

Spring 2013

[Sabbatical Report]

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2013 Spring Sabbatical Report

July 12th 2013

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Summary of Research Project

Title: Independent American Female Filmmakers: Kelly Reichardt In Focus

Purpose and Summary: Using a feminist and cultural studies perspective, my project discusses the independent film industry and its treatment of women directors and female oriented narratives. It begins with a snapshot of female filmmakers' challenges and opportunities with a focus on Kelly Reichardt's career, definition of success, and specific model of filmmaking, with a brief comparison to other female filmmakers whose definitions are different and who have chosen a more commercial path. In addition to discussing industry data and feminist film theory, the body of the work focuses on Reichardt's feature films (one per chapter) framing each within her larger political statements. Reichardt's four features can be used as case studies to examine slow cinematic techniques, minimalism, and neorealism as well as ecofeminism, socioeconomics, class, race, sexual orientation, masculinity studies, and feminist issues. In addition to scholarly research, my project offers pedagogical elements such as discussion questions, classroom activities, sample syllabi units and courses with the aim to increase student awareness and exposure to women in the industry and their films.

Beginning Goals and Objectives for Spring 2013 Sabbatical

In the summer of 2012, I begin writing an Rcap grant proposal requesting funds to cover travel and equipment to interview Kelly Reichardt in New York at Bard College, her teaching institution. I was in contact with her producer and they were filming her newest movie, *Night Moves*. I had also arranged to interview two other industry members at Women Make Movies and *Indiewire* as well as a film scholar. I was not granted the funding, so I was unable to proceed with the trip, but two of the interviewees have agreed to review my project if it is accepted by Bloomsbury Publishers.

Adjusted Goals and Research Summary

I begin in-depth research in January 2013 and compiled a four inch binder full of sources and interviews organized by my chapter topics. While I was unable to obtain a primary source via an interview, the resources I was able to gather provided quality information. I finished a fourteen page prospectus on my project with a six page works cited and then begin writing each day following the ideas of my prospectus.

In an effort to secure the virtually nonexistent copies of Reichardt's 1999 short feature, *Ode*, and her 2004 short experimental film, *Then a Year*, I contacted her producer and was told due to copyright issues they could not give or sell me either film. I believed these films would help inform my research concerning Reichardt's intentions and experiences while writing and shooting her 2006 second feature film, *Old Joy*. As I read interviews and reviews of her work, I

could distinguish which journalist had seen the two shorts and began contacting them to see if they had copies. A journalist at *Stop Smiling* magazine had copies of each film on VHS and after I received them via mail, I converted them to DVDs. By reviewing her entire collection, I was able to understand the progression of her art and this contributed to the chapters discussing her four feature films.

Writing and Research Activities

Society for Cinema and Media Studies Conference (SCMS), Chicago, IL March 6th – 10th

I attended the annual SCMS conference with WKU faculty and MTSU faculty, including my dissertation advisor, Dr. Linda Badley. She was chairing and presenting in a panel and I traveled with her to the conference.

During the five day conference, I attended over fourteen sessions which covered topics concerning independent and Hollywood directors, teaching film, writing about and researching cinema, film festivals, silent film history, administrating in or creating film departments/ programs, documentary and narrative film, and methods of filmmaking. I attended the awards ceremony honoring Dr. Linda Williams, University of California, Berkeley who is the author of *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible"* which I have studied and used in my research. I was also to attend evening functions and networked with pedagogical scholar Diane Carson, St. Louis Community College, who I have studied, film theorist B. Ruby Rich, UC Santa Cruz, who interviewed Kelly Reichardt, and *Camera Obscura's* editor Patty White, who has written many reviews on Reichardt and was presenting at the conference about Reichardt's most recent film *Meek's Cutoff*.

Dairy Hollow Writers' Colony, Eureka Springs, AR April 13th – 23rd

I was accepted into a ten day writing residency in Arkansas. Admission required two letters of recommendation, a writing sample, and an application. The Writers' Colony provided a quiet writing community where I could write uninterrupted. I was able to write 57 pages during my stay. On Thursday the 18th, the colony gave a writers' seminar or "Poetluck" so the residents could present their research and writing to the Eureka Springs community. As the featured speaker I presented for twenty minutes and discussed my writing and research.

Status of and Outlets for Project

As of July 2013, I have drafted five of the six chapters with chapters one and two almost complete. I expect to have chapters four and five completely revised before the beginning of the 2013 fall semester. During the fall 2013 and spring 2014 semesters, I will finish revising and complete chapter three and then write and revise the conclusion, chapter six. My estimated rough completion date of the project is May 2014.

Conferences

2013 London Film and Media Conference June 27th-29th

Title: 'The Open Image,' and Slow Cinema: Negotiations of Pleasure in Kelly Reichardt's *Meek's Cutoff*

I was accepted to the London conference and planned to present a paper discussing Kelly Reichardt's use of film ratio and its effects on spectator pleasure, but I was unable to attend due to lack of funding.

2013 *Popular Culture Association of the South* (PCAS) October 3-5th

Title: On the Margins of Hollywood: Kelly Reichardt's Alternative Filmmaking Model of Artistic Vision, Control, and Success

I have been accepted to PCAS, and depending on funding, will present an excerpt from chapter one of my project which focuses on Reichardt's desire to stay in the micro-budget filmmaking arena, so she can control her artistic vision.

2014 *Society of Cinema and Media Studies Conference* (SCMS) March 19th-23rd

I am currently working to create an international panel to discuss the value and aesthetic of the unofficial movement/genre called Slow Cinema. Chapter five of my dissertation focuses on Kelly Reichardt's fourth feature film and segments of it will serve as my presentation paper.

Possible Book Publication

While at SCMS in March 2013, I met with and presented my project ideas to an agent from Bloomsbury Press of New York and they are interested in the topic saying: "No one is talking about this." I am working to complete and revise the book proposal and will submit it when I have a completed book chapter as my writing sample. If the proposal is accepted, I will deliver the finished project to them by the end of 2014.

Reflective Critique

I could not have made the timely progress on my project like I have, **five chapters in five months**, without being granted this research sabbatical. I set research and writing goals for each day, week, and month and was able to meet them in a manner which allowed room for creativity and inventiveness. I made use of all available assistance such as the WKU Writing Center in Cherry Hall/library and the MA level students who worked with me each week were invaluable. I am continuing to meet with them each week throughout the 2013 summer. I was also able to work with other WKU faculty who have expertise in film and popular culture to seek their guidance and ideas on my writing. I appreciate the support I received from my dean, Dennis George, associate dean, Merrall Price, and my department head Tim Brotherton. I am very excited about the type of expertise this project and research brings to me and to WKU as an extension of my teaching; I have plans (when able) to teach Film 201, Women and Film, and Gender and Popular Culture and this project has helped inform those efforts.