

CNR

Centre for Narrative Research, UEL

*RESEARCH SEMINAR PROGRAMME, 2003-4
1:00 PM, Room N230 or N231 Brooker Building
University of East London, Barking Campus*

September 29 – Jennifer Lehmann – N231

Practice Narratives as a Tool for Reflective Learning

The narrative accounts, or stories, told by human service practitioners and managers of social and community services are a rich source of information about lived experience. They tell us not only about day to day events and the experience of working in human services, but also provide a basis for reflective learning. This seminar will focus on the ways in which narratives can be used as a tool in developing knowledge and reflective practice, particularly with students who have not yet had practice roles and experience on which they can draw.

Jennifer Lehmann is a Lecturer in Social Work at La Trobe University in Victoria, Australia. Jennifer is interested in social work management and organisational studies, and she has explored the use of social- work-practice based narratives as a means for developing reflective learning. Jennifer's broad interests have led to roles in social and community services management, project and consultancy work, and membership on reference groups and boards of management. Jennifer's work has been predominantly in rural and regional areas and encompassed both governmental and nongovernmental organisations.

October 13 - Abiola Ogunsola - N230

Intergenerational storytelling in Yoruba families

This paper will be concerned with preparing the ground for a study of story telling practices in Yoruba families in London. It will describe how such a study might address a major gap in our understanding of how African families in Britain work and start to identify in general terms the challenges that children and young people face in making sense of being African in the UK as well as the implications of these challenges for family relations. It will explain how understanding the sense that Yoruba young people make of being African and their experiences in Britain as well as the roles that key actors play in these processes of sense making, will inform understanding of why racial categories mobilised for the purpose of resisting racism can be counter productive when dealing with individual African children from specific families from specific communities. It will argue that the student body at UEL provides an ideal opportunity to explore these issues and proposes a methodological strategy for conducting such a study.

Abiola Ogunsola is Senior Lecturer in the schools of 1) Cultural and Innovation Studies and 2) Education and Communities Studies at the University of East London. She is interested in African identities and cultures and how these are being understood and remade by African people in Britain and in Africa. Her research activity is about learning from and making links between: Ph D work exploring processes of cultural change in a Yoruba community in

Nigeria; experiences of community development work in African communities in London and teaching and learning at UEL.

November 10 – Nirmal Puwar - N231

Epistemic turns: Re-visioning Britishness

Moving between the yarns of fabric found in our mother's trunks and the documents of ships boarded, visa's obtained, passports and photos from years spent in the colonial British armies, this paper reports on an archaeological expedition that ducks and dives the violating epistemic threads in the work of re-construction. These archives, long forgotten and erased by official national histories need to be recovered and read against the grain of the colonial archive alongside, the trail of adornment wrapped around them. There is an emphasis placed on thinking about how forgotten, erased or de-filed histories can be re-constructed and documented in the public sphere with minimal epistemic violence. Of how different national stories can be engendered without re-subsuming them into the official archive of the nation. Seeking to intervene in public representations of the nation, through the realm of art and museums, the paper considers techniques of knowledge and power as divergent and competing narratives, interests and groups compete in the work of national memory.

Nirmal Puwar is a Senior Lecturer in Sociology at University College Northampton. She has published *Space Invaders: race, gender and bodies out of place* (2003, Berg, in press). She has co-edited *South Asian Women in the Diaspora* (2003) with P. Raghuram and a special issue of the journal *Fashion Theory* on Orientalism (2003) with Nandi Bhatia. She is on the editorial team of *Feminist Review*. Her emergent research is on 'Global Speaking Subjects' www.deriveapprodi.org. She is currently working on a collection of essays on the basis of an AHRB funded project titled 'Britishness: re-visioning erasure' dealing with questions of power and representation.

December 8 –Merl Storr - N230

Female homosociality at Ann Summers Parties

This paper draws on ethnographic research with Ann Summers party organisers in the south-east of England to propose a new theory of female homosociality. . Ann Summers parties are all-female home shopping parties, where heterosexual women buy lingerie, sex toys and other 'personal' products such as massage oils. The parties also include party games, alcohol, and a great deal of hilarity about men and sex. I argue that heterosexual women's interactions and relationships with each other in such homosocial settings have a distinctive structure. This structure is organised around a form of same-sex gender identification - 'being one of the girls' - which is maintained and policed by lesbophobia. This gender identification is highly specific in terms of class (in this case, working-class and lower middle-class) and ethnicity (in this case, white). Homosocial talk about men - which tends to express both desire and disappointment - is exchanged between women in ways which ultimately serve heterosexual men's interests.

Merl Storr is Senior Lecturer in Sociology at the University of East London. Her book *Latex and Lingerie: Shopping for Pleasure at Ann Summers Parties* is published by Berg Press. She has previously published work on bisexuality, sexual identity and the sex industry, and is the editor of *Bisexuality: A Critical Reader* (London & New York: Routledge 1999).

February 9 - Ros Gill - N231

Theorizing Chick Lit: Postfeminist fictions

As part of a larger project concerned with representations of gender in popular media, this paper looks critically at the spate of 'chick lit' novels published in the wake of the huge success of Bridget Jones's Diary. It examines the constructions of the main protagonists, key narratives, and story resolutions, comparing them with 'traditional' romantic fiction such as Harlequin and Mills & Boon romances. The paper explores the complex ways in which these new texts both build on and repudiate feminist discourses and argues that they represent a key articulation of post feminist ideas. Other emerging genres e.g. 'lad lit' and (working) 'mum lit' are also discussed.

Rosalind Gill is a Lecturer in Gender Theory in the Department of Sociology at the LSE. She is author of *Gender and the Media* (Polity, in press) and editor of *The Gender-Technology Relation* (Taylor & Francis, 1995). She is currently writing a book about discourse analysis and completing an interview based research project about young men's identities.

March 8 – Angie Voela - N231

The transformations of a paragraph: images of identity and selfhood in Greek students' writings

When a group of Greek students at Luton University were asked to rewrite in first person an excerpt from a Greek novel dealing with economic migrants in Germany as part of a creative writing exercise, their preoccupation with certain aspects of living abroad overshadowed the literary purposes of the exercise. The present paper attempts a psychoanalytic reading of the resulting texts and a comparison with the original. It focuses on the transformations of the key literary features of the latter and explores the ways in which the attempt to emulate the style of a male writer of the fifties voices anxieties about selfhood, nationality, living in a multicultural community and seeing oneself as other. It also discusses the conditions under which the fictional experience is positivised when transferred into their native country and the ways in which an imaginary identity is constructed out the same move.

Angie Voela is Lecturer at King's College, London. She received her PhD from the University of Edinburgh. Her research interests and publications are in the area of critical theory, psychoanalysis and feminism and the representation of women in modern Greek literature and cinema.

April 19 – David Nightingale - N230

Telling the Wrong Story: Narrative Research and the Problems of

Postmodernism

This paper explores the epistemological tensions between relativist and critical realist versions of social constructionism and examines their implications for narrative research through a particular focus on the interrelationships between language, praxis, and subjectivity. While many contemporary narrative or discursive approaches seemingly propose a resolution to the Cartesianism that has plagued social scientific research, this paper will argue that the majority of these approaches merely replicate rather than resolve this and related problems. Drawing on the work of Giddens, particularly his notions of the 'reflexive monitoring of action' and the 'duality of structure', this paper develops a preliminary sketch of the ways in which subjectivity and language might be reconceptualised as complimentary and co-constituted aspects of praxis.

David Nightingale is Senior Lecturer in Critical Psychology at Bolton Institute (UK). His research interests include critical psychology, social constructionist theory and practice, discourse theory and analysis, feminist theories and methodologies, the philosophy of the social sciences, and theories of the self/identity. He is co-editor (with John Cromby) of *Social Constructionist Psychology: A critical analysis of theory and practice* (Open University Press, 1999).

May 10 – John Munford - N230

Ritual and Resistance - Learning to Labour Revisited

The transition from school to work has been recognised as critical in the construction and interpellation of masculinity and working class identity since the work of Willis (1976). This presentation, based on the analysis of video interviews with adolescent trainees on URF's new E2E programme, explores the means by which the discourses of employability and creativity organise and articulate narratives of identity and aspiration within marginalised and diaspora youth subcultures. The paper concludes with a critical discussion of some of the issues involved in the constitution and regulation of subjective identities congruent with the new imperatives of the post Fordist labour market.

John Munford (MNCH) is the Director and Founder of the Urban Renaissance Foundation, a multimedia and creative arts project training working therapeutically with 'disaffected' 16-19 year olds in Hoxton.