

Narratives of/on sexuality workshop, Cambridge October 2004

Narrative Workshop VI
Narratives of/on sexuality
Thursday October 28, 10.00 – 5.30
King's College, Cambridge

The Centre for Narrative Research is organizing its seventh one-day workshop, this time focussing on narratives of/on sexuality. The workshop is primarily geared to post-graduate students working in narrative research, but is also open to interested others at any stage in their career.

The day-long event will focus on presentations from five researchers working with narrative and visual images. Each researcher will 'walk through' some data with us, explaining how it was gathered and analysed. The five presenters will be: Sally R Munt, (University of Sussex), who will be discussing spatiality and the sexual self, Joanna Phoenix (University of Bath), who will be discussing narratives of sexuality in the context of policy makers and practitioners views, Matthew Waites (Sheffield Hallam University), who will be discussing narratives of fixed sexual identity in the public sphere

Those needing to stay overnight in Cambridge should visit the Cambridge Tourist Information website, which has a comprehensive listing of available accommodation: (<http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/leisure/accommodation/accommodation.html>). Those needing information on how to reach King's College should visit <http://www.mapquest.co.uk> for detailed instructions.

The workshop is limited to fifty participants. The deadline for applications is September 26. If there are remaining places after this date, applications may still be considered. The cost for the workshop is £65, and includes registration, morning coffee, light buffet lunch, and tea. There are also a small number of bursaried places available; please email Maria Tamboukou (m.tamboukou@uel.ac.uk) for details. Applications must be accompanied by a cheque or money order, made payable to the University of East London.

If you require more information, please contact the Centre's Codirectors, Corinne Squire (C.Squire@uel.ac.uk), or Molly Andrews (M.Andrews@uel.ac.uk) or its chair, Maria Tamboukou (M.Tamboukou@uel.ac.uk).

Name _____

Institution _____

Mailing Address _____

Telephone _____

Email----- _____

Enclosed please find my cheque [] money order [] for £65, made payable to the University of East London.

Please send all application forms by October 7 to Linda Talbot, Centre for Narrative Research, School of Social Sciences, University of East London, Longbridge Rd., Dagenham RM8 2AS, marking your envelope 'CNR Workshop.'

ABSTRACTS

Sally R Munt

“A Spatial Self is a Sexual Self: Queer Heterotopias in Pullman’s His Dark Materials trilogy”

Politically and strategically, we need to recognise and appraise more constructive, positive and agentic models for making sense of ourselves in the world, often culture is ahead of the academy in this respect. A renewed concept of the self, can include a stronger emphasis on temporality, on narrative, imagination and on agency. Using critical sources from Foucault, and Italian feminist Cavarero, I execute a textual reading of Philip Pullman’s Dark Materials Trilogy in order to show that the spatial self is a sexual self, and that Pullman’s novels, by representing a queer heterotopia, allow the reader to imaginatively expand her concept of the self. By doing so, I intend to demonstrate how popular cultural practices are engaged in radical play within the social.

Sally R Munt is Professor of Media and Cultural Studies at the University of Sussex, where she is also presently Head of Department. Sally has written and edited seven books in the areas of narrative, sexuality and culture/Cultural Studies. Her most recent project is ‘The Architecture of Affect: Structures of Feeling in Popular Narrative’.

Joanna Phoenix

Narratives, Sexuality and the Social Context: Policy Makers and Young People in Prostitution

This paper examines narratives of sexuality in the context of policy makers and practitioners views of (i) ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ youth sexuality; and (ii) young people’s involvement in prostitution. In the course of the paper, data from two research projects (Implementation and Database) will be presented.

The paper outlines the theoretical framework that opens the space to link practitioner and policy makers’ narratives about young people with policy innovations and practice outcomes. From there, the paper addresses the specific contours of contemporary understandings of what is considered ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ vis-à-vis youth sexuality. Throughout, this paper argues that a subtle and specific symbolic landscape underpins the narratives that constitute young people as posing risks to themselves, to others and especially to the organisations in which practitioners are located. This symbolic landscape is comprised of highly gendered and conventional views of female sexuality and adult male sexuality.

Joanna Phoenix is Senior Lecturer in Sociology in the Department of Social and Policy Sciences, University of Bath. She has studied involvement in and policies pertaining to prostitution for over ten years and has published widely on the subject. Her other research interests include women and criminal justice, young people and punishment and sexuality. At present she is undertaking a two-year ESRC funded project examining different ways in which professionals talk about and constitute young lawbreakers. She lives outside Bath with her partner and two cats.

Matthew Waites

Narratives of Fixed Sexual Identity in the Public Sphere

This paper will analyse the persistence of the heterosexual/homosexual binary in contemporary society, by examining the circulation of knowledge-claims concerning the age at which the 'fixity' of 'sexual orientation' is established. Drawing upon empirical research on the narratives concerning sexual identity that prevail in mainstream politics (especially from parliamentary debates, many observed at first hand), I will examine how the 'scientific' claims of medical and psychological authorities have been utilised in political debates in the U.K. over equalisation of the age of consent, and argue that such claims have persisted in influence through debates over repeal of Section 28 and legalisation of adoption by same-sex couples.

Critical analysis of these debates requires the integration of social constructionist and queer theory perspectives on sexual identities from sociological and cultural theory, with an analysis of biomedical and psychological knowledges in late modernity. Such analysis demonstrates that the increasing assertion of claims for equality, citizenship and recognition of cultural diversity in mainstream politics is dependent upon continuing assumptions that the prevalence of same-sex sexualities will not increase. The persistence of fixity-claims implies particular tensions and dynamics operating in the lives of bisexuals and queers, and especially in the lives of young people.

The presentation will explore discourse analysis in a context where narrative data (eg. parliamentary debates) is approached with a developed theoretical and political perspective, where expectations about key themes are clear. What are the relationships between data-collection, discourse analysis and engagement with broader currents of social theory in this context? Methodological issues in the process of discourse analysis will be reflected upon in this light. I will reflect on the limitations and benefits of my own approach to analysing narratives.

Matthew Waites is Senior Lecturer in Sociology, in the Faculty of Development and Society at Sheffield Hallam University. He has published journal articles on age of consent laws, the regulation of young people's sexual behaviour and contemporary lesbian, gay and bisexual politics in journals such as *Sociology*, *Social and Legal Studies* and *Parliamentary Affairs*. He is co-editor, with Jeffrey Weeks and Janet Holland, of *Sexualities and Society: A Reader* (Polity Press, 2003); and is completing a book *The Age of Consent: Young People, Sexuality and Citizenship* (Palgrave, forthcoming 2005).