



gender:dynamic

The Newsletter of the Gender Studies Program at Northwestern University

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"Second Nature" Series Rethinks Politics and Nature

by Laura Ephraim (with contributions from Crina Archer)

It was minutes before the final keynote presentation of this winter's graduate student conference, "Second Nature: Rethinking the Natural through Politics," was set to begin. My fellow conference co-organizers and I felt a familiar

nervous excitement: this keynote address, by queer theorist Michael Warner, was the closing event not only of the two-day conference, but of a series of lectures and reading-group discussions on the "Second Nature" theme held throughout Fall 2006 and Winter 2007. Warner, a former Northwestern faculty member, is Professor of English and Director of the Center for Cultural Analysis at Rutgers, and author of the 2000 volume *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life*.

As audience members streamed in for Warner's talk, our concern gradually shifted gears, from "will there be enough people?" to "will there be enough chairs?" And this shift, too, was familiar: enthusiastic audiences had filled the chairs to see talks in the speaker series and the first conference keynote, Jane Bennett (Johns Hopkins

University). These prior events helped build a community of graduate students and faculty across the social sciences and humanities, who shared a deepening investment in thinking about second nature and politics.

The organizers of the "Second Nature" series chose this theme when planning began almost two years earlier, in part for the span of issues in political theory (our home discipline) it encompasses. Moreover, we picked this theme for its capacious, interdisciplinary reach. And from the outset, we believed the idea of "second nature" could only be duly interrogated as a political concept if we foregrounded questions of gender, sex, sexuality, race, and class, and explored nature's empowering and subordinating possibilities for struggles against heteronormative and patriarchal institutions and discourses.

Consequently, we were particularly delighted when Gender Studies joined a roster of humanities and social science programs as a cosponsor, supplementing primary sponsorship by the Graduate School and the Alice B. Kaplan Institute for the Humanities. Gender Studies represented a core resource and audience for the "Second Nature" project: a vibrant, interdisciplinary community of



Michael Warner speaks to "Second Nature" audience, including organizers Ephraim, Maxwell, and Archer. (Photo: Kristina Ogilvie)

From the director's desk

With our second issue of the redesigned Gender Studies newsletter, it's a pleasure to highlight some exciting developments in the program.

We've undertaken a major enhancement of our graduate program this year: through a pilot program in the Northwestern Graduate School, we are inaugurating a new interdisciplinary graduate "cluster" in Gender Studies. This initiative allows us, for the first time, to make fellowship offers to incoming students with research interests in gender studies; we will also be expanding our core curriculum, and will have enhanced funds for extra-curricular graduate programming.

Chosen from applicants to Northwestern's humanities and social-science programs for



Jeffrey Masten

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GENDERED CONNECTIONS



Photo: Angela Ellington

Gender Studies organized and cosponsored a wide range of events at Northwestern this year — from events coordinated with courses, to collaborations with students groups and other programs, from prominent visiting speakers to gender/sexuality-related performances in music and theatre. Here's a selection of our activities; photos and further information are available on the Gender Studies website.

October 11, 2006 Adrienne Rich, essayist and poet, discussion with students and public poetry reading, cosponsored with the American Studies Program

October 12, 2006 Danny Roberts, cast member on MTV's 2001 series "The Real World: New Orleans" and gay activist, cosponsored with Rainbow Alliance

November 3 – 5, 2006 National Asian American Student Conference: Building Bridges, Connecting Movement, cosponsored with the Office of Asian/Asian American Student Affairs

November 2 and 7, 2006 Transparent Screening and discussion with Director Jules Rosskam, a Leslie A. Hoffmann Colloquium organized by the Gender Studies Undergraduate Board

Fall 2006-Winter 2007 "Second Nature: Rethinking the Natural through Politics," a discussion series and graduate student conference, cosponsored with the Graduate School

November 16, 2006 Gender Studies Reading Group, Covering: *The Hidden Assault on Our Civil Rights*, by Kenji Yoshino

November 15, 2006 Felice Yeskel, *Economic Apartheid in America*, cosponsored with the Women's Center

January 25-27, 2007 Edward Albee's *The Goat, or Who is Sylvia?*, produced, directed, and performed by the Northwestern student theater company WAVE Productions

January 25, 2007 Cherrie Moraga, essayist and poet, public reading, cosponsored with Alianza

February 12, 2007 Huda Ahmed, an Iraqi journalist, discussion with students and public lecture, cosponsored with the American Studies Program

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From the director's desk

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their strong research interests in gender and sexuality studies, Gender Studies “cluster” fellows, in the words of the Graduate School, will have “dual citizenship” – receiving training and degrees in their “home” discipline’s department, but also participating actively in Gender Studies. The “cluster” program supplements our existing graduate certificate program—a full description of each is available on our website. We look forward to welcoming our inaugural cluster fellows in the fall; I’m grateful to faculty members who have worked especially hard to bring this initiative to fruition.

In the undergraduate program, under the leadership of Director of Undergraduate Studies and Associate Director Jillana Enteen, we have this year significantly redesigned our system of upper-level seminars. Courses that formerly appeared as “special topics” courses will now have more specific rubrics and course numbers, allowing students to locate their particular interests more easily – from “Race, Gender, and Sexuality,” to “Gender and Citizenship,” to “Gender, Sexuality, and Film,” to name just a few of the nearly twenty new course designations. Having these regularly taught courses denoted individually allows both the Northwestern campus and a more general audience to see the array of course offerings regularly taught by our faculty. Many of these courses will now also fulfill College distribution requirements, in areas of the literature and fine arts, behavioral and social sciences, and ethics, thus allowing more students to encounter ideas in the study of gender.

We have made a special effort this year to make the study of gender accessible to more students across the university, especially at the introductory level, with new 200-level course offerings by Nicholas Davis (“Introducing Queer Cinema”) and Jillana Enteen (“Sexuality as Transnational”), as well as two freshman seminars—Amy Partridge’s “Making History in the Sixties” and Frances Freeman Paden’s “Imagining Gender.”

It’s not hard to see why students are on waiting lists to enroll in many Gender Studies courses; I’m happy to say that my colleagues have some of the best teaching evaluations on record. Among several additional new and highly successful courses this year, let me mention two by recent arrivals to Northwestern’s faculty: Kate Baldwin’s “From Here to Maternity: The Motherhood Debate” and

Kasey Evans’s “Gender Theory: After Essentialism.” Our stellar faculty continue to develop innovative, relevant topics – not to mention snappy course titles!

Elsewhere in gender:dynamic, you’ll find a catalog of the many extra-curricular events organized and cosponsored by Gender Studies this year, in collaboration with departments, programs, and student groups across the university. Several of these events had links to our courses through Curriculum Enhancement Grants in WCAS.

Our academic year concludes with the completion of another large cohort of honors theses (under the guidance of Honors Coordinator Amy Partridge), the awarding of Gender Studies prizes, and our annual dinner honoring our graduating seniors.

With this flurry of events, the expansion of the graduate program, and the research and teaching activities of our faculty, Gender Studies at Northwestern continues to be, in the words of this newsletter’s title, *dynamic*—in several senses of the term.

—Jeffrey Masten

Close-up on “The Politics of Beauty” by Poornima Yechoor ‘07

In each newsletter, Gender Studies asks a student to introduce a course to our readers. Poornima Yechoor ‘07 contributed this description of Professor Tessie Liu’s “Race, Gender, and the Politics of Beauty.”

Professor Liu’s “Race, Gender, and the Politics of Beauty” is an upper-level Gender Studies seminar, a lively forum for discussions ranging from feminist viewpoints on beauty to “America’s Next Top Model.” Professor Liu challenged students to develop complex understandings of definitions of beauty—how they are fluid and problematized by questions of race and gender. She also pushed us to interrogate the origin of these definitions and their relevance to daily life.

The course began with an overview of several feminist perspectives on beauty: some denounced the “beauty myth” as an oppressive marker of patriarchy and others praised beauty culture for allowing women the freedom to express their individuality. The contradictory nature of this scholarship served as a springboard for subsequent readings and discussions that further nuanced our understanding of beauty culture. The texts we studied

included selections on the rise of the cosmetics industry, dolls, beauty pageants in America (both national and ethnic), aesthetics and the sublime, and beauty and performance. Some highlights of the course were screenings of the documentary *Paris is Burning* and a performance of Alvin Ailey’s *Revelations*, accompanied by fascinating discussions of how the body fits into discourses of beauty and how race, class, and gender complicate beauty.

The seminar format was ideal for the material and allowed all students to discuss and debate their reactions to the texts in a relaxed, yet rigorous, environment. In addition to short responses on course readings and films, the course also required a final paper that challenged students to explore a section of the course that was of particular interest to them. As a graduating senior, I took “Race, Gender, and the Politics of Beauty” as the last course of my

undergraduate Gender Studies career, and I am happy to say it contained all the elements of a great class, enabling students to closely consider the complicated nature of ideals of beauty and relate beauty not only to theoretical concepts, but also to aspects of everyday existence.



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“Second Nature” Series Rethinks Politics and Nature

scholars with diverse interests in contesting and recasting claims made in the name of nature and the natural. The Gender Studies Program seminar room also played host to “Second Nature” reading groups in the Fall and Winter quarters.

The concept of “Second Nature” has long offered a double-edged sword to scholarly and political interrogations of gender and other categories of social order, hierarchy, and domination. Attempts to ground difference in nature have often worked to entrench inequalities and obscure the workings of power by naturalizing its effects. Yet nature has also been a potent resource for feminist, queer, and anti-racist projects, as an empowering ground beyond the political to which appeal can be made when forms of life get cast by their opponents as “unnatural.”

For example, both feminist and anti-feminist scholars have recently taken novel stances towards natural science’s investigations (and reifications) of gender and sex

“Attempts to ground difference in nature have often worked to entrench inequalities ...”

difference. On the one hand, former Harvard president Lawrence Summers’s recent call for further research on female scientists’ “natural” inferiority offers a hyperbolic reminder of the dangers to feminism of scientific naturalizations of gender difference. On the other hand, Anne Fausto-Sterling’s feminist work has drawn on the methodologies of the natural sciences to expose the social construction of the two-sex model of sexual identity, and to naturalize a plural model of sex difference. Such disparate academic positions have multiple, shifting effects on political struggles, such as those over minority rights, family structures, and sexual freedoms.

Because of these intersections of gender and nature, we as organizers were surprised to find that as the “Second Nature” series progressed, gender, sex, sexuality and race were often presumed or marginalized, despite our intent to center them. For instance, fall speaker Thomas Laqueur, whose 1990 book *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* profoundly contributed to historical understandings of the sexed body, spoke on a theme from his current project, which historicizes conceptions of death. His talk reconsidered both

the radical and domesticating political possibilities that emerge in practices of burying and burning the dead. This fruitfully extended his prior scholarship on embodiment and its political consequences, but it also represented a shift – in his own work and in the unfolding of our series – away from explicit consideration of the politics of bodies’ sex.

Similarly, there was a distinct shortage of conference-paper submissions centered on gender themes – coloring the array of papers selected and the conversation that ensued during the February 9-10 graduate conference. There were notable exceptions: for instance, Keridiana Chez (CUNY) provocatively critiqued recent calls for “cyborg rights” by outing some pernicious gender and race assumptions structuring popular idealizations of cyborg-citizens. Hagar Koteff (UC Berkeley) also foregrounded issues of gender in her incisive reinterpretation of the history of discourses on contraception.

While gender stayed in the background during much of the conference, however, it served as an important backdrop to many of the presentations. Some papers sought to hybridize “the human” with other materialities, and others were explicitly or implicitly indebted to feminist theory or histories of gender, sex, and race. As a result, when these categories were foregrounded, they entered the conversation both as a continuation of the conference’s dominant sub-themes and as a collectively welcome eruption.

Michael Warner’s culminating keynote, too, simultaneously engaged with and disrupted the themes that preceded it. On the one hand, his talk, “The Nature of the Unnatural,” was a capstone to themes that had been dominant throughout the “Second Nature” series: the ambivalent political value of “natural” laws, the fraught intersectionality of biology and sociability, and the problems and promise of natural science for understanding human political arrangements. On the other hand, Warner’s presentation centered questions of sexual normativity, which the series had largely neglected. By historicizing attempts to discover biological bases for “deviant” sexual practices and identities, Warner showed how such attempts must, paradoxically, describe deviations from nature as, themselves, natural. He exposed

irreducible tensions between normalization and its tactic of naturalization, and closed with a timely invitation to imagine a “queer cognitive science.”

In addition to the Gender Studies Program and other institutional sponsors of “Second Nature,” an interdisciplinary group of students and faculty made indispensable contributions to executing the event series – especially the conference’s discussants and the series’ faculty sponsor, Bonnie Honig, whose input throughout was invaluable.

We hope that the conversation and nascent community begun in the “Second Nature” series and conference will continue to shape discussion at Northwestern, with Gender Studies as a key participant in that legacy. ●●

GENDERED CONNECTIONS

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February 17, 2007 Gender Studies Undergraduate Board fieldtrip to see About Face Theatre’s *The Execution of Justice*, a play about the assassination of Harvey Milk

February 27, 2007 “Women Ordinary and Extraordinary,” a vocal recital of works by and about women, performed by Alicia Berneche, cosponsored with the English Department and the American Studies Program (pictured page 1).

March 30, 2007 “Remembering Women Murdered by Men: The Making of a Book,” cosponsored with the Women’s Center, the Interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Theater and Drama, and the Performance Studies Department

April 11, 2007 “Jerusalem Women Speak: Three Women, Three Faiths, One Shared Vision,” public lecture, cosponsored with the Roberta Buffett Center for International and Comparative Studies

April 17, 2007 Jane Roberts, co-founder of 34 Million Friends of the United Nations Population Fund, public lecture, cosponsored with the Women’s Center and College Feminists

April 18, 2007 “Out in the Academy,” a panel discussion with out LGBTQ Northwestern faculty, cosponsored with the Queer Pride Graduate Student Association

April 25, 2007 “Queer in High School: The Integration Question of the 21st Century,” colloquium organized by the Gender Studies Undergraduate Board

May 17, 2007 Don Kulick, Professor and Director of the Center for the Study of Gender and Sexuality, New York University, public lecture and class visit, cosponsored with the Linguistics Department and the Anthropology Department



Faculty News, Honors, and Achievements

Micaela di Leonardo (Anthropology) has an electronic publication in *Cultural Studies* entitled “Neoliberalism, Nostalgia, Race Politics, and the American Public Sphere: The Case of the Tom Joyner Morning Show.” She also presented a paper on her research on New Haven, Connecticut at the Society for the Anthropology of North America meetings in New Orleans in April.

Jillana Enteen (Gender Studies) published “Lesbian Studies in Thailand” in the current issue of *The Journal of Lesbian Studies*. She presented a paper about cyberpunk and science fiction as International Relations at the International Studies Association Annual Meeting in Chicago in March.

Bonnie Honig (Political Science) published “Between Decision and Deliberation (on Rousseau, Habermas and others)” in the March issue of the *American Political Science Review*.

Louise W. Knight (Communication Studies) recently received the Illinois State Historical Society’s Russell P. Strange Memorial Book Award for making “a significant contribution” to Illinois history in her biography of Jane Addams, *Citizen: Jane Addams and the Struggle for Democracy* (University of Chicago Press, 2005). Knight recently gave a talk entitled “Theorist-Activist:

Jane Addams and the Development of Political Consciousness” at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. In April, she was interviewed for a new Bill Moyers’ documentary on the turn of the twentieth-century Progressive Era, to air in the spring of 2008.

Phyllis Lassner (Writing Program) published “Rebecca West’s Shadowy Other” in *Rebecca West Today* (ed. Bernard Schweizer, University of Delaware Press, 2007) and gave two invited talks on her Kindertransport project at Bar Ilan University in Israel in December, 2006. Lassner also organized a panel for the 2006 Modern Language Association Executive Committee on Twentieth-Century English Literature on the subject of “Britain: Homeland? Haven? Exile?”

Jeffrey Masten (Gender Studies and English) has given invited lectures on the history of sexuality and Renaissance literature at Duke University and the University of Pennsylvania, and spoke on a “Queer Editing” panel at the Society for Textual Scholarship meeting in New York. In March, he spoke on the panel “Theorizing Race and Sexuality” at the “Pre-modern Race and Sexuality Symposium,” co-sponsored by the Newberry Library and the Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities (Vanderbilt University).

Alexandra Owen (Gender Studies and History) is on sabbatical leave in Britain and is giving the opening keynote address at a conference on Magical Thinking at the University of London’s Institute of English Studies in early May. Her paper is entitled “Magical Thinking, Modern Spirits and Other Matters.”

Frances Freeman Paden (Gender Studies and Writing Program) and Bill Paden (French and Italian) jointly presented a paper on a tenth-century obstetrical charm at the International Congress on Medieval Studies at Kalamazoo in early May.

Gregory Ward (Linguistics) gave a plenary address at the Lavender Languages & Linguistics Conference at American University entitled “The problem with *having sex*.”

Linda Zerilli (Gender Studies and Political Science) has recently published numerous essays including “Truth and Politics” in *Theory and Event*, “Truth and the Lure of Method,” in the *International Journal of Sociology*, and a “Reply to Tracy Strong’s Response and Richard Flathman’s Response to Linda M. G. Zerilli, ‘Truth and Politics,’” in *Theory and Event*. Her book, *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom* (University of Chicago Press, 2005) is being translated into Spanish and German.

Graduate Certificate Student Updates

Coya Paz Brownrigg (Performance Studies) recently published an interview in *Meridians: the Journal of Feminism, Race, Transnationalism*. She also presented “Performing a New History of Lynching: The Many True Lives of Josefa Segovia” at the Mid-America Theater Conference, and published the article “Linchocracy: Performing America in El Clamor Publico” in *California History Magazine*.

Katy Chiles (English) was awarded a Mellon Foundation Grant by Northwestern’s Alice Kaplan Institute for the Humanities for Fall 2007. This year Katy presented portions of her dissertation work at the American Studies Association and the Midwest Modern Language Association. She will be chairing a panel and presenting this spring at the Society of Early Americanists/Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture Conference in Williamsburg, Virginia.

Amber Day (Performance Studies) accepted a Performance Studies position in the English and Cultural Studies Department at Bryant University in Rhode Island.

Laura Ephraim (Political Science) co-organized the “Second Nature” Series and Graduate Student Conference (see p. 1). Ephraim also gave a paper on secularism in international relations at the International Studies Association Conference in Chicago and a paper on the politics of René Descartes’ scientific method at the Western Political Science Association conference in Las Vegas. Ephraim is the recipient of a Mellon Grant from the Alice Kaplan Institute of the Humanities for Summer 2007, as well as a Dissertation Recognition Award from the Alumnae of Northwestern.

Hollis Griffin (Radio/Television/Film) presented a paper, “Television as the Cultural Center,” at the Flow Conference in Austin, Texas, in October. He presented “Television and the Performativity of Citizenship: Cable Narrowcasts to the Gay Consumer-Citizen” at the Conference for the Society for Cinema and Media Studies in Chicago in March, and “Shirley Temple at the Queer Crossroads: Reconciling Criticism of Reproductive Futurism with Scholarship on the Queer Child” at

the Conference for the Cultural Studies Association in Portland, Oregon, in April. In February, he was elected to the graduate student seat on the Executive Council of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies.

Jennifer Tyburczy (Performance Studies) was awarded a Northwestern Graduate Research Grant and a Center for International and Comparative Studies Summer Travel Grant to conduct research at sex museums in the United States and Mexico. She also received a grant from the Museum of Modern Art to attend the January 2007 conference “The Feminist Future: Theory and Practice in the Visual Arts.” Locally, she has presented her research at the Gerber/Hart Library in Chicago and at Columbia College. Tyburczy also presented her work at the Third Global Conference on Sex and Sexuality Critical Issues in Krakow, Poland. In 2007, Tyburczy taught “Studies in Gender and Performance” and “Sexuality and Visual Culture” for Performance Studies.

Gender Studies Seniors Conduct Original Research

In 2006-07, six Gender Studies majors are writing senior theses to be submitted for honors in the Program. Thesis writers are assisted by their individual advisors and thesis-seminar instructor and Honors Coordinator Amy Partridge. The following descriptions suggest the rich diversity of these capstone projects.

BARRAK ALZAID “THE ESSENTIAL EVITA: POLITICS AND GENDER PERFORMANCE”

Pieter-Dirk Uys is a South African satirist and playwright who engendered a critical commentary of Apartheid in the 1980s. His work operated in the context of an authoritarian regime that enacted its policy through segregationist laws that regulated gender and sexuality through a politics of morality and sexual purity. Uys conveyed his commentary primarily through a female persona, Evita Bezuidenhout, a character that parodied conservative norms. Originally a fictional parody, she has since “leaped out of the chorus line and into the real world.” Thus, I interrogate how Evita exceeds Uys’ portrayal by analyzing the shift from “fictional” to “real.” I also consider how this crossover enables her to function as the “Tannie” (aunt or mother figure) of a democratic rainbow nation.

RUPALI SHARMA “THE POLITICAL AND SEXUAL IMPLICATIONS OF VEILING AMONG MUSLIM-AMERICAN WOMEN AFTER 9/11”

The following two questions frame my thesis: “Why are young Muslim-American women veiling after 9/11?” and “How do these veiling practices shape their role in the umma (community of Muslim believers), in the Muslim-American communities they belong to, as American citizens, and in their relationships with Muslim and non-Muslim men?” To find some answers, I interviewed twenty veiled and un-veiled, second-generation Muslim-American women between the ages of nineteen and thirty-five. Unlike Muslim women abroad, Muslim-American women are raised in varying religious and culturally observant environments and are educated in American institutions, view American television and films, and interact with non-Muslim Americans on a day-to-day basis. Thus, I analyze their testimonies in light of the religious and cultural history of veiling abroad, the gendered discourse that American politicians and media have used to garner support for military intervention in Afghanistan, and post-modern identity politics.

MELANIE WANG “SOUNDS OF SILENCE”

In “Sounds of Silence,” I examine the seventeenth-century autobiographical account of Mary Rowlandson, a Puritan woman taken captive during the King Phillip’s War. My project focuses on how Rowlandson’s use of language – in particular, her self-censorship and discipline of her words in the text – situates how she perceives and negotiates her position as a woman author in her Puritan community.

JESSICA LEE MATHIASON “TRANS HOLLYWOOD BLOCKBUSTERS AND THE GENITAL REVEAL”

In this thesis, I investigate how transgender identities are constructed and rendered visible in Academy Award nominated films from 1992-2005. Focusing particularly on *The Crying Game* and *Transamerica*, I analyze how these films move beyond rigid gender dichotomies described by theorists such as Laura Mulvey, instead creating space for transgendered viewing practices and identifications. While *The Crying Game* uses camera work and sophisticated film techniques to generate a transgender gaze, it is the character of Bree in *Transamerica* that constructs herself/is constructed as a sympathetic transgender subject. By tracing the representation of the body, gender masquerade, and medical discourses through these films, we uncover the potential of Hollywood film to challenge and transform dominant transgender myths and stereotypes.

POORNIMA YECHOOR “CAN THE HIV-POSITIVE HINDU WOMAN SPEAK?: SEX, TRADITION, MODERNITY, AND AIDS IN CONTEMPORARY BOLLYWOOD CINEMA”

According to the 2006 World Health Organization report on the Global AIDS Epidemic, India, along with South Africa, leads the world with over five million individuals living with HIV. Women comprise almost forty percent of the infected population. Since AIDS arrived in India in the early 1980s, Bollywood, the Hindi film industry which produces hundreds of films a year, has released only two movies, *Phir Milenge* (2004) and *My Brother Nikhil* (2005), that address the disease. My thesis analyzes *Phir Milenge* (“We’ll Meet Again”) within the context of Bollywood conventions as well as the contemporary discourse on HIV/AIDS in India. I use Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” to interrogate whether or not the HIV-positive woman in *Phir Milenge* is able to speak, and I discuss the film’s ultimate message, both literal and implicit, about her voice. Finally, I consider the implications of this representation, its relation to female sexuality in India, and the underlying conflict between tradition and modernity on the subcontinent.



NEW RESEARCH: MATTER, PHILOSOPHY, AND GENDER IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

by Helen Thompson

Helen Thompson is an Associate Professor of English and often teaches courses in Gender Studies. Prof. Thompson is the author of *Ingenuous Subjection: Compliance and Power in the Eighteenth-century Domestic Novel* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

During my research leave year as a fellow at Northwestern's Alice Kaplan Institute for the Humanities, I've been at work on a book project which considers the new ways of thinking about matter engendered by the Scientific Revolution at the end of the seventeenth century in England and France. In particular, I'm exploring the distinction between what were called primary and secondary qualities, a distinction between the invisible atomic structure of things and qualities—like color, taste, smell, or pain—that we perceive. It was the contention of the “corpuscular” philosophy inaugurated by Robert Boyle and developed by John Locke that secondary qualities like the color violet do not exist in objects at all, but rather, quite literally, only inside of the people who perceive them.

This way of thinking about the relation between subjects and objects had cultural, figural, and formal effects that have been overlooked when we characterize the rise of empiricism as simply the rise of a regime of scientific observation. My project pursues the philosophical and literary-historical stakes of the paradoxical, provocative, and endlessly reworked distinction between the invisible atomic structure of objects and palpable qualities.

The project will examine how the primary/secondary distinction shaped the rise of discourses and genres such as the discourse of aesthetics and the emergent genre of pornography. I'm deeply concerned with questions central to Gender Studies, because ultimately I'm interested in figurations of mind and body which do not respect the strict boundaries between them so often ascribed to the age of “Enlightenment,” boundaries themselves closely associated with notions of gender.

Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin's painting *The Soap Bubble* (ca. 1733) illustrates one aspect of my project: the boy's bubble, which occupies the painting for one magically protracted instant, is nothing but secondary qualities—about to dissolve, the bubble is pure appearance. Chardin foregrounds not just the involvement of the boy but also the involvement of the painting's viewer in the production of this object. In many figures and forms—from blowing bubbles to eating oysters to feeling love to tasting a new commodity like a pineapple—the intimacy of subjects and objects shaped eighteenth-century literary and aesthetic culture.

A Year in the Life of the Undergraduate Board

by Tiffany Mathiason '10

The Gender Studies Undergraduate Board has had a great year, completing two Leslie A. Hoffmann Colloquia. The first colloquium expressed the board's fall theme, “TransCinema.” We screened the documentary film *Transparent*, which details the lives of female-to-male transgender biological parents, and, the following week, the filmmaker Jules Rosskam gave a presentation. One of the Board's goals in choosing the theme “TransCinema” was to raise awareness of transgender issues, since they are often overlooked in LGB communities. Indeed trans-visibility is a concern central to Gender Studies. Rosskam and audience members participated in an impassioned discussion about the representation of trans-people following Rosskam's talk.

In *Transparent*, Rosskam juxtaposes two views of transgender men on their experience of pregnancy. One man felt uncomfortable during pregnancy, while another described it as the only time he felt at ease in his body. During the colloquium, we discussed how stereotypes are eradicated by allowing both contradictory experiences equal respect and visibility.

Gender Studies and English Professor Nick Davis moderated the Rosskam event and contributed meaningfully to the conversation. Northwestern students and audience members had more than enough commentary to engage Rosskam in a lengthy discussion. Some of the most controversial and interesting topics included pregnancy in female-to-male transgender men and the break-down of assumptions about transgender men, not to mention assumptions by the medical community. The intriguing

conversation continued as the colloquium concluded with a Gender Studies Undergraduate Board-sponsored dessert with students, faculty, and Rosskam.

The Spring Colloquium, *Queer in High School: the Integration Question of the 21st Century*, followed the theme “Queer and Underage.” It consisted of a panel of six people ranging from Northwestern students to community activists. The main topic of discussion was LGBT-specific high schools. The Colloquium concluded with conversation over dinner with the Gender Studies Undergraduate Board and panel members.



Transparent filmmaker Jules Rosskam (Photo: Michelle Lemchuk)

As our two colloquia this year illustrate, the Gender Studies Undergraduate Board provides the opportunity for Gender Studies majors and minors and other interested students to create interesting events organized around our own perspectives. For more information about the Gender Studies Undergraduate Board, or to get involved, contact the Gender Studies office: gender@northwestern.edu. ●●

Cherrie Moraga Extends her Legacy to the Next Generation

by Katy Weseman

Cherrie Moraga delivered an emotional and inspiring reading to a group of students and community members at Northwestern on the evening of January 25, 2007. The event was organized by Alianza, the university's largest Hispanic/Latino student organization, and was co-sponsored by the Gender Studies Program along with several other academic units and student groups.

Moraga has authored and edited many influential works including the groundbreaking volume of essays *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, which inspired a general movement in Women's Studies towards more nuanced considerations of race, class, language, and ethnicity.

Well known for her foundational contributions to queer, feminist, and women of color struggles, Moraga's reading at Northwestern joined these broad themes with her present-day personal tensions concerning



motherhood, aging, and death. The poems and essays Moraga shared with the audience juxtaposed the recent loss of her mother to Alzheimer's with the challenges and joys of raising a teenage son. Moraga's words painted profound images of the impermanence of life, an epiphany she experienced while playing a board game with her son on a sunny afternoon. She spoke of her fears as a feminist

raising a son, hoping that the receptacle for her son's rage will never be a woman. Moraga also addressed her own anger, fear, and angst at seeing her ancestors' communities destroyed in Mexico. In her moving prose, Moraga bridged these emotions and physical realities, attributing the manifestation of a painful kidney stone to her current anxieties.

Despite the somber nature of Moraga's work, her reading and the subsequent question and answer session were inspirational. One audience member, a woman of color currently pursuing a Ph.D., asked Moraga for words of advice as she follows in the footsteps of great women academics/activists such as Moraga herself, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Audre Lorde. This student expressed fear that she would not be able to carry on the legacy. Moraga's response was simple and moving: “I am giving you the legacy, it is yours. You are carrying it on.” ●●

Alumnae/i Updates

Rebecca Rossen (Graduate Certificate, 2006) published short pieces in *Dance Research Journal*, *Opera Quarterly*, and *Dance Teacher Magazine* this spring. She continues to work on her book, *Dancing Jewish: Jewish Identity in American Modern and Postmodern Dance*, and expects her second child in July.

Amanda Schwartz (2005) is completing her first year of law school at Columbia University this spring. She will be working as a legal intern for the Innocence Project in New York over the summer, thanks to a Sonnenschein Scholars Foundation Scholarship.

Lizzy Venell (2004) was the co-coordinator of the Second Annual Collaborative Graduate Conference in Women's and Gender Studies, “Sustainable Directions in Feminist Scholarship,” held March 31-April 1 at Emory University.

Katherine Zwick (2001) is working towards her doctorate in Clinical Psychology at the Illinois School of Professional Psychology. Her Gender Studies degree is put to use every day as she explores how gender socialization affects cognition, sense of self, personality, psychology practice, and pathologized disorders.



“Jerusalem Women Speak” with Gender Studies course (Photo: Kristina Ogilvie).



Gender Studies students and Kresge Hall (Photo: Kristina Oglivie)

identities

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