



Writing Women

A Newsletter for the 18th- and 19th-Century British Women Writers Association

Volume 7 Number 2
Fall 2006

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Writing Women is the bi-annual newsletter for the 18th- and 19th-Century British Women Writers Association. Published in March and September.

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BWWC: A Community of Scholars

As a companion to last issue's retrospective by the founders of the BWWA, we talked to three loyal conference attendees about the conference and its impact on their scholarly lives. Constance M. Fulmer is the Blanche E. Seaver Chair of English at Pepperdine University; Elisabeth Rose Gruner is an Associate Professor of English and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at the University of Richmond; and Donelle Ruwe is an Assistant Professor of English at Northern Arizona University and the BWWA Treasurer. Added together, the three have attended thirty-four conferences since the first in 1992.

The unique subject matter of the conference immediately caught the eye of these first attendees. As Elisabeth recalls: "I was just finishing up my Ph.D. when I heard about the first conference. Since my dissertation spanned a group of four writers from Frances Burney to George Eliot, the conference seemed tailor-made for me. At the time, hardly anyone read any Burney other than *Evelina*, let alone Dinah Craik (who turned up in my conclusion). Coming to the BWWC felt like coming home, from the very first conference." Constance agrees, "Everything about the conference first attracted me (and still does): the purpose, the philosophy, the emphasis on women writers, and the fact that it exactly covers my field and always relates directly to what I teach and to my research. I really like the fact that... there are so many exceedingly bright and enthusiastic scholars who are passionately interested in the same things I am."

Constance's experiences also illustrate the influence the conference has had on their research and teaching. "Presenting my work on Edith Simcox," she observes, "has been very inspiring to me because of the people who are genuinely interested in her and my work on her. Each year I get really good specific and useful ideas for my research and teaching besides being energized and encouraged!" Through the conference, she found a publisher for her edition of Simcox's *Autobiography of a Shirtmaker*. Donelle shares a similar experience: "The conference created a community of scholars for me—people interested in the women writers I was interested in, and through the conference I met individuals who helped me publish my first scholarly articles."

Over the years the conference has changed. "The first BWWC was run on a shoestring budget," recalls Donelle, "but you could tell that there was energy and enthusiasm in the attendees, and that it was going to go

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places.... As the conference became more established, certain extras started to become regular features—play performances and rare-book exhibits.” But as the conference developed, so have the attendees. “I guess the biggest change is in me, not the conference,” Elisabeth says. “I’m now one of the old-timers! It’s been fascinating to ‘grow up’ as a scholar with this conference, to see the ways grad students have become professionalized through it, to see us ‘old-timers’ settling into careers, parenthood, administrative positions.”

We asked the three about their best memories of the BWWC thus far. At the second conference after reading her paper, Constance heard about another scholar doing similar work to hers. As a result, she contacted Margaret Harris and they became good friends. “Such encounters,” Constance says, “have led me to make many friends and have helped me professionally more than I could say.” For Donelle, keynote speakers such as Sally Shuttleworth really stand out, especially “the ones who not only presented at the conference but who also went to session after session and talked to graduate students and senior faculty alike.” The memories of the first two conferences remain the most vivid for Elisabeth: “I remember the classroom at Oregon in which I gave my first talk at the BWWC, and the questions I got about Craik that recognized who she was. I remember the beauty of the setting at Washington, and the Starbucks coffee” before it became a national chain. Speaking for all, Elisabeth remembers finding in the conference “the first sense of reunion, the sense that this was a community that would be continuing to sustain me. I had no idea how much.”

—Troy J. Bassett

Report from the 2006 BWWC: University of Florida

The Fourteenth Annual Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century British Women Writers Conference was held March 23–26, 2006, at the University of Florida. The conference was a great success, featuring a variety of stimulating papers and three excellent keynote addresses. Talia Schaffer (CUNY—Queens College) gave the conference’s first keynote, in which she considered the status and future of scholarship of noncanonical women writers. The following evening Lynne Vallone (Texas A&M University) explored the cultural influence of Mary Queen of Scots in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British literature. In conjunction with her talk, conference participants enjoyed looking at an exhibit of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British children’s literature by women writers collected from the University of Florida’s Baldwin Library of Historical Children’s Literature. Carolyn Steedman (University of Warwick) gave the conference’s closing keynote. In her talk, she discussed Nellie Dean’s role as historian in Charlotte Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*, speaking particularly to the necessity of combining both historical and literary research in such scholarship.

Sunday, the final day of the conference, featured an outstanding pedagogy roundtable, “Sensational Strategies for Teaching British Women Writers.” Cindy LaCom, Elisabeth Rose Gruner, and Roxanne Eberle presented papers and facilitated a discussion on the pedagogical and professional challenges of teaching British women writers at the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Thank you to all the sponsors, volunteers, and attendees for a great conference!

—Lisa Hager (University of Florida)

Invitation to the 2007 BWWC: University of Kentucky

The Fifteenth Annual Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century British Women Writers Conference will take place at the University of Kentucky April 12–15, 2007. Entitled “Speaking with Authority,” the conference will feature keynote speakers Deborah Epstein Nord (Princeton University), Ann Ardis (University of Delaware), Sally Mitchell (Temple University), Teresa Mangum (University of Iowa), Laura Rosenthal (University of Maryland), and Ellen Rosenman (University of Kentucky).

Centrally located, Lexington, Kentucky, with its active downtown and its close proximity to the university campus, will be an excellent place to host the British Women Writers Conference. Attached to the famous Rupp Arena, the conference hotel is located in the middle of downtown Lexington, within walking distance of the university campus, attractive parks, local shops, and fine restaurants.

Because Lexington is often recognized for being the “Horse Capital of the World,” we believe presenters should be able to experience this region's horse industry. Keeneland is a tradition in the southeast and Midwest regions, featuring horseracing at its finest. Only open during the months of April and October, Keeneland will be an enjoyable experience for presenters who arrive early on Thursday.

On Friday night, participants will enjoy a New Woman Roundtable with Ardis, Mitchell, and Mangum at the University's beautiful Special Collections Library. A documentary/presentation by Yolanda Pierce (University of Kentucky) will conclude conference events Saturday night. Professor Pierce will show parts of two documentaries and lead a discussion about Saartjie Baartman, a young African woman who was

often referred to as the Hottentot Venus in nineteenth-century Europe.

Please read the call for papers reprinted on the back page of the newsletter and make your plans to attend this year's conference.

—Katherine D. Osborne
(University of Kentucky)

Announcement of the 2008 BWWC: Indiana University

We are pleased to announce that the Sixteenth Annual Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century British Women Writers Conference will be hosted by Indiana University in Bloomington in spring 2008.

BWWA Travel Awards

In keeping with the BWWA's mission, the BWWA gives out travel awards each year to deserving graduate students to help defray their costs for attending the annual conference. To apply, a graduate student must first have her or his abstract accepted by the conference. Then, submit your abstract and a cover letter including your interest/connection to the BWWA and your estimated travel costs to Donelle Ruwe at <donelle.ruwe@nau.edu> by January 15, 2007. Awards are based on the quality of the abstract and the travel costs. Recipients will be announced by March 1.

From the Editor

We encourage all members to pass along information about conferences, publications, and awards so that they can be shared with everyone (shameless self-promotion strongly encouraged!). Submissions may be sent to <bwwa@ku.edu> by February 15 for inclusion in the spring issue and by August 15 for inclusion in the fall issue.

Fifteenth Annual

British Women Writers Conference

April 12-15, 2007 • University of Kentucky • Lexington, KY

– Call for Papers –

The theme for this year's BWWC conference is "Speaking With Authority," which encourages submissions that reflect on the various forms of power that women writers wielded in the 18th and 19th centuries. We welcome interdisciplinary approaches to the writers of this period, and we are especially interested in the ways women writers gain, accept, resist, and complicate authority and power. Our keynote speakers will be Deborah Epstein Nord, Sally Mitchell, Teresa Mangum, Ann Ardis, Laura Rosenthal, and Ellen Rosenman. We encourage proposals for panels and individual papers that consider, but are not limited to, the following issues:

Narrative as Political Tool

Issues of empire and colonization
The politics of representing social class
Nationalism and female agency
Sexuality and the body
Race and subjectivity

Women Writing in Subgenres

New Woman fiction
The gothic novel
Sensation fiction
The domestic novel or the comedy of manners
Poetry
Drama
Non-fiction in all its forms

Representations of and Responses to Women's Voices

Women's letters and journals
Representations in popular media
Advice literature
Fictional representations of the woman writer
Issues of backlash

Reading/Writing/Creating Cultural Spaces

Architecture (i.e. the British Museum, Crystal Palace)
Circulating libraries
The publishing industry
Sports and entertainment
Clubs or organizations
The private and public spheres

Please submit brief abstracts for individual presentations and panel proposals (including the name of a moderator) by October 1, 2006. Please do not include any identifying information on your abstract. Proposals may be sent through email (include name, phone number, mailing address, institutional affiliation and brief biographical paragraph in the body of the email) to: bwwc07@uky.edu.

Abstracts may also be submitted via regular mail to: British Women Writers Conference, University of Kentucky, Department of English, 1215 Patterson Office Tower, Lexington, KY 40506.

Please include a cover sheet with your name, address, phone number, email address, institutional affiliation and a brief biographical paragraph.

Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies is an online, peer-reviewed journal that publishes insightful and innovative scholarship on gender studies and 19th-century British literature, art and culture. Next summer, we plan to devote an issue to publishing the best papers from the 2007 British Women Writers Conference held at the University of Kentucky. For more information, please visit our website at www.ncgsjournal.com.

<http://www.uky.edu/AS/English/bwwc/>