

**Impact case study (REF3b)**

<p><b>Institution:</b> King's College London</p>
<p><b>Unit of Assessment:</b> UoA35b</p>
<p><b>Title of case study:</b> FRENCH CONNECTIONS: DEVELOPING RESEARCH-INFORMED AUDIENCES FOR FRENCH CINEMA</p>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>This case study is devoted to the impact of Ginette Vincendeau's research, which has influenced cultural life through the creation of more critically-informed audiences for French cinema. It focuses on (i) how her research insights have reached a non-academic, cine-literate large audience through screening introductions and lectures (in particular at BFI Southbank) and through the media (<i>Sight &amp; Sound</i>, BBC Radio, and DVD commentaries) and (ii) how this research has had formative effects on secondary education in the UK (A-level French students) and on other audiences through different forms of cultural production (theatre).</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Vincendeau's research expertise on French cinema has long attracted the attention of a wide public beyond the academy, due to her extensive knowledge of French culture and unique focus on <i>popular</i> French film, combining an interest in film genre, stardom, and gender from a feminist perspective. Deriving from this wider field, Vincendeau's research since she joined King's as Professor in Film Studies in 2006 has given rise to two major and multi-faceted projects: Revising the history of the French New Wave and Popular French cinema: stars, genres, directors.</p> <p><i>Revising the history of the French New Wave</i>  On the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the New Wave in 2009, Vincendeau published an important collection on the movement (3.1) to which she contributed a seminal long essay. She also commissioned, and wrote in, a dossier of articles on the topic for the leading US academic publication, <i>Cinema Journal</i>. These pieces significantly re-appraised and challenged existing historiography, re-situating the New Wave within the continuum of mainstream French cinema as opposed to the dominant view that sees it as a discrete movement in opposition to it. This revisionist approach also underpinned a further substantial article on the New Wave film <i>La Pointe courte</i> (3.2) which appears in the Criterion collection box-set on Agnès Varda.</p> <p><i>Popular French cinema: stars, genres, directors</i>  Building on her reputation for pioneering work on French film stardom (on which she wrote the first academic book in 2000), Vincendeau published the first academic monograph on Brigitte Bardot (3.3). This book, which has been shortlisted for the SCMS Kovacs book award, for the first time explores the entire career of the star and re-appraises her celebrity – arguing that Bardot is the 'first French mass media star'.</p> <p>Her earlier interest in French film noir led to further research on <i>La Haine</i> (3.4), a 1995 film on which she published a book in 2005, now in its third reprint. Her research moved in new directions; as she witnessed first-hand the Parisian suburban unrest which took place as the book appeared she was able to combine her personal and academic knowledge of the French suburbs to offer new insights (3.4). This research has continued to have a strong impact in the school classroom, the theatre, and on DVD (see section 5).</p> <p>Finally, building on her seminal work on the 1930s, Vincendeau continued to explore the history of classical French cinema by re-examining the work of key French directors (Marcel Carné, Jean Grémillon, Marcel Pagnol, and Jean Renoir), establishing in particular how these exceptional figures were also part of the continuum of popular genres, using stars and addressing popular audiences. The most sustained pieces of research (i) challenged views of Pagnol's work during the war as 'collaborationist' (3.5) and (ii) reappraised Renoir. In the co-edited, authoritative large volume <i>A Companion to Jean Renoir</i> (3.6), Vincendeau's piece on <i>French Cancan</i> precisely rehabilitates Renoir's work in the popular genre of the musical, against prevailing views of that film, while specifically looking at its representation of women.</p>

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

3.1 Ginette Vincendeau and Peter Graham, eds., *The French New Wave: Critical Landmarks* (London: BFI, 2009) ISBN 9781844572823. Edited collection written for academic press, peer reviewed.

3.2 Ginette Vincendeau, 'How Agnès Varda invented the New Wave', in *4 by Agnès Varda* (commissioned essay written for the Criterion Collection DVD box-set, 2007).

3.3 Ginette Vincendeau, *Brigitte Bardot* (London: BFI/Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) ISBN 9781844574926. Monograph commissioned for academic press, peer reviewed.

3.4 Ginette Vincendeau, 'La Haine and after: Arts, Politics, and the Banlieue' (commissioned essay written for the Criterion Collection DVD box-set, April 2007).

<http://www.criterion.com/current/posts/642-la-haine-and-after-arts-politics-and-the-banlieue>  
 [last accessed 17 October 2013].

3.5 Ginette Vincendeau, 'Marcel Pagnol, Vichy and Classical French Cinema', *Studies in French Cinema*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2009, pp. 5-23. ISSN 1471-5880. Article in peer reviewed journal.

3.6 Ginette Vincendeau and Alastair Phillips, eds., *A Companion to Jean Renoir* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013) ISBN 9781444338539. Edited collection commissioned by academic press, peer reviewed.

### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Vincendeau has long been a well-known voice on French film in the UK, with her research on *La Haine* and her work on stardom attracting great interest among the cinema-going public. In the current cycle, the work on the New Wave has expanded the already wide scope of her research. As a result of this increasing breadth of expertise and because of her continuing passion for and advocacy of both popular and art house French cinema, Vincendeau has become in the current impact period increasingly influential in informing the critical and cultural contexts through which the full range of French cinema in the UK is perceived. The impact of Vincendeau's research on French cinema described here has taken three main channels: (i) research on stardom and on the New Wave has underpinned work at the BFI, informing programming choices and setting the critical context for BFI audiences; (ii) this body of research has also underpinned extensive and energetic work in journalism and the media (including DVD filmed introductions and printed essays); and (iii) research related to *La Haine* has had influence on secondary education in the UK and also on cultural life through its impact on a theatrical production. As such the full range of Vincendeau's recent research has informed the appreciation of French film in the UK and beyond.

#### Work with BFI Southbank

As a result of the key channels of her research on popular French cinema, French stardom, and the New Wave evidenced in section 3, Vincendeau collaborated with BFI programming on the retrospective of the films of: Juliette Binoche (2008, attendance 3,494), Marcel Carné and Jacques Prévert (2009, attendance 2,709), Agnès Varda (2009, attendance 2,874), François Truffaut (2011, attendance 5,960), Jean Gabin (2012, attendance 3,937), and Jean Grémillon (2013, attendance 1,712). Through Ciné-Lumière, she collaborated on the 2009 BFI New Wave celebration as a result of her new work on this era of French cinema (3.1). These collaborations involved discussing programming (her research into stardom was decisive in particular screening choices, such as *Lady Killer* starring Jean Gabin), writing programme documentation given to the audience and providing a variety of talks (from extended introductions to launch series, to introductions and Q&A sessions and public lectures, one of which, on Gabin, was part of the King's@BFI Key Scholars series). Vincendeau's research across all outputs listed in section 3 was a key contributor to every aspect of the impact of these seasons, from their composition to the emphasis placed on new aspects of the works (through accompanying materials) (5.2 and 5.8). The Education Curator of Public Programmes at BFI Southbank notes that Vincendeau's appearances at BFI Southbank 'have been a crucial element in our efforts to contextualise and interpret our film programme for audiences, with a specific aim of encouraging new audiences, giving them the tools with which to engage with our seasons' (5.8). In this respect she has become since her arrival at King's the first 'port of call' for the BFI concerning aspects of French cinema related particularly to her research

specialisms outlined above. To illustrate the popular reach of such events and Vincendeau's central role in the aforementioned impact, the restaurant chain Chez Gerard used the occasion of the Gabin retrospective to run a competition about the actor in 2011, the prize for which was Vincendeau's 2000 book on stars and stardom in France (5.1).

In addition, Vincendeau's research interests in the New Wave in particular (3.1 and 3.2) have inspired three public courses taught at the BFI by Vincendeau and King's Film Studies colleagues: 'Revisiting the French New Wave' (six week course; Easter 2009); 'Varda and Her Sisters' (four week course; Summer 2010); 'Truffaut in Focus' (four week course; Spring 2011). All drew in a diverse cohort of attendees from A-level students to older film enthusiasts. Course attendees also went to the associated film seasons, and all three courses have been intricately entwined with programming choices at the BFI (5.8). A further course, on Louis Malle, is under discussion for Spring 2014.

The above dates are the key moments when impact occurred, although given that the nature of the impact is the creation of a critical audience, such impact is a slow-burning formative process that only begins on the date of the first viewing encounter. For example, one attendee of Vincendeau's talk on Gabin wrote to her to tell her how the event had stimulated his curiosity and motivated him to seek out her other publications (5.2). In general, interventions with BFI education and BFI programming have uniquely informed the public perception and reception of French film, 'drawing on [Vincendeau's] insight and expertise to benefit our audiences, helping to increase their appreciation and understanding of various elements of film culture and history' (Education Curator of Public Programmes, BFI; 5.8).

### **Reaching a cine-literate mainstream audience via *Sight & Sound*, talks, radio, DVD supplements, and beyond**

Since 1992 Vincendeau has been a key contributor to *Sight & Sound*, with an average monthly worldwide circulation of 20,000 since 2005. Since January 2008 she has written twenty-seven film reviews and short pieces and eight feature articles on French cinema. The Editor of *Sight & Sound* notes that Vincendeau has been 'central to cultivating [the journal] readership's in-depth understanding of French cinema' (5.8). This brings her research on stardom and genre filmmaking, as well as her interest in gender, to bear on contemporary French cinema. As a result, she took part in 2012 in the influential 'Top Ten' poll of films and directors conducted by the journal every ten years. Vincendeau's research has also reached cine-enthusiasts through her prominent role in contextualising DVD releases. Over the impact period, she has contributed seventeen introductions, feature-length commentaries and written essays as supplements to DVD/Blu-ray editions of French films for British, US and French companies (including the prestigious Criterion and StudioCanal) (5.5); several sold over 8,000 copies worldwide (and one over 10,000). Her research on films such as *La Haine*, on star Jean Gabin (*La Grande illusion*), as well as the New Wave (*La Pointe courte*) has therefore been made readily available to and informs audiences who view these releases (5.6).

Vincendeau has during the impact period continued to be a well-known voice on BBC radio. A BBC radio presenter and producer notes how her 'contributions to BBC radio cultural programmes have greatly enriched [...] coverage of European cinema. She has tailored her detailed knowledge gracefully to the level of the general listener on *Front Row*, to the film enthusiast for *The Film Programme* (both on Radio 4) and to the more intellectual approach of *Nightwaves* on Radio 3 [...] She brings humanity alongside scholarship to engage an audience that might be intimidated by the formality of film studies' (5.8). Average figures for *Nightwaves* are 175,000 listeners per episode and *The Film Programme* has a regular audience of 1.3 million. She has given talks in a wide range of non-academic venues, including cinemas in London and the regions (in addition to the BFI), the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the Budleigh Salterton literary festival. All of these appearances in different media have contributed to the impact of her research on a mainstream audience, as can be seen from email evidence of members of the general public contacting Vincendeau to discuss how her work has inspired them. For instance, one man describes how viewing a DVD commentary by Vincendeau led him to read more of her 'outstanding' research; another suggests her 2012 introduction to *La Grande illusion* (drawing out from 3.6) furthered his understanding of the film and has inspired him to seek out more Francophone films mentioned in her text (5.7). Vincendeau's work is also cited by amateur reviewers on the internet, one of whom describes her published research on French stardom and Brigitte Bardot (3.3) as 'really informative

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and enjoyable,' continuing, 'Ginette Vincendeau is a really good writer on French film. She has the understanding on the culture surrounding the cinema [...] One can usually find her in the extra bonus stuff on Melville DVD's. Very impressive!' (5.7).

**La Haine: Theatre and Education**

Vincendeau's research interest in Kassovitz's 1995 film *La Haine* (3.4) has had a strong influence on a wide public through various channels. Her research is the inspiration behind Dutch theatre director Teunkie van der Sluijs, who described her work as 'very insightful and indeed very helpful [...] in the process of adapting the film for the stage' (5.8). Van der Sluijs is a London-based Dutch theatre director, who runs an Anglo-British company Studio Dubbelagent. In 2008, he started a trilogy of new works on violence and exclusion which re-imagines classic European texts. *Hate* is the final part of the trilogy. The production opened at the Rozentheater, Amsterdam's primary new writing theatre, on 17 January 2012, before touring the Netherlands.

In the UK, Vincendeau's research into *La Haine* is routinely used to teach the film in schools, where her book on the film is an A-level set text for some exam boards (5.3). She has received numerous invitations to speak at schools on the basis of her expertise on the film, further allowing her continuing research expertise in this area (3.4) to enthuse and inspire schoolchildren to engage with film through the national curriculum. For example, a French teacher at King's School, Worcester reports that '[the pupils] were inspired by [Professor Vincendeau's] talk' and the Head of French at Abingdon School, Oxfordshire, states that 'the boys' motivation and enthusiasm have increased as a result of Professor Vincendeau's teaching' (5.8).

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

[All website references below last accessed 17 October 2013]

5.1 Publicity from the restaurant chain *Chez Gerard*

5.2 Email evidence of impact of Vincendeau's research on the general public attending BFI events

5.3 A-level exam board featuring Vincendeau's book on *La Haine* as set resource:  
<http://www.zigzageducation.co.uk/synopses/4423-Getting-to-know-La-Haine.asp>

5.4 Email evidence of invitations to school visits

5.5 Online examples of DVD contributions (accompanying material)

<http://www.criterion.com/current/posts/545-the-lovers-succes-de-scandale>

<http://www.criterion.com/current/posts/1906-zazie-dans-le-metro-girl-trouble>

<http://www.criterion.com/current/posts/1907-black-moon-louis-in-wonderland>

5.6 Email evidence detailing representative sales figures to date for DVDs/Blu-rays featuring Vincendeau's analysis and BBC radio audience figures

5.7 Email/internet evidence of public reaction to Vincendeau's research consumed via DVD extras and other media

5.8 Corroborating statements:

- Education Curator of Public Programmes, BFI Southbank (Impact of Vincendeau's research on BFI Southbank activities and audiences)
- Producer, Radio 4, The Film Programme (Impact of Vincendeau's research on audiences of BBC radio cultural programmes)
- Head of French, Abingdon School (Impact of Vincendeau's research on A-level students)
- Theatre Director, Studio Dubbelagent (Impact of Vincendeau's research on theatrical production)
- Editor, *Sight & Sound* (Impact of Vincendeau's research on the journal and its audience).