Letters

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Why a *Feminist* Movement?

Roads to Feminist Protest in Postwar 1960s and 1970s America

by Benita Roth

How and why do women decide to protest on their own behalf? Why and when do they decide to challenge institutional authority? How do they come to challenge the local authority of those with whom they organize? In short, how and why do women activists sometimes become feminist activists?

These are some of the questions that are at the center of my research on gender, feminisms, and women's social protest. When I first heard that the theme for the 2004/2005 Warren Center Fellows Program was "Strategic Actions: Women, Power, and Gender Norms," I felt that the theme had been selected just for me. In working on the gender dynamics of social protest in a postwar American context, I always came back to questions of political decision-making by women activists, that is, strategy. In recovering, reflecting on, and reassessing the way that women in social movement organizations challenged mainstream views of women's roles, I've come to be impressed by the complexity of the contexts within which women strategize, and by the way their strategies are shaped by women's on-the-ground perceptions of opportunities and constraints.

Benita Roth

There's been considerable backlash in the past twenty or so years against the changes that postwar feminist movements have brought about in American society (more will be said about the use of the plural "feminist movements" below). There is little doubt that these and other oppositional movements have irrevocably changed people's lives. Backlash against movements is, of course, a sign of movements' successes, especially so when the movements in question have targeted for change relationships that many see as "natural" and immutable. But the scholarship on the variety and ubiquity of women's protest makes clear that explicitly, self-consciously feminist movements are actually rather infrequent occurrences as political projects by women protestors. For me, it is precisely this combination of relative rarity and transformative potential that makes the question of "Why a *feminist* movement?" so compelling in trying to understand women's agency in popular protest.

The genesis of my interest in the making of U.S. feminisms in the 1960s and 1970s—the "second wave" of feminist protest—began with a political puzzle that confronted me while I was still an undergraduate in the early 1980s, as I noted in the preface of my book, *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave* (Cambridge University Press, 2004). Both at my university, Brandeis, and in the activist community of the greater Boston area in which it was located, questions about racism in what was perceived to be the largely monolithic white feminist movement were inescapable. Racial and ethnic divides were the subject of many discussions and workshops; over and over, in group after group, the failure of white feminism to attract women of color—often characterized as the failure of women of color to be attracted to feminism—was bemoaned. While my experience at the time confirmed that many feminist groups were predominantly or exclusively white, it didn't follow that the activist women of color I met were not feminists. I found this to be true both in the personal friendships I had and in doing coalition work in and around Boston; I continually met women of color who were feminist in their outlook, but were reluctant for different reasons to participate in all-white groups. Some activist women of color feared tokenism, but others were just more involved with community-based organizations and did not want to suffer the "combat fatigue" that joining yet another organization might bring. Adding to my puzzle was the fact that in the 1980s and 1990s, I was, along with others, reading more and more theory by feminists of color, and becoming more and more convinced by the analysis of the "intersectionality" of oppressions that feminists of color generated.[1] Intersectional feminist theory constituted a mode of analysis and consequent vision of liberation from multiple oppressions of class, race, homophobia, and sexism that seemed to many feminists to be the logical next step.

Inside

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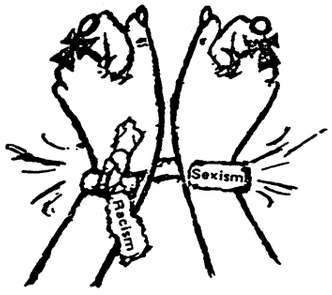

I eventually moved back to my hometown of Los Angeles in the late 1980s and after having been active in various parts of the local feminist anti-violence movement, I began graduate school in sociology at UCLA. Although the organizations I had worked with in LA were somewhat able to mitigate racial divides by hiring diverse staffs, the larger anti-violence movement was still characterized by racial/ethnic divisions and largely consisted of racially/ethnically homogenous groups designed to serve different communities. I went back to graduate school in order to study social protest, and I found myself looking for a case for my dissertation research. The puzzle of why a vision of a feminist fight against the multiple fronts of oppression did not match the reality of racially/ethnically separate groups organizing on the ground once again presented itself, and shaped my research agenda.

The questions I asked to orient my research included the ones I began this article with, and, of course, became more specific. I wanted to know what had generated the divisions I found in the landscape of feminist protest that I confronted. In my research, I looked at the emergence of organizationally distinct feminisms in the 1960s and 1970s, finding that the picture of one feminist movement, organized by middle-class white women, was erroneous. Some Black women and some Chicanas (Mexican-American women) organized as self-conscious feminists at the same time as white feminists, and chose a label— "feminist"—that was not particularly popular within their own communities (not that white feminists necessarily won big popularity contests among male activists in the 1960s). While there were differences in what feminists who were situated in different oppositional communities wanted and organized for, there was also a fair degree of agreement about bedrock issues: reproductive choice, employment opportunity, an end to sexual violence, and even opposition to the Vietnam War. What, then, led to the development of feminisms that were organizationally distinct?

In order to do this work, I first had to reject the idea that the racial/ethnic divisions I encountered were somehow "natural." I also had to reject the idea that the divisions were "only" about race/ethnicity, and not also about class; that is to say, I embraced the intersectional perspective that acknowledged that people have multiple social locations in interlocking systems of social hierarchy. Having been trained in a sociology program that emphasized macro-level structural and historical change, I also took the view that the organizational divisions in feminist organizing were influenced in part by the larger social movement political milieu—a milieu that shaped feminists' access to resources and shaped their perceptions of the possibilities for effective political protest. I married this view with a "meso" (that is, mid-range) level look at movement organizations. I took very seriously the idea that large scale social divisions and social inequalities impacted feminist organizing, because of how activists on the ground were aware of the class divisions that existed between—and not just within—racial/ethnic communities. It is one thing, for example, to state that the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s had most of its roots in a growing Black middle-class, or that the Chicano movement represented the aspirations of an urbanizing community; it is quite another thing to assert that the status of being middle-class travels uninflected across communities. No less than other kinds of activists, those women forming feminist groups readily ascertained class inequalities, and these assessments mattered for how they decided to organize.

After visiting archival collections in libraries across the United States, and after conducting nine oral history interviews of my own, I argued that the second wave of feminism was indeed a second wave of *feminisms,* which reflected the deep class and racial/ethnic inequalities that existed among feminists who organized beginning in the mid-1960s. These inequalities, along with the overall structure of the social movement sector, and the place of emerging feminists within that sector, refracted feminist protest in the era into different, parallel, and largely separate movements organized around the political goal of the liberation of women. While that sounds like a strictly structural argument, I also emphasized that relationships with male activists in other existing movements—particularly those in emergent feminisms' "parent" movements of the Civil Rights/Black Liberation movement, the Chicano movement, and the New Left—were crucial to how, and why, feminists decided to organize as feminists. Feminists didn't just form their own groups to get away from male sexism; they engaged in prolonged debate with male activists about the political wisdom of feminist organizing, and they were noticeably aware of the potential consequences their organizing could have on their own communities.

This question of women's awareness of the consequences of feminist organizing brings me back to the Warren Center theme, and the matter of strategic action by women challenging power and gender norms. How political activists make decisions about how and with whom to organize is a central question for social movement scholars. "Strategic" or "instrumental" action by social movement participants had often been counterposed in the sociological literature with "expressive" action, with the idea being that activists make strategy with their left-brain, sifting through choices with a cold cost-benefit eye, and then switch into right-brain mode when they assert identities through emotional, most often culturally-based, practices that have little to do with their concerns about political effectiveness. This simplistic dichotomy is being overcome by social movement scholars who are now writing with closer attention toward the specific circumstances within which activists make their decisions about how to act politically, that is, the nested boxes of opportunity and constraint that need to be perceived by activists in order to be actually available to them.

In my work on second wave feminisms, I argued for a different understanding of the way that politically invested activists constructed organizations within these sets of opportunities and constraints. Second wave feminists emerged from other movements for social change, those I mentioned earlier, with various degrees of loyalty to others in larger oppositional communities. Feminists used, or attempted to use, resources generated by those communities in order to press for their own issues. They shared values with others in those communities; feminists in each movement saw a feminist agenda as an extension of their movement's values, a way of living up to community ideals. But the emergence of feminisms in a crowded social movement landscape already characterized by competition as much as by coalition complicated matters, especially when it came to the distribution of women's energies within movement organizations. Feminists arguing for a new political agenda were seen as threatening, since most social movement groups relied on women's labor to get the nitty-gritty details of organizing done, not to mention cooking for and cleaning up after meetings.

Ironically—and here is where I saw the inter-movement milieu of social protest mattering most—shared values among different racial/ethnic oppositional communities about how to organize validated separate feminist organizing. As feminists in various organizations debated the merits of autonomous organizing, they were not only talking about mov-

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ing resources from place to place; they were influenced by a left political ethos of "organizing one's own," which positively sanctioned efforts by groups to organize their own communities, and thus achieve liberation through self-determination. "Organizing one's own" came to be seen as the only authentic style of radical activism, and "one's own" was defined as one's own racial/ethnic community. Cross-racial/ethnic (and to some degree, cross-class) efforts by feminists were seen as wrong-headed politically. Instead, what was envisioned was a coming together of groups at some point in the future, after communities had empowered themselves. Thus, shared values about how to organize dictated separation—a separation couched as temporary and strategic, but one that was nonetheless far-reaching. The separate roads that Black, Chicana, and white feminists took in forming their movements left a legacy of divisions that shaped the terrain of social movement protest that I found as a college student in Boston and as a graduate student in LA. Going further, I would argue that some of these divisions are still present to this day.

Large scale research projects tend to have their own "spin-offs" that lead into new, but related, scholarly territory. My questions about women's agency in protest organizations led to looking at another social movement organization, ACT UP/LA (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power/Los Angeles).[2] Militant anti-AIDS protest arose in the mid-to-late 1980s in response to the AIDS crisis, but the idea of protesting in order to change the way institutions dealt with matters of health and disease had earlier and decidedly feminist roots in the women's health movement. After participating in ACT UP/LA for a year, I became especially interested in the kind of burdens that gender inequality generated for feminist women in organizations where men shared their goals, groups where political agreement could help to compensate for the effects of gender inequality. My historical work on second wave feminisms and my ethnographic work on ACT UP/LA has led me to think theoretically about the different ways that institutions and organizations respond to feminist efforts; in more recent work, "Thinking about Challenges to Feminist Activism in Extra-feminist Settings," I've looked at feminist efforts in mixed-gender settings, and the way that organizational structure and culture shape endemic problems that feminist face.[3] One of the problems I theorize, for example, is related to this question of what happens to feminists in mixed-gender groups that are friendly to feminists. I argue that even in these social movement organizations, gender inequality will lead to a situation where feminists will likely suffer "compartmentalization": a situation where the larger group agrees that feminist issues are important, but the task of addressing those issues is assigned to feminist members—that is, to women—alone. It seems to me that "compartmentalization" is a particularly insidious challenge for feminist activists, since organizational acceptance cannot erase the very real burdens that large-scale gender inequality imposes on women.

A second "spin-off" of my initial research project on racial/ethnic American feminisms is the chief project that I am working on while here at the Warren Center, "Harbingers of Feminist Possibility: Links between Vietnamese Nationalist Women and American Feminists in the Second Wave." I'm in the early stages of gathering material for "Harbingers," which is a project whose origins also reach back to my time as a graduate student at UCLA. During a class on international feminism, taken while I was looking at the archival record of grass-roots feminist journals of the 1960s and 1970s, I became intrigued by the question of the relationships, actual or imaginary, between first world feminists and Third World nationalist women involved in national liberation struggles. Typically, the "flow" of feminist thought is depicted as issuing from the West—or the North, or the developed "first" world—toward needy non-Western, globally Southern, sisters, who are seen as being impoverished both materially and ideologically. But many feminist scholars have argued that occasions of nationalist political revolt tend to give women the opportunity to take "uncustomary action."[4] Whatever the aftermath, during nationalist struggles, more egalitarian relationships between women and men become possible. As Kumari Jayawardena notes, the revolutionary fight against American forces in the 1960s was another example of Vietnamese women moving to the forefront of the nationalist struggle within a socialist movement where the "woman question" had been a constant element of debate throughout the early twentieth century.[5]

The examples of egalitarianism forged in struggle did not go unnoticed by activist women in American social movements. Looking at the underground journals and grass-roots newsletters that feminist movement organizations published—perhaps typed, mimeographed, and handed out is a better way to describe what these activists did—I discovered that a number of key New Left activist women who later became important figures in the (white) women's liberation movement had traveled outside the country to meet with Vietnamese nationalist women (i.e. North Vietnamese) as part of their anti-Vietnam war activism. These meetings—there were at least five between the years 1965 to 1971, and I expect to find evidence of others—were reported in accounts by male activists, most notably Todd Gitlin and Tom Hayden, but the meetings themselves appear to have been initiated by women. Gitlin wrote that major contacts with the North Vietnamese began in July of 1965, when members of Women Strike for Peace met with high ranking members of the South Vietnamese National Liberation Front (NLF) in Indonesia.[6] In *Reunion: A Memoir,* Hayden wrote that American delegations from the peace movement that met with North Vietnamese included American women who later became key women's liberationists, for example, Vivian Rothstein; Hayden even cites Rothstein's diary of the events in his recounting.[7]

Neither Gitlin nor Hayden asked the question of what it might have meant for women of the New Left—a movement, which unlike the Old (socialist) Left, had no history of a "woman ques-

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tion"—to see nationalist women in positions of power. Certainly, Vietnamese nationalist women were not "feminists" as such. They would not have used the label, as feminism was branded by their socialist movement (and other socialist movements in other places) as a "bourgeois" diversion from the revolutionary struggle that would lead to liberation for all. But it was possible that these nationalist women became role models for at least some U.S. feminists; otherwise, why did reports about them appear continuously in the emergent feminist press? Unfortunately, we have as yet little sense of the impact of these meetings on Rothstein, on the representatives from Women Strike for Peace, or on second wave feminists more generally, as the legacy of those contacts remains unexplored in a systematic fashion. Did American second wave feminists apply their own standards of "liberation" to the Vietnamese women, or were they were willing to accept a different vision of feminism because of their contacts with the Vietnamese? Who did so, and who did not? Did feminists in different racial/ethnic activist communities in the U.S. "romanticize" the Vietnamese struggle as some activist men seem to have?

Emerging feminist newspapers, magazines, and other journals actually featured recurrent images of a Third World woman—usually Vietnamese, sometimes Cuban, sometimes African—with a baby strapped to her back and a gun in her hand. What was she doing there? It is easy to dismiss these images as just another manifestation of American left romanticism, but my sense is that something deeper was going on for feminist activists seeking an ideological footing in their own oppositional communities. In the feminist grass-roots journals that I have explored, the image of the Third World nationalist woman is more than just an anti-Vietnam War illustration, although she is that. She seems to be set up by emerging first world feminists as a kind of model of feminist womanhood.

Significantly, for feminists of color—Black feminists and Chicana feminists—the Third World nationalist woman was seen as a compatriot, a *compañera* in struggle. Feminists of color made explicit links between their U.S. based feminist activism in communities of color and that of women in Third World national liberation struggles. One Black feminist organization, which grew out of the Civil Rights movement's Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, even called itself "The Third World Women's Alliance." Thus, some U.S. based feminists of color chose to characterize their work as the local incarnation of worldwide, transnational struggles against domination, and in their press, they depicted the Third World woman as a sister in struggle.

With these three initial and potentially unequally weighted strands in my head—the meetings between U.S. based white female anti-war activists and Vietnamese women, the imagery of the Third World woman with a gun and a baby, the documentary evidence of a stance of solidarity with Third World women on the part of U.S. based feminists of color—I will be using this year at the Warren Center to bring the question of different roads to feminism to its transnational level. Increasingly, the world of protest seems to have become transnationalized, as information travels through new media that governments can only imperfectly impede. Money and other resources flow from foundations in one country to non-governmental organizations in another, and people travel across borders to protest global (and other kinds of) institutions. While debate still rages on the existence and extent of a global civil society, let alone a globalized social movement sector, what I hope to do is extend the transnational timeline for U.S. feminisms back by showing how awareness of women's possibilities under a different set of circumstances influenced U.S. feminist perceptions of their own possibilities. The cross-pollination of ideas and ideology that I documented among different racial/ethnic feminist movements in the U.S. had its counterpart at the transnational level. Through the time spent at the Warren Center with colleagues—reading, sharing, and discussing across disciplinary boundaries—I will be trying to understand the back and forth, the ebb and flow, of feminist efforts that crossed boundaries of national space and historical time.

NOTES

1. Those interested in intersectionality and feminist theory are encouraged to look at, among others, Frances Beal, "Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female," in *The Black Woman: An Anthology,* ed. Toni Cade (New York: New American Library, 1970); Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *The University of Chicago Legal Forum* (1989) 139–167; Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence Against Women," in *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings that Formed the Movement,* eds. Kimberlé Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller, and Kendall Thomas (New York: The New Press 1995) 357-383; Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment,* 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2000); Deborah H. King, "Multiple Jeopardy, Multiple Consciousness: The Context of a Black Feminist Ideology," *Signs* 14:1 (2000): 42–72; and Bonnie Thorton Dill, "Race, Class and Gender: Prospects for an All-inclusive Sisterhood," *Feminist Studies* 9:1 (1983): 131–150.

2. Benita Roth, "Feminist Boundaries in the Feminist-Friendly Organization: The Women's Caucus of ACT UP/LA," *Gender & Society* 12:2 (1998): 129–145.

3. Benita Roth, "Thinking About Challenges to Feminist Activism in Extra-feminist Settings," *Social Movement Studies* 3:2 (2004): 147–166.

4. Rosemary Ridd and Helen Callaway, eds., *Women & Political Conflict: Portraits of Struggle in Times of Crisis* (New York: New York University Press, 1987); Sheila Rowbotham, W*omen Resistance and Revolution: A History of Women and Revolution in the Modern World* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972); and Guida West and Rhoda Lois Blumberg, eds., *Women and Social Protest* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

5. Kumari Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* (London and New Jersey: Zed Books, 1986).

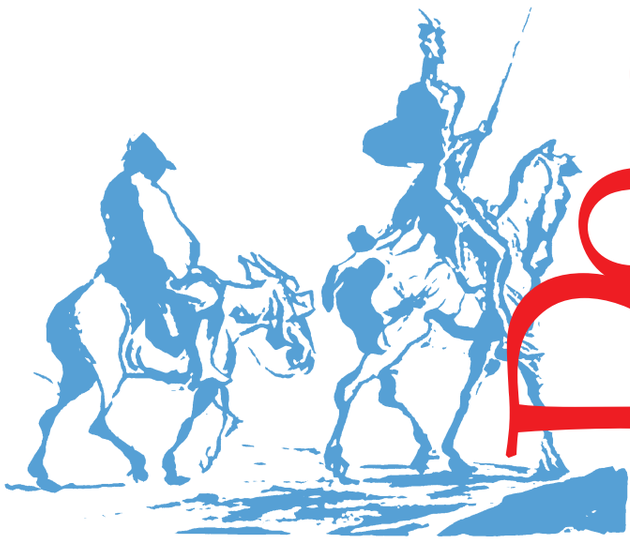
6. Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (Toronto: Bantam, 1987).

7. Tom Hayden, *Reunion: A Memoir* (New York: Random House, 1988).

Special Announcement

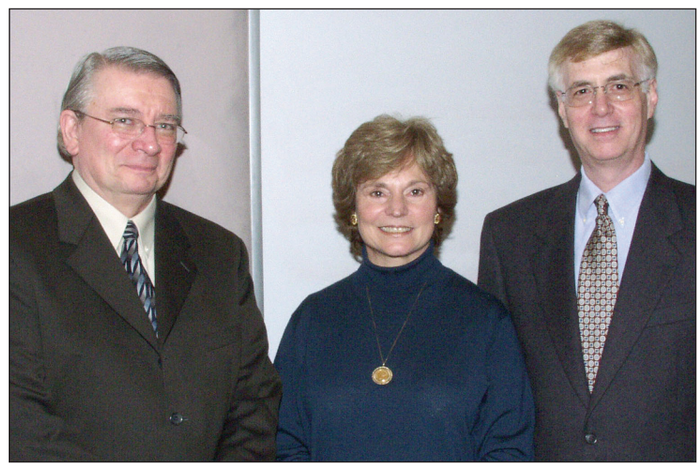
We are pleased to announce an addition to our Warren Center family. Galyn Glick Martin, our activities coordinator, gave birth to Ava Simone Martin on October 27th, 2004. Ava is welcomed by Mom, Dad Scott, Sister Ella, and the Warren Center staff. Congratulations to the Martin family!

Celebrating 400 Years of Don Quixote



The Warren Center sponsored a conference from November 12th to 13th, 2004, in honor of the 400th anniversary of the publication of Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote* (the first part of which was published in 1605). Faculty and students from across the humanities as well as interested Nashvilleans attended the two day symposium, which consisted of three lectures from distinguished Cervantes scholars on Friday and a roundtable discussion on Saturday. Dean Richard McCarty gave the welcoming remarks, and the conference organizer Edward Friedman, professor of Spanish and comparative literature, introduced the panelists.

Marina S. Brownlee, Robert Schirmer Professor of Spanish and professor of comparative literature, Princeton University, was unable to attend. However, her paper, "Cervantes's Doubtful History," was delivered by Edward Friedman. Brownlee's paper focused on the nature and function of history in the fictional narrative, drawing on characters in Cervantes's novel that could be traced to historical sources. Through a reading of "The Captive's Tale," with a special focus on the character Zoraida, Brownlee suggests that the hybridity in that segment of the novel is a theoretical model through which to read *Don Quixote* as a whole. Hybridity is a concept that emerged from post-colonial theory, which identifies the potential for identities to shift and/or merge, suggesting that encounters between different cultural identities need not necessarily be destructive but can be productive of new meaning—of a new way of being. Brownlee posits that "The Captive's Tale"'s hybridity—in its representation of religious, racial, and gender ambiguities and oppositions—dramatizes the dangers to sixteenth-century Spain's fascination with racial purity—a fascination that blinds the culture to the complexities of race.



Howard Mancing, Yvonne Jehenson, and Edward Friedman

Yvonne Jehenson, professor emerita of Spanish and comparative literature, University of Hartford, delivered a paper titled, "Nostalgia Revisited: Don Quixote's Golden Age Speech in Historical Context." Jehenson's talk centered on the concept of resonance. Jehenson suggests that there are resonances in Don Quixote's Golden Age speech with contemporary discourses, that of classical historical discourse and the discourse of the period, which lend the fictional character historical weight. Don Quixote's Golden Age speech outlines the idyllic values that society should return to: individual freedom from law, no ownership of private property, and a work ethic based on selflessness rather than avarice. Citing these three values as central to debates about cultural reform in the sixteenth century, Jehenson identifies traces of the idealized, utopian view of society that Don Quixote promotes in public debates about Spain's treatment of the American Indians. Suggesting that the ideals of the Golden Age speech are "in the air," intellectually available to Cervantes, Jehenson claims that Don Quixote is both the product of his age and is made to be the reproducer of early modern Spain's reform debates.

Howard Mancing, professor of Spanish, Purdue University, delivered the final talk of the day. Mancing's talk, "Dulcinea del Toboso—On the Eve of Her 400th Birthday," took the audience through a whirlwind of stage adaptations and prose retellings of the story of the figment of Don Quixote's imagination, Dulcinea. Mancing's presentation drew on the appeal of *Don Quixote* as a text that fascinates both the academic and generalist reader by discussing Dulcinea both in terms of a theoretical model and in terms of her relationship to popular culture. Bordering on the mythologized, Dulcinea's multiple adaptations from the seventeenth to the late twentieth centuries, portray her character as a prostitute, a mad woman, an autistic, and even a swimsuit model. Why, Mancing asked, are there so many reincarnations of an absent character—of a character that exists only in another character's mind? Mancing draws on M. M. Bakhtin's theory of novelistic images and re-accentuation. Bakhtin discusses "a creation of new images by means of a re-accentuation of old ones" in literature in terms of its historical significance ("Discourse in the Novel," *The Dialogic Imagination* [Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981]: 421). Bakhtin goes on to suggest that "in any objective stylistic study of novels from distant epochs it is necessary to take this process [re-accentuation] continually into consideration, and to rigorously coordinate the style under consideration with the background of heteroglossia, appropriate to the era, that dialogizes it. When this is done, the list of all subsequent re-accentua-

continued on page 6

Don Quixote continued

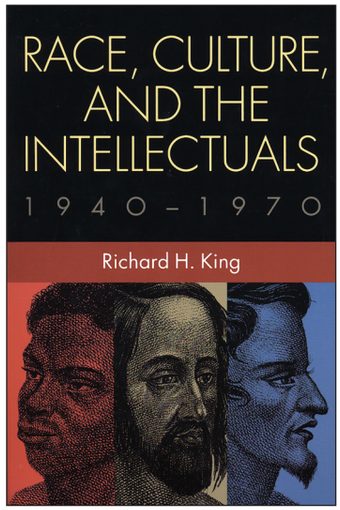
tions of images in a given novel—say, the image of Don Quixote—takes on an enormous heuristic significance, deepening and broadening our artistic and ideological understanding of them. For…great novelistic images continue to grow and develop even after the moment of their creation; they are capable of being creatively transformed in different eras, far distant from the day and hour of their original birth" (422). Mancing takes Bakhtin's identification of Don Quixote as a prototypical example of re-accentuation and claims that Dulcinea goes beyond what Bakhtin theorizes. Not merely creatively transformed, but more alive today than at the century of her birth, Dulcinea opens up the possibility for continued reinterpretations and new permutations of Cervantes's monumental work.

The conference concluded with a lively roundtable discussion on Saturday, November 13th. Panelists fielded questions from the audience and audience members had the opportunity to engage in scholarly conversation with the panelists not only about *Don Quixote* but about more general questions relating to the field of early modern literary studies.

Recent Publications from Past Warren Center Visiting Fellows

The Warren Center is pleased to present profiles of two former William S. Vaughn Visiting Fellows' recently published books. Both books were works-in-progress that formed the basis of the Fellows' research during their tenure at the Warren Center. Many participants in the Warren Center Fellows Programs have said that the effects of conversations they shared with other Fellows lingered well beyond the end of their time at Vanderbilt. *Letters* wants to extend these positive effects to our readers by providing profiles of research that was enhanced by participation in a Warren Center Fellows Program.

Richard H. King, *Race, Culture, and the Intellectuals,* 1940-1970. Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004. Pp. 416. ISBN 0-8018-8065-3, hb; ISBN 0-8018-8066-1, pb. $55.00; $24.95.



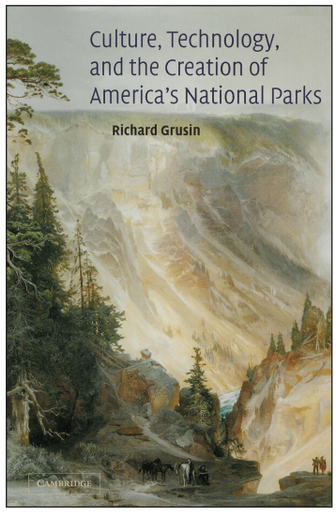
Richard H. King, professor of American intellectual history at the University of Nottingham, was the Visiting Fellow for the 2001/2002 Fellows Program, "Memory, Identity, and Political Action." King also accepted an appointment as visiting professor in the history department at Vanderbilt in 2002/2003. *In Race, Culture, and the Intellectuals, 1940-1970,* King acknowledges his indebtedness to the Warren Center, both as the institution "responsible for much of the intellectual excitement at Vanderbilt" and as providing "a perfect place to work." King cites numerous faculty and graduate students he encountered during his time at Vanderbilt as a vibrant "community of scholars and friends."

Boldly declaring that "race is the modern West's worst idea," King opens *Race, Culture, and the Intellectuals, 1940-1970* by stating that "race as a valid scientific idea" had been discredited in the intellectual community as early as the 1920s. Where King goes beyond current discussions of this discrediting is to produce an intellectual history of racism itself, one that begins at a moment "when the destructive implications of organizing a state around racist assumptions and the contradictions between supposed American commitment to equality and the existence of legal racial segregation became clear." His project asks the question, "Why does thinking in terms of race remain such a compelling, even appealing, notion?" King begins with a discussion of post-World War II America and what he terms the "universalist vision," a concept that promoted equality within and across racial difference, in which cultural and racial differences were elided. He moves to a consideration of "the Cold War context," wherein "by the 1960s in the United States, universalism was increasingly challenged by cultural particularism," a particularism characterized either by the belief that "cultural differences were attributed to actual racial differences" or the more predominant belief that "rejected racial differences as an explanation for group differences, but, at the same time, insisted that it was important to preserve them." King identifies specific events as symptomatic of the movement towards a particularist view of race, including the trial of Adolf Eichmann in 1961 and the 1967 Six-Day War. As King notes, he "sharpen[s] the contrast between universalism and particularism in order to provide a framework within which to understand the quite complex developments in thinking about racism and culture between, roughly, 1940 and the early 1970s in the trans-Atlantic world." By doing so, King can make vividly clear one of his major claims: "When scientific racism was discredited and then replaced by a universalist view of humanity, the focus shifted from race to culture as a way of explaining group differences. But that in turn opened the way for the emergence of an ideology of cultural particularism in which culture was not just an explanatory principle but also a normative ideal. Thus, we have the emergence of an ideology of culture that challenged the very universalism that generated it." King's analysis of the implications of this shift in thought on "the arguments about race, racism, and culture," attempts to "construct a map…of the ideological positions and intellectual influences in the period under scrutiny." King weaves numerous intellectuals into his analysis, moving deftly among the works of Ralph Ellison, Jean-Paul Sartre, Richard Wright, Stanley Elkins, Hannah Arendt, and James Baldwin, to name but a few. Clarence E. Walker, in a review of King's book, writes: "In his readings and critique of Arendt, Adorno, Horkheimer, Myrdal, Cox, Dubois, Frazier, Negritude, and the Black Arts movement King displays a dazzling range of erudition. No historian so far has drawn together an analysis of these diverse scholars and social movements and shown their interconnectedness and divergences." *Race, Culture, and the Intellectuals, 1940-1970* has implications that reach beyond its twentieth-century scope, urging readers to draw inferences from the intellectual history King has created and apply those insights to thinking about "the contemporary world of identity politics, multiculturalism, challenges to cultural canons and hierarchies, and cultural relativism." As King notes, "The deletion of race from the discourse of, and about, 'otherness' has been a distinct gain. Whether its replacement by culture is what we need is another matter."

Richard Grusin, *Culture, Technology, and the Creation of America's National Parks.* Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004. Pp. 232. 42 halftones. ISBN 0-521-82649-7. £45.00.

Richard Grusin, professor of English and Chair of the Department of English at Wayne State University, was the Visiting Fellow for the 1999/2000 Fellows Program, "Constructions, Deconstructions, and Destructions of Nature."

Recent Publications continued



Grusin graciously writes in his preface: "The book would never have been completed without the luxury of my time as a visiting fellow at the Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities at Vanderbilt University, during the 1999-2000 academic year. Not only did that fellowship year provide me with the time and space to bring the manuscript to completion, but the intellectual stimulation and camaraderie of our seminar…provided me with an incalculable benefit."

Cambridge University Press describes *Culture, Technology, and the Creation of America's National Parks* as an "innovative study" that "investigates how the establishment of national parks participated in the production of American national identity after the Civil War. The creation of America's national parks is usually seen as an uncomplicated act of environmental preservation. Grusin argues, instead, that parks must be understood as complex cultural technologies for the reproduction of nature as landscape art. He explores the origins of America's three major parks—Yosemite, Yellowstone, and Grand Canyon—in relation to other forms of landscape representation in the late nineteenth century. He examines such forms as photography, painting, and mapping, plus a wide range of travel narratives, scientific and nature writing, and fiction. Grusin shows that while establishing a national park does involve preserving an area of land as a 'natural' rather than economic asset…it also transforms the landscape into a culturally constructed object called 'nature'."

Grusin's work challenges earlier studies that posit "the story of a deployment of the ideology of nature's intrinsic value to further the social, cultural, or political interests of a dominant race, class, gender, or institutional formation." Grusin suggests that this type of "revisionist narrative…runs the risk of stripping nature of any particularity or specificity whatsoever—of transforming nature so completely into culture that the preservation of nature as a national park, for example, becomes indistinguishable from its transformation into a ranch or a mine or a private resort." While acknowledging the gains that these earlier studies have made, Grusin suggests that if one grants the inseparability of nature and culture, then that concept must be interrogated with more rigor. Grusin theorizes his claims about the cultural construction of nature through the example of the national parks, suggesting that the each park is itself, "in terms of a particular place, location, or environment," a technology "for the reproduction of nature." Grusin's work crosses disciplinary boundaries, and will be of interest to numerous fields, including environmental studies, cultural geography, literary studies, and history.

Joe Klein Presents Harry C. Howard Jr. Lecture

On October 26th, just one week before the 2004 Presidential election, noted journalist and author Joe Klein presented the tenth annual Harry Howard Jr. Lecture. Klein's talk was titled "*All the King's Men* and *Primary Colors:* The Relationship Between Political Fiction and Political Factors in Election Year 2004." Klein wrote the best-selling novel *Primary Colors* (Warner Books, 1996) which was inspired by the 1992 U.S. Presidential race. Klein's contribution to the field of political fiction was very much influenced by Robert Penn Warren's novel *All the King's Men.* Warren's 1947 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel is considered one of the greatest political novels of all time.

From left: Joe Klien, Mr. and Mrs. Harry C. Howard, Jr.

Klein's talk focused not only on his and Warren's political fiction but on contemporary political issues. Klein, who describes himself as a "flaming moderate," offered a trenchant analysis of the issues driving the election that eschewed partisan politics in favor of advocating political and civic responsibility—on the part of candidates, the press, and the voters. Describing this election as "the most serious one that I have ever covered," Klein identified the major issues facing the country: Iraq, Social Security and Medicare, and the U.S. trade and budget deficits. Querying "whether or not we're serious enough as a country to deal with these challenges," Klein noted that "we've seen a campaign so far where the public seems very much involved…and serious, but the candidates haven't responded in a serious way." Klein further acknowledged: "I think it has been one of the great disappointments to me this election year that neither of these candidates has said anything that we didn't want to hear…or asked anything of us in any profound way." Klein also suggested, however, that the news media bore some of the responsibility for its coverage of the campaigns. Most challenging was Klein's call to the audience to a higher level of civic awareness: "What we have had in this country over the last fifty years is the greatest experiment in affluence that the world has ever seen. …But during that time, as a society we lost the habits of citizenship. All of us." Klein urged the audience to "face the challenge of educating ourselves as citizens of democracy," and encouraged people to discuss in an educated way one another's "very real differences."

Klein is a senior writer at *Time* magazine and a regular contributor to *Paula Zahn Now* on CNN. His weekly column in *Time,* "In the Arena," covers national and international affairs. Klein has also been the Washington correspondent for *The New Yorker,* a columnist for *Newsweek,* a consultant for CBS News, a Washington bureau chief for *Rolling Stone,* and a political columnist for *New York,* where he won a Washington Monthly Journalism Award for a cover story on race. His articles have appeared in *The New Republic, The New York Times, Life,* and the *Washington Post.*

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2004/2005 Warren Center Fellows. *From left: Brooke Ackerly, Karen Campbell, Cecelia Tichi, Holly McCammon, Vivien Fryd, Ronnie Steinberg, Barbara Tsakirgis, Benita Roth, Melissa Snarr*

The Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities

Warren Center Staff

Letters is the semiannual newsletter of the Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities at Vanderbilt University, VU Station B #351534, Nashville, Tennessee 37235-1534. (615) 343-6060, Fax (615) 343-2248. **For a listing of Warren Center programs and activities, please contact the above address or visit our Web site at *www.vanderbilt.edu/rpw_center*.**

Statement of Purpose

Established under the sponsorship of the College of Arts and Science in 1987 and renamed the Robert Penn Warren Center for the Humanities in 1989 in honor of Robert Penn Warren, Vanderbilt alumnus class of 1925, the Center promotes interdisciplinary research and study in the humanities, social sciences, and when appropriate, natural sciences. Members of the Vanderbilt community representing a wide variety of specializations take part in the Warren Center's programs, which are designed to intensify and increase interdisciplinary discussion of academic, social, and cultural issues.

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