



Start Blogging *Like a Feminist*

by Laurie Garrison, PhD
WomenWritersSchool.com

'Feminist' is one of the most misunderstood words in the English language. How often have we seen that word twisted into something it is not? Insert your choice: man-hater, bitch, feminazi. I'm sure you can think of more.

So let's do away with any confusion right off the bat.

For me, feminism is a movement that argues for the social, political and cultural equality of the sexes. The belief that patriarchy is bad for everyone—male or female, black or white, wealthy or working class—is an important part of feminism.

For me, feminism acknowledges that despite improvements in the social freedoms of women, especially in the Western World and especially in the last 50 years, we are not yet all equal. In fact, I would argue that one of the most important tasks of feminism as a movement at the present time is to help people see the subtle ways in which we are still oppressed in addition to the obvious inequalities that persist.

I think creative writing has and will continue to play a large role in this task.

How Creative Writing Changes the World

When we write creatively, we often need to imagine ourselves in the place of other people. And I don't just mean where someone lives or what type of car they drive. I mean the exact place. The I-know-everything-they-say-everything-they-think-everything-that-happened-in-their-past-right-down-to-how-they-had-their-cornflakes-this-morning-exact place. That's how you write a character convincingly.

This sort of deep understanding of motivations, thoughts and fears of other people necessitates a lot of empathy, even if the character is

a Lydia Bennett or an Olive Kitteridge. Creative writers who like a challenge like to take on characters like these.

So what happens to all this empathy the writer develops in order to make the reader interested in rather than repulsed by these characters? Ideally, it's passed on to the reader. Imaginative writing is a pleasure to read for this very reason: it puts us in the place of and in the mindset of other people we may never come into contact with the like of in our entire lives.

When people read creative writing, the unsuspecting anti-feminist may meet his dreaded feminazi. And be forced to read from a point of view that is sympathetic with hers. Classists may meet the respectable poor. Homophobes may meet likeable transgenders.

There is a lot of power behind creative writing to encourage people to change their opinions and behaviours. And, there is scientific evidence of the effect that empathy has on readers. In 2013, a study published in Science found that those reading literary fiction showed more empathy in tests that followed than those who had read genre fiction, nonfiction or nothing at all. Some digging around online will reveal more studies and similar claims.

Why Complex Is Even Better Than Creative

One of the things that strikes me as particularly noticeable about the 2013 study is that their 'literary fiction' is comprised of classics and US national award winners. Very white and male, I'm sure, but what this also says to me is that what they were reading is complex. By complex, I mean writing that involves characters that are morally ambiguous, that undermine some of our beliefs, that test us on the things we think we're certain about.

In my mind, complexity is a much more important characteristic than 'literary' or 'genre', 'fiction' or 'nonfiction'. We've all read literary genre fiction and nonfiction that reads like fiction. What I'm getting at is that writing that is complex is ideal for challenging assumptions, no matter what genre it falls into.

This is where blogging comes in. I've read lots of blogs that are full of complex, challenging writing. Also, blogs are meant to be read by a large, diverse audience. How much further could we spread our challenges of convention if we all started blogging about the things we're passionate about and we did so in complex ways?

In order to throw off the shackles of patriarchy, we first need to become aware of its effects, which are often so subtle that they blend invisibly into everyday life. This is what creative, imaginative writing of any genre does: it highlights these effects for people who might not normally see them, whether we are talking about unconscious assumptions about knowledge and experience, disparaging remarks or blatant misogyny.

Becoming aware of and breaking out of the patriarchal conditioning that oppresses all of us is a positive and inspirational thing, no matter who is doing it.

I'd like to help more people do this by spreading high-quality, complex, challenging writing around the internet through blogging. We don't need to be writing fiction in order to help people learn to empathise with each other but we do need to spread these messages far and wide. I think blogging is an ideal medium for making this happen.

What It Means to Blog Like a Feminist

I have always thought that blogging was an intrinsically feminist activity for a variety of reasons. Here's a list of things I think we can all be doing in order to blog like feminists.

Claim Your Voice. Throughout the history of feminism, the idea that women's voices are stifled by patriarchy has always been an important issue, whether we're talking literary silencing or subconscious conditioning that causes us to suppress our real opinions. If you're a creative writer who feels her creative writing just hasn't reached its potential yet due to work and family and social commitments, you can get started changing that right now with a blog.

No matter what you want to blog about, you can do it in a feminist way by claiming your voice, building your community of other feminists and collaborating with them. I'd also love to see you working to raise awareness of inequalities and how they affect your particular niche.

Find Your Community. I would argue that blogging explodes the stereotype of the lone writer slaving away in a sparse, distractionless room where she can hide from the world. When you blog, you might not be interacting with people face to face, but blogging by nature puts your writing in front of new readers. And, once your writing is in front of your readers, the relationship doesn't stop there.

There's good reason that blogging exploded in popularity when the social web came into being with media like WordPress.com, Facebook and Twitter between 2004 and 2006. Now, we not only read each other's long form writing; we can also keep in touch over social media and chat about it whenever we have a free moment. Not surprisingly, there are established blogging communities interested in just about any topic you can think of.

Collaborate with Others. Thanks to all the community-building potential of blogging, it's no surprise that there are so many collaborative blogs out there. I have always seen collaboration to be the preferred way of working for feminists and some wonderful blogs are being managed in this way. For examples, take a look at the Dangerous Women Project and the F-Word as well as the write up of these blogs on pages 6 and 7.

In addition, blogging can be a form of collaboration with your readers. When you blog, what you're making available to your readers is a work in progress that changes, grows and shifts focus over months or years. This is often inspired by comments and questions that come from readers. Blogging is almost like a partnership with readers where both sides think through, analyse and inspire each other about the topics at hand.

Help Raise Awareness. Every social movement has to work hard at raising awareness. As I describe above, I think writing plays a large role in this. For me, writing is the way to highlight the effects of patriarchy, or any discriminatory beliefs for that matter, on a personal level. Writing allows us to see how other people are negatively impacted both in their daily lives and sometimes in terms of the trajectory of their whole lives.

When we place the task of raising awareness within a social, interactive environment like blogging has become, the sky's the limit. I'm looking for talented creative writers to help me teach empathy, raise awareness and, ideally, change the world for the better.

Would you like to be one of them?

Individuals Who Are Blogging Like Feminists

Sarah Tinsley

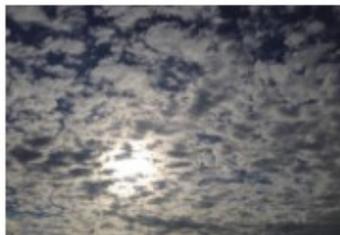
THE POWER OF WORDS



LAZY WRITING



June 5, 2017. Reading time 8 minutes.



FRAGMENT #3 CLOSE PROXIMITY



May 30, 2017. Reading time 2 minutes.



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Sarah Tinsley is a fiction writer and essayist who has published in *Pennyzine* and *Wander Magazine*. She blogs for the *Huffington Post* and she is working on a draft of a novel about gender-based violence.

On her own blog, Sarah publishes short personal essays about gender issues, flash fiction and reviews of books, usually related to feminism and gender. At Women Writers School, we've been really pleased to have Sarah on the author marketing course where we've seen her website transform into its current professional state, one that does justice to the high quality, challenging writing she offers.

Individuals Who Are Blogging Like Feminists

FEMINIST FICTION

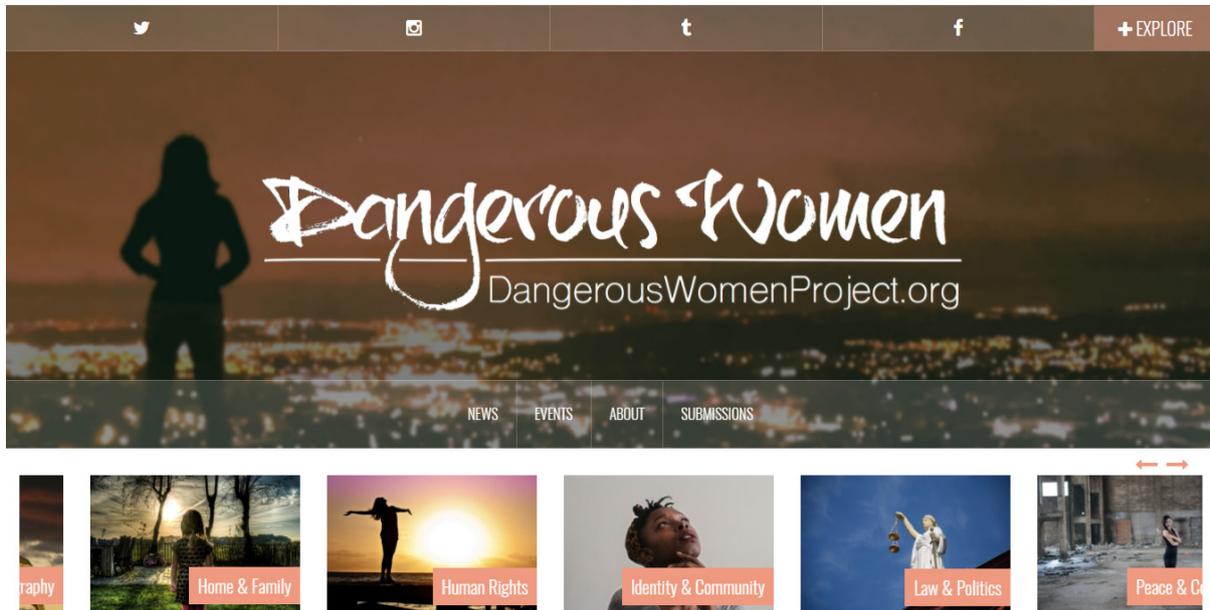
WELCOME BOOKS FEMINIST FICTION THOUGHTS BIO CONTACT



Rhiannon Thomas writes feminist YA fiction, including a feminist re-telling of *Sleeping Beauty* published with HarperTeen. Her blog offers reviews of YA fiction, television series such as *The Handmaid's Tale* and the occasional live show. Her reviews are insightful and she doesn't shy away from the controversial.

Remember the point I made about how complex and challenging can be better than literary? Well, Rhiannon's blog is evidence of this: YA fiction can be complex, challenging and feminist as well as popular. Young readers need to be challenged just as much as the rest of us.

Collaborative Blogs by Feminists



The Dangerous Women Project was an extremely ambitious initiative led by the University of Edinburgh's Institute of Advanced Studies in the Humanities, which specialises in bringing the work of the university into conversation with the public. The Project invited bloggers to contribute pieces in all genres, creative or research-driven, on the idea of the 'dangerous women'.

Posts were published from International Women's Day 2016 to International Women's Day 2017. There is an incredible breadth of different types of posts: poetry, personal essay, videos of performances, historical work, reflections on women in politics, law and science.

The Dangerous Women Project is not accepting posts at the moment, but it is a fantastic place to go for blogging inspiration, whether you want to run your own blog or want to find other people to collaborate with.

Collaborative Blogs by Feminists

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the latest

from the magazine

[DIY Cultures 2017 shows us that counterculture is alive and thriving](#)

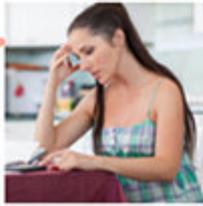
Erin Aniker chats with festival founders Hamja Ahsan, Helena Wee and Sofia Niazi

By [Erin Aniker](#)
8 June 2017

from the blog

[Affording abortion](#)

The Supreme Court has ruled the people from Northern Ireland can't access abortions on the NHS in England. Megan Stodel criticises the inequality this causes



By [Megan Stodel](#)
16 June 2017

from the magazine

[Law, love and the era of the alt-right](#)

Becky Kukla is impressed with how *The Good Fight* tackles issues in the current political climate



By [Becky Kukla](#)
7 June 2017

from the magazine

[An upbeat, upward trajectory](#)

The recent release of Octo Octa's latest album 'Where Are We Going?' leaves Joanna Whitehead in no confusion that the only way is up for Maya Morrison-Bouldry

By [Lucana Taylor](#)
14 June 2017

from the blog

["I am drawn to the fire": Being Ruby Rich programme at London Barbican next week](#)

Sophie Mayer introduces Being Ruby Rich, programme of screenings and talks celebrating feminist film critic coming to London next week

By [Sophie Mayer](#)
15 June 2017

Weekly round-up and open thread

This week's collection of interesting links from around the web chosen by the F-Word team - includes articles on the UK General Election and the recent Wonder Woman film, which has been dividing opinion

By [Lucana Taylor](#)
14 June 2017

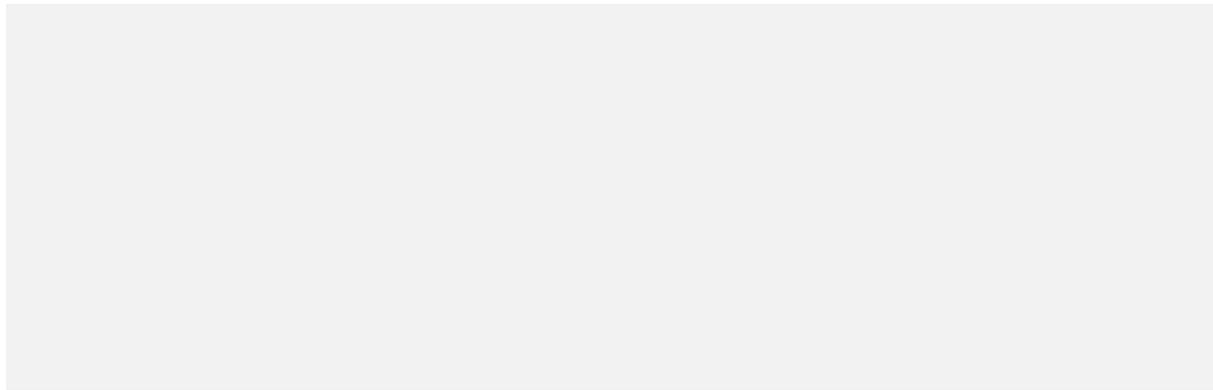
The F Word was founded in 2001 when Catherine Redfern realized there was a lack of exciting feminist magazines in the UK either in print or online. The mission of The F Word then was to offer a medium that would appeal to 'young' feminists (ie, 3rd wave feminists). The focus has since changed to 'contemporary UK feminism'. Readers of all ages are encouraged to submit articles and blog posts for publication with The F Word and there is a special interest in encouraging new voices, though contributors need to be 'UK feminists' wherever they are currently based in the world.

The F Word's wide range of interests - music, film, theatre, books, politics, popular culture - make it an ideal place to find out what other feminists are interested in and writing about.

Start Planning Your Feminist Blog

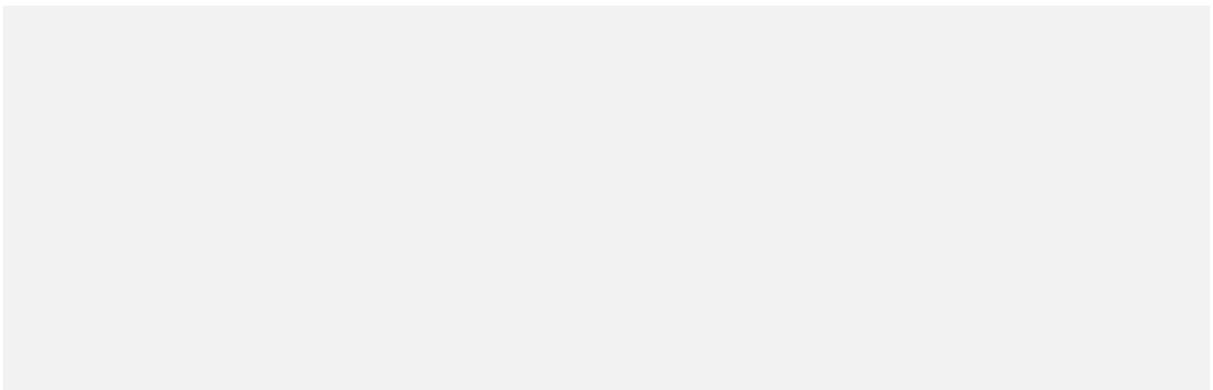
1. What will you blog about?

Let's imagine you're planning to start blogging like a feminist today. If you need some help coming up with ideas, think about what's going on in your life that you'd like to share with other people. Are you working on any new projects? Or do you have some old hobbies that need a refresh? Don't think too hard, just jot down two or three ideas that come to mind. We'll expand on these out as we go.



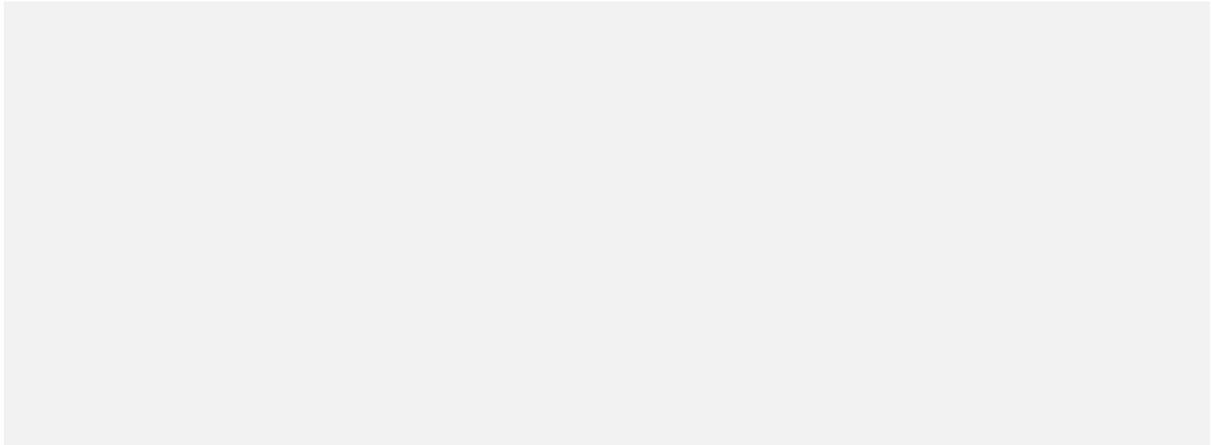
2. Could you do a life writing blog?

Some of the most popular blogs I know of are about books, motherhood, health and careers. Have any of these had a big impact on your life? What could you share that you know lots of people have also experienced? What could you share that's unique to your experience?



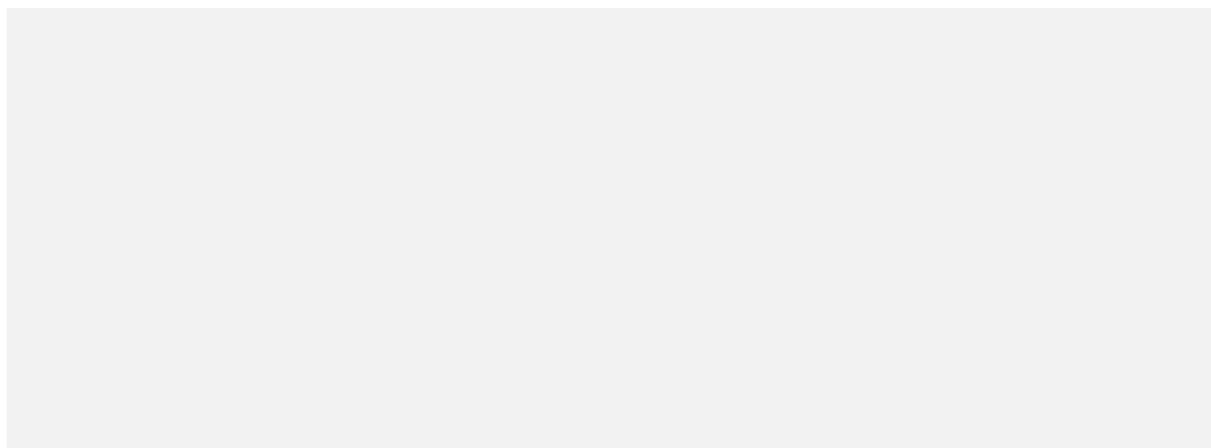
3. What are your passions?

You're probably here because you love books and writing and you've done at least a little creative writing yourself, but that doesn't mean that these are the only things we can blog about. What else are you passionate about? What are your hobbies? What do you long to do when you're looking out an office window waiting for the weekend to come around?



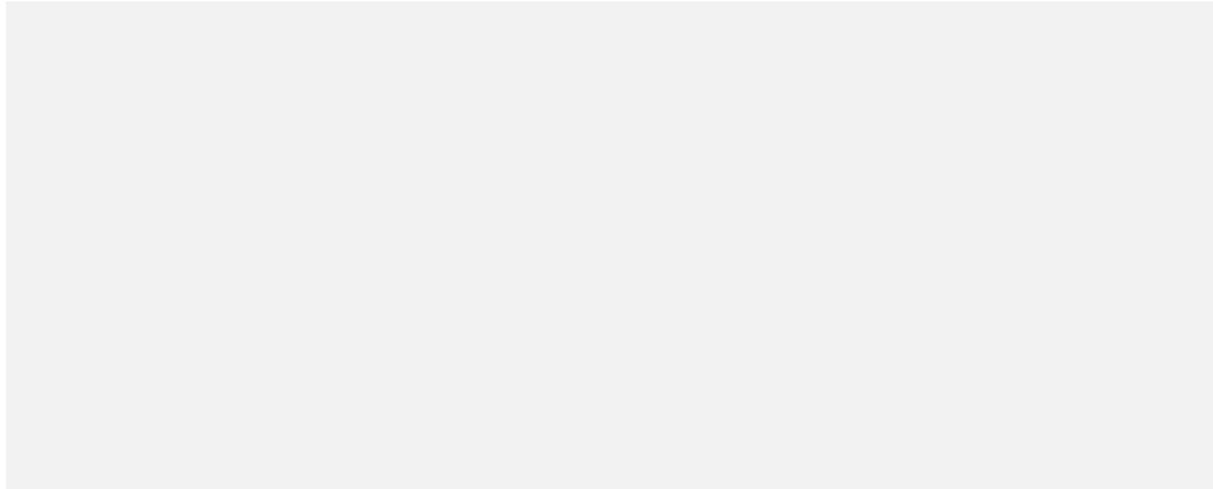
4. If you were going to plan a blogging challenge for yourself, what would it be?

I know of lots of bloggers who plan reading and writing challenges for themselves. Ann Morgan read and reviewed a book from every country in the world in 2012. Others have planned challenges about reviewing books by women or writing a blog post every day for several months. Does one of your passions from question 3 lend itself to a challenge? If you can create a tight deadline to meet, it can make for some really fun, suspenseful reading.



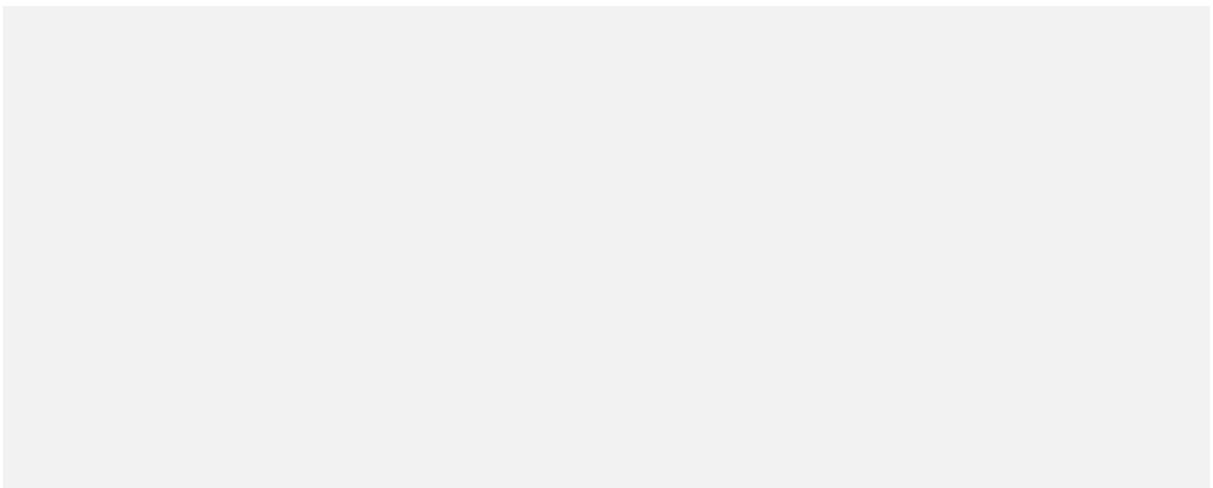
5. Taking account of your responses in questions 2 and 3, if you were to write about your life or one of your passions, could you write about it in a feminist way?

Maybe your hobbies are pursuits that need rescuing from the depths of underestimation (like a lot of stereotypically female activities). Maybe lots of people make assumptions about you as a result of your career and family choices.



6. If you were to pitch a guest post to either The Dangerous Women Project or The F Word, what would you write about?

If another collaborative blog suits your interests better, aim for a topic for that one. This is only hypothetical at the moment so dream big. What would you like to write about more than anything else? What blog would you most like to see your name and photo on?



About Women Writers School

Women Writers School.

Women Writers School has a special mission of empowering women writers to write, publish and market their work with confidence and expertise. We acknowledge that even though our university programs and our publishing industry are 80% female and women buy two thirds of the books in the UK, books by men receive more reviews, more awards and they are considered more 'literary'. We think this is unfair so we are working to change it.

To this end, we offer courses in online author marketing as well as blogging and we run an innovative Women Writers Network where women writers take part in a collaborative author marketing program and network through virtual events.

About Laurie Garrison



Laurie Garrison is an academic, writer and advocate of women writers. Through Women Writers School, she is working to create an online, international network of women writers. The Twitter chat she organizes as a part of Women Writers School has been described by *The Guardian* newspaper as 'hearteningly radical'.

In her previous career as an academic, her publications on Victorian literature and history were reviewed in the *TLS* and shortlisted for the international ESSE award. She is currently working on a piece of historical fiction about William Morris in Iceland.