

Pembroke Center

FOR TEACHING
AND RESEARCH
ON WOMEN

BROWN UNIVERSITY

NEWSLETTER

SPRING 1996

FEMINIST THEORY TO DAY

On sabbatical from the regular Pembroke Seminar, the Center is sponsoring a year-long series of lectures and seminars on Feminist Theory Today.



The series began in September with a one-day conference bringing together (clockwise from left)

Joan Wallach Scott, School of Social Science, Institute for Advanced Study; Hazel Carby, African American Studies and American Studies, Yale University; Naomi Schor, French Department, Harvard University; and Mary Ann Doane, Modern Culture and Media Studies, Brown University.

1994–95 “The Question of Violence”



Kate Baldwin

*Ph.D. in Comparative Literature,
Yale University
Artemis A. W. and Martha S. Joukowsky
Fellow*

Topic: “Shadow Boxing”

Baldwin’s cultural history of boxing is concerned with the relationship between “writing and fighting” and its “feminine” fallout. She traces the “sweet science” of boxing through late 19th- and early 20th-century discourses of art and science to investigate how a regulatory violence concerned with codifications of proper fighting bodies explicitly wards off “femininity.” By looking at the concealment of the “feminine” body – that which is exposed, sutured and scarred – Baldwin demonstrates how boxing is perpetually anxious about its own feminine and feminizing refuse. This relationship, she

contends, indicates a peculiarly violent yet necessary placement of “femininity” in the production of boxing’s compulsory masculinity. In an attempt to denaturalize violence between men as a revelation of pure masculinity, she also poses questions about the production of racial difference within these “male” configurations and focuses on the ways in which a conscription of black male bodies into boxing furthers the spectacularization and eroticization of violence in sports as “natural.”

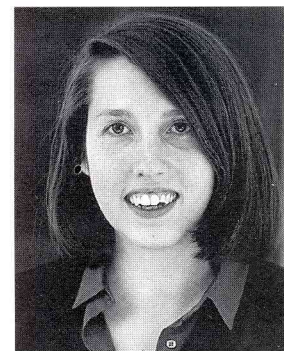


Sarah Currie

*Ph.D. in Classics, Cambridge University
Carol G. Lederer Fellow*

Topic: “Roman Murder”

This study takes up the detection and description of ancient Roman murder from literary, rhetorical, and historical works of the last century B.C.E. and the first two centuries C.E. Starting from the absence of any direct equivalent to modern conceptions of murder and eschewing a purely legal, proscriptive understanding of civilian life-taking, Currie argues for the rise of a Roman culture of murder as a discourse of assault by the socially weak – including women, slaves and foreigners – upon the strong’s previously unabashed command of violence. This notion was fostered by monarchy, beginning with the dictator Sulla, who in 81 B.C.E. created the first permanent murder court, and by an increasing distance between military and civilian spheres. If we consider Roman murder to be a positive critical category, as Currie argues, we discover a society struggling to deal with the violence of pacification and the erosion of the distinction between imperial masters and subjects.



Pamela Haag

*Ph.D. in History, Yale University
Nancy L. Buc Fellow*

Topic: “Seductions, Promises and Obligations: Consent, Coercion and the Meaning of a “Free” Social Relation in Modern American Culture, 1887–1941”

Drawing on an array of legal and popular narratives concerned with various social and sexual “contracts,” Haag’s project historicizes, and thus defamiliarizes, the governing opposition in modern American culture of coercion and consent. By assuming that our culture’s very definitions of “freedom” and “violence” are as historically contextual as our handling of physical transgressions such as rape, she outlines the “pre-history” of sexual rights discourse, so crucial to second wave feminism, through considering how coercive and “genuinely” free relations were defined through their dominant tropes – seduction, abduction, white slavery and interracial rape, among others – from the 1870s to the 1930s. These constructions of violence defined not only women’s unique sexual subjectivity as “victim,” she suggests, but also helped to refashion the normative free individual, or “private person,” in John Stuart Mill’s coinage, in a distinctly “personal” and sexual fashion.

Visiting Scholar Lecture Series:

1994–95

Deborah E. McDowell

*English
University of Virginia*

Elaine Scarry

*English
Harvard University*

The Ruth Burt Ekstrom Lecturer

Patricia J. Williams

*Law
Columbia University
The Susan Ball Lecturer*

1994-95
Roundtable:
March 9-10, 1995

The Charisma of Violence

Page du Bois

Classics

University of Southern California

Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz

Comparative Literature

Hamilton College

Frances Ferguson

English

The Johns Hopkins University

Karen Haltunnen

History

University of California, Davis

Ruth Wilson Gilmore

Geography

Rutgers University

Sharon Marcus

English

University of California, Berkeley



Dr. Swanee Hunt, U.S. ambassador to Austria, visited Brown in November under the sponsorship of the President's Office, the Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies, and the Pembroke Center. Dr. Hunt spoke on "The Role of Women in Democracy: Strengthening the Global Community."

Graduate Student Conference at Brown

"Locating Feminisms," an interdisciplinary graduate student conference, was held at Brown on March 1-2. Funded by the Pembroke Center, the conference was planned and run by an interdisciplinary group of Brown graduate students. The conference explored a range of current academic feminisms and looked at the relationships between the academy and political activism. Participating graduate participants came from Brown, the Bunting Institute, SUNY-Buffalo, University of California-Santa Cruz, Columbia, Cornell, CUNY, Harvard, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, New York University, Princeton, Rutgers, Simmons, Toronto, and Tufts.

Women's Studies Lecture

In September, **Anne Fausto-Sterling**, Professor of Biology and Medicine at Brown University, gave the inaugural Women's Studies Lecture for the 1995-96 year. Her talk, "Do Sex Hormones Really Exist?", is part of a forthcoming book on "Body-Building: How Biologists Construct Sexuality." Fausto-Sterling is author of the acclaimed *Myths of Gender: Biological Theories about Women and Men*.

Pembroke Center Lecture Series in Feminist Theory 1995-96

Hortense Spillers

English

Cornell University

The Susan Ball Lecturer

Jane Gallop

Modern Studies

University of Wisconsin,

Milwaukee

Avital Ronell

Comparative Literature

University of California, Berkeley

Gayatri Spivak

English

Columbia University

The Ruth Burt Ekstrom Lecturer

Anna Tsing

Anthropology

University of California,

Santa Cruz

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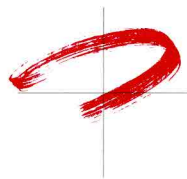
Liana Scalettar
Editorial Assistant

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Pembroke Center
for Teaching and Research on Women
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