



Biography Seminar 2007-2008 Meetings

October 1, 2007: The topic was “Writing about Men Who Loom Large in Our Subjects’ Lives.” Diane Jacobs, whose subject is Abigail Adams and her two sisters, spoke about John Adams. Kathy Chamberlain, writing about Jane Welsh Carlyle’s life in the 1840s, talked about Thomas Carlyle. Abby Santamaria, engaged in a biography of the communist poet Joy Davidman, spoke about Joy’s husband C. S. Lewis. Kathy also moderated.

November 5, 2007: Nancy Rubin Stuart, whose biography of Mercy Otis Warren will be published in July 2008, and Betty Boyd Caroli, author of *The Roosevelt Women*, discussed a topic many members had expressed interest in: “Problems of Voice, Drama, and Context in Narrative.” Carol Ascher moderated.

December 3, 2007: This session was devoted to another often-requested topic: grants, fellowships, residencies, and writers’ colonies. WWWL members with extensive experience in these areas spoke: Elizabeth Brunazzi, Nancy Kline, Jill Norgren, and Patricia Laurence. Sydney Ladensohn Stern moderated.

January 7, 2008: A discussion of “Women Performers” featured Princeton professor Daphne Brooks, a guest of the seminar, who gave a talk about her complex, many-faceted subject, the nineteenth century performer Adah Issacs Menken. Carla L. Peterson moderated.

February 4, 2008: We returned to a topic of ongoing interest, “Locating the Line between Fiction and Non-Fiction.” Presenters were longtime seminar members Alix Kates Shulman and Patricia Valenti. Alix spoke about her forthcoming memoir *To Love What Is* (September 2008) and Patricia discussed turning from the second volume of her biography of Sophia Hawthorne to work on unearthing a story she had discovered while going through a bag of letter written to her mother by a man Pat never knew. Polly Howells moderated.

March 3, 2008: For “Political Firsts: Women Candidates of the Nineteenth Century” (in the context of the Democratic primary), Jill Norgren talked about Belva Lockwood, subject of her recent biography, who actively campaigned for the American Presidency; and Claire Morris Stern spoke on Helen Taylor, the first woman to stand for Parliament in England. Both women ran for office before women had won the right to vote. Guest Bonnie Anderson, author of *Joyous Greetings: the First International Women’s Movement 1830-1860*, commented. Dorothy O. Helly organized this session, and Kathy Chamberlain moderated.

April 7, 2008: Guest Esther Newton, anthropologist and author, spoke about her memoir-in-progress, *My Butch Career*. Co-presenter was Carol Ascher, whose memoir *Afterimages* will soon be published. Esther and Carol discussed the virtues and limitations of chronological narrative, and when to interrupt chronology, as well as the incorporation of historical events into personal narratives, and the use of photographs. Bell Gale Chevigny moderated.

May 5, 2008: Longtime seminar member Sallie Bingham, author of novels, short stories, plays, poems, and a famously controversial family memoir, *Passion and Prejudice*, discussed her new play. *A Dangerous Personality*, about Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, the founder of Theosophy, is opening in New York in June 2008, at the Julia Miles Theater of the Women’s Project. Kathryn Hearst moderated.