

## **Points of Exit: Biographies on the Move**

On Thursday, March 19, and Friday, March 20, 2009, the Centre for Gender and Diversity, Maastricht University, the Netherlands, will mark its ten-year anniversary with a conference entitled *Points of Exit: (Un)conventional Representations of Age, Parenting, and Sexuality*. The conference aims to examine the potential deconstruction of conventional scripts of age, parenting, and sexuality.

For one of the panels, entitled *Biographies on the Move*, we invite papers that deal with the following theme:

Right now, a wave of long overdue biographies is hitting The Netherlands. Splendid, of course. And yet: academic reflection on life-narratives is not very well developed in the Low Countries. The Dutch could very much profit from English, German and French traditions of life-writing and the theory thereof. We want to mix theory of life-writing with our gender- and diversity-perspective. This means that we want to critically analyse the way in which life-stories are impoverished and flattened by gender-stereotypes, by the inability to look beyond the heterosexual matrix, by colour-blindness. It still remains necessary to analyse the processes of in- and exclusion in the biographical canon. But is it enough to add the forgotten and the overlooked to the line-up of lives that are told and remembered? No: we also have to analyse and repair the structural causes of the process of exclusion. Is there something rotten in the narrative conventions themselves, which are commonly deployed in life-writing? That is the central question of this part of the symposium.

A life is usually told as a linear story, beginning with one's birth, ending with one's death. It is very often told as a story of progress, of growth – some decline at the end since the subject has to die one way or another – but most often the story is a linear, chronological one of development and growth and the acquisition of national or literary or military or political significance. That is a narrative convention, also a cultural topos, which forces every life in a similar mould. To its detriment. This mould itself should be critically questioned. Which life-writings (or films) break with traditional narrative conventions? How and to what effect? What kinds of experiments in life-writing are and could be undertaken?

Send in a 500-word abstract and a short bio to [info-gender@cgd.unimaas.nl](mailto:info-gender@cgd.unimaas.nl) (subject heading: "Biographies on the Move") before November 1, 2008.

We aim at publishing a selection of conference papers in a special issue of a peer-reviewed journal.

For further information on the *Points of Exit* conference, see: [www.genderdiversiteit.nl/pointsofexit/](http://www.genderdiversiteit.nl/pointsofexit/).