

OCT09

CELEBRATING
25 YEARS!

CSW
update

BY VIVIAN DAVIS

Mona Simpson

**Q&A WITH THE BESTSELLING NOVELIST AND
PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH**



Photo: Amy Etra/Outline

Mona Simpson writes novels. Her 1987 debut, *Anywhere But Here*, follows Adele and Ann August, a mother and daughter who move from the Midwest to Los Angeles in search of a less ordinary life. The novel went on to be a national bestseller, winning the Whiting Award in 1986, catapulting the author into the literary spotlight. Simpson followed her first novel's success with a

sequel: *The Lost Father*, published in 1992. In it, Simpson's character searches for her Egyptian father, who's been absent all her life, and her quest takes her to New York City and eventually, Egypt. Four years later, Simpson returned with *A Regular Guy* (1996), another work that limns the father-daughter connection, this time between a Silicon Valley millionaire and his estranged, illegitimate

child. That same year Granta named Simpson one of America's Best Young Novelists. In 2000, Simpson published *Off Keck Road*, a novel about a small town spinster, a man who has always been in her life, and a young girl, who completes the odd triangle. This work was a finalist for the PEN/Faulkner Award.

A fascination with places and the people who inhabit them characterizes Simpson's

OCT09

IN THIS ISSUE



25th Anniversary Year: Upcoming Highlights

THIS YEAR MARKS OUR 25TH ANNIVERSARY!!

CSW has countless achievements to its credit over the past 25 years, all made possible through the dedication and contributions of its former directors, affiliated faculty, students, staff, and supporters. This year, we are also celebrating several notable milestones and accomplishments:

- This summer, we completed our two-year Community Partnership grant with the June L Mazer Lesbian Archives, processing and digitizing five of their major collections and also facilitating an ongoing, long-term partnership between the Mazer and the UCLA Library.
- CSW's research project, Women's Social Movements in Los Angeles 1960 to 1999 (WSMALA), received generous funding from a donor and is currently under con-

sideration for a number grants, including a Haynes foundation grant.

- AY 2008-09, was the first year CSW launched the Irving and Jean Stone Graduate Student fellowship awards program, granting a recruitment fellowship to an incoming Women's Studies student and awarding five Dissertation Year Fellowships in collaboration with Graduate Division to students whose research focuses on our mission issues of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Issues.
- This year, CSW will be launching our Graduate Student Initiative that formalizes some of the services we already provide to graduate students and introduces some new programs. Details will be forthcoming in the next issue of the newsletter.

I hope you will all join us for CSW's birthday party. It will be held on February 22nd and will feature noted feminist historian Joan Scott, who will speak on the history and importance of feminist research centers and women's studies' programs. Her talk will be followed by birthday cake and dance music that specifically speaks to our feminist mission (think Aretha Franklin and M.I.A.).

Another anniversary highlight this year, of particular interest to graduate students, will be the plenary for Thinking Gender. Co-sponsored by the four ethnic studies research centers (each is celebrating their 40th anniversary), the plenary will feature graduate student papers on gender and ethnicity and a secret guest respondent (whose name we will reveal as soon as we get the event set up). And we will have an even larger venue this year so that there will be seating for everyone!

FACULTY CURATOR SERIES



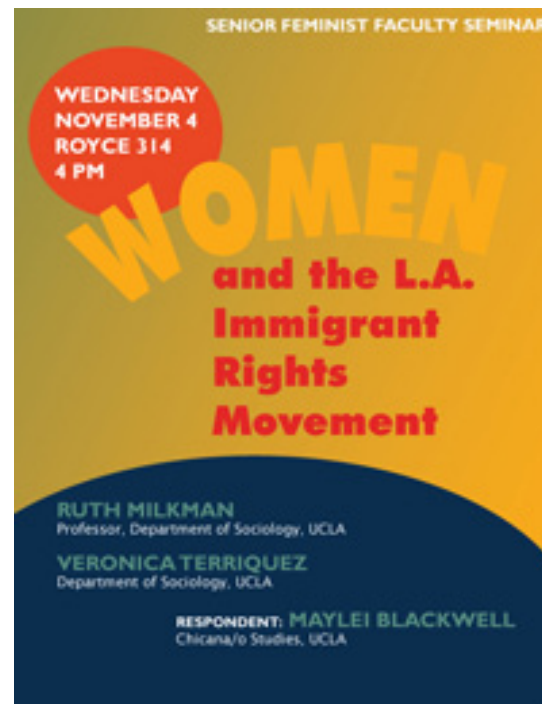
Faculty Curator: Abigail C. Saguy, Department of Sociology

In addition to these and other anniversary events, CSW will also have a speaker's series on "Gender and Body Size" in Winter quarter, guest-curated by Professor Abigail Saguy in Sociology which promises to be very exciting. We will also have two senior feminist

faculty seminars, the first, on November 4th highlighting the work of Professor Ruth Milkman on "Women and the LA Immigrant Rights Movement" and the second, in Spring quarter, featuring Professor Vivian Sobchack, whose title has yet to be determined, but will focus on Barbra Streisand.

As you can tell from this line up, we have a very exciting year planned. Please plan on joining us in our celebrations.

That's the good news. I hardly need to tell you that in addition to our celebrations this year, CSW also faces, as does every unit at UCLA, considerable challenges in confronting the state budget crisis. We are doing everything we can to advance our mission – which is as vital and necessary as at any time in the center's history. You can help by staying involved, paying attention to what is going on and letting your voice be heard. It is vital that we all act to protect the UC as a world-class public research university dedicated to access, public service, and diversity.



Here at CSW we have an important roll to play in that regard, and we are committed to contributing our part, and we look forward to your participation in that effort through the year.

— Kathleen McHugh

oeuvre. Her novels dramatize human bonds and the geographic sensibilities that inform them: mothers and daughters in the heartland, daughters and fathers in Egypt, women and men in a small Wisconsin community. Her upcoming novel, *My Hollywood* (Knopf, Spring 2010), depicts the upstairs/downstairs ironies, enmities, and strange affections between a community of immigrant nannies and their employers in contemporary Los Angeles. Presently, Simpson has begun a story about the lives and loves of Diaspora Arabs in Europe, the Gulf, and the United States, and of their more assimilated, half-American cousins. Considering traditional and non-traditional marriages and contemporary divorce, Simpson's novel aims to look at what it means to love and to marry in the twenty-first century.

Not only a bestselling novelist, Simpson is also a Professor in the Department of English, where she teaches workshops on creative writing to swarms of eager undergraduates.

She also plays an active part in organizing the Friends of English and Hammer Museum's popular "Some Favorite Writers" series, a regular event that brings notable literary talents right into the heart of Westwood.

On a recent summer afternoon, I sat down in a Brentwood coffee shop with Simpson to talk about her work and, in particular, *The American Cousins*.

Your current project is about marriages: traditional and nontraditional. The topic is timely given our current political climate. The passage of Proposition 8 last November both intensified the debate over same-sex marriage and brought to the fore questions about what counts as "family." How does this context figure into your thinking about a novel like *The American Cousins*?

Love, courtship, and marriage have always been essential elements of the novel. Without those plots the novel as a genre may not exist. Domestic daily life is a perennial subject for fiction, though the how-to elements change with every era. People fell in love and married a hundred years ago, but we do those things in a way that reflects our culture and our

conscious and unconscious beliefs. Tolstoy didn't write about kids whose fathers were numbers on index cards in sperm banks or about blended families. I have first cousins who had arranged marriages. One of my cousins who married on his own, while in graduate school here in the States, later divorced and let his mother pick his bride the next time. At least in my family, though, the arranged marriages I witnessed felt less like the arranged marriages one encounters in *A Passage to India* or even in the work of Jhumpa Lahiri. They more closely resembled a really well run on-line dating service.

In other words, the family sought suitable grooms for my intelligent young cousin, arranged with the families to meet, and then paid an orchestrated formal visit. At the end of one of these vetting sessions, which had involved six family members flying to another part of the country where the young man attended medical school, my cousin decided the boy was too short. We will not go forward, my father said, to the father of

the medical student. And another candidate was found, researched, and presented. This happened many times.

How did you begin your research for the novel? Academics are often committed to the idea of toiling away in the archives or working out in the field, compiling textual evidence or hard data. What is your process as a fiction writer?

[Laughs] We have more fun. Usually I tend to write first and research later. There are good and bad things about that. The good thing is that you get only what you need. The problem with research in and of itself is that you're likely to unearth so many uncanny and resonant details that it's tempting to put them in, even where they don't belong. Of course, you learn less. Researching as you go along, you gain a greater depth of knowledge, but I'm usually looking for details. Statistics and trends are easy to come by, but what I want are the textures of daily life.

That's what's so engaging about your books. They're all very interested in the quotidian, the everyday things that make up

any given place. I've always been struck by the description of Westwood in *Anywhere But Here*: the apartment buildings, the car models, the menu at Hamburger Hamlet. Given that you write about Los Angeles in such detail, I have to ask if you like living here. It's one of those cities that people seem to love or hate.

I've felt everything towards Los Angeles: I've loved it. I've hated it. It's home to me. I have living history here. I run into people I went to high school with almost daily. I trust my intuitive rapport with the place and our misunderstood culture. I loved living in New York but I would never write with authority about that city. I'm not a New Yorker. I'm an Angelino, for better and worse.

Within Los Angeles, you also seem to have found a home in the intellectual community at UCLA. How do your colleagues and students shape your creative experiences?

From my colleagues I find out about books I need to read and realms of thought I hadn't even considered. I was on a Hardy binge this summer, for example, and I'm sure almost everyone in the English department could talk

to me about Hardy in a way I'd find totally fascinating and even intimidating. But you know how it is with books. If you read it five years ago, it's not palpably alive in your mind. What's so great about teaching is that you read something you're excited about or troubled by and you give it to fifteen students and you discuss it that week. You've all just read the same thing and they care about the forms and risks of contemporary fiction just as you care about them. Students bring their experiences and their curiosity to the classroom.

Are there unique challenges you face when teaching at UCLA? I know you've held appointments at other universities.

The quarter system has been a bit challenging for me. Teaching writing depends on trust, for the students to work together and expose their raw efforts. It seems that just when the class becomes comfortable and raucous and the students start taking risks in their work, the tenth week comes around.

In addition to teaching, you're also curator of the Friends of English and Hammer

Museum’s Some Favorite Writers series. In the past, you’ve hosted readings by Amy Hempel, David Foster Wallace, Michael Cunningham, Wole Soyinka, and well, this list goes on. How did you become involved?

I became involved when I came here because there was a tremendous poetry series, which had been running from decades, but there wasn’t really an active fiction series connected with the English department. The Hammer has a wonderful atmosphere for us. It’s a vibrant, urban, discursive place.

It does seem a bit tricky to juggle a public persona and a private self, to always be thinking of your answers to these kinds of questions in terms of public relations. As an author how do you feel about readings and publicity tours? Are they events you look forward to?

I just received an email from a good friend whose novel is on the bestseller list right now, with the subject heading “I’m never going on a book tour again.” We all say that. Every time. And then we go again, if we’re lucky enough to be asked. It’s taxing and draining because

it’s so unlike what we normally do; you walk into a morning radio show and the host turns to you and says, “what’s so interesting about your book?” That can be a dumbfounding question. If you could summarize what you’re going to do in a book in two good lines, you’d be a copywriter. It wouldn’t take you 300 pages to intimate and suggest that ineluctable experience you’re trying to give that feels new to you and recognizable and yet so far unnamed. If you could do it in two pity lines, God knows you wouldn’t spend years writing those 300 pages. Book tours are a job of acting, really.

Interesting that you should describe it that way. Do you find your work to be different on page as opposed to stage? How does your relationship to the text change during a reading?

It’s really an act of translation. One of my favorite novels is Marilynne Robinson’s *Housekeeping*. It’s a deep, beautiful book, maybe one of the ten best of the last century, but the first time I heard her read it, I didn’t like it. There are definitely passages that are great on the page, and others that are great

orally. There is overlap, but it’s not complete. Internality is one of the last major territories for the novelist and in readings, sometimes those internal swings are more difficult for the audience to follow. An audience wants to participate in some way. People want to laugh, to express some emotion. We need permission to voice our response. Writers are not in the business of doing that every five minutes when we’re working on the page. It’s a different medium.

David Sedaris was in town, and I was struck with his unusual way of working. He says what he does is that he prints out the reading with huge margins and takes notes during the actual reading, such as “Audience laughs here,” or, “No laugh there.” Then he goes to the hotel that night after the reading and revises, based on audience reaction. He’s really a performance artist, a monologist. He shapes his work to glean the maximum ideal response from an audience.

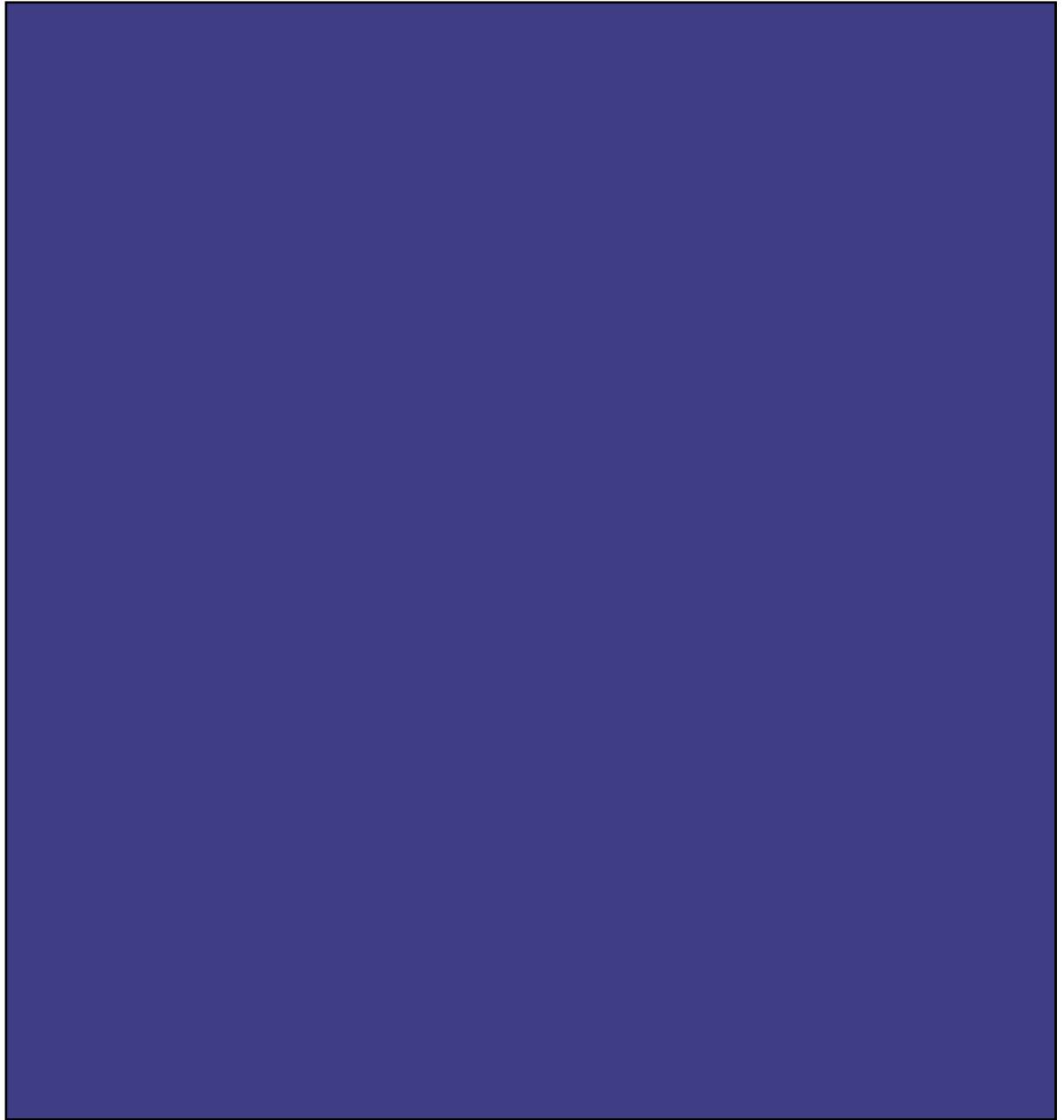
That might not be exactly the same endeavor as trying to write for a private reader.

This all brings me to my last question for you, which has to do with what other projects you have slated. What else are you working on or would you like to work on?

I have two books I want to write; one is *The American Cousins*, a novel, and the other is a straight-out memoir, or short biography of my father's life. He's the youngest son of a large, prominent Syrian family. He was the first person in his generation to break away completely. He came to America in 1956 and he hasn't been back since.

Mona Simpson is a best-selling novelist and Professor in the Department of English at UCLA. In 2008-2009, she was awarded a CSW Faculty Research Seed Grant for her project, The American Cousins. This fall the "Some Favorite Writers" series at the Hammer Museum is scheduled to host an evening with Mark Sarvas on October 20 and one with Yiyun Li on November 18.

Vivian Davis is a doctoral candidate in the Department of English and a contributing writer for CSW Update. She is currently completing a dissertation on comedy and tragedy in the long eighteenth century.



by Elizabeth K. Goodhue

talking with the dead

SARAH FIELDING'S POSTHUMOUS LIVES AS A FEMINIST CHALLENGE TO MENIPPEAN LAUGHTER

“The thing about biography,” he said, “is that you always know how the story ends.” This remark was made by a noted professor of eighteenth-century literature during the annual lecture at the 2009 meeting of the British Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies (BSECS). What struck me most about the comment on that chilly January afternoon was not the offhand tone in which it was voiced, but the awkward chuckles that rippled through the audience afterwards, prompting a smile—half sheepish, half relieved—from our speaker. Death was not mentioned, but it was clearly the specter giving rise to these signs of wary amusement. I couldn’t help but wonder if the audience’s hesitancy to laugh outright—my own included—stemmed from the fact that a joke about death’s ability to render all biographies the same brought mortality uncomfortably close to the here and now that we shared as conference participants.



Portrait (possibly) of Sarah Fielding



Listening to stories that refuse to fit squarely into established literary traditions has long been a hallmark of feminist scholarship.

As I think back on that morning, it seemed even then that more was at stake in our nervous laughter than merely the dubious pleasure of *memento mori*. The moment marked our accession to the speaker's proposition that the plot of life-writing and the plot of human lives share a similar telos, one ending in death. And if the laughter at BSECS was a little uneasy that day, then mine


was doubly so. I was scheduled to present a paper the very next morning on texts that defy that plot by refusing to uphold death's finality. Are texts still "biographical" if they claim to document speech voiced from beyond the grave? The chuckles shared by the host of historians and literary critics gathered at BSECS would seem to suggest not. But thankfully, the CSW Travel Grant that I received ensured

that I left Los Angeles with the confidence to brave the assumptions of my colleagues (along with my jetlag) and argue that shades of the dead deserve to have their voices heard at a conference themed around "Eighteenth-Century Lives."

Listening to stories that refuse to fit squarely into established literary traditions has long been a hallmark of feminist scholarship. Early efforts to expand the eighteenth-century canon by including women writers were instrumental in turning critical attention toward texts like those that formed the basis for my talk, "The History of Anna Boleyn" (1743) and *The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia* (1757), both written by eighteenth-century author Sarah Fielding (1710–1768). The "History" and the *Lives* present biographical history in the guise of posthumous autobiographical speeches, and scholars of the works have often noted how this post-mortem perspective allows Fielding's controversial queens to reflect on the stories told about them by male biographers. My conference paper, however, like the dissertation chapter from which it was excerpted, argues that Fielding offers an equally important critique of

a strain of classical satire that denies women access to the posthumous speech that men enjoy.

The satiric tradition in question came down to eighteenth-century British writers by way of Lucian of Samosata (2nd century CE), whose *Dialogues of the Dead* features the skeletal shade of Menippus of Gadara, an older Greek philosopher and satirist (3rd century BCE) whose works have since been lost. Lucian's Menippus ridicules everyone he meets in the underworld, but he offers especially strident criticism of the only woman represented there in detail, Helen of Troy. Unlike the men who occupy Lucian's Hades, Helen never speaks in her own defense. Her silence reduces the dead courtly woman to a figure that only ever means what men say—and what Menippus says is that she epitomizes the ravages that death rightfully wreaks on all beautiful objects. When, in other dialogues, Menippus encounters men trying to enter Hades bearing luxurious clothing and goods, or just good hair, he accuses them of “effeminacy.” Even once they have been stripped of their property (including their rosy cheeks and folds of flesh), he scoffs at their fragile womanly skulls,

 *“The History of Anna Boleyn” and The Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia, both written by eighteenth-century author Sarah Fielding, present biographical history in the guise of posthumous autobiographical speeches...this post-mortem perspective allows Fielding’s controversial queens to reflect on the stories told about them by male biographers.*

mocking them into a silence that recalls that of Helen.

Lucian thus not only suggests that silence is the only afterlife available to women, but also calibrates the level of access that male shades have to satiric speech against a silence coded as feminine. Surprisingly, however, Lucian's Menippean dialogues have rarely

been considered to constitute a significant antifeminist satiric tradition, particularly not in eighteenth-century studies (where Juvenal has held pride of place on that count, even though Lucian was also widely imitated). Reading Sarah Fielding's posthumous (auto)biographies against Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead* exposes the limitations of critical assumptions about

satire's literary history and simultaneously helps make sense of why Fielding's dead queens spend their afterlives telling stories about the relationship between gender, power, and satiric language.

Analyzing Sarah Fielding's efforts to critique the antifeminist underpinnings of Menippean dialogues plays a pivotal role in my dissertation, "Graveyard Plots: Menippean Afterlives and Satiric Authorship in Eighteenth-Century Britain." In this larger project, I argue that the underworld from which Lucian's dead Menippus speaks constitutes a representational site of paramount importance for how many eighteenth-century satirists figured authorship and literary afterlife. But while male satirists such as Jonathan Swift, Laurence Sterne, and Sarah Fielding's brother Henry found an expansive afterlife of ongoing cultural critique affirmed by the laughter that Lucian's Menippus sustains after death, female writers found a genre that all too often presented eternal ridicule as the foregone conclusion of women's lives. Although Lucian's *Dialogues* refuses to plot death as the end of satire's story, his text still treats women as if their status as objects of scorn quite literally



Reading Sarah Fielding's posthumous (auto)biographies against Lucian's Dialogues of the Dead exposes the limitations of critical assumptions about satire's literary history and simultaneously helps make sense of why Fielding's dead queens spend their afterlives telling stories about the relationship between gender, power, and satiric language.

goes without saying. In this sense, the laughter of Lucian's Menippus betrays a far more insidious version of the assumption that one always knows the end of life's story before it begins. While "Graveyard Plots" aims to redress this assumption in various ways, one of its most crucial interventions is in listening to the voices of female satirists, like Sarah Fielding, whose revisionist contributions

to the Menippean dialogue's afterlife in eighteenth-century Britain have continued to be marginalized in histories of the genre.

Elizabeth K. Goodhue is a doctoral student in the Department of English and a recent recipient of a CSW Travel Grant.

Queering Feminism

a perspective by Cassia Paigen Roth



“It is somewhat remarkable [in] a panel on queering feminism that there was no lesbian content,” Heather Lukes of Occidental College said in her closing remarks at the “Queering Feminist Theory” event at UCLA on October 1, 2009. “It is not a complaint,” Lukes continued; in fact, by not linking queer and feminist theory through the figure of the lesbian, the panelists “are working at a limit between what queer theory can think and what feminism can think.” The presentations of Jennifer Doyle and Carol-Anne Tyler attempted to historicize feminist contributions to queer theory by critiquing

contemporary queer theorists’ negation of feminist influences, particularly in the work of Lee Edelman.

In her response to Doyle and Tyler, Lukes analyzed Ariel Levy’s book, *Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture* (Free Press, 2005), to explore the contemporary intersections between feminist and queer sexuality. According to Lukes, Levy’s book takes an orthodox, pre-sex wars feminist stance towards the “tawdry, tarty, cartoonlike version of [female] sexuality” seen in female attendance at strip clubs and participation in shows like *Girls Gone*

Wild, which, Levy argues, “has become so ubiquitous [that] it no longer seems particular.” Lukes, however, described Levy’s book as an example of queer envy, or the heterosexual displacement of pleasure onto the queer community. As Lukes said, “Culturally I think we come to the queers with the ideas that these people know how to enjoy.” This “inherent” knowledge of pleasure, however, is made possible by the queer’s role in society: “We are now looking at a period where the pervert actually appears as this figure of too much enjoyment. And in our culture whether we like it or not that pervert tends to be

homo.” Levy’s work then, is functioning as a cultural superego, a police force, that uses the 1970s feminist sex war debate to promote socially “acceptable” forms of (hetero) sexuality. When mainstream society narrows its acceptable bounds for heterosexual performance, even straight female sexuality becomes “queered,” or placed outside the mainstream.



In the sex wars of the 1970s and 80s, second-wave feminists became vehemently divided over the issue of female sexuality in general, and pornography in particular. The feminist “anti-porn” crusades were led by attorney Catherine MacKinnon and radical writer Andrea Dworkin. MacKinnon argued that a truly feminist theory of sexuality would depict “sexuality as a social construct of male power: defined by men, forced on women, and constitutive in the meaning of gender.” Through pornography, female subordination “becomes both sexual and socially real.” As Dworkin wrote, “Male power is the *raison d’être* of pornography; the degradation of the

female is the means of achieving this power.” Feminists wanted to remove sexual liberation from the socially constructed and perverted version represented in pornography. Activists rallied around anti-pornography legislation, hoping to make pornographic images a violation of a woman’s civil rights.

The opposition saw this crusade as censoring free speech by employing a rigid definition of human sexuality. Using the “primacy of pleasure” theory which saw sex as physical and genital, not emotional, activists such as Gayle Rubin and Pat Califia denounced the position that one feminist theory of sexuality could encompass all women. Citing the need for their own “queer” sexual theory that did not associate the sexualization of women with sexual inequality, they supported sadomasochism and butch-femme dynamics as healthy and integral parts of queer sexuality and not something to be dismissed as male patriarchy. What emerged from the debate, according to B. Ruby Rich and Catharine R. Stimpson, was a rigid binary. Traditional feminism became equated with anti-pornography activism. This view saw political and social equality as inherently

opposed to women’s sexualization. Anytime you looked at a woman as a sexual object, you replicated her role as an object in society. The opposing side rejected the woman-as-victim model, positing that female eroticism was a form of resistance. Sometimes objectifying women—or men—was a healthy part of sexuality, and to repress someone’s practice or pleasure was just another form of social policing. While neither side truly represented a monolithic group, the public discourse separated feminist and lesbian activism. Relegating eroticism and homosexuality to the margins, this new definition of sexuality set up a duality that separated feminism from queer theory.



Yet the “queer as pervert” paradigm is being challenged today. According to Lukes, the “figure of the homosexual...in the United States is facing this movement of assimilation where gay marriage seems to be a mainstream issue.” Backlash against this movement has appeared in queer theory, especially as practiced by white men. As it moves away

from the realm of social engagement in an attempt to distance itself from any movement towards the mainstream, it separates itself from its feminist predecessors. Lukes argues that queer of color theorists, such as José Muñoz and Rod Ferguson, “give homage to Audre Lorde, give homage to the influence of Gloria Anzaldúa. And yet there seems to be this tremendous gap between feminist predecessors of contemporary [white] queer theory.” In fact, pivotal books such as Kate Millett’s *Sexual Politics* or Shulamith Firestone’s *The Dialectic of Sex* are now out of print.

While the absence of feminist theory in contemporary queer theory is commonplace, the panelists have particular criticism for prominent queer theorist Lee Edelman’s book *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (2004). In her presentation, “Blind Spots: Queer Theory and Abortion Discourse,” Jennifer Doyle worked to connect abortion and queer theory through a critique of Edelman’s book. As Doyle attested, “Abortion plays a key role in Lee Edelman’s *No Future*. This may come as a surprise to some readers of his work not only because his text is wholly

uninterested in women but also because this fact has not been taken seriously in any of the critical responses of his book.” In discussing current pro-life depictions of the fetus as separate from the mother and therefore deserving of life as a human being, Edelman connects women who abort to men who have sex with men; both represent a direct threat to compulsory heterosexuality’s reproductive futurism. As figures who are not “fighting for the children” by reproducing, they remain outside the boundary of heteronormative representational logic. Their conscious rejection of what many see as biological necessity comes to embody outsider status in Edelman’s view.

Then why, asked Doyle, does Edelman step over feminist theory’s “complex fight” against the humanistic logic surrounding reproduction and abortion? The absence of this historical debate puts Edelman “awfully close to speaking from exactly the reproductive position he so forcefully challenges, speaking as child cut from mother.” By not recognizing the feminist political, philosophical, legal, and artistic contributions to the abortion debate in this

case, and queer theory in general, Edelman and other queer theorists are disconnecting themselves from their roots.

In her presentation, “No-Future: Feminism, Queer Theory, and the Ethics of Sex,” Carol-Anne Tyler asked the question, “Is there no shared future for feminism and queer theory where the ethics of sex is concerned?” While the two fields’ interest in sex is mutual, their approaches and understandings often differ considerably. According to Tyler, “Whereas feminist theory sees sexual difference at the heart of sex, queer theory sees sexuality, testifying to an antagonistic structure of sex that cannot be overcome...by a happily coupling of the two fields.” Yet in her critique of Edelman’s book, Tyler sees a rejection of both forms of sexuality. His dismissal of heteronormativity comes at no surprise. His denunciation of gay assimilation movements that seek to imitate the heterosexual drive for reproduction as a way to legitimate their worth, however, is provocative in that it separates queer theory from gay sexuality. As Tyler articulates, Edelman “repeatedly condemns reproductive futurism whether articulated by heterosexual

or liberal lesbian and gay imitators.” This aggressive stance not only rejects any form of homosexual attempts at the nuclear family, but also disallows for any political organization by homosexuals. Edelman sees both efforts as participating in a discourse of futurism in which gays have no part.



In his recent talk, “Queerness and Radical Evil,” at the 2009 LA Queer Conference also at UCLA, Lee Edelman elaborated on his thesis in *No Future* while exploring the place of queer theory within education. In what seemed a response to both Doyle’s and Tyler’s arguments, Edelman stated that he is not interested in queer theory’s connection to sexual orientation studies or the affirmation of various forms of identity. Instead, he argues that “queerness” is a larger issue; it is what we, as a society, choose to put outside the “knowable.” This, as we have seen, could include men who have sex with men or women who choose to abort. Moreover, in queer theory, as in any system of knowledge, there exists a continuous gap

in the ability to fully satisfy one’s desire for knowledge or desire for others. Edelman, working within a Lacanian frame, argues that all positive knowledge’s claims or desires originate from a “lack.” We desire others because they promise to complete us, and we look to the future because it promises to bridge the gap. Children represent our desire to continually gesture forward, to mask and suppress our current lack, which is why all political movements motivate us with the promise of a better future. Queer individuals, by embodying the present, rather than the promise of future satisfaction (of knowledge, sexual desire, or our continued life through reproduction), threaten our cultural investment in the future. By refusing the future of heterosexual reproduction, gay men and women, or women who choose to abort, refuse to suppress the present to the future. Yet as assimilation moves the queer’s status into the realm of the socially understood and “knowable,” there still remains the need to “other” someone else. In order to not do this, according to Edelman, gay individuals should embrace their status and refuse to buy into the dominant narrative of futurity.

Cassia Paigen Roth is a first-year Ph.D. student in the Department of History in the Latin American Field and a Women's Studies concentrator. She earned her B.A. in Latin American Studies, Spanish, and Gender and Women's Studies at Bowdoin College in 2008. Her undergraduate thesis focused on state discourse and policy surrounding family planning in twentieth-century Argentina. She is currently working on two papers: one on the discourse of motherhood in Argentina from 1976 to 83 and one on beauty ideals and practices in Brazil.

Author's note: I thank Lauren Clark of Ohio State University for her significant contributions to this article.

Note: Part of the the year-long Andrew W. Mellon Sawyer Seminar, “Homosexualities, from Antiquity to the Present: Worlds, Subjections, Visibilities,” “Queering Feminist Theory” was chaired by Kathleen McHugh; Lee Edelman, Tufts University, presented at the recent UCLA Queer Studies Conference 2009 organized by LGBT Studies. For more info on the Mellon Sawyer Seminar, visit <http://www.english.ucla.edu/sawyer/>

Faculty Development Grants, 2009–10



FACULTY RESEARCH COMPLETION GRANT

Dawn M. Upchurch

Professor, School of Public Health

Midlife Women's Use of Complementary and Alternative Medicine for Self-Care, Menopausal Symptoms, and Health Conditions investigates midlife women's use of CAM for health maintenance and for management of menopausal symptoms.



FACULTY RESEARCH SEED GRANTS

Eric Avila

Associate Professor, History, Chicano/a Studies, and Urban Planning

Limited Access: The Gendered Politics of Highway Construction in Urban America undertakes a comparative history of urban

highway construction during the 1950s and 60s, after the impact of the National Interstate and Highway Defense Program, which brought the federal government into the business of building a national urban and interurban highway network.

Keith L. Camacho

Assistant Professor, Asian American Studies

Between Okinawa and the Marianas: Gender Power and the Right to Speak in the Post-9/11 Pacific is an ethnographic research project on the formation of social activist groups in the CNMI, Guam and Okinawa during the post-9/11 era. The study is interested in the ways in which the creation of US foreign and territorial policies since 9/11 have shaped the conditions for militarization and anti-militarization movements in Asia and the Pacific.

Robin Derby

Assistant Professor, History

Boca del chivo: Rumors of Power and the Power of Rumor in the Caribbean treats Haitian and Dominican rumors about the state. With examples

ranging from the eighteenth century to the mid-1990s, the project traces circuits of popular narration as they change in meaning from one national or class constituency to another, and as they move from the state to popular sectors and back, with attention to plot, allegory, metaphor and formulaic elements such as condensed symbols.

Christine Dunkel-Schetter

Professor, Health Psychology Chair, Psychology

Trial of a Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Intervention During Pregnancy conducts a controlled pilot trial in a small, ethnically diverse sample of pregnant women in order to examine the feasibility and efficacy of a standardized 6-week mindfulness-based intervention aimed at reducing prenatal stress and strengthening coping skills.

Hannah Landecker

Associate Professor, UCLA Center for Society and Genetics

Epigenetics and the New Politics of Prenatal Nutrition and Maternal Care examines the

intersection of science and the politics of reproduction, looking at how new discourses in the genetic sciences reconfigure ideas of the relationship of care between parents and their fetuses and babies, as well as the relationship of care between societies or governments and women of reproductive age.

Aamir Mufti

Associate Professor, Comparative Literature

Homes and Homelands: Gender and the Iconography of India's Partition explores the iconography of Partition in the visual arts and the ways in which distinct understandings of the Partition and its legacies can be produced through the visual image. The project is interested in particular in the work of Zarina Hashmi, an artist who has been based in New York for more than thirty years.

Margot Quinlan

Assistant Professor, Chemistry and Biochemistry

Regulation of the Actin Cytoskeleton During Oogenesis seeks to understand the role of the cytoskeleton in determining polarity during egg and embryo development. During early development, polarity is required for body axis establishment, the first step in developing the complex body plan of multi-cellular animals. We are currently focused on

understanding the roles of two proteins, Spire and Cappuccino, which regulate the cytoskeleton and are essential for proper egg development in fruit flies as well as mammals.

Saskia Subramanian

Assistant Resident, Psychiatry & Medicine,
with Thuy Tran, M.D.

Health Risks Associated with Hormone Replacement Therapy and Alternatives Available to Menopausal Women seeks to conduct in-depth interviews and focus groups over the course of six months with 12 physicians who regularly treat women suffering from menopausal symptoms. It is the project's goal, through open-ended interview instruments, to explore how physicians decide upon appropriate standard of care of menopausal symptomology in their own patient population, how the clinical decision-making process unfolds, and their perceptions of patient help-seeking patterns.



JUNIOR FACULTY RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

Lucy Burns

Assistant Professor, Asian American Studies

Puro Arte: On the Filipino Performing Body traces the Filipino performing body in various sites, which include early American plays about the Philippines, the Filipino patron in the U.S. taxi dance halls, theatrical performances about the Martial Law, and the phenomenon of Filipino actors in Miss Saigon.

Jo-Ann Eastwood

Assistant Professor, School of Nursing,
with Dr. Noel Bairey Merz

Estrogen Deficiency and Cardiovascular Disease in Premenopausal Women evaluates the stability of Hypo-E in premenopausal women and identifies associations between Hypo-E, other reproductive hormones, noninvasive markers of CVD and environmental stress in this population. This pilot study provides an initial first step by confirming these links. Such pilot data are essential for future development of treatments to prevent or reduce CVD in premenopausal women.

Nina Sun Eidsheim

Assistant Professor, Musicology

Touched From Afar: Towards a Phenomenology of Voice as Becoming posits that a logocentric perspective (which places a higher value on the study of printed scores and libretti than on the performance thereof) has guided the majority of research on voice and vocal repertoire within the Western musical canon. The project questions this platform through an exploration of the extrasonic dimensions—the body and physical space— of singing, and through listening to timbre in ways suggested by the work of four female composers: Juliana Snapper, Björk, Meredith Monk, and Kaija Saariaho.

Michelle A. Johnson

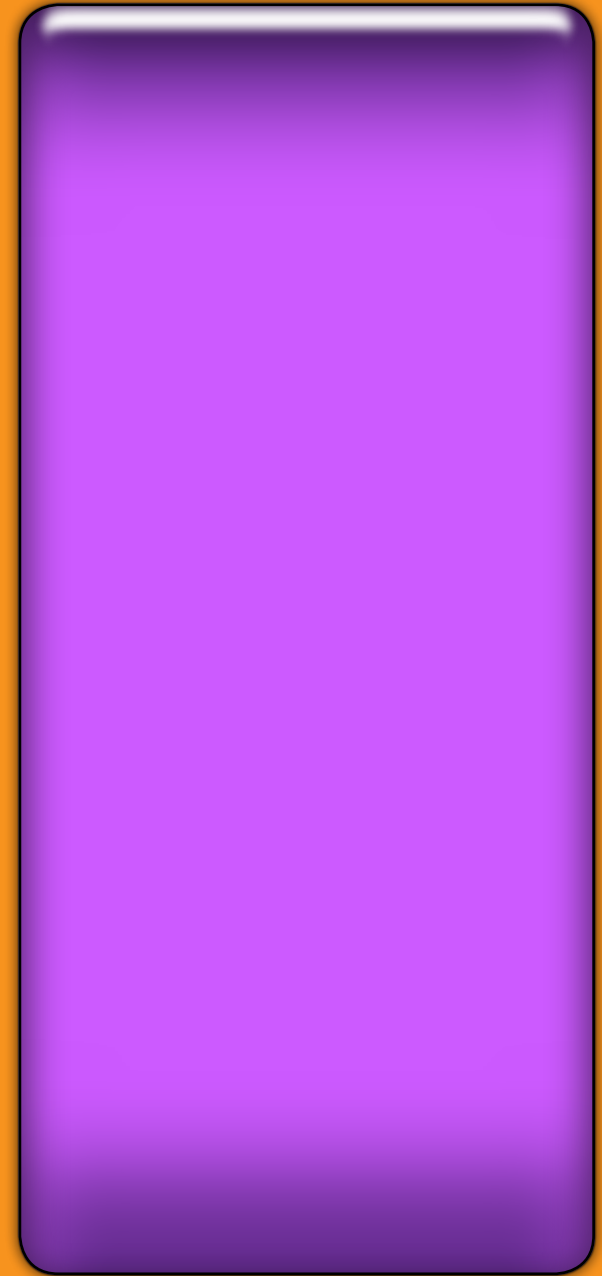
Assistant Professor, Social Welfare

Neighborhoods, Networks, and Perinatal Health Disparities among Women of Mexican-Origin in Los Angeles : Implications for Intervention seeks to build knowledge regarding the ways in which neighborhood dynamics contribute to maternal and infant health disparities by examining the social networks of women of Mexican descent.

Katrina Daly Thompson

Assistant Professor, Applied Linguistics & TESL

The Popobawa's Discursive Trajectories: A Critical Analysis of Sexuality and Gender in a Coastal Tanzania Urban Legend explore the linkages between the discursive phenomena associated with *popobawa*, a Tanzanian urban legend of a giant bat-like creature who is said to break into people's homes at night, paralyzing men and raping them, and the construction of attitudes toward sexuality in modern coastal Tanzania.



UCLA CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WOMEN

DIRECTOR	<i>Kathleen McHugh</i> PROFESSOR, ENGLISH AND CINEMA AND MEDIA STUDIES
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR	<i>April de Stefano, Ph.D.</i>
MANAGING EDITOR	<i>Brenda Johnson-Grau</i>
ADMINISTRATIVE ANALYST	<i>Jessie Babiarez</i>
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT	<i>Patricija Petrač</i>
STUDENT ASSISTANTS	<i>Sarah Cho, Chelsey Crowley, Hao Dieu, Angelica Lai, Alfonso Orozco, Erin Hill, Sadie Menchen, Ben Sher, and Wenpeng Zou</i>
CAMPUS ADDRESS	1500 PUBLIC AFFAIRS BUILDING 722203
MAILING ADDRESS	UCLA CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WOMEN BOX 957222 LOS ANGELES, CA 90095-7222
PHONE/FAX	310 825 0590 / 310 825 0456
EMAIL	csw@csw.ucla.edu

CSW Update is the newsletter of the UCLA Center for the Study of Women. It is published monthly during the academic year. UCLA faculty, staff, and students are welcome to submit articles for inclusion. If you have questions, please email the publications staff at csw-pubs@women.ucla.edu

EDITOR/DESIGNER

Brenda Johnson-Grau

EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS

*Sarah Cho, Hao Dieu, Sadie Menchen,
and Wenpeng Zou*