



Gender Studies Gallery

## Contemporary Women's Writing Association

Renate Haas

The Contemporary Women's Writing Association is a Special Interest Group of the English Association. <http://www.the-cwwa.org/> It grew out of a network founded in 2005 by Mary Eagleton and further well-known champions of UK women's and gender studies, like Lucie Armitt and Imelda Whelehan. "Contemporary" is understood as post-1970. The association aims to bring together "those with an interest in contemporary women's writing inside academic institutions and others outside academia including creative writers, those working in the publishing industry, school teachers and members of the reading public". Its homepage documents a wealth of activities and offers helpful information (see e.g. the "Useful Links" <http://www.the-cwwa.org/resources/>). An important part is played by the biannual conferences. Most of them have taken place in the UK, but some also in the United States, Australia and Taiwan. The conferences of the current decade have highlighted experimental women's writing, environments, literary prize culture, academic feminism in an age of austerity, the body, and new technologies.

In 2007, the journal *Contemporary Women's Writing* (Oxford University Press) was launched, with Mary Eagleton and Susan Stanford Friedman (University of Wisconsin-Madison) as the founding editors. <https://academic.oup.com/cww>. Its outstanding quality was recognised by the Council of Editors of Learned Journals, which, at the 2009 MLA meeting, awarded it the prize for the Best New Journal. Meanwhile the editorial and advisory boards parade many big names from all over the world, including several members of the ESSE Gender Studies Network. *Contemporary Women's Writing* periodically publishes special issues on specific themes. 6.1, for instance, focussed on "Caribbean Queer" and 11.1 on Ruth Rendell. Regularly, the journal also features formal, in-depth interviews with writers. They have included Dominica Radulescu, Chris Kraus, Bernadine Evaristo, Maggie Gee, Marilyn Chin, Shirley Geok-lin Lim, Mitsuye Yamada, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Caroline Bergvall, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Leila Aboulela. Most of these interviews are free to read online. <https://academic.oup.com/cww/pages/interviews> In 2015, an annual essay prize for PhD candidates was established. (Next deadline for submissions: 1 February, 2018, [https://academic.oup.com/cww/pages/essay\\_prize](https://academic.oup.com/cww/pages/essay_prize).)

From the start, the founding "mothers" sought to support the professional development of next generation scholars. They encouraged post-graduate students to establish their own network. <https://pgcwwn.org/> The PG CWWN now hosts a wide variety of events, among them the next biannual conference: "Fast Forward: Women's Writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century", 8-9 September 2017, Sheffield Hallam University. The organisers situate the topic in European and global contexts: "The need to focus on the present and contemporary state

of women's literature seems particularly poignant in a post-Brexit and Trump era in which laws and ideas surrounding the future state of gender, race and class politics are ever more obscure and uncertain." As possible themes they suggest:

- the resurgence of women's confessional writing
- the recent rise in popularity of erotic and romantic fiction
- the emergence of genres such as autofiction and autotheory in women's writing
- writing at the intersection of creative and critical/writing across genres
- writers as public intellectuals and agents of change
- new directions in writing by canonised authors.

(Deadline for the submission of abstracts of 250 words and a short bionote: 30 June 2017  
<https://pgcwwn.org/events/>)