1993–94 Pembroke Center Research Topic

Law, Letters, and “Difference”

The theme for 1993–94 is “Law, Letters, and ‘Difference.’” Every aspect of contemporary United States society has been subject to the law: real and intellectual property, labor, commerce, technology, art, domestic relations, the environment, health, reproduction, sexuality, and so on. Under the pressures of economic, social, and demographic changes this “nation of laws” has become the site of vigorous debates on the status of legal categories and institutional practices. This year’s seminar will focus on some of these debates:

What happens when traditional legal principles are applied to new sets of problems? What are the processes by which legal categories are currently being expanded and rethought? What influence does new research on gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, and so forth have on existing legal categories and on concepts of the juridical subject? Have recent critiques of the Western enlightenment affected the production of juridical subjects?

Pembroke Seminar

The seminar is an interdisciplinary cross-cultural research seminar which meets weekly throughout the academic year. Members include Pembroke Center post-doctoral fellows, Brown faculty members, research affiliates, Visiting Scholars, and selected graduate and undergraduate students.

Affiliated Scholars

Scholars interested in the annual research topics who wish to take part in the Pembroke Seminar are invited to apply for affiliation with the Center.

The first Visiting Scholar to participate in this year’s Pembroke Seminar on Art in the Age of “Difference” was Anna Deavere Smith, Associate Professor of Drama at Stanford University. Ms. Smith has received wide acclaim for her Fires in the Mirror: Crown Heights, Brooklyn and Other Identities, winner of an Obie and the George C. and Elizabeth Marlon Award for 1992. During her visit to the Pembroke Center, Anna Deavere Smith conducted a session of the seminar and gave a public performance of selections from Fires in the Mirror.

Smith’s performance was part of a series celebrating the Centennial of Women at Brown funded by Cynthia Lee Jenner ’61, in honor of her mother, Nadine Newbill Jenner, and her maternal grandmother, Leona Hopper Newhill.
Scientific Knowledge and "Difference"

Leslie Camhi

**Project: Pathological Visions: Hysteria and the Creation of Marginal Bodies in Fin-de-siècle Culture**

Combining literary research with a study of early psychoanalysis, medical practices, asylum memoirs, and photographic images, Camhi’s project examines representations of hysteria in fin-de-siècle culture. A central point of interrogation is the role of photography in literary and scientific discourse on sexual and cultural difference. Camhi sees the marginal bodies of hystericst, hermaphrodites, kleptomaniacs, and colonized subjects as both challenges to and testing grounds for definitions of gender, nationality, and commodity culture. She argues that their representations function as screens for the projection of science’s will-to-knowledge, and limits beyond which an epistemological absence is inferred.

*Leslie Camhi is teaching in the Department of English at New York University. During the first semester of 1992–93 she was also a fellow at the Center for the Humanities, Wesleyan University.*

Lisa Cartwright

**Project: Radiographic Imaging: A Study in the Production of Technical Visual Knowledge**

Cartwright’s project explores the development of radiography as a medical imaging technology between 1895 and the late 1950s. Forging intersections between feminist film theory and feminist historical work in medical technology, she examines the apparatus of x-ray imaging, emphasizing the role of the radiologist as a technical producer and spectator and looks at the axis of power, pleasure, and knowledge in radiography. Cartwright’s book, *Physiological Modernity: Scientific Cinema and the Technologies of “Life* is forthcoming with the University of Minnesota Press.

*Lisa Cartwright teaches in English, and in the Film Studies and Visual and Cultural Studies Programs at the University of Rochester.*

Brian Cooper

**Project: Discourse and the Economics of the Family: The Missing Gender**

Cooper’s project focuses on the recent (circa 1975) development in economics of game theoretic models of the household. These models are nonempirical, mathematical representations of the family that both invoke and embody narratives of the biological and social evolution of gender. Cooper examines the rhetoric of the resultant debate over whether these models constitute legitimate economic knowledge about the household. He places this debate in the context of the “rediscovery” of an economics of the family and in the larger context of economics’ historical role in defining the Western family.

*Brian Cooper recently completed his Ph.D. in economics at Harvard University.*

Jennifer Terry


As part of a larger project on the genealogy of the AIDS epidemic, Terry’s project investigates the production of scientific knowledge which has linked homosexuality with pathology. By looking at three episodes of homosexual “panic” in the United States during the 20th century — the eugenics movement of the interwar period, the post-World War Two nationalist purge of “perverts” from government and the military, and the context of the HIV epidemic — the project looks at the ruptures and surprising consistencies among the three periods. In each episode, scientific discourses about homosexuality provide a frame for analyzing historically specific aspects of American culture: namely, national notions of proper breeding, appropriate gender characteristics, patriotic citizenship, military strength, and bodily integrity.

*Jennifer Terry teaches in the program of Comparative Cultural Studies at Ohio State University. During the first semester of 1992–93, she was a post-doctoral fellow at the Humanities Institute, SUNY, Stony Brook.*
1992–93
Art in the Age of "Difference"

Lisa Bloom

Project: Containing "Minorities": Art Discourses and the Careers of Jean-Michel Basquiat and Robert Mapplethorpe

Feminist art historians have explored the ways the concept of the artist's genius and special individuality is fundamental to the traditional discipline of art history. Bloom's project considers some of the lingering effects of that notion of artistic genius within the discipline. Focusing on two late contemporary artists, Jean-Michel Basquiat and Robert Mapplethorpe, it examines the contradictory ways each was represented by and for modern art history as an "authentic genius" of the 1980s, and looks at what those representations reveal about the changing art historical discourse.

Next year Lisa Bloom will be a Mellon fellow in Art and Art History at Stanford University.

Karin Cope

Project: Crossing Borders, Crossing Bodies

Karin Cope's project aims to provide fresh critical approaches to the work of several writers and painters who, by posing challenges to the comprehension of their readers or viewers, thematize the difficulties of multiculturalism. Working in more than one genre, gender, and tongue, writers such as Gloria Anzaldúa and painters such as Juan Davila elaborate complex and internally differentiated notions of mestizaje, notions that seek to avoid the homogenization of melting pot metaphors and models by preserving, affirming, and inventing heretofore invisible, under-represented, or actively suppressed ethnic and sexual cultural formations. Cope's project suggests that such hybrid works call for hybrid criticism; to read or interpret, the critic must be as patient and inventive, as "at risk" as the artist.

Karin Cope will join the English Department of McGill University in the fall.

May Joseph

Project: Ame-Irika: U.S.-South Asian Performance and the Politics of "Race"

May Joseph is engaged this year in an analysis of U.S.-South Asian performance in the Los Angeles and New York areas. Because U.S. culture is a representative locus of ethnicities of former colonized nations, it is a strategic arena for studying neocolonial discourse. In the context of U.S. theatre, U.S.-South Asian performance becomes a means of reading the tensions inherent in the "Third World" within the "First World." Joseph's research looks at the complex histories of U.S.-South Asians with their links to Africa, Latin America, Britain, the Caribbean, and South Asia, and addresses how this constituency relates to contemporary U.S. cultural and racial politics.

May Joseph will teach next year in Performance Studies at New York University and will be a Rockefeller post-doctoral fellow at the Asian-American Center, City University of New York, Queens.

Visiting Scholars:
1992–93

Anna Deavere Smith, Drama
Stanford University

Mira Schor, Artist, Editor
Sarah Lawrence College

Ruth Burt Ekstrom Lecture
Hazel Carby, African and Afro-American Studies
Yale University

Rosi Braudotti, Philosophy and Women's Studies
University of Utrecht

Harryette Mullen, English
Cornell University

Roundtable, March 1993
"Is multiculturalism to post-modernism as primitivism is to modernism?"

Outside invited participants:
Robert Dilworth, Art
University of Rhode Island

Ann du Cille, English and Women's Studies
Wesleyan University

Laura Kipnis, Radio-Television-Film
Northwestern University

Shishir Kurup, Theatre
University of California, Irvine

Walter Benn Michaels, English
Johns Hopkins University

Sally Price
Anthropologist
Pembroke Center
Advisory Board

National
Joan Wallach Scott, Chair
Institute for Advanced Study
Judith Butler
Johns Hopkins University
Ruth Ekstrom
Educational Testing Service
Susan Harding
University of California, Santa Cruz

Brown
Mari Jo Buhle
American Civilization
Thadious Davis
English
Mary Ann Doane
Modern Culture and Media
Ann Fausto-Sterling
Biomedicine
Lucile Newman
Anthropology
Robert Scholes
English

Pembroke Center
Karen Newman
Director, 1988–92
Elizabeth Weed
Acting Director, 1992–93
Barbara Anton
Coordinator of Alumnae Affairs
Elizabeth Barboza
Coordinating Secretary

Christine Dunlap
Farnham Archives
Kimberly Brookes
Archivist

differences:
A Journal of Feminist
Cultural Studies
Naomi Schor, Duke University
Elizabeth Weed
Editors
Jenny Anger
Assistant Editor
Kristin Bergen
Kerry Herman
Editorial Assistants

Richard Easton
Canonical Criminalizations:
Homosexuality, Art History,
Surrealism, and Abjection
Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger
Matrix and Metamorphosis

Volume 5, Number 1
On Addiction
Jacques Derrida
The Rhetoric of Drugs. An Interview
Leslie Camhi
Stealing Femininity: Department Store
Kleptomania as Sexual Disorder
Richard Klein
The Devil in Carmen
Lynne Joyrich
Elvisophilia: Knowledge, Pleasure, and
the Cult of Elvis
Mark Seltzer
Serial Killers (1)