

Doing Women's Film History

Reframing Cinema Past & Future

Panel Abstracts

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Centre for Research in Media & Cultural Studies
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Contents

ANSELL	SU	14	MURRAY	GILLIAN	20
ARMATAGE	KAY	22	MUSCIO	GIULIANA	15
ARREDONDO	ISABEL	4	NELMES	JILL	15
ATAKAV	EYLEM	4	PASZKIEWICZ	KATARZYNA	4
AVEYARD	KARINA	22	PEREIRA	ANA CATARINA	11
AYRES	JOHN	8	PETERS	CAMILLA	14
BALAN	CANAN	17	PHILIP	FIONA	19
BALL	VICKY	6	PRAVADELLI	VERONICA	13
BELL	MELANIE	6	RAMIREZ	ELIZABETH	13
BARRETT	LEZLI-AN	23	REYNOLDS	LUCY	5
BLAKER	HELENA	5	ROBERTS	CHERYL	10
CHATTERJEE	RANITA	17	RYZHIK	VERA	20
CHICH	CECILE	14	SANCHEZ- ESPINOZA	ADELINA	13
COBB	SHELLY	21	SARGEANT	AMY	19
DANG	SARAH-MAI	21	SAWHNEY	RASHMI	16
DEBAUCHE	LESLIE MIDKIFF	10	SI	DA	16
DELVEROUDI	ELIZA ANNA	17	SKLEPEK	SUSANNE	13
EASEN	SARAH	18	SMITH	MICHAEL	16
ETHERINGTON- WRIGHT	CHRISTINE	8	SMYTH	J. E.	15
EVANS	BARBARA	18	SONNET	ESTHER	9
FÖRSTER	ANNETTE	3	STAMP	SHELLEY	7
FOX	JO	18	STEAD	LISA	10
GHAZIZADEH	SOMAYEH	11	STERMITZ	EVELIN	22
HAGGITH	TOBY		STREET	SARAH	9
HALL	DAWN	4	STUTESMAN	DRAKE	23
HANSON	HELEN	9	TEMPEST	FRANCES	6
HEPWORTH	ROSE	14	TOMADJOGLOU	KIM	7
IMBER	KIRSTIE	12	TORRE	MICHELE	15
KASSAVETI	URSULA- HELEN	11	TURNER	SARAH	5
KNIGHT	JULIA	23	UFFREDUZZI	ELISA	20
LI	MONA MINGXIA	16	VESTERLUND	PER	19
LOSMA	EMILIANA	17	VITELLA	FEDERICO	8
MAULE	ROSANNA	7	WEEDON	ALEXIS	21
MORRIS	NATHALIE	3	WELSH	KERRIE	6
MUKHERJEE	DEBASHREE	3	WILLIAMS	MELANIE	6

Panel Abstracts

Wednesday 13 April 11.50-1.35 Cinema-Room 207

STRAND A: WOMEN'S FILM HISTORIOGRAPHY

Panel A1: *Historiography: Women In & Out Of The Archives*

Chair: **Shelley Stamp** (Univ. UC, Santa Cruz)

Annette Forster (Independent Scholar, Netherlands): *Rosa Porten and Feminist Film Historical Research*

Nowadays referred to as 'the unknown sister of Henny Porten', Rosa Porten was a well-known scenarist, actress and film director in Germany in the 1910s and early 1920s. Today, knowledge about her career and oeuvre is scant and hard to retrieve. Of the over 50 films to which she seems to have contributed, only two complete prints, one incomplete one and an early short are known to be extant in the archives. Trade papers used to record her productions, but not always to review them. Rosa Porten did indeed sign her own name for her scenarios and film roles, but used a pseudonym for the director's credit. These factors provide an interesting case for reviewing available feminist methodologies of film historical research. Which strategies are productive, which ones would be required, and what sources and knowledge do we need for avoiding the trap of just filling a gap?

Nathalie Morris (Special Collections, BFI): *Women in BFI Special Collections*

My paper will offer an illustrated presentation on 'Women in BFI Special Collections', looking at the work and archival traces (or lack of) of women as actresses, producers, directors, designers, script supervisors, publicists and more. Examples will range from the silent era to the present day, including, for example, Mabel Poulton (actress), Betty Box (producer), Catherine O'Brien (publicist), Janet Green (screenwriter), Ann Skinner (script supervisor-turned-producer).

Debashree Mukherjee (New York Univ.): *Notes on a Scandal: Writing Women's Film History Against an Absent Archive*

This paper focuses on the status and work of the female film professional in late colonial Bombay. It attempts to both theorize and confront the acute absence of women's histories from official archives of Indian cinema by turning to the discursive form of scandal as its evidentiary entry-point. I look at three incidents of scandal from the 1930s and 1940s to recuperate alternative biographies of Devika Rani (producer), Naseem Banu (actress), and Khorshed Homji (music composer). These women belonged to distinct socio-economic, religious and professional backgrounds but the irruption of scandal united them to contemporary anxieties about the 'respectability' of film workers. Tangentially, other narratives emerge – gender politics in a patriarchal industry; the actress as the emblematic urban 'modern girl;' and industrial-economic negotiations. I argue that alternative modes of truth-making, such as scandal and controversy, can be valid, productive sources for doing women's film history.

Optional Screenings, 15 mins.

Wednesday 13 April 11.50-1.35 Room 233

STRAND B: NEGOTIATIONS & RESISTANCES

Panel B1: *Negotiating Feminism, Film History & Hollywood*

Chair: **Kay Armatage** (Univ. Toronto)

Isabel Arredondo (SUNY, Plattsburgh): ***My Films Are not Feminist: Relationships Between Feminist History and Women's History in the Case of Third-Wave Mexican Women Filmmakers***

Two generations of Mexican women filmmakers interested in women issues attended the 'Gathering of Latina Women Filmmakers and Videomakers' (Tijuana, Mexico, 1990). It became clear during the sessions that not all the women filmmakers shared the same views on issues ranging from working with film unions to defining the goals of feminist films and understanding the identities of women filmmakers. After the meeting, all the members of the younger generation declared to the press that their films were not feminist. The split between second and third generations Mexican women filmmakers is the focus of my paper. What can explain the different positions of the two generations? Do changes in the educational system and the professional world account for some of the differences? And, how do notions of feminist history and women's history help us frame the split that took place in Tijuana?

Eyelem Atakav (Univ. East Anglia): ***Feminism and Women's Film History in Turkey: The 1980s***

This paper examines the relationship between feminism and cinema in Turkey in the context of the women's movement and films of the 1980s. In focusing on the nature and implications of the representation of women constructed in Turkish cinema and the issues addressed by the women's movement, it argues that there are connections to be made on an analytical and theoretical level between the two sets of practices. The paper argues that the enforced depoliticisation introduced after the 1980 coup is responsible for uniting feminism and film. First, the feminist movement was able to flourish precisely because it was not perceived as political or politically significant. In a parallel move in the films of the 1980s there was an increased tendency to focus on women's issues and lives in order to avoid the overtly political. Secondly, women's films of the 1980s do not merely reflect a unitary patriarchal logic but are also sites of power relations and political processes through which gender hierarchies are both created and contested. Turkish cinema reveals powerful cross-currents producing complex and often contradictory effects, acting both to reinforce and to mitigate against the manifestations of male dominance in different narratives and contexts. However despite these complexities, gender asymmetry in Turkish society is produced, represented and reproduced through filmic texts.

Dawn Hall (Western Kentucky Univ.): ***Opening a Space for Female Filmmakers: Risk-Taking in Deepa Mehta's Fire (1996) and Sally Potter's Yes (2004)***

Deepa Mehta's *Fire* and Sally Potter's *Yes* explore female identity and sexuality by negating the 'male gaze,' while their representation of marginalized people opens up space to reflect upon a female filmmaker's fears concerning how their films are received and how this may lead to a reduction of opportunity. Like the characters in their films, female film directors are also 'others' who have to struggle so their voices are heard and many times live in constant fear of 'being thrown out' for offering ideas that challenge normative ideology. In her article, 'Is the Gaze Male?' Sheila Johnston addresses female spectators' 'need for feminist films that at once construct woman as spectator without offering the repressive identifications of Hollywood films and that satisfy our craving for pleasure' (1973: 355). By offering complicated, female-centred narratives and strong female protagonists who have the ability to ask questions about identity and desire without punishment, Mehta's *Fire* and Potter's *Yes* join the small number of films that create a space for risk-taking through negating the 'male gaze.'

Katarzyna Paszkiewicz (Univ. Barcelona): ***Hollywood Transgressor or Hollywood Transvestite: The Reception of Kathryn Bigelow's The Hurt Locker (2008)***

The purpose of this paper is to explore some of the critical discourses that circulate around Kathryn Bigelow's film *The Hurt Locker* and to show how they are based on the presumed division between mainstream and art-house cinema. Bigelow's status seems under negotiation, as she is often classified as a European-inspired *auteur* working within Hollywood, or a mainstream 'action director' who disguises as a man to earn the respect of the cinematic industry. In order to examine the fraught and multivalent place of women's authorship in postmodern cinema, my aim is to analyse both the reviews and the film itself, which, in its reflexion on the cinematic gaze and the nature of the hero worship, can be understood as a self-conscious play with genre and gender.

STRAND C: FORMS & AESTHETICS

Panel C1: *Hysteriography*

Chair: **Julia Knight** (Univ. Sunderland)

Lucy Reynolds (Independent Filmmaker): *Resistant Forms: Situating Women's Experimental Cinema*.

In 1978, Laura Mulvey presented a paper to the Oxford Women's Studies Committee on the subject of 'Film, Feminism and the Avant-garde.' Surveying the situation for women, both on the screen and behind the camera, she declared that it was 'now possible to make some tentative assessments of feminist film criticism, find some perspectives on the past and discuss directions for the future.' (O'Pray: 1996: 199) Including mention of avant-garde practitioners such as Joyce Wieland and Annabel Nicolson alongside more narrative filmmakers, Mulvey's paper is significant as a revealing measure of where women filmmakers saw themselves following the first flush of second wave feminism.

Returning to her text some thirty-three years later, has Mulvey's optimism for a broad and vibrant feminist film culture been realised? For whilst Mulvey's earlier psychoanalytical interpretation of female representation in narrative cinema retains its potency in the film studies classroom, have other theoretical frameworks been usefully developed since, particularly to read films of a more experimental and formalist form? To what extent can a meaningful canon of feminist filmmaking be identified? Or does the term now carry reductive connotations, both for understanding women filmmakers of the past, as well as interpreting present and future practices? This paper revisits Mulvey's text, finding in it a potent starting point to consider the contribution of feminist film methodologies to the interpretation of women's experimental film practice, both now and past.

Sarah Turner (Independent Filmmaker): *'Perestroika'*

Perestroika (2009) explores technologies of memory, temporality and loss. Or, the relationship between time, photography and death. It explores ideas of what is 'truth', 'fact', 'evidence' and 'record', and in doing so, it plays with some of the 'facts' of my life. Therefore, it's a documentary which is autobiographical, a fiction which is also an essay, but mostly it's a poem, which is an extended meditation on the nature of affect or the ability of the image to represent experience. As a documentary, *Perestroika* deploys the *truth of fiction* in order to explicitly discuss ideas of how experience is framed -- through memory, which is a set of stories we tell of ourselves and others. Or, how our stories of ourselves are constructed through others experience of us, or, how the other holds our stories. Or, therefore, how we are framed through a relational narrative interplay. Women's experimental film has consistently concerned the interplay between two apparently irreconcilable tensions: narration and abstraction. It is an experiential cinema that prioritises the affectual.

In this paper I will focus on *Perestroika* in order to explore and reference the formal innovation that has consistently been present within the feminist avant-garde (Sandra Lahire, Lis Rhodes, etc). This body of work foregrounds the tension between narration and abstraction; it is derived from modernist literary practices and is a formal strategy that has made a unique contribution to film language, which, to date, is perhaps under explored.

Helena Blaker (Independent Scholar): *Performance in Film: Life, Politics, Medium*

In the last ten years, performance in visual art has become a matter of intense concern. The history of performance in visual art has been mediated, to a large extent, through experimental filmmaking; and yet the ethics of live performance have often meant that the image has been disavowed.

This paper will look at some of the fragile film records that have come down to us from live performances, and at contrasting approaches to film by artists working live in changing political, theoretical and interdisciplinary contexts. Filmmakers and artists using film in relation to visual art include Carolee Schneeman, Gina Pane and Mona Hatoum; and in relation to dance, Yvonne Rainer and Becky Edmunds; their representation of the body in film will be compared with the work of experimental filmmakers Sandra Lahire and Alia Syed. In this way, the paper aims to expand the borders of the theoretical context within which the history of women's filmmaking is considered, to address the question of parallel histories and the notion of cinema and gallery contexts, and to shine light on what may be embodied within film and performed through the medium itself.

Screening: 15 minute extract from *Perestroika* (d. Sarah Turner, 2009)

STRAND D: WOMEN IN & OUT OF THE STUDIOS

Panel D1: *Women's Production Roles in Context*

Chair: **Angela Werndly** (Univ. Sunderland)

Kerrie Welsh (New York Univ.): *Louise Tiranoff, The Women's Movement and the Archive in My Closet*

This paper will present original research on filmmaker Louise Tiranoff who has a thirty-plus year career as a director, producer and camerawoman. Drawing on the work of Karen Ward Mahar and Alexis Krasilovsky, this paper will reflect on the structural powers, sociological patterns, and collective actions that have influenced Tiranoff's career. Particular attention will be paid to the impact of the second wave women's movement (NOW v. WABC-TV, FCC, and WRC-TV), the physical architecture at WRC-TV (NBC/ channel four), and union sex-desegregation. My paper is part of an oral history project begun by Tiranoff at Tisch School of the Arts, New York University. The archive includes interviews with 76 female filmmakers conducted between 1998 and 2002. I am working to publish the archive so that these interviews can be available to future filmmakers and scholars.

Vicky Ball (Univ. Sunderland) & **Melanie Bell** (Univ. Newcastle): *Women at Work in the British Film and Television Industries*

Women's participation in film-making and television production has received relatively little attention in academic film/television histories. Women's under-representation in key roles like direction has positioned women directors as 'exceptional' whilst their over-representation in areas such as costume and make-up has created a gendered sphere which has been marginalised by male dominated academic and journalistic criticism driven by models of 'authorship'.

This paper will explore the body of existing research that *has* accumulated around women's participation in British film-making and television production, given women's movement between these interrelated spheres. It does so in order to understand not only how existing research can inform our knowledge of women's experiences in these two production cultures but also the gaps and absences from this research. It will conclude by exploring case studies drawn from each speaker's current research -- respectively on women's contemporary film production and women's TV drama production -- that attempt to address some of the current absences in feminist research on women's production histories past and present.

Melanie Williams (Univ. East Anglia): *Considering Continuity: A Case Study of Barbara Cole and Maggie Unsworth's Work with David Lean*

This paper will look at continuity or script supervision, an area of film labour often occupied by women, to the extent that its traditional unofficial nomenclature was 'continuity girl.' As Sue Harper has noted, despite its importance in film production, its position as a 'female prerogative' has meant an 'attendant lack of status.' Using the example of director David Lean, and two female continuity supervisors he worked with -- Barbara Cole/Beale (on two productions) and Maggie Sibley/Shipway/Unsworth (on twelve productions) -- and making use of archival sources such as Lean's letters to Cole (with whom he was also in a relationship for several years) and BECTU oral history interviews, this paper will attempt to use these two specific instances of the interaction between director and continuity supervisor as a pilot study for further possible research into this deeply gendered aspect of film production organisation.

Frances Tempest (Univ. Bournemouth): *The Status of Costume Design in the British Film and Television Industry*

Starting with my background in the field of costume design, I am currently conducting a series of interviews with established British costume designers about their long careers in the film and television industry. A dominant theme emerging from this work is that of the status of the costume designer, frequently female, within the male dominated and hierarchical industry. I discuss the manner in which costume designers have carved their role, along with the proposition that the entire Costume Department has become feminised regardless of the actual gender of the designer concerned. The concerns of dress and appearance would appear to have been compartmentalised as 'feminine' with the result that the number of male costume designers has declined significantly. The number of female costume students vastly outnumbers the number of male students, thus perpetuating the concept of a Female Department. This process of 'feminisation' has resulted in both a loss of status alongside lower levels of both pay and staffing.

STRAND A: WOMEN'S FILM HISTORIOGRAPHY

Panel A2: *Rewriting Film Histories*

Chair: **Laraine Porter** (De Montfort Univ.)

Kim Tomadjoglou (Independent Curator, Washington): *Her Great Adventure - Alice Guy Blaché*

Alice Guy Blaché's story is unique in the history of moving images; a pioneer and a woman, she was at the forefront of international technological, industrial, and cultural changes that defined the cinema as a new popular form of mass-media entertainment. From early sound technology -- Gaumont's chronophone synchronized sound system (Guy's films of singers and other performers, 1902-1906) -- to overseeing her own company, Solax (1910-1914), to directing independent features, like *The Ocean Waif* (1916), Guy fully participated in all aspects of the evolving motion picture business, assuming a range of roles and adapting to rapidly changing developments and challenges. Her most celebrated achievement is having been the first women film director in history, yet this honor only scratches the surface of what she actually accomplished. It hardly suggests the many doors she opened for women as creative professionals and as powerful agents of economic and social change.

My presentation explores ways we can think about reframing film history from a transnational perspective by examining overlooked and often contradictory aspects that define Alice Guy's life and career, including her status as an immigrant, her possible feminist inclinations, and the sometimes conservative and problematic representations of race, class, gender, and family in her work.

Rosanna Maule (Concordia Univ. Montreal): *Female, Singular: Women in French Cinephilia*

Cinephilia has only recently become the subject of scholarly scrutiny and remains a vastly overlooked area within feminist approaches to film history. In my present research I examine women's cinephilia not just as a way to reconceptualize female spectatorship, but as a crucial subtext to rethink women's filmmaking practices and roles in cinematic institutions. Using Marie Epstein and Germaine Dulacs' writings, correspondence, and public lectures, as well as reports and documents illustrating these filmmakers' active rapports with film clubs and archives, this paper draws an alternative genealogy of French cinephilia.

Shelley Stamp (Univ. UC, Santa Cruz): *Women's Labor, Creative Control, and 'Independence' in Early Hollywood; or, the Price of a Good Time*

This paper examines discourses surrounding three female stars contracted with Lois Weber Productions in the late 1910s and early 1920s, arguing that narratives of independence evident in publicity concerning the formation of Weber's production company were complicated by the star texts of her three key players: Mildred Harris Chaplin, Anita Stewart and Claire Windsor. Drawing on items from the popular press, fan magazines, gossip columnists, product ads, music publishing, marketing materials and movie trade papers, I examine competing narratives about women's labor, creativity and 'independence' in early Hollywood. These case studies underline tensions surrounding notions of female independence and creative control that crystallized in the late 1910s and early 1920s as female filmmakers were increasingly shut out of the US industry, earlier modes of film production gave way to studio conglomeration, and a full-blown celebrity culture took hold.

STRAND B: NEGOTIATIONS & RESISTANCES

Panel B2: *Producer/Director Relations with Stars & Performers*

Chair: **Martin Shingler** (Univ. Sunderland)

Federico Vitella (Univ. Florence): ***The Rise of a Modern Star: Monica Vitti in L'avventura (Antonioni, 1960)***

My paper studies the construction of Monica Vitti's star image in Michelangelo Antonioni's *L'avventura*. In spite of her very limited contractual power stated by the production documents, the centrality of her image in the film's paratexts, the quality and quantity of her screen presence, and even some intriguing metacinematic connotations of the story clearly prove a complex star-building attempt, deliberately orchestrated by Antonioni himself. The operation has a double meaning. The problematic non-Mediterranean physicality, the silent era acting technique, and the role played by Monica Vitti are indeed devoted, on the one hand, to challenge the proto-classic stardom of the Italian *maggiorate* Mangano, Loren, Lollobrigida; on the other hand, to propose a fresh modern star paradigm, along the line established by Ingrid Bergman and Roberto Rossellini in such films as *Stromboli* (1948), *Europa '51* (1952) and *Viaggio in Italia* (1953).

John Ayres (Univ. Manchester): ***Producing Outside the Box: Betty E. Box and Post-war British Cinema***

The study of British cinema production has been dominated by the discussion of male producers/directors. As a result, the major contribution of female practitioners has been minimised, an imbalance that British film scholarship has yet to fully redress. This is particularly concerning for earlier British films, where the greater gender disparity has often camouflaged the significant contribution made by women. This paper draws attention to the work of Betty E. Box, producer of some of the most successful box office hits of post-war British cinema. By examining the gender dynamics of films such as *The 39 Steps* and *Doctor in the House*, the paper moves to evaluate the extent to which Box gravitated to material that questioned accepted stereotypes of masculinity/femininity, and how casting decisions resulted in actors Dirk Bogarde and Kenneth More playing out a more problematic incarnation of masculinity than had been previously seen in British cinema.

Christine Etherington-Wright (Univ. Portsmouth): ***Mike Leigh's Female Protagonists: Exploring Agency and Performance in the Actor/Director Relationship***

This paper looks at the performative style of several key female protagonists (Lesley Manville, Ruth Sheen and Sally Hawkins) in the films of Mike Leigh. According to Leigh all actors are cast because of their performance abilities and subsequent individual meetings create, develop and hone the character (McDonald, 1999: 138).

My paper discusses whether the finished performances are the product of directorial control nuanced by Leigh's methods or the instinctive creativity determined by the actors themselves. I will analyse the distinct relationships cultivated between Leigh and these actors and the ways in which his visions of female identity are explored through their performances. I want to raise the issue of female agency and performance within the context of realism, a mode that has habitually been construed as offering less interpretative space than the more expressive genre of melodrama.

STRAND C: FORMS & AESTHETICS

Panel C2: *Rethinking Cinema's Appeals for Women*

Chair: **Sofia Bull** (Univ. Stockholm)

Esther Sonnet (Univ. Portsmouth): *Revisioning Hollywood Crime and Gangster Film History in the 1930s*

This paper examines the centrality of archival research to the project of 'doing women's film history'. Derived from genre theorising from male critics such as Warshaw (1948), the common-place generalisation has been that crime/gangster films of the 30s were male-addressed films of little interest or relevance to female Depression audiences. However, extensive original archive work at The Margaret Herrick Library AMPAS, LA has revealed the contours of a very different history. The paper will establish that over 560 titles were produced between 1928-1939 that utilised the figures of the gangster within hybrid forms of romance and melodrama, in contradistinction to the classic view of the gangster film as the rise and fall of a charismatic leader within gang structures. Drawing directly on the production documents of the Production Code Administration of the 1930s that recorded debates about script, use of stars, narrative and audience, this paper will argue for a fundamental recasting of the ideological provenance of crime film in relation to women's effacement from the historical record, their significant presence as audiences for putatively 'male genres' and will consider the potentially transgressive pleasures of the female-addressed crime film.

Helen Hanson (Univ. Exeter): *'B' for Blane and 'B' for Budget: Female Adventures and Industry Strategies in the Hollywood Series Film*

Critical histories of the studio-era Hollywood 'woman's film' have, to a large extent, been concerned with dramas, romances and comedies made in the 'prestige' or 'A' bracket of production. While these films featured some of Hollywood major stars, and comprised some of the biggest box office draws of the 1930s and 1940s, a gap exists in current feminist film historiography. Concurrent to the production of 'A' films for women was the proliferation of the female-centred 'B' film. These films featured popular contract stars playing resourceful and independent working women – female reporters, detectives and 'typewriter girls' in narratives permitting them to intertwine working roles with adventure. The production, budget and style of 'B' films varied according to the studios in which they were produced, but a common strategy shared by major studios was the production of B film in series. Series films exploited elements of seriality in terms of characters and stars, narrative chains and continuities whilst retaining discreteness overall.

This paper will examine the popularity of the female-centred series, such as the Torchy Blane series (Warner Bros. 1936-1939), the Maisie series (MGM 1939-1947) and the Blondie series (Columbia 1938-1950). Taking the Torchy Blane series as a case study, the paper will analyse the importance of the 'B' and series film to the industry. It will consider the distinct narrative address, narrative form and female representation of this lower-budget sector. It will trace the antecedents of the series film in American serial films of the 1910s, and it will chart the inter-medial proliferation of some of the series characters in newspaper cartoon strips, radio shows, and television. Overall the paper will explore how the series film productively points up some of the interpretive and methodological tensions in feminist approaches to popular cinema, and the particular questions arising for feminist histories of the Hollywood industry its exploitation of female addressed forms, and its popular representations of female independence.

Sarah Street (Univ. Bristol): *Women and Colour Cinema*

The link between women and colour has been pronounced in both production and reception throughout cinema history. When the first colour films were screened, their appeal to women in particular was a central mode of address. Women also constituted a large part of the workforce in early applied colour techniques of hand-painting, and Natalie Kalmus was Head of Technicolor's Color Advisory Service from the 1930s. Colour advertising films also emphasised a gendered address in the form of fashion shorts in the silent and sound periods. The paper will survey the long-standing and often culturally determined appeal of colour for women as a central element of gendering the audience. I consider how particular 'women's genres' became associated with colour, particularly melodramas which invited women to 'read' the films through colour as a central element of their address, often linking in with commercial tie-ins for costume and accessories. Finally, I address how far women filmmakers have deployed colour or have been interested in exploring colour in an assertive, rather than a reactive manner.

STRAND D: WOMEN IN & OUT OF THE STUDIOS

Panel D2: *Researching Audiences & Moving-Going*

Chair: **Shaun Moores** (Univ. Sunderland)

Lisa Stead (Univ. Exeter): *'Carried away from this workaday world and its troubles:' Working Girl Female Audiences of British Silent Cinema*

This paper investigates the 'working girl' female cinema audiences of British silent cinema. Appearing in a range of film texts, the young working woman constituted a strong representational presence within British silent film culture. While the British industry conceptualized a working-girl audience sector through trade discourses, advertising and marketing, the working girl was also a label with which women self-identified.

Through the fan magazine letters page and within various forms of cinema ephemera like the cinema postcard, fans engaged with film culture as a focal point for discussion and debate concerning young working women's own sense of class, gender and age identity during a period of profound cultural transition. The paper will uncover evidence of young women's engagement with cinema culture as a particular audience sector, specifically showcasing original archival examples of fan ephemera from Exeter's *Bill Douglas Centre for the History of Film and Popular Culture*.

Leslie Midkiff DeBauche (Univ. Wisconsin, Stevens Point): *Why Bertha Glennon Went to the Strand*

This paper will offer a fine-grained image of movie-going in a small city in the upper mid-western part of the United States. In 1918, during her last year of secondary school, Bertha Glennon kept a diary of her daily activities and she also created a scrapbook in which she saved descriptions of and ephemera from special occasions. Movies figured in both the quotidian and the special moments of her life.

These documents provide the opportunity to examine one individual's movie-going choices within the context of U.S. film industry distribution practices at the time, film's relationship with American book publishing, and an increasingly national culture of girlhood during World War I.

Cheryl Roberts (Univ. Brighton): *Dispelling the Myth: The Influence of Cinema on the Fashion of Young, Working-Class Women in the 1930s*

Cinema, one of the major influences on popular culture in the inter-war years was reflected in the lives of women across class. By 1937, twenty million people attended cinemas each week. Film viewing articulated particular forms of language, ideas of family life and visions of what constituted femininity and glamour, yet should the frequency of an image be proof of its penetration?

This object-based dress and social history paper will argue the widely accepted view that young working-class women in the 1930s were hugely influenced by the cinema in their appearance and fashion clothing choices. This research explores the issues of fashionability, modernity, peer group pressure and cohesion, leisure and related dress codes. It is part of a wider study involving analysis of the reactions of the middle and upper classes to the emergence of more fashionably dressed, young working-class women as well as the reactions of the women's parents and peers.

STRAND A: WOMEN'S FILM HISTORIOGRAPHY

Panel A3: *Restoring Women Filmmakers to National Histories: 1*

Chair: **Leslie Midkiff DeBauche** (Univ. Wisconsin, Stevens Point)

Ana Catarina Pereira (Univ. Beira, Portugal): *Female Directors in the History of Portuguese Cinema*

The first Portuguese feature film directed by a woman dates back to 1946, 50 years after the film industry in Portugal set off. *Três dias sem Deus* (*Three days without God*), by Bárbara Virgínia, was actually introduced at the first edition of the Cannes Film Festival, on October 5th, 1946, in spite of the Portuguese audience's lack of interest. This was the first and only fiction feature film directed by a woman during the Portuguese dictatorial regime of Estado Novo (1932-1974).

Nonetheless, one cannot disregard the importance of a number of female figures who were pioneers in the Portuguese cinema, such as producer and scriptwriter Virgínia de Castro e Almeida (in the 1920s) or scriptwriter, actress, and director Maria Emília Castelo Branco, who in the 1950s, and despite several requests for endowment to the SNI (National Information Service), could not finish her feature film, having directed only short films. The second fiction feature film directed by a woman in Portugal – *Trás-os-Montes* – dates back to 1976 and was co-directed by Margarida Cordeiro and António Reis. From then on and until late 2009, 43 fiction feature films were directed by women. The first strong decade in terms of production was the 1980s, a time when names as Monique Rutler, Solveig Nordlund and Margarida Gil stood out. In the following decade, Teresa Villaverde executes her first works and highlights of the first decade of 2000 are 21 films (almost half of the above-mentioned 43), directed by Catarina Ruivo, Cláudia Tomaz and Raquel Freire.

The purpose of this paper will be to answer to the question: 'What is one speaking of when one speaks of the representation of female directors in Portuguese film production?'

Ursula-Helen Kassaveti (Univ. Athens): *Searching for Greek 'Women's' Cinema in the 1960s: The Case of Maria Plyta*

In the context of modern-day theoretical approaches and differentiations as to cinematic theory and genre theory, the description 'women's' cinema seems to young listeners and viewers a fully acceptable and correct term that includes a broad and multi-faceted range of meanings. Undoubtedly, this term could not be readily applied to Greek commercial cinema in the 1960s, since socially and politically conservative Greece was experiencing the first effects of internal migration and was imposing random forms of discrimination against women and children.

Seen in this light, it would be very difficult to refer to Greek 'women's' cinema and female creators. Even so, in the midst of a period marked by difficulties and significant differentiation in Greek cinema, there appeared in the early 1950s the first female cinema director: Maria Plyta. In an entirely male-dominated field, Plyta began her ascent in the world of cinema through writing. She pursued a direction significantly different from that followed by her colleagues: even though she was involved in the commercial and very popular genre of melodrama, she developed an independent approach, especially as regards content, and gave elevated status to the figures of woman-mother and child while avoiding the standardised conventions of more 'adult' melodramas.

The aim of this proposal is to present Maria Plyta's cinema work, the crucial image/role of women in her films, and the attempt to designate her output as "women's cinema", even in this, its earliest form. The presentation will be supported by appropriate audio and visual material.

Somayeh Ghazizadeh (Univ. Iran): *Post-Revolutionary Iranian Women Filmmakers and Feminism*

There are no exact and authentic statistics about the number of post-revolutionary Iranian women filmmakers, but approximately they number around 20. Before the revolution there were no female Iranian filmmakers other than Shahla Riahi, who was Iranian actress who cooperated in making a film. However, after the Islamic revolution of Iran, numbers of artist women started to work in cinema in different positions, as filmmakers, producers, editors, set designers and whatever men do in cinema.

This paper focuses on Post-Revolutionary Iranian Women Filmmakers as directors and their connection with Feminism. Although at present Iranian women filmmakers number more than 20, (including Niki Karimi, Ferial Behzad, Ensiyeh Shah Hosseini, Marziyeh Boroumand, Shalizeh Aarefpour, Shaghayegh Orfinezhad, Mona Zandi, Manizheh Hekmat, and . . .), this paper will consider the role, works, and feminist films of just three Post-revolutionary Iranian Women

Filmmakers, as representing the mainstream of women filmmaking in Iran. 1) Rakhshan Bani Etemad (Social-Political) 2) Tahmineh Milani (Strong Feminism) 3) Pouran Derakhshandeh (Social –Children)

The research not only uncovers their role in Iranian cinema, but it will study them as filmmakers who make films not only as directors but as Iranian women prophets. In their works and in their vision they all have points in common and also they feel that filmmaking is their prophetic mission through which to speak about Iranian women. And if they cannot speak their minds (because of different constraints such as, these days, Iran's condition and government's vision), they couldn't make films such as those of Rakhshan Bani Etemad.

Bani Etemad, Milani and Derakhshandeh are remarkable Post-revolutionary Iranian Women Filmmakers who have definitely influenced other women filmmakers in Iran. One shot is enough to recognize their films. All of them have distinctive methods of filmmaking and actually they have made, and still they are making, the history of Iranian women's films.

Kirstie Imber (Royal College of Art): *Unveiling the Voice: The Use of Sound and Vocality in the Films of Shirin Neshat*

This paper will focus on the role of vocality and aurality in the cinematic works of Shirin Neshat (Iran/USA). The voices within these works are both dramatized and distorted and language has been strategically manipulated in contexts specific to the experience of Islam, demonstrating that cinematic form and technique are being used in highly innovative ways and therefore demand further attention. Indeed most critics focus solely on Neshat's visual language, seldom exploring the specificities of her Iranian/Islamic references.

As my paper demonstrates, a focus on Neshat's aural and vocal strategies reveals a practice riddled with complex references to Iranian filmmaking and the institution of Iranian cinema in post-revolutionary Iran. For example *Turbulent* (1998) constructs a sound/image regime that both conforms to and critiques the 'morality codes' within Iranian cinema. Other examples further demonstrate how Neshat uses aurality and vocality to negotiate issues surrounding censorship and the expression of taboo subjects – issues still powerfully prominent throughout Iranian cinema.

My paper therefore offers an alternative, more nuanced reading of Neshat's work, which in turn sheds light on how our understanding of Iranian filmmaking – both within Iran and the diaspora – is informed.

STRAND B: NEGOTIATIONS & RESISTANCES

Panel B3: Women's Cultural Practices v. Oppressive Regimes

Chair: **Angela Werndly** (Univ. Sunderland)

Veronica Pravadelli (Univ. Rome): *The Politics of Female Friendship in Contemporary Women's Cinema: The Case of Mediterranean Women Filmmakers*

In contemporary women's cinema from North Africa and the Middle East female friendship is very often the key through which cultural and historical conflicts are narrated. Recent films from Algeria and Tunisia, Lebanon, Israel and Iran have focused on the growth of interracial female friendship in the context of political, racial and religious struggles. These films – which shares features of what Naficy has called accented cinema – are structured around a recurrent topos: while women build up profound friendships, despite differences (of race, religion, class, etc.), the political and public arena surrounding them is ruled by strategies of (male) domination and exclusion.

Such a scenario poses a whole set of interesting questions both in relation to contemporary social and political dynamics and to the history of women's cinema. Drawing on the work of such theorists as Jacques Derrida and Juliet Mitchell I will show that it is more productive to look at these films in a global and transnational context than with regard to authorial concerns.

Elizabeth Ramirez (Univ. Warwick): *Texturing the Past: Women Documentary Makers and the Narration of Pinochet Dictatorship*

Women have played a major role in the memory struggle in the aftermath of Latin American dictatorships. In Chile, the presence of female documentary makers in this battle is significant, becoming increasingly prominent in the last decade. However, their work has seldom been addressed from a critical stance. This paper will focus on the work of a new generation of filmmakers that grew up during the dictatorship and started directing during the transition to democracy. I would argue that their narrations not only oppose the 'cultural model of promotion of oblivion' fostered by the official discourse (Del Campo and Arias, 2009), but also, that many of these works seem to be motivated by a quest for the possible ways 'to combine the need to construct a public narrative that at the same time contributes to the recuperation of intimacy and privacy' (Jelin, 2003).

Adelina Sanchez-Espinosa (Univ. Granada): *Reviewing the Neglected Past, Unveiling the Dubious Present, Visualizing Feminist Futures: Creative 'Back Rooms' During the Spanish 'Naked Years'*

My paper is organized around two metaphors: the 'back room' and the 'naked years.' The former refers to the neglected places of memory that women artists needed to revisit in order to move forward and leave behind the devastating effects on creativity of Franco's dictatorship. Confessional writing and filming overcomes the trauma of 40 years of silence. I start with women's writing (Carmen Martín Gaité's seminal *The Back Room*, published three years after the death of Franco). This opens my analysis of women's films and films on women from 1975 to 1990. The confessional approaches of Cecilia Bartolomé's 1978 *Vámonos Bárbara* (*Lets Go, Barbara*), Josefina Molina's *Evening Performance* (1981) and Pilar Miró's *Gary Cooper, Thou Who Art in Heaven* (1981), together with Almodóvar's *What Have I Done to Deserve This?* (1984), *The Law of Desire* (1987) and *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown* (1988) will all receive attention here. I then turn to the 'naked years' metaphor which has recently been used to indicate the need for women's liberation and the confusingly dangerous manipulation of 'body politics' during the Spanish Transition as illustrated by the recent retro-look at the Transition pornography by filmmakers Dunia Ayaso and Félix Sabroso (*The Naked Years*, 2008).

By looking at these narratives of the Spanish Transition I hope to show their politics of representation while also illustrating how they envisaged and anticipated the main issues of what was then the feminist future and is now the feminist present.

Susanne Sklepek (Univ. Nottingham): *Vera Chytilova: A Woman's Take on the CSSR*

My research subject, and the focus of my presentation, will be the cinema of Czech film director Vera Chytilova. Born in 1929, she is the unique case of a woman filmmaker who directed all throughout the socialist period and continues to do so until today. Focusing on films from her pre-1989 period, I will argue that she had the capacity of providing socialist women (and men, to some extent) with 'representation' a lot closer to their reality, not in the expected way of giving women a direct 'voice' but by unveiling the predominantly patriarchal character of Czechoslovak society and the failings of socialism on a larger scale (showing short film clips to support this argument).

STRAND C: FORMS & AESTHETICS

Panel C3: *Aesthetics of Women's Avant-Garde Practices*

Chair: **Christine Gledhill** (Univ. Sunderland)

Camilla Peters (Univ. Falmouth): *Margaret Tait: A Woman is Speaking (1918-1999)*

After her death, renewed interest developed in the work of the Scottish filmmaker Margaret Tait. Todd and Cook (2004) published a selection of writings by and about her and Tate Modern (2009) compiled a tribute screening of her work, situating her as an important independent, avant-garde filmmaker. I aim to draw on the central understanding of Tait as a modernist film-poet by evaluating her work within the framework of feminist film practice involving the intimate observations of the personal, the domestic and the specificity of location. Tait's films rhythmically create ambivalent dialectical signifying realms in which the audience must actively and critically engage. Her self-conscious filming on a hand-held Bolex is integral to her films' meanings and absolute visual pleasure. I argue that while her reluctance to be drawn into committee-driven funding, whose narrow remits and political pressures financed only certain kinds of film-making, did cause her difficulties (Neely, 2008), paradoxically, it was her refusal to conform that enabled her to maintain and develop her vision.

Su Ansell (De Montfort Univ.): *Mining Poetic Connection with Moving Image*

This paper is an exploration of what it means for me as a filmmaker/practitioner to create, what I refer to as: 'poetry for the screen'. It examines the implications this has for the interpretation and development of 'experimental film' and looks at this subject in the context of filmmaking by women artists and filmmakers in particular. This term is taken to include film art, such as the video installation work of the Wilson sisters, or even experiences of enhanced reality using moving image and sound, such as the 'videowalks' of Canadian artist, Janet Cardiff. What it is *not* about, is making visuals to illustrate poetry, nor putting poetic text on screen, though both of these may also occur as part of a poetic film work.

I provide a short summary of many of the elements of poetic filmmaking, and refer to and undertake a brief examination of the theories of semiotics and poetics, where they are applicable to the creation of the type of film/art work mentioned above. I then discuss, giving examples from my own and others' work, including the seminal influence of the films of Maya Deren, how films created in this way provide a gateway to the imagination, eschewing many of the morès of conventional narrative structures, e.g. by not necessarily using dialogue, naturalistic performances, or plotting formulae, relying rather on meanings suggested by symbolic connection to convey a message, and express ideas or feelings. Finally, the impact of new technologies on poetic filmmaking is considered, specifically, the opening up of new possibilities for poetic connection to be made in the future, through immersive, interactive, pervasive and locative media.

Rosemary Hepworth (Univ. Cambridge): *Female and Filmic 'Formlessness'*

This paper examines two films by independent director Penny Woolcock: *Tina Goes Shopping* (1999) and *Tina Takes A Break* (2001). In Woolcock's portrayal of a working-class community on a Leeds council estate, the woman protagonist, Tina Crabtree, is a shoplifter whose successes and failures are produced by, and in response to, the specific order that conditions her environment. Pursuing a consideration of environmental *l'Informe* or 'formlessness' (Bataille), this paper looks at instances of mess as a measure of (female) disorder as it relates to the embodied relation of women to their environment. It then seeks to show that this 'formlessness' is echoed in the aesthetics of Woolcock's filmmaking. **Focusing on?** a style of formlessness that itself can be compared to contemporary strategies in feminine digital narrativity, this paper considers formlessness in film to be a feminine technique.

Cecile Chich (Univ. Paris): *Maria Klonaris & Katerina Thomadakis' Cinema of The Body: A Critical Contribution to Cinema*

Artists and theorists of Greek origin based in Paris, Maria Klonaris and Katerina Thomadaki are internationally acclaimed as prominent avant-garde filmmakers, innovative film theorists and pioneers in multimedia arts. Their collaborative oeuvre includes more than a hundred works in film, photography, video, multimedia performance and installation. They have also produced an important body of theory. Launched in the mid-70s, their *Cinema of the Body* is a radical revisitation of film from a feminist and transcultural perspective, addressing the representation of the gendered body by redefining the position of the female/androgynous subject. Well known to the UK avant-garde film scene since the 70's, Klonaris' and Thomadaki's *Cinema of the Body* has yet to become more widely recognised, as film histories tend to ignore non-narrative cinema on one side, and to be dominated by Anglo-Saxon paradigms on the other. My paper highlights the historical importance of Klonaris' and Thomadaki's *Cinema of the Body*, as well as its original contribution to aesthetical, political and philosophical contemporary debates. Artists' website: <http://www.klonaris-thomadaki.net>

STRAND D: WOMEN IN & OUT OF THE STUDIOS

Panel D3: *Questions of Power: Women Screenwriters*

Chair: **Sarah Street** (Univ. Bristol)

Giuliana Muscio (Univ. Padova, Italy): *American Women Screenwriters of the Silent Period*

In my research on American women screenwriters of the silent period I was particularly interested in the previous work experiences of these pioneers. Interestingly enough the group divides quite evenly in two sections: they came from film acting, or they came from writing in newspapers, magazines, or popular fiction. A few had experience on the stage or they were playwrights.

What was interesting however is the outcome of their careers – were the writers the best screenwriters, or did the actresses have more success in film terms? This is what we can discuss, filmographies at hand.

Michele Torre (Southern Illinois Univ.): *Not Just the Wife of the Studio Head: Antonina Khanzhonkova, Writer, Editor and Decision-Maker*

While there is much scholarship of late on Pre-revolutionary Russian cinema, almost all of it has centered on the male dominated industry, particularly the work of men like director Evgenii Bauer, actor Ivan Mozhukhin and studio head Alexander Khanzhonkov. Taking a cue from recent scholarship on the variety of women's roles in the cinema (see Bean and Negra, 2002), this paper will explore the various roles played by Antonina Khanzhonkova, wife of Alexander Khanzhonkov, in shaping the company. Khanzhonkova and her husband frequently worked together as a writing team on scripts and for the studio's various publications, in addition to making key decisions that would shape the company's future. This paper will delineate the role Antonina played in the decision making process for the studio, through her own writing and memoirs of people working in the industry.

Jill Nelmes (Univ. East London): *Screenwriter - Muriel Box*

Muriel Box began her career as a writer, creating stage plays with husband Sydney Box. Then, after taking over Verity Films, they moved into feature films as a screenwriting, producing and directing team. Box is credited as writer on 22 films and made an important contribution to British cinema in the 1940s and 1950s, *The Seventh Veil* winning an Oscar in 1946 for best original screenplay.

The Special Collection at the BFI holds Muriel Box's diaries for the years 1943 to 1958 and various drafts of screenplays such as *Eyewitness*, *The Seventh Veil* and *The Truth About Women*. In this paper I will first, draw attention to Muriel's role as a screenwriter and her writing partnership with Sydney Box; second, discuss the content of the screenplays available in the Special Collection, the changes to different drafts, why these occur and what they reveal about Box's writing style and her collaboration with Sydney Box.

J.E Smyth (Univ. Warwick): *Producing Women's Historical Fictions: Edna Ferber and Lillian Hellman in Hollywood*

Writers Edna Ferber and Lillian Hellman were arguably two of studio-era Hollywood's most influential women. While for four decades the major studios lined up to produce lavish adaptations of Ferber's historical fiction, Hellman was to adapt her own plays for Samuel Goldwyn and became one of the few screenwriters to work alone on major projects. On the set of *Giant* (1956), an adaptation of her most popular novel, Edna Ferber worked as script-vetter, screenwriter, producer, and post-production feminist critic, while two decades later, Twentieth Century-Fox's production of Hellman's *Julia* (1977) paid tribute to the writer's career and political conscience in a year the film industry called 'The Year of the Woman.' But just how 'powerful' were Ferber and Hellman? This paper will compare their experiences in shaping the productions of *Giant* and *Julia*, films made at the height of their cultural influence. Ferber and Hellman's careers both define the extent of women's power behind the camera and the dynamics of adapting and producing films about women's history.

STRAND A: WOMEN'S FILM HISTORIOGRAPHY

Panel A4: Restoring Women Filmmakers to National Histories: 2

Chair: **Christine Gledhill** (Univ. Sunderland)

Si Da (Univ. Peking) : *Changing the Images of Woman in Contemporary Chinese Cinema: An Analysis based on Li Yu's Four Films*

This paper analyzes the typical features of Chinese women characters seen in four films by female director Li Yu, and aims to discover the diverse and common features of Chinese women's identity. The paper considers five aspects: 1) Sexual insults from society; 2) Women's identity in the single parent family; 3) Metaphors and symbols of female gender; 4) Women's spiritual predicament of birth and death; 5) The negativity inside women's initiative-taking actions. My paper probes the methods the director uses in eulogizing the natural desire and will-to-life which are constrained by social obstacles. In depicting the life-style of marginalized groups who have not been recognised by the social mainstream, the director advocates women's self-awareness in acquiring equal gender rights. The paper argues that under the pressure of strict film censorship, the director's pessimistic but not desperate expression aims to awake the vigilance of the audience, thus her efforts represent a great advancement for Chinese film.

Mona Mingxia Li (Univ. Western Scotland): *A Female Filmmaker of the 'Fifth Generation' in China: Li Shaohong's Work and her Feminine Consciousness*

The 'Fifth Generation' of contemporary Chinese cinema is a term that no scholar can afford to miss in the current academic study of national cinema, world cinema, and East Asian film across the world. Although more scholarly attention has been paid to them and their films in English, Chinese, and other languages, it has focused predominantly on the two leading male fifth-generation film-makers, Zhang Yimou (1950-), Chen Kaige (1952-), and their well-known films such as *Red Sorghum* (1987), *Ju Dou* (1990), *Raise the Red Lantern* (1991), *Yellow Earth* (1984) and *Farewell My Concubine* (1993). However, this internationally acclaimed 'Fifth Generation' of film-makers also consists of five female directors: Hu Mei (1956-), Li Shaohong (1955-), Liu Miaomiao (1962-), Ning Ying (1959-), and Peng Xiaolian (1953-) who have received little attention so far in film studies. They have become an important force in this field and made remarkable achievements in this generation's art movement and in its development. Films made by these female directors also reflect the changing Chinese cinematic landscape in the post-Mao era.

Michael Smith (Univ. Leeds): *Tanaka Kinuyo – Women's Filmmaker or Woman Making Films?*

Best known as one of the most iconic actresses in Japanese cinema, Tanaka Kinuyo also directed six films between 1953 and 1962, making her the only female fiction film director working in Japan during a period in which the subjects of womanhood and female identity were being closely scrutinised within the nation. Through an analysis of her films in relation to the socio-political events of the period in which she worked, the paper's first aim is to critically position Tanaka as a filmmaker with a clear focus on the issues facing the postwar Japanese woman. Secondly, the paper questions whether Tanaka's works were reflective of her unique status as a woman making films about women, or merely contributions to the vast canon of female-centred postwar Japanese film characterised by male filmmakers such as Mizoguchi Kenj, Naruse Mikio, and Ozu Yasujiro.

Rashmi Sawhney (Dublin Institute of Technology): *Women Undoing 'National' Histories Through Regional Cinema: A 1980s Perspective on Gender and Reform in Colonial India*

This paper looks at the depiction of social reform in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century India in three women-directed films: Prema Karanth's *Phaniyamma* (1983, Kannada), Vijaya Mehta's *Rao Saheb* (1986, Marathi) and Aparna Sen's *Sati* (1989, Bengali). It engages with the films within the wider discursive context of colonialism, gender and nation, especially debates around women's social status, and the desire to shape the middle-class Indian woman foremost as a national subject. The argument developed is that the textual strategies and cinematic aesthetic in these films are indicative of a wider third world feminist perspective on gender and nation. The analysis -- rooted in regional and linguistic specificity -- adds richness to the predominantly Bengal-centric theorisation dominating contemporary scholarship of Indian national history and gender. It also allows for interrogating the significance the concept of feminism holds for the production and theorisation of contemporary women's films.

STRAND B: NEGOTIATIONS & RESISTANCES

Panel B4: *New Women, Cinema & Modernity*

Chair: Jane Gaines (Columbia Univ.)

Canan Balan (Istanbul Sehir Univ.): *Ottoman Women as Movie-Goers, 1910s-1920s*

This paper will examine how the Istanbulite middle-class female audiences' appreciation of European melodramas were celebrated and/or criticized by the novels and the journals of the late Ottoman Empire in the 1910s and 1920s. This period witnessed various means by which film criticism and cinema journalism became a profession while cinema-going offered new lifestyles through consumerism and fandom as depicted in the novels and the magazines of the period. The novels and memoirs that deal with cinematic spectatorship posited women as victims of consumerism, through the commodities imported from Western Europe, and therefore susceptible to 'westernization'. The journals, on the other hand, mostly run by the owners of the movie theatres, tended to celebrate the 'glamorous' lifestyles offered by the film stars and encouraged an 'elite' female audience profile mustered at the cinemas. Thus, it appears that the Ottoman penmen viewed cinemagoers mainly as women from either a moralistic or a consumerist perspective.

Eliza Anna Delveroudi (Univ. Crete): *Film Critics International: Women, Cinema and Modernity through the Eyes of a Greek Film Critic in the 1920s*

Iris Skaravaïou is a completely unknown and ignored Greek film critic, journalist and novelist, who wrote in film and small literary magazines, as well as for the daily Athens newspaper *I Vradyni* in the late 1920s. As one of the three film critics of the magazine *Kinimatografikos astir*, she contributed to shaping film analysis and criticism and to expanding film culture all over Greece. Several questions emerge, concerning her own class, education, professional life, and her possible sources, i.e. French, American and British journals. She addresses female readers by highlighting women's achievements in art, science and sport but, within the constraints of a conservative newspaper, her arguments are moderately feminist. Her texts testify to her familiarity with cinephilic trends developed in French and English journals, and her strong interest in modernism.

Ranita Chatterjee (Univ. Westminster): *Distant Voices: Women and Film in 1920s and 1930s Calcutta*

Women have always been an integral part of film, and film history, in India without necessarily having control over their representation in film, or writings on film. Indian film journals of the 1920s and 1930s abound in debates around women in film, and on the effects of cinema on women. These often echo nationalist debates of the time that positioned women as the repositories of culture. The burden of cultural representation fell strongly on women and this was especially true of the literature and cinema of Calcutta. At the same time women constituted a significant section of film audiences with advertising specifically targeting women.

This paper will examine writings by film actresses in 1920s and 1930s Bengali and English journals and study these in conjunction with industry voices on women in film, focussing on Calcutta. Does this new material add to, or indeed change, film history in India?

Emiliana Losma (Univ. Turin, Italy): *Women Directors In Italy: Indifference, Prejudice And Hostility*

The birth of cinema coincides with the appearance of the 'new woman:' while women try to assume a new role, to act their freedom and creativity, the cinema aspires to be a productive and cultural resource. There is a link between the women's movement and the first women directors: between the importance of the female eye behind the camera and women as subjects of the gaze, apparently free to represent themselves.

In Italy the majority of women directors assumed this role through established careers as 'Divas.' Female artists suffer from lack of tradition, of aesthetic codes, and from patriarchal prejudices. A male voice dictates the rules and the measure of a great film. Can this misogynist literature influence their vitality and their work? The price that women directors have paid for the legitimacy of cinema in Italy may have been their confinement within the bourgeois male imagination?

Thursday 14 April 2.30-4.15 Room 234

STRAND C: FORMS & AESTHETICS

Panel C4: Women & Documentary: *The Neglected Field*

Chair: **Melanie Williams** (Univ. East Anglia)

Sarah Easen (ITN Source Television Archive) & **Toby Haggith** (Imperial War Museum): ***British Women Filmmakers in the Non-Fiction Sector 1930-1960***

The examination of women in British film history has so far concentrated primarily on their roles within the feature industry. The appreciation of women directors and producers during the silent period is well underway as is recognition for contemporary women filmmakers. However the role of women in the non-fiction sector who made instructional, educational, propaganda, industrial and social documentary films has mostly been neglected. This paper intends to provide a brief overview of some of the women who worked making these films from the early days of sound in the 1930s through to 1960 including a case study of the director Kay Mander, who worked as a director of documentary films from 1940 to 1957. Mander's career exemplifies the paths followed by many female directors of non-fiction films during this period, but is of particular interest because of her professional and political links with the leading figures of the documentary movement in the 1940s. We will argue that her 1945 social documentary film *Homes for the People* deserves to be recognised as a groundbreaking work of similar importance to the earlier and more famous *Housing Problems* in giving voice to the opinions of ordinary women.

Barbara Evans (York Univ., Toronto): ***Women in the British Documentary Film Movement of the 1930s***

Anyone who has studied the British Documentary Movement of the 1930s will be familiar with the names of John Grierson, Basil Wright, Edgar Anstey and Alberto Cavalcanti, just a few in the pantheon of men who dominate the film programmes, curricula and textbooks celebrating early British documentary. But rarely a mention – or, if any, merely a passing one -- of the women who worked alongside them as documentary filmmakers in their own right, filmmakers such as Evelyn Spice, Marion and Ruby Grierson and Jenny Brown Gilbertson. This paper will explore the work of these women filmmakers – a feisty, adventurous, dedicated and frequently (but not invariably) sisterly lot – and examine their separate and collaborative work as well as the challenges of working within a predominantly male environment. The paper will be accompanied by photographs and film clips illustrating the women's lives and work.

Jo Fox (Univ. Durham, UK): ***Women in British and Canadian Non-Fiction Film Production, 1939-45***

Much has been written of the Documentary Film Movement both before and during the Second World War. The Movement has largely been defined as male, with the group of female non-fiction film directors working alongside John Grierson's 'documentary boys' given relatively little scholarly attention. There is some suggestion, particularly in some contemporary accounts, that this was as a result of Grierson's vision for non-fiction production. During the Second World War, Grierson's influence in documentary stretched across the Atlantic both in terms of the documentarists he left behind, centred on the group emerging from the Empire Marketing Board and the GPO film Unit, and those he created within the newly formed National Film Board of Canada.

This paper compares the experiences of female documentarists in Canada and in Britain and examines their contribution to non-fiction during the war. It evaluates the work of Jill Craigie, Kay Mander, Margaret Thompson, Muriel Box and Grierson's sister, Ruby, in Britain, and contrasts their productions and experience with female documentarists in Canada, specifically Evelyn Cherry (Spice) and Helen Gordon. This paper assesses the relative positions of female documentarists within their industries, the opportunities the war created for women involved in documentary production, and the challenges they faced in forwarding their own ideas and artistic forms. It also seeks to establish the relations between British and Canadian female documentarists and, through their letters to one another, asks whether one can speak of a shared professional identity during the war years and beyond.

Screenings (15 mins)

STRAND D: WOMEN IN & OUT OF THE STUDIOS

Panel D4: *Women/Writing/Cinema*

Chair: **Melanie Bell** (Univ. Newcastle)

Amy Sargeant (Univ. London, Queen Mary): *Dorothy L. Sayers Before Dante*

This paper will discuss the work of Dorothy L. Sayers for the advertising agency, S. H. Benson. It will address attitudes towards copywriting as a suitable job for women of an intellectual bent in the 1920s and 1930s (as voiced by George Orwell in *Keep the Aspidistra Flying* and by Sayers herself in novels and articles for *The Times* and *The Spectator*); transitions in advertising of the period from print to screen; and Sayers as a precedent for apprenticeships in advertising served by more recent and better-known screenplay writers and novelists (Fay Weldon) and directors of ads who have migrated to documentaries and features (Lucy Blakstad and Linda Heymann). I will accompany the paper with a screening of a spoof *Topical Budget* featuring Colman's Mustard Club, the brainchild of Sayers and her husband.

Fiona Philip (Univ. Leeds): *Resisting the 'tinned products of Hollywood': Bryher's Queer Feminist Film Criticism*

In this paper I consider Bryher's contribution to the debate about popular culture's apparent deleterious effects on both the 'masses' and upon experimental art, which was fiercely fought in the first third of the twentieth century. Alongside co-editing the film journal, *Close Up* (1927-1933), Bryher also used the magazine to enunciate her concern for spectators in the face of the British film market's saturation with the 'tinned products of Hollywood'. Here, Bryher staked out her place in the debate about kitsch and avant-garde art, which was also being considered by various members of the Frankfurt school, as well as by critics like Bloch and Greenberg. While Bryher's contributions have led one contemporary critic to label her a cultural elitist, here I want to resituate Bryher's arguments within the censorious *zeitgeist* of the interwar period. I suggest instead that we consider her output as a queer-feminist critique of the increasing heterosexual homogeneity of Hollywood. In this moment – which comprises both the British banning of Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (1928) and the advent of the Hays Code in the US – it became evident that only particular narratives were permissible or that, as Bryher herself observed, 'The end of all the stories must be the same [with] a triumphal bridal procession.'

Per Vesterlund (Univ. Gavle, Sweden): *Elsa Brita Marcussen and Gerd Osten - Two Leading Film Critics in Post-war Sweden*

In the years following World War II, the national Swedish cinema experienced an intense debate on the role that the medium of film should play in society. Two distinct discursive practices among Swedish film critics can be identified in the period from 1945 to the early 1950s. An intriguing fact is that two of the most explicit advocates of each camp in this public conversation were women. Gerd Osten (1914-1974, mother of hailed director Suzanne Osten) pursued an aesthetic and artistic ideal, concentrating her writing on style and thematic features in the work of important auteurs of the time. Elsa Brita Marcussen (1919-2006, daughter of social democratic prime minister Per Albin Hansson) was, on the other hand, more concerned about the function of film from a sociological point of view, pleading foremost for a national production of documentary film in the tradition of John Grierson, and of fiction films with an overt political tendency. This paper will deal with the writings of Marcussen and Osten respectively, and discuss their position in relation to the otherwise patriarchal sphere of film criticism in the 1940s.

Optional Screenings (15 mins)

STRAND A: WOMEN'S FILM HISTORIOGRAPHY

Panel A5: *Performing Women: Re-Envisioning Film History*

Chair: **Clarissa Smith** (Univ. Sunderland)

Elisa Uffreduzzi (Univ. Florence): *Salome, Modern Dance and Liberation of the Female Body in Early Cinema*

Salomé, the biblical heroine, gives us a new point of view on the female contribution to the history of cinema, allowing us to focus on the female body, whose 'liberation' – as a direct consequence of feminist movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century – lead to the birth of modern dance, which crosses its road with the birth of cinema. In the large number of silent movies in which we find a 'veil dance,' this scene constitutes an 'attraction' within the film: it is the filter that conveys the image of the new woman, awakening female attention and consciousness. To explain that, significant are the cases of Charles Bryant's *Salomé* (USA, 1923) – where, according to Dolores McElroy (paper presented at Women and the Silent Screen VI), the design overwhelms the drama – and the previous Ugo Falena's *Salomé* (Italy, 1910), where the drama predominates: despite the different approach, both of them show a mixture of ballet and 'new-dance' movements.

Vera Ryzhik (Univ. St Andrews): *The Silent v. Sound Actress: Gloria Swanson (1928) and Joan Crawford (1932) Perform W. Somerset Maugham's Sadie Thompson*

My argument focuses on analyzing the disparity between two interpretations of the same character, one being silent and the other in sound. I would like to explore the actress's role in film production in silent films by comparing the two performances. There are two adaptations of W. Somerset Maugham's novella, *Sadie Thompson*. The silent film, *Sadie Thompson*, starring Gloria Swanson was made in 1928, and *Rain*, starring Joan Crawford was made as a sound film in 1932. The plots of both films were virtually identical, with the sound vs. silent apparatus being the only key difference. The representation of Sadie Thompson is the core of my analysis. The character of Sadie Thompson is implied to be a former prostitute who is on the run from the law and comes to the tropical island of Pago Pago, falling in love with a sailor and clashing with moral beacon, minister Mr. Davidson, who stays at the same hotel.

Both Gloria Swanson and Joan Crawford can be considered sexual icons of the cinema. Their look in both films is almost identical. Thereby I can focus on how each interpretation differs aesthetically and how the complexity of Sadie Thompson is interpreted in a silent context contrasted with a sound context. I am arguing that the plight of Sadie Thompson is more fully revealed in the silent film by actress Gloria Swanson in the way the silent aesthetic allows her to portray her character physically and through symbolism. Paradoxically, this allows greater subtlety, while Joan Crawford's interpretation is compelled to explicitly state everything her character thinks and feels. The similarity in story and short time gap between films – therefore little change in film aesthetic with the exception of sound allows me to focus primarily on the dynamic of sound vs. silent performance.

Gillian Murray (Univ. Leicester): *Women's 'Dual Role' in Post-War Britain: Work and Pleasure in Moving Images*

In this paper I will analyse the participation and representation of women at work in a variety of moving-image genres: cinema newsreels, television news and industrial film. My investigation is historically located in post-war Britain amid intense public commentary on women's 'dual role,' as workers in the home and paid employment. This period is also associated with the increasing incursion of visual media, namely television, in the home. Both these factors are of historical significance when questioning the relationship between women, work and pleasure in visual culture.

I am interested in how women's 'dual role' effected their participation in moving images as forms of social commentary. Visually, this commentary was located in the gendered framing of women's movement and dress. These images did 'work' that images of men could not, constructing the image of British industry as one of smooth operation, neat, dextrous and efficient. Central questions are: how were salient images of the woman at work built up across moving-image genres over time? To what extent were women able to interrupt these salient representations and assert their own agency?

STRAND B: NEGOTIATIONS & RESISTANCES

Panel B5: Adaptations, Female Authors & The Future of the Woman's Film

Chair: **Helen Hanson** (Univ. Exeter)

Alexis Weedon (Univ. Bedfordshire): *Adaptation & the Book as a System: Elinor Glyn & Other Authors Between the Wars*

This paper proposes a re-conceptualisation of adaptations. Using data from a three-year research project it examines trends in adaptations to film between the wars. It will look at the income from Glyn's adaptations and the way in which they were advertised to the public. It will situate the work of British author Elinor Glyn amongst her peers whose stories were adapted for the screen, including Agatha Christie, Marie Belloc and Baroness Orczy.

The paper will analyse the process of adaptation of Glyn's, *Three Weeks* (1907), through her experience of and participation in tableaux vivants. Tableaux vivants were not silent; sometimes poems were read before or during the viewing or music was performed. However when used in sequence they did dramatize a story through a series of set scenes broken by the curtain fall and the short time allowed the actors to change. Glyn's lifelong interest in materials, fabrics, interior settings and costume stemmed from these early performances. And I argue that there is a connection between the tableau-vivant recreations of old Masters with their dramatic gestures and narrative purpose and films she worked on, particularly in, for example, Alan Crosland's *Three Weeks* (MGM 1924), and her own poised performance as the Author in *Knowing Men* (1930). The paper will provide an examination of her theatre scripts and performances, translations and scenarios. It will use this example together with the experiences of other British authors to propose a new model of adaptation centering on the theatrical and film audience rather than the source text.

Shelley Cobb (Univ. Southampton): *Adapting Feminist Filmmaking: Women Directors, Literary Adaptations and the Postfeminist 1990s*

Scholars such as Laurie Ouellette and Christina Lane have shown how English language female filmmakers associated with the feminist filmmaking movement of the 1970s and 1980s moved toward mainstream narrative filmmaking in the 1990s. This paper argues that film adaptation of literary classics was a central strategy for many of these women to utilize pleasurable narrative forms while engaging with feminist concerns within the fast-developing postfeminist culture. In 2000 Karen Hollinger published an article invoking literary film adaptations by women such as Jane Campion's *The Portrait of a Lady* and Patricia Rozema's *Mansfield Park* as 'the new woman's film' of the 1990s. I argue that in a postfeminist context these films utilize the 'subversive potential' of adaptation, noted by Linda Hutcheon, to highlight, paradoxically, new modes of female film authorship, as well as to engage with the contemporary state of women's cinema and often critique the new postfeminist politics.

Sarah-Mai Dang (Univ. Berlin): *Emma, Elle & Elizabeth: The Contemporary 'Woman's Film' as Aesthetic Mode of Experience*

In my presentation, I seek to conceptualize the aesthetic experience of the contemporary 'woman's film', so-called chick flicks. Considering the apparently new type of female figures which have been dominating the media landscape since the mid-nineties, such as Ally McBeal or Carrie Bradshaw, I want to examine how the representations of these white, heterosexual women, who are financially independent, professionally successful and sexually self-determined, affect the pleasure of watching chick flicks.

Drawing on 'classical' feminist film theories as well as on actual feminist theories and genre theory, I argue that the pleasure of the contemporary 'woman's film' can be described as an aesthetic mode of experience based on processes of negotiating different feminist positions. By analyzing *Legally Blonde* (USA 2001, Robert Luketic), I shall explore in which way the film is structured by paradigmatic scenes referring to feminist theory and therefore, how it reflects the relation between 'first', 'second' and 'third wave', respectively 'post' feminism.

Friday 14 April 11.30-1.00 Room 234

STRAND C: FORMS & AESTHETICS

Panel C5: *Our Place, Our Space: Exhibition Sites & Creation of New Forms*

Chair: Vicky Ball (Univ. Sunderland)

Karina Aveyard (Griffith Univ., Brisbane, Australia): *Our Place: Women at the Cinema in Rural Australia*

Small town cinemas function as vital cultural spaces for many geographically isolated and socially marginalised rural women. As they have done since the early twentieth century cinemas facilitate participation and a sense of connection with the modern, global communications landscape. But perhaps more significantly they provide legitimised and empowered spaces for women alienated by the male-orientated pursuits of drinking and sport, which tend to dominate the social landscape of small communities.

This paper will focus on a group of women in the Australian rural town of Sawtell who in 2009 rallied together to support their threatened cinema. It will explore motivations for their community action and the importance of both on-screen spaces and off-screen flows to their cinematic experiences. This analysis will be based on my experiences as a participant in this enterprise and draw upon material gathered from a more extensive program of empirical research undertaken in rural Australia for my PhD.

Kay Armatage (Univ. Toronto, Canada); **Making History: Directorial Authorship in the Met**

The HD broadcasts of Metropolitan Opera performances, bounced by satellite into cinemas all over the world, are part of the digital revolution that is changing cinema history, specifically in the re-shaping of exhibition practises. Barbara Willis Sweete is at the centre of that historical shift, as she directs approximately one-third of the Met's seasonal offerings. Despite the material constraints of the live broadcasts, which tend to suppress directorial authority - production and staging belong to the theatrical director - Sweete has developed a recognizable auteurist mark. Recognizing the theoretical debates regarding women's authorship and the recent puissance of authorial studies, this paper will examine Sweete's productions in search of a directorial voice. She brings to the broadcasts that ineffable quality: style. The paper rests on the additional argument that, under Sweete's direction, the HD broadcasts must be encountered as a new hybrid form in which 'liveness' is central to the affective experience yet dominated by the cinematic.

Evelin Stermitz (Univ. Ljubljana): **ArtFem.TV: Art and Feminism ITV**

ArtFem.TV is an online television programme presenting art and feminism, founded by Evelin Stermitz in the year 2008. The aim of ArtFem.TV is to foster women's media works, their art and projects, to create an international online television screen for the images and voices of women.

Linda Nochlin asked with her 1971 article, 'Why have there been no great women artists?' Since that time many more women artists have gained overdue recognition. But what has actually changed? New media offers new possibilities and chances, but also comprises old restrictions and patterns. Works in the field of cyberfeminism are a way to subvert public economic traditions of a male technocratic society and offer views, perspectives and possibilities of using new media for female agendas. Within this context, ArtFem.TV is an attempt to break with a male dominated net-culture and media landscapes to highlight women's emphases in art and media works.

STRAND D: WOMEN IN & OUT OF THE STUDIOS

Panel D5: *The Challenges of Circulating Women's Films: Past & Future*

Chair: **Karen Alexander** (Royal College of Art)

Julia Knight (Univ. Sunderland): *The Challenges of Theatrical Releases: the Example of Cinema of Women*

In 1985 Jane Root wrote about the challenges the distributor Cinema of Women faced when they released Marleen Gorris' first feature *A Question of Silence* in the UK. In particular she discussed the challenge of keeping it in the cinemas when male film critics published very negative reviews of the film and box-office receipts didn't match exhibitors' expectations. By launching an extensive leafleting and networking campaign they succeeded in building audiences sufficiently to allow the film to transfer from its original two west-end cinemas to a third London first-run cinema for a further two months. Such cinema releases, while not always profitable, are crucial in raising the national profile of films and ensuring their subsequent regional exhibition. As a result the film became something of a cause celebre in feminist circles and suggested feminist feature films would become a permanent fixture on the theatrical market. This paper looks at the cases of some of Cinema of Women's subsequent releases, including *Anne Devlin*, *Leila and the Wolves*, and *Born in Flames* to examine the challenges that continued to face COW throughout the 1980s in terms of delivering such films to wider audiences.

Drake Stutesman (Women's Film Preservation Fund, New York): *Strategies for Archiving, Preservation & Exhibition of Women's Films*

I co chair The Women's Film Preservation Fund, based in New York, which raises money to preserve American films in which women have played a significant creative role (producer, director, animator, editor, screenwriter, actor etc). These cover every genre, length or format. The some 80 films we have preserved/restored stretch from 1911 (Alice Guy Blache) to 1978 (Barbara Kopple). We annually screen films and organize panels and have toured nationally and internationally. I spoke briefly about this in the WFHI conference at Columbia University March, 2010, but I would use this opportunity to present more detailed ideas about ways to screen these kinds of films. This would include themes, conferences, panels etc and collaborations with other groups, such as Columbia University, Museum of Modern Art, Turner Classic Movies or Women Make Movies. Public awareness of this amazing work is as crucial as the need to guarantee that films are saved and well stored.

Lezli-An Barrett (Curtin Univ. Australia): *Making an Exhibition of Ourselves: Charting Journeys through Feminist Cinema Exhibition and Distribution into the Digital Age* (DVD & Skype)

This paper argues that scholarship on feminist and women's cinema distribution and exhibition has not paid sufficient attention to the rapid shifts in contemporary media processes and practices. Feminist cinema, and inevitably distribution, is essential to the establishment, maintenance and impact of feminist film studies. This paper demonstrates that film texts which form the subject of this theory and which much of this academic literature depends on are at risk. Yet significantly, alternative feminist cinema exhibition institutions have attracted comparatively little attention from scholars. This article critically evaluates the histories and issues facing feminist cinema production and exhibition, and raises concerns about issues of archive and distribution in the future digital age. The author is a feminist filmmaker and academic and employs an argument from the perspective of a critically engaged practitioner, mapping the unique history and development of the feminist cinema movement and raising important questions about the future, technology and change.

