BUFVC and MeCCSA. Instead a more open brief has been given to the consultants who are charged in part with finding out how the academic community views the library and what changes we would like to see. The BFI's review is being driven by the Film Council and, if we believe the BFI library is important, it's important that we reflect this in our response. If you want to make a contribution, email me at c.geraghty@tfts.arts.gla.ac.uk immediately. Further information about the consultants' report will be put on the website, hopefully sometime in September.

RAE

MeCCSA members will no doubt be aware by now of the constitution of the RAE Communication, Cultural and Media studies sub-panel. In case your attention has been on other things, here it is. Details of MeCCSA's role in nominations can be found on the MeCCSA website.

Peter Golding (Chair), Loughborough University
John Adams, University of Bristol

Martin Barker, University of Wales, Aberystwyth
Neil Blain, University of Paisley

John Corner, University of Liverpool

John Ellis, Royal Holloway, University of London

Chris Frost, Liverpool John Moores University

Justin Lewis, Cardiff University

Angela McRobbie, Goldsmiths College, University of London

Maire Messenger, University of Ulster

Mica Nava, University of East London

Helen Normoyle, OFCOM

Sue Thornham, University of Sussex

Helen Galbraith, University of Bristol

Anna Sendall, Royal Holloway, University of London.

You may also be aware of the consultation on the 2008 RAE. The next stage of consultation for the RAE 2008 is on the draft sub-panel and panel criteria. The period for consultation is now slightly extended from the original plan, but is still quite tight. HEFCE has announced that "the draft criteria will be available for consultation and comment on the RAE website from 16 July to 19 September 2005. The funding bodies welcome responses from all interested parties, including subject associations, professional bodies, HEIs and individuals". MeCCSA will be submitting comments and would therefore like to hear from members with points they wish to have included in that response. In order to make this practicable could any such comments please be sent to Peter Golding (p.golding@lboro.ac.uk) by no later than 9th September. The RAE 2008 website may be found at www.rae.ac.uk.

You might well receive this newsletter after this 9th September deadline and possibly after the 19th September deadline too. This information was circulated to members by email in early summer.

Credit due: Why Weber matters for cultural studies

In the latest in our series where academics return to neglected, forgotten or under-rated contributions to the fields, **Ros Brunt** revisits Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

I'm afraid I long ago stopped advertising Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* as recommended reading for undergraduate courses. The intellectual journey from Benjamin Franklin's quaint maxims via obscure Calvinist sects to weird Weltanschauungen and what any of this might have to do with twentieth-century, let alone twenty first century, modern media and popular culture was becoming just too tortuous to sustain in lectures and study guides. And particularly so when the introduction of modular degree routes meant that no prior knowledge of sociology, never mind its origins as a discipline, could still be assumed. I felt it was asking students to make too big a conceptual leap to take on the theoretical implications for contemporary cultural studies that might be contained in, say, a detailed exegesis of Luther's translation of one biblical phrase. Even *The Protestant Ethic's* first English translator, Talcott Parsons, described the book as having a volume of footnotes so 'excessively large... as to form a serious detriment to the reader's enjoyment.' However, I still continue to recommend *The Protestant Ethic* for postgraduate students embarking on dissertations. And in the 100th anniversary of its original journal publication, 1904–05, I'd like to suggest why.

When students are first thinking of the outline shape of their thesis, I start by stressing the investigative nature of the work: its basic steps, its initial questions – what are the 'leads', the 'clues'? Where will the evidence be found? And I know of nothing quite like *The Protestant Ethic* for spelling out the stages of investigative procedure so precisely: The Problem; The Nature of the Problem; Task of the Investigation, and so on. Presenting research as a constant process of refining and reformulating his original questions, Weber repeatedly invokes the reader with 'let us define our terms' – and then redefines them in a continual dialogic dance with other positions and perspectives.

But although he emphasizes the 'provisional' and open-ended nature of his findings, Weber is nevertheless insistent on the 'scientific' nature of his method. And this is where *The Protestant Ethic* needs to be read in the light of the much harder slog of his contemporaneous methodology essays, particularly "'Objectivity" in Social Science and Social Policy' and 'The Logic of the Cultural Sciences'. I've long since learnt not to propose these as student texts after mounting protest about their ponderous vocabulary and sentence structure. And yet, if it's possible for us as lecturers to do a decent translating job, I think they are still relevant in offering a formidable challenge to those charges that cultural studies research can never be more than subjectivist and impressionistic. For as Weber demonstrates in *The Protestant Ethic*, researchers may well start with 'vague impressions' about various connections and causal relationships but then, precisely because they are dealing with the non-quantifiable, non-repeatable realm of culture, they have more of a responsibility than do natural scientists able to follow experimental procedures, to aim for rigour and precision in evidence and 'validity' and 'adequacy' in explanation.

Besides offering an exemplar for how to conduct a piece of cultural studies investigation, I think the substantive case studies Weber offers in *The Protestant Ethic* remain pertinent both for approaches to textual reading and for an understanding of how 'situated meanings' might work.

Weber's methodology essays attempt to deal with the necessarily 'qualitative' approaches taken to cultural meanings by referring to their 'characteristic uniqueness': yes, cultural phenomena are nonreplicable but nevertheless they also contain generalisable features which researchers need to delineate, highlight, exaggerate and find causal 'genetic' explanations for,

particularly in terms of historical and cross-cultural contexts. So when Weber alights on a single unique text, like Franklin's *Necessary Hints To Those That Would Be Rich* and extracts from it a working definition of 'the spirit of capitalism', he does so with clear explanations to the reader that his 'one-sided' textual reading has a particular heuristic purpose within an historical investigation that is backed up by the massive scholarship to which the famous footnotes attest.

Since the publication of *The Protestant Ethic*, Weber has been claimed as a Founding Father of classical sociology and appropriated by scholars of every political and disciplinary hue: whether structural-functionalists, cold-war ideologues, Trotskyists analysing degenerate bureaucracies or radical Democrats like another of his English translators, C Wright Mills. And the basic hypothesis of the book with its bravura yoking together of the spiritual and the material, via the oxymoron of 'worldly ascetism', a supreme instance of Weber's 'paradox of the consequences', has been furiously debated, particularly with reference to Marx. My own take on this, still cleaving to some notion of the 'base' ultimately determining the 'superstructure', is that whatever the merits of the Weber contra Kapital case, his accounts of how abstract belief systems become routinised, regulated and part of everyday concrete

practices at the level of 'situated meanings' are both exemplary for cultural studies and could still fit within a Marxian model of determination.

I'd single out here Weber's stunning account of how members of Calvinist sects resorted to lives unremitting daily busy-ness to confront the fear that although they believed they were God's Elect they might in fact be facing the fires of Hell. Re-reading this I was struck not only by how its psychological insight is matched by its historical scholarship but also how much its emphasis on regulatory disciplines prefigured Foucauldian concerns with theories of discourse.

I haven't come across any, but there must be teachers of cultural and media studies making *The Protestant Ethic* exciting and relevant to their undergraduate courses. And maybe I should be renewing efforts to enthuse students with the sheer brio and breadth of Weber's investigative grasp. Not least because all that intellectual oomph and audacious scholarship was so hard-won. I remain impressed and moved that *The Protestant Ethic* followed a prolonged period of breakdown when Weber could not write a word.

Ros Brunt is Research Fellow at Sheffield Hallam University and a former Vice-Chair of MeCCSA.

The New Hollywood Radicals

Ben Dickenson investigates left-wing politics in Hollywood and amongst some of its best-known celebrities.

The genesis of my book *Hollywood's New Radicalism* was unorthodox. It took place between the killing of an Italian youth by police in July 2001, and a press junket with movie star Sean Penn shortly afterwards. Penn's words to the press provided a link between the two occurrences, in my head. Penn praised "young people who lay their lives on the line" for a social cause. He derided business-friendly politicians and bemoaned the corporate interests in American film production. He called for a "revolution in our culture".

Penn was talking a day after Carlo Giuliani was shot dead in the Italian port city of Genoa. Giuliani was a

student, who took classes in cultural studies, and who had joined a protest of hundreds of thousands of activists against the G8 summit. That is the same gathering of leaders from the world's richest nations that came to Gleneagles in the UK this summer. The Genoa protestors gathered to challenge the consensus that had come to dominate the political and cultural landscape. Sean Penn agreed with the protestors, and argued that there was a new resolve among some Hollywood talent to undermine an apparent corporate hegemony.

Penn is, therefore, partially responsible for my book. I undertook research into the relationships between film-

makers, society, politics and movies. In the process I have uncovered the tumultuous experience of those in Hollywood who are committed to social justice. However, I didn't want to be restricted to an activist or filmmaker's journal. So I journeyed through the social history of the American cinema over the last 25 years, interviewing the people who were there, turning over financial and social records.

I felt there was a gap between the project of cultural studies and many recent histories of cinema. I wanted to try and fill the vacuum. I also wanted to relate to a general readership. So *Hollywood's New Radicalism* is not confined to a study of electoral politics and its relationship to Hollywood. Wider social situations are the book's terrain. Formal debates in film or cultural studies are factors too. Above all else, this book is an analysis of recent aesthetic and socio-political phenomena in American cinema.

Globalisation came early

In the 1970s, capitalists trained on Wall Street began buying up American film studios. They undertook a restructuring programme founded on their ethic of gross financial accumulation. In the 1980s President Ronald Reagan's fiscal policy supported these businessmen, cutting their taxes and changing legislation to suit their needs. In this climate left wing Hollywood became marginal. Hollywood activists demonstrated their disgust with war, organising protests and publicity stunts against Reagan's foreign policy in Central America.

Films challenging Reaganite ideology were rare, but savage critiques occasionally broke through, such as Oliver Stone's stock market drama *Wall Street*. However, anti-Reagan resistance both on and off screen developed an individualistic tone. Thus *Wall Street's* central character, Gordon Gekko, channelled Stone's disgust with the entire project of Reaganism into a single fictional persona.

This tendency to individualise complex social situations laid the Hollywood left open to manipulation. When Democratic President Bill Clinton arrived in the 1990s his liberal rhetoric encouraged the production of several movies featuring politicians with panache and compassion. Michael Douglas, who had played Gordon Gekko, now became *The American President* with a twinkling eye and a passion for the average citizen. The

reality of Clinton's tenure was very different.

Trans-national corporations took a grip on the global economy. International media giants Vivendi and Sony moved into Hollywood. Multi-nationals rapidly bought up the independent film industry, which had thrived since the early 1990s. Stories of suffering caused by the same business interests in Latin America and Africa began to filter through to Hollywood. Alternative media producers, like Globalvision's Danny Schechter, began to find a new American audience. The USA's urban poor saw no practical benefit from Clinton's administration. Consequently, movies produced by Hollywood left-wingers in the late 1990s became focussed on the failure of the liberal agenda. Warren Beatty weighed in with *Bulworth*, portraying a failed Democrat.

Resistance and war

In November 1999 50 -100,000 people (estimates vary) demonstrated outside the Seattle summit of the World Trade Organisation. A half-decade of worldwide anti-capitalist protest was ushered in, which rolled over into anti-war protest in 2003 when George W Bush invaded Iraq. A generation of Hollywood progressives engaged with this activism. During the Iraq war Hollywood personalities Martin Sheen, Danny Glover and Sean Penn were identifiable figures in protest movements.

The talent that had emerged from the 1990s independent scene was also infected, although they still tended to produce films that prized individual anti-corporate heroes. Steven Soderbergh's *Erin Brockovich*, in which a working class mother takes on a major corporation, is one example. The Hollywood corporations were keen to exploit the new political mood themselves, and produced confused movies with a veneer of anti-capitalism. *Fight Club*, with its visceral fury at consumerism, for example. Those directly involved in the anti-capitalist movement began making a very different kind of niche-marketed film that represented moments of collective resistance, like Tim Robbins' *Cradle Will Rock*.

Where now?

George W. Bush's return to office with more than 50 per cent of the popular vote in 2004 may bode ill for Sean Penn's cultural revolution. Cinema box office takings in Europe hit a record high this summer, and the biggest successes were American corporate-produced fantasies. Yet, in July, Tim Robbins waved off German protestors

heading for Gleneagles with the aim of repeating the protests of Genoa 2001. The fruit of the last 25 years of American cinema has been, in part, a new radical Hollywood left. Do they recognise their own social, political and economic history? Perhaps they do not. Can we learn something about culture from the contradictory social relationships that shape present-day Hollywood? We can, and *Hollywood's New Radicalism* is one attempt to help us do so.

Ben Dickenson is a film writer and journalist, based in North East England. He has a Master's degree in Film and Television from the University of Westminster. *Hollywood's New Radicalism: globalisation, war and the movies* is published by I.B. Tauris in November.

Crossing cultures: a tale of two cities and several continents

Karen Ross reports on the experience of travelling with two students to a conference in Germany.

Wednesday (late February)

Receive an unexpected email from someone in one of our partner city universities asking if I would like to take part in the city's annual week-long festival. As this is the first year that Poppleburg has elected a woman mayor, the theme of the opening forum is gender equality and the future of cities. Sounds great! I've never been to Poppleburg before and novelty has become a principal criterion in deciding if I'm going to do things which involve flying as I simply can't afford the trauma of missed flights, inedible airline food (no we don't have you down for a vegetarian meal do you want chicken or beef?) and the head cold which I then nurse for weeks after I return home. I say yes to my new colleague.

Thursday (early April)

It's my birthday and one of my presents is an email from my new colleague, let's call her Susanne, telling me that not only am I invited to Poppleburg, but as she has secured some Socrates funding, I can bring some students to participate in a symposium on gender in/and research, if I have anyone working in this area. Of course I do! What a great opportunity. Two of our students are working on aspects of gender, media and communication and their work would fit perfectly. Discuss the idea with Carol and Sujata (not their real names) who are immediately enthusiastic and they soon get the ball rolling to obtain Schengen visas: they are both international students and know all too well how laborious and problematic this can be for them. In the nick of time, all is sorted and we're on our way.

Friday (June)

We arrive in Poppleburg, and are picked up from the airport by a chauffeur-driven sleek black BMW, natch. This luxury is small compensation for the rude and hostile treatment meted out to Carol and Sujata at passport control. It is always a salutary experience for a white British national to travel with colleagues who share none of those particular characteristics. I loiter, pointedly, by the barrier, saying "we're traveling together". The officials ignore me but I stand my ground, however useless such posturing actually is, and eventually they allow us all to go through. I am outraged at the interrogation they have endured but Sujata and Carol simply shrug it off: they are both well traveled and regard such humiliations as a necessary part of the journey. I don't think I would be so sanguine but I admire their much more practical response. We arrive at my hotel first and we agree to meet here after they've checked in to their accommodation and left their bags. I find out later that they are staying in a student residence, charmingly (and inaccurately as it turns out) described as a guest-house which is a 15-minute bus ride away. Over the course of the visit, Carol and Sujata discover more than they will ever need to know about the intricacies of German street signage and how many different routes they can take to the same place.

Saturday

The next day is the City Forum and I make my main presentation. Unfortunately, Poppleburg is basking in its sunniest June day for 30 years while I'm trying to screen

the short film I've made on the Coventry Women's Festival, most of which is shot at night and indoors. It's a disaster and I'm last on before lunch and we're already over time, so there is much whispering and fidgeting. Afterwards, the moderator apologizes for the weather and the lack of blinds in the auditorium. Over lunch – yet more sausage, but at least Carol thinks she's died and gone to heaven – I am congratulated for bringing the multicultural nature of Coventry to life through the film, a comment made more pertinent by the fact that amongst the assorted throng of VIPs from Poppleburg's many partner cities in Europe, the folks from Coventry City Council (Ram Lakha (Mayor) and Surindar Nagra (Corporate Policy Co-ordinator), together with Carol and Sujata) are the only participants who are not white. I wonder who else even notices this?

Sunday

Sightseeing. Our threesome have a wonderful time wandering around, talking and eating. I really enjoy spending time with these two young women on more or less equal terms for a change and tell them so. Despite our best efforts, it's sometimes hard for staff and students to break out of the academic hierarchy in which we are placed (and of course, in which we place ourselves!), but our shared 'otherness' in this city, including a complete lack of German language skills, has a curious leveling and bonding effect, which we all tacitly acknowledge, in our different ways.

Monday

Our visit has been moving inexorably towards precisely this day which is the student symposium. We arrive at the seminar room, me clucking around 'my' two like an anxious parent. We have already rehearsed their presentations on my laptop and all looks fine. However, as they are both presenting film-based material on DVD, there is a nagging concern that the technology won't make the short hop across the channel. I decide to lug my laptop to the venue, 'just in case'. At the 11th hour, we do have to use it but we just can't make it talk to the overhead projector. In the end, though, Carol's film works fine with me riding shotgun on the sound mixer, and Sujata has her work up on her website, so a helpful techie makes a successful live internet link, he, Sujata and I having a ridiculous conversation in ersatz English – Basil and Mañuel would have been proud. The hot and stuffy day wears on and exhaustion creeps in: the chair has not discharged her primary responsibility very well

and by the time we are back from lunch, we are already 60 minutes behind schedule and Carol and Sujata are on last. The chair, my new Poppleburg colleague Susanne, is a right-on, charming, politically savvy woman who absolutely 'does' gender but doesn't quite appreciate the nuances of other aspects of equality and diversity. So, she doesn't grasp the import of seating the two black students together at the very end of the table – the other students are more dispersed – of putting them on last in the programme, giving them no planned time to test the technical set-up and mis-pronouncing their names. No one likes going last but if you already feel like an outsider and people are shuffling their papers around and looking at their watches, and you're worried about the AV and this is the first time you've presented to an international audience, how much worse is that? However, they both do a sterling job and receive enthusiastic applause which has them, one after the other, beaming away happily. I bump into them later in the town square, Carol enjoying one last sausage and Sujata munching stir fried noodles. We sit on a bench for a while talking and listening to German karaoke, reflecting on the rhetoric and the reality of cross-cultural communication.

Tuesday

Back to Blighty. Passport control rigmarole again at the German end. Sujata asks, quite reasonably, why the officials should make a fuss when they are leaving the country and none of us have an answer, other than, 'because they can'. We have a little time before take off and we split up, Carol in search of one last perfect morsel and Sujata to buy chocolates for her housemates. We say our goodbyes at the coffee shop in Birmingham airport and agree that the visit was a worthwhile experience. For me, I have learnt not to make assumptions about prior knowledge, having caught myself prefacing remarks with, '...of course, you know that...', to be met with blank stares. And I loved spending some downtime with both of them: I vow that I will try and build this into our programme for next year, maybe not Paris, but at least a picnic in the park. For Sujata and Carol, they were forced to be more outgoing than comes naturally, to be more assertive in discussing their own work and to develop more self-confidence. All in all, the women done good.

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The Contemporary Documentary Archive at Salford

The past twenty years have seen some radical changes in documentary. The introduction of new lightweight DV cameras, new digital and satellite channels and the rise of reality television are only some of the factors that have changed both the production and reception contexts of the genre.

Since 1997 the Contemporary Documentary Archive (CDA), at the School of Media, Music and Performance at the University of Salford has been building up a large collection of these documentaries which focus mostly on law and order and surveillance themes.

With over 3500 hours of broadcast material along with many associated journal and newspaper clippings, the CDA is now in a position to open its collection to other media and television researchers. We can offer viewing facilities here at Salford and provide you with photocopies of requested journal and newspaper articles. Should anyone be interested in receiving a copy of the CDA's holdings please contact Ian Calloway at: I.Calloway@salford.ac.uk.

Gareth Palmer
Ian Calloway

ESRC launches new website for social sciences

The Economic and Social Research Council has launched *ESRC Society Today*, a free website offering academics, librarians and researchers unrivalled access to high quality social and economic research – including full-texts and original datasets, key Facts & Figures and accessible plain-English summaries.

A powerful search function can be tailored to bring back the best results for each user's particular interests. Users can also register for regular news bulletins and email alerts to notify them when new material of interest has been added to the site.

Fellows can log onto *ESRC Society Today* by visiting www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk
<<http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk>>

Closing Credits

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