

# Liverpool Film Seminar

2012 – 2013 series

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Every year, Liverpool Film Seminar invites six experts to deliver a series of talks. Topics vary greatly and the series does not focus on a specific aspect of film. Instead, a range of genres and approaches are celebrated, from historical reach to the internet's impact on cinematic material.

## **Professor Hilary Radner** (University of Otago)

### **Neo-Feminism and the Girly Film: Gender and Genre in Conglomerate Hollywood**

Why does Hollywood make so few films for women? Why do the few that are made operate within such a limited band? Films such as *Pretty Woman*, *Romy and Michele's High School Reunion*, *Legally Blonde*, *Maid in Manhattan*, *The Devil Wears Prada*, *Sex and the City: The Movie*, testify to the rise of a narrative format, which following on from Charlotte Brunsdon, I will call the "girly" film. Borrowing from female friendship, "career girl," and romantic comedy plots, the genre, if it can be described as such, revolves around the concerns of an unmarried woman, an ambitious "striver," defining herself as much through consumer culture as romance or work.

The needs of Conglomerate Hollywood in terms of pre-established awareness and product tie-ins encouraged this emphasis on consumer culture within the woman's film. Consequently, a neo-feminist paradigm, which highlights consumer culture as important dimension in feminine identity, has become increasingly the dominant perspective within movies addressing a female audience. Instead of lamenting the loss of second-wave feminism, this presentation will explore why another perspective, neo-feminism, which is more compatible with neo-liberalism, has proven more influential, offering insight into the resulting widespread discontent among feminist-oriented scholars and audiences who are seeking more than "labels and love" in a film experience.

## Biography:



Hilary Radner is Professor of Film and Media Studies in the Department of History and Art History at the University of Otago. Her research interests revolve around understanding the representations of gender and identity in contemporary visual culture, particularly in terms of how these evolve over time in relation to second wave feminism.

She has published numerous articles and book chapters on cinema, visual culture and gender: these range from film melodrama, make-up, fashion photography, and women's magazines to, more recently, the woman's film, New Zealand fashion, Hollywood film genres, New Zealand cinema, World Cinema and French cinema.

Her books include two monographs on feminine culture and subjectivity: *Shopping Around: Feminine Culture and the Pursuit of Pleasure* (Routledge, 1995) and *Neo-Feminist Cinema: Girly Films, Chick Flicks, and Consumer Culture* (Routledge, 2010).

She is also a co-editor of six volumes: *Film Theory Goes to the Movies* (Routledge, 1993); *Constructing the New Consumer Society* (St. Martin's Press, 1997); *Swinging Single: Representing Sexuality in the 1960s* (University of Minnesota Press, 1999); *Jane Campion: Cinema, Nation, Identity* (Wayne State University Press, 2009); *New Zealand Cinema: Interpreting the Past* (Intellect, 2011); *Feminism at the Movies* (Routledge, 2011). Current projects include *The Blackwell Companion to Contemporary French Cinema* (with Michel Marie, Raphaëlle Moine, and Alistair Fox), a monograph on romantic melodrama in Hollywood cinema, as well as a long-term project on the woman's film in national cinema.