

**PRESS RELEASE**  
**DR. KIMBERLY RHODES TO LECTURE AT SHENANDOAH UNIVERSITY**  
**ON FEMINIST FICTION AND "OPHELIA"**

On Tuesday, March 6, 2007, Kimberly Rhodes will present two public lectures at Shenandoah University. The first, "Models, Muses and Makers: Finding Feminism in Fiction," will be presented at 12:30 p.m. in Henkel 106 on main campus. Dr. Rhodes's second lecture, "Ophelia, Visual Culture and Victorian Body Politics," begins at 7 p.m. in Hester Auditorium, Henkel Hall.

"Models, Muses and Makers" will show that although women artists are still underrepresented and ghettoized, many readers of historical fiction are getting a dose of feminist art history from popular, often bestselling, novels. Book such as Harriet Scott Chessman's *Lydia Cassatt Reading the Morning Paper* (2001), Kate Braverman's *The Incantation of Frida K.* (2002) and *Mary Gordon's Spending* (1998) introduce readers to feminist concerns, including questions of canon formation, patronage, the gendering of power relations within the commercial gallery system and the agency of artists' models while telling compelling stories about women artists.

In "Ophelia, Visual Culture and Victorian Body Politics," Dr. Rhodes will discuss the popularity of Ophelia in the 19th century and show how many artistic representations of the character interact with Victorian ideas about the female body. During the Victorian period in Britain, the shape, function and representation of women's bodies were most often regulated and interpreted by such public and private patriarchal institutions as the family, the medical community, Parliament, and the arts to attempt to insure its passivity, beauty and sexual innocence and protect the notion of separate spheres for men (public) and women (private). As a result, women had a limited amount of formal, cultural power in shaping their own bodily image. A number of emblematic fictional female figures such as Shakespeare's Ophelia dominated the visual culture of the period, functioning as idealized templates of Victorian womanhood that were malleable enough to shape-shift as conventions did as the nineteenth century moved towards the twentieth.

Dr. Rhodes's lectures, presented in celebration of Women's History Month, are generously supported by a gift from Virginia-Wojno Forney. Acknowledging Willa Cather's allusions to Hamlet's Ophelia in Willa Cather's *A Lost Lady*, The Willa Cather Institute has provided additional support. Shenandoah University's Women's Studies program is also sponsoring the talks. Admission is free and open to the public.

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