

MARCH 2005 NEWSLETTER

President's Report by Ann Braithwaite

Hi everyone! Hope you're all well at this very busy time of year and that you all had happy and successful semesters this year. In this newsletter you'll find updates of all kinds – on the book award, on our new essay competition, on some issues that were raised at last year's conference, and of course, on our upcoming conference – which is shaping up to be a wonderful conference this year! The program committee, headed by Susanne Luhmann, has been hard at work organizing all kinds of wonderful looking keynote speakers, plenary sessions, joint sessions, panels around two central themes, and a variety of social events to keep us all busy when we're not in conference sessions J I'm really looking forward to this year's conference, and to seeing you all in London in May! Don't forget to register for the conference – the CFHSS has already sent out all of its information, and it's also all available online by following the links from www.fedcan.ca.

As you've probably noticed, we've been a little slow on producing the newsletters this year so far (as our 'other' jobs get busier and busier...). And of course we recognize that this is one of the 'perks' we offer members, and a way to keep in regular touch with you all about the association. While I've been sending out a lot of messages via the email list, the newsletter is another way to have a different kind of communication with you all – and one we certainly don't want to lose. Rather than simply using the newsletter to reiterate information already sent in those emails, though, we'd like to see it change into another kind of forum – for longer articles or commentaries on issues central to the association and to Women's Studies, for interviews with authors of newly published books in Women's Studies, for updates on how we all differently undertake similar kinds of events at our various institutions, etc. etc. (And to that end, you'll see that this newsletter includes our first "commentary" – by Ann (Rusty) Shtier, entitled "Should undergraduate Women's Studies programs hire only Women's Studies PhDs?") The Board of Directors is thus currently discussing this kind of possible re-organization, along with establishing definite deadlines for a quarterly newsletter that you would all be assured of getting at specific times of the year – and could look forward to! This will be one of the issues to be discussed at this year's AGM – enticement for you all to make sure you book that event into your conferencing this year. If you have any suggestions, please don't hesitate to contact me at any time.

Membership Update By Beth McAuley

Thank you to all of our members who have renewed their memberships. I am still in the midst of sending out receipts and letters, so please have patience if you haven't yet received these in the mail. I would also like to say welcome to all of our new members, some of whom are teaching as far away as Japan. It's great that we are building such an international network! I also want to thank those of you who have made donations to the CWSA/ACEF Book Prize, Graduate Essay Prize, Undergraduate Essay Prize and Conference Travel Fund. These donations are much appreciated and will be used to promote these efforts over the coming months.

Finally, a note about *Atlantis: A Women's Studies Journal/Revue d'Études sur les femmes*. As you know, CWSA/ACEF designated Atlantis as its journal of choice last year and over the past year we revamped our membership form to include information about the journal.

When you indicate interest in an subscription, I pass on your name and contact information to Cecily Barrie, the journal's managing editor, who then follows up with you. Atlantis is celebrating its 30th Anniversary of continuous publishing this year and welcomes all new subscribers to participate in the celebration. Be sure to visit its newly designed website at www.msvu.ca/atlantis.

Conference Update **By Susanne Luhmann**

We've been working hard on putting together this year's exciting conference schedule, and are anticipating a great conference! With two central themes and an open call, plenary sessions and keynote speakers every day, workshops and round tables, multiple concurrent sessions, lunchtime events, film screenings, social events every evening... whew... should keep us all busy for a few days. A preliminary schedule of the conference is available on the CWSA/ACEF website at www.yorku.ca/cwsaacef -- follow the links to "conference" and get all the information there! We will post a "closer to final" schedule as we near the conference, and of course your conference packages will include a final print program. Looking forward to seeing you all there!

Student Luncheon at the Conference **By Anne Wagner**

Feeling overwhelmed? Nervous about presenting a paper? Why not come out and get to know your fellow CWSA/ACEF student members? As the student representative of the CWSA/ACEF, I am pleased to invite all student members to our first annual student networking luncheon. All student members are invited to come to this informal gathering, which will offer us an opportunity to get to know one another and mingle in an informal, relaxed setting. This luncheon is being organized in response to students' suggestion that it would be helpful to have a venue to meet other students at the beginning of the conference, before we all get caught up in the business of Congress. So why not stop by, say hello and introduce yourself to a group of similarly minded scholars? The luncheon is scheduled for Sunday May 29 12:15-1:30. Check your conference materials for the location. Hope to see you there!

WEIN update **By Ann Braithwaite**

In summer 2004, in response to issues that were brought up at the Annual General Meeting at the CWSA/ACEF conference in Winnipeg, I wrote a letter to the Federation expressing the membership's concern with two major issues – childcare provisions at the conference, and accessibility issues for both conference events and for the conference site generally. I also sent a copy of that letter to Wendy Robbins, who is the CWSA/ACEF representative at WEIN (the Women's and Equity Issues Network – a Federation wide committee) this year. (The Federation also responded to this letter indicating its understanding of importance of these issues and its desire and willingness to work on them at future conferences).

Wendy Robbins reports that the concerns that the CWSA/ACEF raised about childcare at Congress were thoroughly discussed at the recent Executive meeting, and that everyone was in agreement with the importance of having childcare made as hassle-free as possible. While arrangements change from year to year depending on the site of the Congress and the individual university's facilities, our members' concern with too early deadlines was noted by the Congress staff.

The issue of how to increase accessibility all around is also an ongoing concern of the committee, as one of the issues covered under the title name "equity" is disability rights throughout the Federation. While I don't have anything really specific to report on this front, one recommendation I would make to all of us is to make sure that any other associations we are members of are both aware of the importance of this issue, and communicate it to the Federation and Congress organizers. The more people—and associations—speak up, the more the Federation will both take notice and think about accessibility issues of all kinds when they thinking "Congress."

CWSA/ACEF 2005 Book Award By Ann Braithwaite

Once again this year we are really pleased to have a book award ceremony as one of the central events at the upcoming conference. The list of nominees for this year's award are listed on the CWSA/ACEF website (follow the links from www.yorku.ca/cwsaacef), but here they are also:

- Bridgeman, Rae. *Safe Haven: The Story of a Shelter for Homeless Women*. University of Toronto Press, 2003.
- Cullum, Linda. *Narratives at Work: Women, Men, Unionization, and the Fashioning of Identities*. ISER, 2003.
- Gonick, Marnina. *Between Femininities: Ambivalence, Identity and the Education of Girls*. State University of New York Press, 2003.
- Henderson, Jennifer. *Settler Feminism and Race Making in Canada*. University of Toronto Press, 2003.
- Johnson, Laura. *The Co-Workplace: Teleworking in the Neighbourhood*. UBC Press, 2003.
- Krane, Julia. *What's Mother Got to Do with It? Protecting Children from Sexual Abuse*. University of Toronto Press, 2003.
- Malacrida, Claudia. *Cold Comfort: Mothers, Professionals and Attention Deficit Disorder*. University of Toronto Press, 2003.
- Porter, Ann. *Gendered States: Women, Unemployment Insurance, and the Political Economy of the Welfare State in Canada, 1945-1997*. University of Toronto Press, 2003.
- Noble, Jean Bobby. *Masculinities Without Men: Female Masculinity in Twentieth-Century Fictions*. UBC Press, 2004.
- Reed, Maureen. *Taking Stands: Gender and the Sustainability of Rural Communities*. UBC Press, 2003.
- Williams, Carol. *Framing the West: Race, Gender and the Photographic Frontier in the Pacific Northwest*. Oxford University Press, 2003.

Congratulations to all of these authors for their nominations! And of course, to know the winner, you'll have to come to the book award ceremony, currently scheduled for Monday, May 30, at 6:30pm. The winner will also be giving a keynote talk at this event. In addition, we're planning for a wine and cheese reception, displays from a variety of publishers, a raffle of the books that were nominated this year, music, and just generally a great celebration of the amount and quality of intellectual work produced in Women's Studies and by our members over the past year! Hope to see you all there!

2005 Undergraduate and Graduate Essay Competitions By Ann Braithwaite

We're also really excited that this year we were able to implement two new competitions for graduate and undergraduate students, for essay prizes. All students writing in Women's Studies courses are eligible, and the competitions are separate – one at the undergraduate level and one at the graduate level. Papers had to be nominated by faculty members of CWSA/ACEF in good standing and are being judged by panels of volunteers from the association – who are about to start reading through the various submissions we have received. And students who win will have the opportunity to present their papers at the conference in May, and will receive a monetary prize of \$200! The deadline has just passed, so congratulations to those who sent us essays, and everyone be sure and look for these events at the upcoming conference.

Commentary

By Ann (Rusty) Shtier

Email: rshteir@yorku.ca

"Should undergraduate Women's Studies programs hire only Women's Studies PhDs?"

The CWSA/ACEF has asked me to prepare a discussion document as a resource for undergraduate Women's Studies program administrators across the country regarding the importance of hiring candidates with PhDs in Women's Studies for positions in their units. I offer reflections here based on having been an early director of the Graduate Program in Women's Studies at York University. I remain closely involved with York's graduate program as a course director and member of the Executive Committee. I also currently coordinate one of the undergraduate units within York's School of Women's Studies, and this includes sitting on the Curriculum Committee of the School. I approach questions of background preparation and credentialing for job candidates in undergraduate programs from this vantage too.

So, should undergraduate Women's Studies programs hire only Women's Studies PhDs? My answer to this is "yes, of course." However, there is a "yes, but" edge to my thinking that connects to my broad concern about the disproportionate Social Sciences orientation within Women's Studies programs.

At the time that faculty members at York University seized the initiative and prevailed on administrators at York and at the provincial level to establish a full graduate program in Women's Studies, there was no freestanding doctoral program in Women's Studies in Canada. Indeed, very few universities anywhere offered the possibility of PhD work in something called "Women's Studies." Establishment of the Graduate Program in Women's Studies at York University was institutional acknowledgement, therefore, of a new area of scholarship by a university that prided itself on innovative and interdisciplinary directions in research and teaching. Scholars in Women's Studies were aiming to create new knowledge. Crafting a freestanding program that gave degrees in "Women's Studies" served as the declaration of an area of study with its own legitimacies. One assumption was that this new area of study would be giving degrees to students who in many cases in turn could go off to teach Women's Studies courses and contribute to the shaping of the field in other universities.

The history of graduate education in Women's Studies is still very young, and tensions are ongoing between the vision and realities aspects of this history. These tensions continue to be productive in stimulating intense and highly reflexive discussion among those invested in the future of Women's Studies. As a new field of study, Women's Studies is working on how to institutionalize itself, and this happens within the limitations and exigencies of

issues in higher education at provincial and federal levels. A double-edged climate of success results. Moving Women's Studies into university environments is a way to break new ground, but Women's Studies programs also have to live within, and in tension with, institutions with their own histories and practices.

Given all of that, it seems to me that jobs in undergraduate Women's Studies programs should be in the hands of those who have declared themselves for the future of the field by committing themselves to doing their graduate work in Women's Studies. I am well aware that some students are seeking strategic latitude for themselves by combining MA work in one field, say, Women's Studies, with PhD work in another, say, English, or Sociology. They aim to enhance their marketability by choosing a woman-centred/feminist PhD topic so as to give a Women's Studies profile to their dissertation. They form a supervisory committee that reflects their effort to keep a disciplinary base but reach out beyond that. These decisions are pragmatic and inventive. However, students who complete their PhD in a program that is not Women's Studies will have attained their degrees by fulfilling requirements specific to a home discipline that has its own history, practices, and internal debates. This is not the same as anchoring one's training decisively within Women's Studies.

I firmly believe, therefore, that students who have done their graduate degrees in Women's Studies should be given priority for jobs in Women's Studies programs, or in units struggling to introduce courses in Women's Studies into their curricula. There are three overarching reasons for this:

i) Applicants with a PhD in Women's Studies have been trained in this field. They have worked within a curriculum shaped by those who are deliberate about the field of Women's Studies. Graduate programs in Women's Studies think hard about coursework in an area that aims to be interdisciplinary. They formulate topics for core courses, and set out breadth requirements that are meant to give students acquaintance with key debates, research methods, theories, and texts. Faculty who are teaching in Women's Studies understand that they are trying to shape new approaches to knowledge and that the impetus is to move beyond current disciplines to something else.

ii) Having been through comprehensive exams in Women's Studies, and having written a doctoral dissertation under the supervision of faculty members in Women's Studies, the student who holds a PhD in Women's Studies has the credential that should be basic for a position in this still new field. They have been trained in Women's Studies and they have received the highest professional accreditation that the University awards.

iii) The student who holds a doctoral degree in Women's Studies has lived the current state of play in the field. This point is key. Anyone with a PhD in Women's Studies is familiar with the struggles within the field, and should have a sense of how she would like the field to develop. She will have experienced the privileges of being a participant in a still pioneering endeavour, and she likely will know the frustrations and disappointments of unfulfilled aspirations. She will have sat through many challenging conversations about core topics such as interdisciplinarity in Women's Studies, generational differences, limitations and resistances within curriculum, limited resources for faculty hires, etc. Those who come out the other side of such journeys have a fire-tested optimism about Women's Studies that makes them especially vibrant and well-informed candidates for positions in Women's Studies programs.

In short, the student who has achieved a doctoral degree in Women's Studies is precisely

the student trained and poised to shape the future for the field. She is the more suitable choice for appointment to an undergraduate Women's Studies program or unit than a candidate whose feminist or woman-centred graduate training was in another area of study.

There is a "yes, but" edge to my argument, however. I am troubled by the imbalance across many Women's Studies programs between courses, methods, and orientations drawn from the Social Sciences and those drawn from the Humanities. This has partly to do with the historical development of Canadian Women's Studies out of work in political economy. It also has partly to do with the preponderance of contemporary topics in the field and the turn away from history within Women's Studies. The reasons for this direction in the shape of the field are layered, and they should be addressed by CWSA/ACEF. Women's Studies programs would be wrong to keep perpetuating this imbalance. I can picture circumstances, therefore, in which the better choice for an undergraduate position in Women's Studies would be the candidate with doctoral work in an area of the Humanities that is represented insufficiently within the curriculum of the Women's Studies hiring unit. Such a candidate could contribute important new dimensions to the undergraduate Women's Studies offerings there, and also model directions for the field more generally.