

**Yanbing Er**

**PhD candidate in English Literature, University of Edinburgh**

**Lena Wånggren**

**Research Fellow in English Literature, University of Edinburgh**

We believe that the Theories and Textual Practices project is a great opportunity for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows to directly influence student training in the LLC in the spirit of collaboration. Peer learning is a great way to both learn and teach at the same time – it encourages not only new initiatives in self-guided learning, but also a greater sense of community among the students and staff involved. This series of day seminars will provide a great way for students and staff to interact with their colleagues' research interests, and will hopefully open up for cross-disciplinary discussions on theory and methods.

We have structured the lecture into two parts: the first one providing a thematic and cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary introduction to the study of feminist and gender theory, the second one providing a more historic overview of the ways in which feminist and gender theory has been used specifically within literary criticism. The lecture will involve an element of student/peer participation, so as to get the participants to think about gender and feminist practices not just in their work but in daily life. The second lecture will guide participants through various uses of feminist theory in literary criticism, mapping the broad debates defining the emergence of the field particularly in the late twentieth century.

The structuring of the lecture into two parts will provide two ways of approaching feminism as theory and practice; firstly, by exploring the diversity of the field of feminism, by highlighting different approaches and topics; and secondly, to study more in-depth the uses of feminist theory in our specific discipline, literary studies. This will provide two entry points into the field of feminist research: theoretical and historical.

Some of the current concerns of feminist theory will then be discussed in response to the topics covered in the morning lecture. We have therefore organised the participants into three groups under different critical debates situated within feminist theory, i.e. sex/gender, difference/essentialism, and embodiment/affect. Based on a few key readings set before the actual seminar, the participants will present briefly on the central ideas of these debates, which allows for a more discursive and collaborative turn in the seminar schedule.

Later, we will the seminar to back to a critical evaluation of the inextricable relation between theory and praxis in feminist thought, and how this can be situated in our own work. By drawing again to the historical debates covered during the day, we will examine how these methods or thematic trajectories have changed in light of new developments in the field. This will also give us the opportunity to reflect on our status as academic researchers, and examine the processes of feminist academic criticism itself. The participants will also end the seminar by sharing about the problems they have encountered in their current research. We hope that the seminar would have given a good overview of the current discussions in feminist and gender studies, as well as introduced a more reflexive way of theorising such theories in relation to their own work.