

HEA SUBJECT CENTRE REPORT

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Introduction

On 21-22 July, 2009, the University of Aberdeen held its 6th annual Arts and Social Sciences Postgraduate Conference, *Moving Forward*. Financial assistance for visiting delegates in the areas of Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies was generously provided by the HEA Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies. The funding contributions of the Subject Centre were passed on in whole to visiting delegates, who accepted the support with sincere appreciation. The following is a report on the proceedings of the conference, the use of the funds provided by the Subject Centre, and a brief outline of our plans for future developments.

Event Report

As in years past, the 2009 *Moving Forward* postgraduate conference proved a success. Building upon the work of previous committees and their organisational skills and achievements, the 2009 conference organising committee was proud to have attracted a record number of delegates from across the World to this year's *Moving Forward*. We also are pleased to report that this year we received a record number of applicants (over 150 abstract submissions), and the number of submissions in Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies were significantly greater than in previous years (34 abstract submissions). Due to the high quality of most of these applications, we offered 23 presentation positions to delegates in Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies (3 more than initially planned).

Over the two days of the conference, we hosted over one hundred postgraduate students of the arts and social sciences disciplines, with representatives from Australia, USA, Istanbul, Italy, France, Canada, Germany, Japan, Ireland, New Zealand, Portugal, Rwanda and the United Kingdom. Around one-hundred papers were presented by students at various stages within their PhD and research programmes during a variety of themed parallel sessions, which were chaired by eager colleagues from across the College of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Aberdeen. We were also pleased to offer four plenary sessions, featuring esteemed speakers from the University of Aberdeen: Professor Timothy Ingold, Professor Christopher Fynsk and Professor Peter Stollery and our guest plenary speaker, Dr Elizabeth Stokoe, University of Loughborough. They offered their insights into 'interdisciplinarity', specifically talking to 'Fields of Study and Lines of Interest', 'The Idea of the Centre for Modern Thought', 'Sound Travels; A Journey From Lone Acousmate to Sonic Collaborator' and 'Interactions Across the Disciplines', respectively. The feedback received from delegates for both was most complimentary.

During proceedings, we were pleased to welcome musicians from the School of Music; Ross Whyte, Claire Singer and Bill Thompson, who performed a closing piece to the conference. In addition, throughout both days, an exhibition of 'Drawing the Social', a collection of art work curated by Katy Fox, was on display. This work is a collaboration of art produced by anthropology students in the course of working with Gray's School of Art, Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, in order to develop academic representations

through alternative media. We also hosted two installations of music/visual presentation, which were available through headphones/on display during both days. These were provided by Ross Whyte, Claire Singer, Bill Thompson, James Wyness, and Patrick Keenan.

Within the programme, of course, there were multiple opportunities for delegates to participate in less formal elements of the conference. In order to encourage delegates to forge connections and to discuss the papers and purpose of the postgraduate conference in a relaxed manner and setting, the conference hosted a dinner reception on the first night. During the course of the evening, good food, wine and company was shared by all. Indeed, for their hospitality and good service, we owe thanks to Manzil, King Street, Aberdeen. Further, to end the conference on a 'high' note, we also hosted a drinks reception accompanied by music from the Elphinstone Institute, featuring Frances Wilkins (a previous organiser of this conference 2006-07).

Feedback

Feedback was solicited from delegates through anonymous feedback forms. We received a number of forms, the majority of which were exceedingly positive. In addition to these forms, we have also received many emails from delegates. Some of the comments made in these two forms include:

- "It has been such a successful conference. Thanks... thanks for organising it and taking care of us so well."
- "I really enjoyed being a part of *Moving Forward 2009*."
- "Once again, thanks for an extremely enjoyable and worthwhile conference, superbly organised with a noticeably light touch."
- "It was really stimulating and very pleasant."
- "It was the very first time I have presented my work. Even though I was nervous at first I was made to feel at ease."
- "Nice groupings of topics and mix of disciplines."
- "Most useful plenary sessions."
- "Thank you for a very positive experience."
- "Superb organisation and information flow. Excellent format. Good opportunities for cross-pollination of ideas."
- "Keep the conference going every year!"

Use of Funds

The Subject Centre generously pledged 500 GBP toward UK-based delegate bursaries. Since a majority of our UK-based delegates are located within Scotland, the number of delegates seeking funding was not exceedingly large, nor was the amount each delegate seemed to require. As such, we allocated funds to all 7 applicants for financial support in the area of Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies.

An award of 15GBP was made to Elsa Kao who visited the conference from the University of Glasgow for the day of her presentation.

Three awards of 35GBP were made to Hsu Li-hsin (University of Edinburgh), Margaux Whiskin (University of St. Andrews), and Mark West (University of Glasgow). These delegates attended both days of the conference.

Two awards of 125GBP were awarded to Dibyadyuti Roy (University of Glasgow) and Doaa Hamada (University of Leicester).

Roy is an international student from India currently pursuing her postgraduate degree (MLitt) in "Twentieth Century and Contemporary Literature and Culture" from the Department of English Literature, University of Glasgow. She graduated from Presidency College, India (under the University of Calcutta) with first class marks and being ranked amongst the top five students in the University. She was awarded the Glasgow Postgraduate Excellence Scholarship by the University of Glasgow. Her field of interest lies in the area of gender and sexuality, especially in the constant evolution and ramification of these concepts in a postcolonial context. The title of her presentation was 'The Crisis of Identity: Narratives of Everyday from Partition Literature'. Although affiliated with the University of Glasgow, Roy is usually located in India.

Hamada has received two university degrees from Tanta University in Egypt. One is in Education and the other in English language and literature. He has a postgraduate diploma in teaching English literature from the same university and a postgraduate diploma in English and American literature from Cairo University in Egypt. He has worked as a literature teaching assistant in Tanta University and Kafr EL-Sheikh University in Egypt for seven years. Now a PhD student in the University of Leicester, he is mainly interested in American poetry, with specific areas of interest in race, gender, hybridity, and identity politics. He studies poetry in relation to the social and the historical contexts of the American society. The title of his presentation was 'Margaret Walker and the Harlem Renaissance: Self, Race, and Culture'.

Finally, one bursary valued at 130GBP was awarded to Martin Modlinger who is located at the University of Cambridge. Born in Dachau, Germany, Modlinger studied English, History and Ethics of Textual Cultures (German Studies, Theology, Philosophy, Cultural History) in Munich, Erlangen-Nuremberg and Perth (Australia). Currently in his 1st year of his PhD studies at the University of Cambridge, Department of German, Modlinger's research is titled "Approaching something that repels: literature and the horrors of history". He is especially interested in historiography, (post)modernism, the "Ethical Turn", Holocaust literature, literature after September 11, and the role of the archive in writing about catastrophe. He is currently working on the use of the historical Terezin Cabaret in literature and theatre. The title of Modlinger's presentation was 'On a carousel through history: The cabaret of Terezin and Roy Kift's Camp Comedy'.

Future Developments: Publication

The conference has, for the second time, attracted numerous publishers who are interested in working with us to prepare a volume of papers (four publishers have made contact to date). We are presently in the early planning stages for this publication, and will begin to submit our proposals accordingly in Autumn 2009. We will keep the Subject Centre informed as to the progress of this publication and acknowledge the support of the Subject Centre within the volume. We hope to have the volume complete for Winter 2010.

Conclusion

Although work continues for the 2009 organising committee, we will look to reform a new organising committee for 2010 and begin to make plans in due course. We hope the conference is beginning to gain importance across disciplines as a valuable

research training exercise and opportunity for professional development. We hope to accept and include many more of the delegates' papers for what will be the seventh annual *Moving Forward* postgraduate conference in 2010.