A Conversation with Tish Crawford:
Detective Fiction in the Academy

Assistant Professor of English, Norlishe (Tish) Crawford became a reader because of Nancy Drew. Crawford, who specializes in African American detective fiction, told us in a recent interview: "When I was a child I was a reader, but when I discovered Nancy Drew I really became a reader. That happened in about the third grade...As my leisure reading, I always read detective fiction—all kinds, everything from Agatha Christie, Sherlock Holmes, to the hard boiled stuff like Shaft. I was very ecletic, didn't have any loyalties to any particular kind. It was just 'who done it,' I loved the mystery aspect of it."

Tish Crawford came to Bucknell in the Fall of 2000 from the University of Maryland, where her Ph.D. thesis focused on Chester Himes, a middle-class rebel who, by a strange turn of events, became a writer while doing time at the Ohio State penitentiary. Crawford argues that detective fiction, like romance novels, science fiction and other popular culture forms, provides a window on the sensibility of "the folk"; "Detective fiction shows how working class people, middle class people, are thinking about the world they live in. It allows you to zero in on a community and look at it from the inside out, because the detective has to ask all these intimate questions, and find out all the secrets and the subterranean things that are going on in these small communities." African American authors, "raise all these concerns that are particular to being African American. And beyond that, they also try to challenge stereotypical ways of looking at African Americans that exist in the mainstream literature and in hard boiled detective literature...The detective, who represents the value system, the point of view that the reader is supposed to take, is in the character of a black body. The worldview is from the black context."

Detective fiction raises issues of gender roles and relations that Crawford's students often find electrifying. Chester Himes's If He Hollers Let Him Go, published in 1945, has proven to be success in the classroom because, as Crawford relates: "It is so vibrant and alive in talking about the issues of African American masculinity: How does a black male determine 'I am a man' in a society where he accepts the rules of patriarchy, but because of Jim Crow opposition, is shut out of doing the things that men are supposed to do? The male students always love Himes because they identify with the masculinity issues."

Crawford notes that over the years the genre has become much more nuanced in its depiction of characters. The works of contemporary African American women writers like Barbara Neely, who has been invited by Crawford for a reading on March 30,
Calls for Papers, Proposals, and Presenters

March 30, 2003: Minority/multicultural affairs
Proposals for presentation at "Respecting Diversity in Distance Higher Education: A Multicultural and Curriculum Conference," June 5-6, 2003 at Northern Arizona University. Contact: Linda Neff, Northern Arizona University, Box 6025, Flagstaff, Ariz. 86011-6025; (800) 522-2283, fax (928) 523-6395, http://www4.nau.edu/ifwfd/diversity

April 10, 2003: Jewish studies
Proposals for presentation at the annual conference of the Association for Jewish Studies, in December in Boston, Mass. Contact: AJS, Mail Stop 011, Brandeis University, P.O. Box 549110, Waltham, Mass. 02454-9110; (781) 736-2981, fax (781) 736-2982, ajs@brandeis.edu, http://www.brandeis.edu/ajs

April 15, 2003: Gay/lesbian/Gender/Women's studies
Applications from scholars who are conducting research on women and/or gender-related issues to participate in the Affiliated Scholars Program at the University of California at Berkeley. Contact: Affiliated Scholars Program, Beatrice M. Bain Research Group, UC-Berkeley, Berkeley, Calif. 94720-2050; bbmg@uclink4.berkeley.edu, http://socrates.berkeley.edu:7013/programs/appscall.htm

May 14-17, 2003: Working-Class Studies: Intersections with Race, Gender, and Sexuality
Conference announcement. The Sixth Biennial Conference of the Center for Working-Class Studies at Youngstown State University, Youngstown, Ohio. http://www.as.ysu.edu/~cwcs/ Co-sponsored by the Race, Gender, Class Project of Southern University of New Orleans.

May 31, 2003: Queer Matters
Call for papers. An interdisciplinary conference at King's College London, UK Fri 28 to Sun 30 May 2004. 'Queer Matters' is a major international, interdisciplinary conference, organized by the School of Humanities at King's College London, with the involvement of the Center for the Study of Gender and Sexuality at New York University. 'Queer Matters' has been conceived with the aim of interrogating the Anglo-American divide in queer work (both in the academy and beyond), as well as providing a forum for international exchange on topics related to queer practices of all kinds. We envisage the event as an opportunity to take stock of the place of queer in contemporary British and American culture, to consider the differing discourses of queerness that arise in particular locales, and to address the theoretical and political issues that arise from such inquiries. For details go to http://www.queermatters.org

June 1-8, 2003: Comparative Perspectives on Gender, Race, Ethnicity and Nation in Postsocialist Societies and the United States
Conference to be held in Zagreb and Porec, Croatia. Sponsored by the National Center for Curriculum Transformation Resources on Women in collaboration with the Centre for Women's Studies. http://pages.towson.edu/ncctrw/summer%20institutes/summerdefault2.html

July 1, 2003: Working-Class Rhetorics
Call for Papers. The term "working class," through highly contested and socially constructed, refers to a meaningful socio-economic category and cultural marker. While rhetoricians have begun to map out feminist and queer rhetorics, complex rhetorics of race, and contrastive studies western and eastern rhetorics, very little scholarship in the field(s) of rhetoric explicitly seeks to study, understand, and critique working-class individuals, communities, tropes, and cultures. In response to this void, essays are sought for a new volume that will expand the scope of the rhetorical tradition by exploring the definitions and possibilities of working-class rhetorics. http://www.users.muohio.edu/degenaw/cfp.html
July 30, 2003: Special Issue on Women and Wealth
Guest edited by Carmen Diana Deere and Cheryl Doss

October 15, 2003: Diversity
The Murray Research Center offers two different levels of grant funding to postdoctoral researchers drawing on data within the center's Diversity Archive. Contact: Grants Program Administrator, Studying Diverse Lives, The Henry A. Murray Research Center, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, 10 Garden Street, Cambridge MA 02138.

**Race/Gender Resource Center Summer Grants**
Deadline for applications is Monday, April 21, 2003.
Submit proposals to: Race/Gender Resource Center
c/o Susan Reed and Elizabeth Crespo
For Grant Proposal Guidelines see: http://www.departments.bucknell.edu/rgrc/summer_grants.htm

### Coming Events
#### Spring 2003

**Tuesday, March 18**
Olín 268, 7pm

"We Refuse to Continue Seeing Each Other as Enemies..."
A meeting with Palestinian and Israeli peace activists.

**Wednesday, March 19**
LC Forum, 7:30pm

**WOMB WARS: Culture, Power and Reproductive Technology**
Charis Thompson, History of Science, Harvard University
*Heterosex: The Human Embryo in the New Reproductive and Genetic Technologies.*

**Sunday, March 30**
Bucknell Hall, 8:00pm

**A Reading by Barbara Neely**
Author of African American detective fiction, Barbara Neely, will read from her work.

**Monday, March 31**
TBA

**Gisela Hoechler-Alden, Prof. of German, University of Maine**
"From Berlin to Hollywood: Exiled German Authors and Filmmakers in the US."
Authors and filmmakers were persecuted by the Nazis and had to flee Germany in 1933.

**Tuesday, April 1**
LC 241A&B, 4pm

**Race/Gender Resource Center Faculty Colloquy**
Tish Crawford, English Department
"You’re Taking What?!: Teaching Race and Gender Through Detective Fiction"
COMING EVENTS (Con’t)
SPRING 2003

April 4-6
Black Arts Festival

Friday, April 4
Diversity Celebration
Terrace Room, 6:30pm

Monday, April 7
Creative Writing Workshop led by Ana María Shua
Vaughan Lit 102, 11-12noon
Ana María Shua, Argentinean poet, novelist, and screen writer will lead a Short
Story Creative Writing Workshop. (In Spanish)

Monday, April 7
Ana María Shua, lecture
Gallery Theatre, 7pm
“A Writer: Skills and Mysteries”

Tuesday, April 8
Creative Writing Workshop led by Ana María Shua
Vaughan Lit 102, 7-9pm
(In Spanish)

Tuesday, April 8
Social Science Colloquium: History and Nation
Willard Smith Library, 7:30pm
Colin Kidd, University of Glasgow
“Identity Before Identities: Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Historian.”

Tuesday, April 8
Susan Estrich, Prof. of Law at University of Southern California
Weis Center, 8pm
“Sex and Power: The Status of Women in America”
Estrich, a prolific author, legal and political commentator, and veteran of
three presidential campaigns will base her lecture on her most recent book,
Sex & Power.

Wednesday, April 9
Creative Writing Workshop led by Ana María Shua
Vaughan Lit 102, 11-12noon
(In Spanish)

Wednesday, April 9
Anna María Shua, lecture.
Gallery Theatre, 7pm
“Latin American Women Writers and Jewish Writers: What is New?”

Friday, April 11
George Lamming, lecture
Rookie Auditorium, 4pm
“Global Signatures: A Caribbean Literary Perspective,” a lecture by
Barbadian Novelist, George Lamming

Wednesday, April 14
WOMB WARS: Culture, Power and Reproductive Technology
Gallery Theatre, 7:30 pm
Film, “A Handmaid’s Tale,” followed by a discussion facilitated by Ann
Naragon, ’03.

Would you like the R/GRC to co-sponsor a lecture or event on race/ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, nationality, disability, or other
issues of diversity and social inequality? The R/GRC has funds to co-sponsor events. Please contact Elizabeth Crespo
crespo@bucknell.edu or Susan Reed (sreed@bucknell.edu).

Check our Calendar of Events at http://www.departments.bucknell.edu/rgrc for updated information.
Staff of the Race/Gender Resource Center

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