



# matters

Undergraduate & Graduate Programs in Women and Gender Studies, Faculty of Arts & Science

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## Director's Message:



The past two academic years since our last issue of this newsletter have seen a combination of growth, transition, and stability. Each was achieved in both increments and leaps. The priorities set up by the University of Toronto's *Stepping*

*Up* Academic Plan in 2003 have shaped the directions and initiatives of the Institute. We achieved our first priority on July 1, 2005 when the Institute became an autonomous unit within the Faculty of Arts and Science. This shift confers on us the full privileges and powers of a department, including a change in the reporting structure, the right to acquire faculty members with majority appointments in the Institute, and the responsibility to manage the budget. To mark our new status, we have changed our name from the Institute for Women's Studies and Gender Studies (IWSGS) to the Women and Gender Studies Institute (WGS), hence the new logo and visual identity. As Director, I am now reporting to the Dean of Arts and Science, we have completed our first majority appointment hiring process, and we are now managing the full budget.

Our next priority was the approval of the stand-alone MA program. The year was spent finalizing the MA proposal document and moving it through the requisite governance bodies of the University of Toronto and the Ontario Council of Graduate Studies (OCGS). Having just received an encouraging and affirming external appraisal, I am pleased to report that the proposal is currently in its very last stage - that is, awaiting final approval from OCGS. This innovative and unique MA degree will give further coherence to interdisciplinary,

graduate-level Women and Gender Studies at the University of Toronto and consolidate our flourishing community of graduate students.

This new institutional autonomy has solidified the infrastructural basis for building the research capacity of the WGS. We have worked hard in the last two years to develop an internally collective and externally consultative process for imagining and cultivating research initiatives that are interdisciplinary, intellectually cutting-edge and collaborative with units in and beyond the University of Toronto. An Academic Planning Committee, chaired by Jacqui Alexander, has been working over this past year to translate the visions set out in the *Stepping Up* prospectus into specific research plans and proposals. The defining of strategies for developing the WGS as a major research site in our field is the objective of an upcoming workshop *Rethinking Women and Gender Studies: Conditions and Possibilities*. A generous fund from the Dean of Faculty of Arts and Science has made planning this event possible. The defining thematic of Gender and Transnationality that frames the Institute's undergraduate and proposed MA programs, has been pursued in various settings. In December 2004 a small group of (con't...)

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faculty members from the Institute and other universities in Ontario participated in a workshop on *Theorizing Gender and Transnationality*, co-organised by myself and Martina Rieker, Acting Director of the Institute for Gender and Women's Studies at the American University in Cairo. Bringing together select scholars from diverse disciplines from across the Middle Eastern region made for an exciting set of discussions and hopes for further collaborations. Another event that drew together scholars from this region in particular, was a short conference on *Women, War and Learning*, a critical theme of transnational feminism that we organised at the University of Toronto in April 2006.

We have continued the workshops in the *Theorizing Transnationality, Gender and Citizenship* series with ongoing success. In the fall of 2005, we collaborated with East Asian Studies to bring Tani Barlow, scholar of Chinese feminism, to present a public lecture in that series. Taking advantage of Barlow's experience in innovative, transnational East Asian scholarship, we organised a Roundtable session on *Area Studies in Trans-*

*national Times*. This was an opportunity to discuss, with colleagues in the various area studies programs and in Diaspora and Transnational Studies (DTS), the implications of contemporary re-configurations of knowledge. This topic was developed further when WGSJ participated in the International Colloquium on Area Studies, Diaspora Studies and Critical Pedagogies organised by DTS in March 2006. We have taken seriously our commitment and responsibility to assert a feminist and gender analysis in this university-wide conversation about interdisciplinarity and emergent geographies of scholarship.

Events addressing the theme of gender and transnationality will continue in this upcoming academic year, as will discussions that elaborate appropriate pedagogy for the pending MA program. In addition, and as part of our overall research and intellectual development, we are planning each year to organise events around a particular interdisciplinary sub-theme, one that highlights the work of clusters of faculty within Women and Gender Studies and involves collaborations with other departments and

programs. This year a series of talks and workshops on the transnational theme of *Biopolitics and Technosciences* is being planned under the direction of Michelle Murphy (History and WGSJ).

To promote university-wide engagement with our field of scholarship and to strengthen ties amongst Women and Gender Studies and the various academic units and research centres across the three campuses of the University of Toronto, we have reconceived the role of the Advisory Board and renamed it the Tri-campus Women and Gender Studies Network. The Network provides a space for intellectual exchange on curriculum transformation and opportunity for creating research alliances across diverse units and disciplines. Over the past couple of years we have also supported various events that have built links between community organisations and the Institute through our WGSJ Community Knowledge Alliance Fund (See report of one such event by Bonnie McElhinney, p. 8).

As clearly evident in the following pages, these two years were full of success stories. Our colleagues' scholarly contributions were out-



*The WGSJ Admin Team provide support to the students and faculty at the WGSJ...*

*From left to right: Luci Mok, Office Assistant, Marian Reed, Undergraduate and Graduate Administrator, Jacinta Crasta, Acting Business Officer*

standing; they included SSHRC-funded awards, book publications, and excellence in teaching. We have continued our commitment to improving the experience of students in both the Undergraduate and the Graduate Collaborative Programs, finding ways to foster their participation in the intellectual and political life of the Institute (See reports of Undergraduate and Graduate Programs).

It is gratifying to reflect back on the challenges and witness the achievements of these past two years. The WGSi is now one of the most sought-after units on campus for collaboration and participation in new programs or initiatives. This speaks to the quality of our slowly expanding faculty complement, the Institute's growing profile as an innovative and enterprising academic body, and the recognition of the significance of feminist scholarship more generally.

The WGSi currently holds enormous potential for further growth as an exemplary interdisciplinary unit with strong research and teaching collaborations with community and university bodies. Managing our current status is a challenge and we recognise that the expansion of our graduate teaching and research capacity will require both more of us and additional institutional support. We are fortunate, therefore, in having in place a team of strong and dedicated staff who manage the busy day-to-day life of the Institute with precision and commitment, making it a welcoming environment for students, faculty members, and community members.

Also, we are delighted to welcome, as a new member of faculty, Dr. Ashwini Tambe, who is joining us from Georgetown University. Her interdisciplinary research in South Asian studies, on such issues as sex-trafficking in colonial Bombay and legal definitions of Indian girlhood and sexual consent, is innovative and multifaceted. Her work complements and will contribute to the Women and Gender Studies Undergraduate and Graduate Programs, and the Department of History and the Sexual Diversity Studies where she is cross-appointed.

In closing, I would like to add a few words of deep gratitude to all of our colleagues and friends at New College, in particular Principal David Clandfield. New College has been, since its inception in 1999, and until this past year, the academic and administrative home for the Institute. The expansion of the Institute was made possible under the visionary leadership of David who generously committed resources to the Institute and courageously supported our ideas for a stronger and more imaginative academic unit. The Institute, though independent from New College, will remain as one of the active partners of the College and will work collaboratively with all other programs in advancing the academic values of social justice, equity and diversity. We are anticipating the continuation of this mutually enriching relationship under the leadership of in-coming Principal, Professor Rick Halpern.

*S. Mojab*

### *Faculty Awards, 2004-2006*

**Jacqui Alexander**

SSHRC Standard Grant for *Migrations of the Sacred: Gendered Spiritual Practices in an Era of Globalization* (2006)

**Kay Armatage**

Taiwan Cultural Foundation of Canada Grant (2005)

**June Larkin**

McGill University Grant for *Seeing for ourselves: Visual methodologies for self-study with teachers in addressing HIV/AIDS* (2005)

**Bonnie McElhinny**

SSHRC Grant for *Infants, Imperialism and the International Regulation of Motherhood: North American Interventions into Filipino Child-rearing Practices, 1908-2008*. (2005)

**Shahrazad Mojab**

SSHRC Grant for *Kurdish Women Organising* (2005)  
International Development Research Centre Grant for *Women and Urban Sustainability* (2006)

**Kathryn Morgan**

SSHRC Grant for *Gene and Gender* (2005)

**Michelle Murphy**

SSHRC Grant for *Economies of Reproduction: A Transnational History of Neoliberal Practices of Fertility Control* (2006)

**Kerry Rittich**

Wright Foundation Award for *Gender and the New Economy* (2006) and *Global Social Governance* (2006)  
SSHRC Institutional Grant for *International Network for Transformative Employment and Labour Law Conference, Cuernavaca, Mexico* (2006)

# *Undergraduate Report*

Over the past two years there have been many curriculum activities and program events in Undergraduate Women and Gender Studies, St. George campus. The focus of the ongoing curriculum revision process was a restructuring of the feminist theory course to reflect the intellectual direction of the Institute. The revised course, WGS 262Y: *Texts, Theories, Histories*, “examines texts and theories that shaped varieties of feminist thought and situates them historically and transnationally so as to emphasise the social conditions and conflicts in which ideas and politics arise, change and circulate.” The course, which was designed and co-taught by Michelle Murphy (History and WGS) and Alissa Trotz (SESE, OISE and WGS), tracks key theoretical themes in women and gender studies and places feminist works in conversation with other major strands of critical thinking such as Marxism, post-colonialism, and queer studies. Students found this new course highly challenging but extremely rewarding. Jacqui Alexander, our new full appointment and internationally renowned transnational feminist scholar, taught a special topics course entitled *Colonialism, Sexuality, Spirituality and the Law*. The course received rave reviews from students and will become part of our permanent core-course offerings next year.

In keeping with WGS’s commitment to enhance student experience, an undergraduate student-faculty liaison committee was set up to meet annually with students, giving them an opportunity to express their views on the program, make suggestions, and learn more about the considerations that shape the program. Though attendance for the first such meeting (held in February 2006) was small, various constituencies of students were represented (part-time, parents, working) and the discussion proved valuable in giving us feedback to take into account in our planning. The WGSSU helped to organize this meeting and over the past two years has worked hard to build an undergraduate women-and-gender studies community by organizing student events and maintaining a mailing list. Given the pressures on students’ time, it is difficult to bring out large numbers to events. The liaison committee is currently discussing ways in which we might collaborate with the Union (see page 9) in mounting activities that draw in more students. The contribution of the union leaders is much appreciated.

The International Women’s Day Lecture this year was a dub poetry event with three well-known artists, d’bi young, Afua Cooper and Rafeef Ziadah, who had the audience clapping and cheering throughout their powerful and politically provocative performances. In the previous IWD, poet, activist, and film maker Rebecka Tabodondung, a member of the Waskausing First Nation of Parry Island, presented her work to a fascinated audience in the Introduction course.

Many students participated in our two annual professional development events, the Going to Graduate School Workshop, held in the fall term, and the Careers Workshop, which takes place in the spring. These workshops are designed to provide students with information that will be helpful in planning their future in academia and/or in the workplace. Animating the workshops are graduates of our program who return to share their career and academic experiences with the next cohorts of Women and Gender Studies students. This year, Wendy Peters, a former WGS teaching assistant, distributed a zine on the angst of applying to graduate school. The frank but hilarious publication added levity to our discussions of the onerous graduate application process. At the Careers’ Workshop, Joanna Kerr, Executive Director of the Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID) and Janet Mahwinney, of the Center for Addiction and Mental Health, provided a synopsis of their own career paths and offered advice based on their personal triumphs and challenges.

In the Undergraduate Student Research Colloquium held annually in the month of March, students from the *Advanced Research Seminar* course, WGS460, make presentations on their independent study projects to an audience of friends, family, faculty and co-students (see next page). The range and relevance of topics addressed by students in both 2004/5 and 2005/6 was impressive, as can be seen from the papers’ titles. The quality of the presentations was outstanding, and the question and answer period generated lively discussion allowing students to demonstrate their expertise about their respective topics.

— June Larkin, Undergraduate Coordinator



## Undergraduate Colloquium—Friday March 18, 2005

### PANEL I - CONTESTING CULTURAL DIFFERENCE AS DISADVANTAGE

Habiba Nosheen: *South Asian women and media representation: Reflections on the making of a SexTV documentary*

Michelle Landy: *Women and the Beit Din: The Power to Choose?*

Mulki Mohamed: *Somali Mothers in Toronto: Struggles over special education*

### PANEL II - FEMINIST RECONFIGURINGS OF KNOWLEDGE

Samantha Cutrara: *Historic Space: A feminist conceptualisation of Canadian History*

Negar Mazrooyi-Sebdani: *Critical Care: Toward a feminist rethinking of social work practice*



Panelists receive a thank you for their work in the 2005 Undergraduate Colloquium



Undergraduate students enjoy a day of yoga, culture-jamming and more at the WGSSA Retreat January, 2006

## Undergraduate Colloquium—Friday March 17, 2006

### CONSTRUCTING QUESTIONS/ QUESTIONING CONSTRUCTS UNDERGRAD FEMINIST SCHOLARS AT WORK

Meredith Davis: *In Pursuit of their Cause: Feminism and Abolitionism in the Writings of de Gouges, More and Martineau*

Kiera Chion: *'Brown Sugar Tigress': Colonialist Constructions of Racialized Desire and Difference in the Sexual Economy of the Caribbean*

Aneesa Walji: *Victims of Culture? Sri Lankan Muslim Women Negotiating Identity*

Myera Waese: *A Case of Frayed Nerves: A Feminist Analysis of Anxiety, Mothering and the 'Good Woman'*



Linzi Manicom and the participants of the 2006 Undergraduate Colloquium

## GRADUATE WOMEN'S STUDIES STUDENTS ASSOCIATION (GWSSA)

Graduate students from the Women and Gender Studies Institute have enjoyed a wide range of activities and events during the 2005-2006 academic year. Highlights included the annual Graduate Symposium and two brown bag lunch workshops. On October 21, 2005, Tara Goldstein (WGS and OISE) and Mary Nyquist (WGS and English) facilitated a stimulating workshop on strategies for feminist pedagogy in the humanities and social sciences. Our speakers shared valuable insights for creating a feminist classroom based on their experiences teaching undergraduate and graduate students. A recurring theme of the discussion was the need for more spaces that prioritize pedagogical training and mentoring at the University of Toronto. A second workshop was held on March 10, 2006 on strategies for successful publication of feminist scholarship in the humanities and social sciences, when Jill Matus (English) and Bonnie McElhinney (Anthropology and WGS) imparted their experience and advice on how to go about getting articles published.

The successful Graduate Symposium, sponsored by a number of collaborating units, brought together graduate students from the universities of Toronto, Concordia, and York on December 7. Participants enjoyed thought-provoking plenary lectures by Jacqui Alexander and Pamela Klassen, and had the opportunity to listen to a wide range of presentations on the work of co-students.

Finally, Graduate Coordinator, Alison Keith, hosted two coffee and networking meetings, which enabled members of the Graduate Collaborative Program to discuss their research interests in an informal setting. Special thanks are due Alison and Marian Reed for organising that event and for all of the support that they provide to graduate students in the program.

—Katie Larson and Sandra Tam  
GWSSA Representatives, 2005-2006.

## GRADUATE STUDENT AWARDS

### *The Janka Seydegart Scholarship in Feminist Studies*

2004-2005 Ayasha Mayr Handel (MSW, Social Work)

2005-2006 Sandra Tam (PhD, Social Work)

### *City of Toronto Graduate Women's Studies Scholarship*

2004-2005 Helen Kang (PhD, Public Health Sciences)

2005-2006 Zahra Hojati (PhD, TPS OISE/UT)

### *Graduate Women's Studies Entrance Prize*

2005-2006 Allison Burgess (PhD, SESE OISE/UT)

### *Margrit Eichler Graduate Leadership Award*

2004-2005 Nadia Mohammed (MA, Criminology) and  
Marie Vander Kloet (MA, SESE OISE/UT)

2005-2006 Wendy Peters (PhD, SESE OISE/UT) and  
Marie Vander Kloet (MA, SESE OISE/UT)



*Margrit Eichler presents the Margrit Eichler Graduate Leadership Award to Wendy Peters (left) and Marie Vander Kloet (right)*

# WGSJ Graduate Report

The most significant development for graduate studies in women and gender – and by implication, feminist scholarship – at the University of Toronto over the past two years has been the definitive progress made on the MA Program. The proposal for this masters program has been several years in the making, wending its way unevenly through many drafts and many way stations on the path to approval. It went to the Ontario Council for Graduate Studies (OCGS) in late November, 2005, fully supported by the School of Graduate Studies and the Faculty of Arts and Science at the University of Toronto. And it secured final University of Toronto approvals in January, 2006. WGSJ hosted the OCGS external assessors, Professors Berenice Carroll (Political Science and Women's Studies, Purdue University) and Sneja Gunew (English and Women's Studies, University of British Columbia) on April 26-27, 2006. Reviews were positive, and we now hope to receive OCGS approval to mount the MA program starting in 2007-2008.

The past two years have been exciting ones for the Graduate Collaborative Program in Women's Studies (GCWS). Enrolment numbers are up slightly from previous years to 45 (MA) and 65 (PhD) in 2005/6 and a number of successful, well-attended graduate events mounted by WGSJ have contributed to the building of the Women and Gender Studies graduate student community.

The opening event each year is the GCWS Orientation, an opportunity for new and continuing

students to meet WGSJ and other participating faculty as well as other students, and to learn about the program and its resources. In the September 2004 orientation Kathryn Morgan (Philosophy and WGSJ) and Alissa Trotz (OISE and WGSJ) gave talks about their research. In 2005 Michelle Murphy (History and WGSJ) and Mary Nyquist (English and WGSJ) shared their work. This was also the occasion to recognise the GCWS award winners (see previous page).

In addition to the now-traditional fall and winter Coffee & Networking Sessions, this past year the GWSSA representatives initiated a lunchtime workshop series on topics of interest to graduate students. A workshop on feminist pedagogy took place in the fall and another on feminist publication in the spring. The content and format of these workshops proved very effective in meeting students' interests and will be continued in upcoming years (See previous page).

The annual GCWS Symposium has become more impressive every year, both in the breadth and quality of student presentations and the numbers of participants it attracts. It is organized by the students in the *Advanced Research Methods Seminar* (JPW 3000) and takes place at the end of the first term. *Local Experiences/Global Processes* was the title of the December 8, 2004 symposium. The keynote talks were given by Rhonda Love (Department of Public Health Sciences) who spoke on "Gender Exclusion and Disparities in Health and Health Care" and Rachel Gorman (IWSGS Postdoctoral Fellow) who presented her work on "Mixing Art and Politics: Feminist Art-based

Research with Former Political Prisoners." The December 7, 2005 symposium was devoted to the theme *Citizenship, Space, Subjectivity* and featured two keynote speakers, Jacqui Alexander (WGSJ) on "(Sexual) Citizenship, Patriotism and the New Imperialism" and Pamela Klassen (Religion) on "Christian Healing on the Frontiers of Empire." Thirty students in the collaborative program presented papers on a wide variety of panels: "Remapping Curriculum," "Imagine (d)Nation," "Transnationality and the Family," "Literature, Cultural Production, Histories," "Politics of Places," "Citizenship and Human Rights," "Sporting Subjectivities," "The Academy as Contested Space," "Feminists Critiquing Feminisms," and "Activism and Social Change." There was animated discussion following both the panels and keynote addresses and a very lively informal dinner after the event.

The success of these events is owed particularly to those involved in planning them, but also to all of the students who participated. Particular thanks are due the Graduate Women's Studies Student Association (GWSSA) representatives for both years, Marie Vander Kloet and Wendy Peters (2004-2005) and Katie Larson (PhD, English and GCWS) and Sandra Tam (PhD, Social Work and GCWS), as well as the WGSJ Program Officer, Marian Reed.

—Alison Keith (Classics and WGSJ) Graduate Coordinator

# WGSJ Community Knowledge Alliance

On March 31, WGSJ sponsored one of its regularly occurring Community Knowledge Alliance events, initiatives that are aimed at strengthening the intellectual and practical ties between communities of feminist scholars and feminist practitioners working on community groups and organisations or engaged in gender-applied service, advocacy and policy. This event focused on social justice initiatives that addressed issues affecting the Filipino community in Toronto, with particular attention to the role, meaning and forms that research has in settings outside the academy.

Lillian Petroff, Coordinator of Education & Community Outreach at the Multicultural Historical Society of Ontario (MHSO), offered a historical overview of the work that has been done by the MHSO and reviewed MHSO's community-based approach to the collection of oral testimony from and with Ontario's many ethnic communities. She outlined materials available in the Filipino collection at MHSO and screened a brief segment of *Canada: A People's History* in which Rosaline Bustamente, a former university professor in the Philippines, retired teacher, and MHSO-linked researcher, talked about the history of the Filipino community in Canada in the 20th century.

Mila Astorga-Garcia is a Board Member and Research Coordinator for the Community Alliance for Social Justice, Managing Editor of *The Philippine Reporter* and Research Analyst for the Social Policy Analysis and Research Unit of Social Development, Finance and Administration, City of Toronto. She presented a paper in which she discussed how the police slaying of a Filipino youth, Jeffrey Reodica, in 2004 galvanised many people and organisations in the Filipino community into organising a new group, the Community Alliance for Social Justice. This organisation works in coalition with other anti-racist and immigrant groups in Toronto to redress the exploitative aspects of the live-in caregiver program, to gain recognition for the credentials of foreign-trained professionals, and to address community safety and police racism. She also discussed the role of community newspapers in political activism, arguing in compelling ways for the need for such newspapers to move beyond objectivity to clearly articulated political positions.

Anita Fortuno and Bernice Small, Settlement Counselors for INTERCEDE for the Rights of Domestic Workers, Caregivers and Newcomers, reviewed the

caregiver program and talked about recent negotiations with Canadian immigration authorities on how to transform the live-in caregiver program.

Dr. Pamela Sayne and a group of about 10 students from a UTSC course on Applied Women and Development showed us the difference undergraduates can make. They animatedly discussed the role they have played in launching a livelihood project with poor women and children living in a garbage dump in Manila. This group produced jewelry made of recycled magazines.

Finally, Magdaragat Philippines and the Filipino Students' Association of Toronto (FSAT), under the direction of Jason Salonga, presented several dances from the Philippines. These included participatory numbers in which they taught audience members some gender-bending dances with aprons, and gave a lesson on how to create another kind of balance in their lives—with candles and cans on their heads—to laughter, cheers and enthusiastic applause.

— Bonnie McElhinny

## THEORIZING TRANSNATIONALITY, GENDER AND CITIZENSHIP SERIES:

Area Studies in Transnational Times, Critiques,  
Dilemmas, Directions: A Roundtable with Tani  
Barlow and Ato Quayson—  
October 28, 2005

Tani Barlow: *The Sexy Modern Girl Icon in  
Shanghai Advertising During the Interwar  
Years*—October 28, 2005

Jacqui Alexander: *Pedagogies of the Sacred:  
Feminism and the Secularization of  
Experience*—November 24, 2005

Lynne Milgram: *Fashioning Urban Activism:  
Marketscapes and Livelihood among Philippine  
Street Vendors*—March 3, 2006



## **UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT AWARDS**

### **CITY OF TORONTO UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP IN WOMEN'S STUDIES**

2004-2005 Samantha Cutrara  
2005-2006 Kiera Chion

### **TORONTO WOMEN'S BOOKSTORE ESSAY PRIZE**

2004 Emma Lind  
2005 Arti Mehta

### **CANADIAN WOMEN'S PRESS PRIZE**

2005 Sara Gottlieb

### **ELSIE GREGORY MACGILL PRIZE IN WOMEN'S STUDIES**

2003-2004 Gayle McIntyre and Emma Lind  
2005-2006 Julia Weisser

### **HELEN GREGORY MACGILL PRIZE IN WOMEN'S STUDIES**

2003-2004 Nidhi Punyarthi  
2004-2005 Emma McKenna and Raha Behreini

### **THE GORDON CRESSY STUDENT LEADERSHIP AWARDS**

2004 Andrea Macerollo and Julia Weisser  
2005 Kiera Chion and Yumi Namata



*Kiera Chion, who graduated in 2006, earned two undergraduate awards for leadership and scholarship in women's studies. She, along with Yumi Namata, co-founded The F\* Word, a feminist pop culture magazine*

## **Women's Studies Student Union Report**

The Women's Studies Student Union (WSSU) changed its name to the Women and Gender Studies Student Union (WGSSU) at the beginning of the 2005-2006 academic year, in keeping with the status change of the Women and Gender Studies Institute. President and Vice-president of the Union were, respectively, Sarah Eisen and Caitlin Burgess. Julia Weisser was the president in the previous year.

A number of events were organised during the course of the two years, some more successful than others. We held informal movie nights in the WGSi lounge, screening "Osama", "Maria Full of Grace" and "But I'm A Cheerleader". In 2004 we organised a Remembrance Day Lecture, *Remembering Gender: Women and War*, with guest speakers, Dr. Joan Simalchik and Dr. Patricia Durish. Last year we participated in the December 6th Vigil at Philosopher's Walk, and held an event called

*Step Up: Freedom From Violence Against Women*. This event included speakers from two United Way agencies: Education Wife Assault and The Redwood, a shelter in Toronto for abused women and children.

The most successful events in both years were the annual WGSSU retreats. The theme in January 2005 was *Reclaiming Your Body*, with workshops on bellydancing, Jiu-Jitsu, and Loving your Body. In January 2006 the theme of the retreat was *Finding Your Voice* and included a yoga workshop, a zine-making workshop, and spoken word/musical performances (see photo on page 5). Zine-making was the most popular workshop at the retreat this year, which inspired another zine-making event in February 2006 with Wendy Peters, the popular former TA leading activities.

— Caitlin Burgess

## Research Profile: Alison Keith



Alison Keith is a full Professor of Classics who was cross-appointed to Women and Gender Studies in 2001. Alison completed her M.A. and Ph.D. in Classical Studies at the University of Michigan and has written extensively on the intersection of gender and genre in Latin literature. She is author of *The Play of Fictions: Studies in Ovid's Metamorphoses Book 2* (Ann Arbor 1992) and *Engendering Rome: Women in Latin Epic* (Cambridge 2000), and is currently the Editor of the Classics journal *Phoenix*. Alison has been Coordinator of the Graduate Collaborative Program since July 2004, when she inherited not only responsibility for organising this growing program but also the considerable labour involved in bringing to fruition a self-standing Masters Program in Women and Gender Studies. Her strategy for attempting to keep sane amidst the frenetic demands of administration, teaching, researching and writing, involves a daily swim and piano playing session.

The volume of Alison Keith's current research undertakings is awe-inspiring. There are two edited volumes in the works: one (with Jonathan Edmondson) on *Roman Dress and the Fabric of Roman Culture*, the other on *The Changing Face of Ovid's Metamorphoses* in medieval and early modern European literature and art. There is a commentary on the fourth book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* under completion for a Cambridge University Press series. There is a book on *Propertius, Poet of Love and Leisure* being written for Duckworth Publishers. And there is a SSHRC-funded project in progress that looks at the thematic and literary resonances of Ovid's epic poem, *Metamorphoses*, in later Latin (and European) literature and culture.

All of these projects combine Alison's passion for Latin literature with her interest in the study of gender in antiquity. While her work is based on intricate literary analysis and interpretation, it is also thoroughly interdisciplinary. In her SSHRC project on the reception of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Alison engages several bodies of knowledge –as evidenced in some chapter titles - "Politics," "Topographies," and "Architectures." (As this goes to press, Alison is exploring ancient architecture in Italy).

The book-in-progress on *Propertius*, Alison acknowledges, has been significantly informed by the postcolonial and transnational feminist analytic that frames the WGSI undergraduate curriculum and that of the proposed MA. In this work, Alison is looking at the themes in Propertius' elegiac poetry that reflect the Augustan imperial context in which he wrote. These are themes of an ostentatious Roman empire, of homosocial relations (of love and rivalry) amongst the male imperial elite, and of "the traffic in women" who circulated as symbols and courtesans, as subjects of poems and objects of adoration. Poetry is understood, by Alison, as a luxury good - "the literature of leisure" - which celebrated Rome's imperial and material achievements as it confirmed the place of Propertius and other poets amongst this privileged rhetorical, political, and literary stratum of the empire.

### Visiting Scholars (2004-2006)

#### Ishara Mahat

*Gender, Energy and Poverty:  
Rural Perspectives in Nepal*  
September 2004-April 2005

#### Gillian McCann

*Rukmini Devi and the Politics of Femininity*  
September 2004-April 2005

#### Fabienne H Baider

*Lexicography, Ontology, Ideology: Is Integrating Social  
& Sociological Concepts in Knowledge  
Organization possible?*  
January 2005-May 2005

#### Sook Hee Park

*Language Evolution and Women's Social Status*  
September 2005-May 2006

# Research Profile: Jacqui Alexander

Jacqui Alexander joined the Women and Gender Studies Institute as full professor in the fall of 2004. She was previously the Fuller-Maathai Chair of the Department of Gender and Women's Studies at Connecticut College. Jacqui, one of the speakers in our Public Lecture Series on *Theorizing Transnationality, Gender and Citizenship* in 2002/3, was subsequently invited to come to the Institute at the U of T. Jacqui co-edited (with Chandra Talpade Mohanty) *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, and is co-editor of *Sing, Whisper, Shout, Pray! Visions for a Just World*. Her most recent publication is a book of both previously published and new essays entitled *Pedagogies of the Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred* (Duke University Press, 2005). In 2006, Jacqui was awarded a SSHRC grant for a project on *Migrations of the Sacred: Gendered Spiritual Practices in an era of Globalization*.



Jacqui Alexander's recent work, which designates the Sacred as a critical site of inquiry, might be read as a departure from her previous analytical preoccupation with sexual politics, neo-colonial state formation and citizenship in the context of global neo-liberal capitalism. But a reading of the essays collected in *Pedagogies of the Crossing* and the research proposal for *Migrations of the Sacred* reveals this current work to be less a departure than a rigorous and courageous pursuit of themes that have persisted as deep commitments in Jacqui's scholarship. At least two such continuing strands are found in her work on feminism and the Sacred: the focus on pedagogy, broadly conceived as the ongoing challenge to destabilise inherited and hegemonic analytic and epistemological frames, and to reconfigure ways of knowing and being; and secondly, the rejection and rethinking of the tradition/modernity binary that underwrites the violence of imperialism just as it reproduces hierarchies and differences in our feminist classrooms.

Jacqui's SSHRC-funded study looks at "the gendered impact of migration and displacement on indigenous spiritual practices and the ways in which Aboriginal and African women and women of African descent become agents of the spiritual in these times of rupture". Though there are many studies that look at Christian and Islamic fundamentalisms as responses to the dislocations of globalisation, such work invariably overlooks indigenous spiritual practices; these tend to be obscured or colonised by these major religious mobilisations. Jacqui's research importantly draws attention to these spiritual practices, significant in the lives of vast numbers of the world's women. At the same time, she challenges the prevailing approach "which subsumes religion under the political and conflates the religious with the spiritual". Her study asks about "the meaning of spiritual work, how it is linked to individual and collective subjectivity or how it shapes the creation of moral agency and social transformation". One of the aims of this interdisciplinary, comparative study is the elaboration of non-reductionist ways of teaching about the spiritual and about globalisation that link the macro- with micro processes of identify formation. The work will also contribute to the reconciling of the "archaic analytic divides" between the 'sacred' and 'secular', the 'traditional' and the 'modern'.

## WGSJ Events (2005-2006)

*Stone, Ashes and Hazrat*—June 25

*The Scrubbing Project: Turtle Gals Performance*—  
November 8

Launch of *Lionheart Gal: Lifestories of Jamaican Women*—December 9

*Mpenzi Film Festival*—February 17

*Kurdish Women and the Political Crisis in the Middle East*—February 22

*Cuando Los espíritus Bailan Mambo* (Documentary Film Screening) — March 7

International Women's Day—dub Poetry Event featuring d'bi Young—March 8

*Communities, Crises, Caregiving and Courses: Developing, Social Justice Research on, with, by and for the Filipino Community in Toronto*—March 31

*Women, War and Learning*—April 6-7

## *GAAP: Gendering Adolescent Aids Prevention*

A number of Women and Gender Studies students are members of the Youth Advisory Board for the Gendering Adolescent AIDS Prevention (GAAP) project that is housed at the WGS. This year GAAP students participated in a photovoice workshop, independent research projects, and World AIDS Day events. Members of the Performed Ethnography Group performed at events and conferences both within and beyond the University of Toronto, including the Brown Bag Series at the Centre for Women's Studies in Education at OISE, the conference of the Ontario HIV Treatment Network (OHTN) and the Adhoc 25: Women, Constitutions and Democratic Renewal conference in Ottawa. WGS student, Nidhi Punyarthi, along with a few Equity Studies Students have been awarded full scholarships to attend the International AIDS Conference to be held in Toronto in August, 2006.

*My involvement with GAAP began when I was still in high school. I attended a workshop that explored youth's contribution to HIV/AIDS discourse through hip-hop dance, photography and the dramatic arts. After that, I started volunteering with the GAAP Youth Advisory Board (YAB) and participated in focus groups and evaluations of education materials prepared by GAAP researchers.*

*Being part of the GAAP "Performed Ethnography Group" has been an amazing learning experience. We had the opportunity to take an intensive course on this educational methodology with Professor Tara Goldstein from Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, OISE/UT. We started by holding focus groups amongst ourselves on GAAP research data and then wrote about what resonated for us in the data and about our understandings of HIV/AIDS and sexuality. Then, after studying the format and structure of plays and monologues, we learned how to incorporate the issues that emerged in our writing in these literary forms. In this way we were able to come up with short scripts on HIV/AIDS issues for performance. Since then, we have been going to different forums not only to perform our pieces, but also to present the methodology of performed ethnography as a powerful form of research and education about HIV/AIDS.*



*Members from the Performed Ethnography Group at the Brown Bag Lecture at OISE November 2005*

*My work in GAAP projects has greatly enriched my and other participants' undergraduate experience. It has given us opportunities to expand our academic experience into graduate and professional spaces and to develop our critical thinking outside of university courses. GAAP has definitely contributed to the development of my own confidence and ability to develop, present and discuss my work in conference settings. My colleagues in the GAAP Youth Advisory Board share these feelings of accomplishment.*

— Nidhi Punyarthi



*Faculty and Staff from the WGS present outgoing New College principal David Clandfield with a token of their appreciation for his dedicated support of the WGS, at his retirement party, June 2006*

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