

[0:00:00]

Kieran Connell: I mean, it would be great to begin with I was going to ask about how you actually ended up -

Michael O'Shaughnessy: At the Centre?

Kieran Connell: - at the Centre, what drew you there?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Yeah...

[Meals arrive]

Kieran Connell: Thank you.

Michael O'Shaughnessy: I – because I'd studied English and Film at Exeter Uni in the early 70s and started as a teacher, teaching at schools, teaching a bit of Film with English. So I got involved with the British Film Institute and they used to run a summer school up in Stirling and I went to that in 1977 and that was basically my first introduction to writing from (inaudible 0:00:47) so there was an essay by Stuart Hall on something like "Culture and the Ideological Effect"; I can't remember exactly, but it was like – I'd never read anything like it before. And it just gave me a whole new way of looking at film and literature, so I thought that was amazing.

Kieran Connell: What year was that roughly?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: That was in '77 – summer of '77. So following that I thought, "Well I'd really like to kind of develop this stuff", so I found out about the Centre and I applied during that year and wrote a piece on Jimmy Savile and "Jim'll Fix It" as a kind of send off – got an interview and then went along to that, but it was that connection through the BFI Summer School, because they were already in touch with the kind of things that the Centre were doing and then – yeah got the interview and went there to do the MA, which meant giving up a job and going to work doing the MA part time and doing bits of part time work.

Kieran Connell: Was that lecturing kind of adult education - ?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Well it was one night working in a bakery (laughs).

Kieran Connell: Really?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: And doing teaching – things like hairdressers communication.

Kieran Connell: But I mean that's quite a well established – I mean a lot of people at the Centre were doing like adult education things all across Birmingham, like Hall Green Technology College and –

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Yeah exactly those places. So I got enough to live on doing that.

Kieran Connell: Can you remember who was on your interview panel? Because I know that a lot of students were weren't they? I mean – (both laugh)

Michael O'Shaughnessy: They were! Michael Green was. I – is there someone called Eve Grunswick?

Kieran Connell: Eve Brook maybe?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Or Eve Brook yes and possibly Hazel Downing... and another guy – yeah that's it. And I'd just had a motorbike crash a week before so I was kind of limping into the interview. Yeah but did that.

Kieran Connell: What was that like? I mean was it kind of intimidating to have your fellow students on that Committee?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: It was different from what I'd experienced before and I think I was pretty nervous. I really wanted to come but I just didn't know whether I had it enough intellectually or otherwise and I guess – yeah the interview was my first kind of taste of, "Oh well this is kind of the ethos of the Centre" – yeah, which was different.

[0:03:19]

Kieran Connell: So were they asking you questions about like – I mean I know obviously it's a long time and you probably can't remember, but were they mostly interested in like your intellectual work? Or was there also like a political side of you within that interview do you remember? Or not really?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: (Pauses) I don't know if I remember clearly enough. I think I was possibly slightly intimidated by the women students interviewing, because they seemed to be quite highly strung. And my whole – I mean that's one of my first experiences of the whole thing about – yeah really coming into contact with Feminism in a way that I hadn't before, was challenging and really interesting. And it was like – I think I came with a kind of naïve, "Yeah I'm interested in women and representations of women and that" but I really hadn't kind of seen it from their point of view.

Kieran Connell: At all, right.

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Yeah.

Kieran Connell: Did you have like an awareness of the Centre – obviously you came across it like sort of indirectly by Stuart's essay that you read at that Summer School. So before then or before you found about the Centre from the BFI, it wasn't like – the Centre wasn't in your kind of like – you weren't aware of it or - ?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: No it was really – yeah that BFI thing and they had probably two or three readings which were coming from there. So it was those things, yeah. And then I think I might have picked up some (stencil?) papers, maybe even not before then, no.

Kieran Connell: So that – how would you kind of describe, when you actually arrived? I mean obviously you got in, you know it well enough for you to get in, what was it - ?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: (Inaudible 0:05:03).

Kieran Connell: Oh were you? So someone dropped –

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Someone dropped out, yeah.

Kieran Connell: How would you describe the atmosphere or your first impressions of the place when you arrived?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: (Pauses) I guess kind of small in terms of like the building because it was just on that one floor – the eighth or ninth floor.

Kieran Connell: The Muirhead Tower.

Michael O'Shaughnessy: The Muirhead Tower, yeah... and intense – intense... that whole year it was very challenging for me, a White middle class guy who hadn't really come across the political stuff before, nor Feminism particularly and even coming to Birmingham and it was also incredibly exciting there. So I kind of loved it; it was a challenge but it was just incredibly stimulating. It was also – it felt like it was the first time I'd made a decision, "This is what I really want to do" there and I remember just doing lots of reading, but often reading – there'd be a group of people in the same room together, trying to get through the same quite difficult texts at times. And then I guess the Mondays there was a big meeting every Monday which was for everybody in the Centre and I can't say that I participated

much in that in terms of contributing to it; I was just kind of listening and watching, because there was a lot of stuff going on.

Kieran Connell: That was a general meeting? The Centre General Meeting?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Yeah, so we had our MA meetings in the morning and the afternoon and that was kind of a sandwich of the meeting which then became a lunchtime, yeah.

Kieran Connell: I mean obviously the Centre was organised – like you mentioned like with the groups – that would be the subgroups right?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Yeah so all the different subgroups and I would have gone in two or three of those ones.

[0:07:28]

Kieran Connell: Do you remember which ones you were in?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: The Media one because my particular interest was film, so obviously that one. And that's where I worked a lot with Gary on popular television and Hazel. So I know in that first year we did quite a lot of stuff looking at quiz shows and things like "Mr and Mrs" and (laughs) and "Blankety Blank" and watching these and transcribing them – a bit kind of following on from the kind of stuff that Dave Morley and Charlotte (Runs?) had done in -

Kieran Connell: Nationwide.

Michael O'Shaughnessy: - so really playing close attention to all that, yeah. So it was the Media Group. There was the English Group where Rebecca O'Rawke and I don't know if you've been in touch with her - ?

Kieran Connell: Yeah, I've interviewed –

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Yeah, she was kind of the key person with Michael Green and we did a lot of stuff on romance in that. And again it was really interesting for me because it was looking at the literature and it was really like I felt I knew then why I wanted to teach Literature and Film and that was the whole thing that the Centre offered and it was that political perspective, the Marxist, Feminist perspective and something else which I've forgotten.

Kieran Connell: Like I mean – obviously like you know (inaudible 0:08:55) politics was like Marxism, Feminism, sort of Structuralism and Post-Structuralism as well came into it and quite a broad spectrum as well. Did you arrive like – did you arrive with that sort of - ?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Did I have that already?

Kieran Connell: Did you have like a – were you Left-leaning would you say? Or were you sort of like on the Left or - ?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: I was – I would say I was Left Liberal, but not very active prior to going there. And I'm not sure I'd say I was "active" politically when I was there, but I was taking all that stuff in.

Kieran Connell: How did – because it was such a broad spectrum wasn't it – I mean how did – do you have any reflections on how that all – when you had like IMG or the SWP or you know the Women's Liberation; like how did that all – do you remember how it all fitted together? Was it kind of – did it have a presence in the Centre and - ?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: It did and those things were all kind of there. There was a guy – Robin -

Kieran Connell: Rushop? Robin Rushop?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Could be, but he was particularly connected with Northern Ireland and stuff happening there and the politics of what was going on there and yeah there were kind of different people with

different newspapers and stuff as well. And I mean I guess I didn't get particularly involved with any of those groups because partly I was just taking the theory there and for me, the whole thing around ideology and hegemony, which are often obviously kind of key words – but they were revelations in a way about understanding how culture and society worked. So I was really kind of taking that in and how that would relate to teaching and not that actively involved in the politics.

Kieran Connell: Okay, you mentioned Feminism, did that – you hadn't really previously encountered much of that previously, but did that have an effect on you?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: That probably had the biggest effect in terms of – yeah what I was doing, because I don't think it was in the first year but I mean first of all it was – for me, it was that whole thing of looking at representations of women and gender and that led to the issues of masculinity. So I think it was in the second year that I was there that we did set up a men's group and there were certainly two other Centre guys – a guy called George Miodrag?

Kieran Connell: I don't know that name actually.

[0:11:40]

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Okay well he came – (both laugh) it's a good name! George Miodrag, which is “M-i-o-d-r-a-g” and I don't know what happened to him since, but he – it seems to me he was a really interesting guy. He came I think in '79 and Graham Dawson - ?

Kieran Connell: I've heard the name Graham Dawson, yeah.

Michael O'Shaughnessy: He's – I know he taught in Brighton subsequently and he may well still be there. But the two of them, myself and then some friends who we'd kind of met in Birmingham – yeah we set up our own Men's Group, so it wasn't a part of the Centre but it certainly – from George and Graham and my position was being informed by what was going on there.

Kieran Connell: So what – in a sense like, the stuff at the Centre all about like Feminism and Gender from a women's perspective, in a sense led you down the road of thinking about (inaudible 0:12:46) and - ?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Yeah, yeah and you know where were we in that? What could we do to help? And what could we do for ourselves as well? So I know we got involved in running (Freshers?)...

Kieran Connell: Right Okay.

Michael O'Shaughnessy: We – one of the houses I lived in had women who were working for Women's Aid, so we were doing something to try and help support that as well.

Kieran Connell: Okay so in a sense for you then, the politics wasn't with a big “P” like with those areas like Marxist or Socialist Groups, but it was like more broadly in that sense of like Gender and...?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Yeah and like the personal is political so it was the kind of personal stuff, yeah. And – yeah and that revelation of, “Oh masculinity can be examined as well” and I think that was a major shift. Before it was all kind of focused on women and representations of women and it was suddenly like, “Oh well hang on! We're men, what are men?” (inaudible 0:13:47). And that certainly became quite a focus of a lot of my teaching.

Kieran Connell: Subsequently? Okay interesting.

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Yeah, yeah.

Kieran Connell: So did you have a sense that – I don't know if you were there when – for example, it might have been slightly earlier when – I think it was slightly earlier when “Take Issue” for example was first produced; I think that was produced in '77.

Michael O'Shaughnessy: That had just come out, yeah.

Kieran Connell: Okay just come out.

Michael O'Shaughnessy: So I read that pretty much as soon as getting there.

Kieran Connell: Do you have a sort of recollection of like the effect that all those debates around Gender and Feminism had on the sort of daily running of the Centre? Because I mean I know that for some people it was slightly difficult perhaps.

Michael O'Shaughnessy: I remember in the first few months of being there – yeah, there was – it was these monthly meetings and I can remember a paper called “On Contradictions” which -

Kieran Connell: It's in the Archive! (Both laugh)

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Yeah I'm sure it is. And it felt like there was this huge kind of inward looking thing at how the Centre was running itself and all the questions of you know where the power was, which was both in relation to women, but it was wider and the Race kind of issue was beginning to come up and that felt it was almost like it was always there but not given as much weight as Gender at the time. And so Paul and obviously Stuart to an extent, were kind of there with that, but it didn't come up so much. But there was – yeah, this constant kind of focus on, “How is the place running?” And on the one hand that seemed really useful and interesting and at times it kind of felt, “Well we just need to kind of get on with what we're doing anyway”.

[0:15:42]

Kieran Connell: It just seemed – I mean did class come into it?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Yeah, but not so much, or that's my memory of it - not so much.

Kieran Connell: So it was never sort of like a Feminist moment and then the Race moment? There was never a class moment?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Well I think that would have been the first thing, yeah. So that would have come first, then Gender and then Race. And then three were there... yeah.

Kieran Connell: You mentioned like Group work and the process of like doing – working, researching, reading, perhaps some people writing as well, with other people. But what was that like for you, like was that positive or was it - ?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: It was – it was positive and it was new for me as well... And again it may have been because I – the small groups that I was in, which was particularly those two, the English Studies Group and the Media Group, the people who I was working with I felt it was – yeah it was a good dynamic working with them, so there wasn't... it wasn't conflict but there were different kind of points of view coming through. And that was new for me to work in that collaborative way and that was a very positive experience of the place, yeah. And I think those kind of – because I think that was the last year that Stuart Hall was there.

Kieran Connell: Do you remember him leaving?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: (Pauses) I remember a party at his house (Kieran laughs)... because I – well you probably can – but I'm thinking that he left at the end of '79 - ?

Kieran Connell: Yeah.

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Yeah, so he was there for the year that I did the MA, so the whole of that. And he also, for me, was an extraordinary teacher and I'm sure you've heard that from other people as well.

Kieran Connell: Definitely, yeah.

Michael O'Shaughnessy: And I can just remember going to sessions where he would just kind of start talking and just – the most amazing kind of understanding of so many different things which he could bring together and communicate. So I got a huge amount from him... but also yeah from the groups that we were then going off and working; so working with Gary and Hazel and Mike Denning... that was very productive and yeah it was good working in that way with different people. That carried on for me, because I was – officially I was part time, but basically I was there pretty much full time in the first year and the second year carried on in the small groups that I was doing my individual dissertation, so that was a little bit more separate. And I guess to me it felt a little bit when Stuart went, something went from the Centre then and I think it was... because I stayed in Birmingham for another five years, so I was kind of vaguely linked to it, but it was really those two years -

Kieran Connell: That you were kind of - ?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: - that he was there, yeah.

[0:19:20]

Kieran Connell: I mean Stuart – I mean I was going to ask you about Stuart and about staff more generally as well, because obviously from a lot of people I've spoken to and from the Archive, it seems that there was like a real attempt to try and break down the kind of conventional relationships between staff – academic staff and students. Did you feel that was like something that was there right from - ?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Yeah and also because the students, I mean they were post-graduate mature students, so that was – you know a different ethos from what it had been like being at university as an undergraduate anyway. And it was clear from the subgroups that that was a collective thing where everybody could have input to it, yeah.

Kieran Connell: Did the staff nevertheless – did they still have an influence on - ?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Sure, you mean like on the Agendas -?

Kieran Connell: Yeah on like – I mean everyone I've spoken to pretty much had always said in the same that you have about Stuart's you know charismatic kind of brilliance really, so I was just wondering like on the one hand there's a commitment to this like democratic kind of collective approach to researching and you know how the Centre operates and the Centre General Meetings. But on the other hand of course, Stuart and Michael and Richard Johnson in their different ways are also kind of like – kind of in different ways you know very experienced and – so how did – I was wondering how that – was there ever a tension between that collective approach where – and the importance of staff members?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Yeah – I mean what – my perspective would be that in groups you're always going to get some people who have more leadership qualities than others or intellectually, more interesting ideas or whatever. So they obviously had a wealth of experience which they brought to the situation, so for myself, I was happy to kind of see what directions they suggested and then could go in. So there wasn't a tension for me in the way that was going on. I could see that there were sometimes tensions... in the groups. But I – I mean I just never felt that they were at staff, kind of saying, "This is the way..." I mean only occasionally and maybe more from – you'd get a sense from Michael of you know, "We've got to work within the University's institution. You know they're funding us, they're letting us do it" so some awareness of that. But for me, it wasn't a struggle the whole thing and it just felt – and you know I remember in the English Group, I mean people like Rebecca just – she had loads of ideas, so she was kind of driving stuff within that. There was a guy called Tony Davis as well - ?

Kieran Connell: Yeah, he was (based?) in English wasn't he?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Yes but I mean he kind of came in as just a participant in a way and so just putting in his material as well. So it did feel as – in my experience that there was a kind of sharing in those things. So I'm aware from the Monday meetings that there was things kind of going on...

Kieran Connell: Did you ever have like – you mentioned like Michael maybe being the voice that says like, “We’ve got to be aware of what the wider University is thinking or doing or our relationship with that”, did you ever – did you as a student, as a postgrad, ever have like an inkling of the relationship between the Centre and the University? Did you ever have much to do with the wider University?

Michael O’Shaughnessy: Not then... but I think in the kind of – the years afterwards, I was helping – they were beginning to teach Cultural Studies to undergraduates so I was one of the people who was tutoring on that.

Kieran Connell: This would have been moving on into the sort of 80s –

Michael O’Shaughnessy: This is ’81, ’82, so it was – in a way as the Postgraduate Centre was having more problems with getting funding and students in you know with long term funding there, they were expanding it into the undergraduate area. So that would have been my connection there and that was interesting because you were getting students I think going – you got students from all kinds of disciplines and it’s almost some – you know now it’s memory, but maybe a lot of them had to do this unit -

Kieran Connell: Yeah, yeah.

Michael O’Shaughnessy: - and it was like, “What is this about? We were trying to –”

[0:24:18]

Kieran Connell: Was this kind of “Inter Faculty Studies”, was that what it was?

Michael O’Shaughnessy: Yeah that’s right, yeah.

Kieran Connell: So it’s kind of a bit like people – the students were kind of a bit slightly taken aback perhaps with the (inaudible 0:24:27) approach - ?

Michael O’Shaughnessy: Some of them, yeah. And some of them were kind of like, “This is great stuff and really interesting”.

Kieran Connell: And what about you – obviously like being part time and having to fund yourself and working in the bakery and also doing this adult education teaching, how did that like – this – all the intellectual efforts that were going on in the Centre and all these long debates and General Meetings about what-have-you, how did that – going between those two different worlds? In your head did that feel like you were entering two different worlds? I mean going to teach like – I don’t know adult education –

Michael O’Shaughnessy: Hairdressers.

Kieran Connell: - yeah hairdressers. How did that play out?

Michael O’Shaughnessy: (Pauses) The first year I was kind of so absorbed with all the stuff coming from the Centre that that was just taking up my life and the other bits were just, “This is getting me enough money to survive on”... Subsequent to that I’m trying to just remember back to it, but I started to do adult education which was actually teaching television studies and film studies, so this was setting things up in Birmingham through the (inaudible 0:25:40) Department and that felt that this was really the way of taking all the stuff that I’d got from the Centre and taking it out into my wider world. And I guess my wider world you know for a long time stayed within academia. So it was about how you could teach these things to first of all adults and then undergraduates and it certainly – it changed my approach to that and informed the approach to that. Politically outside of that, I just was never a hugely political animal, so there was kind of the Gender stuff with the Men’s Group and all of those things going on. Day to day living, living in a collective house, I hadn’t done that in quite the same way and I’m sure that was influenced by the Centre, so Bob Willis was one member of the house and the women who were there were all involved in like the Women’s Aid Project and other things.

Kieran Connell: Was the Women's Aid Project this – to do with the Women's Refuge on the Priory Road?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Yes.

Kieran Connell: So Tricia McKabe would have been involved in that?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Yes although – yeah and she was around. I didn't have a lot to do with her but she was one of them. But the other women in the house where I was were not women at the Centre, they were...

Kieran Connell: (Inaudible 0:27:18) Women's Liberation.

Michael O'Shaughnessy: That's it, yeah.

Kieran Connell: Did you have – were you sort of into kind of the music scene in Birmingham? Like the Punk scene that I know that like the Au Pairs for example were kind of Martin (Calderwell?) watched them for a bit and I know there was a connection there between some Centre members and obviously Dick Hebdige's influence were a bit earlier, but he was very much involved in that kind of milieu of Punk and stuff. Were you kind of into that or were you a bit far removed from it?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: I was kind of – I remember going along and watching stuff. Suzie and the Banshees – I think then King Creole was very popular with the Centre. But I hadn't had a big kind of music interest prior to that anyway, so I was kind of interested in it and in terms of a – just the whole interest in popular culture and how that worked; so yeah I was interested in how music would work in that way.

Kieran Connell: But film was obviously your kind of like key –

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Film and TV – I mean TV – and that was the big thing that the Centre took on, but also you know we did work on – well the stuff on football and sport because (inaudible 0:28:35) sport. So all of those kind of popular culture pursuits, yeah.

Kieran Connell: And I guess like – so in a sense like the broader Centre Project is all – is all to do with like taking those kinds of subjects seriously isn't it I guess? I mean not dismissing them as you know mass culture or whatever -

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Absolutely, yeah.

Kieran Connell: - and not worthy of study. So presumably for you that was – you were in a sense you were part of that same kind of tradition in one way.

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Yeah. And I think in terms of popular culture, yeah seeing it on the one hand as something that's of the people, so it's like really valid and valuable in all those kind of ways. But also as the arena often in which consent is won in kind of basic Gramscian terms, so that – it's really important to see how it works in that way. So looking at stuff – like yeah sport from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century onwards and all those popular aspects.

Kieran Connell: You mentioned Gramsci then, I mean obviously I know that – I don't know how prevalent this was when you were there, but the whole notion of this organic intellectual was something that the Centre in general was obviously quite keen on.

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Yeah, yeah.

Kieran Connell: Did you ever sort of see yourself as an organic intellectual or did you have a kind of like a – was that something that kind of inspired you? Because I know Stuart said that he wanted to produce organic intellectuals at the Centre.

Michael O'Shaughnessy: That's what I would have liked to think I was and I don't know if I was, but... yeah and I mean the Gramscian stuff was...more – I mean also it was flavour of the month or the year at the

Centre on top of Althusser and Ideology, but it was a revelation for me, so yes I would want to think that what I was doing in Education was part of that wider kind of process.

Kieran Connell: Did you – you mentioned like some contradictions and I know Hazel and other people have talked about that as well, but were there any other sort of crises that you remember? Or did the students ever demand to be more involved or – you know was there ever – did anything like – did anything stick in your mind from that period? (Inaudible 0:31:11) contradictions...

Michael O'Shaughnessy: It felt to me like that period in '78... that there wasn't something as intense as that afterwards, but I would have been less involved because that was the year that I was there for the whole time. The subsequent year was much more kind of part time and then it was just working more with the Subgroups. But I don't know if it's... if it had a radical change on how things were being organised and I'm really trying to kind of think back to this now.

Kieran Connell: Yeah well I appreciate it's quite a few years ago.

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Yeah and if I have any subsequent thoughts -

Kieran Connell: Drop me a line; that would be great. I mean do you remember anything about – because I mean – was there ever a sense at the Centre that people were doing, studying there to have academic careers or was there ever that careerism that's so commonplace now within higher education that you know you do a PhD to become a lecturer or something? Was that ever something - ?

[0:32:30]

Michael O'Shaughnessy: I didn't think it was there in terms of careerism. I thought it was there in terms of we wanted to change the world.

Kieran Connell: Change the world, yeah.

Michael O'Shaughnessy: And I can remember for myself just kind of thinking if everybody knew about ideology, society would change then. So it was – it was more about wanting to kind of share and spread the message and maybe also those techniques of working as well, so all of those, rather than about getting jobs. That – it certainly didn't feel like that to me, no.

Kieran Connell: What about like I mean – obviously there's all the kind of – the Hutchinson books that were produced like – which came from the Working Papers in Cultural Studies and the Centre produced a lot of publications on stuff that – what was that – were the motivations behind that to do with – again to do with like you say like putting the word out there, rather than getting an academic post?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Yeah I certainly would have said that. I'm trying to think – because there was all the stuff about they've got the contract, so what's the next book going to be on? So there might have been some kind of issues about, "Which is the most important thing to take on?" So that particularly might have come up because I'm trying to think – the "Women Take Issue" was that '77?

Kieran Connell: '77, '78 I think.

Michael O'Shaughnessy: There was a more kind of general – I'm trying to think what the sequence of the books coming out...

Kieran Connell: Because I think "The Empire Strikes Back" came a bit later – about '81/'82 perhaps.

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Right but I mean – yes so the move to do that on Race so that would have been an issue I think in the sense that, "What is the topic that we're going to look at?" But not about careerism, it was more about, "What's the most important issue to look at now?" And certainly with "The Empire Strikes Back" it hasn't been dealt with and I think – I think Bob Findlay would have been really important in kind of pushing for that alongside with Paul –

Kieran Connell: (Eryl?) Lawrence presumably would have been around -

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Yes, yes because he I think came probably '79 or something. So – and it was like it's time for this to be – or the assumption of course... but no I never had the feeling of there's an issue about careers. And it's interesting – and it's just an interesting question to reflect on in that way.

Kieran Connell: I mean in terms of like – I was going to ask more broadly really about your own subsequent life and you know – like after you finished the Masters then, did you get back to teaching?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: I actually got funding at Aston University to do a PhD on the development of film and media studies because that had been my – and there's a... it was almost an accident getting that funding because they needed someone.

Kieran Connell: Which Department was that in?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Educational Enquiry – there's a guy called Henry Miller.

Kieran Connell: I think I know the name "Henry Miller" (laughs).

[0:35:54]

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Well he used to live in – well as everybody did, the King (Seath?) Area, he taught at Aston but he had connections. And actually he – he'd have quite a lot of Centre students living at his house.

Kieran Connell: That's where I know the name – Neil Grant I think mentioned the name because I think they might have had quite a good relationship (laughs).

Michael O'Shaughnessy: It's just all these names!

Kieran Connell: (Inaudible 0:36:25).

Michael O'Shaughnessy: So I kind of got that funding and it was never a subject that I really wanted to look at. Oh well I partly did, but it wasn't – it was just like, "This is a way of getting some money for the moment" and I started teaching – yeah (inaudible 0:36:40) classes in Birmingham, some in London with Gary for adult education and then doing some part time teaching at Wolverhampton with Jeff Herd who was – I don't...

Kieran Connell: He's retired now.

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Yeah I'm trying to think if he was at the Centre. I think he was there -

Kieran Connell: I think he had a good relationship – I think Dick Hebdige and they had quite a close relationship with Dick and went to do a lot of teaching there.

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Yeah but Jeff was there in '78 I'm pretty sure, either as part time or just coming in... and there was a guy from Australia as well.

Kieran Connell: At the Centre.

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Whose name I will remember because I know him now in Perth in Australia.

Kieran Connell: Oh right!

Michael O'Shaughnessy: But he was – there was a couple of guys from Australia I think who were over – Steve something... yeah so I was just getting various bits of part time teaching and it just felt that this is a way to – I mean it was a way of earning a living, but it was a way of using all that stuff.

Kieran Connell: Was that more appealing for you, like doing that kind of teaching and then taking – I mean obviously you were doing a PhD at Aston so presumably it wouldn't – it would have been an option to do the PhD and then become a lecturer and you would go down that route. Would that ever have appealed to you?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: I was more interested in teaching and as I say, the PhD wasn't – if I'd chosen a topic, it would have been about Masculinity but that couldn't happen at that institution. So – yeah so I just kind of didn't worry about that and I do remember when I was applying for jobs, because after about five years – I'd taught at Warwick with Richard Dyer and Charlotte Runsdén. Do you - ?

Kieran Connell: Yeah I know Richard Dyer, yeah.

Michael O'Shaughnessy: So at the Film Department there which was fantastic – I mean they just had a great Department there, but I was quite happy doing that part time for a while but then I was thinking, "I do need to get a job" so I was applying for jobs and I do remember having the interview and they were saying, "So what about the PhD?" And I said, "Oh I've given that up" (Kieran laughs) And afterwards, one of the interview panel said, "That was very risky saying that" – yeah, but I managed to get the job and so – because I enjoy teaching basically.

Kieran Connell: The job was working in a –

Michael O'Shaughnessy: This was at Leicester Polytechnic – yeah, teaching Film Studies.

[0:39:20]

Kieran Connell: So in terms of like – you know what was the influence of the Centre on your work and your kind of like outlook really I guess. I mean more generally...

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Huge... in terms of having a kind of understanding of what the role of Film, Media and Literature are in society and wanting to teach that and the whole issue about representation – yeah, how representations in the Media feed back into how people and the culture sees itself. At the same time the whole kind of aesthetic kind of formal thing about looking at how does film work? So you want to look at that in terms of how it's put together. It was always – the main thing was the fact that the social meanings in it and how the media could help to give you an understanding of the culture you lived in. So that – and you know the class, gender, race (inaudible 0:40:26) -

Kieran Connell: Yeah that kind of identity politics.

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Yeah, all of that thing – that just kind of ran through it always, so – and that was at Leicester where I taught Film – Film Media and then subsequently I went to Australia. That was to do a similar job and developed work there.

Kieran Connell: Was the Centre's work known much in Australia?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Yeah it was and the Head of Department where I went to, I'd actually met on a BFI Summer School and there were people from Australia kind of coming over and taking that stuff and developing it very interestingly and doing a lot in schools. So there was a kind of Media Study development in schools in Australia which in some ways I think was ahead of what was happening in England. So that was all going on, so there was a guy called David McKey who's not a centre person – he was a Scottish lecturer who also – you know was taking in all that stuff and he turned up in Perth as well. He was the only person I knew when I went there. And I've subsequently – I mean I wrote a kind of – an undergraduate textbook on Media and Society which – I'm happy to send a copy if that was useful to put into -

Kieran Connell: Yeah, that would be brilliant.

Michael O'Shaughnessy: - which I would say a huge part of it was from my development at the Centre – the ideas from the Centre. And I guess what I see is – there was a whole bunch of us at that time who weren't initially (inaudible 0:42:15) careers but did go off...

Kieran Connell: Did you find teaching more like – in a sense, I mean I know it's got a lot of baggage attached to the phrase "organic intellectual" but I guess in a sense was that – the teaching approach, in a sense a bit more of an organic route than a – you know more academically driven approach?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: I would say so, yeah, yeah, because I wasn't particularly driven by research. Yeah there were little bits of it... and the writing stuff came later, so yeah I was more interested in teaching and working with that.

Kieran Connell: And just finally so you can get on with your lunch –

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Well I'll just – I'll say in terms of the influx, so one of the things I – Althusser talks about "unconscious ideology" and that whole idea of how the unconscious drives us along, I was really interested in that. And my next intellectual development was to be interested in psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, which would partly come from the gender and the Men's Group, but it was also that idea of interest in the unconscious and for me, I would see a link between that and I know that that was not – there was some stuff around psychoanalysis and film studies, but not in terms of therapy and all those kind of things. And I got particularly interested in Wilhelm Reich - ?

Kieran Connell: Yeah, I know the name.

Michael O'Shaughnessy: - who you know I would say is a classic "organic intellectual" who is interested in Marx, Equality, Sexual Liberation and all those kind of things back in Germany in the 30s. So he and Jung who's not someone who's particularly taken often by Cultural Studies but I think has a lot of interesting themes as well.

[0:44:15]

Kieran Connell: So in a sense like your interests that you developed at the Centre, like part of the trajectory that then kind of developed the interest in psychoanalysis?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: I would say so, yeah, yeah. Yeah, so the unconscious ideology, "Oh well actually, let's explore the whole unconscious thing as well and what's behind that".

Kieran Connell: Right Okay and just to end then, the kind of question that I'm asking a lot of people but in some ways it's an impossibly broad question but it was just – I was wanting to know what your thoughts were really, I mean in terms of what you think – whilst you were at the Centre, what you think made that kind of particular approach and way of working, possible in terms of sort of you know that historical moment? I mean in terms of how it operated and the people that it attracted? What was it about that particular period do you think that made it possible?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: (Pauses) The answer – I mean a whole lot of social things going on... and this is more what I know about happened in the Centre, that the kind of late 60s when Rick Compt was there and Stuart, but that was part of the beginning of the kind of student politics and changes. And so while that's feeding into it...

Kieran Connell: Was that something that – whilst you were there, was that kind of a story that people told? Like was it a bit of mythical thing that you know - ?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: I think the specifics of the Centre was something that I would have somehow just pieced together by hearing about it. We were obviously reading Richard Hoggart then and knew that he had kind of started it, so seeing how that fitted in to it. The student stuff of the late 60s and early 70s, in a sense I'd lived through but -

Kieran Connell: From afar sort of thing.

Michael O'Shaughnessy: - yeah, or I was at Exeter University which wasn't particularly radical, but it's like you know the sense of freedom you know coming from all those changes through the 60s and then the more challenging time in the 70s politically and the kind of moving into – and the kind of Punk

movements and then kind of Thatcher. All of those things would be feeding in to that moment and – which I almost feel I just kind of fell upon through that interest in Film Studies and yeah the work that was developing there. But it certainly changed my life and I would say for the better and it seems to have had an amazing effect out – you know kind of globally.

Kieran Connell: Great, thanks very much.

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Okay.

[End of Part 1]

[Part 2]

[0:00:00]

Michael O'Shaughnessy: So I actually kind of resigned from my full time job almost exactly ten years ago but I was getting more and more interested in music and actually doing something creative, so I – and that I guess was the – yeah, changed me. But I now teach primary school kids music (laughs) and in some ways I would still see all the stuff that I learnt from the Centre as having an influence in – yeah what I'm trying to do and set up with the kids musically, including things like (collectivity?) of their expressions, bringing things in and culturally introducing different kinds of music and that kind of stuff as well, so it's...

Kieran Connell: So you still see that as being like a – on the same trajectory almost like - ?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Yes and indeed singing with the "Spooky Men's Chorale" is a very interesting exploration of masculinity.

Kieran Connell: That's your choir then?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: That's the choir that I've been in over here, yeah. And you know it is a Men's Group and one of the songs we sing is, "We are not a Men's Group" so it's kind of playing around that – but you know something behind a choir is a kind of an exploration of masculinity in the contemporary world as well, so those things still...

Kieran Connell: So presumably you still think there's a need for – even though the Centre's no longer around, the sort of need you think for Cultural Studies?

Michael O'Shaughnessy: Absolutely yeah and I mean it's obviously in lots of places and in some – I think one of the dangers might have been where the study of popular culture has just become a celebration of popular culture and has lost its critical edge and that's the real kind of tension for it – yeah for Cultural Studies and how it deals with that. But I feel yes absolutely there's a role for it and it feels like it is actually there in lots of different ways. And so many other disciplines – I had some experience with a Music Department and could see how you know Music Degrees now have taken on things there which would never have been there in the past, so Cultural Studies comes through.

Kieran Connell: Great.

[End of Transcript]