PGR Work in Progress Seminar, Film Festival Research Network

3pm - 4pm (UK time), 23 April 2024 on Zoom

**Unveiling the Political Economy of Migration in Jumana Manna's "Wild Relatives" (2018): A Border**

**Abolitionist and Decolonial Perspective,**

**Hera Lorandos (King’s College London)**

I examine the interplay of factors surrounding the creation and exhibition of *Wild Relatives* (2018) at the London Migration Film Festival (LMFF) and how all these factors contributed to the public's perceptions of migration. Employing a border abolitionist and decolonial lens, I seek to unearth the presence of borders within filmmaking, symbolic representation, and exhibition—elements that shape viewers' perceptions of migration. *Wild Relatives* serves as a compelling case study due to its foundation in decolonial and 'borderless' methodologies which frame migration in a positive light. However, its presentation at the LMFF, an event lacking a border abolitionist or decolonial stance, raises important questions. The festival is in danger of failing to incite meaningful action from its audiences.

This prompts a critical inquiry: what purpose does such a film like Wild Relatives serve if it does not propel audiences towards action or reach those who could benefit most from its message? Who truly benefits from its screening? These questions underscore the necessity for a closer examination of the film's journey—from inception to its exhibition at LMFF. Drawing from a secondary online interview with Jumana Manna and my reflective diaries employing ethnographic methodologies, I synthesize this data to dissect the nuances of *Wild Relatives*' creation and its subsequent display at LMFF. Through this analysis, I aim to uncover the subtle yet profound impacts of these processes on the broader discourse surrounding migrant cinema.

Bio

Hera Lorandos is a PhD candidate at King’s College London, supervised by Belén Vidal and Chris Berry, exploring how inclusive migrant films and film cultures can drive change in wider cultural understandings of migration and migrants. In partnership with the London Migration Film Festival, the project uses the festival as a case study of what an inclusive space could look like and how that influences attitudes around migration. Her PhD builds on her multidisciplinary academic background

(in English, Film Studies, Cultural Studies and Sociology) and experience with organisations that campaign for the refugee rights (e.g. Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network).

**BFI Flare: London LGBTQIA+ Film Festival: Gender Assemblages and the Queer Film Festival, Joss Morfitt (University of Durham)**

Investigating gender politics within the queer film festival, my work seeks to augment the academic field with integration of continental literatures, synthesising branches of contemporary queer, gender, and assemblage (agencement) philosophy. Marking the Deleuzian turn in queer theory, this project traces an historical development of gender politics in the context of BFI Flare using an ‘assemblage’ frame, drawing from Jasbir Puar, Rachel Hann, and Jane Bennett, among others. My methodology incorporates interviews with various festival staff members, a wealth of commercial ephemera, and textual analyses of various films exhibited at the festival since its establishment in 1986. Theorising gender as processual, fluid, and constituted by heterogeneous exchangeable components, this analysis demonstrates the multiplicitous compositionality of organisational and/or collective formations of gender.

Bio

Joss Morfitt is a PhD research student at Durham University in the faculty of Modern Languages and Cultures. His work examines gender and identity politics within the queer film festival and his thesis employs the BFI Flare as its primary case study. He received his BA in Film at Bournemouth University and his MA in Film & Television at the University of Bristol.

**Save the Cinema: Cinephilia, Festivals and Abandoned Movie Theatres in the Global South, Marie Krämer (Philipps-Universität Marburg and Université de Lorraine)**

Abandoned cinemas have been a recurring motif in films about cinephilia, dating back at least to CINEMA PARADISO (1989). Although cinema attendance is declining in many countries, there is a constant demand from festivals for films that showcase struggling or revitalised movie theatres. Since the early 2000s, a growing number of these productions have focused on cinemas in the so-called Global South, including productions from Brazil, Cambodia, Palestine and Sudan. How does this trend relate to Girish Shambu’s calls for a more diverse “new cinephilia” (2019)? And what role do festivals play in producing and marketing films about saving cinema?

Bio

Marie Krämer is a PhD candidate at Philipps-Universität Marburg and Université de Lorraine. Her binational PhD project examines how and why cinephilia is being renegotiated across media configurations, drawing on professional experience in cultural politics, film festivals (Berlinale, DOK Leipzig) and film heritage institutions (Cinémathèque de la Ville de Luxembourg).