



news

USC CENTER FOR FEMINIST RESEARCH

Interim Director's Message

by Lisa Bitel

A few weeks ago a student asked me, "Were you in the feminist movement?" I didn't know how to answer. What did he mean by "movement," I wondered. He couldn't or wouldn't explain. Maybe he imagined that I burned a bra with Betty Friedan. Or maybe he was asking about my participation in the last march on Washington. Or maybe he pictured me wearing a pro-choice t-shirt, shouting angrily as I waved an "ERA NOW" sign on some street corner. Whatever his figment of feminist movement, though, he clearly thought it lay in the past. I told him, yes, I am a feminist.

In fact, my credentials are public record. I'm the interim director of the Center for Feminist Research. My mandate, handed down from the College administration, is to lead a task force that will assess the Center's past contributions to USC and generate a proposal for its future. Joining me in this task are other feminists from across College departments: Beth Meyerowitz, psychologist and former Dean of Research;

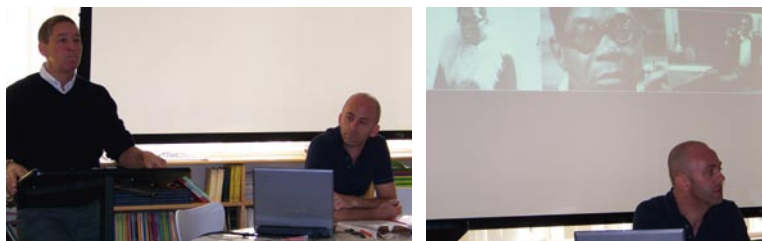
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CFR FALL 2007 EVENT FEATURES GAVIN BUTT

"Stop That Acting!"

Queer sincerity in Shirley Clarke's *Portrait of Jason*

Invited by Professor Judith Halberstam, Gavin Butt, Senior Lecturer at Goldsmith College at the University of London, presented a paper to the USC feminist community about the exploration of Shirley Clarke's much overlooked 1967 film of African American gay hustler Jason Holliday. As a feature-length example of underground realist documentary, the film exhibits a typical bohemian fascination with the otherness of its subject. Butt's presentation offered featurettes of the contemporary televisual confessionals found in Clarke's film. A diva delight to watch, Holliday had free reign to narrate his story, and to perform the act of his minoritarian life to camera. But what intrigues Butt in this paper is how Holliday's performance troubles any spectatorial desire to valorize it as sincere or authentic, whilst at the same resisting the tag of the 'merely' theatrical. The difficulty of 'how to take' this performance — of whether or not to take it seriously — lead Butt to consider the subversion of 'serious' value and attention more generally in recent and contemporary performance, and to theorise the import a 'queer' kind of earnestness which calls for a less-than-serious appraisal of its staged pronouncements.



Lisa Bitel, *continued from page 1*

Jean Morrison, a petrologist, the Vice Provost for Graduate Programs, and the Director of the Women in Science and Engineering program aimed at increasing the number of women in science and engineering; Sarah Banet-Weiser, a previous interim director of CFR and associate professor of Communications in the Annenberg School; Judith Halberstam, my colleague in the Gender Studies program, professor of English, and former director of CFR; and Raquel Gutierrez, the assistant director of CFR and an actor/artist/writer/member of ButchLalIs de Panochtitlan.

CFR has gone through many incarnations. It began in 1987 as the Institute for the Study of Women and Men, funded by donations and some university money. For a few years, ISWM organized symposia, colloquia, lectures, and salons at Paramount Studio. Betty Friedan headed a Think Tank of Feminist Issues for ISWM, which brought people from the film industry, legal and political arenas, and other universities to USC to think feminist thoughts.

In the early 90s, ISWM took an academic turn when its funding dwindled. Feminism fractured into many feminisms in this period. The Second Wave came to an end, according to Rebecca Walker, who responded to the Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas hearings by announcing in *Ms. Magazine*, "I am not a post-feminism feminist. I am the third wave." These were also the years of RCG awareness, the academic turn to post-structuralism, and the onset of Gender Studies. The steering committee of ISWM responded to these political shifts by retreating from public involvement and using its diminished funds to for academic events and small fellowships for graduate students and faculty working on feminist issues. At some point ISWM became the Center for Feminist Research in a small gesture of resistance to those who proclaimed the death of feminism.

For the next fifteen years, while each entering class of USC undergraduate seemed to know less about feminism than the previous class, the leadership of CFR continued to bring a rich variety of scholars, artists, writers, and theorists of feminism and gender studies to the campus. The events were often fabulous, the crowds occasionally too small. Meanwhile, more and more academics brought feminist methods and gender-related inquiry to their teaching and research across the academic disciplines.

Guess what: Despite what the bloggers and pundits suggest, neither feminism nor sexism is dead. Equal pay, childcare, harassment, and chilly gender climates remain hot issues in academia—outside the ivory tower, the effects of sexism and far more dire and murderous. Pace my curious student, the movement has never come to a halt. Our task force is doing what feminists have been doing for decades: scrutinizing the gender situation, keeping an eye out for backlash, and trying to decide how best to harness and aim the formidable energies of scholarly feminists. Let us know if you've got an idea about the direction we should take—just email me (bitel@usc.edu). But be assured that CFR is on the move.

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Ballet in the American Imaginary

In June 2007, Sarah Fried-Gintis, a PhD in the department of history traveled to New York City to conduct research for her dissertation, "Elevated: Ballet and American Culture, World War II to the National Endowment for the Arts." With combined funds from the Center for Feminist Research, Visual Studies Graduate Program, and Roberta Persinger Foulke Summer Research Fellowship, Sarah spent a month at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Her dissertation, "Elevated: Ballet and American Culture, World War II to the National Endowment for the Arts," examines the commercialization of high culture in the United States in the post-war era. During these years young women flocked to local dancing schools, new ballet companies were organized, and more Americans than ever before attended live ballet productions. Prior scholarship in dance history has located the popularity of ballet in the context of the Cold War. Sarah, however, positions ballet as part of a trans-Atlantic

exchange in goods, ideas, and people that followed World War II, and argues that mass, consumer oriented culture, particularly film, television, and popular theater, were important in disseminating images of the ballet to new audiences.

During Sarah's stay in New York, she viewed dozens of televised broadcasts that featured ballet dancing. From talk shows to the successful performing arts series, *Omnibus*, and episodes of *I Love Lucy*, ballet continually entered American homes. Sarah is interested in the elevation of ballet as the highest of the "high" arts. She is, therefore, tracing the evolution of mass culture's portrayal of ballet from a snobby, elitist art that was often parodied and laughed at to a serious, worthy, reputable art-form.

Sarah graduated from Vanderbilt University in 2002 and has completed an M.A in history at USC. She expects to complete her dissertation May 2009.



Yetta Howard, Phd
Candidate, Department
of English

CFR FALL 2007 EVENT

Felicia Luna Lemus reads from *Like Son*

by Yetta Howard

CFR kicked off the fall semester with a well-attended reading by novelist Felicia Luna Lemus. Lemus read from her latest novel, *Like Son* (2007), published by Akashic Books, for an audience of graduate and undergraduate students. *Like Son* explores a transgender man's familial and psychic connections to a photograph of a 1940s Mexican lesbian poet, which he inherits from his dying father. In explaining the intersections between estranged and intimate relationships in her writing, Lemus stated that she wanted to transgress traditional father-son narratives.

During the discussion following the reading, Lemus addressed questions about her use of the figure of the poet Nahui Olin, a non-fictional yet less recognized literary celebrity photographed by Edward Weston. Lemus encountered the photograph at an

exhibit several years ago and, captivated by it ever since, wanted to include it in her work (the photograph adorns the cover of the novel). Lemus further discussed components of her own biography that inform her novels' incorporation of Chicano/a heritage and folklore.

A native of Orange County, Lemus revealed that her family has been living on the same block in the City of Orange for over 100 years and went on to talk about her love/hate relationship with Southern California and the various differences between notions of ethnic neighborhoods in the East Village of Manhattan, where she currently lives. Lemus also spoke about her non-linear writing process and the importance of having a novel featuring a transgender character without reducing the story to transgenderism.

When asked about writing from a transgender man's perspective, she linked it to the experience of being Latino/a, but passing as white. Next on the horizon for Lemus are two book projects: a novel that traces several generations of a Mexican family and a young adult novel.

faculty news

Alice Echols

Associate Professor in English and Gender Studies

I was on leave last year writing *Upside Down: Disco and the Remaking of American Culture*, which will be published by Norton in 2009. Over the last year I've given talks at Cornell, Rutgers, Columbia, Northeastern, and the American Studies Association Annual Conference.

Lisa Bitel

Professor in History and Gender Studies

I just finished my fourth monograph about medieval Europe, which will be published by Oxford University Press this coming autumn. Tentatively titled "Landscape with Two Saints: How Genovefa of Paris and Brigit of Kildare Converted Barbarian Europe," it's about the ways that women helped spread Christianity in northern Europe—not by preaching, but by building shrines and new religious landscapes. Now I'm working on two projects about religious visions—a book about medieval environments of visions and a collaborative study, with photographer Matt Gainer, of a modern vision event in the Mojave Desert. I also continue to labor as director of the digital repository, /Monastic Matrix (<http://monasticmatrix.org>).

Joseph Hawkins

Adjunct Lecturer in Anthropology and Gender Studies

This past summer I spent time with my study group in Japan at Chuo University and my devoted professor Yajima Masami. It was a great trip and I had time to complete research for my ethnography tentatively titled "Homo Japan: Homosociality, Homosexuality and Masculinity in Modern Japan." I am also working on a film of a Hadaka Matsuri, or Naked Festival, tentatively called "Sacred Striptease," which will examine the convergence of religion, community and eroticism.

At ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives where I am still President of the Board, we held our annual fund raising event,

where we present the ONE Culture Hero Award. This year that honor went to author, activist, and historian Lillian Faderman. The presenter was Ann Bannon, writer of the lesbian pulp fiction novels that included the heroine Beebo Brinker. Ann has a play currently running in New York by the same name. ONE has also launched a new Culture Series which includes many great speakers. Check out the website at www.onearchives.org.

Susan McCabe

Associate Professor in English and Gender Studies

Susan McCabe has had a book of poetry accepted from University of Utah, and it won the Agha Shahid Ali first prize.

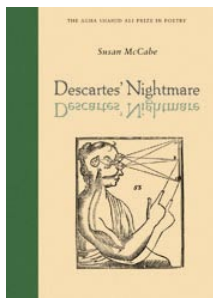
Tara McPherson

Associate Professor in Critical Studies and Gender Studies

Tara McPherson's edited collection, *Digital Youth, Innovation and the Unexpected*, has just been published by MIT Press. The volume was produced as part of the MacArthur Foundation's Digital Media and Learning Initiative and features work by USC faculty Ellen Seiter, Anne Balsamo and Steve Anderson. She has recently been named as one of three editors of a new MacArthur-sponsored publication, *The International Journal of Media and Learning*, also from MIT Press. Both the volume and the journal were announced December 12th at a public event at MIT. Tara was also appointed to a three-year term as a member of the *Cinema Journal* editorial board.

Tara delivered a number of talks over the past few months. Several of the talks featured work from her book-in-progress that examines the relationship of mid-century struggles over civil rights to emerging structures of computer code and new forms of visual culture at the time. This work was presented as an invited speaker at the Frontiers of New Media Conference at the University of Utah, at the Modern Studies Association conference in Long Beach, and in an invited lecture at Brown University. Other invited lectures at Harvard, UC-Davis, and the University of Tennessee focused on the digital humanities and the online journal, "Vectors."

Over the past several months, Tara has served as an external reviewer of the Humanities division at MIT, where she is a member of the Humanities Visiting



Committee, and of the film department of Dartmouth College. In the fall, she served as a reviewer for digital humanities grant competitions for the NEH and for the MacArthur Foundation.

Tara recently received a substantial planning grant from the Mellon Foundation to develop a proposal for a multi-university digital hub in support of work in visual culture. She will be working with scholars from Brown, NYU, Rochester and UC-San Diego. The grant is administered through the Institute for Multimedia Literacy. She is also, with Phil Ethington, the recipient of a Zumberge research award for a project exploring new forms of digital publication, analysis, and archiving.

Mike Messner

(Chair) in Sociology and Professor in Gender Studies

Michael A. Messner (2007) *Out of Play: Critical Essays on Gender and Sport*, State University of New York Press. I was also recently elected to Chair the Sex and Gender Section of the American Sociological Association.

Gloria Orenstein

Professor in Comparative Literature and Gender Studies

Nashim, A Journal of Jewish Women' Studies and Gender Issues, Fall, No. 14, 5768/2007 has published my article in its issue devoted to Women and Art: "Torah Study, Feminism and Spiritual Quest in the Work of Five American Jewish Women Artists." This journal is published by The Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem and by the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute, and distributed by Indiana Univ. Press. I write about five important women artists in this article, and among them is our own Ruth Weisberg, Dean of the School of Fine Arts at USC.

Last Spring I was on a study leave. I attended the American Comparative Literature Association's conference in Puebla, Mexico, and gave a DVD presentation/lecture on Leonora Carrington, the Surrealist artist and writer I first began studying in the early seventies. She is now 90, and I made a special presentation in honor of her 90th birthday. I also paid her a visit after the conference. I then returned to Mexico in July to work with Surrealist artist, Alan Glass, who is having his retrospective at the Museo de Arte Moderno in Mexico City in the Fall. I will have

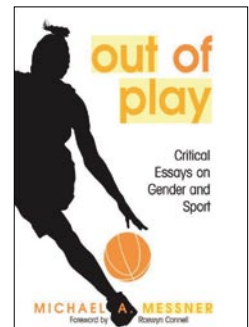
a prologue in his catalogue, and plan to do further work on his artistic oeuvre. Alan Glass' art is what I call a Cabinet of Wonders—he travels all over the world, visiting flea markets (as the surrealists have always done), and he collects rare and unique pieces, objects, etc. and then creates box art, cabinets and installations with them. I will give a paper on his work in relation to synchronicity, known to the Surrealists as "le hazard objectif" at the Amer. Comp. Lit. Assoc. Conference in Long Beach this April.

I have published the Introduction to Vijali Hamilton's artistic memoir entitled *World Wheel, One Woman's Quest for Peace*. Vijali Hamilton is an extraordinary sculptor who lived in a Vedanta convent from early childhood until she was twenty-four. She then decided to pursue a life in art—which eventually became a life in meditation, spiritual questing and living in what she refers to as "a borderless world." She travels virtually alone to various countries, and works on earth sculptures and rituals with shamans and the indigenous people of the regions she visits. See her website under World Wheel.

I am currently writing an article on one of the founders of the performance art group known as "The Waitresses." The Waitresses were one of the groups of women who studied at The Woman's Building, and created feminist performances that address issues facing women ranging from rape to exploitation in the workplace. Anne Gauldin was also a co-founder of the performance group "The Sisters of Survival," who traveled all over Europe dressed as nuns in rainbow outfits, carrying banners with semaphore codes and signs to protest nuclear proliferation and the production of toxic wastes.

I have written the Introduction to an art book of the work of Jean Kazendjian, who has come to live in L.A. from Paris, and was affiliated with the Surrealists in France. His work is what I call the work of a pro-feminist male gaze---his women are always on the move, ascending, and are never portrayed as sexual objects. I call this introduction "The Dreaming Universe of Jean Kazendjian".

I would like to add that my classes on Women and Art (ARLT 100g) are affiliated with the Media Lab. in Taper Hall, and students are going in groups to do video-portrait interviews with pioneer feminist artists in Southern California for the archive

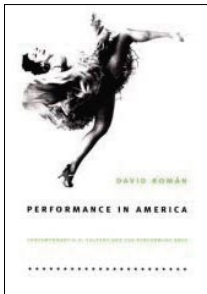


that Gender Studies has established at USC. We are sending duplicates of the video archives to Rutgers Univ., where a national archive has been established. We hope to screen some of these video interviews on USC's You Tube very shortly.

Karen Tongson

Assistant Professor in English and Gender Studies

The last year has been an incredibly busy one for Karen Tongson. This fall, Tongson published her essay, "The Light That Never Goes out: Butch Intimacies in Lesser Los Angeles" in the Blackwell Companion to LGBTQ Studies (eds. Haggerty and McGarry), as well as a review essay for the *International Journal of Communication* on Elana Levine's *Wallowing in Sex: The Sexual Culture of 1970s American Television*. Meanwhile, Tongson's first book, *Relocations: Queer of Color Suburban Imaginaries* has been contracted to the NYU Press "Sexual Cultures" Series (edited by Jose Esteban Munoz and Ann Pellegrini). For much of 2006-2007, Tongson was on the road giving invited lectures, keynotes and plenary addresses at Johns Hopkins University (for the Women and Gender Studies Program), New York University (For the "After CBGB, Now What? Gender, Sexuality and the Future of Subculture" symposium), Swarthmore College (for the Sager Symposium), UC Santa Cruz (for the "Historicism, Homonormativity and Queer Political Formations" Conference), UC Riverside (for the disJunctions conference) and the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign (for the Asian-American Studies, Gender Studies and English Departments).



Back home at USC, Tongson was elected as a Humanities representative to the College Faculty Council, and received a Provost's Arts and Humanities Initiative Grant for a series of performances, titled "RECORDS y Recuerdos: Music and Memory in East L.A." These events were co-curated by CFR's own Raquel Gutierrez. On November 1, 2007, in collaboration with Alexandra Vazquez (Yale University) and Christine Bacareza Balance (UCR), Tongson is launching a web magazine about pop music and the culture industry from a feminist/queer perspective titled OH! INDUSTRY (<http://ohindustry.blogspot.com>). Tongson will also continue to maintain her own blog about sexuality and the suburbs, titled THE INLAND EMPEROR (<http://theinlandemperor.blogspot.com>). Off campus, in March 2008, Tongson will be hosting a listening party on "The Suburbs" at L.A.C.E. (Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions) in a series of listening parties about pop music and place curated by Josh Kun.

David Román

Professor in English

David Román and Richard Meyer coedited a special double-issue of *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, entitled "Art Works," which featured over twenty contributors writing about the role of the literary, visual, and performing arts in queer culture and history.

David also published an essay, "Remembering AIDS: A Reconsideration of the film *Longtime Companion*," in the volume. He also published a series of performance reviews including reviews of *Hecuba* by Euripides at the Royal Shakespeare Company and *Electricidad* by Luis Alfaro at the Mark Taper Forum in *Aztlan: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 31:1 (2006) and a review of the *American Songbook Recital* by Audra McDonald at Lincoln Center in *Theatre Journal* 57:4 (2006), a special issue on "Black Performance" edited by Harry Elam Jr. In addition, the American Society for Theatre Research (ASTR) held a special plenary session on his book *Performance in America: Contemporary US Culture and the Performing Arts* at their 2006 national conference. In 2006 he won two USC-Mellon Awards for Excellence in Mentoring, the first award was for his work with undergraduate students and the second award was for his work with the junior faculty in the College.

USC's Latin American Studies Initiative and Center for Feminist Research are pleased to present Adelina Anthony in her one-woman show:

MASTERING SEX & TORTILLAS

March 13, 2008

Ground Zero Performance Cafe

University of Southern California, 615 Childs Way

7:00–8:00 Reception with food and beverages

8:00–10:00 Performance

Event is free and open to the public

> *Los Angeles based performance ensemble: (from left to right) Mari Garcia, Claudia Rodriguez and Raquel Gutierrez. (Photo credit: Hector Silva)*



VISIONS AND VOICES AT USC

Records y Recuerdos



Adjunct lecturer and MacArthur Genius Fellow Luis Alfaro.

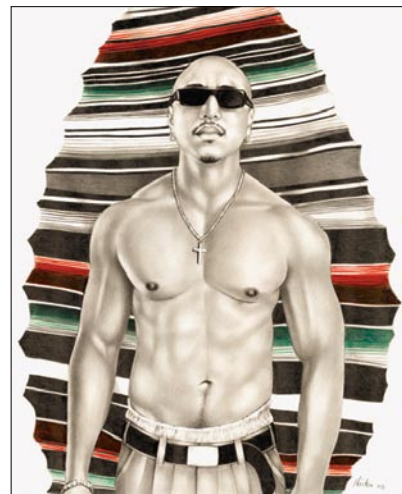
Records y Recuerdos is a multimedia event that brings together the music, history and memories created at the intersections of race, queer sexuality, outlawness and punk. Conceived by Professor Karen Tongson (English and Gender Studies) and Raquel Gutierrez (Center for Feminist Research), this series consists of multiple events in March and April. Each event examines the underground grass-root political natures and creative expressions that take place in different East Los Angeles neighborhoods.

On March 6th is Eastside Stories: Queer Latino/a Art and Activism in East LA that takes place at El Centro Chicano at 6:30 pm.

On Friday, April 11 and Saturday, April 12, The Barber of East LA will be performed at Ground Zero Coffeehouse on the USC campus. Directed by MacArthur Fellow Luis Alfaro, this full-length play features Butchalis De Panochtitlan (BdP), a Los Angeles based three member ensemble who perform and titillate queer of color experiences of love, lust, and play.

After the April 12th performance join the opening reception of Hector Silva's Retrospective at the One Institute. This retrospective will include a wide range of Hector Silva's highly

eroticized pencil drawings of Latino masculinity and will be on display until May 20th. This event is in collaboration with Visions and Voices — USC's Arts and Humanities initiative, the One National Gay and Lesbian Archives, the LGBT Resource Center, the Popular Music Project at the USC Norman Lear Center and El Centro Chicano.



< *"Obregon #2" by Los Angeles-based visual artist Hector Silva.*

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We strongly encourage you to support our activities by becoming a Member in any of the categories listed below. Your contribution will place you on our mailing list. You will receive our Newsletter and be invited to special events. You will also know that your generosity is furthering the development of feminist scholarship and outreach in Los Angeles.

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I would also like to include and additional donation to help support the work of CFR.

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USC CENTER FOR FEMINIST RESEARCH

Spring 2008

USC Center for Feminist Research
University of Southern California
Mark Taper Hall of Humanities, Suite 422
Los Angeles, CA 90089-4352
213.740.1739
fax 213.740.6168
cfr@usc.edu