



Writing Women

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

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Outside the Canon; Inside the BWWC

Julia Flanders, Anne Mellor, and Jane Spencer were a few of the speakers at the 1999 British Women Writers Conference hosted by the University of New Mexico. It also happened to be my first appearance at this gathering. Upon arrival at the hotel in Albuquerque, I timidly approached the registration desk where everyone was enthusiastically engaged in conversation. Indeed, everyone was smiling, laughing even! I was shocked—you see, it was only the second conference that I had ever attended (and the first I had to travel to), and after a difficult year in graduate school and a transfer into a new doctoral program, I was unused to scholars and graduate students mingling on such a congenial level.

At that conference, at a special session on “The Role of Computers in Recovering, Researching, and Disseminating Women’s Texts and Voices,” I heard Julia Flanders discuss the Brown Women Writers Project and, for the first time, heard about SGML. Perry Willet spoke next on the Victorian Women Writers Project, then Emma Clery and Julie Shaffer for the Corvey Project (also known as CW³). Elizabeth Clarke concluded the entire session with a practical discussion on search capabilities for the Perdita Project. Though I did not yet understand this new type of language (terms such as databases, SGML, metadata, analytical tools, interpretive keywords flew around the room), I dutiful wrote it all down in notes that I still have. I originally attended the session because I was already thinking about constructing a hypertextual archive of my own, but I was not sure that my new doctoral program would appreciate such a potentially ephemeral project. I hadn’t even taken my qualifying exams yet and here I was contemplating my dissertation and dreaming of the possibilities that hypertextual and database-driven archives could provide not only to me but also to scholarship at large.

But the scariest moment of the conference came when I sat at a table with Paula Feldman whose scholarship on literary annuals had sparked my own interest in them. Paula’s archival work on Felicia Hemans was the article that convinced me to work on literary annuals, and here I was on a panel with her. Being such a young graduate student, I was terrified more than enervated, at least until I met her. She and the several of her graduate students with her were inviting and congenial and provided an intellectual exchange that would come to represent each and

every interaction that I had at the BWWC. And that was only my first conference.

The subsequent British Women Writers Conferences have been just as interesting, productive, and congenial as my first. I returned last year to the BWWC to present on literary annuals, a topic that has become the mainstay of my scholarly career, and I am excited to see that we as a conference are still pursuing some of the same issues, including panels such as "Rethinking the Canon through Women's Writing," "Refashioning the Other," and "(Re)Collecting Women Writers through Technology"—the latter panel especially reminded me of the 1999 panel that challenged me to learn a new way to communicate and disseminate literary scholarship. For a change, I was not presenting on my work with a hypertextual archive, *Forget Me Not: A Hypertextual Archive* (available at <www.orgs.muohio.edu/anthologies/FMN/>). Instead, I focused on "A Titillating Textuality: Transgressive Femininity in British Literary Annuals." The other panelists also discussed popular literature (such as Silverfork novels). Because our papers overlapped historically, we were intrigued by each other's work, creating more of a workshop atmosphere than a panel. Sitting in the audience was Paula Feldman, checking up on my scholarly progress no doubt. But, more likely, enjoying all of the panels like everyone else. I was also privileged to listen to Paula's latest research on the annuals—a presentation that forces me (and everyone else) to re-evaluate the purpose of literary annuals. Once again, I left the BWWC with more ideas and energy than I could get onto paper.

When I look over my old notes from that last session at the 1999 BWWC, I can see from my hurried handwriting that I was excited and flustered by the technologists.

Their projects seemed insurmountable and overwhelming, even optimistic. And, so began my work as a digital humanist and editor of an online archive. The 1999 BWWC marked my dedication to working outside of the canon and my discovery of other scholars doing the same. I was more inspired by the graduate students who were doing progressive and innovative scholarship. Now, I'm impressed by the number of colleagues who have attended the BWWC. The conference created a legacy that encourages younger scholars like myself. What seemed so intimidating and foreign in 1999 has become a welcome, relaxing and incredibly enjoyable event. Oh yes, and the scholarship is top notch, too. Back in 1999, Carolyn Dever, my M.A. thesis advisor, commented that she really enjoyed attending the BWWC. I didn't ask why. But now I understand how she feels, and I find myself echoing that same sentiment to my graduate students. The next time the BWWC call for papers comes out, I'll be sure to forward it our SJSU graduate students with a note about conferences to enjoy.

— Katherine D. Harris
(San José State University)

Invitation to the 2007 BWWC: University of Kentucky

This year's conference, hosted by the University of Kentucky, is entitled "Speaking with Authority." We expect nearly 200 scholars this year, including keynote speakers, presenters, moderators, and other attendees. We are very excited about conference events—including an afternoon at Keeneland Race Track, several keynote addresses, a roundtable discussion, a book exhibit, and a documentary presentation on Saturday night.

On Thursday evening, participants will be able to enjoy Deborah Epstein Nord's keynote address, "Outward Bound," on travel

and domestic life in nineteenth-century fiction. On Friday afternoon, Ellen Rosenman's talk will focus on "Edith Simcox: Narrating Same-Sex Desire" and will be followed that night by a round-table discussion on New Woman writers and an exhibit of texts by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British women writers at the University of Kentucky's Special Collections. This roundtable will feature Sally Mitchell's "New Women's Work: Personal, Political, Public," Teresa Mangum's "She Loved to Go A Wandering: The New Woman and Empire," and Ann Ardis's "Where We Are Now: Current Research on the New Woman." During the Saturday luncheon, Laura Rosenthal will speak on "Eliza Haywood's Discrepant Cosmopolitanism," and Yolanda Pierce will close conference events with her discussion of two documentaries on the life of Saartjie Baartman, the woman who was known to nineteenth-century Europeans as the Hottentot Venus.

We at the University of Kentucky are looking forward to an exciting and stimulating conference. Please visit our website <www.uky.edu/AS/English/bwwc> or email us at <bwwc07@uky.edu> for more information.

—Katherine D. Osborne
(University of Kentucky)

Announcement of the 2008 BWWC: Indiana University

The sixteenth annual Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century British Women Writers Conference will be hosted by Indiana University from March 27–30, 2008. The conference theme, "Female Marginalia: Annotating Empire," seeks to investigate the shifting site of margins and the act of creating marginalia. Over the course of the conference we hope to encourage a timely discussion not only of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century

women's writing, but also the role our scholarship plays in continuing to shift and reshape the margins of the field.

To encourage such a conversation, we will be hosting three exhibits that will delve into areas that were once firmly in the margins but have, in recent years, become dominant sites for shifting the discourse. The Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction—created by IU's famous Alfred Kinsey—will offer a glimpse into the risqué world of Victorian sexuality and colonial erotica. The Mathers Museum will take us to regions across the globe to trek the voyages and display the cultures that eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women travel writers explored. And the Lilly Library will offer us insight, through three exhibits, into the English parlor, the London street scene, and the transatlantic realm of correspondence. Also, Susan Fraiman (University of Virginia), author of *Cool Men and the Second Sex*, has graciously agreed to head up a distinguished panel of scholars on the topic of feminism's work in academia and popular culture.

The Indiana Memorial Union, where we will host the 2008 conference, is located in the heart of IU Bloomington's campus. From the hotel and conference rooms, attendees can gaze out across the busy IU campus and see the daily student life of this Big 10 University. More important, the IMU houses a Starbucks, a food court, a restaurant, a game room, and cozy places to prepare papers, and is a quick walk to downtown Bloomington—a full-fledged university town of shopping, restaurants, and coffee shops.

Look for our Call for Papers to be posted soon at the BWWA website, the 2008 BWWC website <www.indiana.edu/~bwwc>, or contact conference chair Miranda M. Yaggi at <mmyaggi@indiana.edu>. We look forward to seeing you in Bloomington!

—Miranda M. Yaggi
(Indiana University)

Travel Awards Presented for 2007

Each year, the BWWA presents travel awards to graduate students to assist them in attending the annual conference. The awards are based on the quality of the submitted abstract as well as distance and cost of travel to the annual conference. The three recipients of the 2007 BWWA travel awards are:

- Matthew Hackler (University of Louisiana at Lafayette) for his submission “The Cemetery Tourist: Facing Death in the Travel Writing of Lady Emmeline Stuart Wortley”
- Lisa Sibbett (University of Maryland) for her submission “Orpheus and Orpheus: The Turkish Correspondence of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Alexander Pope”
- Sara Steger (University of Georgia) for her submission “Authority in Tears: The Inherent Paradox of Political Sentimentality”

Congratulations to all our recipients!

Ruwe Wins Poetry Prize

Donelle Ruwe, professor of English at Northern Arizona University and BWWA Treasurer, has won the second annual Camber Press Poetry Chapbook Award for her collection *Another Message You Miss the Point Of*. Along with a cash award, Donelle’s collection has been published by Camber Press. Congratulations!

From the Editor

In a future issue, we will be featuring information about past conference co-chairs and committee members in a “Where Are They Now” article. If you were involved in a past conference, send us an update on your latest successes to <bwwa@ku.edu>.

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.