GEXcel – Centre of Gender Excellence

Theme 1: Gender, Sexuality and Global Change

Örebro University Spring 2008

WORK REPORTS FROM VISITING FELLOWS

Professor Violet Eudine Barriteau
University of the West Indies
West Indies

I spent the period April 12th to May 1st 2008 as an International Visiting Fellow of the Centre for Gender Excellence, GEXcel, at Örebro University, Sweden. This has been one of the most intellectually stimulating and productive periods I have spent on attachment to a university or academic exchange programme.

Excellent Research Facilities

GEXcel provided excellent research facilities at Örebro University throughout the period of the fellowship. This was characterised by generous access to the library, large and comfortable office space with computer facilities, internet access and printing\photocopying resources. Particularly significant and helpful was the frequent engagement and discussions with other visiting Fellows, faculty and colleagues of GEXcel and the Centre for Feminist Social Studies. A key benefit of the fellowship was to participate in an informal seminar given by Professor Jónasdóttir to GEXcel fellows, explaining the origins and key concerns of her work.

New Area of Research/New Dimensions to Globalizing Feminist Scholarship

Because of these conditions, I was able to research and write a paper in an area of feminist investigation that is new for me. This research fitted the theme of, 'Gender Sexuality and Global Change,' and fittingly I was able to use a theoretical model developed by a Northern European, feminist scholar and apply it to examining the socio-sexual unions of Women in the South, specifically, the Anglophone Caribbean. I applied Anna Jónasdóttir's theory of love power to theorizing gender, sexuality and power in the Anglophone Caribbean. Building on Jónasdóttir's theoretical work, I examined Caribbean women's socio-sexual unions and began to explore the configurations of material and ideological conditions under which Caribbean women's love power is appropriated. Applying Jónasdóttir's framework enabled me to pose new questions about sexuality and love in a manner in which these dimensions of women's lives have not been previously examined in the Caribbean.

My application of Jónasdóttir's theorising to Caribbean women's socio-sexual relations demonstrates the relevance and applicability of what others have described as the transnational traveling of ideas. This application of a Northern theoretical construct to concrete realities in the South, in no way collapses the lives of women into homogenous, essentialist constructs. Instead, it illustrates that there are foundational features to women's experiences of unequal relations of power in relations of gender and these features are not bounded by geopolitical or cultural borders. This cross-fertilization and application of feminist ideas and analysis also underscores the global dimension of

feminist studies of sexuality and change even as it allows for cultural specificities in different regions of the world.

Output Benefits of the Fellowship

Based on the research completed I delivered a seminar on April 24th, 2008 in the GEXcel's, spring seminar series. I benefitted considerably from the discussions and questions of other fellows, students, faculty and GEXcel colleagues. For example, questions posed by my colleague Ann Ferguson in a conversation on April 23rd, on the eve of my seminar, helped me to refine my discussion of Jónasdóttir's twin components of love power, care and erotic ecstasy. Professor Ferguson's questions about how I perceived the erotic dimension of love power helped me to recognize that there is a caring dimension embedded in the erotic, even as I hypothesized it is women's pursuit of the erotic in their intimate relations with men that leads to their powerlessness.

The GEXcel seminar is the first of many means of sharing the research and multiplying the benefits of this fellowship. On September 30th 2008, I shall present a seminar at the Cave Hill Campus of the University of the West Indies sharing in my academic community the work I completed in Sweden, even as I sensitize this community to the work of GEXcel. I hope to attend the 7th European Feminist conference in June 2009 at the University of Utrecht and present the paper there, which I will refine again following the discussion from the September 30th seminar. The paper has been accepted for publication as a chapter in one of the books that will be published from the GEXcel research. Finally, I have exposed the work of Professor Jónasdóttir and other scholars to graduate students at the University of the West Indies. I have added the book, ***Why Women are Oppressed***, and to the two volumes of GEXcel's "Work in Progress Reports" to our required list of readings. I have also become aware of additional publications by GEXcel fellows, which I have instructed our library to acquire for the benefit of faculty and graduate students.

Conclusion

The GEXcel fellowships were well organised, the living accommodations were good, the hospitality and support of Professor Jónasdóttir and her staff were superb. I truly benefitted as a feminist scholar from this experience. I offer my sincere thanks and appreciation to all the colleagues who made my invitation possible and my fellowship so worthwhile. My one regret was my inability to attend the May conference because of administrative responsibilities, and so participate in a meaningful dialogue with the network of scholars researching the theme, Gender, Sexuality and Global Change.

Professor Ann Ferguson
University of Massachusetts at Amherst
United States

I spent seven weeks at the GEXCel institute at the University of Örebro, from April 7-May 26, 2008. It was a wonderful experience for me as I worked primarily on two papers, both on feminist theories of justice. The first paper, "Global Gender Solidarity and Feminist Paradigms of Justice", was one I gave three times while there, once at a seminar April 29, once during a visit to the University of Gothenberg, and once at the closing conference from May 22-25 for the 2007-2008 theme on Gender, Sexuality and Global Change.

At Örebro University I was able to receive very helpful feedback from colleagues at Örebro and Linköping Universities, particularly Anna Jónasdóttir, Ingrid Pincus, Erika Svedberg, Berit Åberg , Gunnel Karlsson, and graduate student Lena Gunnarsson, as well as Nina Lykke and Jeff Hearn from Linköping University who came to my presentation of the paper. The daily exchanges at lunch with most of these colleagues and on several occasions for dinner, afternoon tea and other informal occasions were really insightful about related issues of theory and politics as well, particularly on feminist theories of gender, love and power, which is also my area of specialty. There was a two day rewarding exchange as well with colleagues from the workgroup that I was involved in with ten other people for the final conference on the theme "Common and Conflicted: Rethinking Interest, Solidarity and Action".

I also benefited from visiting research fellows Stevi Jackson from the UK, Xinghui Zhang from China, Kimberle Crenshaw and Kathleen Jones from the U.S., and Eudine Barriteau from Barbados. The excellent library collection in English on gender studies at the University of Örebro was also very helpful, as were the tips about relevant journal articles that were easily accessible on the library website. I felt very welcomed by the efficient arrangements that were made for me for housing, transportation, office space and equipment by the local administrators of the GEXCel program. While I was there I made final edits to my paper "Anna Jónasdóttir as a Pathbreaker in Socialist-Feminist Theory" for the festshrift collection called *Gender and the Interests of Love* in Jónasdóttir's honor, edited by Kathleen Jones and Gunnel Karlsson, to be published by Örebro University this year.

I also was able to work on a related paper, called "Freedom, Equality, Pluralism, Care, and Solidarity: Feminist Paradigms of Justice" which I wrote for a talk later in June in Barcelona, Spain for the feminist center La Bonne Maison, and the MA in Inter-University Gender Studies there. People went out of their way to be helpful and hospitable, and this fueled an energized context for insightful

intellectual discussion that is rather rare even in research institutes. I feel honored to have been a part of this inspiring process.

Professor Stevi Jackson
University of York
United Kingdom

I spent just over two weeks at Örebro in April 2008 and found it a very rewarding experience. I was impressed by the facilities available to visiting fellows, the efficiency with which the programme was organised and the wonderfully collegial environment. It was such a luxury and to able to devote my time to writing and thinking, interspersed with stimulating and often challenging discussions with colleagues. While such activities are central to academic life, it is rare to be able to devote myself wholeheartedly to them amid the myriad demands of teaching and administration that take up most of my routine working life. I therefore welcomed the opportunity to be freed from my everyday responsibilities in order to engage in sustained intellectual work.

I spent the period of my fellowship working on a paper entitled 'Materialist feminism, the Pragmatist Self and Global Late Modernity', in which I sought to bring together and develop rather different strands of my work, including my recent interest in theorising the self, debates on modernity and a current project on East Asian sexualities. The paper was presented at an internal seminar and at the conference on Gender, Sexuality and Global Change, 22nd – 25th May. I now intend to revise the paper for publication. In addition to the time the fellowship gave me, I benefited hugely from informal discussions with the other GEXcel fellows, Eudine Barriteau, Ann Ferguson, Kimberlé Crenshaw and Xingkui Zhang as well as the academic staff and research students at Örebro. I also found the workshop format of the conference extremely productive and rewarding.

I am very grateful for the opportunity to participate in the fellowship programme and hope that this will lead to further intellectual exchanges in the future.

Xingkui Zhang, PhD student
University of Sydney
Australia

In January 2008, I was awarded a two-month fellowship to work at Örebro University under GEXcel (Centre of Gender Excellence). I started my work on the second week of April and finished my fellowship by the end of the first week in June.

The main research topic that I worked on fell into the first theme of GEXcel: Gender, Sexuality and Global Change. My research was on the issues of married men keeping mistresses in China, which was known as *Bao Ernai* in Chinese. During my fellowship, I presented my research at two occasions and participated in several seminars at Örebro University and Linköping University. I had the opportunity to receive the supervision of Professor Anna G. Jónasdóttir throughout my fellowship.

The following two sections present a detailed description of the major events and other related seminars that I attended.

Major events

On April 24-29, I was one of the GEXcel visiting fellows who held open seminars at Örebro University, which included Eudine Barriteau, professor and head of the Center for Gender and Development Studies, University of West Indies, Barbados; Ann Ferguson, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy and Women's Studies at University of Massachusetts Amherst, USA; Kimberlé Crenshaw, Professor of law at University of California, USA; and Stevi Jackson, professor and director of the Center for Women's Studies at University of York, UK.

My presentation on the 24th of April was called *"Bao Ernai" in China – a Contemporary Form of Polygamy or Sexual Exploitation of Women? Toward a New Approach of Sexuality and Gender*. I received valuable feedback from participants in the workshop and I was particularly thankful to Ann Ferguson and Eudine Barriteau for their comments both before and after my presentation.

The second major event I attended was the GEXcel conference May 22-25. I joined the workshop with a thematic group on "Sexuality, Love and Social Theory". My presentation was on the 23rd, with Stevi Jackson as my discussant. I was co-discussant for Stevi's paper on the 24th. The workshops were well organized and I found it rewarding because I benefited both from reading other scholars' papers and from their comments on my work.

Other Seminars

On April 11, I attended the seminar "*The Soldier Mothers as a Feminist Organization Today in Russi"*, by Elena Zdravomyslova, Associate professor, sociologist and gender researcher at The European University of Saint Petersburg.

Also in the first week, I attended the joint meeting of three gender excellence centers and the seminars that followed: *In/visible Gender in Physics* (Helene Götschel), *the Women-Made City* (Christine Hudson), and *Tango Tourism in Buenos Aires* (Marie Tornqvist).

On May 14, I attended a joint seminar in Linköping presented by Richard Howson from Wollongong University, Australia and Marie Nordberg from Karlstad University, Sweden, on issues of masculinities, which is my major interest in my PhD thesis.

On June 5, I attended a seminar at Linköping University. Tobias Axelsson from Örebro University presented his project on meeting places for parents and Redi Koobak from Linköping University presented her paper on "writing-stories" as feminist methodology.

I attended a small scale seminar on April 30 on the concept of love power developed by Anna Jónasdóttir. On May 30, I joined some PhD students at Örebro University for their seminar on masculinity, intersectionality and postcolonial theory coordinated by Professor Jónasdóttir.

Other Works

I also had the opportunity to use the library and electronic resources available at Örebro University for more readings that are related to gender studies. My stay in Sweden coincided with the Olympic torch relays around the world and the devastating earthquake in Sichuan, China. I collected media coverage and academic work on nationalism, gender and global media; masculinity and information technology; and the debate on the concept of hegemonic masculinity. All these will be research topics for me to follow later. Some of them are parts of future GEXcel themes. I have also collected some data on gender equality in Sweden that I can introduce to a Chinese audience when I return.

GEXcel is planning to publish an anthology of papers from the May conference. I have applied for my paper to be included and have started to revise my paper.

In all, the GEXcel fellowship has provided me with a wonderful opportunity to learn from both established and beginning scholars in research on gender-related issues through international collaboration. As a junior scholar, this experience is valuable in building up my knowledge and ability in my future career.

Finally, I thank Professor Nina Lykke, director of GEXcel, Anna Jónasdóttir, co-director of GEXcel and team leader of GEXcel Theme 1, and the rest of the staff at the Centre for Feminist Social Studies, Örebro University: Gunnel Karlsson, Berit Åberg, Erika Svedberg, Ingrid Pincus, Eva Ljunggren, Lena Gunnarsson, and Tobias Axelsson, for their warm reception and emotional support during my stay.