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# Like Minds

Diversity with a purpose

The Newsletter of Friends of Women's Studies, Old Dominion University, Summer 2007



## A message from FOWS President, Laura O'Reilly

A big thank you to everyone who supported the Women's Studies Department and service-learning by attending the Annual Dinner in February and making donations. The Dinner was very successful once again. All of our Board members worked very hard, and I want to thank everyone who devoted their valuable time and energy in preparation for the Dinner.

For the second year in a row, we had record-breaking attendance and record-breaking donations. This generous support has allowed us to provide a \$500 scholarship to each of the 12 students who will be traveling to South Africa this spring. This is a huge accomplishment considering that we just began fundraising for service-learning a few short months ago.

Of course, I have to remind everyone that continuing this level of support to our students is going to require a continuous, higher level of financial support than we have sought in the past. New supporters, along with our long-time supporters, and increased donations will help us meet these greater demands in the coming academic years. Based on the success so far, I have no doubt that we can meet our goals with your support.

Speaking of support, we have another important request. For those of you who would like to be more actively involved in Friends of Women's Studies, we have several vacancies on the Board. Now is a great time to participate, as we have been making improvements to the Dinner format, and are working on new projects to support service-learning. If you are interested, please contact me at [laura.oreilly@hotmail.com](mailto:laura.oreilly@hotmail.com).

Again, thank you to everyone who worked on the Dinner, who attended the Dinner, and who supported the Women's Studies Department with your generous donations. Each and every one of you plays an integral role in helping the Department reach its goals.

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## Best Selling Author Janine Latus: Book Reading & Book Signing

Friends of Women's Studies is hosting a fundraising event that you will not want to miss!

Janine Latus's brand new book, *If I Am Missing or Dead: A Sister's Story of Love, Murder, and Liberation*, is already on the *NY Times* best seller list, and she has received a flood of emails from women all over the country marveling that she has captured their stories. The book is an exploration of how the author and her sister, Amy, two seemingly well-adjusted, successful women, ended up in physically and emotionally abusive relationships with men. Latus, an established journalist, accustomed to writing on a wide variety of subjects, was moved to explore the intensely personal subject of the murder of Amy by her male partner. *If I Am Missing or Dead* has been called a "heart-wrenching journey of discovery as Janine Latus traces the roots of her own -- and her sister's -- victimization with unflinching candor."



Latus has been writing professionally since 1991, and she covers topics ranging from personal finance to parenting, health, the environment, and women's issues. Her writings have been published in *O Magazine*, *Women's Day*, *Family Circle*, *McCall's*, *Sports Illustrated for Kids*, *WomensWallStreet.com*, *MSN Money*, and many others.

Now Janine Latus has graciously agreed to share her story with us. Please join us on **Tuesday, June 12th at 6:30 pm** at **Court Street Cordials** restaurant in Portsmouth as Latus reads from her book and discusses the impact that her sister's death has had on her and on others. There will be copies of her book for sale and the author will sign books. Court Street Cordials is located at 455 Court St. in downtown Portsmouth (next to Brutti's). Admission to the event is \$20.00 (pay at the door), and includes wine and hors d'oeuvres. Profits are in support of the Women's Studies Department's annual events. **It is very important to RSVP to Sue Doviak at [sdoviak@odu.edu](mailto:sdoviak@odu.edu) (or 489-0909) by Friday, June 8th as seating is very limited.** Call today to reserve your place!

## Women's Studies 2006 - 2007 Graduates

### December 2006

#### Undergraduate

##### Major

Janika Corprew

### May 2007 Undergraduate

#### Majors

Caitlin Currey

Benita Diggs

Corie Nixon, WMST 2006-

2007 Outstanding Student

Amy Reeb

#### Minors

Danea Freeman

Jessica Jackson

Latoya Morgan

Alex Paige

### May 2007

#### Graduate Certificate

Jessica Dambruch

Shana Lipford

Rebecca Lauren (Gidjunis)

Laura Soulsby

## 2007 Women's Studies Spring Celebration

### Essay Contest Award Ceremony and Graduation Party

The Women's Studies Department held its annual graduation celebration and essay contest awards ceremony on Thursday, May 3 at 3:00 pm in the Rector's Room of Webb Center. We had a large graduating group, and many family, friends, students, and faculty were in attendance for this festive event.

Ruth Triplett, Acting Chair for the Women's Studies Department, welcomed everyone. Students who won the essay contest awards were then presented with a certificate and prize by Friends of Women's Studies President, Laura O'Reilly. The 2 winners, Corie Nixon, undergraduate winner, and Shana Lipford, graduate winner, both received a \$100 gift card. The 3 Honorable Mentions, Katherine Piland, undergraduate, and Jessica Dambruch and Rebecca Lauren (Gidjunis), graduates, each received a \$25.00 gift certificate. Each of the winners read a short passage from their winning essay (except for Ms. Piland, who could not attend).

Next, our seniors were asked to speak, and each of them gave a wonderful "senior reflection." Each student shared with us their experiences, challenges, and different paths to becoming a Women's Studies major. Janika Corprew was first, as she was a December 2006 graduate. We then heard from Caitlin Currey, Benita Diggs, Corie Nixon, and Amy Reeb, all May 2007 graduates. Their stories were all truly inspiring, and many in the audience commented on the strength and persistence of each speaker. Jennifer Fish and Kathy Pim then handed out certificates to all the students receiving a major, minor, or graduate certificate. Many of these students, along with Anita Fellman and Jennifer Fish, are pictured here at our party in Webb Center.

Jennifer Fish closed our ceremony by thanking Ruth Triplett for her work as Acting Chair for the spring semester. The department presented Ruth with a photography



Back Row: Benita Diggs, Laura Soulsby, Dorothy Shaffer. Front: Anita Fellman, Jessica Dambruch, Corie Nixon, Amy Reeb, Shana Lipford, Janika Corprew, Rebecca Lauren (Gidjunis), Caitlin Currey, Danea Freeman, Jennifer Fish.

book and many thanks for a job well done! Jennifer then read the graduates a poem, *Wild Geese* by Mary Oliver. The last lines are an inspiration to all: "The world offers itself to your imagination, calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting -- over and over announcing your place in the family of things." Afterward, everyone had a wonderful time meeting old and new friends, while enjoying a variety of refreshments.

In a separate ceremony, Corie Nixon received the Women's Studies Department 2006 -- 2007 Outstanding Student Award (see picture above with Ruth Triplett, Corie, and the Dean of Arts and Letters, Dr. Chandra de Silva).



Ruth Triplett, Corie Nixon, Dr. de Silva

### Winners of the 2006 Women's Studies Student Essay Contest

#### First Prize Winner, Undergraduate Contest:

Corie Nixon, "Shaming the Dictionary: An Analysis of Parallel Terms for Women and Men in Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, written for Dr. Anita Fellman's Capstone course.

#### Honorable Mention, Undergraduate Contest:

Katherine Nicole Piland, "The Effect of Seventeen Magazine," written for Jordan Seller's English Composition Course.

#### First Prize, Graduate Contest:

Shana Lipford, "Women in the French Resistance," written

for Dr. Peter Schulman's French Political Culture course.

#### Honorable Mentions, Graduate Contest:

Rebecca Gidjunis, "When Victorian Women Dead Awaken: Applying Adrienne Rich's Poetic Theory to Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* and Augusta Webster's *Portraits*," written for Dr. Manuela Mourao's Victorian Literature course.

Jessica Dambruch, "Cyborg Women: Culture, Context, and Criticism in *Ghost in the Shell* and *Star Trek: Voyager*," written for Dr. Kevin Eric DePew's Digital Culture and Writing class.

### 2006 Essay Contest: Winners and Honorable Mentions Papers (Excerpts)

#### First Prize Winner, 2006 Essay Contest Undergraduate

#### Shaming the Dictionary: An Analysis of Parallel Terms for Women and Men in Webster's Unabridged Dictionaries

(excerpt)

By Corie Nixon

While dictionary compilers claim to have satisfied feminist demands in recent decades by featuring essays on "Avoiding Sexist Language" (Birnbaum) and including words such as *sexism*, *acquaintance rape* and *sexual harassment* ("Webster's New Universal"), the mere addition of these terms does not detract from the underlying sexism present in the texts overall. Moreover, even when so-called "feminist" or "politically correct" terms are included in dictionaries, they are promptly labeled "ridiculous" and even "dreadful" (Birnbaum). In a 1991 *Time Magazine* article entitled "Defining Womyn (and Others): Random House's New Dictionary is Gender Neutral, Correct- and an English Lover's Disappointment," Jesse Birnbaum laments the appearance of the words such as *herstory* (developed to point to the importance of women's particular historical experiences), *wait-person* (as opposed to the male waiter or female waitress), and *womyn* (a way of avoiding the assertion that women are mere extensions of men). Asserting that English should be "protected from the mindless assaults of the trendy," Birnbaum claims that catering to "the sensitivity of minority groups" both cheapens and "tatters the language" (Birnbaum). Despite positive innovations in meaning of words such as *gender* (in the past referred to strictly biological sex but now listed with sub-definitions such as *gender identity* and *gender role*), it becomes obvious upon closer examination that dictionary makers have failed to truly alter their assumptions of male primacy and female inferiority. However, this point is artfully masked in the very design of the dictionary. Due to the fact that users of the text typically look up the spelling or definition of one word at a time at random intervals, the sexist assumptions deeply imbedded in our society and language usage remain invisible unless explicitly pointed out. While dictionaries

are constructed as authoritative and even truthful representations of the language, in actuality they reflect and reinforce many stereotypes that limit the diversity of women as well as men.

Webster's dictionary all but admits this little known fact in its definitions of the words *man* and *woman*. In 2003, for example, the second definition listed for the word *man* is "a member of the species *Homo sapiens* or all the members of this species collectively, without regard to sex" ("Webster's New Universal" 1166). However, a woman is described as "the female human being, as distinguished from man" (2185). In all four 20th century dictionaries studied, there is no mention in any year of a woman being "a member of the species *Homo sapiens*." Furthermore, it would be absolutely unthinkable to use the word *woman* to refer to "all members" of the species, "regardless of sex," despite the fact that the reverse is acceptable. Instead, the word *woman* is assigned various other meanings, such as "a paramour" in the 1942 dictionary (Neilson 2944), "a mistress" in 2003 ("Webster's New Universal" 2185). Ironically, in each of these examples, women are defined in terms of their service to men, mostly in sexual terms. While Webster's dictionaries openly refer to men as "the species," they strategically position women as the subspecies, a group that cannot be defined in terms of their own essence but only in terms of their relation to men.

In Webster's dictionaries throughout the twentieth century, examples of negative definitions for women and positive definitions from men are abundant. The 1913, 1942, and 1971 dictionaries, for instance, all include *woman* as a term that may be used as an insult; as seen in the illustrative phrase "never woman me!" (McKechnie 2013). A definition from Shakespeare, "to make effeminate or womanish," is also included in the 1913 and 1942 dictionaries. Thinking back to the positive associations of the word *man* when used as a verb (to strengthen, fortify, or brace), one can easily infer that to be a woman is both a weakness and a curse in American society.

## 2006 Essay Contest: Winners and Honorable Mentions Papers (Excerpts) Continued

### First Prize Winner, 2006 Essay Contest

#### Graduate

#### Women in the French Resistance

(excerpt)

By Shana Lipford

The French resistance was a movement that appeared during World War II after France was invaded and occupied by the Germans. Many of the French people overcame their indifference and fought back in clandestine ways. Despite her many historic victories, however, France is often viewed today as weak and ungrateful. Her resistance efforts seem all but forgotten. Yet, some French indeed *did* stand up to the Germans, and in addition, many of these resistance fighters were, despite tradition, *women*.

Women played a significant role in the French resistance of the Second World War - a role which is rarely singled out and given the attention it deserves. Some women, such as Bertie Albrecht, Lucie Aubrac and Marie-Madeleine Fourcade, operated like men, leading networks and groups, making life and death decisions, and commanding others. Other so-called "ordinary" women, identified by the French Communist Party and recognized particularly in the 1970's, participated by fulfilling traditional gender roles (organizing demonstrations for food, or providing food, clothing and shelter for others.) And then some tasks, such as "clandestine propaganda, unusual forms of intelligence collection, [and] courier services," newly surfaced as needs of the movement, and were largely devoid of gender labels.

The most unusual, and probably most important, activity for women in the Resistance was physical combat. These *partisans* typically fought under the French Communist Party, as its unconventional tactics (including sabotage and guerilla attacks on strategically or symbolically significant individuals or installations) introduced more opportunities for women, and, as the Party was outlawed in 1939, women came into the Party during the resistance on the ground floor, serving as liaison agents, and later

taking up arms. Although most women of the resistance remember it as a time of equality of men, most still did not *faire le coup de feu*. Those who *did* participate in combat were typically young single women from urban areas, such as Madeleine Riffaud, a nineteen-year-old who led a guerrilla group from the Compagnie Saint-Juante in the twentieth arrondissement of Paris "specializing in sabotage, train derailments, and attacks on German soldiers."

Other women worked closely with combat operations, although they themselves were not the ones planting bombs or shooting Germans. Their tasks included planning attacks, doing reconnaissance, acquiring and transporting weapons, recruiting fighters and transmitting messages and instructions...It was soon discovered that women best performed these jobs precisely because of their sex -- they had greater mobility and could be subjected to greater exposure because "women were less likely than men to draw suspicion from the enemy." Women often used their position to its greatest advantage by hiding behind their roles as mothers, wives, or lovers, and by using shopping bags, "pregnant" pouches, baby carriages, and even baby diapers to conceal weapons or documents. Some could even flirt their way past security.

The *women* of France, in any case, seem to have a long history and bright future when it comes to standing up to the oppressor. Besides such notable figures as Simone de Beauvoir, the famous feminist, or Charlotte Corday, the Revolutionary assassin, French women are also able to "take it like a man" by leading the troops to victory. As far back as 1924, *la pucelle* Joan of Arc led French troops to military victory and King Charles VII to his throne. Today, the tradition continues. Segolene Royal, the Socialist Party contender for the French Presidential election in 2007, is the first woman to represent a major French party in a Presidential contest. According to her, "There will be pitfalls. There will be tumbles but we will rise up again. There will be wounds but we will heal ourselves. There will be traps but we will go around them." Royal could be talking about her party or her country, but it should at least be obvious, in 2006, that her words apply to the women of France as well.

### Honorable Mention 2006 Essay Contest

#### Undergraduate

#### The Effect of Seventeen Magazine

(excerpt)

By Katherine Piland

*Seventeen* is America's most-read young women's magazine, with more than two million subscribers after sixty-two years of publication. Every month, the magazine reaches over fourteen million readers nationwide. Magazines account for over half of reading done by adolescents. With so many teenage girls reading this magazine, it is important to understand the impression that

the magazine makes on its readers. The cover of the magazine continuously features a picture of a girl or women that has been digitally altered so that there are no flaws. A large portion of the magazine is devoted to advertisements, many that show women who are thin and unblemished. *Seventeen* magazine continuously has "the largest percentage of pages [in each issue] devoted to articles about appearance." Some research proposes that artificial images like these advertisements are to blame for eating disorders in young girls, as well as poor body image and low self esteem. The positive and negative effects of these advertisements on young girls' body image and eating habits should be studied and considered, for the benefit of the readers as well as the magazine.

### \*\*\*\*\* News Flash!! \*\*\*\*\* News Flash!! \*\*\*\*\* News Flash!! \*\*\*\*\*

Twelve students left on May 11 to be part of our **first service-learning experience!** The students, accompanied by Jennifer Fish, arrived safely in South Africa. They have created a blog at <http://www.globenotes.com/odusouthafrica2007>. There are many discussions of adventures, experiences, their work, and the local people, along with incredible and outstanding pictures taken by the students. Please visit their blog and add your comments! They want to hear from you.

## 2006 Essay Contest: Winners and Honorable Mentions Papers (Excerpts) Continued

### Honorable Mention, 2006 Essay Contest Graduate

#### Cyborg Women: Culture, Context and Criticism in *Ghost in the Shell* and *Star Trek: Voyager* (excerpt) By Jessica Dambruch

The infinite and creative mystique available in the world of science fiction, infused with the technological anxieties of cyberpunk fiction and subsequent posthumanist incarnations, has promoted the scholarly feminist examination of cyborg realities constructed through language and culture. In particular, a recent draw for feminist scholars to science fiction is the cyborg as a model of women's postmodern subjectivity.

As traditional boundaries, both physical and metaphorical, dissolve in the wake of technological progress, cybernetic metaphors for embodiment increasingly mediate our relationship and roles in the fiction and reality of increasingly posthuman communications landscape...Perhaps most contradictory and intriguing of all are instances in which cyborgs, beings supposedly free of human constructs, appear gendered as women in popular cinema and televi-

sion. A limited range of study in western cinema and cultural production, however, contributes to the sense of an essentialized model of western female cyborg subjectivity, one which discourages critical discussion of race in the products of international cinema. Japan, for example, as a space of cultural production, is heavily saturated by the influence of post-World War II reconstruction industries and technologies. This contributes extensively to the creation of a equally inspiring, postmodern cyborg mythos that does not uphold, or necessarily share, all of the visual and ideological signifiers commonly assigned to the cyborg woman of western cinema. For example, the Japanese cyborg Major Motoko Kusanagi of Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell* (1995), as opposed to the western cyborg Seven of Nine, from *Star Trek: Voyager* (1995), represent vastly different portrayals of cyborg subjectivity within two very similar narratives.

Careful analysis of the female cyborg within context can allow us to formulate new, productive ways of interpreting fragmented, postmodern identity for women internationally. By remaining content with suppressive representations of cyborg subjectivity, we risk being left with a problematic means to cyborg existence.

### Honorable Mention, 2006 Essay Contest Graduate

#### When Victorian Women Dead Awaken: Applying Adrienne Rich's Poetic Theory to Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* and Augusta Webster's *Portraits* (excerpt) By Rebecca Lauren (Gidjunis)

The Victorian era is characterized not by one identity, but several; not by one voice, but multiple; and in many cases, all are in conflict. This plurality is perhaps most embodied in the Victorian woman, particularly in the various ways that she is portrayed in literature and the periodical press. In late-nineteenth century, Margaret Beethan estimates that at least 120 new periodical titles for women alone hit the market, including magazines that specialized in "mothers", "girls", "fashionables", "women at home", "ladies", and so on." Several periodicals, like the *Women's Penny Paper* espoused the women's movement, but other more traditional titles, like *The Queen*, continued to justify women's roles in the home.

While the women's specialty press allowed women to voice their values and concerns to other women, the literary world was not so generous. For many women writers,

particularly poets, composing literature was an art form that existed primarily for male authors and a male audience. Women poets in the nineteenth century often found themselves writing a woman's story in a man's world. Many had to adopt what W.E.B. Du Bois calls "double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others." Two female poets in particular, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Augusta Webster, successfully overcame unique challenges in order to be extolled by the male critics of their time and appreciated by female readers as well.

Barrett Browning's and Webster's assumed derailment from female poetics and transgression in to the masculine realm of literary readership is largely due to their successful mastery of inherited patriarchal form, as well as simultaneous innovation of that very form.

For progressive Victorian female poets, such as Barrett Browning and Webster, the task of appealing to male and female readership was, to say the least, quite arduous. While constantly maintaining a double, or even at times, triple consciousness, these writers attempted to negotiate between adhering to inherited poetic forms while simultaneously working to transform women's lives, both in poetry and contemporary society.



### The Women's Studies Department is Moving!!!

The Women's Studies Department will move into its permanent home sometime **mid-July**. We will be on the third floor of Batten Arts & Letters Building, and the Women's Studies office will be BAL 3041. We will have a suite of offices; Anita's office will be 3046, and Jennifer's office will be 3044. Our phone numbers will stay the same. Please call 683-3823 if you have any questions.

**Like Minds** is the Newsletter of the Friends of Women's Studies. FOWS promotes knowledge of women through its support of the Women's Studies Department of Old Dominion University. We provide funding for scholarships and other awards, women's studies journal subscriptions for the ODU library, and support of community conferences on feminist topics.



## Mark Your Calendar!

**June 12:** Book reading and signing with Janine Latus.

**Later this Summer:** There will be a welcome back reception for the students who traveled to South Africa. Everyone is invited! More to come soon.

## Friends of Women's Studies Board

### Executive Board:

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## ***Contribute to Friends of Women's Studies!***

► Please help Friends of Women's Studies with their on-going commitments, such as sponsoring women-related events and assisting with students' service-learning.

- \* Make your check payable to the ODU Educational Foundation.
- \* Mail this form with your contribution to ODU, Women's Studies Dept., BAL Bldg., Norfolk, VA 23529.
- \* Be sure to include your name, address, & phone number or email address.
- \* Contact Kathy Pim in the Women's Studies Dept at 683-3823 for additional information (or [kpim@odu.edu](mailto:kpim@odu.edu)).