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](http://www.fwsa.org.uk)
Membership

Membership to the FWSA includes the following benefits:

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

Membership fees

Students
(Annual rate £12)
Student discount rate for three years
(Three year rate £30)
Income of £10,000 – £20,000
(Annual rate £20)
Income of £20,000 – £30,000
(Annual rate £30)
Income of £30,000 – £40,000
(Annual rate £40)
Income of £40,000 +
(Annual rate £60)

Charities
(Annual rate £75)

Institutions
(Annual rate £150)

Application for membership can be done by post or online. Go to www.fwsa.org.uk for further details.

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Please note that the views expressed in the newsletter and any enclosures or advertisements are not necessarily those of the FWSA.

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Happy New Year! Welcome to the first newsletter of 2013. This brief report from the Acting Chair shares with you the changes on the Executive of the FWSA and exciting news about the impressive range of recipients of our various awards and prizes. I would like to thank Alison Phipps for her hard work and success as Chair of the FWSA. Last year also saw the departure of our treasurer Rachael Vorberg-Rugh, Nadine Muller and our administrative assistant Katya Salmi. All four are moving onto new ventures and we wish them all the success.

Following the interim event Feminism in Academia: An Age of Austerity in Nottingham in September 2012, the Exec has been joined by Zoe Alker as our new administrator, Emily Falconer as Support Officer, Bridget Lockyer as Publicity Officer and Joanne Ella Parsons as Social Media Officer. I hope you will join me in warmly welcoming all to the FWSA.

The 2011 Book Prize was awarded to Clare Hemmings (pictured) for her monograph “Why Stories Matter: the Political Grammar of Feminist Theory” (Duke University Press, 2011). The judges were impressed with Clare’s outstanding piece of scholarship. The 2011/12 Essay Prize, was awarded to Nancy Martin for her essay titled “The Rose of No Man’s Land [?]: Femininity, Female Identity, and Women on the Western Front”. The runners-up, which will also be published in the *Journal of International Women’s Studies*, were Katherine Tellyng’s “Quite contrary: Mary Daly and within and without Women’s Studies”, Alexander Harris’ “Non-binary gender concepts and the evolving UK legal treatment of transversed individuals”, Semel Assinder’s “Politics and Poetics in late Victorian fiction”, Emily Henderson’s “Gender as Topic and Frame in the Lecture Theatre” and Say Burgin’s “Understanding anti-war activism as a gendering activity”. This impressive collection of essays has been published in the *Journal of International Women’s Studies*.

The 2012 small grant was awarded to Victoria Cann of the University of East Anglia for her workshop “Gender, Media and Generations”. Aimed at postgraduate researchers working in the areas of gender, media and age, this workshop will enable networking and identity training and research needs. I would like to thank Trishima Mitra-Kahn and Katy Pilcher for arranging the Essay Prize and Small Grant award respectively.

I hope 2013 proves to be rewarding and productive for all,

Kate Sang (Acting Chair)
Conference reviews

Forthcoming Feminisms: Gender Activism, Politics and Theories
Leeds University
October 2012

Forthcoming Feminisms: Gender Activism, Politics and Theories explored the contemporary landscape of gender politics and theory at a crucial moment of feminist resurgence. Against the backdrop of political economies of austerity, in which women are disproportionately disadvantaged, and in challenge to “post-feminist” cultural prophecies, current times indicate a renewed interest in, and commitment to, feminism. In academic climates, while women’s and gender study programs face threats of closure, the popularity of such programmes continues to grow; reflecting the continuation of feminist and gender theory as a flourishing and dynamic arena. This conference encouraged debates about these political and theoretical paradoxes and flows in exploring varied feminist cultures, values, ethics, knowledges, challenges and aspirations across the social, legal, medical and cultural environments.

The conference was attended by academics, postgraduate students and activists from the UK, US, Israel, Taiwan, Germany, Austria, Turkey and Czech Republic. It was clear from the conference papers that there were substantive areas of research and activism continuing to interrogate gender inequities witnessed across the world. The conference streams that were represented ranged from divisions and coalitions within feminist thought, generational approaches to gender and feminist activism, sexualisation and sexual violence, young people and gender, (post)colonial feminism, education, embodiment and intersectionality, which provided ample ground for exploring the past, current and future directions of feminism inside the academy and beyond.

Following the conference a number of contributors sent messages:

“Congratulations on a really interesting day on Friday! It was great to meet (again) other delegates and to hear a range of good papers. Thanks very much for all your work in making it happen.”

“I just wanted to thank you both for a fantastic conference on Friday, and for the opportunity to present at it as well! I really enjoyed all of the sessions I managed to go to […] and had so many interesting discussions throughout the day inspired by the conference themes.”

“I found the day really engaging and stimulating. I am glad feminism seems well and truly back on the agenda again, with a truly diverse mixture of views and academic theory.”

The keynote addresses that “top and tailed” the event was provided at the outset by Julia Downes (Durham University) who presented a creative in depth look at feminist music cultures and their historical and current contribution to gender activism and its place in academic feminist theory. Bridging academia and activism (as many feminists do), Julia explored the somewhat contentious position of being a punk band member whilst being part of the “academic elite.” Imogen Tyner (Lancaster University) closed the conference with a poignant analysis of the social and political landscape surrounding Gypsies and Travellers and the recent evictions from their homes in the UK. Imogen’s analysis was underpinned by theories of the “excesses of working class masculinities and femininities” portrayed in the media and especially in popular cultural mediums, such as My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding.

Forty four papers were presented with another fifty two participants far exceeded both mine (Zowie Davy) and Sally Hines’ expectation for the Inaugural BSA Gender Study Group event. Therefore, we would like also to acknowledge that the conference would not have been possible without the support of the participants, the British Sociological Association (Gender Study Group), Centre for Interdisciplinary Gender Studies (CIGS), University of Leeds, Community and Health Research Unit (CsHRU), University of Lincoln and Feminist Review Trust, who provided financial and time to the conference.

If you would like information about future work and events that the Gender Study Group are involved in please visit: www.britisoc.co.uk/study-groups/gender.aspx or contact Zowie Davy zdavy@lincoln.ac.uk or Sally Hines S.Hines@leeds.ac.uk

Zowie Davy, University of Lincoln

Bodies of Evidence: Crime, Gender and Representation
Newcastle University
April 2012

Representations of crime are frequently characterised by strongly gendered meanings and inflections, and are constructed in ways which can both shore up and disrupt dominant models of gender and sexuality. This year’s Crime Studies Network conference took place at Newcastle University, with the support of Newcastle’s School of English, the newly formed Research Centre for Film and Digital Media, and the Gender Research Group, and opened up the complex intersections between crime and gender in a range of visual, legal, media and literary representations. Taking in film and television studies, literary studies, law, sociology and history, and featuring discussions of the representation of crime and gender from the Eighteenth Century to the present day, the conference programme demonstrated the extraordinary range of current scholarship being undertaken in this area.

The conference opened with Deborah Jermyn’s (Roehampton) keynote address, “Battered and Burnt Out?”. Jane Tennison and the Demise of ‘An Icon’ in Prime Suspect 7: The Final Act”. Jermyn interrogated the depiction of Jane Tennison in the TV series’ final instalment by examining the critical reception of the film, and suggested
that the representation of the detective’s alcoholism and crumbling personal life indicates significant anxieties about female professionals and aging. The keynote was followed by a lively discussion about the significance of Helen Mirren’s star persona, and the depiction of older women more recently in the television procedural, in both UK and American contexts.

A key thread running throughout the day was the role of the body, and more specifically the violated body within gendered representations of crime. Notions of fetishesisation and/or abjection surrounding the (frequently female) murder victim were central many of the papers, including Catherine Haworth’s (Huddersfield); “...Something Beneath the Flesh”: Medicine, Music and Masculinity in the Gaslight Thriller”, Mareike Jenner’s (Abertyswyth) “She’s Been Murdered: The Death of Laura Palmer and Nana Birk Larsen”, Cecilia Giff’s (Newcastle) “Who’s the Monster?”, Amélie Nothomb’s Re-Assessed Dynamics of Criminality, Monstrosity, and Bodily Violence”, Florian Mundhenke’s (Leipzig) “Fake Death and Truth Claims: The Representation of False Incidents in Film”, Lucy Bolton’s (Queen Mary) “Dial G for Gender: Updating Hitchcock’s Blonde in A Perfect Murder”, and Sílvia Harris’s (Exeter) “Gender, Violence and Sexualisation in Val MacDermid”. The corpse and issues around victimhood form a central concern for both films and feminist scholarship. Issues around female criminality and the criminal’s body were also explored in many of the day’s papers, including Anne Schwän’s (Edinburgh Napier) “Adultery, Gender and the Nation: The Trial and Imprisonment of Florence Maybrick”, Eliza O’Brien’s (Northumbria) “The Body of the Condemned: Guilt, Gender and Display in the 1790s”, Harri Sutherland- Kay’s (Independent) “Situating Politically Violent Women”, Jac Armstrong’s (Chester) “Heteronormativity and Criminal Sexuality”, and Cristelle Maury’s (Toulouse) “The False Femme Fatale and the True Malevolent Housewife: The Politics of Gendering Genres in Laura and Leave Her to Heaven”. Finally, links between masculinities and crime were discussed in James Byrne’s (Northumbria) “All We Have is a Confession: The Rejection of Genre Conventions in the Korean Crime Film”, Charlotte Beyer’s (Gloucester) “Somebody Else Should Come Along Soon: Sexualised Violence Against Men in Contemporary British Crime Fiction”, Ian R. Cook’s (Northumbria) “Putting the Brakes on: Exploring the Emergence of Kerb-Crailer Re-Education Programmes in England and Wales”, and Aysegül Kesirli’s (Dogus) “Reading House M.D. as a Detective Drama”. The sheer range of high-quality presentations and the complexity of the engagement with theories of gender and sexuality being demonstrated throughout the day indicate the vitality and interdisciplinary nature of crime studies in the UK and beyond. The conference acted as a timely reminder of the significance of the intersections between feminism, gender studies, and representations of crime within global and pan-historical contexts.

Katherine Farrimond
Newcastle University

Moving Dangerously: Women and Travel, 1850-1950
Newcastle University
April 2012

This two-day international conference, held in the School of English at Newcastle University, and organised by Dr Emma Short, brought together scholars from a range of disciplines – including literature, geography, history, film and politics – to explore the changing relationship of women and travel from 1850-1950. The event was supported by a grant from the Catherine Cookson Foundation at Newcastle, and was presented in association with the University’s Gender Research Group and the Long Nineteenth Century Research Cluster.

In terms of the quality of the work presented over the course of the two days, Moving Dangerously was a huge success. The first keynote speaker, Dr Avril Maddrell, Senior Lecturer in Geography at the University of the West of England, opened the conference with a fascinating and insightful paper, entitled “Women on the Move: Moving and Being Moved”, that simultaneously encompassed the central concerns of the conference while sustaining an in-depth exploration of the experiences and writings of a number of women travellers. Through an analytical framework of geographies of emotion and affect, Dr Maddrell demonstrated the ways in which the accounts of travellers such as Violet Cressy-Marks can be read as emotional, phenomenological and embodied responses which enable us to gain a clearer understanding of women’s changing relationship with and access to the spaces of modernity. Dr Maddrell’s keynote provided an inspiring start to the conference, and many of the ideas and questions raised by her paper were touched upon in papers over the course of the next two days.
Thanks to the high quality of the papers presented throughout the conference on such a diverse range of topics the event was a great success.

Papers on the second day of the conference were equally varied, with two panels on “Modernist Movement”, the first of which saw Katherine Cooper (Newcastle) and Rebecca Kirstain Hanwood (Minho, Portugal) discuss travel in the writing of Storm Jameson, while Mhairi Podier (Aberdeen) reconsidered Dorothy Richardson’s Oberland (1927) as a masterpiece of travel literature. Other panels included “Politics and War”, in which Marlene Baldwin Davis (William and Mary), Maureen Mulligan (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria) and Jocelyne A. Scott (Buckingham) discussed the impact of women travellers such as Gertrude Bell, Freya Stark and Stella Benson upon the political landscape of modernity, and “National Identity and Travel”, in which Leanne Groeneveld (Regina) and Sara Steinert-Borella (Franklin College) explored the ways in which countries’ national identities were (re)constructed by the writings of those women who travelled through them. The second day of the conference also featured Dr Alexandra Peat, Assistant Professor of English at Franklin College, Switzerland, who delivered the final keynote on “The Limitless Horizon: Travelling in the Home”. In this illuminating talk, Dr Peat considered the possibilities for travel in the home in modernist fiction by women, positioning the home as a mobile space which is transformed by travel, and which itself partakes in travel. Her keynote was a timely exploration of the ways in which the home can and indeed should be included in discussions of travel across this period, and highlighted the ways in which technological advances, combined with the cultural construction of the home, firmly situate it as a space of travel and transit.

Thanks to the high quality of the papers presented throughout the conference on such a diverse range of topics the event was a great success.

The keynote speaker was Professor Nicole Humble (Roehampton), author of The Popular and the Middlebrow: Women’s Writing 1880-1940

Newcastle University
April 2012

This interdisciplinary postgraduate conference took place at Newcastle University on 12th April 2012. Sponsored by the Catherine Cookson Foundation and Newcastle University’s Gender Research Group, the one-day event sought to help students working on middlebrow and popular women’s writing to discuss and nuance their relationship to these terms both in their work and as scholars more generally. The intention was to offer a space for postgraduates to present and exchange their ideas with others working in the field, as well as opportunities to build networking and research skills. With this in mind all delegates were encouraged to sign up for and to learn about key research networks in the field such as the Middlebrow Network and the Crime Studies Network and to attend the afternoon workshop on the archive and the middlebrow. With just under fifty delegates attending the event showcased the growing postgraduate interest in this area as well as some of the fascinating work taking place on middlebrow and popular women’s writing in the UK and even further afield.

The keynote speaker was Professor Nicole Humble (Roehampton), author of The Popular and the Middlebrow: Women’s Writing 1880-1940
The conference attracted a number of excellent papers covering authors such as Winifred Holtby, Agatha Christie and E. M. Delafield and a range of genres from detective fiction to travel-writing, demonstrating the broad sweep of postgraduate interest in this area. The event also featured a workshop event entitled “The Magazine, the Middlebrow and the Archive” led by Dr Kirsten MacLeod (Newcastle) and Dr Michelle Smith (Strathclyde). The workshop aimed to introduce and familiarise delegates with the archive as useful tool for work on middlebrow and popular fiction and other cultural artefacts. Dr MacLeod and Dr Smith spoke about their own research and experiences of archive work as well as offering practical advice on archive work, and even solutions to researchers’ individual problems. The workshop proved a fascinating way to promote archival research and provided the ideal starting point for those wishing to pursue this approach in their own work.

The event was brought to a close with a roundtable chaired by the organisers Katherine Cooper (Newcastle) and Jodie Laird (Newcastle) in which they sought to bring together many of the ideas discussed throughout the day. The organisers were thrilled with the success of the conference, which brought together so much interesting scholarship and created a real sense of a postgraduate community of researchers working in this area. They would like to thank all keynotes, speakers and delegates for their excellent papers and contributions.

The event was run concurrently with the two-day conference Moving Dangerously: Gender, Travel and Modernity 1850-1950, also supported by the Catherine Cookson Foundation and a good many delegates stayed on in Newcastle to attend this event the following day.

**Katherine Cooper**
University of Newcastle

# Feminists in Scottish Academia: Dialogues and alliances across boundaries

**Herriot-Watt University June 2012**

On the 25th June, 2012, Herriot-Watt University hosted the first interdisciplinary networking event for feminist academics based in Scottish Universities. We were very kindly sponsored by the School of Management and Languages. We were fortunate to welcome two external speakers: Professor Alisa McKay (Glasgow Caledonian University) and Dr Rebecca Finkel (Queen Margaret University). Alisa gave an enlightening and inspiring talk which drew on her experience as a feminist academic within Economics, a discipline which has historically ignored the contributions of women. More recently, Alisa has set up the Scottish Women’s Budget Group which is based at Glasgow Caledonian University. This important lobbying group informs policy emanating from the Scottish Government in addition to carrying out other research work relating to women’s roles in the Scottish Economy. As Alisa, and other audience members, alluded to, Scotland is undergoing significant social and political change, all of which will impact women’s experiences within the home and work. It was interesting and informative to hear how her academic and activist roles intersected.

Our second talk was from Dr Kate Sang who presented the findings from focus groups with feminist academics in England. Using an intersectional approach, Kate highlighted how a feminist identity can qualitatively affect how women experience the academy. This led to a broader discussion of the review process and how feminist research can face challenges in disciplines where such approaches are considered ‘political’ or challenging the current norms. This theme was carried through to later discussions about the REF.

The final talk was given by Dr Rebecca Finkel. Rebecca’s talk drew on the themes which emerged during the day, namely, the diversity of feminisms which are present within the academy and the need for solidarity and collegiality amongst feminist academics. Our final talk led to a number of fascinating discussions, including the use of social media by feminist academics – a theme which a number of delegates indicated their interest in pursuing as a research topic.

We are already planning our next events and we look forward to developing this network. Please do get in touch if you are interested in joining us: Kate (k.sang@hw.ac.uk) Rebecca (finkel@qmu.ac.uk)

**Kate Sang**
Herriot Watt University

**Rebecca Finkel**
Queen Margaret University
Spotlight on... essay competition winner Nancy Martin

Nancy Martin is the winner of the FWSA 2011 Essay Competition with her essay ‘The Rose of No Man’s Land’: Femininity, Female Identity, and Women on the Western Front’. Nancy’s essay along with the other six shortlisted entries have been published in a special issue of the Journal of International Women’s Studies see http://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol13/iss6/ We asked Nancy to tell us more about herself as a feminist scholar and her winning essay.

Tell us a bit about yourself and how you came to submit your essay for the competition.

Before beginning my doctoral studies in English at Oxford, I completed a Masters of Women’s Studies at Memorial University of Newfoundland (Canada), where I am from. Through this degree, I became a proud member of the Canadian Women’s Studies Association and was eager to find a similar organization upon moving to the United Kingdom. I was first made aware of the FWSA at a conference in Newcastle, entitled “Demystifying Public Engagement: Gender and Sexuality Beyond the Academy”. It was here that a kind colleague suggested that I consider submitting to the essay competition. I am very glad I took her advice!

What are the most important themes that your essay addresses? What issues does your essay raise that you think are of relevance for feminist studies today?

The most important themes of my essay centre on representations of femininity and feminine identity in wartime. It explores the diverse, and often complex, ways in which nurses, VADs, and ambulance drivers were represented in dominant discourse—newspapers, propaganda, etc—and, more importantly, how these women represented their own respective “feminine” identities in relation to the war’s emotional and physical trauma.

In particular, I think the essay’s focus on often-neglected women’s writing is of great relevance for feminist studies today, as is the focus on women’s individual experiences during the war. While feminist literary scholarship of the last three decades in particular has made incredible strides in bringing women’s experiences of war to the fore, gaps in the history still remain.

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

Researching in the archives at the Imperial War Museum before writing this essay was – and continues to be – an incredible experience. I have had the opportunity to work with unpublished and personal documents, including letters, diaries, and journals, which were handwritten by nurses, VADs, and ambulance drivers during their time at the front. This experience has been incredibly rewarding.

What are your current and future research interests?

I am currently in the third-year of my doctoral program in English at Oxford, completing a thesis that explores constructions of masculinity and femininity in First World War fiction and memoir. After completing my doctoral studies, I hope to teach and continue to conduct research in war writing at a university in Canada.

What does winning the FWSA essay prize mean for your future academic endeavours?

The FWSA essay prize has offered invaluable support and recognition. It has also given me the chance to publish my work within the excellent Journal of International Women’s Studies, which, in an increasingly difficult professional environment, is a fantastic opportunity. The prize has provided the important first steps in what I hope will be a career in university teaching and academic publishing.
Exclusive Interview with **Luce Irigaray**

With the following questions, we have tried to engage in a fruitful philosophical dialogue with Luce Irigaray, who is still one of the most renowned French philosophers of our time. Irigaray is mostly known for her critical engagements with the canonical figures of the Western psychoanalytical and philosophical traditions in works such as *Speculum of the other woman* and *This sex which is not one*, and for her philosophy and ethics of sexuate difference that focuses on establishing a culture of difference in which female and male subjects could finally live together whilst respecting each other’s otherness. It is our interest in the latter issue, and in how such a culture of sexuate difference could come into being, that motivated us to sketch out some questions with regards to Irigaray’s more recent works, such as *I Love to You. Sketch for a Felicity Within History, The Way of Love, and Sharing the World*.

The idea of doing an interview with Luce Irigaray, however, arose during the inspiring lecture she gave at the 2012 Luce Irigaray International Seminar and Symposium at Bristol University. Irigaray has been organising these international seminars for quite a few years now, and by doing so, she hopes to bring Ph.D. students from all around the world together, engage in a dialogue with them about her oeuvre, and challenge them to reflect upon the practice of philosophy in general. It is this dialogical aspect that was central to the public lecture Irigaray gave at Bristol University in June 2012, in which she also touched upon the current situation of academia. According to Irigaray, current academic communities are no longer focusing – or have never really focused – on the value of an intersubjective and respectful dialogue. The value of a dialogical, non-appropriating conversation between different subjects has been lost in our academic culture and in Western culture in general, just as the existence of sexuate difference has been disregarded.

1. **What do you think about the current state of academia in general? And do you have any comments with regards to the condition of the academic community in the UK, given that you have been organising most of your recent international seminars at British universities?**

**Luce Irigaray:** Academia in general seems to be in crisis, at least in the West, which is what I know best. It is facing with an accumulation of scientific knowledge, but also with a diversity of cultures and mixed population of students that make it impossible to confine itself to the previous model of organisation and teaching. However, taking a step forward is not an easy task, all the more so since the values that underlie our assessment of truth and ethics are put into question. More often than not evolution amounts to criticising the past era without yet reaching another stage in culture and the education system. In fact, it is the general perspective that has to be reconsidered, as I will try to explain through my answers to your other questions.

My proposals of teaching have been better welcomed in the UK than in other countries, probably because English people are more open to change, more pragmatic and less ideological. My ideas and plan concerning the seminar that I held for nine years in the UK were first presented to the academic staff of the University of Nottingham when they offered me a post of special professor. To explain my intentions was not always easy, but the international seminar for young researchers doing their Ph.D. on my work has nonetheless already been welcomed by various English universities. This seminar takes place on the fringes of the university, after the academic year, and thus does not provide a real opportunity to observe the evolution of English academia. Nevertheless, I can add that I already received a few honorary doctorates in the UK, and also invitations from English students themselves to give talks. All these things attest that English academia has the ability to become aware of new cultural horizons, which, furthermore, focus on a subjective evolution related to sexuate difference.

2. **Given the cuts currently facing higher education in the UK and in other European countries, what advice would you give to young female scholars worried about their futures?**

**Luce Irigaray:** My advice would be that they unite, and prove that they can provide other perspectives in academia that could contribute towards an evolution of culture, especially towards a world culture. Instead of all together imposing their values and their relational abilities in particular, women too often are in competition with one another in the name of masculine skills, and have their sights on a traditional job in an unchanged academic context. They agree with the way things are just to make their career in academia. For example, women who are teaching my work accept to suspend their living relations with me in order not to challenge traditional academic customs. According to me, this is an important cultural contradiction that cannot contribute to the recognition of the intellectual capacity of women. Furthermore, this leaves life and sentiments outside academia and culture, as it is the case in a masculine tradition.

3. **If academia indeed is in a stalemated position at the moment, and dialogue and sexuate difference are not cultivated in today’s academic culture, then how would we be able to transform academic culture to really share life, or share the world?**

**Luce Irigaray:** It is up to women who already teach in universities to bring about change in academic culture. For example, they could ask for the constructive part of my work to be in crisis, at least in the West, which is what I know best. It is facing with an accumulation of scientific knowledge, but also with a diversity of cultures and mixed population of students that make it impossible to confine itself to the previous model of organisation and teaching. However, taking a step forward is not an easy task, all the more so since the values that underlie our assessment of truth and ethics are put into question. More often than not evolution amounts to criticising the past era without yet reaching another stage in culture and the education system. In fact, it is the general perspective that has to be reconsidered, as I will try to explain through my answers to your other questions.

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be added in the syllabus, and not only its critical part, and waiting for that, they could already allude to that constructive part in their teaching and in their way of behaving. They could make the difference between a world in the masculine and a world in the feminine appear, and save some time to organise dialogues between the two worlds, as I did notably with Italian children and adolescents (see for example Luce Irigaray: Key Writings (2004), and the chapter "Teaching How to Meet in Difference," in Luce Irigaray: Teaching (2008)). They could also propose themes for essays, theses and even Ph.D.’s on how to share in difference at all levels, starting from the most basic and universal difference, namely that between the sexes. I am afraid that women have not yet understood what sexuate difference means and what, not only natural but also cultural, resources lie in relationships in difference. They remain divided between a not-yet-cultivated feminine part of themselves and a culture in the masculine that they still see as the only possible culture that they must reach and teach. They too often criticise masculine behaviour without proposing a real alternative.

No doubt, women must make a very difficult way in a short time. But they sometimes lack more initiative and creativity when they are in academia than when they remain faithful to the girl in themselves. And they are more careful to avoid the so-called feminine stereotypes than the masculine ones!

4. With regards to your own psycholinguistic work on the differences between how women and men use language and converse amongst and between one another (as for instance explained in the essay “The Question of the Other,” or in I Love to You), how would you describe the language and manner of communication that is being used in academia, which still appears to be a highly hierarchical organised structure? Could we say that the kind of language and conversations held in academia tend to be more subject-object oriented, and are hence more or less appropriating? Do you think that female scholars could transform academia into a space that is more open to respectful conversations? Or put it differently: since women are more accustomed to using a subject-subject language that wishes to uphold the other subject’s Otherness, could female scholars play an important role in transforming academia into a space where life and the world could be shared?

Luce Irigaray: One of the most decisive features in the manner of communicating in academia is the fact that the individuals are presumed to be sexless. The only discourse that is allowed there is a discourse in the neuter, which is supposed to be neutral, but in fact amounts to a masculine strategy to liberate men from the power of the maternal origin and world. The apparent neutrality in communication is accompanied by a logic in the masculine and passionate conflicts between academicians. The neutralisation of the persons favours the stress on an object, be it material or spiritual, the only place where they can affirm their competence and power. Obviously, the differences between people are, then, quantitative and linked to a material or spiritual appropriation. These differences lead to competition and conflict, and not to the development of intersubjective relations.

Women could transform academia into a place of dialogues respectful of difference(s). However, if the language of girls and female adolescents shows a privileging of subject-subject relations over subject-object relations, this relational quality has to be cultivated as such. This is not yet the case, and the investigations that I conducted in France and Italy – and that other researchers conducted in other countries – prove that sexuate difference vanishes in the discourses of the teachers, because they have been taught to use a unique discourse, in the neuter, as a sign of their cultural competence. Without a cultivation of their intersubjective attitudes, women are not always able to respect the Otherness of the other. And they then enter in a process of subjugation or domination that does not make them capable of transforming academic culture into a place of sharing in difference.

5. Could you comment and elaborate on the interesting, Heideggerian-inspired statement you made during your public lecture at Bristol university, namely that “only thought can save us”? How does this relate to Martin Heidegger’s “only a God can save us” statement? Should we for instance see this as a strong critique of Heideggerian philosophy, or rather as a part of your critical dialogue with the latter? And how does your own statement refer to your ethics of sexuate difference and your ideas about transforming academic culture?

Luce Irigaray: This sentence has its origins in the work of Hölderlin, a poet who was really important in Heidegger’s intellectual journey, and it refers to “a god”, alluding to the aid that the gods brought to humans in Ancient Greece. I do not think that this sentence has the meaning that we attribute to God today. Perhaps I am mistaken. However, the sentence speaks of “a” god and some of us can also transfer the qualities of Ancient Greek gods onto God as they have qualities in common.

I did not intend to criticise Heidegger when saying that according to me a loving thought is what could save us today. Heidegger is probably the philosopher who taught me the most about the value of thinking and the path to approach thinking. It is true that we have entered a new era in which multiculturalism and the problem of plurality of religions are henceforth at the core of a cultural evolution; it is thus no longer obvious to appeal to a god to save us. We are rather facing the task of elaborating another way of treating the divine, in us and between us, as humans who must share at a world level. And this has something to do with an ethics of sexuate difference that an unique Absolute prevented us from seriously defining and practising in the field of sciences, ethics and religion.

6. This brings us to your philosophical engagement with Hegelian philosophy, and your analysis of Hegel’s masters仆 slave dialectics in I Love to You. Could we say that your reading of Hegelian philosophy in this book is much more constructive than in Speculum? Although you already touched upon the issue of sexual indifference and the absence of a truly mutual relationship of recognition between Hegel’s Antigone and her brother Polyneices in Speculum, isn’t I Love to You even more focused on and working towards a culture of sexuate difference; a culture in which recognition is built upon a double, or even triple dialectics, instead of on a Hegelian masculinised dialectics of the One?
Luce Irigaray: There is no doubt that the chapter on the philosophy of Hegel in Speculum is more critical and deconstructing, while I Love to You is more focusing on another dialectics which can take sexuate difference into account. However, I would not speak of a sexuate indifference between Antigone and her brother Polyneices, as it is as a masculine member of the family that she must carry out the ritual of his burial (also see “Between Myth and History: the Tragedy of Antigone” in Interrogating Antigone in Postmodern Philosophy and Criticism (2010), an essay which appears again in Irigaray’s book In the Beginning, She Was Bloomsbury, October 2012). Perhaps my interpretation is now closer to Ancient Greek times. And it is also this faithfulness which, amongst other reasons, compels me to use the term “sexuate” in such a case. The relation between Antigone and Polyneices is a sexuate, but not a sexual one, and Antigone must respect the sexuate identity of her brother as different from hers before fulfilling her sexual desire towards Haemon, her fiancé. A thing that she never had the chance of experiencing, because King Creon sentenced her to death. In other words: becoming able to embody a sexual relation with respect for one another first requires us to acquire a sexuate identity and recognise the identity of the other as different. Something that questions the traditional way of conceiving the family unit as a whole which lacks differentiation.

Hence the need of a double and even triple dialectics: one which serves the cultivation and becoming of a feminine identity; one which serves the cultivation and becoming of a masculine identity; and one which serves their relation with respect for their mutual differences. Which allows them to sometimes form a unity while preserving their duality. Recognition, then, involves recognising the otherness of the other as a real that never can be appropriated in one’s own world, that is, taking charge of the insuperable negative existing between two differently sexuated human beings.

7. With regards to the previous question, how can we step outside Hegel’s master-slave paradigm, and how would you define the latter? Could you also comment on the chapter “Frenchwomen’, Stop Trying” in This sex, in which you allude to Marquis de Sade’s La philosophie dans le boudoir and criticise his phallic, libertine model of sexuality? Can de Sade’s libertinism be seen as a philosophy that is based upon such a Hegelian master-slave dialectics in which subjects never really encounter each other in their specificity and otherness? And are there any comparisons to be drawn between these two philosophies and those of Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir? Do you think that the latter pair was able to step outside this Hegelian paradigm?

Luce Irigaray: The master-slave struggle takes place within a logic of the one, the same and the One. The master and the slave are presumed to be the two parts of a unity which are in conflict to appropriate the only possible unity. Their roles are quite different, but they represent a division of human being itself in two irreconcilable parts that can merely dominate one another, or subject to one another, without ever being able to enter into dialogue. Each one wants to suppress the other to gain one’s unity, but by doing this, one also suppresses oneself, because the other is a part of one’s self.

To avoid this insoluble problem, our culture usually leaps over the relation between two, and passes to a relation between many ones who somehow or other are united by a same One, for example a philosophical or religious absolute, or a political leader. Such a gesture does not solve the problem of the master-slave relation which recurs under various forms, notably between man and woman where it has nothing to do. Indeed, man and woman are not two parts of a same unity, but they are two different human unities who do not compose a one. They can sometimes produce a one: in love, in generation, in spiritual desire or creation. However, this is possible only if they keep their duality that traditional Western culture mistook for a logical pair of opposites. Now man and woman do not form a pair and are not opposites (e.g., In the Beginning, She Was, Bloomsbury, October 2012). They are two different natural and cultural unities. To situate the master-slave relation between man and woman amounts to confusing a cultural construction with a real which still lacks recognition and cultivation. It means staying within the logic of the one and the same. Libertinism seems to ignore that sexuality strictly speaking cannot be practised without considering the duality of identities and subjectivities of the partners. It reduces human being to only one aspect of itself with which it would be possible to play without taking into account the unity of the person involved, a thing that allows to fall back into a master-slave relation with a distribution of roles, for example between man and woman. This way of dealing with our sexuality also appears to be a sort of capitalist play that expands our energy without caring about our life enough and respecting its material and spiritual resources. It is not by chance that it is often a really young woman who has to offer her energetic resources to the pleasure of the libertine.

I think that only the transcendence of the other, as naturally and culturally different, can allow us to go further than the Hegelian dialectics, without neglecting its teaching and risking falling into a worst nihilism. This asks us for recognising that man and woman are two naturally and culturally different subjects, a thing that neither Jean-Paul Sartre nor Simone de Beauvoir did. What we can read and know about their conception of sexual intercourse (see for example the first chapter of To Be Two, 2001) does not show a surpassing of a sort of master-slave play from which they try to escape by multiplying the number of their partners and also by perpetuating the traditional split between body and mind that prevents us from reaching our specific individuation and unity, and a possible new relation between two sexuate subjects.

8. Although you have defined such an ethics of sexuate difference as a carnal ethics in An ethics of sexual difference, and have emphasised throughout your oeuvre that such an ethics would primarily develop itself between two sexually different subjects, couldn’t the model of I Love to You also be expanded by for
“Libertinism seems to ignore that sexuality strictly speaking cannot be practised without considering the duality of identities and subjectivities of the partners.”

instance focusing on the element of “to?” If the “to” in I Love to You stands for mediation and non-appropriation, couldn’t we then also work towards a broader model of recognition that could implement the multitude of differences between subjects?

Luce Irigaray: Obviously the ethics that I try to define, starting from the difference(s) between man and woman, can be and is already used between other sorts of subjects. But this ethics could not be defined starting from another difference, because difference, then, would not be as irreduable and transcendent as it is between two different sexuate subjects. Furthermore, in this case the difference is not only constructed but also natural, and it corresponds to a universal one: all cultures are more or less clearly elaborated by taking it into account and it can thus serve as a basis to construct a world culture. Another point: this natural and universal belonging is also a privileged place of our relational behaviour. Between man and woman, a negative can be at work without preventing the relation from existing: difference is a source of relational energy and creativity there. It is the existence of a possible and necessary negative, as the guardian of the existence of a possible and necessary negative, as the guardian of the duality of the persons, that allowed me to define some means of establishing intersubjective relations with respect for mutual difference(s). The “to” of I Love to You is one of these means, I Love to You means “I love to what and whom you are”, thus to you as a person, a specific person, and not only as an object or a support of my love or desire. I defined other ways of being in communication without domination or subjection, appropriation or fusion: for example, the choice of the verbs, and more generally of the words in a sentence; the choice of the syntactic structures and transformations; the choice of tenses and even moods; the preservation of the sensory, sensitive and sexuate aspects of the discourse, etc. All that can contribute to the respect for the otherness of the other.

9. To conclude this interview, could you comment upon the importance of dialogue and listening-to in the construction of an ethics, politics, and culture of sexuate difference? And how could we as scholars, but also as human beings, work towards such a culture of mutual and dual recognition? How could we re-establish a culture of humanity in academia and in our daily lives?

Luce Irigaray: If we wish to recognise the other as other, we first must listen to this other in order to enter into relationships with one another. What we already experienced, or have been taught in the name of a presumed neutral and neutral culture, cannot be of use on this occasion, except partly at the level of needs. But needs are not the way to establish friendship with respect for mutual difference(s). Needs are rather what abolishes these difference(s), and it is because we too often stay at the level of needs that we are not attentive to the importance of our difference(s). And yet only cultivating desire and love can make us really human and capable of elaborating suitable ethics, politics and culture. I focus on the importance of listening to the other, especially the different sexuate other, in the chapter “In Almost Absolute Silence” in I Love to You, reminding of the need to preserve a place of silence in order to be able to perceive something of the other. I comment on the necessity of listening-to both in thinking and in teaching in “Listening, Thinking, Teaching” in Luce Irigaray: Teaching. There you could find a more developed answer to your question.

I could also remind you that, in order to reach mutual recognition, you must learn to dwell in yourselves, know and cultivate the one who you are, building your own world while recognising the irreducible otherness of the other. You must learn to distinguish the manner of addressing a same as you from that of addressing a different from you, going outside of a culture that neutralised our natural and cultural difference(s).

You must reach autonomy, and discover means to create relationships in mutual respect, not only in the name of moral obligations, but towards your human accomplishment.

By Luce Irigaray
Evelien Geerts (Utrecht University) and Maud Perrier (University of Bristol)

Bibliography

Books

Articles
Information, space and collisions: the possibilities of public history

Towards the end of my PhD I started working as a volunteer at the Butetown History and Arts Centre, a people’s history museum in Cardiff Bay. It was an experience that transformed my ideas about politics, research and how knowledge can circulate. Previous to working in the Centre, my academic training has been in Literature and later, Critical Theory.

At BHAC I learnt about oral history, exhibitions and public history. It inspired me and made me realise that I wanted to conduct research in these areas. It felt tangible in a way that just reading books never has. Talking to people, listening and recording their stories amazed me. Helping to construct exhibits in museums and transmit knowledge in public spaces was deeply satisfying. I marvelled as I watched the audiences absorb and encounter the information before them.

Part of the attraction in Public History work for me is about accessibility. I have always been very concerned with how academic information circulates, long before it became a tick boxing exercise for the REF. Where knowledge travels, who encounters it and how, has always struck me as a political question. In an age where university education has become a luxury for the privileged few, the role of freely accessible museums and public history initiatives is ever more critical.

While what is displayed in museums is unquestionably political, and always involves acts of representation and exclusion, they still offer vital spaces where people can collide with information and be transformed by it.

It is such information collisions that impel me to continue to research. I love the chance encounters and opportunistic meetings with people, ideas and things that happen in public exhibitions and archives. The first exhibition I curated last year was the product of such a meeting. In 2007 I was visiting the Feminist Archive South in Bristol, when I began to read about an anarchic feminist theatre troupe called Sistershow that performed in the city in the early 1970s. What fun I thought! And how surprising! When do you ever hear of feminists in the 1970s going to women only conferences in male drag in order to subvert the agenda?

What followed was detective work in archives, tracking down women involved and eventually attaining funds to conduct oral histories and hold an exhibition to tell the story of Sistershow, and the history of feminism in Bristol, 1973-1975.

Another important aspect of Sistershow Revisited was the use of a blog to post information about the project as it progressed, and document its activities. I’d been massively inspired by the work of the Remembering Olive Collective in London, who had used a blog to document the history of Olive Morris, Black Feminism and the British Black Panthers. The ability of blogs to disseminate information quickly, including sound, images, text and video, is perfect for the needs of Public History projects.

Using a blog also fed into the work on the Women’s Liberation Music Archive (WLMA). Launched in May 2011, I have been working alongside Frankie Green to map the music making histories of the UK Women’s Liberation Movement, 1970-1989. The online archive contains well over 100 acts, many of which had no information about them on the internet until we began to organise the material. Ever heard of Ginger and Spice? Abandon Your Tutu? The Fabulous Dirt Sisters? Siren? No? Then I suggest you head over to http://womensliberationmusicarchive.wordpress.com to have a look. What kind of music can you expect to find there? Well, it’s incredibly diverse. Soul, reggae, jazz, rock, folk, pop, a cappella and improvisation all feature, as well as music that combines all these genres and invents new ones. There are also photos, scans of ephemera, oral history excerpts, videos and personal testimonies. The archive has a physical presence too, and will be deposited in the Feminist Archive South in Bristol in April 2013.

The WLMA has been the inspiration for the exhibition I recently worked on. Music and Liberation is a Heritage Lottery funded touring exhibition that began in Cardiff on the 9 September and finished in London on 13 January 2013. The aim of the exhibition was to create a physical space where people could interact with and learn about the histories of feminist music making from the 1970s and 1980s. Music and Liberation contains photographs, objects, books, ephemera, posters, installations, oral histories, films and of course music.

The Music and Liberation grant from the HLF provided crucial resources to organise the music of the WLMA. While a lot of the musicians have managed to digitise their back catalogue, many have not. I’ve been handed countless audiotapes of recordings of practices, live performances and demos that have been lurking at the back of cupboards, or underneath beds, unheard for decades. Some of these are the only recordings of the bands in existence, so it’s pretty exciting to listen to them and know they are being preserved for future generations.

It is absolutely vital these histories have the opportunity to circulate within the public sphere, and putting them on a blog and in an exhibition are effective ways of doing this. Women are still massively marginalised in the music making, from grassroots to professional levels. Part of the reason for this is a lack of role models within music histories and culture at large. My hope is that with the WLMA and Music and Liberation, more people will be able to recover these legacies so they claim a permanent place within cultural memories. If you missed the exhibition on the tour, there will be the chance to see a scaled down version at the FWSA conference in July.

Deborah Withers

Intermedia: Twitter @music_liberate
http://music-and-liberation.tumblr.com
http://womensliberationmusicarchive.wordpress.com/

Projects mentioned:
www.bhac.org
http://sistershowrevisited.wordpress.com
http://rememberolivemorris.wordpress.com/
Members’ News

FWSA postgraduate members Katherine Cooper and Emma Short published their edited collection entitled The Female Figure in Contemporary Historical Fiction with Palgrave Macmillan in October 2012. The collection addresses the ways in which contemporary female writers use fiction to re-introduce women’s narratives and narratives about women into the historical past, taking into account work by Sarah Waters, Kate Grenville and Margaret Atwood among others. It features contributions by the FWSA’s own Nadine Muller and Claire O’Callaghan, as well as Diana Wallace and an interview about the practice of writing these narratives with Susan Sellers and Alice Thompson.

Professor Kath Woodward has just published two books Planet Sport (2012, Routledge) and Sex, Power and the Games (2012, Palgrave). Both books are about the social and cultural importance of sport in providing opportunities as well as reinstating inequalities and as a serious site for research. She has also been awarded an AHRC grant of £33,082 with Dr Tim Jordan of King’s College London for a project entitled “Being in the Zone: the Importance of Culture to Peak Performance in Sport, Arts and Work”.

The Weeks Centre for Social and Policy Research, LSBU will host the next Gender and Education Association international conference Compelling Diversities, Educational Intersections (April 23-26th 2013) see www.genderandeducation.com/tag/conference-2013

Dr Tracey Reynolds, Weeks Centre for Social and Policy Research, LSBU has been identified as a Routledge “Sociology Super Author”. Her articles on community, parenting, young people, and gender and racial identities within black and minority ethnic/migrant communities are published in journals such as: Community, Work and Family; International Review of Sociology; Journal of Youth Studies; Mobilities; British Journal of Sociology of Education and Ethnic and Racial Studies.

Dr Alexandra Kokoli (Lecturer in Critical and Contextual Studies, Gray’s School of Art, Aberdeen) curated the exhibition “Burnt Breakfast and other works by Su Richardson” (pictured), which opened on 5 July and ran until 9 September 2012. The exhibition is installed at two sites, the Constance Howard Gallery and the Special Collections Reading Room, Goldsmiths University of London. Simultaneously celebrating, exploiting and subverting the connotations of womanly craft skills such as crocheting and embroidery, Su Richardson’s home-made objects explore domesticity, femininity and their mutual implication from a distinctly feminist point of view. www.gold.ac.uk/library/exhibitions

Heather Mendick, Brunel University, and Kim Allen, London Metropolitan University, have been awarded £170,000 by the ESRC to explore The Role of Celebrity in Young People’s Classed and Gendered Aspirations. The project started in autumn 2012 and run for 20 months.

Dr Srla Roy, (Lecturer in Sociology, University of Nottingham and Executive Committee member of the FWSA) has just published two books. The first is a monograph on the gender and sexual politics of Indian Maoism via a study of women’s participation in the late 1960s radical left Naxalite movement in eastern India. Published by Oxford University Press, Remembering Revolution: Gender, Violence and Subjectivity in India’s Naxalbari Movement will be released at the Oxford Book Store in Kolkata, India on the 19th of February 2012. The second is a volume of edited essays on the contemporary state of feminist politics in the countries of India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and the diaspora, titled New South Asian Feminisms: Paradoxes and Possibilities (Zed books, 2012). It includes an essay by FWSA executive member, Trishma Mitra-Kahn on cyberfeminist activism in urban India. Details of the books can be found on the publisher’s websites: http://ukcatalogue.oup.com/product/9780198081722.do and http://zedbooks.co.uk/node/8017

Dr Christin Scharff, King’s College London, has recently published a book called Repudiating Feminism: Young women in a neoliberal world with Ashgate. Gender equality is a widely shared value in many western societies and yet, the mention of the term feminism frequently provokes unease, bewilderment or overt hostility. Repudiating Feminism sheds light on why this is the case.

Dr Katy Pilcher, Brunel University, has recently published an article based on her PhD research in Sociological Research Online entitled “Performing in a Night-Time Leisure Venue: A Visual Analysis of Erotic Dance”.