

Haidee Wasson: I'm Haidee Wasson, Associate Professor of Film and Media Studies at Concordia University Montreal. I am here in Glasgow, at Glasgow University. It is June 22nd, 2015. I'm here to interview Professor John Caughie. John Caughie is an Emeritus Professor at Glasgow University and has a long and distinguished career in film and media studies. He helped to build the program here at Glasgow in the early 70s, which was devoted to film and television studies. He was an early member of the editorial board for the journal *Screen* and a key participant in the culture and debates linked to that journal.

Professor Caughie is editor or author of numerous works, including important early works on television and also authorship, among them, *Theories of Authorship*, published in 1981 as editor, and as author, *Television Drama: Realism, Modernism, and British Culture*, published by Oxford University Press in the year 2000. He is currently principal investigator on a three year funded major research grant on early Scottish cinema about which I hope to hear more today.

Hi, John.

John Caughie: Hi.

Haidee Wasson: Thank you so much for agreeing to do this.

John Caughie: Good.

Haidee Wasson: So, I actually thought I'd start by asking you a little bit about what you're doing now and why it is that you've called many of us here to Glasgow.

John Caughie: Okay. Somewhat surprisingly, I've just become an empirical historian. I've been especially in some textual analysis and theory for most of my career. And we've been doing a project which was suggested to us by the Scottish Screen Archive on early cinema in Scotland because there's been lots of work on British cinema and its contribution to our cinema, and there's been work on Irish cinema, and there's even been two monographs on Welsh cinema but there's been very little on Scottish cinema. So this project is kind of intended to add to that. There hasn't been work on early Scottish cinema.

Scottish cinema tends to start with Grierson, and it doesn't really begin to have a profile until the late 1970s again. So, what we're trying to do is look back to the period before sound came in, and look at the very earlier period when cinema was incredibly popular in Scotland, and then there is higher cinema tendencies in Scotland than were in England. Some of the highest. And then Glasgow had one of the largest capacities in Europe. Some of the biggest cinemas were produced in Europe. So, cinema was incredibly popular. But it never got into manufacturing. It was never a production-base for cinema.

So, you have this odd situation in which all of the entrepreneurial money was going into exhibition and none of it was going into the risky business of production, so you had a cinema, as a national cinema, [but] kind of invisible. But as an exhibition industry, and in terms of the experience of people going to the cinema, [it] is really interesting. Very interesting indeed.

Haidee Wasson: So, you're not just a film historian, you're a historian of film exhibition.

John Caughie: Yeah. Much more. The bit that I've been doing, which by choice, is cinema in small towns. Because a lot of the early cinema history has been about theatrical [exhibition] and development. So what I'm interested in is what was happening in towns of populations of 8,000 and 7,000. Because it was cinemas... one of the towns I've been looking at had a population of about 14,000 but had three cinemas there all at the same time, so cinema was popular in the small towns. And I'm just trying to understand what it was like to be in a remote community, and be confronted by the cinema. I mean, you had houses that didn't even have electricity yet. But they were going to the cinema to see the electrics and all that.

Haidee Wasson: That's fascinating!

John Caughie: Yep!

Haidee Wasson: So, let me rewind a little bit and take you back, and ask you how it is that you came to be a film scholar. What got you interested in the study of cinema?

John Caughie: It's kind of mysterious. It's complete serendipity. It's really chance and opportunism. I did an undergraduate degree at Glasgow in English Literature and Language. And most of my intellectual assignments as a student [were] around poetry, particularly like modern school and American poetry and theatre. I then dropped out. I said, "Well." I ended up in Boston, painting houses. And came back to Scotland in... 1969? I was a schoolteacher teaching English and drama. And, at that point, I was interested in acting - I no longer am - but at that point I was interested in acting. And I think I caught the eye of the professor of drama at the university, and he suggested I do a PhD without any real kind of background in theatre.

It was a period when university recruited on the whim of professors. You didn't have to have a PhD. I never finished my PhD. But I did my PhD work on experimental theatre, avant-garde theatre in New York and Britain. And was eventually appointed to a job in what was then called the Department of Drama. We teach American theatre, but there was kind of a requirement that I teach a bit of film. And I didn't have any background in that. I kind of lied at the interview about how much I knew, because I actually knew more about Stan Brakhage than I knew about John Ford, so I mean, the credentials for teaching cinema studies or film studies were pretty slim.

So, I went to BFI Summer School. And the BFI Summer School, this was in 1974, the BFI Summer School was a kind of training ground for a generation of academics, and a lot of the academics that I still know are people I met through the BFI Summer School. And it happened in Stirling, which is only 30 miles from Glasgow, so it was convenient.

And it was a two week, intensive summer school. First year I went was the year that Christian Metz had broke out, as it were, and it was a year on semiotics and mise-en-scène. And there was a year on genre, and people reassembled each year at the BFI Summer School, and it was people like Ed Buscombe and Jim Hillier, who were teaching on it.

I guess what then happened was I got much more interested in film theory and film criticism than I was in theatre studies, because theatre studies is, and I have to be careful what I say here, but theatre studies has always been either a very radical discipline in which practice is a key element, or really quite a conservative discipline in which theatre history is the key element. And ours was a fairly conservative department, so I was kind of excited by theory and by the kinds of debates that were going on around feminism, psychoanalysis, semiotics, etc. and that was really how we got excited about cinema, so it was, I would say the BFI Summer School, for me, was key for that.

Haidee Wasson: Can you say a little bit more about how the summer schools ran?

John Caughie: They ran, I mean, I can't remember how many people were at them. There were about probably around 100 people, and not just UK people, but I remember Mary Beth Haralovich being there. I remember a lot of the people that I knew from the US having been at the BFI summer schools, and you were divided up into groups, and you worked with a tutor. It was a lot around film analysis, and a lot of the work was around film analysis, and a lot of it was actually just seeing films, two, three films a day, so a lot of my experience [was] Seeing Minnelli. Minnelli was a biggy. We did genre, it was melodrama and film noir, so I saw a lot of Minnelli films, film noir. It was ... because it was residential you actually did have a kind of continuing engagement with the people.

Haidee Wasson: Was it mostly other young aspiring scholars and intellectuals?

John Caughie: Yes. Yes, it quite mixed. Some people were going who were what we would have then have called film buffs, who were just interested in the cinema. I mean most of the people I made contact with were in higher education or working on the brinks of being in higher education. So, it was a kind of communal building move, because I think it was at the point at which, around 1974 is the point at which film studies begins to get a profile in the UK, so I think a lot of it was actually about giving people credentials. It was a period when the BFI was being called the University of Film Studies, and the BFI, and associated with it, and SEFT [? 11:10] and *Screen*, were the key instruments in Scotland, so it was a way of getting to what was then the kind of cutting edge of film studies. Particularly,

building up a community, because a lot of people who had been in the BFI summer school then could, as it were graduated to *Screen* weekend schools. The *Screen* weekend schools were, I mean, people like Laura Mulvey doing weekend schools, and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith doing weekend schools on melodrama, and Colin McCabe doing weekend schools on realism, and [Bresson\[?\]](#) on Brecht.

Haidee Wasson: So what was the difference between the summer school and the weekend school?

John Caughie: The summer schools were the undergraduate courses and the weekend schools were post graduate. The weekend schools were quite intense and quite vigorous in arguments, and you were getting it from the horse's mouth. The summer school was kind of relaying advances in film studies, but largely around things like genre and noir convention which was ... The weekend schools were much more about the project off-screen. The weekend school was held at the Edinburgh Film Festival because *Screen* was also doing events at the Edinburgh Film Festival. At the end of the film festival you're getting people like Serge Daney and... I remember chairing a session with Stephen Heath and Serge Daney on it. It was really quite electric!

Haidee Wasson: So tell me more about the Edinburgh Film Festival.

John Caughie: Well the Edinburgh Film Festival at that point was being run by Lynda Myles, and Lynda Myles was a good friend of Tom Nairn who was a good friend of Peter Wollen, and there was a link between Peter Wollen, Laura Mulvey, Paul Willemen, Claire Johnston, and Lynda Myles. The festival hadn't yet become kind of marketplace, which festivals tend to become, and it has become much more of a film marketplace for the exhibiting films. It was then... It had new seasons and new German cinema, new Hollywood cinema. Also major events on... I think, the second really big event on women's feminism cinema. There was a big event on the avant-garde, where Peter Wollen brought Peter Gidal, I mean just all kinds of people, and just put them all in a big room and shut the door to see what would happen!

Haidee Wasson: And what happened?

John Caughie: [crosstalk]. Everybody denounced each other and said their practice was reactionary, and it was really very exciting! So the Edinburgh Film Festival was a period of about a week, 10 days, where you have pretty intensive time for debate and film studies. I think that was what was important about the *Screen* weekend schools and the Edinburgh film festival, they weren't simply a place to go learn about the history of film criticism. They were places to go engage in debate. Some of the debates were quite ferocious.

Haidee Wasson: You survived.

John Caughie: I survived! Yeah, I survived! I think what happened during that time was that there was, it's interesting in terms of what happened in higher education because a lot of the work at the BFI had been about getting film studies into schools. There was quite a big constituency of secondary school teachers, and then layered on top of this was a layer of academics. A lot of them from Cambridge - Stephen Heath, Colin McCabe and [Bruce Miller \[? 15:41\]](#), from Cambridge, who were the cutting edge of theory. They were associated with *Tel Quel*, they were part of that Parisian group, so you've got kind of divide between the people who would come to get an idea of what to do in teaching practice when they went into a class of fifteen-year-olds, and the people who were there to actually engage with debates about feminism, semiotics, and psychoanalysis.

It was kind of split, and every weekend school I can remember there was a plenary at end to summarize the event. Every occasion there was this criticism that "what am I going to do with this in the classroom on Monday". So, there was a division between the secondary school sector and the kind of university sector. I think that played out to some extent between *Screen Education* and *Screen...*

Haidee Wasson: You described some of the debates as ferocious. Was the ferociousness a symptom of that particular conflict between a kind of applied idea about teaching and more theoretical [approaches], or was there something else that was ferocious?

John Caughie: It was ferocious among the issues when feminism was clearly debated very vigorously at that point, and particularly male participation in feminist debate was something which was quite vigorous. I think very challenging, and interesting, but quite vigorous. There were debates around questions of realism. There were debates around the split between film and television. There were quite interesting theoretical debates. There was also a big debate between the independent film sector, the film makers, and the academics, which is a bit like the debate with schoolteachers. The film makers wanted to grasp these ideas, and they wanted to know 'what do we do with these ideas that are circulating?' The most common unexciting debate between a lot of the particularly radical film makers - in Cinema Action, Berwick Street Collective, and what would seem as being... Paul Willemen, in one of his attacks in *Screen*, described the Cambridge sectors being intellectual [[splitoffs? 18:47](#)]. The intellectuals and the practice people, so there's a lot of engagement about how this works out in film, and in filmmaking practice.

Haidee Wasson: To my ear it's so interesting. You describing it as... many many kinds of ferociousness. There were multiple debates happening at once, but what's so interesting to my ear is that they were happening. You were all in the same place in order to then ...

John Caughie: We're still in the tidal wave of 1968. It's still post '68 engagement. A particular kind of post '68 engagement and all of the things that that turned out were still fresh.

The other debate that went on, and Paul Willemen was one of the people who was particularly adamant about this, was about the institutionalization of film studies. That what one could see happening already was that film studies was on the way to becoming an academic discipline, and the law of the debate was about not being a discipline, about being ill-disciplined. A lot of it was resisting the institutionalization of film studies, whether it be in film theory or in film practice. It was quite new. It was that 1968 desire for something outside the academy. Something that wasn't going to be absorbed into the Leavisite Academy.

Haidee Wasson: Well, let me ask you a question about institutionalization, because ... So, you were part of these debates and then you started building institutions. You built, in 1974, what I understand is an undergraduate program here at the University of Glasgow. Can you tell me what discussions you were having at that point when you built that program?

John Caughie: Well, initially we were kind of responding to university politics. It was a point in the UK 1960's boom in university education, and by the 1970's you were beginning to get what was thought about then as a rationalization. We've had this group, now we're going to rationalize and make this fit academic patterns. We had me teaching a film studies course in the drama department. We had a colleague teaching a film studies course in the French department, and we had another colleague teaching a film studies course in history of art. We said instead of spreading this around three different departments why do we put it together, and we'll teach a single, initially we said we'll just teach a one year course, which first year undergraduates can take. It would just be film studies for first year undergraduates. I can remember the document that we put in and support letters where we said, "this will have no resource implications," which was the key! They said, "If there's no resource implications you can do it." We put this proposal up and we got the one-year course.

At that point Glasgow was very much like a community university. Most of its students came from western Scotland. When I was undergraduate, 70% of the students lived at home, and it was a very community centered university. And they were beginning to worry that their demographic base was going [to] evaporate, so they wanted courses that would bring in new students. So we said "hey, film studies. We can bring in new students." We proposed then to have a film studies course which gradually built up to being a four year undergraduate course. We debated whether to do a one-year Master's course or an undergraduate course, but decided on a four year course, which we could only do by bringing in Gillian Skirrow, who was at that point teaching at Strathclyde University, which is about three miles away from Glasgow University.

So we had this bizarre course which was actually taught, a single course, which was taught between two universities and for the honors course, for the first two years the students can move between the campuses, and then they settle in one campus or the other. It was actually very successful. It was quite a successful course. It was a set of kind of opportunistic moves, and we were always able to say here's what the university wants to do. We can deliver it. We kind of built up by stages of opportunism.

Haidee Wasson: Did you feel in that moment of institutionalizing that you were doing what you wanted to do? Were you making compromises? How did you understand the kind of more radical sides of the project in relation to the institution?

John Caughie: I think the more radical side of the project was that we were giving students alternatives to doing English Literature or theatre studies. The radical side of it when we started. I mean I hear what you're saying we are arguing against academic stylization of the discipline and yet here we are taking out opportunities and making it academic. I think our justification would have been, to some extent would still be, that it's an alternative to traditional ways to teaching humanities subjects. It was incredibly ambitious. When we were doing a one-year course, in that one-year course we were taking them from *Battleship Potemkin* to Lacan; by the end these first-year students were getting a lot of stuff thrown at us. We were team teaching, so we would go in there, the three of us, we'd go into the classroom together and we would argue with each other.

What you end up getting were students who were risk takers. You know the students who wanted a comfortable degree would do the standard degree pattern. I think the students we got were the ones who thought to be doing film studies in an ancient university, this is a 1451 university, to be doing film studies in an ancient university was kind of bizarre, so you got the kind of bizarre students. You got the students who were taking risks, and they were very excited to work with us. By the time we had all those courses we were doing work with undergraduates that would be quite respectable with a Master's course, they were just very keen, very competitive. It was difficult to get in because we had limited numbers, and it was difficult to stay in, so they had to be good. We got some very, very good students.

Haidee Wasson: So, as a teacher do you remember the things that you were reading to figure out what then to teach this new field?

John Caughie: We were reading the standard texts, we were reading Bazin and reading Victor Perkins. We were reading Raymond Williams for television, but the way it went there wasn't a body of literature you could draw on at that point. So in a sense we were reading *Screen*. When the quarter issue of *Screen* hit your doorstep, that was, your next nearest teaching program as it were. We were reading *Screen*, we were picking up Christian Metz. It was work around. I remember Janey Place's "Women in Film Noir" being a key text for the genre courses. When you graduate, books came on the market, which we were picking up.

The real difficult thing was television, because I think we were, again by chance, I think we were the first course in the UK to call itself film *and* television studies. All the other courses at that point were film studies courses. Now quite a few of them are. Some of them have actually changed to doing film and television studies courses. The reason we were film and television studies courses was we put to the faculty a proposal for a course on film studies and we said we're going to do "the first term will be on this bit of film, second term will be on this bit of film and the third term we'll do some television," and the Dean said "so why don't you call it film and television studies?" We said "Fine. We'll call it film and television studies," so we ended up with a course in film and television studies and we then had figure out to teach television, because in a way, from our perspective, the available text was Raymond Williams' *Television: Technology and Cultural Reform*, I mean there wasn't, I mean a lot of sociology texts. We weren't doing media studies we were always quite emphatic that what we were teaching was film and television studies, and it was a humanities discipline. So there wasn't much around, so Raymond Williams was what we used, and then Steven Heath and Gillian Skirrow's piece in *Screen*, "a World in Action" was..., and bless it because we had something that applied semiotics to television.

Haidee Wasson: So, Raymond Williams was crucial for your teaching on television. How did the students respond to the television in a 500 year old university?

John Caughie: Some of them just wanted to do film studies, quite a few people just wanted to do film studies, and once we had options they graduated for film studies. Others really wanted to do television, because although the students were getting more radical, I think they did at the back of their minds have the possibility of working in the industry. At that point, in the 70s, there wasn't the British film industry to work in, so if you were going to work in the industry you really were going to work on television. A lot of the teaching we did was seen as a way of understanding better how to work in television. One course we offered was a course on contemporaries in British television. Where we just invited people in who worked in television to talk about their practice, and in many ways that set up a lot of the students for careers in television.

I mean, again we'll probably have to edit this out, but the intellectuals among the students were into film studies. The ones who wanted careers were in television studies. I mean that's a very crude division but to some extent there was some truth in it. It used to be that there was a kind of gender split. The boys all wanted to be intellectuals and they wanted to do film studies, and the girls wanted [something] much more practical, but that broke down very quickly.

Haidee Wasson: Did it break down because of a particular pedagogical strategy or because it just wasn't tenable? I mean it's a classic gender divide between art and commerce as well.

John Caughie: Yeah.

Haidee Wasson: How did it break down?

John Caughie: I'm not sure how it broke down. I mean a lot of the television we were doing was ... well some of the television I was doing was television drama. Most of my interest was in the single play on the tradition around that.

The reason I think it broke down was because television and film become indistinguishable. I mean once Channel 4 came into being in 1982, to the extent that Britain had a film industry it was a television industry. Essentially the boundaries between film and television evaporated.

Haidee Wasson: Already in the early 80's you would say that?

John Caughie: Yeah... Well I would say '82, when Channel 4 came in, and *Film on Four* started and all that kind of new wave of cinema began. It was the point at which film studies and television studies became kind of inseparable, and that's kind of the point at which what it means to do film and television studies, exactly means to do film and television studies. It became the point at which television became part of the intellectual agenda, as well as the career agenda.

Haidee Wasson: I wondered if you could say a little bit about your experience of teaching difficult films? In particular for instance any art cinema or avant-garde films.

John Caughie: One of the courses that we had in the program, from when the honors program started in 1984 or something like that, we started teaching honors, I'd always say we must have a course in avant-garde cinema, and the avant garde cinema went from Eisenstein and Vertov up to Michael Snow. The students really engaged with it. They didn't always love the films, but they liked the ideas. It was a really interesting course in the sense that it was one of the places where students really kind of engaged with the ideas behind the course. It was a much easier way of teaching Marxist criticism, and showing them the socialist realism, because they got the ideas behind it.

There were some films, the one that always broke the camels back, I usually started the program with it, was "Tom, Tom, the Piper's Son," a Ken Jacobs film. You do have to have quite a strong robust constitution to sit through 90 minutes of the break down of a silent movie, and students would hate it and would hate me for showing it, but they would still be talking about it at the end of the course. It still had that kind of capacity to generate intellectual interest. It was the same with Godard, even for first year students, students just out of school being confronted with *Tous Va Bien*. They wouldn't like it. They would object to it and say "oh, it was is boring", but when it came time to our essays, they would write essays about it while ignoring *The Searchers*. So, there was a kind of engagement with these difficult texts, again that was one of the things that was really exciting about teaching film studies was that ability to engage with an active, engaged, avant-garde.

I think also the integration between that and the independent filmmakers, and the way that interfaced with the development of Channel 4. Channel 4 was showing avant-garde programs. They were showing avant-garde video... in their early years. So, there was a kind of cultural excitement around it.

Haidee Wasson: How did you show films in your classrooms? Were you getting prints or students watching the Channel 4? Did you have video early on?

John Caughie: We had video. For television teaching we had video, including half inch pneumatic tapes. I can remember carrying huge heavy pneumatic recorders up stairs to show the program, and I had to take them home because at that point none of use could afford our own VCR's, so we had to take the department machine home and record it off air, bring it back in, take it in the classroom, show them the television program.

Television was always difficult because there was a question of whether it was legal. Frankly it wasn't. We had huge library of video that we'd recorded off air. What we did was, with film, we tended to show prints in the early days on 16mm. We could also use 35mm. We'd show mainly 16mm prints, but we also built up a library of VCR and VHS tapes, so that students could see the film as a film, but then we could go and break it up, and review it on tape.

Actually, that was when digital was horrible. When digital came in you can't cut the same way with it as you can with VHS. VHS was actually was a much friendlier teaching technology.

Haidee Wasson: One of my colleagues now tells these great stories about teaching with 16mm, and in order to reshow a scene in the classroom he would stand beside the projector and put in a piece of paper into the uptake reel as like a bookmark, and then rewind to the mark so he could show them again. He had these kooky ways that would stop the film and make it teachable. It's pretty incredible.

John Caughie: Yes, we did that. I think with film in the early days that's what we did. The way we taught was that we had two lectures a week and in between them there was a film analysis class, which we taught on the Monday. That evening there was a screening of the film, and then Tuesday we go to a two-hour class, in which we took the 16mm print in, and this was the advantage of team teaching because one of could be back in the projection box with the projector. We could stop the projector right around the scene. It was pretty complicated. We would take scenes for analysis that way, and then we would have a formal lecture after that.

Haidee Wasson: Do you ever miss your 16mm projector experiences?

John Caughie: Yeah! I know, I know....

Haidee Wasson: So you've published an important book on authorship, and you have also published some very important early writing on television. I wanted to ask you about the impetus to go to television as an area of scholarly interest because it's quite early, and I think a lot of your work ... I remember reading your work as an undergraduate student, particularly the "Playing Americans" piece, which is important in Canada strangely, because it's so easy to identify with. It's daily sport in Canada. I just wanted to ask you to say a little bit about what the context in which you began as a scholar to write about television, why it was important to you.

John Caughie: One of the things about careers from my generation was that a lot of them were determined by the inability to say no. There were so few of us around that you were asked to do things, and I keep telling people in other departments this, but it's very seldom I've sat down and thought I must write an article about it. Almost always it's someone saying can you write something about this. For that generation, because there weren't many around, our careers to some extent were determined by what we were asked to do.

What happened in our case, just get bizarre again, was that after Stephen Heath and Gillian Skirrow published their piece on "World in Action", and we decided we would have a weekend school in Glasgow, a *Screen* weekend school in Glasgow on television. I think it was the first time that *Screen* had did a weekend school on television. We had Steven and Gillian were presenting, and Raymond Williams was meant to be presenting, but at the very last ... like five days to go, Raymond Williams wrote me a letter saying "I'm terribly sorry, I've double booked myself. Can't come", so I very quickly had to think what would Raymond Williams have said. So I became Raymond Williams. I wrote what I thought Raymond Williams arguments would be and I did the paper. And because of that then people said could you write this about television, could write this about... I think the piece that I did there eventually ended up in the film festival magazine.

Then there was a debate between Colin McCabe and Colin MacArthur about "Days of Hope", the drama documentary "Days of Hope", and I got kind of sucked into that, and I wrote an article about it. That was kind of picked up, so then I became, to my own bemusement, I became a television studies scholar, because I was being asked to do things. Then Pat Mellencamp, who came to the Edinburgh Film Festival, heard something I'd done in Edinburgh about television, so she said come to Milwaukee, which is where I wrote the "Playing Americans" paper.

Haidee Wasson: So you were in America?

John Caughie: Yeah. I wish I could actually put motive behind my career, but a lot of it does seem to have been accidental!

Haidee Wasson: I completely understand.

Could you say a little bit about... again you've been placed in Glasgow for most of your career but that's not to say that you've only been here. You taught at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, and also spent some time in Brazil?

John Caughie: Brazil, yeah, University of Santa Catarina.

Haidee Wasson: Can you say a little bit about the international experience you've had, and the national, as in Glasgow, and then the international experience you've had and your understanding of film and television studies as an international endeavor?

John Caughie: I think partly because Glasgow was so much part of that community college it was in my generation quite traditional. People doing their undergraduate degree in Glasgow, their post-graduate degree at Glasgow, and then teaching at Glasgow and staying at Glasgow 'til the end of their career, and I'm afraid I am that man. That in a sense has been the pattern. I've stayed in Glasgow.

The international experience being at University of Wisconsin Milwaukee was a terrific experience. I think I got much more out of it than they did. Being able to see academies from the outside was tremendously useful. I also taught in Santa Catarina, which was also really interesting because the students are very very good, but it was in this department in which all the teaching was done in English. The students were very very engaged and showed a lot of initiative. It was very refreshing seeing students coming at it from a completely different perspective than what I was used to. I'm not quite sure why I've stayed in Glasgow. I think when I was thirty I applied for a job at the University of Kent, which John Ellis was appointed instead of me. I think I got a letter I think from Ben Brewster saying the university had decided that I was too old, at 30! It was a period when they were trying recruit young new staff, and 30... I'm too old. So I gave up after that.

Haidee Wasson: To leave if even temporarily and see another perspective on the field you were laboring to build in a way. What was it like to suddenly be in Milwaukee? What did you learn?

John Caughie: I think what I really like about American post-graduate education – when students ask me I say if you can get a scholarship to go to the States, go to the States - my broad view is that our undergraduate degree is stronger than a North American undergraduate degree, but the post-graduate work is more interesting in North America than it is here, than it has been here. I think a lot of that has to do with treating students like real intellectuals in the North American system and actually treating staff like real intellectuals. I think the way staff work with students in North American post-graduate education is much more than intellectual training, than to a large extent what we've managed here. Our PhD program which is not a top program, can be very much one student working with one supervisor or two supervisors. It's quite a gloomy business, where as that business of coursework that's built into the PhD program in North American I think does build up an intellectual community. I

just found that, again that intellectual community that grew up around post-graduate programs at Wisconsin Milwaukee to be really interesting.

Haidee Wasson: Did it change your teaching at all? To be teaching American graduate students. Do you recall?

John Caughie: It wasn't the teaching. A lot of the teaching I did was actually undergraduate and post-graduate. Pam had set this visiting fellowship [opportunity to fit into the conference she was doing at the end of it, so all the work I was doing was my own work. But, actually I sat in on Patrice Petro was doing work on German cinema, particularly on the fact that [inaudible 00:48:21]. I found that really engaging. I think it effected it to the extent that at exactly that time Simon Frith and I were setting up post-graduate program here, called Media and Culture, which was also between University of Glasgow and University of Strathclyde. It was done between Simon who's background is in sociology and me who's background is in humanities, so it was a kind of cross disciplinary course. Simon had done work at Berkeley and done his PhD program at Berkeley, so he had experience in North American education. I think what I got from it was a better way of working with post-graduates in post-graduate teaching. And the rather more instrumental course structure, which a lot of our post-graduate courses then had. I think what I got out from it was how to work with post graduates.

Haidee Wasson: You've described and named a couple of American scholars who were coming over here, and you of course went to the US as did many of your British colleagues. Do you have a way you think about the intellectual community?

John Caughie: At that point Milwaukee was kind of *Screen* in exile. I mean Milwaukee did annual conferences or workshops or colloquia. The first one I went to was with Stephen Heath was there, Paul Willemen was there, Mark Nash, so it was a kind of-

Haidee Wasson: What year?

John Caughie: I think it was '79. My recollection was that... David Bordwell was there as a graduate student. It was a time that I was developing a graduate program, so there were these bright students coming to these seminars. Again, you had the link between what was happening in Milwaukee and what was happening in *Screen* in Edinburgh particularly, and in the *Screen* weekend schools. There's kind of a linkage between Milwaukee particularly and the *Screen* agenda.

Haidee Wasson: Can you tell me a little bit more about the project with Simon Frith. What are the other ... he's of course well known as a music scholar as well, so it becomes an interesting configuration that you with your roots in film and television studies and him with his roots in popular music. What were you trying to do?

John Caughie: It was called media and culture. I think quite specifically we were trying to be cross disciplinary. Most of the students... It was a one-year Master's course.

Some students went on to do PhDs or that, but we were focusing on a one-year Master's course, and again it was team taught, but the core elements Simon and I taught together. Again, it was kind of self critical. Simon felt that semiotics was a waste of space and I felt sociology was reductive, so we could have argued with each other. I think team teaching, if you have the right set of people, team teaching is terrific. It's the way to go, and Simon and I actually worked really well together on a team taught basis. It was a very generous kind of course, in that there was a lot of give on both sides. We had more students. Simon was quite happy to contribute on that basis. It would be really difficult to do at universities now, because you would spend three years now trying to manipulate the regulations to do it, but it was then on the basis of good will that we managed to set it up.

For the UK it was a very popular course. We were getting twenty students a year, which in the UK for a Master's course is a lot. I think that a lot of people noticed it. Brown noticed it. Mary Ann [Doane?], when Brown was setting up their post-graduate course I was invited to go over and join a seminar there because that kind of notion of cross disciplinary teaching was popular. I think what happened in the later 80's was that people saw the market, and you got a lot of courses which were similar in their aims.

Haidee Wasson: I want to return to one question about *Screen*. We talked about the early days, but it's also true that you still work on the journal?

John Caughie: No, not now. I finally decided that you couldn't be 70 and be an editor of *Screen*. It was getting to the point where the board had been together really since 1990. Pretty much the same board had been together since 1990, and now it was time to expand the board, and expanded boards are always difficult to work with, or we had to have some kind of invitation. Annette Kuhn and I stood down as editors, so I think we're editors emeritus. We stood down as editors. I came off in 2012, and Annette came off in 2013 or near after that, and that got in some new editors.

Haidee Wasson: Can you say a little bit given since you've had such a long relationship to the journal. Say anything about its arc and its status now as a journal in the field?

John Caughie: Again, that was a matter of some debate when we ... what happened was officially *Screen* was the journal of SEFT, the Society for Education in Film and Television, which was a grant-in aid body of the British Film Institute. So the first period I was on *Screen*, from '79 to '85 was when *Screen* was a London journal. It didn't have any academic affiliation. It was attached to SEFT which was attached to the BFI.

Actually, interestingly when Simon and I were both in Milwaukee we got word that the BFI were withdrawing their funding from SEFT, and that *Screen* was looking for a home. So we put together a plan - and Annette Kuhn was actually teaching with us as well - Annette, Simon, and I put together a plan to put in a

bid and see if we could bring *Screen* to Glasgow. There was some competition, but we ... I think because Annette, and I, and Simon had all had prior association with not with the journal, with SEFT. Simon had been very active with *Screen Education*. I think because we had that prior association, we got the contracts for where we took over *Screen*.

That was an awkward moment because then *Screen* was becoming an academic journal, and it was embedded in Glasgow University, and I think published by Oxford University, written by our university press. It did become more of an academic journal, and we went down through it. It became peer-reviewed. A lot of people, some Americans, wouldn't publish in *Screen* because it wasn't peer-reviewed, so it's peer-reviewed. I think it has become an academic journal. I always say that with just a little tinge of shame in my voice because I remember the debates of whether it should or shouldn't, and we were denounced by some people for it. I think a lot of people would have rather seen *Screen* just disappear than see it becoming an academic journal. We talked about that and we decided lets not kid ourselves, this is an academic journal. So, *Screen* became an academic journal. I think quite a good academic journal. I mean it's still a journal of choice by academics who want to publish on film and television.

Haidee Wasson: It's true.

John Caughie: Yeah.

Haidee Wasson: So looking at the state of, lets call it, film and television studies now. What is your sense of where things are headed? Is its future bright, bleak, exciting, ferocious?

John Caughie: I think it's growing. I think a lot of the anxieties about what happens when things become academic and institutionalized are correct, were correct. I think there is that anxiety about the discipline becoming solidified and the discipline just becoming another discipline, but I think there are a lot of bright people coming into the discipline. Actually, really in the last five years of my career I think I saw more really really good PhD students than I'd seen before, so I think they've evolved. I think because of the academicization of it you want to get in a new generation. In a way for my generation we were kind of stuck in place. There wasn't a huge throughput of students. A lot of our students did go and work in the industry. It was really quite difficult to hold onto students to do PhD degrees, and even a lot of the students who started PhD degrees were then diverted to working in the industry. What I'm seeing is a lot of really good PhD students. The postdoc on the early cinema in Scotland project did her Master's... is from Columbia. They're Master's degree drops, and then their PhD with me is now one of exemplary post doctoral student who's got a leave for her fellowship, which mean she go on in two or three years. So, I think your going to get that throughput of really good post graduate students, which will revive and reenergize the profession.

Where were you in '68? You know we all get nostalgic for the days when we could battle against institutions, but I think in a way the academy ... I think one of things we were always ... there was always a kind of a motivation behind film and television studies in the early days. If we teach people the complexities of film and television then film and television will change. So, there was an idea if you do film studies and then go in and be a film producer, then television will be different. In the early days it was a bit of a wishful thinking. I think now we are seeing our students going into positions. The head of drama in BBC Scotland at the moment is one of our students. We can track a number of our students who have gone into the profession and I think have made a difference, and I don't think they automatically forget Raymond Williams as soon as they've left our doors. There must be something that sticks.

Haidee Wasson: Why don't you plant a chip in they're head?

John Caughie: I know. I know.

Haidee Wasson: Every time they forget it goes off!

I mean one of the things as you're talking I'm thinking through, there was this was in which the project of institutionalizing, I guess we could call it that, film and television study in the '70's was a very exciting ... it was contentious, but it was an important moment for bringing in what we call new technologies and new forms, and certainly in the US the culture of youth and revolt. It was very important for transforming what could be thought about and talked about in universities today. Do have your own sense of - in the face of what some people call new media, say digital, social media, gaming devices, iPhones - that film and television as a legacy, as intellectual body of work, and so on, has something to offer?

John Caughie: Yeah, that's an interesting question. I think I really haven't caught up with how the digital technology is taught. I think actually, there is something about film and television. The reason we always refused to call it media studies - I mean the university really wants to call us media studies, because if you've got media studies, you've got students, students will come do media studies, because there seems to be a progression for media studies into industry - and we always refused to call it media studies. It was film and television studies, and it was because what we were teaching was analysis. It was humanities analysis. It wasn't on the other side, but it might have been that kind of close analysis of poetry. We were teaching people how to understand texts better. I guess I still think that's important. Teaching people how to read popular texts is an important activity, and I want to hold onto that.

One of the interesting things particularly the light of my new engagement as a cinema historian, you engage with at the cinema is story. And one of the things we're in danger of losing is the history. I think the debate about losing our history is around "Do we need films?". New cinema history is about moviegoing

exhibition and reception. One of the things that is being lost in film studies in the UK is history. There are very few places teaching early cinema history, and I think there are relatively few places teaching television history, so I think there is a danger that film and television studies will lose their sense of their own history. I think that's something that needs to be recovered. I think intellectually, for me, film and television studies is about the ability to read critically and to do analysis, and to engage politically and with texts. But it's also a need to retain that sense of the history of the development of these media.

Haidee Wasson: And the history of our development of our ways of thinking and talking about it.

John Caughie: Yeah. In a way cinema isn't that important. Thinking of the cinema is important. It's about intellectual debates that the engagement with popular texts and poems that seems to be, became the real radical set. That's what was different about film and television studies in the 70's was we were engaging with texts that the students already knew. You didn't have to teach them how to enjoy movies or television programs. They already enjoyed them. One thing I do is engage them and connect their interest in what that enjoyment ... what we're paying for, intellectually in exchange for that enjoyment.