

Friends of the

# PEMBROKE CENTER

## Newsletter

## \$5 million gift establishes endowed directorship for the Pembroke Center as we welcome new leadership

The gift, from Class of 1976 Brown alumna Shauna Stark, is the largest in the Pembroke Center's history. Leela Gandhi, who succeeds Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg, will be the first to hold this endowed position.

### Announcing the Shauna McKee Stark '76 P'10 Directorship for the Pembroke Center

All of us at the Pembroke Center are delighted and honored to share with the Friends of the Pembroke Center that, with her recent gift of \$5 million, Pembroke Center Advisory Council member Shauna M. Stark '76, P'10 has permanently endowed the directorship



Shauna M. Stark '76 P'10

position at the Pembroke Center for Teaching and Research on Women. This gift comes at a time of transition for the Pembroke Center, as Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg completes her second term as director and we welcome Leela Gandhi, John Hawkes Professor of Humanities and English at Brown, as the inaugural Shauna McKee Stark '76, P'10 Director of the Pembroke Center. *[Please see the associated story.]*

By endowing the directorship, Stark has given the Pembroke Center the gift of permanence—the directorship will last as long as the University lasts—while providing the director with the ability to flexibly allocate funds that will strengthen the Center's mission, bolster existing

### Introducing Leela Gandhi, the inaugural Shauna McKee Stark '76 P'10 Director of the Pembroke Center

Leela Gandhi will be the inaugural Shauna McKee Stark '76, P'10 Director of the Pembroke Center, beginning her three-year term on July 1, 2021.

A literary and cultural theorist whose research and teaching focus on transnational literatures,

postcolonial theory and ethics, and the intellectual history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Gandhi joined the Brown faculty in 2014. She is the John Hawkes Professor of the Humanities and English and serves on the steering committee of the [Center for Contemporary South Asia](#) at the Watson Institute. At the Cogut Institute, she leads the [Humanities in the World Initiative](#), and she is a Senior Fellow in the School of Criticism and Theory at Cornell University.



Leela Gandhi

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## From the Director



As I look back on my seven years as Pembroke Center Director, I am heartened by the growth and progress we have made here, and I am truly excited about the Pembroke Center's future. I am so moved to complete my tenure at the Pembroke Center by sharing the wonderful news about the newly established Shauna McKee Stark '76, P'10 Directorship for the Pembroke Center, and the appointment of Leela Gandhi, a truly extraordinary scholar and leader, as the incoming director. The endowment

ensures that Leela will be able to advance the Center's mission from a position of strength.

It is exciting to imagine what the future holds for the Pembroke Center, and gratifying to look at all that we have accomplished together.

Our postdoctoral fellowship program and research agenda are internationally renowned, and I know that the Pembroke Center will continue to cultivate exciting and necessary scholarship. The Pembroke Seminar will remain a forum that, like *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, represents the leading edge in feminist critical studies.

I look forward to the continued growth and development of the Gender and Sexuality Studies program (GNSS), which equips undergraduate and graduate students across the University with the tools to examine the complex ways that "differences" are produced culturally, politically, and epistemologically. The students who win Pembroke Center prizes and grants demonstrate how they are using GNSS to advance knowledge – like [Whitney Arey's dissertation](#) on the biosocial aspects of abortion access and decision-making

or [Lyle Cherneff's thesis](#) on family-making in the postbellum South – and create new, impactful projects, like 2018-19 Linda Pei Undergraduate Research Grant winner Francesca Raoelison's anti-intimate violence nonprofit Omena, which [continues to make news](#).

The [Pembroke Center Archives](#) has become a research destination for scholars from the U.S. and around the world. When I became director at the Pembroke Center, we did not yet have Mary Murphy on board as the Nancy L. Buc '65 Pembroke Center Archivist, because that position did not yet exist. Nor was there the assistant archivist position, made possible by Shauna Stark, that Amanda M. Knox has so wonderfully filled.

Our public programming is recognized as contributing to both theoretical feminist discourse and public conversations about feminism and forms of difference. Just recently, over 1700 people from across the globe attended the Judith Butler lecture we hosted.

The Pembroke Center's strength is derived in great part from the strength of our community, and the constancy of the Friends of the Pembroke Center. The incoming director will be fortunate, as I have been, to advance the mission of the Pembroke Center knowing that she has the Friends, and their committed advocacy, at her side.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg'.

Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg  
Director

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In our previous newsletters, we announced [two related name changes](#), but we know old habits can be hard to break! As a reminder, the name "Pembroke Center Associates" has been replaced with **Friends of the Pembroke Center**. The new name more accurately describes our community, reflects its inclusiveness, and dispels any confusion arising from the terms "Associate" or "membership," which are no longer in use. The Pembroke Center is open to all, and greatly strengthened by all the Friends who have shown and continue to show support for the Center's work. The [Pembroke Center Advisory Council](#) (formerly the Pembroke Center Associates Council) is the governing body of the Friends of the Pembroke Center.

## Leela Gandhi inaugural director, *continued*



Leela Gandhi teaching her 2017-18 Pembroke Seminar “The Cultures of Pacifism.”

The School of Criticism and Theory is where Pembroke Center Director Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg first got to know Gandhi.

“I met Leela at Cornell in the summer of 2009, and was immediately struck by her extraordinarily fine critical thinking,” Stewart-Steinberg said. “She is a leading feminist postcolonial theorist with an exceptionally sophisticated view and methodology. In 2017, she led a hugely successful and engaging [Pembroke Seminar on the cultures of pacifism](#). We are so lucky to have her as the next director of the Pembroke Center.”

As the inaugural Shauna McKee Stark ’76, P ’10 Director of the Pembroke Center, Gandhi will oversee the Center’s programming and research mission, including the Pembroke Seminar and the postdoctoral fellows program; the [Gender and Sexuality Studies](#) undergraduate concentration and graduate certificate program; the [Pembroke Center Archives](#); the journal [differences](#); public humanities programming; [international programs](#); and the [Black Feminist Theory Project](#).

Gandhi said that the unique forum of the Pembroke Seminar, as well as the spirit that animates it and connects the programs of the Center, were among the compelling reasons she accepted the appointment.

“The experience of running the Pembroke Seminar was one of the most intellectually exciting and capacious experiences I have had,” Gandhi said. “At Pembroke, I felt there was encouraged a spirit of genuine collaboration, intersectional inquiry and what I like to think of as dissident fields in the humanities space. The best term for that I think is intersectional

critical human sciences – a combination of feminist, gender, sexuality, race, and postcolonial studies. I saw that, at the Pembroke Center, transformative thought mattered.”

Gandhi added that she feels inspired by the legacy at Pembroke of directors Joan Wallach Scott, Elizabeth Weed, Ellen Rooney, and Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg, as well as the team at *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*.

“I learned a lot individually from all of these people,” Gandhi said. “The community is very precious.”

Looking ahead, Gandhi would like to make the Pembroke Center even more of a meeting point for the worlds of the Cogut and Watson Institutes, the humanities and social sciences, and to do so in a manner that brings a greater transnationalism to the Center’s intersectional project.

“One of the most ample ways of doing gender and sexuality studies is in alliance with associated fields,” Gandhi said.

She added that the newly endowed directorship provides an excellent opportunity to expand the conversation among European humanities and Middle East studies, South and East Asian studies, Africana studies, and regions in the Global South by establishing colloquia or seminars run by faculty from across the University, making the Center “the go-to place for interdisciplinarity.”

Additionally, Gandhi plans to further develop one of the Center’s key initiatives, the Black Feminist Theory Project (BFTP), by focusing on bringing to the Center feminist scholars of color, ranging from fellows to emerging and established scholars and scholar-writers. Gandhi would like to work with the Pembroke Center community to formulate a yearlong program that extends the work of the BFTP for colloquia and seminars that would be companions to the Pembroke Seminar.

While that work lies ahead, Gandhi said that having a longstanding commitment to the Center is exciting, especially with the opportunities the newly endowed directorship provides.

“There are resources we didn’t have before to bring in people to be with us and work with us – not just visit but *be* here, and participate,” Gandhi said. ■



## Stark Directorship announcement, *continued*

programs, and launch new initiatives.

Pembroke Center Director Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg, who has led the Center for seven years and is completing her second term in June, said that the gift enhances the stature of the director's role on and off campus.

"The next director, Leela Gandhi, and all future directors, will have the great honor of carrying Shauna Stark's name and leading a Center that is made more durable through this endowment," Stewart-Steinberg said. "Shauna said she wanted to do something good in these difficult times, and that she chose the Pembroke Center as the place to do good is overwhelming," she added.

Stark, who noted that "women have suffered the most, economically," during the pandemic, said that beyond volunteering in her local community to the extent that health protocols would allow, she wanted to counteract the darkness and needless suffering of the Covid era by doing something substantial and targeted toward women.

Keenly aware that the work of women is often invisible or undervalued, and dedicated to an intersectional feminist approach that acknowledges how various forms of inequality operate together and exacerbate each other, Stark chose to ensure that the work of the Pembroke Center would endure, and that its leadership would be elevated.

"I had a real, personal stake in saying I'd make this permanent," Stark said of the directorship. "The Pembroke Center is a vibrant place of feminist scholarship. I want students to feel that,

to see it, and to take advantage of all its programs. An endowed directorship ensures permanence and sends a message that the Center will not be marginalized, that its work will continue."

Stark first became involved with the Pembroke Center in 2016, when she met with Nancy L. Buc '65 LLD '94 hon. to discuss Buc's decade-long quest to raise an endowment for the Pembroke Center Archives, which make visible and accessible the papers of major feminist scholars and the history of women at Brown and in Rhode Island.

Stark was struck first by the importance of the project, and later by the lasting impact of Buc's ultimately successful effort to endow the archives: the archives bring more women's voices to the fore in every academic field, and elevate the work and stories of women, trans, and non-binary individuals that might otherwise be invisible or hard to find.

Stark went on to join Buc on the Pembroke Center Advisory Council. Over the years, she has supported key programmatic areas of the Pembroke Center, including the Pembroke Center Archives, public humanities programming, and the postdoctoral fellowship program. Stark said she was impressed by how hardworking the volunteer group of alumnae/i, parents and friends is.

"I got to know this expansive group of diverse women – generationally, ethnically, and professionally diverse – who work together so beautifully, with so much respect for one another's views," Stark said. "You don't always have that

level of diversity and collegiality, but everything starts from the top. Suzanne [Stewart-Steinberg] has been really good at fostering that, and this directorship is a tribute to Suzanne's leadership and to this amazing group of Council members and others who have worked on behalf of the Pembroke Center for so long."

When Leela Gandhi takes the helm of the Pembroke Center as the inaugural Shauna McKee Stark '76, P'10 Pembroke Center Director in July, she will lead a Center made stronger by this endowment. She will have the pleasure of knowing her work advancing the Pembroke Center's mission builds on a rich past and has a secure future.

"Living through the four-year trauma of witnessing the Trump Administration roll back the gains made by women over the past 30 years, topped off by their lethal mishandling of the pandemic—impacting women as essential workers and caregivers even further—led to my desire to do something big and something permanent in 2020," Stark said.

"I wanted to do this now. I wanted to make a stand," Stark said, "and now I get to watch what happens." ■

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## Remembering Liz Barboza

Everyone at the Pembroke Center was saddened to hear last fall of the death of Liz Barboza, who was a beloved figure at Brown and the manager of the Pembroke Center from 1981 until her retirement in 2006. Characterized as endlessly resourceful, knowledgeable, and warm, Liz was a wonderful, singular person, and someone essential to the growth and development of the Pembroke Center.

In 2006, Liz was awarded a Brown Employee Appreciation and Recognition Excellence Award for Service. In nominating her for the award that year, then-Pembroke Center Director Elizabeth Weed wrote the following:

“For almost 25 years, Elizabeth Barboza, the manager of the Pembroke Center, has been crucial to the Center’s success, and has helped build it to what it is today: an internationally respected research center with many programs and a healthy endowment. Liz oversees the administrative details of a busy and multifaceted center with great skill and efficiency and maintains productive relationships with academic and administrative departments across the University. But why Liz merits exceptional recognition is that she does all this with an extraordinary warmth, wit, and generosity that enhances everything the Center does. As many have remarked, she is the heart of the Pembroke Center.

“The Center has housed 72 postdoctoral fellows, graduated 175 concentrators and worked with scores of faculty fellows, visiting scholars, and affiliated faculty. For Liz these are not numbers. Postdoctoral fellows who leave Brown after a year in residence at the Pembroke Center continue their relationships with Liz for years afterwards. Virtually everyone involved with the Pembroke Center experiences the Center at least in part through their relationship with Liz. When she retires at the end of this academic year, she will leave her incomparable personal touch as one of the Center’s richest legacies.”

Ellen Rooney, professor of English and modern culture and media and director of the Pembroke Center from 1993-2000, wrote an essay on the occasion of Liz’s retirement in 2006. Here is a short excerpt from that tribute:

“I first met Liz in 1984, my second or third week at Brown, after finding my way up the stairs to the Pembroke Center in search of seminar readings. Liz was in those (my early years) an angel of mercy, handing over copies made to save me (obviously looking a little harried, I guess) time and trouble, reminding me when to be where, and always welcoming, welcoming. I’ll always be – as a generation of scholars and postdocs



President Ruth J. Simmons (left) presents Liz Barboza (right) with the BEAR award on January 20, 2006. Credit: John Abromowski / Brown University

and students and faculty are – grateful for her warmth and hospitality, her way of gathering people in, making them at home, which has been such an important feature of the Center over the years.

“But my largest debt to Liz dates from the moment when I became the director of the Pembroke Center in 1993. I was a raw recruit. I had been in charge of exactly one thing in my time at Brown: Modern Literature and Society concentration. I had never had a budget, a meeting with a provost, an annual review to conduct. Picture the absolute beginner, more than a little tentative, but lucky enough to be in the hands of the one who knows.

“It is a rare, rare person who can so master rules and procedures, so know her way around an institution and a community, and still retain her flexibility, her inventiveness, her capacity for improvisation and willingness to try something not in the rule books. When the guest speaker is trapped on an Amtrak train outside Westerly and the audience is already assembled in the purple palace? What do we do? Give up? Send everyone home? Why not have the reception first – wine and cheese for everyone for the better part of an hour. The speaker arrived, and her talk and conversation afterwards had a unique conviviality. A uniquely Liz-like conviviality. I know that we must all be happy for you today, for the future you are headed for and all of the improvisations that lie ahead for you. But we are all going to miss you very very very much.” ■

# Notes on Teaching | Spring 2021

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During the spring 2021 semester, which ended in late April, our Pembroke Center postdoctoral fellows shared reflections in real time on their teaching.

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A screenshot of Hannah Frydman taken while teaching her GNSS course over Zoom.

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Hannah Frydman,  
the Shauna M. Stark '76, P'10  
Postdoctoral Fellow

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This semester I'm teaching a seminar called "Sex and Money: The History of Paris since 1750." We have been looking to the history of Paris to explore difficult questions about the construction of sexual difference and sexual identities, sexual and economic exploitation, the racist underpinnings of moral activism, the way stereotypes have shaped access to public space, and much more. Before the semester started, I was concerned that the fact that the class was fully online might make these discussions, which require a certain amount of trust among students, more difficult.

As the course is progressing, however, I have been pleasantly surprised to see students getting to know each other in spite of the distance, to see them starting to feel comfortable talking about difficult (or just plain awkward) topics and to think deeply with each other about new and challenging ideas, both in small groups in breakout rooms and together as a community. In a stressful moment, I have tried to cultivate our Zoom

classroom as a welcoming, inclusive, non-judgmental space of critical thinking that draws on each student's strengths and that allows them to bring their own investments and excitement to class in various ways. One way I have tried to do this is through flexibility, making it clear that each assignment leaves room for their own creativity and interests, as long as the work they produce helps them develop the competencies the assignment was designed to engage, whether that be contextualizing and analyzing primary sources, engaging critically with secondary sources, or integrating these skills into the work of telling stories about the past.

I have been very pleased by the way students have taken this openness and run with it. For the final assignment, which asks students to integrate primary and secondary sources into a historical narrative, they have come up with a wide range of topics and creative ways of emplotting them. One student is planning to create a 3D model of a Parisian boulevard to better understand the cultural and social mixing that took place in this space and what it would have been like to be part of the crowd. Others are using online storytelling software like Adobe Spark and Twine to create digital narratives that interrogate the male gaze, women's embodied performances, attitudes about abortion, moral judgments around mixing money and intimacy, and high fashion. Still others are writing creative nonfiction pieces about café culture, women's revolutionary activism, and feminism and art. And yet others are creating digital exhibitions on the links between performance and hysteria, as well as the history and present of narratives of sex trafficking and of sexual advertising.

This has been a difficult semester for many of my students, dealing with health scares and crises and the emotional fallout these bring with them. And yet they have continued to show up to class and for each other, ready to think together, and even more committed to analyzing the past, the better to understand the inequalities of our present.

*Next year, Dr. Frydman will be an assistant professor of French in the Department of French and Italian Studies at the University of Washington in Seattle.*



Nicolás Sánchez-Rodríguez

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Nicolás Sánchez-Rodríguez,  
the Carol G. Lederer  
Postdoctoral Fellow

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This spring I am teaching an online seminar entitled "Boom Towns: Finance and Literature in Latin America." It has been an immense pleasure to engage every week in insightful conversations with a set of brilliant and creative students. While it has been a challenge for all of us to adapt to online education, it also has been an opportunity to



## Notes on Teaching, *continued*

develop new pedagogical strategies and take advantage of what the virtual world can offer, including the opportunity to invite guest lecturers who otherwise might not have been able to share their insights with the class. It has been a wonderful surprise to realize that despite not being able to meet in person, we have managed to create a truly engaging intellectual community.

In the seminar, students examine Latin American literature through the lens of finance. In particular, we look at how money – understood both as a social relation and an object – has historically participated in the production of gender, racial, and class inequalities in the region. In the first part of the semester, we read and discussed short stories by authors such as the Argentinian Jorge Luis Borges and the Mexican Rosario Castellanos, who make visible in their works the often-overlooked aesthetic and affective dimensions of finance. Recently, we have engaged with Latin American novels that create literary boomtowns, including Gabriel García Márquez’s celebrated *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. For two weeks, we delved into the novel’s universe through a close examination of Macondo – the novel’s legendary fictional town – as an allegory of Latin America’s uneven and often contradictory modernization. Investigating how the town was transformed by the banana industry, students in the class dissected this masterpiece while accounting for the way in which the novel offers insights on the extractive economies that characterized development in large parts of the Global South.

One of the most gratifying aspects of the class has been reading the



Sa Whitley

intellectual production of the students. A couple of weeks ago they created fascinating encyclopedia entries of the word “money” based on literary sources in which they accounted, for instance, for finance’s gendered history. Currently, they are working on their own short story. Based on a short prompt – a character’s encounter with a token of value – they use fiction to reflect on the relation between money, aesthetics, and social relations of power. I can’t wait to read their pieces and continue to see how their critical and creative approaches have evolved throughout a semester of online learning.

*Next year, Dr. Sánchez-Rodríguez will join the Princeton Society of Fellows as a Cotsen postdoctoral fellow with*

*an appointment in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese.*

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### Sa Whitley, the Nancy L. Buc ’65 Postdoctoral Fellow

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Sa Whitley, who taught [Conversations in Trans/Feminisms: Theories, Cultures, & Politics](#) in the fall of 2020, discussed their teaching [here](#).

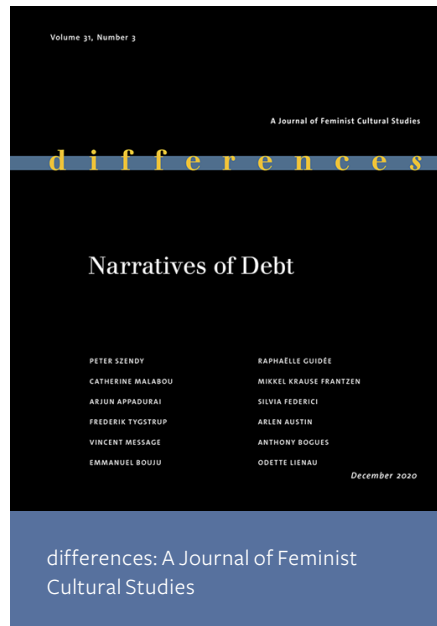
*Next year, Dr. Whitley will be a Postdoctoral Fellow at Dartmouth College in the Society of Fellows.*



# differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies

The most recent issue of *differences*, Narratives of Debt, collects essays, a short story, and archival texts that explore how the condition of being indebted is witnessed and narrated, and how debt itself is a narrative, “a performative fiction that organizes time by linking past, present, and future,” as Peter Szendy, *differences* guest editor and the David Herlihy Professor of Humanities and Comparative Literature at Brown, puts it.

The connection between debt and narrative form, and the historical rise of indebtedness as a mode of governance, were at the heart of both the 2020-21 Pembroke Seminar [Narrating Debt](#), which Szendy convened, and the 2019 conference he co-organized, [Narratives of Debt](#), which gathered together the key thinkers in contemporary critical theory counted among the issue’s contributors.



Excerpt from the article “How Much Is Your African Slave Worth?” by Anthony Bogues, Director of the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice

[Thomas] Jefferson often referred to enslaved women as “capital”; he wrote in a letter that “a woman who brings a child every two years” is “more profitable than the best man of the farm” since “what she produces is an addition to capital, while his [the male slave’s] labors disappear in mere consumption.”

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Excerpt from “Nigerian Writings (Fragments),” part of the Silvia Federici Papers, held in the Pembroke Center’s Feminist Theory Archives

[T]he Nigerian civilian government had not managed to disconnect from the European and American economic systems—the bulk of their loans were contracted at variable interest rates in U.S. dollars. So, when the Feds raised interest rates, the debts exploded and their currency crashed. It was pure recolonization, a manufactured debt crisis. Then came the IMF, the cavalry, clip-clop, clip-clop, clip-clop, bom-baaa! and they said, “no problem, here are some new loans; you just have to submit to recolonization, total control.”



Miron Tee, Untitled (“Shame”), 2013 Courtesy of the artist

The issue links to the Pembroke Center’s yearlong research and programming on debt, and to the Pembroke Center’s [Feminist Theory Archive](#), which is the source of the selections from Italian-American scholar and activist [Silvia Federici’s diaries](#). Those fragments were presented and contextualized by Federici scholar Arlen Austin, who is completing his PhD in the Department of Modern Culture and Media this summer with a [graduate certificate](#) in gender and sexuality studies.

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