

Institution: Durham University
Unit of Assessment: 28 (Languages and Linguistics)
Title of case study: CS4 Promoting public understanding of international film in North East England and Ibero-America
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Research on world cinema at Durham University has led to collaboration with filmmakers, cinemas and film festivals regionally and internationally. Durham academics have assisted regional organisations to bring major figures of international independent cinema to North East England, in order to showcase work which would not normally achieve wide exposure, and to enhance public understanding of foreign film, culture and language. In doing so, they have helped those organisations to meet their own institutional objectives. Internationally, Durham research has led to jury membership at a film festival whose mission is to raise the profile of independent filmmaking in Ibero-America, and to provide financial support to encourage further film production. This participation has also led to changes in the festival's practice, in the form of increased involvement of jury members with an academic background.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Research by staff in Durham's School of Modern Languages and Cultures on international film is undertaken in the research group on Visual Culture and Performance. The group's members bring their expertise in a range of languages, cultures and methodologies to bear on an agreed set of principle research issues, most notably that of gender. The research that underpins the activities presented here is attentive to gender's political, aesthetic and historical dimensions within visual culture.</p> <p>Collaborations by Marie-Claire Barnet and Santiago Fouz Hernández with contemporary international filmmakers result from their research into European cinema and visual culture. Fouz Hernández (in post at Durham since 1999) has worked on Ventura Pons's cinema of as part of his investigation into contemporary Spanish cinema, and in particular, representations of masculinity and the male body. He has shown how Pons' films of the late 1970s and early 1980s break contemporary taboos in their depiction of non-normative masculinities, and how Pons' cinema goes beyond the gaze to engage other senses of the spectator [output 4]. He has demonstrated how these concerns are related more broadly to the period of the Spanish transition to democracy (1975-1982), and to contemporary Catalan culture and national identity [outputs 3 and 5]. Barnet (in post at Durham since 1997) researches contemporary French literary and visual culture, focusing on female writers and filmmakers. She has investigated Agnès Varda's use of cinematic and photographic space, and the continuities between her films and her increasing use of mixed-media forms [outputs 1 and 2]. In October 2006, Barnet and Shirley Jordan (Queen Mary, University of London) interviewed Varda together [output 1]. Barnet's questions emphasised issues of space, gender and autobiography. They led Varda to elucidate her conceptual concerns, including the interplay between material and psychic spaces, and the resonance of certain geographic locations. In particular, Varda set out the importance that beaches hold for her as spaces of mourning, memory and indeterminacy. Barnet pursues these themes in her reading of Varda's 2006 exhibition, <i>L'Île et Elle</i> [output 2]. She shows how Varda's experimental artistic practice extends beyond celluloid and the conventional museum space, into site-specific installations of both private and public spaces.</p> <p>Andrea Noble's work as a jury member at the 2012 Guadalajara International Film Festival arose out of her research on Latin American visual culture, and in particular her 2005 book, <i>Mexican National Cinema</i> [output 6]. Noble has been in post at Durham since 1998. Her book takes a cultural historical and thematic approach to Mexican cinema, from its inception in 1896 through to more recent productions. It examines clusters of films produced at different moments in the history of Mexican cinema, demonstrating how they register changes and patterns in Mexican and Latin American cultural history and identity. In doing so, her book maps the connection between cinema and modernity, where cinema is understood as a key emblem and crucible of modernity and the processes of modernisation. For example, it analyses the relationship between the 1910 Mexican Revolution as a historical event, and film as a receptacle for and catalyst of memory of the Revolution. Crucially, it draws out the role played by film melodrama in articulating changing</p>

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conceptions of masculinity; and it stresses the cinematic representation of the indigenous Other in relationship to the development of patterns in anthropological discourses. Its analysis is underpinned by an understanding of Mexican cultural and cinematic history in relation to Hollywood on the one hand, and developments in Latin American cinema on the other. Methodologically, the book engages with film theory that has emerged largely in the Euro-American academy, while seeking to question and nuance this by bringing to bear insights from Latin American cultural theory and history.

3. References to the research

Key outputs (alphabetised by author)

1. Marie-Claire Barnet and Shirley Jordan, 'Interviews with Agnès Varda and Valérie Mréjen', *L'Esprit créateur* 51 (2011), 184-200.
2. Marie-Claire Barnet, "'Elles-Ils Islands': cartography of lives and deaths by Agnès Varda', *L'Esprit créateur* 51 (2011), 97-111.
3. Santiago Fouz-Hernández and Alfredo Martínez-Expósito (2007), *Live Flesh: The Male Body in Contemporary Spanish Cinema*. London and New York: I. B. Tauris. 288pp.
4. Santiago Fouz-Hernández (2009) 'Caresses: the male body in the films of Ventura Pons', in *Mysterious Skin: Male Bodies in Contemporary Cinema*, ed. by Santiago Fouz-Hernández. London and New York: I. B. Tauris, pp. 143-157.
5. Santiago Fouz-Hernández and Ian Biddle (2012) 'Voicing gender: performativity, nostalgia and the national imaginary in Spanish cinema of the Democratic Era', in *Screening Songs in Hispanic and Lusophone Cinema*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 30-50.
6. Andrea Noble, *Mexican National Cinema*. London: Routledge, 2005.

Evidence of quality

- Outputs 1 and 2 are published in an international, peer-reviewed journal of French studies, and are submitted in REF 2
- Outputs 3, 4 and 5 are published in peer-reviewed edited volumes published by major academic presses. Output 5 is in REF 2
- Output 6 is peer-reviewed and published in a prestigious series on national cinemas by major UK publisher of arts and humanities research. The research and writing was supported by a Leverhulme Research Fellowship, 2001-2002 (award value £17,285)

4. Details of the impact

Through their research on Pons and Varda respectively, Fouz Hernández and Barnet established personal contacts which led to each filmmaker's engagement with, and participation in, events aimed at increasing understanding of their work among the general public. The events were organised in partnership with the Gala Theatre in Durham and the Tyneside Cinema in Newcastle and thereby helped them to fulfil their objectives of contributing to the cultural enrichment of North East England. Pons and Varda are major figures in European art house cinema. Pons is one of the best-known filmmakers in contemporary Spanish and Catalan cinema, having made 24 films in the course of a 30-year career. His films have been credited as establishing a Catalan 'star system'. Varda's contribution to film has been recognised over several decades, including a lifetime achievement award at the Cannes Film Festival (2010).

In 2009, Fouz Hernández invited Pons to give a public lecture at Durham University, and to take part in the UK premiere of his film, *Barcelona (un mapa)* (2007), at the city's Gala Theatre, an institution funded by Durham County Council. The events took place on 25 January 2010, with support from the Catalan cultural organization, the Institut Ramon Llull. Fouz Hernández's research on Pons had come to the filmmaker's attention in 2007, thanks to his co-authored book, *Live Flesh* (2007). Films by Pons had previously been shown at the (now-defunct) Newcastle Film Festival, and Pons was keen to show another film in the North East. Fouz Hernández selected *Barcelona (un mapa)* because it emphasised key aspects of Pons' cinema, and in particular, the issues of male nudity, homosexuality and identity that Fouz Hernández has stressed as central to his work. Pons' public lecture at Durham University (attended by over 100 people) was followed by a

question and answer session chaired by Fouz Hernández, and a sold-out screening of the film at the Gala Theatre. Pons commented that 'the screening and talk at Durham strengthened my links to the UK film circuit, having presented some of my other films at festivals in Manchester, Cambridge and, especially, London, for the last three decades. [...] Events such as this can have a considerable impact on foreign distribution of my films in various formats and, importantly, on the spread of Catalan culture abroad' [source 1]. Although the Gala Theatre generally screens mainstream films, it does aim to 'show films from around the globe, particularly from independent film makers, and to bring their work to wider attention'. The screening of Pons' film contributed to the Gala meeting this objective. The then-Director of the Gala Theatre states that staging the UK premier of Pons' film 'was enormously successful', and gave 'a tremendous boost to our programme and [helped] to establish our venue in the region as a key World Cinema location' [source 2].

The Tyneside Cinema is an independent organisation and registered educational charity located in central Newcastle, screening foreign language and independent films from around the world. According to the cinema's Programme Manager, its aim is to play 'a significant role in the cultural life of the North East', and to do so by bringing 'as many people as possible together in our venue to experience, enjoy and engage with the past, present and future of cinema'. During 2011, Barnet collaborated with the Tyneside Cinema on a festival to mark the fiftieth anniversary of Agnès Varda's most celebrated film, *Cléo de 5 à 7* (1962). Held from 10 to 24 November 2012, the festival included a retrospective of five Varda films; in addition to *Cléo de 5 à 7*, Barnet selected four films to demonstrate the diversity of Varda's cinematic output over the course of five decades. The selection served to emphasise the key thematic concerns that Barnet's research has shown to be central to Varda's work. For example, both *Sans toit ni loi* (1985) and *Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse* (2000) depict the nature and condition of marginality in contemporary society, while *Les Plages d'Agnès* (2008) foregrounds Varda's investigation of space, and its relationship to mourning, memory and identity. Barnet co-authored the press release and the relevant section of the Tyneside programme. The festival included an academic conference on Varda, featuring nine speakers from six universities in the UK and Canada, and open to the general public. The conference examined Varda's artistic production across five decades, and her manipulation of a range of genres and styles, from photography and film to hybrid documentary and installation art. The festival closed with a sold-out evening showing of a restored print of *Cléo de 5 à 7*, with Varda herself present. The screening was followed by a question and answer session with the cinema audience and Varda, chaired by Barnet. The films generated box office takings of £1,433 (gross) for the cinema [source 3].

Varda's attendance at the festival was the director's only public engagement in the UK to mark the anniversary of *Cléo de 5 à 7*, and was secured thanks to the relationship developed between Barnet and Varda since 2006. The Varda festival, and the filmmaker's participation, helped the Tyneside achieve its own objectives as an arts organisation. The Programme Manager highlighted Varda's participation at the festival as essential to its success: 'To get someone like Varda to come and talk about their work is the kind of thing you usually only get in London at the BFI. It was a real coup for us. It was about having someone of that stature coming here'. Varda's presence raised the cinema's profile in the North East, with coverage in regional media (Sky Tyne and Wear and *The Journal*). The Programme Manager concluded that 'the opportunity to bring a filmmaker of the stature of Agnès Varda to the Tyneside was a real gift to the Cinema and its audiences' [source 4].

In 2011, Noble was invited by the Director General of the Guadalajara International Film Festival (FICG) to serve on the panel for 'Best Ibero-American film' in its 2012 edition. The FICG is the most important film festival in Latin America, awarding approximately £240,000 in prize money. 260 films from 45 countries were shown in the 2012 edition, which registered a record of over 100,000 paid admissions. The winner of the 'Best Ibero-American film' category automatically enters the selection stage of the Golden Globes organised by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association [source 5]. Noble's selection by the Director General was based on her track record of expertise in the cultural history of Mexican and Latin American film acknowledged by film historians and professionals in Mexico over the course of the previous years. Her work had come to the Director General's attention during her research visits in 2000 and 2001 to the Filmoteca de la

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Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, the most important film archive in Mexico, which he ran between 1989 and 2008. The Director General states that, 'during these visits, she told me about the objectives and focus of her work; [...] but also several academics and cinephiles from our country and abroad told me about the importance of her work' [source 6]. The importance of Noble's research was also acknowledged by the Mexican cultural attaché in the UK, who had been director of the main government-funded body for promoting and financing national cinema in Mexico, the Instituto Mexicano de Cinematografía. In 2007, the cultural attaché and the Mexican Embassy funded a visit to Durham by the future director of the FICG to take part in a workshop on Mexican science fiction films with Noble.

Noble was the sole academic jury member in the 2012 edition. Her panel was otherwise made up of film industry professionals, including the editor of a leading Spanish-language film magazine; an international film festival organiser; a Mexican film director; and a Mexican film actress [source 7]. According to the Director General, Noble's contribution as a jury member lay in insights based on her historical understanding of key themes and trends in Mexican and Latin American cinema: 'an academic perspective is always important because it is based on a wide historical context that can be shared with other members of the jury who are perhaps focussed on purely technical and contextual questions. This is precisely what happened through Noble's participation, which brought historical antecedents that helped to understand the provenance of certain themes' [source 6]. Recognising Noble's successful participation in the 2012 festival, and the contribution of her historical expertise, the organising committee included a greater number of academics on juries for the 2013 festival (three in total): 'having Noble on the jury has reinforced this position, and in the last edition of the festival, we included a greater quantity of academics' [source 6].

The jury on which Noble served was one of eight panels in the festival. Its remit was to award prizes for new cinematic production from across the Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking world. It considered sixteen pre-selected films from nine countries (Argentina, Bolivia Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador Peru, Spain, Venezuela). The panel awarded prize money totalling \$400,000MXN (£19,000), and trophies in the following categories: Best Screenplay, Best Cinematography, Best Actress, Best Actor, Best First Film, Best Director and Best Ibero-American Feature. Success in the competition represented a significant increase in profile for the winning films, with concomitant benefits in terms of local and international sales and distribution. The award of Best Director and Best Actor to Ecuadorian film *Pescador* came shortly before the film's commercial release in its home market. According to the film's producers, it helped them promote the film and generate public interest there [source 8]. The distributor of *Abrir Puertas y Ventanas* [Back to Stay] states that the award of Best Film 'was a catalyst in terms of sales' as a result of increased media exposure: for example, shortly after the award of the prize, the film secured national distribution in its home country of Argentina [source 9].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. Statement from filmmaker.
2. Statement from former Director of Gala Theatre, Durham.
3. Data from Tyneside Cinema, Newcastle.
4. Statement from Programme Director, Tyneside Cinema, Newcastle.
5. 'Mariachi Gringo, Back To Stay win at busy Guadalajara', festival report in Screen International, <http://www.screendaily.com/festivals/mariachi-gringo-back-to-stay-win-at-busy-guadalajara/5039176.article#>
6. Statement from the director of the FICG.
7. List of jury members on the official website of the 27th Festival Internacional de Cine en Guadalajara, <https://www.ficg.mx/27/index.php/es/programacion/jurados>.
8. Statement from the producer of *Pescador*.
9. Statement from the distributor of *Abrir Puertas y Ventanas*.