

Director's Column

by *Ranjana Khanna, Margaret Taylor Smith Director of Women's Studies at Duke*

The news for the last few months has been all about a duality: the miserable economy and the possibility of hope. Even as we lose our jobs, realize we can no longer afford to retire or maintain the lifestyles to which we have become accustomed, we nonetheless retain this idea of hope. In the face of hard times, what might hope mean? And what has it meant in feminist thought?

We are currently engaged in two projects that seek to examine hope through the question of work, the workplace, and alternatives to current life practices through the lens of feminist thought. We have been thinking about international labor and food.

Feminist thought on labor is varied, and has focused on different possibilities for women's employment, and for work more generally conceived in both good and bad economies. Part of the hopefulness in some Marxist feminist strands of thought from Delphy to Barrett sought to recognize traditionally-conceived "unproductive" labor—like subsistence farming or childcare—as productive. Others, like Arendt, saw this as "unutopian," because the forms of work vital for the maintenance of life were subsumed under the category of labor. Still others, like my colleague Kathi Weeks, have sought to question emphasis on work and labor as positive forces in modern life. She hopes for an emphasis on life itself as distinct from work.

Recently, faculty from Women's Studies, the Kenan Institute for Ethics, and the Medical Center, as well as some alumnae, have been asking: what constitutes a feminist workplace? Hoping for alternatives, we decided to convene a series of events called "The Ethical Workplace," which would allow us to come together to think about ethics and inequities. This has come from a shared sense that even as government offices, corporations and universities have Human Resources, administrative, and faculty appointments to assess and train in "diversity," this has, at times, resulted in a privatization of worker's concerns rather than a broad movement to address ongoing inequities, parity issues, abuses, and prejudices in the workplace. Experts have obviously addressed these issues from a number of different angles: "opting out," the triumph of the market over life, the difficult relation of migration and labor, chilly climates, systematic harassment, and the devaluing of labor. Often, on a practical level in the

workplace, the solution to problems are dealt with on an individualized level by representatives who refuse a language of systematic and systemic inequities, seeking personal solutions for anyone who consults them thereby failing to

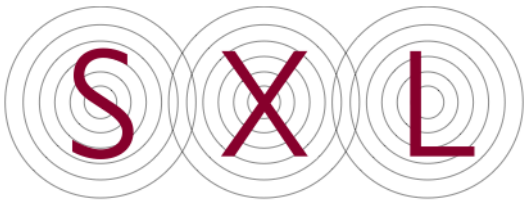
address the larger issues of institutions and work cultures. Situations are often dealt with by legal cases, transfers from one office to another, legal settlements, or resigning oneself to the situation. None of these solutions are really adequate to the task of addressing, or even recognizing, systemic problems. Our ongoing series, organized in association with the Kenan Institute and with support of the Trent Center for Bioethics, Humanities and History of Medicine, hopes to address these issues and to look at the ways in which we may imagine and conceive ethical workplaces and cultures of work.

This semester, we are also thinking about the politics of food and our relationship to the current economics and cultures of food. Faculty member Kathy Rudy has been leading us over the past few years, with the Earth to Table Reading Group, and the New Eco-Feminism group. This semester we are co-sponsoring with Screen/Society a film series called *The Politics of Food* in which we examine the problems of pollution and unhealthy food products alongside the economics of this production and alternatives and hope for better way of being in the world. Films include "The Real Dirt on Farmer John," "Invisible," and "The Gleaners and I." The latter, made by feminist filmmaker Agnes Varda, considers the French law enabling people to pick leftover crops from commercially harvested land. It's a hopeful film that moves beyond fields to consider the use of waste products of modern life more generally. It shows us how to make something beautiful from junk, and how, in the face of the meager resources left from the waste-products of modern capital, some can find hope.

It's one way of picturing possibility and potential in the face of fewer resources and tightening budgets. We in Women's Studies are doing our part to find ways of imagining different fields of content to that important but elusive term, *hope*.



Director Ranjana Khanna



the program in the study of sexualities at duke

by Ara Wilson, Director of the program in the study of sexualities

Interest in the program in the study of sexualities (SXL) certificate continues to grow among undergraduates at Duke. Because students are designing research projects in the field, SXL has started a travel grant (modeled on the one in Women's Studies) to help students attend conferences or conduct research. This spring, SXL offered seven courses. One of these, **Cultures of Gender and Sexuality**, was taught by our postdoctoral fellow in Transnational Sexualities, **Elisabeth Engebretsen**. Drawing on her anthropological training, her course studied the proliferation of gender and sexual diversity in the world, investigating, for example, whether US-based queer theory applies to African same-sex cultures, and if so, to what extent? Another course looks at gender and sexuality in French Canadian theater. Our current courses and events can be found at the now fully functional SXL website at <http://sxl.aas.duke.edu>.

The program in the study of sexualities has had an eventful and ambitious year of public programming on the theme of Transnational Sexualities, cosponsored with Women's Studies. These events have helped expand interest in sexuality studies at Duke and strengthened links with other departments and area studies programs. Two of our events, **Lázaro Lima** and **Noor Al-Qasimi**, were underwritten by a grant from the Robertson fund and continued our work with the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill's Minor in Sexuality Studies.

Along with Transnational Sexualities, SXL's other major series is **Profiles in Sexuality Research**, cosponsored with the Center for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Life. Profiles in Sexuality Research is a series of lunchtime talks introducing students, faculty and staff to the range of research on LGBT and sexuality subjects being conducted by faculty at Duke. In Fall 2008, we heard about economics research on sexual orientation and income from **Seth Sanders** (Economics/Public Policy Studies) and **Sharon Holland** (English /African & African American Studies/Women's Studies) presented the erotic life of racism. This spring, **Robyn Wiegman** (Women's



INDIA, SEXUALITY & THE ARCHIVE COLLOQUIUM

by Svati P Shah

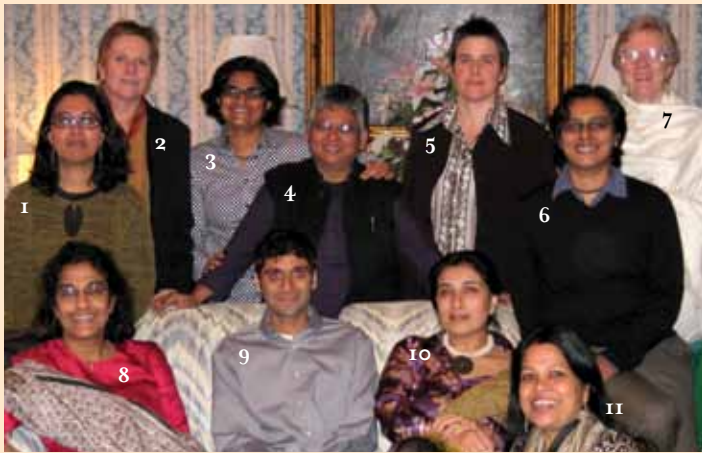
On February 13, the program in the study of sexualities and Women's Studies, hosted a symposium entitled **India, Sexuality & the Archive** and provided a forum for presenting and discussing new scholarship on the history, politics and problematics of doing archival sexuality research in, and on, India. The space that this work has begun to define and shape has necessitated a perspective on the methodologies and contexts for its emergence. The archive and the space of sexuality studies in India are mutually constitutive. At the same time, archives in India are historically constant, having existed long before the colonial era, having been contested through the crucible moment of anti-colonial struggle, and carried forward through the postcolonial, contemporary era. This contemporary moment is marked by highly politicized debates over Indian culture and nationalism, sometimes presented as unitary forces by Indian anti-secularists.

Studies/Literature) provocatively asked about the place of sex in queer theory and sexuality studies and **Janie Long** (Director of Duke's LGBT Center) discussed her experiences challenging the conceptions of LGBT subjects in psychological research.

SXL's programming has proved successful—our events this year consistently drew admirably sized audiences and our courses are consistently over-subscribed. In addition, our events have broadcast the renewed relevance of Duke as a site of original conversations in sexuality studies.

*In the fall, the director of SXL, **Ara Wilson**, appeared on a National Public Radio show "What is Marriage?" to discuss the passage of prop-8 and the issue of gay marriage. The show was broadcast on November 18, 2008.*

These political contexts have become one route through which the question of sexuality within Indian archives, both 'official' and not, has become interpolated into discourses on history, nationalism, and sovereignty within South Asian contexts. Archival sexuality research, in particular, also begs the question of the nature of the archive itself, and how the notion of libraries and documents can be conjoined with other kinds of archival objects, libraries, and repositories.



The papers presented at the symposium raised these issues by bringing together interdisciplinary scholars who use and theorize archives to understand the politics of sexual discourse in the national context of India. Papers were presented by **Anjali Arondekar**³ (University of California-Santa Cruz) "Subject to Sex: The Devadasi Archive"; **Shohini Ghosh**⁴ (Jamia Millia Islamia University) "Cartographies of Desire: Bombay Cinema's Archive of Sexuality"; **Charu Gupta**¹¹ (Yale University) "Sexuality & Obscenity in Colonial India: 'Indigenizing' Archival Representations"; **Patricia Uberoi**⁷ (Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi) "The Indian Sex Survey: Past and Present." Respondents to these presentations gave summary and specific comments at the end of the day. Respondents were **Neel Ahuja**⁹ (University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill); **Sumathi Ramaswamy**⁸ (Duke University); **Anupama Rao**¹ (Barnard College and National Humanities Center); and **Robyn Wiegman**² (Duke University). The symposium was hosted and moderated by **Ranjana Khanna**¹⁰, **Ara Wilson**⁵, and **Svati Shah**⁶ and co-sponsored by the North Carolina Center for South Asia.

Spring Events

- 1/15** **In Print: A Celebration of Recent Publications by Duke Professors** Jennifer Devere Brody, Peter Burian, Tina Campt, Katherine Ewing, Esther Gabara, Negar Mottahede, Martha Reeves, Rebecca Stein
- 1/22** **Chris Berry** Professor, Film and Television Studies; Co-Director Goldsmiths Media Research Programme, University of London "Queer Asian Film Studies: Gendered Consumption of East Asian Gay Cinema" *Transnational Sexualities*
- 1/27** **Noor Al-Qasimi** Visiting Adjunct Professor, New York University "The Emergence of the Boyah Identity in the United Arab Emirates" *Transnational Sexualities*
- 2/5** **Robyn Wiegman** *Profiles in Sexuality Research*
- 2/13** **India, Sexuality, and the Archive Colloquium**
- 2/15** **The Real Dirt on Farmer John** *New Eco-Feminism Film Series*
- 3/5** **Janie Long** Director, Duke's Center for LGBT Life *Profiles in Sexuality Research*
- 3/20-3/21** **Feminist Theory Workshop** (Read PS on back cover and more in our Fall issue!)
- 3/22** **Invisible** *New Eco-Feminism Film Series: The Politics of Food*
- 3/31** **Svati Shah** "Sex Work, Migration, and Labor in Mumbai: Reading Biopolitical Exceptionalism and Neoliberal Sovereignty Through India's Gotham" *Transnational Sexualities*
- 4/2** **David Valentine** Assistant Professor Anthropology, University of Minnesota "How To Make Do Without an Identity" *Transnational Sexualities*
- 4/6** **S Charusheela** Associate Professor and Interim Chair Women's Studies, University of Nevada, Las Vegas "Sexing Economy: Sex Work between Marx and Foucault"
- 4/7** **Lázaro Lima** Associate Professor Spanish and Latina/o, Co-Coordinator Program in Gender and Sexuality at Bryn Mawr/Haverford "U.S. Empire Building in Puerto Rico: Reproduction, Science and the Politics of Transgender Dissonance" *Transnational Sexualities*
- 4/18** **"Feminism Today"** panel **Ranjana Khanna** with **Kimberly Jenkins**, **Pam Stone**, **Rachel Weeks**, **Christopher Scoville**, and **Fiona Barnett**; **Rachel Weeks** & **"School House: The Freshmen Collection"** **Trunk Show** (see page 8) *Alumni Reunions weekend*
- 4/19** **The Gleaners and I** *The New Eco-Feminism Film Series*
- 4/20** **Pamela Stone** talk *The Ethical Workplace*

Please check our website for upcoming events.

Senior Perspectives

Our three contributors are joined by classmates Tiffany Labon and Kristen Yoh.



Mary Key

This isn't something a person typically admits, but recently a collection agency contacted me. The Houston Public Library alleges that I owe them \$37.80 in late fees for several books, including *The Feminist Movement*, *Sexual Politics*, *A Woman's Wage*, *Decoding Women's Magazines from Mademoiselle to Ms.*, *Class, Sex and the Woman Worker*, *Women's Suffrage*, and *The Glass Ceiling*. The titles sounded familiar enough that I knew no one had stolen my library card. The itemized receipt revealed not only my ninth-grade taste in pleasure reading, but an approximate start date for the journey that led me to where I am today. As my fines accumulated, so did my passion for Women's Studies.

My interest in feminism and gender accompanied me to college, but not yet ready for specialization, I took the multidisciplinary approach. Each semester I balanced my schedule to create a mix of science and humanities courses. Women's Studies courses complemented Chemistry perfectly and provided a relief from the "objective" facts I memorized in my science classes. Although it was always a part of my academic plan, in my sophomore year, I officially declared a Women's Studies major because Women's Studies reaches across the disciplines, just as I wanted to do.

Today, when I announce that I'm majoring in Women's Studies with a minor in Chemistry and a certificate in Ethics, people are usually too distracted by the combination to probe further into what Women's Studies is as a discipline. Instead they grin as if they're the first to say, "What are you going to do with that?" The truth is: I'm not sure what I'll do in the future, but Women's Studies has given me an education that can travel with me wherever I choose to go.

The field of Women's Studies uses a framework that can evaluate social structures such as race, class, nationality, religion, and sexuality and their interconnectedness to each other and to gender. These systems are inextricable from our lives, yet they hide within institutions and cultural practices. Once you become aware of these social systems—and their inherent inequities—you can never look at the world or personal relationships in the same way again.

As an added academic bonus, Women's Studies gave me the space to pursue my interest in women's health issues. Through the major's core classes and electives, I focused on health disparities as well as the interplay of gender and health. Additionally, I also had the incredible opportunity to travel to India, China, and South Africa, where I studied the effects of globalization on health. More importantly, however, my experience abroad helped me remember the search for a global sisterhood that began four years ago in my introductory Women's Studies coursework.

The library fine has been resolved, but I'm grateful for the reminder of my past passion. While I was unwilling to let those books go in ninth grade, I now know that the knowledge I've gained in Women's Studies at Duke will be with me forever.

Mary hopes to pursue a Master in Public Health and has applied for fellowships that involve working in health policy with underserved populations in HIV/AIDS.

Heather Satterfield



When I first went to college after graduating from high school in 1998, I had an incredibly hard time adjusting. As things got worse, my parents suggested that I take a break and so I started working full-time for Duke University. Four years later I decided it was time to go back to school. Imagine my surprise when the Continuing Studies Dean told me Duke may not be the place for me! She warned that adult students often have difficulty with course material and classroom atmosphere. I matched her hesitancy with patient persistence; I wasn't about to be turned away and I knew that, with determination, I could succeed at Duke.

As a non-traditional student I was immediately conscious of the differences I presented in the classroom. I was much older than many of my peers and my ways of learning, even processing information, were dissimilar to my classmates. Initially, my goal was simply to blend in.

Gender and Everyday Life, with Kathy Rudy and Tina Camp was my very first class at Duke. The course provided me with a fresh perspective. When I read material on gender and became acquainted with certain works such as Judith Butler's theory of gender as performative, I applied this new information to my personal life. I began to analyze the gender performance of family and friends based on their actions and the bodily style they displayed. The excitement and eagerness that I felt in applying newly learned academic ideas to my personal life was something that I had never experienced before.

When I took **Gender and Popular Culture** (which focused on the role of gender and sexuality within religion and religious media) I had the opportunity to research homosexuality in Mormon thought and doctrine. This was a great experience because growing up in a Mormon family—which placed enormous value on the principles and ideology of the Church—I had not been encouraged to question specific teachings of the Church.

Through my research paper, I was able to reflect on a religion that I was still struggling to understand.

Semesters later I enrolled in a Women's Studies course **Clinical Issues for LGBT**; specifically discussing how members of the LGBT community cope with their sexuality. Here again I encountered the kind of conflict between religion and sexuality that I had been grappling with from within. My final research paper looked at the ways the Mormon Church counsels its homosexual members. I read stories of Mormons who sought guidance from the leaders of the Mormon Church for their same-sex attraction and learned that many of these Mormons suffered even greater turmoil and pain as a result of Mormon counseling methods, which include aversion therapy. This research paper was very hard to write because of my shared struggle and personal connection to the material. **Once the research paper was complete however, I had a new and intimate understanding of how my childhood religion impacted my sexuality and vice versa.**

In my work in the Women's Studies major, I have come to appreciate the fact that while there are required core courses that every student must take, there is no single curricular route for advancing through the major. This allows each of us to use the major to explore and interact with the issues we find most pressing in our environment, making learning personal. Having almost reached the final destination of my educational journey at Duke as Women's Studies major, I am pleased that each phase of my excursion has prepared me for the next. As a member of a non-traditional religion, with a misunderstood sexuality, and a bumpy educational past, I can say that while these intricacies of my own identity do not fully define all that I am, with the help of my academic and personal journeys in Women's Studies, they have shaped the person I am today.

Heather will continue to work full-time at Duke while finishing up coursework. Since becoming a pro at balancing work, school, and life, she is "toying" with the idea of applying for a Sports Management Master degree program in the future.



Irene Pappas

Believe it or not, it was my father who first got me involved with Women's Studies. The summer before I entered Duke, while my future classmates were waking up to their 6:55 AM alarms alerting them that Registration was about to begin, I was traversing through Spain, indifferent to my impending first year of college. I left the task of registering for classes to my father. Of course he tried to collect some information involving my interests, but I told him that I didn't have time to discuss it. The bigger truth was that I just didn't care. So when I arrived home

from Spain I discovered that he had enrolled me in an introductory Women's Studies course. Reading over my schedule I remember looking at my father with a "What were you thinking?" expression. This was promptly met with his "It's your own damn fault for being so lazy!" glare. He had a point.

It shouldn't have come as such a shock to me that my father put me in a Women's Studies class. As a little girl I memorized a page in a big book my dad gave me *100 Most Important Women of the 20th Century*. On my 16th birthday he gave me Maureen Dowd's "Are Men Necessary?" And just last month he made sure to save the Wall Street Journal's feature on leading female CEOs and business executives. After that first semester with Kathy Rudy in *Gender and Everyday Life*, I always found myself waking up to my 6:55 AM alarm and registering for classes under the WST category. Halfway through my second-to-last semester I changed my Women's Studies minor into my second major—with my father's blessing.

The fall of 2008 was essential to my development as a writer and critical thinker both in an academic and journalistic sense. Women's Studies courses I took with Kinohi Nishikawa and Jonna Eagle are why I decided to make the transition into a second major. In *Sex Work: Economy of Gender and Desire* instructed by Kinohi, **I absorbed a vast amount of fundamental knowledge within the women's studies discourse.** But to accompany and complement this understanding, I was encouraged to develop my personal interests within the subject matter and urged to flesh those ideas out in a paper topic of my choice. Rather than curtailing my interests to be within the scope of the standard academic debates surrounding sex work, Kinohi encouraged me to find my own voice within the subject matter. Which is how I got to a final research project titled: "Past, Present, and Porn Chic: The Evolution of Sex Work and Fashion in Mainstream Society."

When I felt as if I didn't have a niche because I wasn't interested in what Econ, Biology or even my original major, Political Science had to offer, the Women's Studies program welcomed me with open arms and provided me a haven to explore my creative side making me a better writer, thinker, and journalist.

Originally I surmised that it was fate which landed me in Kathy Rudy's class freshmen year. Now I recognize that despite my pre-freshman ambivalence towards class registration, my father saw something in me that took me until my senior year to find. I now have the confidence to pursue my love and affinity towards fashion journalism and the courage to pursue my natural talent in fashion reporting. But then again on some level maybe I always knew that the fashion world was my destiny—the page I memorized word for word in the book my dad gave me about the 100 most important women was... the biography of Coco Chanel.

Starting June, Irene will be working for the "fabulously talented and successful" fashion designer, Diane von Furstenberg in her Public Relations department located at the DVF headquarters in the meat-packing district in Manhattan.

WST 90	Gender and Everyday Life – Jonna Eagle	WST 150S.10	Cultures of Gender & Sexuality – Elisabeth Engebretsen
WST 101	Animals and Ethics – Kathy Rudy	WST 161	Money, Sex and Power – Ara Wilson
WST 109S	Study of Sexualities – Ara Wilson	WST 163S	Interpreting Bodies – Kathy Rudy
WST 139	Women/Gender/SXL in the US – Laura Edwards	WST 189	Gender/Sexuality in Latin America – Diane Nelson
WST 150.01	Engendering Black Britain – Tina Campt/Kenetta Perry	WST 195S	Senior Seminar: Alternative Political Imaginaries – Robyn Wiegman
WST 150S.01	Aging, Sex & Popular Culture – Erin Gentry-Lamb	WST 205	Debates in Women's Studies – Kathi Weeks
WST 150S.02	Partnerships Under Oppression – Sara Appel	WST 210S	War and Media – Jonna Eagle
WST 150S.03	Exchange of Chains – Genna Miller	WST 220	Foundations in Feminist Theory – Robyn Wiegman
WST 150S.04	Clinical Issues for LGBT – Janie Long	WST 271	Feminist Studies – Negar Mottahedeh
WST 150S.05	Feminist Political Economy – Ceren Özselçuk (read more on page 11)	WST 297S	Teaching Race/Teaching Gender – Sharon Holland
WST 150S.07	Women at Work – Genna Miller	WST 300	Race, Photography, Archive – Tina Campt

Franklin Humanities Institute Seminar: Alternative Political Imaginaries

by Kadji Amin

This year's Franklin Humanities Institute seminar, co-convened by Duke Women's Studies professor **Robyn Wiegman** and Literature professor **Michael Hardt**, is devoted to the topic of **Alternative Political Imaginaries**. Bringing together graduate fellows, postdoctoral fellows, and professors from a range of disciplines in the Humanities and the Social Sciences, the seminar explores how, in recent decades, a concern for the political has come to characterize Humanities scholarship. This question is particularly germane to Women's Studies scholars, since Women's Studies departments owe their very existence to this post-sixties transformation in the Humanities.

Our work in the fall semester focused on the intellectual genealogies of this institutional turn. Reading Gayle Rubin's classic feminist essay, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," reminded us of a very different political moment, one in which, according to Women's Studies professor **Kathi Weeks**, feminist collectives devoted serious study to theorists such as Claude Lévi-Strauss and Sigmund Freud. We agreed that this moment, characterized by the belief in an instrumental link between understanding social inequality and engaging in political action to end it, felt very distant from the present. How, then, did the relationship between knowledge, political action, and the university change in the decades following the publication of Rubin's essay, and what do these transformations mean for activists and for engaged scholars?

Since no single participant is able to definitively answer such an ambitious question, the seminar has been characterized throughout by both strong disagreements and by flashes of collaborative thought. One particularly lively debate occurred during a discussion of the relation between the intellectual trends we had been studying and what has been termed the "crisis in the Left." Michael Hardt argued that the deconstructive critique of intentionality at play in much contemporary theory—including psychoanalysis, Marxism, and poststructuralism, to name only the most obvious examples—contributed to the crisis in the Left by "undermining of the stability of the subject of political action." Visiting postdoctoral scholar of Sociology **Anna Curcio**, on the other hand, emphasized that the subject of political action had itself undergone a significant transformation in the shift from the industrial proletariat to the student and feminist movements. She argued that these new political actors both necessitated and themselves produced novel epistemologies and imaginaries of the political. University of Chapel Hill professor **Gregg Flaxman** asked whether there might be a relation between the perceived unviability of traditional political action after the sixties and the contemporary injunction to be political in the Humanities. Robyn Wiegman suggested that the relation was, in fact, quite direct, since many activists moved into the universities as a result of the post-sixties conservative backlash. She argued in favor of university knowledge projects as "a way of inhabiting the 'meantime,'" producing and sustaining alternative political imaginaries currently unrealizable within a highly constrained political climate.

The seminar this year is officially engaged in two undeniably political events. Immediately after the election of Barack Obama, seminar participants **Gunther Peck**, **Douglas Campbell**, and Robyn Wiegman and Franklin Humanities Institute Director **Srinivas Aravamudan** facilitated an open discussion on the subject of Obama's election at one of the Franklin Institute's "Wednesdays at the Center." The discussion leaders focused on the aspects of the election that seemed to promise something "new," while underlining how such novelties both extended existing political narratives and, in some cases, risked being reabsorbed into the political status quo. At the end of January, the seminar embarked on a field trip to the World Social Forum in Belem, Brazil. The Forum, whose slogan is "another world is possible," claims to provide an inclusive space for the alternative political imaginaries of a new global counterhegemony. Through such engagements, the seminar aims not to bring our intellectual insight to "the public" or "the social movement," but rather to think about how, as we speak, diverse political subjects are actively reconfiguring the possible scenes of politics.



Fashion & Feminism Unite

Two years ago and while a senior Women's Studies major at Duke, I had an idea for a collegiate apparel company that would bring fashion-forward, ethically-sourced apparel to my alma mater. The idea of the brand—vague as it was back then—combined everything I knew and loved: global feminism, fashion, and social entrepreneurship. But I didn't have the first clue about designing or making clothes nor much of an understanding of how one would go about sourcing clothing "ethically." What were ethics in the garment industry? How could I figure out how to manufacture clothing in a socially responsible way? And where was I going to find the funds to do all of this?

I applied for a Fulbright grant to research socially responsible apparel manufacturing in Sri Lanka, a country in the midst of an international campaign to market itself as an "ethical" source of apparel in a competitive global sourcing environment and by summer was fortunate enough to find myself thousands of miles from home on a tiny, teardrop-shaped island off the southeast coast of India.

Initially I'd planned to conduct the bulk of my academic research at the corporate offices of MAS Holdings, one of Victoria's Secret's top suppliers, but quickly realized I needed to be on the ground, meeting a diverse array of manufacturers from the small to the large, the struggling to the profitable. I needed to meet the people that made up the industry: sewing technicians, production managers, screenprinters, trim suppliers, human resource managers, and Tanuja, the Sri Lankan garment industry veteran who crafts custom dresses like pieces of art.

So I started out with Upali Weerakoon (who became my dear friend and confidant) and began to learn a multitude of lessons: many third world manufacturers are running hand-to-mouth operations, with managers who can't afford to pay their utility bills (let alone pay their employees a decent wage) because transnational brands will literally pack up all of their orders overnight and leave a factory in the dust to pay pennies less some place else. And, while consumer prices in the U.S. have risen on average in the past ten years, the prices paid to manufacturers in countries like Sri Lanka have often fallen, sometimes drastically.

Enter **School House**, the company I had my heart set on building: a first class/third world brand willing to pay an extra dollar or two per product to our factory to make sure their predominately female workforce earned a living wage. By adding value through fabric quality, outstanding design, and brand innovation in the collegiate market, School House could pay the factory good prices and still earn a profit.



Factory worker Dehiwela Liyanage Chathuranga Kumari



Over the Internet, I “met” Creative Director Colleen McCann who not only saw and understood the vision completely but translated it into a brand identity and a 60-product launch collection for Duke that would land us our first order. And after a long hard search, we found our factory partner in a company called JK Apparel, who not only took me under their wing from day one—holding my hand through the world of fabric selections and pre-production samples—but agreed to set up a new “living wage” facility for **School House** if we could keep promising them orders at a premium cost.

Since that first and all-important Duke order, Colleen and I have been out traveling the country to sell the t-shirts, yoga pants, and collegiate undies and it has not been easy! Starting **School House** has been both the most frightening rollercoaster and the deepest labor of love I could imagine. It has been a testament to the education and experience I gained in Women’s Studies, which taught me to question the status quo and imagine how things might be made different, as well as to seek out those gray areas of feminist politics (fashion!) and inhabit them more (un)comfortably. Two years after the idea for School House first came to me, I have that knowledge to thank for taking me from critical thinker to cautious doer, and for leading me to a career so suited to my passions.



Above: At a New Year’s luncheon for the Women’s International Group in Colombo

Left: Rachel with Kumar Kuberan, Director of JK Apparel

School House will launch in Duke University Stores on April 10, 2009.
Visit <http://www.shopschoolhouse.com> for a preview of the line, or contact Rachel directly for more information: rachel@shopschoolhouse.com



Lesbianism with Chinese Characteristics: *An Interview with Dr. Elisabeth Engebretsen*

Elisabeth Engebretsen is currently a Postdoctoral Fellow in Transnational Sexualities at Duke's Women's Studies Program. She has a PhD in Anthropology from the London School of Economics and Political Science with a thesis titled "Love in a big city: Sexuality, kinship and citizenship amongst lala ('lesbian') women in Beijing" (2008). She majored in Chinese studies and Anthropology for her BA studies at the University of Oslo, holds Master degrees in Gender Studies and Social Anthropology from the LSE, and has studied Chinese language and literature at Sichuan University and Xiamen University in China.

Calvin Hui is a doctoral student in the Graduate Program in Literature. He is currently writing his dissertation about the rise of a new middle class in post-socialist China. He is enrolled in the WST Certificate program, he was the co-organizer of the Graduate Scholars Colloquium (2005-07) and proudly considers himself a big fan of Women's Studies.

Your book project is titled "Different Women: An Ethnography of Sexuality, Gender, and Cultural Politics in Postsocialist Beijing." What is it about?

In short, it considers issues of gender and sexuality, family and marriage, and Chinese cultural identity on the part of a large and diverse population of women I did fieldwork with in Beijing for my PhD. I examine the connections between the current and new possibilities for alternative individual identities based on sexual preference and other kinds of social and political experience as well as symbolic imaginaries, especially those relating to family and national belonging, or 'being Chinese.' I also consider how these processes are increasingly influenced by global flows of culture, information and symbols. I apply the notion of belonging, or citizenship, to study the seeming paradoxes at play in women's lives: Sexual identity is important in some contexts but in others carries little or no significance—coming out and categorical visibility is commonly considered negative; being married conventionally is both derided and desired because it enables some freedoms yet limit others, community formation based around same-sex identity is considered 'abnormal' because it makes sexual orientation into something special, yet the possibilities to meet others like themselves is longed for by most. Different desires to belong to a modern Chinese society, one that is increasingly global, cosmopolitan, and consumer based, produce these new identifications with same-sex identity and communities, and oftentimes they include an explicit definition against western practices and identities. Overall, the project considers sexuality in shifting and relational contexts—with newly emerging queer communities and activist efforts, same-sex relationships and identity discourse, conventional families and marriage, and a contemporary Chinese society that remains fundamentally defined by a nationalist ethos of 'Chineseness.'

Can you say something about the ways in which contemporary lesbianism in Mainland China is connected to same-sex sexual cultures in other Chinese societies, especially Taiwan and Hong Kong?

The most immediate influence on Mainland queer discourse and community building remains Taiwan and Hong Kong, as well as Chinese queer diaspora, due to shared language and cultural history. The Tongzhi (meaning 'comrade', a slang word for 'gay') conferences in Hong Kong and Taiwan in the late 1990s were enormously important in establishing gay and lesbian networks in Mainland China. The Taiwanese, Hong Kongese, and Chinese queers abroad, especially in the United States, provided inspiration, experience, knowledge to Mainlanders, and this was absolutely crucial in establishing networks and activities there. When I participated in a nationwide lala ('lesbian') conference in Beijing, summer of 2005, lesbian activists from Hong Kong and Taiwan were there to share their experiences and offer suggestions about networking and activism, for example. The introduction of the Internet to Mainland China in the late 1990s, has further facilitated this connection.

How useful are western theories of feminism, gender and sexuality to the study of the Chinese context? Is it a problem for your research that you use theories produced in the US and Europe to analyze Chinese culture?

This is a very good question, but one that is difficult to answer in a satisfactory way. I think that certain theoretical frameworks regarding sexuality, gender, kinship, modernity that were originally produced in western places and with western systems taken for granted, are useful as frameworks also in Chinese contexts. The basic tenet of queer theory for example approaches sexuality as fluid and unfixed, something that changes according to context. This insight is useful to the project of thinking sexuality transnationally, and in non-Western contexts, although there remain considerable tensions in this scholarship. Anthropology is also useful here because at its very core is the aim to study human culture and the ways in which self and other connect. The particular research methodology of long term participant observation has the aim to enable the anthropologist the ability to link abstract theorization—oftentimes produced elsewhere from the location of fieldwork research—to the particularity of the

by Ka-Man Calvin Hui

cultural system s/he interacts with. Useful and important anthropological, and interdisciplinary scholarship is the kind that enables audiences to grasp at least some of these connections even as they may present themselves as absolute differences.

That said, there is much more that should be said about the prevailing politics and inherent ethnocentric academic discourse that presumes a Western location as primary referent for all other cultures. I have discussed this at length in a recent paper on ethnographic research of same-sex sexuality and the tendency of queer theory produced in the United States to assume, at least implicitly, that non-western nonnormative sexuality that does not identify itself by out and proud identity politics, Gay Pride parades and so on is lacking, less developed, less modern, free and so on. This is a major point of tension in current work on sexuality cross-culturally and interdisciplinary, and I am happy that especially the last couple of years have seen a number of very sophisticated studies being published that problematize the US-Anglo dominance in sexuality studies and theorizing. My ambition for my own research dissemination and writing is to be able to contribute usefully to this new tendency.

You are teaching a course titled *Cultures of Gender and Sexuality in the spring semester*. What is it about?

The course examines interdisciplinary—although with emphasis on anthropology—scholarship on gender and sexual cultures globally, with emphasis on the contemporary world and alternative/non-normative manifestations of gender and sexuality, including homosexualities and transgenderism. We read literature, watch films, and look at Internet sites that present a great variety of ways in which people think and live gender and sexuality worldwide, for example, women's 'mati work' in the Suriname, lesbians in Namibia, homosexuality in Melanesia, 'comrades' in China, and queer and transgender life in the United States. The aim is to explore the rich variations in gender and sexual identity, practice and movements in a cross-cultural perspective, and appreciate that the customary western emphasis on identity politics and discourse is but one example amongst many. To this end, we also consider how certain versions of gender and sexuality become dominant at certain moments in certain places, and the ways that state and structural powers—including the institutions of family and marriage—promote certain definitions and practices as good, natural, or developed against others. In sum, this is really the course I wish I could have enrolled in when I was an undergraduate student.

A Feminist Political Economy?

Initially, I had considered entitling the undergraduate seminar I am teaching this semester "The Political Economy of Women." But this title seemed to give the impression that we already agree on a pre-given approach, "political economy," to shed light on yet another object of inquiry, "women." The motivation of the seminar, however, is not to "add and stir" women within an already demarcated field of political economy, but to present feminist political economy as a knowledge and an even ontological project to rethink the field of political economy. Might there be a feminist way of thinking about and producing economic knowledge? What kind of social relations can we bring into being through a feminist way of inhabiting economy? Hence, the present title: **Feminist Political Economy...with a question mark.**

Since the 1960s, in response to persistent critical statements from feminist work—both outside and within the university, mainstream (neoclassical) economics has been compelled to address its gender bias and blindness. Nonetheless, this has largely meant extending "economic reason" to the previously invisible spheres of the household, gendered labor market, caring practices, and so on, as well as recasting and re-inscribing these sites of social relations in terms of *homoeconomicus*.

The seminar situates feminism's intervention in its struggle with this imperial move to define all sociality in relation to the calculative individual within economics. Feminist political economy renders visible partiality, the situated gendered nature of knowledge production, and the plurality of economic identifications. It also emphasizes how regimes of economic knowledge are not objectively arrived at, but rather are reproduced materially in "scientific communities" through disciplinary conventions, discourses of expert knowledge, institutional networks, research grants, state subsidies, recruiting students, and so on. Thus, feminist political economy expands the conditions of social "reproduction" beyond household practices to include knowledge production itself.

The vibrant literature on care exemplifies different veins of feminist rethinking of the social. One vein valorizes of the undervalued "caring/feminine" dimension in all social relations from the informal economies of family, friends, partners, and lovers to the formal institutions of markets and state-supported social agencies. A second introduces care as a way to present an alternative to neoliberal forms of governing subjects.

In addition, care is understood as a social relation in which desire, affects and investment play a role, imagining a political economy beyond the demand for recognition and financial compensation for undervalued social relations or servicing needs. This approach emphasizes the open ended-ness of caring economies: The question of articulating the different economic practices of care; the unknowable nature of its consequences; the responsibility to anticipate and respond to unexpected difficulties and needs of others; and the risk, but also the pleasure of becoming in care. Care, then, opens an ethical space to ask questions about how we want to organize economic and social relations.

It is through such an opening that the seminar approaches what a feminist political economy might be.

Ceren Özselçuk , Postdoctoral Fellow, 2008-2009, John Hope Franklin Humanities Institute and Instructor, Women's Studies, Spring 2009

Sex at Work: *An Interview with Dr. Svati Shah by Kinohi Nishikawa*

Svati Shah is a Postdoctoral Fellow in Transnational Sexualities at Duke University. She received her PhD in Sociomedical Sciences, a joint degree in Anthropology and Public Health, at Columbia University in 2006. Dr. Shah earned her Master's in Public Health from Emory University, and her BA in Anthropology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Dr. Shah's research and teaching interests include: the political economy of migration and sex work; development and urbanization in South Asia; and feminist ethnography and historiography. Her articles have appeared in the journals *Gender and History*, *Cultural Dynamics*, *New Labor Forum*, *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, the *Georgetown Journal on Poverty Law and Policy*, and *Rethinking Marxism*.

Kinohi Nishikawa is a PhD candidate in the Graduate Program in Literature and a candidate for the WST Certificate. He was the Women's Studies Dissertation Fellow in 2006-7. His work has appeared in *American Literature*, *American Book Review*, and *PMLA*.

Trained in anthropology and public health, you are particularly well-situated to bring interdisciplinary questions to bear on sex work, migration, and South Asian studies. Why is it important to approach these issues through an interdisciplinary lens?

I'm not sure that public health as a field has its own disciplinary approach to these kinds of questions. But having a public health background helped me to think about the ways in which sex work and migration are part of the industrialization of development-related services such as education and healthcare. To be inside a space where development is taken very seriously and where people are being trained as practitioners within the public health industry was helpful for me to develop a critique of those spaces and to think about how one could engage with them productively.

Sex work and migration have been dealt with from a number of disciplinary angles, but I think my training allows me to put a lot of those different perspectives together to generate an intersectional understanding of sex work as a category of analysis that moves beyond thinking about sex work as a static, objectively discernible activity. I think part of the problem with the way sex work has been talked about in various literatures is that it gets divorced from other aspects of social and political life. For example, if someone is doing sex work, it's assumed she's never really done anything else and that her behavior needs to be seen as a psychological problem, which in turn is pathologized. In using an interdisciplinary approach, what I'm trying to do is situate sex work in a materialist web of social, economic, political, and historical relationships that cast light on women's ability to negotiate their survival in particular circumstances.

In an article that appeared in *New Labor Forum* in 2003, you pose the question, "Is prostitution really 'work'?" What was your motivation in asking this question?

Sex work can no longer be understood as something that's limited to national frameworks. People are migrating internationally, which is directly linked with the migration of capital internationally. In that piece, I was trying to outline

the ways in which the migration of capital and the migration of labor are related with respect to sex work. Framing sex work in terms of labor within the context of economic globalization does a number of things, including forcing us to think about migration policy and how border controls that are supposed to regulate the movement of poor migrants actually increase the conditions for labor trafficking, which may include, but is distinct from, forced prostitution.

Your review of the 2004 documentary *Born into Brothels* is a fine example of how you've chosen to participate in public debate about sex work. Can you talk about why you published the review in *SAMAR Magazine*, an online forum for South Asian issues?

Academic publishing takes a long time; even if you're commissioned to write something, it usually takes six months to a year before your publication sees the light of day. With regard to *Born into Brothels*, I felt there needed to be a more immediate response. One thing I'm trying to do with my publication practice is to develop venues where I know I can put out responses to things as they happen.

I vacillate between thinking that *Born into Brothels* is the most damaging film on sex work ever, and thinking that it tapped into something much bigger than the film itself, something epochal. I think the success of *Slumdog Millionaire*, like *Born into Brothels*, outside of India is also testament to the fact that, at the end of the day, Western audiences want to see this very narrow representation of poverty in a "Third World" country. I just think people are really interested in representations in which they can identify with the protagonist filmmaker as the savior of these people. This may be what I find more disturbing than the film itself: the film's iteration of a certain Western perspective on poverty and development.

Given the difficulties of representing sex work in non-Western contexts, where do you see your scholarship fitting into gender and sexuality studies in the US academy?

I'm not sure doing research on sex work is the same as doing research on "sexuality" in the way that most people

understand this term. I think the discourse on queerness and normativity, which in many ways grounded American sexuality studies initially, deals with sexual desire in a way that is differently mediated than sex work is. Sex workers sell an experience of sex—a service—which may not have anything to do with their own desire or worldview. A lot of the people I spoke to in Mumbai, for example, made it fairly clear that their work was a performance of sex, and while they did experience pleasure in this performance, this was necessarily not an expression of whatever they understood to be their own desire or preference. It makes sense—capitalism disciplines desire, right? Sometimes the rubric of normativity, which I think is extremely helpful in understanding both queer marginalities and sex-worker marginalities, is a gloss for sexuality studies per se. I think the location of sex work within sexuality studies definitely needs to be theorized more.

In closing, what advice would you give to current Women's Studies students who are looking to pursue similar interdisciplinary paths as you have in your teaching, scholarship, and activism?

Especially within the US academy, there's quite a lot of room for doing interdisciplinary work on sexuality, and being able to do it in a long-term way. But the advice I was given early on in graduate school still rings true. A friend and colleague said, "Interdisciplinarity is great, but we all need a methodological foundation for the work that we do." I do interdisciplinary work—I do archival research and media studies, for example, in addition to ethnography—but ethnography is really my bread-and-butter methodology. To get inside a methodology, to really understand how to use it well, and to grow one's interest in interdisciplinary practice from that foundation: this is the advice I'd give to Women's Studies scholars.

The Eye of History: The Camera as Witness

by Anne-Marie Angelo and Erica Fretwell

With Women's Studies Professor **Tina Campt**, we attended a conference at Wesleyan University, "The Eye of History: The Camera as Witness," convened by History and Feminist and Gender Studies Professor Jennifer Tucker. Discussing pre-circulated papers, we explored the intersections among gender, race, the photographic image, and historiography. Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer presented their work on "street photographs" of family members taken before, during and after the Holocaust. Geoffrey Batchen discussed Hirsch and Spitzer's work with regard to the theoretical implications and historiographic problems of the visual image's contradictions, oscillations, and resistance to interpretation, and what happens when photographs do not let us see what we, as scholars, want them to say. Leigh Raiford examined twentieth-century artistic works of social activism that strategically use the archive of lynching photographs. Her essay enabled a discussion about how late twentieth-century black visual culture circulates the black body in order to motivate critical black memory, and that memory's ability to question the documentary status of photography. Elizabeth Edwards explored the complex relationships between photography, anthropology and nineteenth-century British history, based on an extensive, if not exhaustive, archive of national survey photographs. Edwards' essay inspired us to consider how the historical anthropology of the photographic survey movement opens up the relationship between photography and popular historical consciousness in the age of high empire, and how photography operates as a set of material practices that is enmeshed with histories of vision and movement, as well as the cartographic impulses of empire. This led us to ask, how do photographs mobilize affect in a way that produces a kind of silence around empire? And, drawing from Deleuze's notion of the haptic, to what extent does materiality extend to the sensory nature of photographs "beyond the visual"?

"The Eye of History" successfully bridged the gap between histories of photography and the practice of professional photography itself. Photographers, curators, and critics alike took an active role in the conference. Participants enjoyed a panel discussion among art critic David Levi Strauss and documentary photographers Susan Meiselas, Eric Gottesman, and Wendy Ewald. Both Gottesman and Ewald have connections to Duke: Gottesman as an alumnus (T '98) and former fellow at the Center for Documentary Studies and Ewald as a Senior Research Associate at the Center for Documentary Studies. Presenting their documentary work in Kurdistan, Ethiopia, and England, respectively, the photographers shared their experiences of photography as a medium and language, and of the role of photographer as a translator and interpreter. Their images and words sparked several discussions of how to keep the "photographer-in-the-field" at the center of scholarly work on photography. In addition to the photographers' panel, conference participants attended the opening of their exhibition, "Framing and Being Framed: The Uses of Documentary Photography" at the Ezra and Cecile Zilkha Gallery at Wesleyan. With the conference's coupling of photographic practice and theoretical intervention, we (Erica, Anne-Marie, and Willeke Sandler) appreciated this opportunity to explore questions of race, gender, and visual culture. These questions will undoubtedly inform our contributions to Duke's Women's Studies 2009-10 theme, "Gender, Race, and Visual Culture."

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Fruitful Visit to a Garden of Metamorphosis



Doryun Chong, Assistant Curator of Visual Arts at the Walker Art Center, with Kudô Tetsumi's "Philosophy of Impotence."

by Ignacio Adriasola (Art, Art History & Visual Studies)

Women's Studies graciously funded a brief trip I undertook to Minneapolis in early December. The object of the trip was to visit *Kudô Tetsumi: Garden of Metamorphosis*, a retrospective exhibit organized by curator Doryun Chong at the Walker Arts Center on the work of Japanese artist Kudô Tetsumi (1935-1989). Kudô's work explores failed masculinity as a metaphor for the malaise of postwar society and the perceived stagnation of representative politics in the age of mass consumption. However, his work also hints at the possibilities behind this crisis.

In 1962, Kudô—by this time already a well-known artist—obtained a fellowship for a year-long stay in France. He commuted his airplane ticket for two one-way tickets, and headed to Paris with his wife and collaborator Hiroko, where they remained until the mid-1980s. In France, Kudô joined the Parisian happenings scene, led by artist Jean-Jacques Lebel. In February of 1963, Kudô presented a piece in a Lebel's festival, *To Conjure the Spirit of Catastrophe*. In it Kudô showed an installation and happening piece titled *Philosophy of Impotence*.

The environment is one of the first works on show at the exhibit I visited. While I had seen the work on photographs, I had never realized how large and impressive the installation was. Phallus-shaped oblong objects made out of insulating tape, whose eye-like endings are fashioned out of light-bulbs, hung from nets clad on the ceiling and walls, interspersed by baguettes. At the center of the room, there is a bundle of ropes and small "penises," ending in one large phallic object, made out of resin and other materials. The white, semen-like resin covering the

object traps hair trimming, while photograph cut-outs from various magazines are strewn over a trail of ropes.

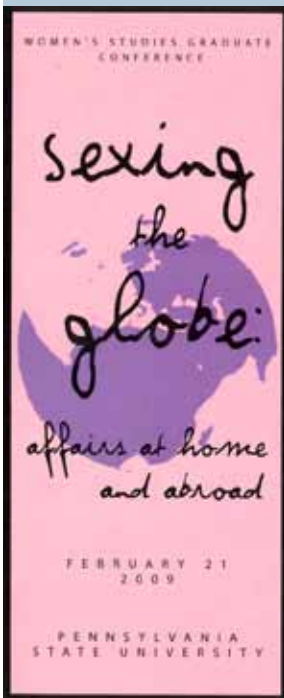
The use of phallic imagery is one of the signature components in Kudô's work. In my dissertation, I argue that Kudô used these detached or grafted penises to lampoon notions of autonomy and action, both concepts central to the imaginary of political representation on which Japan and Western Europe had been refounded in the wake of World War II. For instance, in 1946, philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, arguing for an ethics of political engagement stated that "[t]here is no reality but in action... man is nothing other than his own project, he doesn't exist other than in realizing himself, he is nothing other than the totality of his acts, nothing besides his life." But, by the 1960s, it was already evident that such action is curtailed by the postwar conservative political consensus: the possibility of Sartrean engagement was being put into question.

But while Kudô was skeptical of the voluntarism of humanistic thought, he shared with existentialism a sense of urgency in engagement—Kudô referred to his detached and graft-like penis-shaped objects as being also a chrysalis, embodiment of transformation. When Kudô presented *Philosophy of Impotence*, he didn't simply speak of a state of negative imprisonment. By choosing *Philosophy* for his title, he was in fact arguing for a new sort of ethics. In Kudô's piece, despite being bound, the artist finds a means of engaging in small, intimate and futile gestures, whose failure or *impotence* seem unto themselves a plan for action, fruitful despite its barrenness.

While it would be difficult to attempt to rescue Kudô outright for a feminist artistic canon, it becomes clear that some of the ideas he develops are of consequence to a feminist philosophy. Kudô's work argues against similar ideas of autonomy (political and aesthetic) and universal "subjecthood" that Women's Liberation contested so forcefully in the 1970s. The stress on action and failure as part of a necessary and continuously renewed political process, which Kudô expresses in the notion of metamorphosis, puts his work in direct relation to feminist debates on the relationship between theory and practice. I would like to thank once again WSP for supporting a trip that yielded so much useful material, and the opportunity to reconsider the works I am currently writing about.

Made possible by the Knapp Fund

**Selected reports from grateful recipients
of Women's Studies Awards**



Women Studies Graduate Conference at Penn State University

by Clarissa Ai Ling Lee

I must confess that the conference's title was what caught my attention at the conference, if not as a presenter, then as an onlooker, observer, and participant who could engage with the on-going conversations, even as a member of the audience. While the individuals from Duke who went to the conference might have gone with different aims, one could safely say that the title held the kind of intellectual allure that prompted

our eight graduate students, and one visiting scholar from China, to spend the weekend traveling between Durham and College Station, where Penn State is located. **Robyn Wiegman**, a professor of Women Studies and Literature, attended as the conference's keynote speaker. Three of us—**Kinohi Nishikawa** (Literature), **Alvaro Jarrin** (Cultural Anthropology), and **Kadji Amin** (Romance Studies)—were slated to present at the conference.

Our group arrived Friday evening and attended a discussion organized by a group of PSU Women's Studies students who were reading and discussing chapters of Prof. Wiegman's latest book manuscript. This kick-started a conversation that was to continue into the next day when Prof. Wiegman delivered the keynote entitled "Intimacy of the Present: Sex & Worldliness in the Age of Globalization," where she spoke of the transformation of sex and sexuality from objects of study to analytic frameworks. She spoke of the multifacetedness of sex and its aftermath, such as how one could engage in queer discourse "after sex." However, despite the "sexiness" of the keynote, the discourse of sex at the various panels was more muted, with greater attention paid to the politics of gender, power, race, and the global movement of cultural and socio-economic capital. The closest thing to sex was a panel on sex trafficking, though not many of the issues were sufficiently problematized and tackled. There were parallel sessions running from 9:15 am until 4:30 pm, covering issues ranging from close readings of textual/media objects to a presentation on the roles of NGOs in the Third World and former Second World countries.



Many of the papers at the conference posited the United States as the site of "Westernity" and the non-US as the Other engaged in a power-balancing act with the US, whether in terms of the economy of consumption (papers on mothering, the beauty industry in Brazil, global sex trafficking) or geo-political and socio-cultural relations (papers outlining the experiences of an American white male EFL teacher in South Korea and a feminist analysis of the US-Mexico border protection). Some participants seemed to take the angle that their usage of "Western" theories was already performing the act of exoticizing, though it was not always evident as to why they selected a particular theory to work with in the first place. My observation was that the role of the researcher is blurred as she moves between engaging her object of study in a personal capacity and trying to maintain a distance from the object she is researching.

The configuration of the papers in the conference presented a very realistic take on many of the issues grappled with by the multidisciplinary inhabitants of the Women's Studies program at PSU and on other campuses. The panels illuminated the possibility for non-US sites and objects of study to shift feminist discourse away from US global hegemony. The Duke participants felt that they learned a lot; Alvaro said going to the conference with a group of Duke graduate students reaffirmed his affiliation with the Women's Studies Program at Duke as the intellectual home for the kind of work he does.

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Spring 2009 Newsletter



School House: The Freshmen Collection

On April 18, during Alumni Reunions Weekend, Women's Studies and Duke University Libraries are co-hosting the launch of School House: The Freshmen Collection—WST major Rachel Weeks' clothing line produced in an ethically conscious way in Sri Lanka. The trunk show will feature the Sri Lanka story, a "mobile" Duke Store to shop at, and a "styling corner" where you can see how to create outfits with School House clothes. If you plan to be in Durham, please come to von der Heyden Pavilion 10:15-11:15 am to sit and chat while viewing the models and meeting Rachel!

PS: A Short Take from The Third Annual Feminist Theory Workshop

For me, this year's Third Annual Feminist Theory Workshop was particularly striking in that the four keynote speakers all returned to the rich theoretical traditions of Marxism to rethink various kinds of economic, political, social, and cultural issues in the contemporary world. **Neferti Tadiar** returned to Marx in order to re-theorize and re-historicize some of his central concepts, so as to provide a radical critique of the lives of many female migrant workers from the Philippines. **Wendy Brown** returned to Marx's critique of religion, as well as to second-wave feminism, to theorize the relationship between secularism, gender inequality, and the sacredness of the family in the US culture. **Tani Barlow** explained that the politicization of the woman figure in Maoism was indeed a contribution to feminism. **Drucilla Cornell** explored the ways in which, in South Africa, the category of "ubuntu" is being used to articulate an indigenized socialism. All these talks encouraged me to think about the ways in which feminist theorists creatively drew on the strengths of the trajectory of Marxism, but also they challenged and reinvested the Marxist concepts to take account of the experience of transnational capitalism. *Calvin Hui*

Starting Fall 2009

The 2009-2010 theme is **Gender, Race and Visual Culture** and WST 360: **Visualizing Archives: The Sight and Sense of Race** will be team-taught as a video-linked course by Professors Tina Campt and Saidiya Hartman at Columbia University.

How should we understand the relations between gender, race, visual culture and the senses? How is the visibility of race produced through multiple sensory registers and genres? Engaging visual culture from points of entry such as the sonic or haptic dimensions of visibility produces an alternate way of understanding racial and gendered subject formation, the meaning of difference, and a re-mapping of power and agency. This course engages contemporary theories of photography and visual culture, theories of the sonic and the haptic, history, literature and anthropology to explore the complex relationship between race, gender, visibility and the senses.