

Foreword

Wendy Everett

I am honoured to have been invited to launch this double issue of *Film Journal*, containing articles whose roots, for the most part, lie in the 16th SERCIA conference held in Bath, UK, in September 2011. That conference, *Cinema and the Crossing of Frontiers / Le Cinéma et le passage des frontières*, was a celebration of cinema's perpetual desire to question, provoke, and shock; to transgress limitations of any kind, and to break down all perceived boundaries. Those of us fortunate enough to have been there experienced an intoxicating atmosphere of originality and passion as, thanks to some 72 papers, in addition to a stimulating talk by the British film director Ken Loach, and to discussions which continued well into the night, we explored the countless and often unexpected ways in which cinema is engaged in the crossing of frontiers.

What was fascinating was to discover just how wide-reaching this topic could be. For example, various papers considered cinema's struggles to overcome its technological and technical limits, not only historically (silent film to sound; black-and-white images to colour, and so on) but also in its ongoing experimentation with new technologies that are completely altering its relationship with the "real". Others considered ways in which cinema rejects barriers between itself and other art forms such as painting, drawing, photography, sculpture, dance, literature, poetry, theatre, and music, and explored the heady cross-fertilisation which results. Still more papers showed film's ability to cross boundaries between the spatial and the temporal, the geographical and the historical, between truth and fiction, between object and subject, between spectator and screen. One particularly dynamic strand proved to be the destruction of generic boundaries, the way in which it can be so difficult to label a film, to place it firmly in a category in which it simply refuses to stay. Another key area was the way in which film narratives defy social and political taboos, challenge moral and philosophical norms, and encourage us, the spectators, to view film and the world in a new way. This was, in part, the topic of Ken Loach's talk; the way that films of his which had formerly been banned (some of them still are), were exposing and engaging with uncomfortable subjects that those in authority prefer to keep hidden, but to which cinema offers a privileged and influential access.

It is impossible to encapsulate in this restricted space all the topics that were dealt with in the conference, but I hope to have given you a taste of its remarkable dynamism. It is now time to let the papers, contained in this issue of *Film Journal*, speak for themselves. In the decade that separates their articulation from their publication, they have been on their own spectacular journey, and in so doing

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have had to confront any number of frontiers. It is, of course, in the nature of journey that plans are destroyed, maps lost, new hurdles encountered; all the more reason to celebrate their safe arrival, and to wish you, the readers, every joy with the journeys on which they will now lead you, and the various frontiers that you too will cross as you reach through them to new discoveries and ideas. Bon voyage!

My gratitude to all the authors for their patience, and - in particular - to Isabelle Schmitt and Julia Echeverría for their hard work in bringing this long journey to its destination.