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- 1 In September 2015, the SERCIA (Société d'Etudes et de Recherche sur le Cinéma Anglophone, est. 1993), a society dedicated to the study of English-speaking cinema, held its annual conference at the Université d'Artois. The conference was organized by Julie Assouly, Associate Professor of American Studies at Artois University in Arras, and Marianne Kac-Vergne, Associate Professor of American Studies at Jules Verne University, Amiens.
- 2 The conference focused on "Masculine/Feminine: Gender in English-Language Cinema and Television" and featured a rich spectrum of approaches to gender issues onscreen, ranging from the silent era to the 21st century. Over the course of the 3-day conference, two keynote speakers, Yvonne Tasker and Jacqueline Nacache, and 87 speakers divided into 24 panels of 3-4 speakers explored different aspects of gender. Panels on masculinity in crisis, the empowerment of black women, the reinvention of classic cinema and evolutions of film and television genres, female filmmakers and American actresses, physical challenges, audience reception and star studies tended to question norms and roles established to define masculinity and femininity through a long history of male domination on screen and behind the camera. Speakers examined counter models in order to question the visibility given to stigmatized groups such as ageing actors and actresses, LGBTQs and racial minorities, seeking to generate new narrative dynamics and multiply processes of identification for larger and more diverse audiences.

- 3 Gender identity within a specific genre was the focus of a panel on superheroes and superheroines. Adriana Kiczkowski (Distancia State University, Spain) analyzed how the Canadian series, *Orphan Black* (Space, 2013-present), calls into question the very notion of identity (as opposed to property), as well as the idea of difference. Sophie Bonadè (Evry University, France) spoke of the almost total absence of maternal figures for superheroes and villains alike, and Charles Joseph (François-Rabelais University, Tours, France) explored the diminished and diminishing roles of superheroines on film and television, as well as a tendency towards troubled female roles (Catwoman, Liz Sherman, Black Widow). Valerio Coladonato (Rome Sapienza University, Italy) rounded out the panel with his discussion of the receptive pleasures of watching gendered superhero blockbusters like the *Ironman* franchise, noting that such films allow the spectator to participate in the illusion of mastering chaos and of regaining control.
- 4 Different reflections on the superhero(in)e genre introduced keynote speaker Yvonne Tasker's analysis of women's capability to embrace superhero codes generally associated with masculinity. Tasker, Professor of Film and Television Studies at the University of East Anglia, UK and a leading researcher in film and television, examined the possibilities of fiction (comics, cinema, television) for putting women in the center of the frame, noting the role(s) played by women in the current trend of superhero action films and their focus on transition, transformation and becoming powerful. Tasker pointed out how this sense of possibility frames feminist questioning of the superhero genre and noted the continuing cultural ambivalence surrounding female superheroes—an ambivalence which may be related in part to past poor box-office results, as well as a constant insistence on the sexiness of the female characters to satisfy the heterosexual male gaze. While recognizing that women remain at the periphery of the frame in terms of cinema and television, Tasker pointed to gaming culture as a space where, ironically, female characters may provide more flexibility, as the framework of the game allows men to embody female characters.
- 5 One panel focusing on the cult of Hollywood actresses, such as Mary Pickford (Marion Polirsztok, Paris 8 University), Jean Harlow (Mélanie Boissonneau, Paris 3 University) and Ida Lupino (Yola Le Caïne, Paris 3 University), introduced second keynote speaker Jacqueline Nacache. In her analysis of Doris Day's shifting onscreen presence, the eminent author and Professor of Cinema Studies at Paris 7 University traced how the actress's virginal, squeaky-clean screen image intensified over time before essentially becoming a parody of itself. Nacache also drew parallels between changing audience reception of Day in the 1940s, 50s, and 60s and the increasing disconnect between the image of America peddled on large and small screens and the reality of contemporary culture.
- 6 The instability of shifting cultural norms was also at the heart of two panels focusing on "masculinity in crisis." In the first, Ray Arsenault (University of South Florida, United States) pointed out the clear (and comic) ties between sexual and political aggression in *Doctor Strangelove* (Stanley Kubrick, 1964), while Stephen Whitfield (Brandeis University, United States) outlined the pitfalls of masculine performativity in American filmmaker David Mamet's film universe, where banter passes for conversation and where not "getting taken" rules supreme. In his examination of "homo oeconomicus" in *American Psycho* (Mary Harron, 2000) and *Nightcrawler* (Dan Gilroy, 2014), Tom Harman (Cardiff University, Wales) traced how capitalist models and human

relationships interrelate, creating specifically masculine monsters and inviting the spectator to view the world through their eyes.

- 7 In the second panel, Elizabeth Mullen (University of Western Brittany, France) related masculine malaise and flagging hegemony in 1970s America and the fear of losing control, taking examples from *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (Milos Forman, 1976) and *Day of the Locust* (John Schlesinger, 1975). Cristelle Maury (Jean Jaurès University, Toulouse, France) examined similar themes in *Body Heat* (Lawrence Kasdan, 1981). Turning to more recent works, Marianne Kac-Vergne (Jules Verne University, Amiens, France) discussed how the figure of the black Other challenges modern notions of hegemonic masculinity in *Predator 2* (Stephen Hopkins, 1990) and *Demolition Man* (Marco Brambilla, 1993), while the free flow of gender identity and sexuality questioning normative structures of categorization and the establishment of new patterns of masculinity is at the center of (Paris 7 University) Christophe Beney's analysis of the works of the Wachowskis (*Sense8*, Netflix, 2015; *The Matrix Trilogy*, 1999-2003, *Cloud Atlas*, 2012). Both panels underscored the instability surrounding representations of masculinity on screen.
- 8 A panel on women behind the camera highlighted the sheer range of approaches to questions of gender in films made by women. Penny Starfield (Caen University, France) explored the role of the mother in Carine Adler's *Under the Skin* (2013) and in Clare Kilner's *Janice Beard 45 WPM* (1999), while Nicole Cloarec (Rennes University, France) analyzed how in Merilee Bennett's films, editing foregrounds rupture and discontinuity, decentering the first-person narrative and creating "sorts of radioactive fossils," objects which, according to Laura U. Marks in *The Skin of the Film*, may arouse other memories by setting off chains of associations; Lizzie Borden's 1983 *Born in Flames* served as a springboard for Céline Murillo's (Paris 13 University) fascinating examination of feminist experimental film. Justin Wadlow (Jules Verne University, Amiens) wrapped up the panel with a study of the extreme works of Lydia Lunch.
- 9 Female empowerment was also at the heart of two panels on television series. Taline Karamanoukian (Nanterre University, Paris, France) studied the exhibition and sexualization as well as intimacy and the construction of gender identity of "babes behind bars", targeting both heterosexual and gay audiences in two television series, British drama *Bad Girls* (ITV, 1999-2006) and American comedy-drama *Orange is the New Black* (Netflix, 2013-present). She also discussed the exploration of contemporary issues concerning LGBTs, feminists and racial minorities through the analysis of a large panel of diverse female and transgender characters. Anne Sweet (Paris 3 University) explored the impotent male figure in Girl Power-supernatural TV series from the 1990s-2000s: *Xena: Warrior Princess*, (Syndication, 1995-2001), *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (The WB, 1997-2001; UPN, 2001-2003) and *Charmed* (The WB, 1998-2006). All three shows display many male characters caught up in masculinity crisis, while dominant, powerful female characters reconfigure gender codes and reaffirm the success of girl power model. Barbara Dupont (IHECS, Brussels, Belgium) questioned the potentially progressive evolution of female role models on screen with the overrepresentation of powerful women in a male-dominated space in the legal and political drama television *The Good Wife* (CBS, 2009-present), in which women characters simultaneously appropriate empowering masculine codes while displaying normative feminine qualities. This notion is also observed in the panel on the questioning of models.

- 10 Aurore Renaut (Lorraine University, Nancy, France) analyzed the treatment of female characters in the gangster genre in the American period crime TV show *Boardwalk Empire* (HBO, 2010-2014) and the complexity involved in offering non-caricatured visibility and legitimacy to women's roles during a historical period well known for its strong male leading figures. Matthieu de Wasseige (IHECS, Brussels) discussed the slightly exaggerated yet mainly positive portrayal of male appropriation of female gender roles through the character of Richard Castle played by actor Nathan Fillion in the American crime drama *Castle* (ABC, 2009-present), as an answer to contemporary questionings of the concept of masculinity crisis. Anaïs Le Fèvre-Berthelot (Nanterre University, Paris) studied the use of voice-over techniques in television series leading to the subversion of narrative rules. She also examined how introducing offscreen female voices could provide narrative space for character intimacy and transform masculine voices.
- 11 The audience's invitation inside character intimacy was also discussed in Grégoire Halbout's contribution to the panel devoted to LGBTQ film and television studies. Halbout (Francois-Rabelais University, Tours, France) examined the representation and visibility of gay intimacy in several television shows and films distributed by pay television network HBO (*Looking*, 2014-2015; *The Normal Heart*, 2014; *Behind the Candelabra*, 2013). Anne Crémieux (Nanterre University) questioned male filmmakers' ability to film and characterize lesbianism, and what legitimacy they may (or may not) have to do so; she also focused on the fragmentation of women's bodies through the camera's gaze and on changing target audiences, from 50s and 60s exploitation movies to porn and contemporary cinema. Another panel on the debunking of gender norms examined LGBTQ concerns regarding the need to subvert mainstream societal norms and gender roles. Charles-Antoine Courcoux (Lausanne University, Switzerland) discussed the appropriation of masculine codes and the empowering performance of masculinity through the figure of the female boxer (*Million Dollar Baby*, Clint Eastwood, 2004; *Girlfight!*, Karyn Kusama, 2000). Fatima Chinita (Lisbon Higher Polytechnic Drama and Film School, Portugal) focused on how specific aspects of transgenderism are examined through the character of Hedwig from 2001 musical comedy-drama *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, performed by John Cameron Mitchell. She studied the creation of the transgender persona and the troubled nature of self-determination as neither man nor woman, or both, regarding the impact of biology and social gender codes. Jean-Baptiste Chantoiseau (Paris 3 University) proposed a study of American independent filmmaker Jim Jarmusch's male characters as figures of compromised masculinity, leading to the destruction of the myth of male power.
- 12 Among different representations of the body which contest the exclusive character of social and biological norms in the panel on physical challenges, Anne-Cécile Mouget (Caen University, France) stressed the lack of models of identification and the misrepresentation of the figure of the handicapped man in mainstream movie culture. She studied several examples of gender-bending relationships in cinema through the physical and emotional dependence of disabled men on the empowered woman figure.
- 13 Kevin Dwyer (Artois University) reflected on the status of the abject obese body, which can either be exploited as a degrading model to mock or as a counter model questioning the standardization of bodies in movies. He also commented on the judgmental look from audiences and the media on actors' and actresses' changing bodies. This notion was the center of Josephine Dolan's (University of the West of

England, Bristol, United Kingdom) focus on ageing female stars, audiences' pathological gaze upon women's changing bodies and the obligation for actresses to "age successfully" in order to remain visible. On the contrary, the positive reception of the ageing male Hollywood star triggers new career opportunities for actors. Delphine Letort (Maine University, France) commented on American actor Jack Nicholson's ability to use his ageing body in order to create new personas depending on the movie genres he plays in, such as the comedy genre, leading to an exploration of the concept of the « bankable » ageing male actor.

- 14 The varied angles of gender analysis in both television and cinema revealed the rising involvement of academic research within popular culture and visual studies. It also reaffirmed the necessity of understanding and discussing gender as performance both on screen(s) and off: such reflection will shine a light on more diverse models of identification.

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