



5. What does it mean to do transnational scholarship? What does the broad concept of “global village” mean for visual studies and its future? That is, as scholars we often interrogate global media structures, but what does it mean to reflect on the notion of a global village of scholars?

Marks: I’ve been thinking about this a lot these past few weeks as I’ve been in Beirut studying Arabic (which I have done for many years but am still barely “intermediate”), trying to catch up on media art, and now attending the Home Works conference.

It is hard to do good scholarship across borders. For people like me, who have jobs in Western countries and do research somewhere else, it is a long apprenticeship. It takes a very long time to build up knowledge of a local media (art) scene, and to earn the trust of the people who work in it. One cannot parachute in.

As for a global village of scholars, it’s important to recognize that the stakes are and have been different for all of us. If a scholar in India who manages to start an art magazine while waiting to find a university job, but has written little, and a Western scholar who has a tenured job and research funding and publishes books, are equals in terms of their contribution to scholarship, then it must be because they have both stirred minds and made things happen. And again, fluency in more than one language is crucial!

Hastie: While I might prefer the metaphor of a global city – more cosmopolitan, with more possibilities for intersections, both spatial and intellectual – I can see productively mapping the notion of a global village quite literally onto a gathering, but one which consistently and insistently moves across the globe.

In 2001, my UC-Santa Cruz colleague Shelley Stamp and I officially opened the “franchise” of the Women and the Silent Screen conference. Spurred by a much smaller gathering in Sweden two years prior, we wanted to expand both the size of the meeting and the sorts of work it would showcase. Shifting from a dominant model of representation of women on screen, we shaped our conference through a particular focus on women’s cultural practices and labor in silent film industries. By the end of a very successful weekend, participants begged us to put it on regularly, but we instead invited the possibility that the conference might instead rotate across institutions; and thus, it has become a regular event as feminist film scholars took up this invitation all over the world, quickly increasing the gathering’s global emphasis in both materials presented and locations for the meetings. In 2004, the conference was held in Montreal; in 2006, Mexico City; in 2008, in Stockholm; and this year it will take place in Bologna. To me, this is an ideal example of a “global village of scholars”: a group with shared interests that increasingly opens and expands, in great part through the conference’s own meeting sites across the globe. As such it demonstrates the possibility of transforming scholarship in feminist film studies and early cinema research through encounters and collaborations made possible by its geographical and intellectual scope.

Kheshti: There’s no need to cross a political border to qualify as transnational; the transnational exists alongside, in opposition to and/or within the national. For me, transnational scholarship includes ideas that travel through numerous circuits — the scholarly, the vernacular, the popular, and the political — as engaged ideas with the capacity to speak to local conditions and circumstances.