

# Body & Wellness

# Inside

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The UCI School of Humanities quarterly magazine is produced by the SOH Department of Advancement.

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# Dean's message

The ancient Greek philosopher and founder of Western medicine, Hippocrates, once said, “wherever the art of medicine is loved, there is also a love of humanity.”

The art of medicine implies skill, talent, critical reflection and more than anything else, a sensitive and caring relationship between the practitioner of that art and its human subject. This is where a genuine love of humanity enters the picture as the very source of the Hippocratic oath physicians traditionally swore to heal and care to the best of one's ability.

Some of the most fraught questions we face as human beings are those relating to embodiment—what does it mean to have or be a body, how are our bodies constructed not just physiologically but culturally as well, how are bodies represented over time, what is an unwell body and how do we face the inevitable loss that is the death of the body? These are some of the questions we take on in our latest magazine, which takes “body and wellness” as its theme.

In the pages that follow, you'll read a variety of features on, and contributions by, faculty, graduate student and undergraduate student voices. Inside, you'll find an examination of modern anatomy's start in Renaissance art by Lyle Massey, professor of art history; a feature on Erika Haysaki, professor of literary journalism, whose long-form journalism has told countless stories about medical marvels, disease and death; an essay on how authors' characters may outlive their creators by Emily Jackson, Ph.D. candidate in Spanish and Portuguese; a Q&A with James Kyung-Jin Lee, whose upcoming book explores how Asian Americans figure into narratives of health and illness; and many other fascinating contributions that will hopefully expand our views on the intersections of embodiment, identity and wellness.

Our magazine takes a timely theme institutionally as well. The School of Humanities recently launched a minor in medical humanities. Led by co-directors Sven Bernecker and Annalisa Coliva, professors in the Department of Philosophy, the minor gives students the opportunity to see health and medicine through the prism of the humanities. With the integration of these disciplines, we will promote a model of healthcare that is patient-centered, culturally sensitive, and responsive to community needs. This is the type of examination that will help us collectively build a future where the art of medicine is loved, and loved in its fundamental core as the love of humanity and of what humanity represents at its best.

We hope you enjoy the pages that follow and look forward to your feedback.

Yours,



Georges Van Den Abbeele  
Dean, School of Humanities



*Photo by Steve Zylius*

# A BODY OF WORK:

Erika Hayasaki writes about death, disease and what it means to be alive

*By Annabel Adams*

A doctor who can literally feel your pain, a woman who can't remember her past, a young girl who survives being shot by her father—these are just some of the stories Erika Hayasaki, associate professor of literary journalism at the University of California, Irvine, has captured in written form.

Both teaching and practicing literary journalism—a style of writing that blends non-fiction with narrative and story-telling techniques—Hayasaki has spent more than fifteen years covering some of

the nation's most tragic and captivating stories. They have been published in print and digital newspapers and magazines and taken shape in e- and print book forms.

As a writer on her high school newspaper, Hayasaki always had an interest in being a journalist. It was a personal tragedy, however, that compelled her to look to long-form journalism as a method for bringing stories to life in a way that short news clips could not.

“Within the facts,  
we can discover  
metaphor and  
meaning”

When Hayasaki was 16, her good friend was shot and killed by her boyfriend. It was the same day as the Oklahoma City bombing. Reading the short newspaper coverage of her friend's death, Hayasaki took it upon herself to write a more in-depth piece. It was her first article about death.

When I get her on the phone, Hayasaki is in Seattle gathering research for a story on two men who experience pain at different sides of the spectrum. Tipped off by a medical report, Hayasaki knew this was a story she'd want to tell. Increasingly, Hayasaki finds some of her stories after they've been covered in local newspapers or medical journals.

"It starts with a question," Hayasaki advises a group of recent transfer students to UCI interested in learning more about literary journalism.

The question "why does a class about death have a three year waiting list?" led to her book, *The Death Class: A True Story About Life*, which received critical praise and was optioned by NBC for TV. The book centers on the professor who teaches, and the students who take, the class "Death in Perspective" at Kean University in Union, New Jersey. Hayasaki spent four years gathering information for the book, including a year as a participant journalist where she enrolled and took the class herself.

Later, she would travel, once while pregnant and again with her then-six-month-year-old daughter and husband in tow, to Mount Carroll, Illinois, population 1,700, to capture the story of a survivor of a grain bin accident—Will Piper—whose two friends died in a corn silo. *Drowned By Corn*, a Kindle single, begins where the newspaper coverage ended—with the aftermath of tragedy. Calling into question not just how we cope with preventable deaths, but also the industries and practices that support them, Hayasaki never stays on the surface of a story; she literally places herself within it to see it most clearly.

Ten years ago for the *Los Angeles Times*, Hayasaki told the story of a 16-year-old girl, Binna Kim, who survived being shot by her father. It was a murder-suicide and her father killed her mother and brother and attempted to kill her too. To catch up with Kim a decade after this tragedy, the

*Los Angeles Times* published a follow up piece. As a result, Hayasaki's original story has gained momentum again, garnering over a hundred thousand views in one month. Her stories continue to spark interest precisely because they focus on people who have to battle unimaginable pains, traumas or conditions. But Hayasaki doesn't force us to sit in the pain for too long—she spends enough time with her subjects to get to the resiliency, the triumph or the sadness. Eventually, she gets us to the complex truth.

When I ask Hayasaki how covering stories about survivors and disorders affects her, she brushes off the question and says she follows her interests. Later, I recall reading a letter she wrote and shared with her students. One student, Monica Luhar, took Hayasaki's class on writing about death and shared with me the words that transformed her own beliefs and allowed her to make peace with her grandfather's recent passing:

Life moves fast. Memories fade. People die. Only storytellers have the power to slow down time, force us to pay attention to the quiver of an old man's lip, the lavender streaks in a Missouri sky, the flutter of a woman's heart. How lucky are we to document. How lucky are we to share these stories for the world to read?

In the conclusion to *The Death Class*, Hayasaki writes that without memories and stories, "the dead would remain dead." She continues, "Within the facts, we can discover metaphor and meaning."

Hayasaki's stories continue to slow down time just enough for us to get to the humanity within even the most tragic stories.

To learn more about Hayasaki, please visit her faculty profile [here](#).

To learn more about *The Death Class: A True Story About Life*, click [here](#).



# THE ART OF ANATOMY:

How modern anatomy got its start in Renaissance art

*By Lyle Massey, associate professor of art history*



Girolamo Cardano, the sixteenth-century, Italian physician and mathematician who held a chair in medicine at the University of Pavia, once wrote:

*The painter is a scientific philosopher, an architect, and a skilled dissector. The excellence of his representation of all the parts of the human body depends on this. This was begun some time ago by Leonardo da Vinci, the Florentine, and all but perfected by him. But this work never had such a craftsman, such an investigator of the natural parts, as Vesalius.*

From our modern perspective, it is surprising and somewhat disconcerting that Cardano makes no distinction between Andreas Vesalius, the sixteenth-century professor of anatomy at the University of Padua who is known as the founder of modern anatomy, and Leonardo da Vinci, one of the greatest painters of the Renaissance (albeit also one who performed dissections). For Cardano, these two men shared a set of transferable skills and, presumably, a similar viewpoint. To be an artist was akin to being an anatomist in the sense that both viewed and understood the body in similar ways. This is why Renaissance anatomical illustrations often seem to be based on familiar artistic models. Distinctions that we might make now between “aesthetic” images and those deemed “scientific” would have made no sense in the Renaissance because the division between art and medicine was highly malleable.

In point of fact, Renaissance anatomy was driven by a set of pictorial concerns. The foundations of what we know as modern anatomy were laid in 1543 when

Vesalius published his path-breaking work, *De humani corporis fabrica*. One of the hallmarks of this folio-sized book was that it was filled with exquisite, large-scale, woodcut engravings depicting the body in various stages of dissection. Vesalius’s contributions to anatomy are generally understood to be a result of his own methodological break with medieval tradition. Medieval anatomy relied heavily on the writings of Galen, the 2nd c. C.E. Hellenistic physician whose influence was widespread in medieval universities throughout Europe: i.e., Padua, Genoa, Paris and Louvain. Dissection, while actively practiced from the thirteenth century onward, was often understood to be necessary only in so far as it could be used to demonstrate Galen’s assertions. Vesalius challenged this tradition, insisting that knowledge of the body could not reasonably be obtained through textual authority alone, but instead required engaged and direct observation through hands-on dissection. This insistence on visual and experiential confirmation was expressed in both the text and, more importantly, the plates of *De humani corporis fabrica*.

The most celebrated images in the *Fabrica* appear in a series of full-page engravings that demonstrate the human body’s surface musculature. The first of these plates depicts a male figure, flayed of his skin, standing in a classical contrapposto pose [Fig. 1]. Balanced, symmetrical, and perfectly proportioned, the figure is clearly modeled on antique and Renaissance ideals, such as Leonardo’s “Vitruvian Man.” To our eyes, this would seem to be primarily an aesthetic choice. In the Renaissance, the male body was conceived as a microcosm that reflected the divine perfection of the universe or macrocosm. Renaissance art developed a pictorial mode for interpreting this microcosm/macrocosm idea, using Graeco-Roman sculpture and

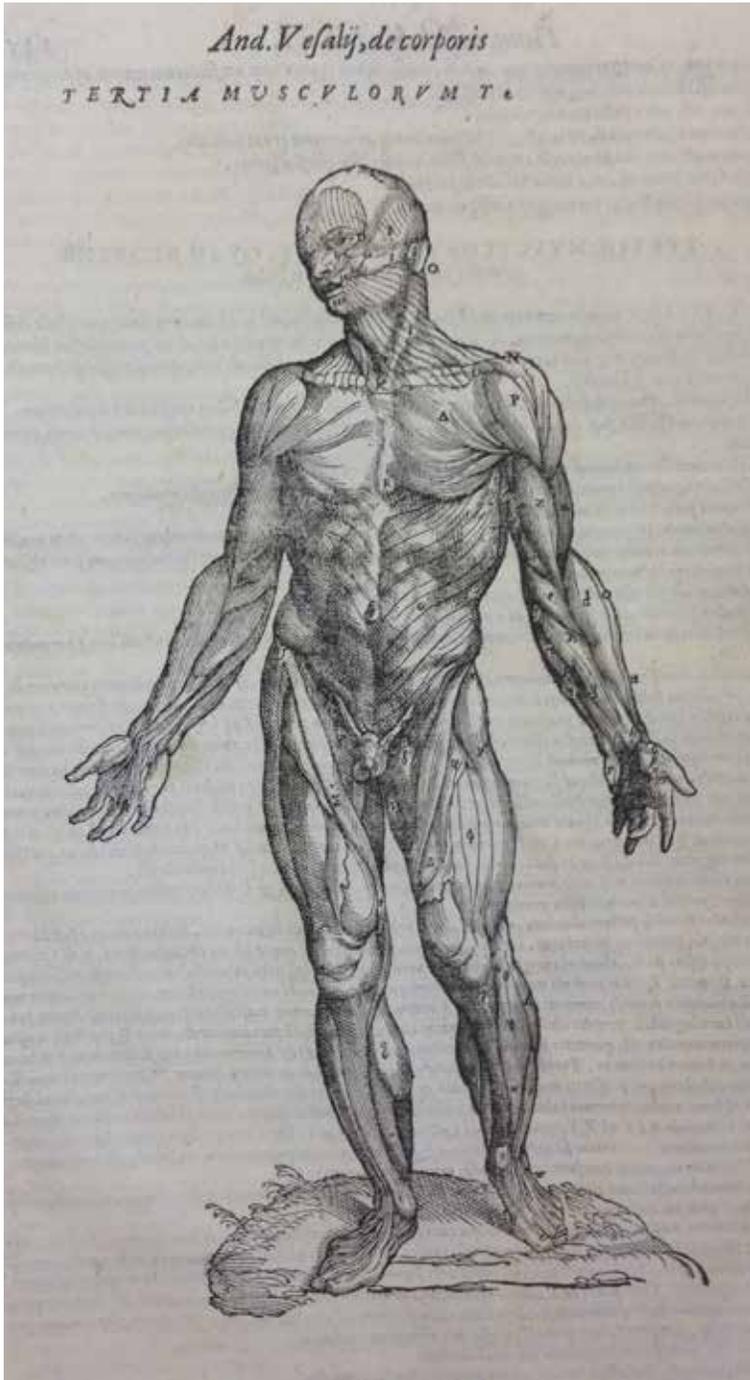


Fig. 1 - First Muscle Figure, Andreae Vesalii Anatomia, Venetiis, Apvd I.A et I. de Franciscis, 1604 (reprint of the Venice 1568 edition, with copies of the original Calcar drawings by Johannes Criegher), Langson Library Special Collections and Archive.

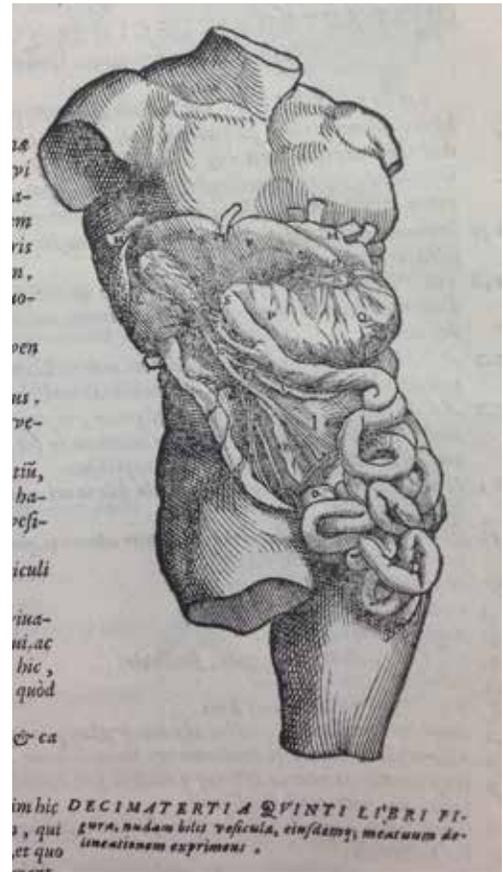
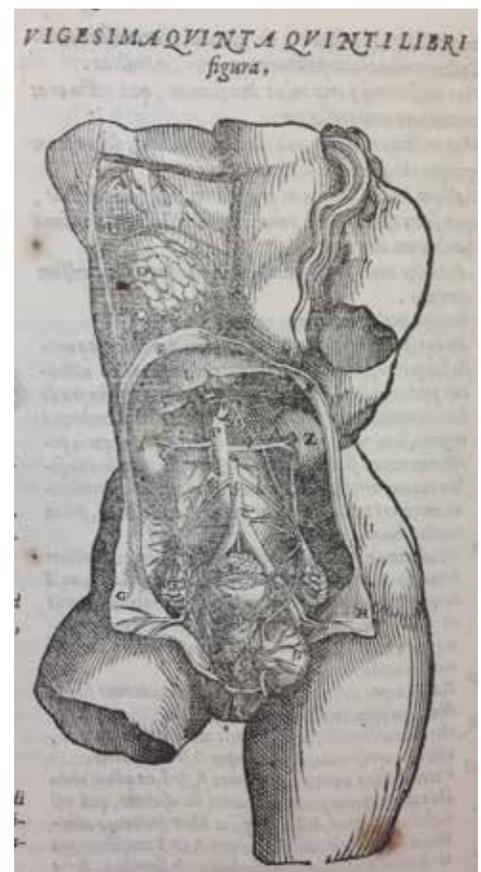


Fig. 2 - Male and female viscera figures, Andreae Vesalii Anatomia, Venetiis, Apvd I. A et I de Franciscis, 1604. Langson Library Special Collections and Archive.



architecture as a template for constructing a visually perfected, ideal human form. Certainly this is part of the reason that Vesalius's anatomical figures look the way they do. Some of the smaller images in the *Fabrica* actually reproduce what appear to be fragments of antique sculpture that have been dissected, linking the study of anatomy to the ancient wisdom displayed in artistic form [Fig. 2]. Understanding anatomy meant scrutinizing the wondrous machine that was the human body, a reflection of divine perfection from outside in. So it stands to reason that when the science of anatomy was founded in the Renaissance, the dissected body would take the form of the ideal, artistic body.

But there is another reason that Renaissance art and anatomy found mutual expression in a singular approach to the human form. The perfected, classical, Renaissance ideal was a ready model for standardization. Vesalius dissected many cadavers in his search for knowledge and as a result he was confronted constantly with the diversity and variation that the human body displays. Because his book was unlike any other that came before, Vesalius and the artist he mostly likely worked with, Jan Stephan van Calcar, were free to choose a visual approach that most closely aligned with Vesalius's pedagogical and intellectual goals. While anatomists needed to be familiar with variation, learning the essential qualities of human anatomy seemed to require a standard or mean that could reduce that diversity to a set of repeated, recognizable relationships. The adoption of a Greco-Roman and Renaissance ideal body was therefore not simply an aesthetic choice, but also an epistemological one. It was the basis of what might be called a normative or standardized representation of anatomy that became the stock in trade of anatomy textbooks from the sixteenth-century to the present (think *Gray's Anatomy*).

The ideal body was not simply beautiful in the mind of its Renaissance admirers; it was also more informative and clarifying than a series of images based on variation. This was certainly an idea that Leonardo endorsed. He worked on an anatomical treatise of his own, although it remained unfinished as did so many of his written works. Through his dissections and drawings he also pursued a standard. In his case, it was also not just for art's sake, but for the sake of greater understanding.

It would not be until the eighteenth century and the rise of pathological anatomy that interest in depicting variation would come to compete with the standardized image created first by Vesalius and Leonardo.

*Lyle Massey has been associate professor of art history and visual studies at UCI since 2008. Her scholarship often explores the complicated relationship between art and science in Renaissance Europe. She has published widely on painting and mathematics, on anatomical prints and wax sculptures, alchemical images and, more recently, has become interested in representations of desert landscapes and saints. She is a contributor to the Medical Humanities Initiative at UCI, teaching a core course on art and medicine for the new Medical Humanities minor.*

Image on page 6: Pietro Francesco Alberti, *Accademia d'pitori* (Painters Academy), ca. 1600, etching.



# MILITARY BODIES:

## The politics of space and commemoration

*By Olivia Humphrey, second-year Ph.D. student in history*

During an early sea battle in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5), the crew of the Russian cruiser Varyag chose to scuttle the vessel, rather than see her become enemy spoils. This was but one of many defeats Russia suffered over the course of the bloody year, but this act struck at some particular societal chords. In a war where there was very little to laud, the crew of the Varyag returned to Russia's capital as heroes.

As for the 33 men who died during this engagement, they were hastily buried in Chemulpo, Korea (modern day Incheon), near to where the battle had been fought. The plan was to have these bodies moved and reinterred in an Orthodox chapel in Seoul. Five years after the last shots had been fired, this operation was still slowly grinding its way through government bureaucracy, battling revolutionary distractions and tight purse strings.

"Alive, dead, in memory and in materiality, bodies – and the limits that define them - are used to construct the narratives of war. "

This belaboured process was rudely put on hold in 1910, when Korea was fully assimilated into the Japanese Empire. In the words of A. S. Somov, the concerned Consul in Seoul, the country had now “become” Japan. Signatures put to paper had transformed neutral soil into enemy soil, and—half a decade later—ground that had been an acceptable, though undesirable, stop-gap had now been rendered utterly unfit for Russian heroes. Both Somov and the government agreed it was imperative for these dead sailors' remains to be transported to Russia, and in haste. Vladivostok, Russia's pre-eminent pacific port, was selected as the choice destination, and coffins, disinfectants, and transport ships descended upon Chemulpo. The remains were eventually reinterred to subdued fanfare at the end of 1911.

This case study offers certain insights as to how the bodies of the dead rank-and-file come to stand in as representatives of national honor at certain points in time. In this case, the contingency was the changing soil—inanimate but intimate, and certainly politically charged—that sparked such a reaction in Russian newspapers and at the Seoul consul. As to whether it is the people or the land that embodies the nation, perhaps nothing speaks to its combination thereof quite as potently as disintegrating remains.

Unlike some of the famous memorializations in Western Europe after WWI, I do not think it particularly useful to frame the Varyag dead as presumptive representatives of nationhood or honour (this can be somewhat patronizingly over-reliant on hindsight—if only the government had the wit to realize such potential!). Rather, these attributes were fleeting, vicarious and delicate, in a manner akin to the sailors' own lingering materiality. These remains tell a more complicated story about the politics of commemoration, where the origins are inextricably bound up with folk tales and burial traditions as much as they are with local geo-political realities and the logistical opportunities afforded by modern technology.

There was more to this issue than soil, although it was certainly the catalyst that brought the other factors to light. Invoking the current swell of popular interest in the issue, Somov even went so far as to make an impassioned plea to have the remains taken all the way back to Moscow or St. Petersburg (some 4,000 miles). The critical issue here was exposure: the value of these remains, which spoke to an event “unparalleled in the history of maritime battles,” was conditional on their exposure to Russian people. Not only was Seoul now in the hands of the Japanese, Somov opined that only “two or three Russian tourists” would bear witness to the monument—which he juxtaposed against a scenario where the bodies and a memorial would find a home in the “proud” metropolises of Moscow and Petersburg. Thus he made a case for the military dead as spectacle; a monument needed to be seen in order to be considered worthy. “Honoring” the dead was not simply about building a monument or moving remains from one place to another, but was an active and continuous process sustained by the passage of people.

This summer I made my first preliminary trip to the Russian archives, and this was one of the stories I found. I like it because it shows how the many facets of the body frame my research on military death during the Russian revolutionary era (1904-24). Alive, dead, in memory and in materiality, bodies—and the limits that define them—are used to construct the narratives of war.

*Olivia Humphrey is a second-year Ph.D. student in the Department of History. Her research focuses on military death in the Russian revolutionary era, and she is excited to start a Mellon-Sawyer "Documenting War" Fellowship in the upcoming academic year.*



# FINDING LIFE IN CORPSE & CORPUS

*By Emily Jackson, Ph.D. candidate in Spanish & Portuguese*

Early 20th-century Spanish philosopher and writer Miguel de Unamuno is famous for having said that Don Quixote, the literary knight who lived adventures in an imaginary chivalric world, has an existence more real than that of his author, Miguel de Cervantes. Unamuno's statement, which echoes all throughout his work, speaks to the persistence of literature, outlasting the temporal human bodies of all who participate in its creation. It

speaks to the meeting place of corpse and corpus: the author's mortal voice may be silenced, but his or her ideas can speak through the written word for generations. Death comes to all, but Unamuno argues that the written word is exempt from this sentence.

We most often encounter history in the same medium as fiction—as a text, a collection of printed words. While there are other ways of exploring

“The finality of death exposes the presence and influence of relationships—person to body, body to environment, body to disease—in ways that might be hidden in life by modesty, vanity, ignorance, or shame.”

history (visiting ruins or other historical sites, for instance), in many cases the apex of historical tangibility is the feeling of fingers on paper. The difference between history and fiction is that in history's case we encounter bodies that boasted corporeal existence outside of the documentary corpus. French historiographer Michel de Certeau has called history a "represent[ation] of the dead along a narrative itinerary," where "the dead are the objective figure of an exchange among the living." This description highlights the power of the historian, the living entity who still has the agency to determine how and where each historical corpse is to be buried among the paragraphs.

Historical corpses, though, are not without their own form of agency. Our bodies anchor us in time and place, uniting us in the common experiences of birth and death, carrying within them genetic material shared with ancestors and offspring. Bodies—as TV crime dramas remind us—tell stories about the kinds of lives we live, testifying to good health or bad, keeping their own silent records of the progress of aging and disease. In his analysis of autopsy in *The Birth of the Clinic*, Michel Foucault called death "the great analyst that shows the connections by unfolding them," a truth about physical autopsy that is no less true in the case of history-making. The finality of death exposes the presence and influence of relationships—person to body, body to environment, body to disease—in ways that might be hidden in life by modesty, vanity, ignorance, or shame.

I learned about the power of life to obscure and contest the truth of the body when my grandmother died almost two years ago. She died of stage IV breast cancer, her body playing host to a tumor that I saw for the first time the day before she died: a purplish, angry-looking mass, somewhere between the size of a ping-pong ball and a tennis ball. But my grandmother never mentioned the tumor. Seeing it was a jarring encounter with a physical truth at odds with my grandmother's own narrative.

A consummate storyteller, my grandmother worked carefully to curate the narrative she believed would

be most beneficial for her children and grandchildren. Even on the day that she was checked into the hospital because the cancer had metastasized to her lungs and she was finding it hard to breathe, she told me on the phone (so cheerfully that I almost believed her) that it was—thankfully—only pneumonia. Not until my grandmother's voice was silenced by death were we able to start constructing a history that openly took the reality of her body into account.

An inventory of your physical body will tell part of your story, but not all; and it likely tells a story different in many respects from the one you would choose to leave behind. The second corpus, the corpus of memory, invention, creativity and fiction, is the realm where our stories transcend our bodies, creating habitable spaces—for our imaginations and those of others—that exist and persist outside of time. An autopsy of Miguel de Cervantes's corpse would never reveal Don Quixote, but Don Quixote may reveal a great deal about Cervantes. As a student and teacher of literature, it is my aim to honor the bodies of history by shedding light on the legacy left behind in this second corpus, keeping in mind another observation of Unamuno's (maybe even one he learned from Don Quixote): "there is no truer history than the novel."

*Emily Jackson is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese. She received her B.A. in Spanish from Cal State Fullerton and her M.A. in Spanish Language and Literature from UCI. Emily is also a licensed attorney and spent a year between her M.A. and Ph.D. practicing immigration law in California's Central Valley. Jackson's dissertation studies the idea of fiction as existential history—an opportunity to explore the ethical possibilities of past events—with particular emphasis on the Spanish Civil War and transition periods. Her textual focus is the work of contemporary Spanish novelist Ignacio Martínez de Pisón, placed in dialogue with the early twentieth century fiction (and philosophy) of Miguel de Unamuno. When she is not trying to write, Jackson enjoys spending time with her husband Daniel and baby daughter Eva.*



# A PIONEERING SPIRIT:

## History alumna Donna Symons forged path in nursing

*By Annabel Adams*

In 1965, Donna Augustine (now Donna Symons) left her all-girls Catholic high school for the University of California, Irvine, which had just opened the doors to its first class of students. The campus was more rolling hills than buildings; there was no Ring Road or air conditioning; and alumni recall occasionally seeing a cow graze outside their dorm windows.

A founding school, the UCI School of Humanities was led by Samuel McCulloch, UCI's first unofficial historian. McCulloch collected clippings, memos, records, stories and letters and conducted more than 100 oral-history

interviews with key academic and community leaders. These stories would later become the basis of his book, *Instant University*.

In 1965, the School of Humanities offered majors in classic humanities disciplines, but did not yet offer programs like literary journalism, the Medical Humanities minor or regional and ethnic studies. What UCI did offer was an energy and can-do spirit that Symons still recalls fifty years later. "There was this pioneering spirit and camaraderie. We were all in it together," says Symons.

"The study of history helps you better understand people, context and timing."

Symons majored in history where she gravitated toward modern European history. She spent her weekends doing homework and making friends with her dorm-mates in Cuesta as well as those in nearby Cielo. When I talk to Symons, she is still reeling from a trip she took to Greece and Turkey with some of these same friends. Every year they meet up in unique places across the globe.

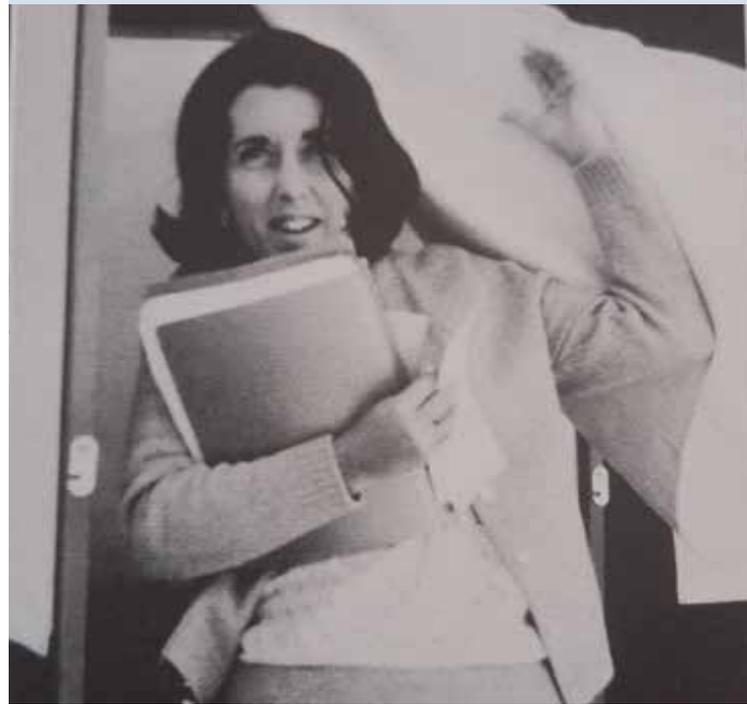
Now retired, Symons spent nearly forty years as a pediatric nurse practitioner. She wanted to become a teacher but couldn't find a credential program that was available. She tried a master's program, Peace Corps and retail positions until she found a job at Planned Parenthood as an assistant. "I worked with two dynamic nurses and after two years with them, I looked to nursing for a lifelong career," says Symons.

Symons attended Grossmont College in San Diego where she received her credentials. Her next steps surprised even herself—"Even though I had been a candle-carrying Vietnam War protestor, I joined the Air Force," says Symons. "The thing is—when you grow up in San Diego, you know that people in the military are just people—good people."

She was stationed in Travis, Calif. in the pediatric unit for two years. She then attended the University of Washington's nurse practitioner program. For the rest of her professional career she would serve as a pediatric nurse practitioner, just recently retiring from Kaiser Permanente after 35 years.

While Symons' path to nursing wasn't a straight line, she believes her degree in history has played a role in shaping her perspective on her patients. "The study of history—art history, cultural history—helps you better understand people, context and timing. Those three things are incredibly important in the nursing field," said Symons. "In fact, medicine and the humanities are not as unrelated as they seem. The first task for a healthcare provider when seeing a patient is to take a 'history.' This history is the patient's story of his/her symptoms or problem. A detailed and accurate history can be more important than the examination itself."

Symons believes UCI is where she found her pioneering spirit. She is still actively engaged with the campus as a member of the Alumni Association (she is currently volunteering her time to research alumni for the Alumni Association's 2017 reunion). In her spare time, Symons is an avid reader of historical fiction and enjoys history-focused travel.



Donna Symons (then Donna Augustine) '69

## NOTABLE NURSES THROUGH THE AGES

Agnes von Kurowsky, an American nurse serving in Milan during WWI, became the inspiration for "Catherine Barkley" in Ernest Hemingway's novel, *A Farewell to Arms*.

Florence Nightingale was a foundational philosopher of modern nursing, statistician, and social reformer. She was put in charge of nursing British and allied soldiers in Turkey during the Crimean War and her writings had a transformative effect on healthcare.

Mary Seacole was a pioneering nurse and heroine of the Crimean War. Her autobiography, *Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands*, is considered one of the earliest autobiographies of a mixed-race woman.

Lynda Van Devanter wrote the memoir, *Home Before Morning: The Story of an Army Nurse in Vietnam*, about her year serving as an army nurse in Vietnam during the Vietnam War & its effect on her life post-war.

Walt Whitman served as a nurse for three years during the Civil War. His poem, "The Wound Dresser," describes his service and the suffering of soldiers in the war.



## CHALLENGING ART:

Rachel Johnson and James Nisbet explore the work of Valie EXPORT and discuss the body as an artistic medium

*Senior art history major Rachel Johnson talks with James Nisbet, associate professor of art history and director of the Ph.D. Program in Visual Studies, about an independent study she conducted on the artist Valie EXPORT, an Austrian who was born Waltraud Lehner in 1940 but who later took on a surname from a brand of cigarettes in response to the tradition of women adopting the last names of their fathers and husbands.*

**JN: Tell me a bit about how you first became interested in the role of the body in the art of Valie EXPORT.**

RJ: I was first introduced to the performance art of Valie EXPORT in your art history class, "Postwar European Art," in the winter quarter of 2015. While exploring how artists in Western Europe grappled with the aftermath of World War II, we stopped to look at Vienna as an art scene dominated by a misogynistic group called the Actionists and a city lacking any real feminist movement at that time. I was instantly drawn to the way that, through the medium of her own body, EXPORT's work confronted and challenged these notions of how gender, politics, and media come together in making art.

Despite EXPORT being overlooked by much of the art world outside of Vienna for many years, I find what she did to be some of the most important and experimental feminist art in the postwar period.

**JN: Could you describe one of these works by EXPORT that you find most affecting?**

RJ: In my research, I focused on EXPORT's "Body Sign Action" (1970), which is a multilayered performance piece, tattoo, and photograph. The photograph is black-and-white and cropped very close, showing EXPORT's genitalia with an elastic strap hugged by the cold clasp of a metal garter permanently and irrevocably inked into her skin. Looking at this image, the viewer is forced to confront EXPORT's unabashed nakedness.

I was instantly moved by the brittleness it demanded. The body, EXPORT's body, becomes the most important tool in her work. It challenges the systems in place, a world constructed by men and the ideals placed on women, particularly a history in art eroticized by female nudity.

**JN: From these interests that developed around "Body Sign Action," what questions did you begin to pursue in your research project?**

RJ: This really began as a creative project for me. I was interested in researching how Valie EXPORT's "Body Sign Action" mediates, through its given title—the body as an artistic ground, the body as a sign, and the body as an action. What began as a larger thematic was then the jumping off point for other questions that I had such as: how does and when did tattoos function as art, what does the role of permanent body art mean when it's inked onto the skin of the artist? It was important to then research the history of the female nude, garters belts, and other tools of male fetish and domination.

My research also focused on the history of performance art and its makers, including the French artist Yves Klein as a predecessor, EXPORT's contemporaries the Viennese Actionists, and fellow female artists such as Marina Abramovic, Yoko Ono, and Diane Arbus. Largely, I wanted to understand how EXPORT's work operates within this expanded field of body-based art, and how "Body Sign Action" inverts and renegotiates femininity and sexuality within it.

**JN: It seems like this raises ethical issues between artists and artistic subjects.**

RJ: Yes, that's correct. Ethical consent in performance art as well as in photography must go hand and in hand, but it's an issue that's often overlooked for the sake of art that's avant-garde or pushes the boundaries of popular culture and media. Even if critics and spectators alike may turn a blind eye to work that negates the moral rights of humans, we should not be complicit in these works that are disturbing, unethical, and immoral. For example, I explored extensively the work of Santiago Sierra, a Spanish artist who is provocative but who fails to respect the duties of consent. In December 2000, he filmed a video called "160 cm Line Tattooed on 4 People," for which he tattooed a continuous line across the backs of women who were drug-addicted prostitutes, explaining "Four prostitutes addicted to heroin were hired for the price of a shot of heroin to give their consent to be tattooed." My discomfort with his work is that it costs other bodies than the artist's own. Sierra had no direct experience of the physical unpleasantness of his work, instead treating women as a disposable commodity.

Thinking about this work in comparison to that of EXPORT led me to a larger conversation about art and ethics. I have come to understand that performance art is not always ethically black-and-white but it should attempt to respect the audiences, performers, and people that it affects.

**JN: It seems that your exploration of EXPORT's work has opened up a timely and important path of research for you. What are some of the questions that you hope to pursue in the future?**

RJ: This project has been extremely important to my growth as a scholar. What was originally a term paper

then sparked an interest in continuing my research on Valie EXPORT and the body and pushing my studies in the form of an independent study course on feminist art from the 1960's to 1990's.

Following this independent study, it's exhilarating to think about the many questions I have now—particularly, in the area of photography and ethical consent. Photography was only a small part of my research but the questions that it brought about still linger. I am also interested in understanding war and cultural destruction in regards to art and how the lives and works of artists respond to the global atrocities of destruction and violence.

I'm looking forward to continuing to research and work out these problems as possible projects in the next coming school year and into the future. For me, this kind of research is never complete and I want to continue forward working with talented scholars and educators and adding my voice to the larger conversation of art history.

I am so grateful for the opportunities that the Art History Department, School of Humanities, and the University of California, Irvine provides its students. Thank you for taking the time to interview me Professor Nisbet and for overseeing this project; it has been a pleasure.

# A LASTING LEGACY:

Art History supporter Virginia Laddey leaves behind \$136,000 to support art history students



Virginia Laddey was a founding member of Friends of Art History, a member of the Dean's Leadership Council, and a devoted UCI supporter, particularly of the School of Humanities and Department of Art History. She was a World War II naval officer, sales executive and financial consultant, art collector, literature devotee, philanthropist and social progressive. As a member of UCI's Legacy Society, Laddey left a generous bequest to the Department of Art History, a source of her passion and enthusiasm. Her gift will support students participating in the department's new 4+1 Master's Program. Kylie Ching and Jasmin Pannier are the first recipients of the Laddey Fellowship in Art History. Pannier will use the funds to continue her research on the influence costume books

had on the composition of photographs of ethnic types in the 19th century; and Ching will continue her research on artist Shigeko Kubota.

Established in 1993 to recognize those who wish to establish a legacy at UCI through estate or deferred gifts, UCI's Legacy Society enables individuals to provide lasting opportunities, including scholarships, professorships and other endowments, to UCI students and faculty.

To learn more about UCI's Legacy Society, please reach out to Nicole Balsamo, executive director of advancement, at [nbalsamo@uci.edu](mailto:nbalsamo@uci.edu) or 949.824.2923 or visit [www.plannedgiving.uci.edu](http://www.plannedgiving.uci.edu).





# NARRATIVES OF BEING:

## Or why Asian Americans never seem to get sick

*A Q&A with James Kyung-Jin Lee, associate professor of Asian American studies*

### **Tell us about your current book project.**

My book project explores the intersections of race, illness, embodiment and narrative. Specifically, I am interested in the ways in which the contemporary experience of illness, and the ways that Western biomedicine confronts illness and the persons of ill embodiment, compels new forms of storytelling. I'm interested in particular in how Asian Americans figure in the landscape of illness and healthcare in part because of the particular ways that they have entered both the popular, critical, and scholarly imaginations of this landscape. If you were to look at narrative representations, you'd think that Asian Americans rarely get sick and even more rarely died. (For the record, Asian American death rates mirror that of other Americans). Conversely, Asian Americans have in

many ways become spokespersons about contemporary illness in the U.S.: they are more often than not physicians and surgeons and even chief spokespersons for the medical establishment: think here of the current U.S. Surgeon General (Vivek Murthy), CNN's chief medical correspondent (Sanjay Gupta), and bestselling authors about U.S. biomedicine (Atul Gawande, Siddhartha Mukherjee, Pauline Chen). What does this skewed representation—a preponderance of (healthy) Asian American doctors who are writing as doctors, a dearth of Asian Americans writing about ill embodiment—mean? What are the possible social, ethical, and political consequences of this narrative asymmetry, not only for Asian Americans but also for Americans in general, not only for the sake of cultural visibility but also for public policy?

### **Can you trace this narrative of Asian Americans defying illness or give us a sense of its trajectory?**

The preponderance of Asian American medical narrative and the dearth of stories about Asian American illness can be understood broadly in two ways. The political economy not only of the U.S. but also of developing countries in Asia over the last half century, produced a series of push/pull conditions that sent physicians and other healthcare professionals overseas to the U.S.. As an example: South Korea built medical and nursing schools in the aftermath of the Korean War specifically to train young doctors and nurses for export to the U.S., with curricula modeled after U.S. schools to facilitate easy licensing. This occurred around the very time that the U.S. transformed its immigration policy to a new mode of state selectivity, displacing national origins for employment-based preference at the very moment that demand rose for skilled healthcare workers, such as the passage of Medicare and Medicaid in 1965. Pass this particular mode of social mobility to second generation (U.S.-born) Asian Americans, you can imagine how it became an easily reproducible narrative into which Asian Americans could project desire. In addition, the physician's story reinforces and distills the prevailing social narrative of Asian Americans as model minorities, a narrative that has held sway in the U.S. imagination for more than 50 years. While the representation of Asian Americans as model minorities is one of economic and educational mobility, I suggest that there is a coterminous ongoing passionate attachment to fantasies of indefinite health that is baked into this notion of the Asian American model minority. Asian American physician narratives buttress this connection, for which group is more poised to be a non-sick person than the professional existentially and socially-produced to diagnose and cure what illns you? And in turn, why would you write an illness narrative that might disrupt the overwhelming optimistic vision of Asian American model minority health?

### **What are some of the political and ethical consequences of this narrative asymmetry?**

For one, this asymmetry means that the illness and death that does occur within the Asian American community

are hidden, buried, unheard, and unrecognized. Such lack of recognition can lead to immeasurable suffering, a kind of suffering beyond pain (but which may include pain), which in turn can have profound impacts on relations within and among Asian American families. There are also policy implications: Asian Americans contain communities least likely to produce advanced healthcare directives for themselves or loved ones and among the most likely to resort to "heroic" measures at the end of life, which may prolong physical life but at a great expense: ICUs and the like are costly and tortuous. Despite its great advances, Western biomedicine's impulse to prolong human life indefinitely has produced deleterious outcomes. The Asian American rendition of this relationship to contemporary biomedicine takes this cultural logic to its limit, and my project wonders if in these narratives we see not just biomedicine's limits but also its potential undoing.

### **What sparked your interest in this topic?**

I spent 400 hours working as a chaplain intern on the oncology and medical surgery floor of a hospital in downtown Los Angeles in the summer of 2009. It was during those ten weeks that I discovered that the more than twenty years of socialization to become an academic were more or less useless when encountering people beset with contingency, fragility, vulnerability, and mortality. It was perhaps this crucible of experience that helped me see how profoundly disruptive illness and disability can be in how and why we tell stories—and how transformative an honest assessment of what bodies tell can be.

### **Where would you point us for further reading?**

One book that got me through that summer in 2009 was Arthur Frank's *The Wounded Storyteller*, and I still turn to it for insight. I think for Asian Americanists, Mel Chen's *Animacies* and Rachel Lee's *The Exquisite Corpse of Asian America* will help people make this turn to race and embodiment. In terms of memoir, I would probably start with Anatole Broyard's *Intoxicated By My Illness* and Audre Lorde's *The Cancer Journals*. Brandy Worrall's *What Doesn't Kill Us* is that rare illness memoir written by an Asian American so very worth reading.



# MEDICAL HUMANITIES:

## Keeping medicine patient-centered

*By Annalisa Coliva, professor of philosophy and co-director of the minor in Medical Humanities*

“It’s more important to know what kind of person has an illness than what kind of illness a person has.” This phrase would strike many of us as possibly written by someone who did not hold medicine in great esteem. Actually, it was pronounced by Hippocrates (Kos 460-375 BC), the founder of Western medicine.

Different interpretations of it can be offered, ranging from seeing a connection between one’s character and habits and the kind of disease one might get or develop, to paying attention to the way

in which different people can react to the same disease or to the different ways in which they respond to therapies and doctors. In short, this phrase reminds us of the truth that the science of medicine is supposed to cure human beings. Hence, just as much as it needs to be a science, and to concern itself with quantities and measures, it also needs to remain in touch with the kind of creatures it is supposed to cure, the complexity of their characters and the variety of their values, whether they be personal or culturally inherited.

“[Medicine] needs to remain in touch with the kind of creatures it is supposed to cure, the complexity of their characters and the variety of their values, whether they be personal or culturally inherited.”

By reflecting on their own experiences of illness and healing or of death of people around them, people will clearly see how those experiences shaped, and were shaped themselves, by their overall attitude towards life and by their values.

In an era of increasing specialization and of new biomedical frontiers, in a global context of social and economic inequalities, the Medical Humanities minor aims to do justice to the felt need of giving center stage to the Hippocratic injunction. It thus focuses on an interdisciplinary, humanistic and cultural study of illness, health, healthcare, death and the body. It includes topics such as bioethics, medical epistemology, narrative medicine, and history of medicine, psychology, culture studies, science and technology studies, medical anthropology and sociology, dance, music, literature, film, as well as visual and performing arts.

The minor aims at giving students the opportunity to understand illness, healing, and dying from ethical, humanistic, and socio-culturally sensitive perspectives. It will foster a critical reflection upon multiple dimensions of human identity and experience shaped by illness as they intersect with other social relations of power such as race, class, gender, age and nationality. It will promote an understanding of the cultural, philosophical, historical and artistic study of medicine, past and present, as well as of the ethical dimension of medical knowledge and practice. It will also address some epistemological problems specifically related to medicine, such as the culturally and historically changing conceptions of disease and healing. It will therefore allow students to appreciate the diversity of perspectives, cultural expressions, social formations, and practices related to medicine. While exploring the boundaries between sickness and health, students will learn to see life through a patient's eyes and will develop a critical understanding of medicine itself.

The minor may be combined with any major and will be of particular interest to those students planning to attend medical school, nursing school, pharmacy school and public health school, as well as students in the humanities seeking to pursue graduate work in the field of medical humanities.

## PLATO'S PHAEDRUS (270: b-c)

**Socrates**

The method of the art of healing is much the same as that of rhetoric.

**Phaedrus**

How so?

**Socrates**

In both cases you must analyze a nature, in one that of the body and in the other that of the soul, if you are to proceed in a scientific manner, not merely by practice and routine, to impart health and strength to the body by prescribing medicine and diet, or by proper discourses and training to give to the soul the desired belief and virtue.

**Phaedrus**

That, Socrates, is probably true. [270c]

**Socrates**

Now do you think one can acquire any appreciable knowledge of the nature of the soul without knowing the nature of the whole man?

**Phaedrus**

If Hippocrates the Asclepiad is to be trusted, one cannot know the nature of the body, either, except in that way.

**Socrates**

He is right, my friend; however, we ought not to be content with the authority of Hippocrates, but to see also if our reason agrees with him on examination.

**Phaedrus**

I assent.



# Baltimore

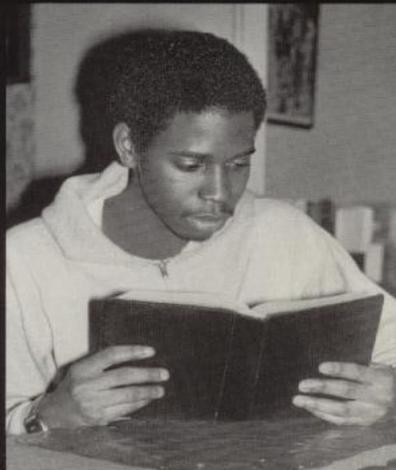
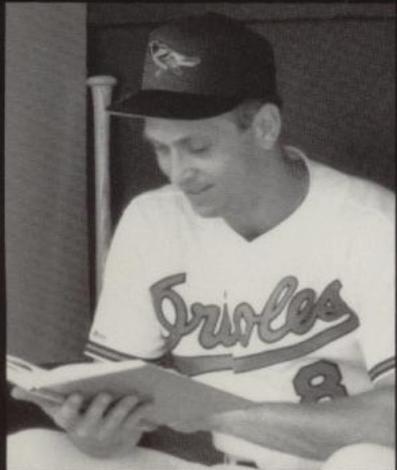
THE CITY THAT READS



## HOUSE ON FIRE:

Baltimore as epistemology

*By Jeanne Scheper, associate professor of gender and sexuality studies*



It was fall of 1968 when an electrical fire burned through the Baltimore slumlord apartment building my parents had recently moved into. My mom was six months pregnant and I was less than a year old. We got out safely with our dog and my dad had to return later to retrieve his smoked-stained, 1,000-page, typed dissertation. The April 1968 Baltimore uprising had just occurred in the wake of Martin Luther King's assassination. It was an era of white flight and opposition to "open housing." On moving to Baltimore in 1966, my parents decided not to move into an all-white neighborhood. Instead of responding to classified ads in *The Baltimore Sun*, which were individually labeled for desired customers as "cld" or "wht," my mother drove around racially-mixed neighborhoods looking for housing.<sup>1</sup> However, there were few to no neighborhoods that were racially integrated. Eventually, we moved into a row house in a predominantly Black and poor neighborhood, Reservoir Hill, that had a small white minority including, one block away, Jonah house, the non-violent activist peace community founded by Dan and Phil Berrigan (members of the May 1968 Catonsville Nine, who confiscated draft records and publically burned them with homemade napalm to protest the Vietnam war) and Elizabeth McAlister.

At the time, my mom was a graduate student working towards a Ph.D. in philosophy at Catholic University. She grew into a community and housing organizer, addressing what now would be called "food deserts" by driving to Pennsylvania to buy the equivalent of organic meat and dry goods from the Mennonite families and running a food co-op out of our basement. As an active member of the neighborhood community association and later director of its homeownership program, she helped write

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1 - After an experience of having the same real estate agent answer the phone for several different advertised companies, my mother made an appointment to go to the office, which turned out to be that of Goldseker realty, which was blockbusting, and was not willing to sell to a white couple in the neighborhoods she was interested in. This experience was the basis of my parents' later participation in a class-action suit against Goldseker Realty.

the "tenant's right of first refusal" law, which tried to break up the stranglehold of slumlords and create avenues for Black home ownership in the city.<sup>2</sup>

This brief biographical return to my childhood offers a snapshot of the choices that my parents made in the late 1960s about where we would live and how we would respond and situate ourselves as a white family in a world shaken by anti-Black violence and war, in a city shaped by housing segregation, racial wealth inequality, urban poverty, as well as Black radical resistance. My approach to my research and teaching emerges from my earliest memories and images of bodies and their social regulation: of being tear-gassed on the steps of the Capitol at an anti-war protest as a baby, of stopping a multi-lane highway cutting through Leakin Park, of my father arrested at the White House for praying for peace, of my mother telling us to duck out of sight of news cameras filming us at a housing anti-discrimination demonstration, of my lesbian high school teacher chaining herself to the steps of the Capitol for women's reproductive freedom, of a woman who had been raped knocking on our door for help in the night, of a teenager telling us she was pregnant by a close relative, of serial house fires and families displaced by urban blight as well as urban renewal, of people lining up on hot nights at gates of the Gothic city jail when the windows were open so one could talk to loved ones behind bars. As a child, I saw that my neighborhood and my Black neighbors would be the ones under national guard rule and patrolled by tanks after a snow storm, that helicopters would buzz the houses regularly enough to be called "urban birds," and that it would require walking to the white neighborhood on the other side of North Avenue to find a proper grocery store. As Nina Simone sang it: "*Oh, Baltimore, ain't it hard just to live?*"

I grew up, in other words, less than two miles from where Freddie Gray was arrested and murdered last

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2 - Some of her experiences (unattributed at her request) are documented by Matthew A. Crenson in his book *Neighborhood Politics* (Boston: Harvard UP, 1983).

year while in police custody, spurring another Baltimore uprising. Many of the boarded up houses that defined the neighborhood where I grew up, and the streets nearby where the 2015 uprising took place, had been boarded up since the uprising of 1968. Professor Saidiya Hartman offers the language of the “afterlife of slavery,” to describe “how Black lives are still imperiled and devalued by a racial calculus and a political arithmetic that were entrenched centuries ago.”<sup>3</sup> And, as with all of these cases of death in police custody, not only are these realities not new, but there is no justice, as confirmed last month by a damning Department of Justice Report on Baltimore City (see my colleague UCI Associate Professor of History Jessica Millward’s [analysis of the long arc of unfreedom in Baltimore](#)).

Flash forward to the present, and I am a professor of gender and sexuality studies at UC Irvine, and my research and teaching take up questions that began forming in my head as a child: questions related to race, gender, and the performance and politics of bodies, especially as they move across highly-regulated, policed, and demarcated spaces. My parents choices set in motion a collection of experiences growing up that have driven me to continue to think about the give and take between past and present, and about the profound impact of what W.E.B Du Bois would call the “problem of the twentieth century”: the color line.<sup>4</sup>

Baltimore, and the material conditions of life in “the city without pity” undergird my understanding of the contours and complexities of bodies, their performances, and their boundaries: whether surveilled, regulated, resistant, or reimagined. These lessons from Baltimore undergird a sense of ethical urgency in my work to recognize and question how social violence is not new and how our current ways of looking have been shaped by past ones. Unlike sensational televisual representations of Baltimore that traffic in what I call the “nostalgic grotesque” for

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3 - Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-making in Nineteenth Century America* (Oxford University Press, 1997): 6.

4 - W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903).

white audiences invested in the preservation of all-white suburbs while consuming the “spectacle of the Other,”<sup>5</sup> there is a different backwards glance that recognizes that the anti-Black violence of the present is rooted in the unfreedoms of the past. That insight is central to my approach to teaching popular culture at UCI. How do the cultural pedagogies of performing and consuming culture—and each other—shore up existing power structures? In order to understand the raced and gendered calculus of our society and the urgent need to address its effects, we must ask ourselves, what are the ways that our neighborhoods, our cities, our families, our experiences and our ways of seeing and consuming the raced urban landscape are shaped by the social inequalities writ large across bodies over time? How are we to understand the antagonism between those who project the city and its people as “rioters” and those who insist the city and its people be known as a “city that reads”? What are the ways that the past haunts and shapes the present, from slavery to racial wealth inequality and the growth of prisons, from Jim Crow segregation built on fears of miscegenation to the regulation of sexualities and motherhood, the persistence of conditions of policing and militarization, and the lasting effects of lead poisoning, conditions that define cities like Baltimore or Flint, Michigan.

With this set of questions and sense of urgency as an epistemology and method for thinking, my work on early 20th century popular stage performers contributes historical insights into how women in the arts have fought to be recognized as cultural producers and critics, not merely as muses or objects on display. They used their bodies as sources of knowledge and resistance, and I am particularly interested in how these figures have mobilized their critiques of the mandate to perform both on-stage and off. The figures I examine navigate the enormous cultural shifts of the early twentieth century, performing with and against prevailing prescriptions and boundaries: one challenges the color line of the stage

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5 - Stuart Hall, “The Spectacle of the Other” in Stuart Hall (Ed.) *Representations: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. (London: Sage and The Open University, 1997): 223-279.

and the racial segregation of the streets while another is caught in the tangles of cultural appropriation. For instance, African American dancer and choreographer Aida Overton Walker (1880-1914) not only challenged the racist reception of the Black female body on stage—through her choice of costume and choreography—but she also wrote outspoken newspaper editorials and contributed to the formation of the first Black Actor's Union. [See [Women You Should Know](#).] My forthcoming book, *Moving Performances* (Rutgers UP, 2016) looks at why we remember certain performers and forget others, and examines the uneven archiving of the history of women and women of color in the arts. I am also interested in how later contemporary feminists and artists then re-cycle and cite these diva icons from the past, illuminating the meaning and politics of these past performers.

[\*Moving Performances: Divas, Iconicity, and Remembering the Modern Stage\*](#) - Excerpt from Chapter 1: "The Color Line is Always Moving: Aida Overton Walker"

"[Aida Overton Walker] drew attention to the way Jim Crow and racism in the U.S. demanded particular embodiments of the Black body—ways of moving and not moving, spaces to occupy and not occupy—and authorized which tropes were naturalized as 'proper' to Black bodies. Race, she understood, is constructed at the level of the body and geography; power demands that bodies perform according to certain social scripts, whether these are registered directly in and as rules, codes, and laws that enforce racial segregation, or in and as performative repertoires of expectations, social blueprints, cultural practices, and so forth that regulate social identities. As Overton Walker describes in her editorials, these compulsory performances, on stage and off, were ubiquitous and relentless, and she directly addressed and protested them through her performances. As a public thinker, Overton Walker's cultural production on stage was augmented by the cultural critique she offered in newspaper editorials that addressed racism and discrimination. Bringing the effects of racial power

into view by responding to the injustice of these cultural mandates, she also articulated the added labor of critique required of Black performers and of Black people moving as social actors through the public sphere. She produced these critiques implicitly through her choice of theatrical material and her own modes of embodied critical practice on stage, including teaching and making visible new approaches to dance, movement, and political embodiment for Black women. She thus resisted the limits placed on Black bodies by producing a variety of public discourses that critically analyzed the impact of U.S. racism on Black people and Black performers who labored on segregated, predominantly white-owned and -managed national theater circuits. Aida Overton Walker's significant yet all-too-brief career demonstrates the political complexities embedded in popular dance performances. Popular dances like the Salomania dance craze and the cake walk could easily be dismissed by her contemporaries and later by twentieth and twenty-first century critics as merely 'cheap amusements'<sup>6</sup> rather than political interventions. The result is that Black feminist thought, especially that conveyed through moving embodied practices, could be erased and hidden from view in the archive and in the myriad ways that the modern stage is remembered."

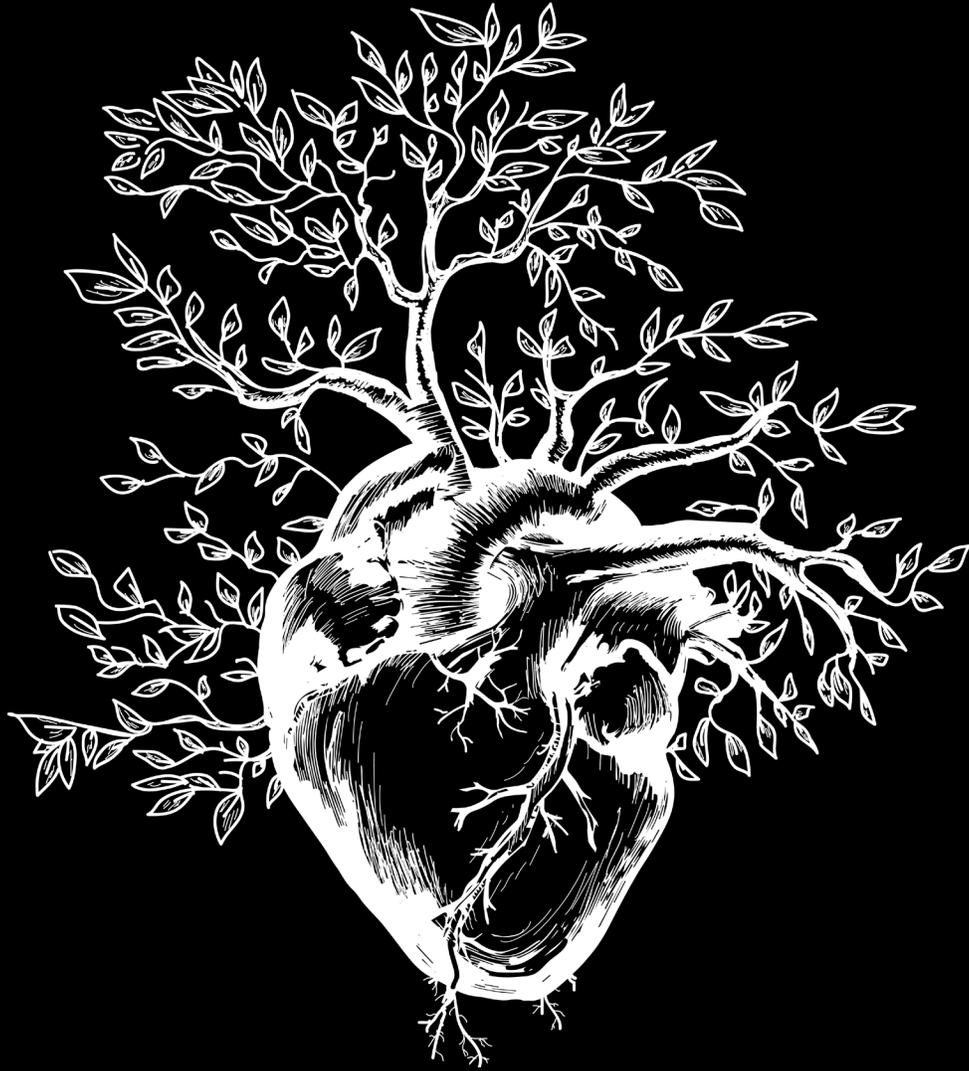
Excerpt from *Moving Performances: Divas, Iconicity, and Remembering the Modern Stage*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2016.

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*Jeanne Scheper is associate professor of gender and sexuality studies. Her book, Moving Performances: Divas, Iconicity, and Remembering the Modern Stage publishes this December.*

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6 - See Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986): 163.



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