

Scottish Consortium for Film and Visual Studies First Conference

24th June 2008 Gilmorehill Centre, University of Glasgow

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Announcement

In 2007, following an application by St Andrews and Glasgow Universities, the Carnegie Trust agreed a grant to fund a series of conferences which would help to establish a *Scottish Consortium for Film and Visual Studies*

. This will be a multi-faceted project that will evolve gradually and could provide a forum for research collaborations, practice development, knowledge transfer activities, archive work and postgraduate activity. It is intended to be open to all interested staff whatever department you work in and we hope to make contacts outside Higher Education particularly in Scottish Screen (and Creative Scotland), the archive and with practitioners.

The international speaker at the first conference will be Professor Patrice Petro, Director of the Centre for International Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and Professor of English and Film Studies. She is currently President of the Society of Cinema and Media Studies and in a good position to offer an overview of how our disciplines are developing. We are keen that the first conference should be genuinely engaging and exploratory and so we are not inviting formal papers from participants. The main emphasis will be on plenaries and workshops in which people can meet and ideas be exchanged. We hope to end the conference with a map of activity already going on in Scotland, with the seeds of new collaborations planted and ideas for the next conference in 2009.

Many colleagues expressed an interest in this project when it was first being developed by Professor Dina Iordanova and Dr Dimitris Eleftheriotis and we hope that you will wish to get involved. Details about registration will be circulated later in the year. The intention of this notice is to get the date in your diary and to ask you to circulate this flyer as widely as possible. The Conference will be free and some bursaries will be available to support the attendance of postgraduate students.

Programme

10-10.30am Gilmorehill Foyer Registration, tea and coffee

10.30am Andrew Stewart Cinema
Introductory plenary

Welcome and Introduction by Professor Christine Geraghty

Round table discussion chaired by Dr Dimitris Eleftheriotis with:

- Professor Elizabeth Ezra, University of Stirling
- Professor Stephen Partridge, University of Dundee
- Dr Karen Boyle, University of Glasgow
- Dr David Martin-Jones, University of St Andrews

Each speaker will discuss their research and its context (which may be departmental, institutional, collaborations within and outside Scotland, within and outside academe) and how they see the research agenda shaping up over the next few years (which might cover funding, archives, political issues, academic context, intellectual challenges).

Comments from floor

11.35am break

11.45am Workshop I (Rooms 408, 409, 217a, 217b)

12.45 -1.45pm Lunch (Served in the Gilmorehill Bar)

1.45-2.30pm Andrew Stewart Cinema
Professor Ian Christie, Birkbeck, University of London
Chair tbc

2.30-3.30pm Workshop II (Rooms 408, 409, 217a, 217b and Cinema) - what next?

3.30pm Tea and Coffee (Gillmorehill Foyer)

3.45 - 4.45pm Andrew Stewart Cinema

Plenary on the theme of 'what next' chaired by Professor John Caughie

4.45pm Close and reconvene in the Stravaigin, Gibson Street

Subject Interest Panel I 11.45am-12.45pm

Room 408: The National and the Transnational

Sally Baxter; Kathryn A Burnett; Lynne Hibberd; Nick Higgins; Brian Hoyle; Christine Geraghty; Matthew Jarron; David Martin-Jones; Aimee McNair; Jonathan Murray; Sarah Neely; Caitriona Noonan; Gill Plain; Alistair Scott; Philip Schlesinger; Jane Sillars; Maria Antonia Velez-Serna

Room 217a: World Cinema

Yun-hua Chen; Ruby Cheung; Anderida Field; Maryam Ghorbankarimi; Karen Lury; Elisabetta Girelli; Yun Mi Hwang; Bill Marshall; Sara Nameth; Anna Page; Serazer Pekerman; Milja Radovic; Miriam Ross ; Philippa Smith; Derik Tamanaha

Room 217b: Spectatorship and Audience

Canan Balan; Martine Beugnet; Taraneh Dadar; Philip Drake; Elizabeth Ezra; Robert Halsall; Trevor Griffiths; Rick Instrell; Charles Lovatt; Lesley Murphy; Melanie Selfe; Michael Stewart; Belén Vidal; Lynn Whitaker; Sarah Wylie

Room 409: Digital technology

William Brown; Dana Cooley; Kirsty Crawford; Dean Cummings; Dayna Galloway; Mark Grindle ; Stephanie Marriott; Anna Notaro; Stephen Partridge ; Adam Seddon; Inge Sorensen; Damian Sutton; Mel Woods; Laura Bissel

Subject Interest Panel II 2.30pm – 3.30pm

Room 408: Gender and Sexuality

Laura Bissell; Taraneh Dadar; Andrew Dorman; Anderida Field; Lynne Hibberd; Maryam Ghorbankarimi; Elisabetta Girelli; Katharina Lindner; Bill Marshall; Serazer Pekerman; Gill Plain; Jane Sillars; Michael Stewart; Derik Tamanaha; Belén Vidal; Sarah Wylie;

Room 217a: Industry and Policy

Kathryn A Burnett; Ruby Cheung; Kirsty Crawford; Dean Cummings; Philip Drake; Nick Higgins; Charles Lovatt; Caitriona Noonan; Gracia Ramirez; Miriam Ross; Philip Schlesinger; Melanie Selfe; Lynn Whitaker

Room 217b: Aesthetics

Martine Beugnet; Dana Cooley; Robert Halsall ; Brian Hoyle; Dayna Galloway; Karen Lury; John Izod; David Martin-Jones; Louise Milne; Christopher Murray; Stephen Partridge ; Philippa Smith

Andrew Stewart Cinema: Film History / History and Film

Canan Balan; Sally Baxter; Elizabeth Ezra; Trevor Griffiths; Yun Mi Hwang; Matthew Jarron; Alan Marcus; Sara Nameth; Sarah Neely; Milja Radovic; Damian Sutton; Leshu Torchin; Maria Antonia Velez-Serna

Room 409: Film education

Scott Donaldson; Christine Geraghty; George Head ; Rick Instrell; Tracey McConnell-Wood; Holger Mohaupt; Alistair Scott; Adam Seddon; Inge Sorensen; Mel Woods

Report 1: Dr. David Martin-Jones

This was the first of a series of conferences and workshops scheduled to take place over the next five years, dedicated to bringing together scholars throughout Scotland working in the fields of film and visual studies. The Consortium was established by Professor Dina Iordanova (University of St Andrews) and Dr Dimitris Eleftheriotis (University of Glasgow), and has been very generously funded by the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland. In the whole I found it an extremely enjoyable experience.

I was privileged to be invited to participate in the opening plenary round table discussion, in which four scholars, with a diverse range of interests and backgrounds presented their research. The aim of the plenary was to open up discussion as to how the research environment for film and visual studies is likely to develop over the next few years. Professor Elizabeth Ezra (University of Stirling) and Professor Stephen Partridge (Duncan of Jordanstone College), Dr Karen Boyle (University of Glasgow) and myself, put forward perspectives from modern languages, art and design, film and television, and film studies respectively.

This diversity reflected the inter-institutional and inter-disciplinary nature of the conference, with scholars from over fifteen of Scotland's Universities and Art School's being joined by representatives of Scottish Screen, Scottish Arts Council, BBC Scotland, the Association for Media Education in Scotland, National Library of Scotland, and so on. The audience – in fact consisting of over sixty scholars, industry insiders, postgraduate students and practitioners – then engaged in a broad ranging discussion covering a diverse field of topics. Of particular interest was the need to establish the international presence of Scotland's Universities in terms of the research currently being undertaken into film and other forms of visual media throughout the country. This topic came up on several occasions, although in the sessions I attended the role of Scottish Universities in relation to the UK, Europe, the US and broader markets remained only a sub-current in this conference. Rather, focus remained on concrete steps that could be taken, such as establishing a website.

Common ground was also found on many issues relating to funding, how best to obtain it, and

the different variety of projects for which it could be used - from the more traditional needs, such as archival research, to more community based knowledge transfer activities related to women in society, to Professor Partridge's £433,350 AHRC funded four-year project, "REWIND", dedicated to preserving and analysing artists' video work from the 1960s to the 1980s. This theme continued throughout the day in one form or another, in particular in relation to the smaller and larger possibilities for establishing networks, collaborative PhD studentships, and other forms of pooling funds through the interaction between scholars from different institutions facilitated by the Consortium. Indeed, in terms of funding, much was learned from Professor Ian Christie's (Birkbeck, University of London) plenary immediately after lunch. Professor Christie shared his knowledge and experience of his time establishing and running the AHRC (or as it was then, AHRB) funded, predominantly London-based Centre for British Film and Television Studies.

Breakout sessions occurred throughout the day on a range of topics of interest to the delegates, to try to establish the common ground from which different projects could develop in the future. Understandably, film and television production in Scotland was a primary focus of at least one of these, with a shift in emphasis towards industry-linked, institutionally collaborative research into television production being one intriguing outcome for future consideration. Others, which I was not able to attend solely due to their parallel nature, included World Cinema, Industry and Policy, Digital Technology, and Gender and Sexuality. Here discussion was given freshness by input from the numerous postgraduate students who attended, for whom travel bursaries were made available by the Consortium. This was testament to the thriving research culture currently developing in the field of film and visual studies in the various Universities of Scotland.

Speaking personally, the day passed in something of a blur, mainly due to the difficulty of trying to talk to everyone in such a concentrated burst. This was certainly the first conference I have been to in the past five years when I did not find myself alone or at a loose end even for a second, as people grasped every opportunity to meet and talk between sessions, over lunch and so on. Vitally, the conference concluded in Stravaigan, the local pub and restaurant, as scheduled on the programme. Unlike some major international conferences, then, it was good to have time specifically built in for the type of informal networking that the Consortium is supposed to facilitate. I appreciated, for example, being able to speak not only to the numerous other scholars researching Scottish cinema – a research interest of mine – but also to talk to Janet McBain (National Libraries of Scotland), the curator of the Scottish Screen archives in Glasgow in the same location. I left with several new contacts with whom to explore new ideas and interfaces in the future.

'Mapping Scotland' did exactly what it set out to do, which was to establish the parameters of research into film and visual media currently taking place in Scotland, discover the mutual interests, synergies and potential points for collaboration, and ultimately, prepare the ground for

future projects. The final plenary, chaired by Professor John Caughie (University of Glasgow, and co-organiser along with Professor Christine Geraghty), discovered many voices calling for more, smaller- scale, focused workshops in future, as opposed to fewer, larger scale conferences. Of most immediate note, the need to raise the profile of the Consortium internationally through the rapid establishing of a website, was one of the primary goals for the next few months. Due to the Consortium funding, the next five years will see a surge in activity in this area. However, hopefully this increased activity will relate to both the content of our research and the manner in which we can enhance activity through collaboration, but also to the broader concerns that we face as a field in relation to the outside world. Fingers crossed the establishing of the Consortium website – on which we can set out our stall for all to see – will be only the first step in this regard.

Report 2: Prof. Christine Geraghty

In the final plenary there was enthusiasm for the way the day had gone. It was recognised that the Consortium had limited funding which was mainly earmarked for conference activity and aimed at developing the research capacity in Scotland through developing collaborations and new projects. The following ideas emerged for further discussion and possibly implementation:

1. a website. It is recognised that this is in the plan. It could aim to be informative not just for us but for others, giving a sense of the international range and quality of Scottish research in film and visual studies;

2. the email list could be used as an initial basis for circulating information and seeking collaborations. In the longer term, it might be useful to consider setting up a registry of interests and possibly a forum for discussion groups;

3. the open conference format had worked well and there was interest in continuing to meet. It was felt that the consortium's conference should not replicate conference formats elsewhere and that we needed to be flexible, possibly having two small conferences instead of one large one;

4. it was important to recognise postgraduates's interests. One possibility might be to link up with Scottish Communications and Media Association to hold a postgraduate conference or strands within a conference. SMCA is positive about this but we would need to discuss it with them in time for their meeting in September;

5. there was a suggestion that there might be interest in workshops focusing on specific skills eg addressing policy issues, using archives, research methods. These would be generalist events aimed at updating researchers rather than exclusively specialist sessions;

6. it was recognised that people from outside the HE sector had attended eg from Scottish Screen, BBC Scotland, National Library of Scotland and this was warmly welcomed;

7. it was recognised that sustainability was critical and had to be thought about in developing ideas. There was a request for volunteers to help and John Izod (University of Stirling) and Brian Hoyle, University of Dundee later put their names forwards. More welcome!

8. links between research and teaching were recognised and the consortium could seek to

support this thought circulation of information and good practice;

9. Group leaders were asked to forward brief accounts along the lines of the reports made in the plenary. It was recognised that connections had already been made and could well develop into networks etc

Film History Working Group

Sarah Neeley

A significant focus of the discussion for this group was around archival research. Points were made regarding the challenges of getting students involved in archive research and the difficulties facing some academics in knowing where and how to access certain materials. It was suggested that the consortium could offer a potential networking site for information relating to archival resources. Along similar lines, potential was seen for the consortium providing training sessions (similar to the publishing workshops previously held at the Screen conference). Topics suggested include: using screen-grabs and other technological tools, interviewing (as part of research projects) and accessing funding (particularly in terms of projects that have an output beyond the traditional academic journal article or book form). The possibility for focus study groups (particularly around emerging areas) was also raised as a worthwhile venture for future symposium meetings.

Concerns were also expressed in relation to the perceived divorce between film history and film theory, where early cinema is reserved for film historians and film theory is generally employed in relation to contemporary cinema. It was felt that a more integrated approach is required.

Gender Working Group

Belén Vidal

Members of the discussion group declared interest in the following topics:

bodies, gender & technology; femininities and masculinities in relation to national identities; sport and gendered bodily activity; queer theory and cultures; gender and popular culture & media; audiences; masculinities in feminism; 'crisis' areas for gender studies such as violence or pornography; feminist film theory and film genres.

Discussion focused on the continuous relevance of feminism as a set of approaches enabling the critique of canons and issues of value. Research interests run parallel to the teaching of gender theory and criticism in relation of film and media. Issues raised included the continuing relevance of feminist theory in historical contexts touching issues of production, reception and representation. Discussion expanded on popular culture as central to the study/teaching of contemporary gender studies, and the need for continuous revising and re-signification of the feminism as a set of histories and epistemological tools.

What next?

- The potential of a network (mailing list?)/forum for discussion of research/teaching linkages in the area of gender and sexuality.
- The need for continuous re-thinking of 'feminism' as a critical term in historical contexts, as well as the meanings of post-feminism.
- The launch of Women's Archives as an opportunity for further research & teaching.
- The intersection between the local and the global in the discussion of feminist theory and practice.

World Cinema Working Group

Dimitris Eleftheriotis

Discussion in the group revolved around the following key issues:

Studies of films, directors and movements within this broad category is a key area of development in film studies and attracts many research students.

The difficulties around the use of the term as it produces an over-generalised umbrella category. Its use can be justified in pragmatic terms and also discursively as it foregrounds the marginalisation of certain cinemas within film theory and history.

Research in the field is characterised by self-reflexivity (the questioning of one's own position in relation to the object of study but also the limitations of one's knowledge of different cinematic cultures) and inter-disciplinarity.

In practical terms the following practical suggestions were made that can facilitate research in the field:

- Access to films (perhaps an inter-institutional archive of films available can be placed on the Consortium's website).
- Translation work needed to assist access to essential critical literature published in a variety of languages.

Spectatorship and Audiences Working Group

Michael Stewart

1. Our group had a lively discussion about what is meant by spectatorship and audience studies in screen studies and how this translated into the different methods applied and methodologies used around the table. There was some frustration or questioning of a lack of cohesion or rigor in this sub-paradigm; but in the main a variety of approaches was considered positive and potentially productive – and this then fed into the group's practical suggestion: number 5, below.

2. Group members spoke briefly about their own experiences and projects, and the potential value of, among others, cognitive, psychoanalytic, psychotherapeutic and ethnographic methods was discussed.

3. The group discussed how pervasive and entrenched the idea of media effects remained; and it was agreed that contemporary audience studies should engage with rather than side-step this question. Alongside this, the group discussed the importance of maintaining a good knowledge of industry practices and techniques, and addressing the question of screen studies' relation to and involvement with policy initiatives.

4. Like other groups, this one discussed the importance of a full knowledge and use of data sets and archives.

5. The group's practical suggestion was that members should establish an on-going workshop and research project to examine the same phenomenon or artefact using a variety of perspectives and methods.