

FILM GEOGRAPHY: A NEW SUBFIELD

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Zusammenfassung: Filmgeographie: ein neues Teilgebiet

Anhand des Films *The Day After Tomorrow* versuchen die Autoren zukünftige Betätigungsfelder einer Filmgeographie zu entwickeln und darzustellen. Als erstes Feld werden geopolitische Implikationen aufgezeigt, die durch filmisch kommunizierte Bilder und deren zugehörige Erzählungen zu einer größeren und übergeordneten Vorstellungswelt führen. Das zweite Betätigungsfeld liegt im Bereich kultureller Praktiken, die dem Medium Film eine zentrale Funktion in der Konstruktion sozial-räumlicher Bedeutung zuweist, indem diese definiert, in Frage gestellt und immer wieder neu verhandelt werden. Der dritte Strang filmgeographischer Betätigung liegt in der Betrachtung von der Globalisierung bestimmter Kulturindustrien und deren raumkonstituierenden Kommunikationsströmen, die kulturelle Zuschreibungen angleichen und weltweit konsumerabel machen. Als Abschluss gilt die Aufmerksamkeit der Rolle filmischer Darstellung und Konzeptionalisierung im Hinblick auf die „Krise der Repräsentation“ unter den Aspekten Realismus, Ideologie und Macht.

Summary: With this paper, we use the film *The Day After Tomorrow* to explore four future trajectories of film geography research. The first, geopolitics, examines how film images and narratives constitute shifting eddies within a larger geopolitical imaginary. The second, cultural politics, positions film as an arena in which social-spatial meaning is defined, contested and negotiated. The third, globalization, situates film under the rubric “cultural industry”. As a cultural industry, film is engaged in the “spaces of flows”, in that cultural meaning has been commodified for global consumption. The fourth trajectory of film geography research, science, representation and mimesis, examines the role of film in terms of the “crisis of representation”, realism, ideology and power.

Introduction

The earth is under attack, but this time it is not by terrorists or space aliens. Mother nature’s ultimate revenge is upon her citizens: an abrupt global warming has propelled the earth into the next Ice Age. U.S. politicians simply would not listen to the warnings of climatologists and now they have no one else to blame but themselves. Familiar icons of civilization in the United States are destroyed in grand fashion: a tidal wave washes over the Statue of Liberty and the New York City skyline; tornadoes tear up the Colombia Records building, the Hollywood sign and downtown Los Angeles, Tokyo, and New Delhi are part of the global montage, however, they are prefabricated representations derived from Hollywood backlots or computer visualizations. A climate ward in Northern Scotland gains authenticity through ignoble cultural stereotypes of whiskey – which is drunk by the scientists, and soccer – represented by the British icon Manchester United. Director, Roland Emmerich, has a propensity for tearing down cultural landscapes in summer blockbusters: both *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004) and *Independence Day* (1996) rip apart familiar places, spaces and icons setting the stage for a new social geography. In *Independence Day* the destruction of icons of civilization allow for the rise of mythic male archetypal heroes who save civilization (AITKEN a. LUKINBEAL 1998). In *Independence Day* the

(male) heroes’ tale unfolds against a political correct “other” (space aliens) which reifies the capitalist-patriarchal-Western hegemonic order. In *The Day After Tomorrow* the male hero rushes to save his family against a (m)other that has run amok. Even though both movies center around a “crisis of masculinity”, in the end the capitalist-patriarchal-Western hegemonic order is reinforced. Hollywood cinema creates its own fractal geographies at multiple scales through the obsessive repetition of icons and myths, narratives and images. These fractal geographies reinforce the status quo and hegemonic order through the use of the *mise en abyme* (LUKINBEAL a. AITKEN 1998; AITKEN a. LUKINBEAL 1997, 1998). The *mise en abyme* is like a hall of mirrors where it is impossible to have a stable subject/object relationship. Cultural meaning and ideology are naturalized through the infinite and obsessive repetition of images and narrative: it must be true if we see it everywhere all the time? This fractal geography is described by DIANE ELAM (1994, 27–28) as a “spiral of infinite deferral ... [where] representation can never come to an end, since greater accuracy and detail only allows us to see even more of the same representation.”

The *mise en abyme* is just one terrain that film geographers are seeking to map. Other geographies embedded in *The Day After Tomorrow* include (1) geopolitics, (2) cultural politics, (3) globalization, and (4) science, representation and mimesis. With this article we use

The Day After Tomorrow as a foil to expound upon these four film geography themes. Film geography is a new and growing interdisciplinary research arena that links the spatiality of cinema with the social and cultural geographies of everyday life. In what follows, we first examine the origins of this subfield. We then use *The Day After Tomorrow* as a base for our exploration of four future trajectories of film geography research.

1 A brief history of film geography

In his seminal essay, "Terrae Incognitae: The Place of the Imagination in Geography", J. K. WRIGHT (1947) proposed that geographers should not only be concerned with the traditional "core area" of formal geographical studies (objective studies), but should also investigate "peripheral areas" in their research (subjective studies). These peripheral areas would begin charting the terra incognita of geographical knowledge. To WRIGHT (1947, 10) this terra incognita existed in "books of travel, in magazines and newspapers, in many a page of fiction and poetry, and on many a canvas." The combined study of "core" and "peripheral" areas, according to WRIGHT, could be called "geosophy". Aesthetic geosophy, a further subdivision, would focus on literature and arts.

WRIGHT's call for the study of this terra incognita was re-examined by LOWENTHAL in 1961. He suggested that geography include a person's perception, imagination, and subjective view of reality; sometimes termed the geography of the mind or one's personal geography. This internal or personal geography was elaborated upon by PRINCE (1961) and WATSON (1969). PRINCE echoed WRIGHT's (1947) and LEIGHLY's (1937) statement that good geographic description demands not only respect for truth, but also inspiration and direction by a creative imagination (PRINCE 1961). WATSON's (1969, 10) often cited lines suggested that imagination and personal perception are important because, "not all geography derives from the earth itself; some of it springs from our idea of the earth. This geography within the mind can at times be the effective geography to which men adjust and thus be more important than the supposedly real geography of the earth. Man has the particular aptitude of being able to live by the notion of reality which may be more real than reality itself."

Since then geographers have examined literature (MALLORY a. SIMPSON-HOUSLEY 1987; POCOCK 1981), art (TUAN 1990), and also more common forms of mass media including newspaper (BROOKER-GROSS 1983), music (KONG 1995), travel literature (ZUBE a. KENNEDY 1990), comics (LUKINBEAL a. KENNEDY 1993), adver-

tisement (FLEMING a. ROTH 1991), television (ADAMS 1992), postcards (ZIMMERMANN a. ESCHER 2001) and film (CRESSWELL a. DIXON 2002; CLARKE 1997; AITKEN a. ZONN 1994; WIRTH 1952). Geographers have also stressed multiple perspectives (MEINIG 1979), subjective-individual perspectives (PORTEOUS 1990; MEINIG 1971) and the study of language (BARNES a. DUNCAN 1992; CURRY 1991; TUAN 1978, 1991) as a way of understanding human actions and interactions with the environment. Even geography itself has been discussed as a form of art (PORTEOUS 1986; MEINIG 1982). The study of film by geography is a logical extension of this line of inquiry and thought. Film offers geographers a realm of knowledge which combines multiple perspective, imagination, art, objective and subjective qualities, geographic information and geographical imagination.

While the earliest record of a German geographer engaging film dates back to the 1950s, it was not until recently that a serious commitment to film research occurred. EUGEN WIRTH (1952), the dean of oriental geography in Germany, showed how narrative structures in film relate to specific uses of space and place. In his dissertation¹⁾ cinematic spaces are explained through artificial attributions of space deriving from classic theatre. Some twenty years later the film historian HÖFIG (1973) published a seminal work on the 1950s German genre *Heimatfilm*. While not a geographer, HÖFIG's approach focused on looking at the locations filmed, representations of landscapes, and the economic structure of film production. HÖFIG (1973) underscores that many key works in German film geography were often written by scholars in other disciplines. For instance, HENNECKA (2002) examined the emblematic powers of film scores in the representational process. German geographers' first true engagement with media include examinations of newspapers (BRUNNENGRÄBER 1988) and the perception of the world through media and how this might be implemented into the school curriculum (HAUBRICH 1985). ZIMMERMANN (1998) explored the construction of everyday geography through mass media and saw cinema as an indispensable piece within the perception process. Two new arenas of interest to geographic research on film in Germany include film tourism (ZIMMERMANN 2003; KELLER et al. 2002) and the movie industry (KRÄTKE 2002).

ESCHER and ZIMMERMANN's (2001) article on cinematic landscapes was the first film geography article

¹⁾ WIRTH, EUGEN (1952): *Stoffprobleme des Films*. Diss. Freiburg. He received his Phd in Sociology before he turned exclusively to Geography.

to be published in a professional German geography journal. ANTON ESCHER and STEFAN ZIMMERMANN'S (ESCHER a. ZIMMERMANN 2001, 2004, 2005; ZIMMERMANN a. ESCHER 2001, 2005a) research demonstrates how cinematic cities are constructed by visual imagery, through meta-stories and complex systems of cinematic heritage. The cinematic city is one of the most prominent film geography research topics both in Germany and around the world (FORSHER 2003; BARBER 2002; SHIEL a. FITZMAURICE 2001; CLARKE 1997; ROSE 1994; FORD 1994; BRUNO 1993; FRIEDBERG 1993; LUKINBEAL a. KENNEDY 1993; GOLD 1984, 1985). BOLLHÖFER (2003) uses the cinematic city as a foil to explain new cultural geography, while VOGT (2001), a film scholar, dedicated a large compendium to German cinematic cities.

More recently CRESSWELL and DIXON (2002, 3–4) point to a radically different understanding of the ontology of representation where film is no longer considered “mere images of unmediated expressions of the mind, but rather the temporary embodiment of social processes that continually construct and deconstruct the world as we know it.” Similarly LUKINBEAL (2004a, 247) argues that “distinctions between reality and representation, primary and secondary experiences, first-hand and second-hand observations change hands endlessly in a world of *Top Gun* presidents, *Terminator* Governors and ‘reality TV’”. CRESSWELL and DIXON (2002) suggest that a real-reel distinction may even be reinforced by the dominance of the textual metaphor in both landscape studies and film geography. While the textual metaphor may work well with material landscapes “film resists such fixity” (CRESSWELL a. DIXON 2002, 4). Film is not a re-presentation of reality, but rather, “film (re)produces a virtual space” (CLARKE 1997, 9). Rather than a re-presentation, it is more appropriate to describe film as simulacral rather than representational (CLARKE 1997). DIXON and GRIMES (2004) further argue that the binary real-reel lacks analytical power because it is based on the false assumption that the “real” is an ontologically stable world. Researchers need to move beyond the binary distinctions of reel-real, material-nonmaterial, primary-secondary, because they hold little analytical power when examining the geography of film. What then is the future of geographic research on film?

2 *The future of film geography take one: geopolitics*

“I don't think we'll be invited to show this picture at the White House.” Mark Gordon, producer of *The Day After Tomorrow* (Phase9, 2004).

The intersection between geopolitics and cinema are easy to see when considering the film *The Day After Tomorrow*. Critics call the film propaganda because of its doomsday portrayal of the consequences of global warming. The film's release led to many debates relating to the relationship between science, politics and cinema. Ideological overtones in *The Day After Tomorrow* are prevalent whether it is the overt similarities between the reel and real U.S. Vice President (Dick Cheney), the U.S. decision not to sign the Kyoto Protocol, the incident where U.S. citizens are blocked at the border from entering Mexico, or the forgiveness of all third world debt by Western nations. While cinema has a long history of ideological and political intonations modern Hollywood cinema seems, for the most part, devoid of such rhetoric. *The Day After Tomorrow* actually served as a precursor to the invasion of politics into Hollywood cinema in 2004. Released early in the summer of 2004, the film was later over-shadowed by Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11*. *Fahrenheit 9/11* quickly became the largest grossing documentary film in history and led many to question the emblem “documentary”. With the hotly contested and devise U.S. presidential election in full swing, the summer and fall of 2004 saw a plethora of overtly political documentary films for and against George W. Bush and John Kerry.

JAMESON (1984, 1988, 1992) maintains that film can be used to cognitively map the geopolitical imaginary. He argues that the further we drift towards monopoly capitalism, the further an individual's phenomenological description of the world becomes a fixed view in social reality. Daily experiences of the individual can no longer explain social reality, since their experiences are a minuscule piece in the matrix of the total capitalistic structure. While these realities can never fully appear in the realm of perception, we find symbolic remnants of them in the reproducible technologies. Through the visual media of film, video and television we are presented with degraded images of this great geopolitical space, a space which JAMESON believes can be cognitively mapped. Extrapolating from KEVIN LYNCH'S (1960) proposition that cognitive mapping can help to identify and make cityscapes legible, JAMESON (1992, 1988) suggests that the inability of the individual to socially map the geopolitical imaginary is crippling.

JAMESON'S work informs the geopolitical relationship of film, capitalism and space. BUNNELL'S (2004) recent essay beautifully captures the essence of JAMESON'S cognitive mapping enterprise. BUNNELL (2004) shows how films are more than mere entertainment; they are active agents remapping the relationship between trade, cultural meaning and politics. BUNNELL examines the relationship between the film *Entrapment*, the

Petronas towers and the reception of the film in Malaysia versus the reception of the film in the United States. At the time of filming the Petronas Twin Towers were the largest in the world and were used by Malaysia's politicians as national and international icons of progress and development. Through editing and montage, *Entrapment* makes it appear that slums and the Petronas Towers exist side-by-side. Malaysian audiences including their Prime Minister Mohamad Mahathir were quite critical and offended by the film's decontextualization of their national icons. The film literally challenged the re-imagining of Malaysia's own geopolitical imaginary: a challenge to their political legitimacy and national economic development policies. As LUKINBEAL (2004a, 248) points out, "The social and political events that followed show that cinematic geographies are not merely intertwined with the construction of ideology, identities, beliefs and values, but are active participants in cognitively mapping the geopolitical imaginary."

3 *The future of film geography take two: cultural politics*

While environmental politics are quite evident in *The Day After Tomorrow*, what elides the surface is the overt cultural and gendered rhetoric within the narrative. The movie typecasts events in simple binary fashion: nature-civilization; environment-economics; science-politics. Film geography has primarily focused on revealing the cultural politics inherent in film. Cultural politics refers to the "domain in which meanings are constructed and negotiated, where relations of dominance and subordination are defined and contested" (JACKSON 1991, 200). Binary logic is just one way that film *naturalizes* cultural politics. We use the term *naturalize* to refer to the way film, through the deployment of realism and suspension of disbelief, seeks to pass off that which is cultural as natural (cf. DUNCAN a. LEY 1993). Inherent in *The Day After Tomorrow* are hegemonic tensions between these binaries as the narrative seeks to unsettle dominance (civilization, economics, politics) and bring forth the subordinate (nature, environment, science). Similarly, the dominant normative belief within geography would posit that this cultural politics is wholly removed from "reality" because the movie itself is a "representation." However, what DIXON (DIXON a. GRIMES 2004; CRESSWELL a. DIXON 2002) has sought to show is that these binary categories are already socially constructed and "overdetermined" by power relations. Therefore, film geography is not simply a disassociated "reading" of entertaining "texts", but rather, are inquiries of cultural documents that

reveal hegemonic tensions within meaning creation, appropriation and contestation. The binaries represented in *The Day After Tomorrow* are not ontologically "given" or static objects awaiting inquiry; they are living testaments to a specific era's cultural political dialogue.

Film geographers have engaged the cultural politics of such varied topics as landscape (LUKINBEAL 2005; ESCHER a. ZIMMERMANN 2001), race (MAINS 2004; AITKEN 2003), cultural identity (SMITH 2002; ZONN a. WINCHELL 2002), violence (KIRSCH 2002) and gender (AITKEN a. LUKINBEAL 1997, 1998; LUKINBEAL a. AITKEN 1998). A common theme running through all of this research is an epistemology based on antiessentialism, a topic discussed in AITKEN and DIXON's essay in this publication (AITKEN a. DIXON 2006; CRESSWELL a. DIXON 2002). We use the term to specifically relate to film and cultural politics as discursive formations where meaning is dependant on context. Thus, categories, binaries, and social and spatial structures are not pre-determined, but are constructed through a cultural dialogue. As ZIMMERMANN and ESCHER (2005b) demonstrate, this dialogue can be analyzed through means of border-crossing theory (cf. LOTMAN 1972) which assesses the creation of cinematic and cultural spaces. This does not mean an endless spiral of relativism where no meaning can be gained from research, but rather, (1) researchers are cognizant of their positionality within the research and writing processes and (2) that insight can be gained and knowledge transferred from a hermeneutical engagement.

4 *The future of film geography take three: globalization*

"Hollywood is a place you can't geographically define. We don't know where it is." John Ford (quoted in BORDWELL et. al. 1985).

The Day After Tomorrow, in one sense, is just another summer blockbuster release from 20th Century Fox, a subsidiary of Richard Murdoch's News Corporation LTD. As such it is a product of what some economic geographers call the "cultural industry" (DUGAY 1997). In this era of advanced capitalism, art, culture, ideas and entertainment are commodities to be bought and sold on a world market. As LUKINBEAL (2004b) posits "'cultural economy' and 'cultural industries' are dialectic in that economic practices have been thoroughly culturalized and culture is an economic commodity." The era of advanced capitalism can be traced to the global recession of the 1970s. A vast economic restructuring of capitalism's mode of production during this period had far reaching effects on trade, commerce,

employment and cultures throughout the globe. During this period, manufacturing was globalized: transnational corporations moved as much film production as they could to locations that offered a cheaper labor pool. No longer were companies tied to relative locations or cities, rather, production became *flexible*, in terms of capital and labor, and *specialized* in terms of what was produced in particular locations (LUKINBEAL 2002, 2004b, 2006; STORPER 1993; STORPER a. CHRISTOPHERSON 1985, 1987; CHRISTOPHERSON a. STORPER 1986). Globalization and flexible specialization underpins the era of advanced capitalism, with its informational mode of production. Rather than a focus on relative locations and Fordism, the new information economy can be characterized by “spaces of flows,” or the degree to which cities, (film) industries and individuals are tied into the stream of innovations, information, knowledge and ideas (CASTELLS 1996, 1997, 1998). Just as innovations in technology and communication created cinema in the industrial revolution, new technologies and communications are driving cinema’s transformation in the information revolution.

Western cinema is economically dominated by Hollywood cinema. Hollywood’s hegemonic tentacles extend into film production, distribution and consumption as well as into genre, narrative and meta-stories (ESCHER a. ZIMMERMANN 2005) that promote cultural commodification, homogenization and multinational corporatization (MILLER et al. 2005; JAMESON 1992). Globalization in some way can be equated with Americanization. According to MILLER (2000, 15), “Los Angeles culture and New York commerce dominate screen entertainment around the globe.” Hollywood cinema rewrites history and reruns meta-stories in an endless mise en abyme. It reinforces and reifies geopolitical imaginaries centered on capitalist-patriarchal-Western hegemonic dominance. Hollywood’s mise en abyme embraces the Westernization protocols of globalization through educating, acculturating and assimilating global masses. Global masses are inundated with cultural products which reinforce the cultural politics of Westernization via globalization.

In terms of Hollywood style film production, globalization is closely tied to flexible specialization at all levels. Hollywood’s film production industry exists through a globally extended subcontracted network. While Los Angeles has retained oligopolistic control of this network (CHRISTOPHERSON 1996) regional centers around the world are now specializing in three different market niches: consumption, product type and representation (LUKINBEAL 2004b). A consumption market niche is where a film production center focuses on distribution at a particular scale (regional, national, conti-

mental and international). A product type market niche is where film centers focus on the production of one or more types of visual media. For instance, Vancouver B.C. has succeeded in becoming a film production center by focusing on television shows, television movies and low budget feature films for U.S. release (GASHER 1995, 2002; COE 2000a, 2000b). Similarly, Cape Town, South Africa, Bucharest, Romania and recently Berlin (Babelsberg studios) have found a lucrative market in “runaway” motion picture production. These centers are the “new” globalized Hollywood: outsourced production and imagery that saves money for multinational media conglomerates. In this collection of essays, LUKINBEAL (2006) explores the history of Hollywood’s runaway production as it relates to the competing discourses of realism and economics.

A representational market niche is where locations around the world market themselves as potential film locations based on the “look” of their location (LUKINBEAL 2004b). For instance, Morocco and Tunisia vie with each other for dominance in the “North African” and “Orient” representational market niche. This is an economic battle waged by film offices, local film crews and tourist boards (ZIMMERMANN 2003). Locations seeking to establish a representational market niche based on their locational look compete for a market share in a variety of global film industries (Hollywood, Bollywood, European, Middle Eastern, etc.). Switzerland has become known as the “other Kashmir” for Indian filmmakers simply because of the political instability in the real Kashmir (KELLER et al. 2002). These *crimes against geography* allow film makers to use one location to “double,” or stand in for, another location. The process of “doubling” is a film production practice done to save money or protect workers from potentially dangerous situations. For instance, the Oscar-winning film *The English Patient* (1996) used Tunisia to represent 1930s Cairo, Egypt. This happened for various reasons: first, Cairo was far too modern in 1996 to portray Cairo in the 1930s; second, the political instability in 1996, caused by a series of vicious tourist murders, made Egypt far too unsafe and expensive to film in this region.²⁾ Tunisia “doubled” for Egypt and provided the oriental look needed, but the filmmakers had to make some concessions. According to Moez Kamoun, “I told them that I could build them a perfect Egypt here [in Tunisia] but they shouldn’t ask for the Pyramids.”³⁾ “Doubling” of locations is usually seen as a problem of authenticity, a crime against geographic realism.

²⁾ Insurance costs for film production went up exponentially because of these murders.

To increase realism, filmmakers often use “icons” or generic symbols to create authenticity: the “Orient” is geographically established through the use of desert scenes, adobe villages and Middle Eastern wardrobes. The Moroccan Berber village Ait Benhaddou is not only a UNESCO world heritage site; it is probably the most frequently filmed location in Northern Africa (ZIMMERMANN 2003). It usually stands in for different villages in various regions and eras. Additionally it attracts tourists from all over the globe (POPP 2001). The cinematic use of Ait Benhaddou commodifies it for global consumption in movie theatres, television screens, advertisements and movie products. But the commodification does not end there: Ait Benhaddou becomes a commodity in and of itself for tourists seeking the cinematic. The lines dividing cinematic representation and tourism are increasingly blurred in this era of globalization. The real and reel endlessly change hands in the minds of the consumer-voyeur as they traverse the cinematic landscapes of Ait Benhaddou on the cinema screen and village square.

Film tourism can be seen as the ultimate and most obvious intrusions of mass media into the everyday (ZIMMERMANN 2003). Places attract people because of their visual legacy and film sets are often left in the landscape for film tourist to visit. Places around the world seek to attract film tourism. Whether it's New Zealand and *The Lord of The Rings*⁴⁾, Tunisia's “On the footsteps of *The English Patient*”, “*Quadrophenia's Brighton*”, Iowa's *Field of Dreams*⁵⁾, or walking tours of Manhattan on film (KATZ 1999), film tourism is a growing global phenomena. Cinema and the everyday mingle to such an extent that audience and tourist do not know what was there first (BAUDRILLARD 1994). The cinematic world exists on the screen and in the streets, cities, villages and towns of our daily lives.

5 *The future of film geography take four: science, representation and mimesis*

A central theme in film geography is the “crisis of representation”, an attack on mimesis and absolute realism through representation. According to DUNCAN and LEY (1993, 2) mimesis is “the belief that we should

strive to produce as accurate a reflection of the world as possible.” They go on to argue that there are four major “modes of representation” in Anglo-American human geography: two of which fall under the mimetic rubric (positivism and descriptive fieldwork) and two of which challenge mimesis (hermeneutics and post-modernism). *The Day After Tomorrow* has been roundly criticized by scientists and journalists alike for its “unrealistic” portrayal of the effects of global warming (VERGANO a. BOWLES 2004; DAVIDSON 2004; MICHAELS 2004; REVKIN 2004; WAXMAN a. LEE 2004). For instance, Kevin Trenberth, a leading U.S. climatologist and global warming theorist claims that the film “really exaggerates things – it's physically impossible for things to happen the way they are shown” (DAVIDSON 2004). Similarly, PATRICK MICHAELS (2004), a senior fellow in environmental studies at the Cato Institute writes in an editorial, “As a scientist, I bristle when lies dressed up as ‘science’ are used to influence political discourse.” What we find interesting in this debate is the overt emphasis on realism and its perceived link to “science” and, the vehemence to which scientist do not like seeing science perverted for political purposes. What is more disconcerting is the fact that Americans are more concerned about the lack of scientific realism in a summer blockbuster than they are over the Bush administrations overt intervention into science for ideological purposes. In February of 2004, sixty-two leading scientists, including Nobel laureates, called for the Bush administration to restore scientific integrity to policy making. At the same time, the Union of Concerned Scientists issued a report, *Scientific Integrity in Policymaking*⁶⁾, showing numerous instances where the Bush administration suppressed and distorted scientific analysis and overtly sought to undermine the quality of scientific advisory panels.⁷⁾

BRYSON (1983, 13–15; in DUNCAN a. LEY 1993, 4), defines realism as “the coincidence between a representation and that which a society assumes as its reality.” While a film like *The Day After Tomorrow* clearly has gone beyond the confines of what Western society assumes to be a realistic representation of future events, Americans are much more willing to allow the scientific endeavors to be subverted for blatant “real” political ideologies. Clearly this is troubling: when a society is more concerned about fictional mimesis rather than the suppression of “real” mimetic representations (via

³⁾ Moez Kamoun, Tunisian film director, was *assistant director* and *location manager* for *The English Patient* and the late *Star Wars* movies. Interviewed in Tunis by STEFAN ZIMMERMANN.

⁴⁾ <http://www.newzealand.com/travel/about-nz/culture/lotr-2003/introduction.cfm>

⁵⁾ <http://www.fieldofdreamsmoviesite.com/>

⁶⁾ http://www.ucsusa.org/global_environment/rsi/page.cfm?pageID=1322

⁷⁾ http://democrats.reform.house.gov/features/politics_and_science/support.htm; <http://www.ucsusa.org/>

science) for ideological reasons. This is the types of mimetic politics, we believe, BAUDRILLARD (1994, 1) seeks to uncover when he claims that it is, “the map that precedes the territory – precession of the simulacra – that engenders the territory, and if one must rerun to the fable, today it is the territory whose shred slowly rot across the extent of the map.” Just as JAMESON (1984, 1988, 1992) argues that culture and art are economic commodities in this postmodern era, we would argue that science and other forms of mimesis are in “crisis” for two reasons: (1) the “claim” of being able to create a representation with absolute realism is questionable at best; and, (2) in this era of postmodernism, science is no longer removed or separate from politics and power relations but is embedded within them. Realism is just another ideological struggle for power wherein different groups vie to have their ideologies and world views *naturalized* through the political or mimetic process. The recent rise in political documentary films, like *Fahrenheit 9/11*, show how this “crisis of representation” is a battle for who gets to define what is “real” while at the same time, “realism”, or perfect mimeses in documentary filming, will probably never be accepted again by Western societies, and especially not by Americans.

Conclusions

While we do not believe that *The Day After Tomorrow* is a very “good” movie in the classic sense of narration, filming, editing and montage, we do believe that it provides a vehicle through which to explore some of the vibrant and growing themes in the new and growing subfield of film geography. In this article we have explored just a few of these new and emerging themes. We do not see our essay as an “all inclusive” summary of the past and present work, but rather, we hope that it serves as a useful point of departure for debate and discussion about this subfield.

The history of this subfield extends back to early discussions about aesthetic geosophy and subjective approaches to geographic knowledge. With the rise of humanistic geography, and other counter movements to the quantitative revolution, interest in literature, art, media and film began but never truly developed. Following the “cultural turn” in geography and debates over “traditional” and “new” cultural geography, non-material cultural forms of inquiry rose to prominence. However, an invidious distinction between what constitutes geographic research has kept this subfield from truly growing and thriving. With the rise of critical cultural geography and disciplinary interest in such key issues as the “crisis of representation”, film geography

has moved from the peripheries to become a central issue in geographic research and pedagogy. According to CRESSWELL and DIXON (2002, 1) “in articles and books, in lecture halls and seminar rooms, film has become one of the most popular sites for research and teaching.”

If there is any criticism to be levied against this body of work it is twofold: (1) that it focuses on textual readings of films to demonstrate social theories; and (2) that there is a lack of materially grounded empirical research. The primary focus of geographic research on film has been to use filmic narratives to expound upon social-spatial theories. While this is a useful and worthy endeavour, this type of research runs the risk of becoming ‘floating language’: a fetishized and reified space wherein the researcher’s mental space envelops social and physical space (LEFEBVRE 1991). Also, while some recent studies are grounded in empirical practice (cf. JANCOVICH et al. 2003), most of the literature focuses on ‘readings’ of filmic texts. We would argue, however, that current research goes beyond simply using it as a “text” to describe social-spatial processes. Film is a discursive formation embedded in the cultural politics of specific eras. Content and meaning of any given film is relative and dependant on the viewer, the situation and the cultural era. The recent book of JANCOVICH et al. (2003) *The Place of the Audience: Cultural Geographies of Film Consumption* marks the first film geography book focused on the audience. Their book provides a significant breakthrough on understanding and placing the audience within a geographical context. More empirical studies like this are needed on cinema’s cultural power and the resulting influence on the perception of place and space.

Film is more than just mere *re*-presentations of some ontological stable Cartesian space. Film, as a discursive formation, is a cultural commodity that is produced and consumed in a global context. Film, media and television are central agents of globalization and the commodification of culture. JAMESON takes this one step further to argue that films are cognitive maps of a geopolitical imaginary. Similarly BRUNO (1997, 2002) argues that films are today’s social cartography of meaning creation and identity formation at multiple scales. Whether we follow a hermeneutical or post-structural critique of representation, cultural geography must come to grips with the crisis of representation. This central theme effects how film geography engages, and eventually dismisses, the real-reel binary. The normative belief that research on film never rises to the level of importance because it does not deal with “real life” issues continues to curtail a vigorous engagement of visual media. This normative belief

perpetuates the myth that film is simply a *re*-presentation of reality. The textual metaphor, of reading the geography within film's narratives, may also reinforce this belief.

We eschew the representational determinism that film geography is synonymous with *re*-presentations of some ontological stable "authentic" reality. Drawing from CRANG et al. (1999, 2), we posit that film geographies always exceed the cinematic technologies which produce representations because film is "constituted by the social relations, discourses and sites in which these technologies are embedded." The technologies that capture, encode and represent the world are always embedded in social and cultural practices that are temporally and spatially specific. Representations are not the polar opposite of reality especially when it comes to film and cinema. Cinematic images are always socialized just as technologies are always socialized.

Cinema and television design virtual spaces embedded in everyday life. Places of historical interest are re-presented and re-constructed by media again and again recreating their very meaning, appearance and context. This raises an important question: What if the copy is better than the original? What if the original never existed but is a myth? The crisis of representation strikes us right in the core of our belief system. Why bother with authenticity when people can travel to Las Vegas and praise the fake Venice or New York while pointing out that it's much better than the real place?

We conclude with an analogy relating geographic discourse to the extremely popular movie *Goodbye Lenin* in which a son tries to protect his mother from having another heart attack. The mother has been in a coma for eight months and during that time their country (East Germany) and community (East Berlin) has changed dramatically. During her coma, German unification happened giving her no chance to prepare for the changes. To protect the mother from these stressful changes, the son recreates a socialist East Germany in the mother's apartment and in their social network. In *Goodbye Lenin* we find parallels to central issues facing geographic research on film. The son must continue to re-present a nonexistent cultural and political reality to his mother. In essence the son faces his own "crisis of representation" throughout the film: how to make the map precede the territory; or put another way, how to create a simulacrum in which the mother can exist. The son's crisis is similar to the one facing cultural geography: do we continue to believe that we can distinguish between real-reel or do we accept the growing body of evidence which shows that these distinctions are not only useless but have consequences in and of themselves. We live in a reality in which politicians (e.g. the

Bush Administration, the former East German apparatus of state) put ideology and representation as primary rather than secondary to the real, where simulacra in the form of postmodern architecture allows "form to follow fiction", where packaged tourist adventures re-configure the relationship between commodity, culture and nature. Doesn't it seem naïve to position cinema as simply re-presentations of reality? We ask then, is current geographic discourse concerning film better represented as the mother or the son in *Goodbye Lenin*? In other words, are we constructing our own discursive bubble, our own simulacra in which positivism, descriptive fieldwork and mimetic representations naturalize and essentialize geographic knowledge? Or, do we willingly understand that we are a part of the knowledge creation process that simulacra, realities and representations are all relative to the individual; that we cannot, nor should not, allow ourselves to fall under the spell of the *mise en abyme*?

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