

Feminist and Women's Studies
Association (UK and Ireland)

NEWSLETTER

June 2007 Issue 50

Interview with Sarah Waters

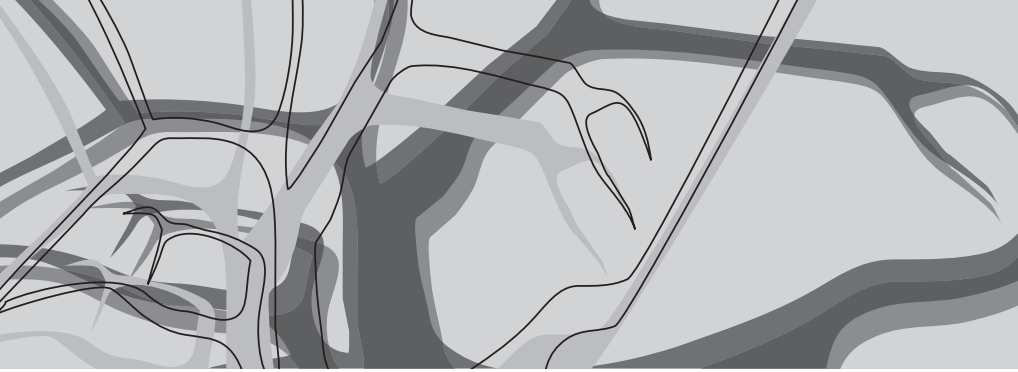
FWSA 2006 essay competition
winner, international conference
reviews and much more inside...

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Membership to the FWSA includes the following benefits:

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- Discounted registration at FWSA conferences and events
- Funding for student-organised workshops and seminars
- Biannual newsletter
- E-mail distribution and discussion list
- Election to the Executive Committee

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CHARLIE HOPKINSON



Editorial

Welcome to the June 2007 edition of the FWSA newsletter! This issue is dedicated to capturing the depth, variety and diversity of feminist scholarship, both within the UK and internationally. Inside we have an interview with Booker-prize nominated novelist, Sarah Waters, who discusses her work (including her new book!) in relation to feminism. We also have a spotlight on this year's FWSA essay competition winner and an update about the exciting student-organised seminars sponsored by the FWSA. As the newsletter seeks to highlight connections between feminist researchers internationally, we have included conference reviews and research briefs from scholars working in the UK, Australia and Germany.

Since the last issue, the newsletter team has seen some changes and this issue owes its existence to the work and support of Carolyn Pedwell, Michaela Fay and myself, Amy Hinterberger. Carolyn Pedwell deserves a special thank-you for helping to produce this first issue of the re-vamped newsletter. Carolyn has meanwhile taken on the post of Treasurer for the FWSA which means that in the future the newsletter team will have to make do without her. Sincere thanks also to the former editor of the newsletter, Clare Beckett, for her valued contribution. We also want to thank, in particular, the many contributors to this issue without whom there would, quite simply, not be a newsletter.

With this newsletter we hope to produce a thought-provoking publication that enables members to make connections with each other but also aims to capture the debates and issues pertinent to feminist and women's studies in the UK, Ireland and abroad. It is a reflection of the ongoing, excellent work the FWSA has been engaged with over the past 20 years.

We hope you like this issue. Please contact us with any suggestions, ideas and feedback you may have! We look forward to meeting many of you at the annual conference in Newcastle this June.

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Chair's Report

There have been a number of new developments since the past newsletter, not least the revamping of the newsletter which you are holding in your hands. Amy Hinterberger and Carolyn Pedwell have redesigned the newsletter and given new life to it. Upcoming items in the next newsletter include reports from our sponsored student workshops, a review of the FWSA conference taking place in Newcastle this June, an article on the state of Feminist Studies in Australia – and much more!

We are delighted to be sponsoring three student-organised seminars this year: *Women Writing Rape* (Warwick, April 2007), *Wanted Dead or Alive? Positioning Contemporary Women's Writing* (Warwick, June 2007) and *Researching 'Women': How, Where, Why?* (Lancaster, July 2007). The range of topics and ideas being explored in these events makes quite clear that feminist theory and criticism remains of vital importance to new scholars. We are keen to build on the success of all the events we have sponsored to date and would ask interested students to get in touch with us and for supervisors to encourage their students to think about ways in which we might help them organise an event of relevance to their research.

We had over forty entries for the student essay competition this year – the highest number to date. Congratulations to Sarah Parker, whose undergraduate dissertation from the University of Exeter won – Sarah receives £200 and a year's membership to the FWSA. The top six entries will be published in a special issue of the *Journal of International Women's Studies* (www.bridgew.edu/SoAS/jiws/). Many thanks to Karen Throsby for running the competition this year, to Flora Alexander for acting as an external referee and to all those who provided comments on the submissions – your work is much appreciated.

We have just launched the 2007 essay competition and would ask all members to consider submitting/encouraging their students to submit. The poster is available for downloading from the website with all the details of how to enter. The deadline is 1 November 2007 but we heavily encourage

early submissions – particularly from undergraduates who may drift away after July.

We have been toying with ideas of how to best represent/reach the members of the association: ideas for blogs and wikis have been circulating for some time. Some of you were kind enough to complete our questionnaire and we are slowly compiling the results of this consultation exercise. We hope to have details by the AGM this summer. In the meantime, Helen Fenwick – our stellar administrative assistant – has put together a more interactive website. We would encourage you to bookmark this (www.fwsa.org.uk) – and do contact us to let us know what you would like to see on the website.

This year's conference – Feminism and Popular Culture – will be held at Newcastle University on the last weekend in June. Keynote speakers include Jackie Stacey, Yvonne Tasker, Imelda Whelehan and Pamela Church Gibson. There will also be feminist karaoke (!) This is the 20th annual FWSA conference and we would like to encourage as many of you as possible to attend – both for the feminist karaoke and to discuss the ways in which the FWSA can approach its next twenty years. The AGM will take place during the conference – full details will be available on the conference programme (<http://fempopcult.ncl.ac.uk>).

The coming year will be one of transition for the FWSA. Myself and Karen Throsby are stepping down from the executive after having served the allowed two full terms. There are a number of new faces on the executive but we would like to see more – both junior and senior colleagues. The success of the FWSA is down to the commitment of its members who volunteer to serve on the executive committee. Without this support, the FWSA simply would not be able to carry out its activities, including the essay competition, the student seminars and the annual conference. If you are interested in joining the executive committee then please get in touch with us through our official email: fwsa@fsmail.net.

Stacy Gillis
FWSA Chair, Newcastle University

FWSA Student Seminar Update



The FWSA student seminar scheme began in 2004-05, and is designed to bring together feminist scholars and activists across institutions and disciplines. The seminars can be on any feminist-related topic, and the FWSA provides a £250 budget to support the event. These seminars play an important part in building up the membership of the FWSA, as well as providing opportunities to students to develop new networks and connections and to gain valuable experience in event organisation.

This academic year, the FWSA is supporting three seminars. The first – *Women Writing*

Rape – was held at the University of Warwick on 28 April and was a great success. The day began with a captivating keynote presentation from Dr Ananya Jahanara Kabir (University of Leeds) on the topic 'Double violation? (Not) Talking about Rape in Contemporary South Asia' and was followed by two panels incorporating a diverse range of papers around the theme of 'women writing rape'. The day concluded with a creative writing workshop. The quality of the papers was very high, leading to engaged discussion, and the creative writing workshop was particularly well received, with many expressing regret that more conferences do not include creative writing in their programmes. For those wanting to know more about the seminar, you can go to their website (www.warwick.ac.uk/womenwritingrape), where the talks are also available in MP3 format. Congratulations to Sorcha Gunne and Zoe Brigley for organising such a successful event.

The second seminar is on 15-16 June, also at the University of Warwick, and is the inaugural conference of the Contemporary Women's Writing Postgraduate Network. The event is titled *Wanted Dead or Alive? Positioning Women's Writing*, and includes

a keynote presentation by Professor Mary Eagleton and an interview session with acclaimed writer Ali Smith. The third seminar is at Lancaster University on 10 July on the topic of *Researching 'Women' – how, where, why?* and aims to explore the ways in which postgraduates are interacting with 'women' as an investigative category. We would like to thank all of the organisers of these events for their hard work, and will report back on them in the next issue of the newsletter. Further details for both of these seminars can be found via links on the FWSA website.

The seminars are an important element of the work of the FWSA, and we would like to encourage more seminar proposals in the future. If you are interested in submitting a proposal, the details of how to do this are available on the website, or you can email us with any questions (fwsa@fsmail.net). We're looking forward to hearing from you!

Karen Throsby
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Call for FWSA Chairs

Stacy Gillis, the current FWSA Chair, will be stepping down in Summer 2008 after her second term on the executive. The executive is seeking one or two individuals who are interested in joining the executive and moving into the position of Chair (or Co-Chair) by Summer 2008. The Chair manages the executive committee and chairs the 3-4 yearly executive meetings. The Chair is also responsible for working with the administrative assistant, who has, in the past, been a postgraduate student linked to the Chair's institution.

Further duties are laid out in the constitution (available on www.fwsa.org.uk). Ideally,

the Chair should be in a permanent post at a university and have some experience of working on committees and/or in organisation.

If you are interested in taking the FWSA forward into its third decade and in working with like-minded and enthusiastic individuals who are passionately committed to feminism, then please consider joining the executive and becoming Chair. This is a time of transition for the executive committee, with several key members leaving after their two terms and several new and keen individuals who have just joined. It is crucial that someone come forward from the feminist community to lead

the FWSA and to build on such projects as the essay competition and postgraduate seminars which we have put together in recent years.

Anyone interested in discussing this with Stacy should contact her on stacy.gillis@ncl.ac.uk.



Interview with Novelist, Sarah Waters

Sarah Waters' new novel *The Night Watch* joins her last bestseller, *Fingersmith*, in being nominated for both the Man Booker Prize and the Orange Prize. There have been successful BBC adaptations of her books, *Tipping the Velvet* and *Fingersmith*, and a film adaptation of *Affinity* is in the works. Slightly awed by a three-time 'author of the year' with a PhD, **Deborah Finding** met up with Sarah at the National Theatre in London and found a warm and engaging writer who, despite her larger-than-life characters and pull towards the hidden stories of the past, is firmly rooted in her own city, community and culture.

DF: As this is for the FWSA, I guess my first question should be to ask if you think of yourself as a feminist writer?

SW: Definitely. The Fawcett Society just did a campaign to get people to photograph themselves in 'This is What a Feminist Looks Like' t-shirts, so I did that and gave a statement about why I was a feminist. My writing grew completely out of my academic work, which was rooted in feminism, particularly queer theory and performativity. I haven't been in academia since the late 90s, so I'm probably theoretically stuck there! But I definitely write with the sort of agenda I would have taken towards looking at other people's books, with an interest in gender and class, and those sorts of issues.

DF: So you're ok with the tags that have been ascribed to you: woman writer, feminist writer, lesbian writer, etc?'

SW: Yes. I've probably done more than anyone to actually appropriate the lesbian tag. I've never wanted to put myself in a position where I am playing it down, and also it's so obvious there as an agenda in my writing. I do think labels can become a bit confining, but I've been in this special position of maintaining a lesbian readership and having mainstream success as well. I suppose if I had had ambitions to break out of the lesbian market and never managed to, it might be frustrating. But I didn't have those ambitions when I started – in fact I didn't have any ambitions at all, except maybe to write a book or two that I was interested in! Also, my life outside of my writing hasn't really changed at all, and it's still really rooted in lesbian feminist networks – my friends. I'm not particularly scene-y, but I certainly feel connected to the lesbian and gay community in London.

DF: I'm glad you mentioned London. There's a passage in *The Night Watch* in which Julia says that anyone who can get lost in London shouldn't be allowed to live here, and that there should be a test! I know you walk almost everywhere – is it Sarah talking in that passage?

SW: Ha! Well, I think my characters do tend to be like me in that way. Very rooted in London, very aware of the layout of the streets, and also what that means – you know, how geography intersects with community and how everybody has their own version of London that they stick to and become attached to. I love the fact that London can contain all those communities, side by side, and because there are so many of them, practically everyone who comes to London can find what they're looking for. I've lived here for 20 years, but I love that you can be walking round a bit you think you know and then turn off into a side street and suddenly discover a square or something that you didn't know existed. And it's full of names that you use without thinking about them, like White City or Elephant and Castle, then when you write them down, you realise that they really are quite extraordinary.

DF: Can you see yourself writing a book that isn't set in London?

SW: Actually the book I'm writing right now is set in Warwickshire – which I know nothing about! But I wanted it to be in a really generic English country setting, near somewhere that was bombed, and Warwickshire was the heart of the country and near Coventry...

DF: So your new book is also set in the 1940s?

SW: Yes, I've found each book has grown out of the one before it. With the first three novels

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there was a continuing, organic interest in the 19th century, and more things I wanted to say about it. And the same thing has happened with the 1940s. The book I'm writing now is set in the same sort of period, but in a very different context. It covers things I couldn't really address in *The Night Watch*, or at least gives a slightly different version.

DF: I found *The Night Watch* more contemporary than your other books – not just because of the era, but also because of its focus on the more mundane aspects of human relationships.

SW: Yes, the characters are definitely human-sized, rather than larger-than-life. I do tend to think in terms of heroes and villains, so when I first started to write *The Night Watch*, I set it out on a piece of paper, and at the top I wrote, 'Not villainy, just...shabbiness'. I liked the idea that it wasn't grand stage villainy, like *Fingersmith*, but more domestic, yet quite devastating betrayals. It was small but real.

DF: How did it feel to write the character of Julia (a writer), in *The Night Watch*?

SW: Well, I find her quite unpleasant, so I didn't identify with her the way I did with lots

of other characters, which is funny, given that she is a writer. But inevitably I did have my own comparisons with her – for example I gave her a really nice study at the top of the house with a nice sofa, and I kept thinking 'I'd like that!' Originally she was going to be a historical novelist, but I thought, 'no, that's just going to sound too self-referential'. And at the time, there were quite a few women crime novelists, so it just seemed more fun – especially coming up with the titles of her books! Especially as the novel does have a detective element to it, where things are discovered. At one point I had planned a scene, which I never actually wrote, where Helen follows Julia because she's so obsessed. I liked the idea that she'd be doing something that Julia would have written in one of her books, but how different it was in real life to the created world.

DF: Speaking of 'the real' and 'unreal', I wanted to ask you about the ways in which you use magic and illusion in your books. Do you feel yourself particularly drawn to the idea of magic?

SW: Not exactly, although I've always been drawn to the idea of performance

as an illusion, and the ways that extends into life – the way we're all performing all the time in all sorts of ways. And I'm definitely interested in magical thinking, both the type you find in therapy, and also in talismans and superstitions and the way they can have a pull, even on very rational people. I know in my own life that I am quite superstitious, and it's absolutely absurd, but there is sometimes a pleasure about surrendering yourself to a different way of thinking. Especially when it comes to extreme feelings. It's like that bit in *The Night Watch*, where Helen says – and I often think this myself – that if only there was a system of punishments.

DF: whereby you could earn what you really wanted...

SW: Yes exactly, or expunge things, or do penance. I was brought up Catholic, so maybe it's that! But I do think there is a kind of neatness to a magic world that there isn't in real life, and that's a shame sometimes.

DF: The way you create these slightly magical or 'otherly' worlds reminds me a bit of the way M Night Shyamalan does it in his films. Especially when you add in the penchant for the twist you both have...

SW: Oh that's nice, and actually, I know exactly what you mean. I love *The Sixth Sense*. I think it's a brilliant example of a twist. So often twists at the end of something are annoying, because actually what they do is cheat you in some way, and somehow act to close things down. That twist is a brilliant one because it opens things up. And I definitely identify with him with that pull towards broad strokes and popular cultural effects, like cliffhangers.

DF: And on that note...

SW: Ha.

DF: Thank you so much for talking to us. When can we expect to read your new book?

SW: Well, I'm about six months into my initial writing process, which I'll do until I have a whole manuscript. Then I'll step back and take another look at it and start rewriting. So you may have to wait a little while...

Deborah Finding is a PhD candidate at the LSE's Gender Institute. d.p.finding@lse.ac.uk

'My writing grew completely out of my academic work, which was rooted in feminism, particularly queer theory and performativity.'



Reflections on Bodies of Knowledge: Sexuality in the Archive

**Centre for the History of European Discourses, University of Queensland
Brisbane, Australia, 26 – 28 April, 2007**

These images are taken from three politically motivated and intentionally controversial films made in the US by artist Barbara DeGenevieve:

1 A black homeless man lies naked on a hotel bed. The artist is flirting with him and he is charming her, shifting his body this way and that, revelling in the eye of the camera with smouldering eyes.

2 A white man tells us how he hid masturbating in the bushes while he watched a young adolescent girl play in a park playground. A white woman remembers how as a child, she followed a man into the bushes and put her hand on his penis. When he was done, she left, laughing to herself.

3 A white woman with long hair lies on her back with her legs open. A second white woman, with cropped hair, is touching her. The woman being touched starts to come; the tones in her voice 'yes, yes, yes', the lines of expression in her face change. The women know each other and the orgasm is real.

Despite the historical being a prerequisite to the inception of 'archive', and aside from the distinct lack of contributors from the social sciences, this conference couldn't be typecast by discipline or field. The influence of History and sexuality studies/queer theory seemed present in often dispersed, latent or differentiated ways. Neither sexuality, the archive, nor their relation, alone played the role of central organising concept to a disciplinary moment (to which sub-discipline could the objects 'archive' and 'sexuality' singly belong?); symptomatically, I think, the trajectory of the conference was very much marked by participants' presuppositions about what 'sexuality in the archive' might mean. This made for a different experience from one which confers the certitude of academic trends and positions; I for one, did not leave high on the 'cutting edge' of

that moment of disciplinary cohesion many conferences yoke or rally toward. The sheer variety of locations brought forward as 'archival' set off questions in the direction of state recordings of the sexual activities of servicemen; the doubled problematic of Creole and authentic identity in the archives of Mauritian bodies; the oxytocin induced eroticism of breast feeding; visual representations of the human distinctiveness within cultures characterised by their standardisations of bodies, to name just some.

How and why do we do archival work? How can we approach the archive through reading practices that do not privilege the idea of recovery, and that do not, in turn, seek to recover a subject from a body of knowledge? What is the force of the idea of the archive in relation to the study of sexuality? How does one form an ethical relationship with an archival imaginary? Has the archive become ubiquitous and if so, how and for whom? A lot of latent Foucault featured in the conference, and of course references to Derrida, but the discussion was not about their theories and methods. The medicalisation of the body; the role of state and colonial powers; the absence or presence of what has been written (by and in complex contexts of power); orality, dance and song; the visual; the spatial organisation of (im)material knowledge in the age of the server; it would be impossible to name the diverse range of objects that were taken to constitute the archives presented to us, and the multiple ways in which such objects were mobilised by the concerns of postcolonial studies, feminism, and to a lesser extent queer theory.

There was one, much discussed, distinct area of resonance, and that is the 'problem' of the inflection of dialogue with the identity politics of participants in deeply personal ways. We are not done with the question of how to speak about something that is important to us without creating moral hierarchies. We are not done with the question of how to speak within an interdisciplinary framework without being

exclusionary towards epistemological positions different to our own.

When DeGenevieve asks, with her films and photographs, why the sexual body is still such a site of discomfort, the audience does not contemplate, it reacts. In interest, in awe, in arousal, in confusion, in disgust, in nausea even. We are shown – we viscerally witness and embody – how political correctness in institutions such as our own, and not the rule of censorship, increasingly has the power to eradicate possibilities for thinking, seeing, feeling and speaking otherwise, that is, for speaking critically against the hierarchical deployment of bodies, feelings, and sexualities. As an audience, these visceral reactions were accompanied by views so vehemently expressed that our dialogue closed itself down in public view of the keynote; continuing our conversations in private, we ourselves responded in servitude to the political correctness that enforces this division.

'We can survive without government funding but we can't survive without academic freedom or with censorship – and the most insidious censorship right now is self-censorship' (www.degenevieve.com).

So, while I cannot recreate their depths as objects, and the depths of their effects and affects, I thought the images should stay in.

Bodies of Knowledge, an international conference sponsored by the Centre for the History of European Discourses, was organised by Dr Elizabeth Stephens and Dr Susan Stryker. For more information please contact Elizabeth at e.stephens@uq.edu.au.

Thank you to the Network for Early European Research (NEER) for funding my conference participation.

Sarah Cefai
PhD candidate
Department of Gender and Cultural Studies
University of Sydney

The Feminist Future Symposium

**Museum of Modern Art, New York
25 – 26 January, 2007**

The Feminist Future Symposium was hosted by the Museum of Modern Art, New York, on the 25 and 26 of January, 2007. Most of the speakers were well known, and published, and video recordings of the talks are freely available via the MOMA website (www.moma.org). I was intrigued by my feelings as 'an Australian' attending the symposium.

My breath steamed on the icy air around me as I stood, hugging my parka, on 54th street in Manhattan. Back home people were sweltering and either cringing or rejoicing in the national festivities of Invasion Day. Trying to be grateful for the pallid icy sun on my pallid icy skin, I looked around me. I was standing in a queue of women, all clad in long coats of some sort. Even in mid town Manhattan, we were remarkably monochrome, pale skins, long coats, sensible shoes, spectacles, neat hair, not obese, not unkempt, not 'coloured', as some North Americans say, as if white is not a colour. In my artist life I'm called a 'colourist' so I think it's OK that colour is what I noticed most about MOMA. The beige of my hands – the cold-pinked pinkness of the faces around me – the dry and dark hands that search our bags, collect our tickets, that turn and show their own pinkness as pink mouths open and say 'this way ma'am'.

I noticed the predominance of certain colours in certain spaces, as bands, and thresholds, that seemed to spread out and colour or bleach participants. Within the white walls, pallid skins faded and contrasted with the darker skins of service workers. Within the cavernous gloom of the lecture theatre, pallid faces loomed between black coats and dark teal seats and blanched further as speakers and audience members asked, 'but where have all the colours gone?' why are so many of the feminists here white?

I mention colour, because colour is a troubling issue for an Australian on the

26th of January. Impossibly far from home, I would have been happy to have ensconced myself in a utopian revisionism of 'The Feminist Future' and I desperately wanted to be one of the girls kicking down the doors of capitalism, patriarchy and art world elitism, almost as much as I felt a frisson of delight, a vertiginous swoon, at my own privilege actually being at the summit of art world power, surrounded by people I thought only existed within books. I felt like a very lucky girl. I was happy to make it into the main auditorium, happy to join in the standing ovation for the all-star line-up of feminist art stars, and happy to be filled with words and ideas of hope, challenge, criticism, and confusion.

So I feel a little bit guilty at my own fractiousness about the symposium, even though I could argue doing feminism is to fracture, question, wriggle, agitate and challenge. To not sit comfortably with anything. To wriggle in the nice seats of MOMA, to wrinkle my nose against the pale and perfumed ivy-le(ague)ions of white straight, rich, respectably ageing feminists, to wring my hands at the proliferation of pallor within this city of colour and within a political and cultural movement that has many, many colours, many classes, and so many delicious contradictions.

Anne Wagner made a wonderful point during her keynote address. She mentioned that her discomfort with feminist identity politics came from her own sense that she didn't know how to do womanliness. While most of my problems of doing women, involve questions of desire rather than being, I felt her point, and felt the silent rippling fractures across the space of gushing girly goshness. The performativity of 'audiencing' at such an event, of constituting an imaginary public of implied political unity, not to mention identity, are difficult to say the least. Not least when the event is hosted by an institution which speaker after speaker identified with everything that as art activists, and as feminists, they had tried to challenge.

Listening to the speakers, scrawling notes and sighing and applauding, gave me more than a frisson of performing the sisterhood. Do I need to write here that feminism is still a vibrant, inspiring, brilliantly critical and dynamic movement, within and often outside of art and art institutions? The life affirming generosity of so many of the speakers, the ideas, and the art was and is a refreshing lifeline out of the impossible spaces of the present, of art making, of political struggle and that impossible contradiction of organising around something (i.e. gender) in order to disrupt or destroy it. However much I squirmed and scratched at myself, my whiteness, and the sheer vertiginous luck of being there, having two days in which to surround myself with 'The Feminist Future', was like being fed on the poetics of the probable, which allows the performance of the continual imagining, 'what if?', which is the lifeblood of any critical project of art or activism.

Margaret Mayhew is undertaking a PhD in Gender and Cultural Studies at Sydney University on Post-War Life Drawing. She writes about art at: <http://artandmayhem.blogspot.com> and has lectured, exhibited and performed in relation to queer and feminist politics since 1993.

We invite readers to submit conference reviews for our December 2007 issue. Please email fwsa@fsmail.net if you are interested in reviewing a conference.

International Links



possible via the site, which would then become a community website.

WeAVE also aims to provide useful information to its members on a peer-to-peer basis. On the website, all users can upload information on conferences, events, job opportunities and other interesting news. The website also has a space for members to indicate their 'whereabouts' – letting other members know where they

are moving and asking if there are any others coming to the same conference or event. It is also possible to search for members working in the same field, for example sociology, queer studies, philosophy, literature and so on.

The network has a core group that meets annually in connection with the ATHENA network meetings and virtually in e-conferences, using the website's chat space. The core group – with its two coordinators, Iris van der Tuin from the University of Utrecht and Anna Moring from the University of Helsinki – is responsible for planning and executing the activities and meetings of the network as well as maintaining the website.

Currently WeAVE is planning a student conference to be held during the 7th European Gender Research Conference in 2009 in Utrecht. The members are also working on a special gender studies student's issue of the interdisciplinary peer reviewed Graduate Journal of Social Science (www.gjss.org).

We invite you all to join our web community!

Web space:
www.weave-network.eu

Coordinators:
Iris van der Tuin (iris.vandertuin@let.uu.nl)
Anna Moring (anna.moring@helsinki.fi)

WeAVE – Students Networking Across Europe

WeAVE is a network for European gender studies students, post-doc researchers, junior teachers or anyone else interested in this field of study. WeAVE emerged in 2005 from the ATHENA Student Forum, an international network of students that was formed as part the Thematic Network for European Women's Studies, ATHENA.

The name WeAVE incorporates two thematic lines, which define our network organisation. The image of weaving refers to the connectivity and interaction that WeAVE aims to create. Similarly, the WAVE capitalised in the title points towards a new third wave feminist generation, the future of European gender studies.

WeAVE aims to increase interaction between European women's and gender studies students. The main method, due to a lack of funding for meetings and conferences, is to provide a virtual space for students to meet, discuss and find information on networks and associations. The WeAVE web space was launched at the 6th European Gender Research Conference at the University of Lodz, Poland (2006), and has been advertised on email-lists and women's and gender studies forums throughout Europe. Anyone interested in joining in can register for free at www.weave-network.eu. Whereas WeAVE has a mailing list with over 250 subscribers, the website is set up to make communication



2007 FWSA Student Essay Competition

The Feminist and Women's Studies Association (UK and Ireland) (FWSA) invites entries from students who are doing innovative and interdisciplinary work which is grounded in feminist theory for the annual essay competition. Students from any discipline and at any stage of their studies at a UK or Irish university are invited to take part in the competition. The prize for the winning essay is £200 and one year's FWSA membership. The top six entries will be published in a special issue of the *Journal of International Women's Studies*.

Submission requirements

Between 4,000-8,000 words, including footnotes but excluding bibliography.

Electronic submission to fwsa@fsmail.net, with cover sheet downloaded from www.fwsa.org.uk/essay.htm.

The essay must be submitted as a single MS Word document attachment, including bibliography and cover sheet. Failure to incorporate the cover sheet will render disqualification.

Include details of programme of study and contact details (postal and email) through until December 2008.

Submission deadline: **1 November, 2007**. For further information, please contact: fwsa@fsmail.net or visit www.fwsa.org.uk

Research Briefs

Research Briefs is intended to showcase feminist/gender research in progress, to share research questions and concerns and build links between people with overlapping research interests. Thanks to Christina Scharff for kicking off this section and we encourage other students and scholars to share their research in this space. Please email fwsa@fsmail.net

“Negotiating Feminisms: A comparative study of young women's relationships to the women's movement in Germany and the UK”

In my PhD research, I examine the widely documented phenomenon of young women's repudiation of 'feminism' by exploring this in Germany and the UK. I am aware that 'feminism' represents many different theories and that there is no one, single 'women's movement' with a unified set of goals. For these reasons, my research regards 'feminism' and the 'women's movement' as discursive categories to signify the multiple, individual as well as cultural, understandings of the concepts. Similarly, 'young women' do not represent a homogenous group, but gender identities are constituted through a variety of factors such as 'race', socio-economic status, cultural background, ability and sexuality. Conducting qualitative empirical research on feminist consciousness, I interviewed 44 women aged between 18 and 35 in Berlin, London and Birmingham. Seeking to take young women's differences into account in my research, the identity characteristics of the women I interviewed varied along the lines of sexual orientation, ethnic, socio-economic and cultural background – and intersected with each other in numerous ways.

Feminist academics attribute a variety of reasons to young women's lack of identification with feminism. They argue, for example, that young women regard gender equality as having been achieved, distancing themselves from feminism as anachronistic. Furthermore, they highlight the role of neo-liberal discourses promoting individual achievements which dissolve the appeal of joining collective political struggles. However, historical and empirical accounts of young women's distancing from 'feminism' simultaneously

suggest that normative femininity and heteronormativity might play a crucial role in mediating responses to the 'women's movement'. Cultural representations and empirical observations show that femininity and feminism are often positioned as diametrically opposed which raises the question of whether the repudiation of feminism can be read as a re-affirmation of normative femininity. Drawing on Judith Butler's performative understanding of sex, gender and sexuality, my research seeks to explore the role of heteronormativity in feminist (dis-)identification.

However, the foregrounding of sexuality in the analysis of feminist (dis-)identification potentially leads to a neglect of other axes of difference, such as socio-economic and ethnic background. Gender and – in the context of feminist identification amongst young women – femininity should be seen as classed and racialised performances. Regarding 'gender' as constructed through multiple axes of differentiation – such as 'race' and class – implies that ethnic and socio-economic background intersect with feminist identification in complex ways. As my preliminary empirical findings seem to suggest, 'race' and class are taken up in variegated ways, and produce different sexualised, classed and racialised identities which impact unpredictably one's feminist consciousness.

In accordance with the feminist concepts that I draw on to explore feminist consciousness theoretically, I am using a feminist methodological framework to select, describe and analyse the data collection methods of my project. This implies extensive reflection upon power-relationships during the interview, questions of representation and ethical dilemmas in research. Currently, I am seeking to construct the interpretative frame of my study, by investigating the compatibility of performativity theory and discursive psychology. This work raises

interesting questions about different ways of understanding feminist (dis-)identification/repudiation (discursive/and or performative) and most recently my attention has been drawn to the role of 'affect' in negotiations of feminism, which I am keen to explore further.

I am hoping that my project will contribute to a refined understanding of why young women tend to repudiate feminism in a socio-economic order that is still characterised by gender inequalities. Offering theoretical insights into the negotiation of discourses of 'gender', 'race', 'sexuality' and equality, my research may potentially be useful to a wide range of audiences: academics interested in gender studies, intersectionality, social movements and youth, as well as feminist activists seeking to mobilise young women. Moreover, the findings could be applied to 'gender work' nationally and internationally, suggesting reasons why women (and men) tend to take a critical stance towards gender issues and offering insights into how gender work might need to be framed in order to challenge negative stereotypes.

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Spotlight: FWSA 2006 Student Essay Competition Winner



The FWSA hosts an annual essay competition open to students at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels (see page 8 for further details on this year's competition). **Sarah Parker** won the 2006 competition with her essay "The darkness is the closet in which your lover roosts her heart": lesbians desire and the gothic genre". The standard of the entries was very high and all of those on the shortlist should be commended. The winning essay, along with the other shortlisted entries will be published in a special issue of the *Journal of International Women's Studies* later this year. We asked Sarah to tell us more about herself as a feminist scholar and what influenced and inspired her winning essay.

Tell us a bit about yourself:

I was born in Littlehampton, a rather run-down seaside town on the Sussex coast. At school, I fell in love with reading, particularly *Interview with a Vampire* and *Wuthering Heights*, which I only partially understood then. In 2003, I began my degree at the University of Exeter. Here I discovered such delights as Mary Wollstonecraft, Sylvia Plath and Angela Carter, not to mention psychoanalytic theory. I also began to write and perform my own poetry, and helped produce a creative writing magazine, whilst running the LGBT. But it was only in my final year that I discovered the two loves of my life: Djuna Barnes and my girlfriend Catherine. My dissertation was the beginning of my current research interests, which I am now pursuing further at the University of Sussex.

What are the most important themes and issues that your essay addresses?

This paper is a very timely reappraisal of lesbian literature. I feel it is no longer possible to talk about lesbian literature as if it were somehow set apart from the mainstream; look at the recent successes of Ali Smith, Joanna Briscoe, Jeanette Winterson, and of course, Sarah Waters. By addressing how a 'popularist' genre that has deeply permeated so much of our culture – the Gothic genre – is intrinsically linked to a tradition in lesbian literature, I seek to free lesbian literature from the deductive notion that it is always realist

and/or overtly political in emphasis. It's time we did the diversity of lesbian literature justice.

What did you enjoy most about researching and writing the essay?

Meeting Sarah Waters was an absolute dream come true. Not many people can say they have interviewed the author they are writing their dissertation on! Reading *Nightwood* for the first time was another experience I will never forget. Having the time and space to write about exactly what I wanted, and to pursue my own research, was the highlight of my entire degree. I never under-estimate how lucky I am to be able to write about lesbianism and feminism without fear of censorship.

What are your current research interests and how do they follow from your essay?

Shortly after writing the essay, I gave my first conference paper, on intertextuality in *Nightwood* and Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus*. I have since written papers on the nineteenth-century diarist Anne Lister and prostitution in the novels of Virginia Woolf. However, my main interests continue to lie with Djuna Barnes, Natalie Barney and the modernist expatriates of the twenties. I have recently completed a paper on lesbian homoeroticism in the poetry of Renée Vivien, and my Masters dissertation will examine Parisian salon culture and Sapphic modernist communities. I hope to develop this research through to a PhD.

2006 Shortlisted entries

(in alphabetical order)

Zoe Brigley: 'Confessing the secrets of others: Pascale Petit's poetic employment of Latin American cultures and the Mexican artist, Frida Kahlo.'

Emily Marchese: 'No women allowed: exclusion and accountability in men's anti-rape groups.'

Cera Murtagh: 'A transient transition: the cultural and institutional obstacles impeding the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition in its progression from informal to formal politics.'

Lucia Pietroiusti: 'Body and the text / Body of the text in Mina Loy's Songs to Joannes.'

Sofia Sanchez: 'The female body in Margaret Atwood's *Lady Oracle* and *The Edible Woman*.'

Call for Papers

Body, Performance, Text

In association with the Northern Writers' Centre
Newcastle University, UK (April 11 – 13 2008)

For many contemporary scholars, the concept of performance is crucial to the project of theorising the relationship between bodies and texts. Within the context of recent thought, critics including Judith Butler, Peggy Phelan, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick have worked to illuminate the radical contingency of embodied experience, performance, and discourse. While these theorists have usefully extended the parameters of debates about performance, and identified its important links to the politics of identity and empowerment, they have also gestured towards the ways in which performance might be used to straddle the gaps between creative and critical disciplines.

This international, interdisciplinary conference will bring together scholars working on all aspects of performance and embodiment. We are particularly interested in exploring the points at which the creative and the critical intersect and/or diverge, and we hope to provide an open forum within which writers, performers, theorists, and readers can meet and exchange ideas.

Possible Topics:

- the body in/of the text
- literary representations of the body
- the body in film, theatre, and the visual arts
- dance
- the performing body
- performance and performativity
- writing as performance
- memory
- psychoanalysis
- the politics of embodiment
- gender and sexuality
- race and ethnicity
- disability
- the boundaries of performance
- popular culture
- digital technologies
- cyberspace

The organisers are open-minded about the form that contributions might take. We invite applications from creative writers and performers, and are also interested in receiving proposals for roundtable discussions on relevant themes.

Please send 300-word abstracts or 1,000-word panel proposals to Melanie Waters at m.j.waters@ncl.ac.uk by 1 November 2007.

Researching 'Women': Who, how, where, why?

One Day Postgraduate Seminar, 10 July 2007, Lancaster University Sponsored by the Institute for Women Studies (Lancaster University) and the Feminist and Women's Studies Association (UK and Ireland)

Confirmed Keynote Speaker:
Jackie Stacey

The Researching 'Women' day seminar aims to explore the ways in which postgraduates are interacting with 'women' as an investigative category. The seminar seeks to strengthen relations between feminist scholars, providing a place for sharing work and ideas across disciplines. The seminar will bring together (past and present) postgraduates of this continuously lively community in order to empower them when they examine the future of Women's Studies. The seminar also aims to explore the possibilities of interdisciplinary working environments and intersectionality in postgraduate feminist scholarship.

Registration:

£7 FWSA members
£12 non-members
(includes coffee and lunch)

Please contact Lia Kinane,
l.kinane@lancaster.ac.uk for further details and registration.

Snapshot Interview with Gabriele Griffin

Gabriele Griffin, Professor of Women's Studies, Anniversary Chair in Women's Studies, University of York



Book on your bedside?

Helen Humphreys, *Wild Dogs* – she's a wonderful Canadian writer – I've just been to her hometown, Kingston, Ontario.

What do you love about your job?

The variety, the degree of autonomy we have in deciding how we spend our working time, my PhD students (every one of them different but all interesting and stimulating to talk with), working with colleagues internationally... and lots more.

Worst job you have ever done?

Garage attendant – in the days when you actually still scrubbed the tiles around the filling stations, filled petrol into cars, and cleaned windscreens for drivers.

A word you like?

Marsupial.

A word you overuse?

'Ok' when I mean 'wonderful'.

Three authors who have influenced you?

Simone Weil, Adrienne Rich, Gabriele Wohmann.

Favourite children's book?

Pippi Longstocking.

What keeps you awake at night?

Delays in my students or researchers getting paid; EU bureaucracy.

Who would you invite to your dream dinner party and what would you serve?

I have many different dream dinner parties as there are such a lot of great women out there one would like to spend time with – very hard this one. One set: women with divergent creative imaginations who combine verbal and non-verbal arts in provocative ways: Leonora Carrington, Hannah Hoeh, Djuna Barnes, Mary Kelly, Pina Bausch, Gerlind Reinshagen. Top girls all! Since I don't like cooking, the effect of coming from a large family (though I enjoy food), and I don't like the fetishization of food, I'd put the question of what to serve off until the last minute and then do something really simple and probably not very imaginative.

When you are not working what do you do?

Go to the cinema and theatre, read novels, a spot of housework to keep the chaos at bay.

Where did you grow up?

Cologne in Germany.

What did you want to be when you grew up?

Something to do with books.

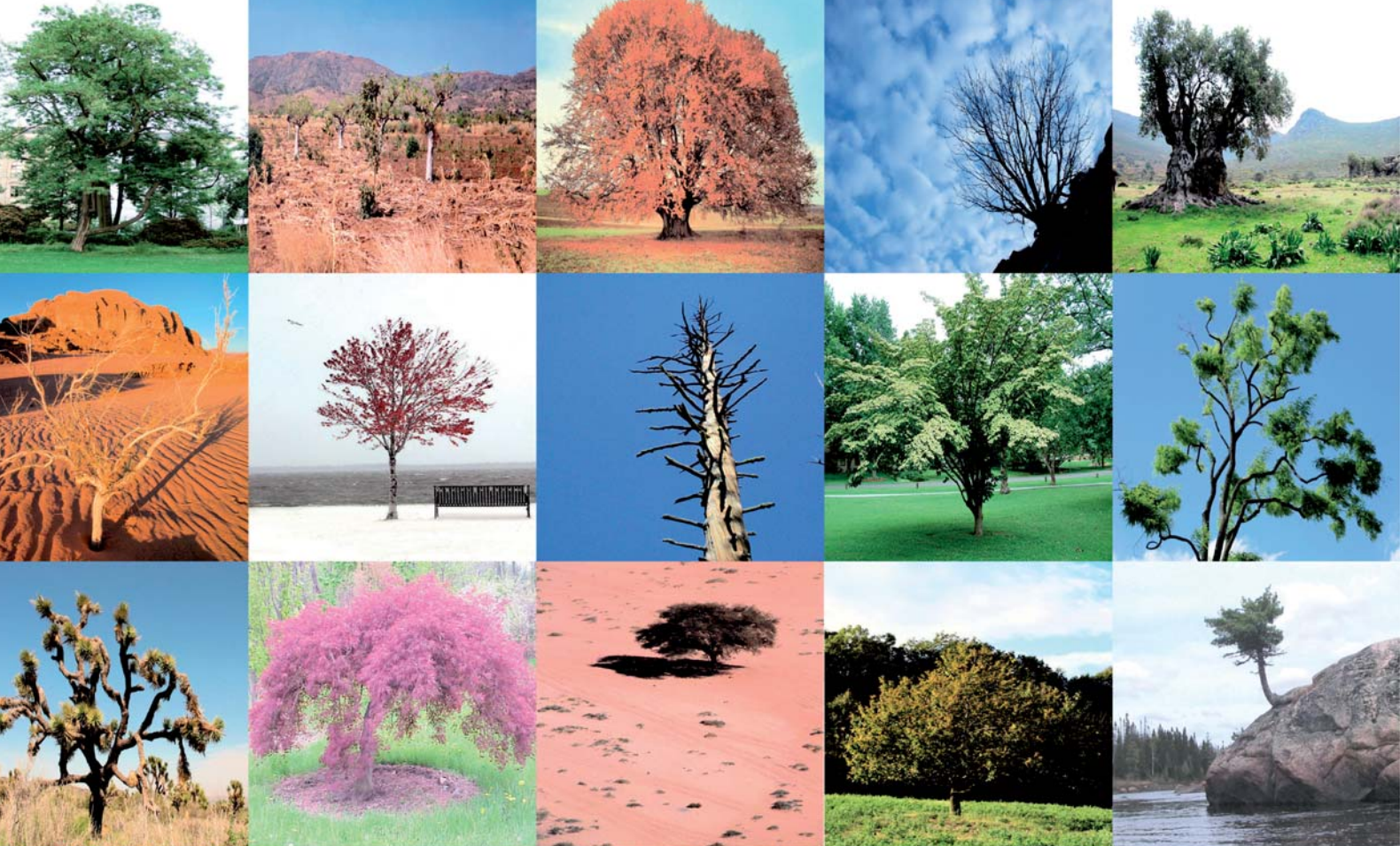
Name one of your guilty pleasures?

Chocolate.

If you had to describe your relationship to feminism in one sentence or less what would it be?

Unconditional love.





NEW: MA Gender and Culture

Goldsmiths College, University of London

What is the Feminist and Women's Studies Association (UK and Ireland)?

The FWSA promotes feminist research and teaching and women's studies nationally and internationally. Through its elected executive committee, the FWSA is involved in working on issues of central importance to feminist scholars in further and higher education, supporting postgraduate events and enabling feminist research. Recent and upcoming work includes participating in the development of subject benchmarks, funding student-organised seminars, a highly successful student essay competition and the annual conference.

Committed to raising awareness of women's studies, feminist research and gender-oriented issues in secondary and tertiary education, the FWSA liaises regularly with other gender-related research and community networks as well as with policy groups.



www.fwsa.org.uk

In the last decade there has been increasing academic attention in the inter-disciplinary fields of gender theory, feminism and cultural studies. This has been accompanied by the development of new areas of research, for example, the body; feminist ethics, cyberculture; affect and emotion. There has also been a consolidation of research in areas such as women and human rights discourse; gender and development; gender and legal theory; gender, 'race' and ethnicity; gender, nature and culture; and also in gender and the media. The new MA in Gender and Culture which will commence in September 2007 is the result of a unique collaboration between Sociology and Media and Communications. The course provides an opportunity for students to engage in-depth with issues across a wide field of gender-related topics including, feminist theory, post-colonial feminism, gender, sexuality and the body, women and human rights discourse, queer theory, post-feminism and popular culture. This intense one year course comprises of two core courses over the autumn and spring term as well as a range of options from various departments including History, English and Comparative Literature, The Centre for Cultural Studies and Anthropology. There is also a research dissertation component with each student being appointed a supervisor to advise on this element of the degree.

This MA will be of value to students with first degrees in all social science subjects, literature, drama, the arts and humanities in general, media and cultural studies, visual and fine arts practice, and other cognate areas. Dissertation topics can be chosen to complement career options, and overall the Masters offers advanced training for graduates wishing to embark on professional careers in the following areas: social research, think tanks, arts and the cultural sector, government and public administration, development, human rights work, work with NGOs, and media and communications

globally. The MA will also be helpful for students considering going on to take a PhD.

Overall the programme has the following inter-related aims:

- to provide in depth inter-disciplinary knowledge of contemporary gender formations
- to provide theoretical, analytical and methodological points of orientation for understanding gender and culture transnationally and across different societies and geo-political regions
- to offer skilled supervision in the development and completion of a small research project which tests thoroughly a range of research skills
- to expose students to a lively research environment and the relevant expertise of the RAE top rated and research-led departments of Sociology and Media and Communications

Teaching Staff

Although teaching staff vary each year, the following staff will be involved in this new MA: Lisa Adkins; Sara Ahmed; Vikki Bell; Lisa Blackman; Kirsten Campbell; Natalie Fenton; Celia Lury; Angela McRobbie; Kate Nash; Nirmal Puwar; Marsha Rosengarten; Beverley Skeggs; Joanna Zylińska. Please visit the home pages of these staff for information about their research interests and key publications.

Students taking this MA will not only have an opportunity to work and study alongside our large cohort of MA students in Sociology, Media and Communications as well as in the departments offering options for this MA Gender and Culture, they will also be able to attend the regular guest lectures hosted by Goldsmiths across the academic year, including well known figures from the arts, from the public and political world as well as from academia.

For further information about the MA in Gender and Culture, and the application process, please visit our home page: <http://www.goldsmiths.ac.uk/pg/ma-gender-culture.php>.