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Editor's Preface and Acknowledgments

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Family

Sex

Law

disClosure
a journal of social theory

20th Anniversary Issue



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Contributors

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Jessica Beaufils earned her B.A. in English from Northern Illinois University and is now studying medical anthropology at Ball State University. She is a poet at heart, and has been writing verse for as long as she can remember. Her one-year-old son inspires poetry on a daily basis.

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Daniele Pantano is a Swiss poet, translator, critic, and editor born of Sicilian and German parentage in Langenthal (Canton of Berne). His most recent works include *The Possible Is Monstrous: Selected Poems by Friedrich Dürrenmatt* and *The Oldest Hands in the World* (both from Black Lawrence Press/Dzanc Books, 2010). His forthcoming books include *Oppressive Light: Selected Poems by Robert Walser* and *The Collected Works of Georg Trakl*, both from Black Lawrence Press/Dzanc Books. He divides his time between Switzerland, the United States, and England, where he is Director of Creative Writing at Edge Hill University. For more information, please visit www.danielepantano.ch.

Mary Ryan is a Ph.D. candidate at Mary Immaculate College, Ireland. Her thesis examines the cultural, generic, and gender contexts of the fiction and non-fiction of Irish author Marian Keyes. Mary's research interests include popular culture, literature (particularly women's literature), feminism and gender studies. Her research has appeared in a variety of conferences and publications, including a chapter in the forthcoming collection *Investigating Shrek* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). In September 2009, she won a prize for her paper at the Postgraduate Contemporary Women's Writing Network's "Reading Bodies/Writing Bodies" conference at Oxford University.

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Shannon Sigler is an artist and arts administrator living and working in Boston. She currently serves as the Program Administrator for the Center for Practical Theology at Boston University while also volunteering with CIVA, an international faith-based arts organization. She and her husband Matthew are expecting their first child in April, 2011. Shannon's art uses found materials such as old sewing patterns, food wrappers and modern art imagery to engage societal symbols and norms. She attempts

to reveal and break through boundaries surrounding marriage and family roles through unlikely juxtapositions in her collages.

Rachel Tudor holds a B.A. in Multi-Cultural Studies and an M.A. in Humanities from the University of Houston, as well as a Ph.D. in English from the University of Oklahoma. She specializes in the areas of Modernity and Theory, and American and Native American literatures. Her current research interests include postcolonial and gender studies, and she highly recommends the works of Martha C. Nussbaum.

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Editors' Preface

Jeffrey Zamostny and Rebecca Lane

In response to the wish of a well-meaning graduate student that a department in the humanities at the University of Kentucky be run like a tight-knit family, a horrified professor exclaimed: "No, no! Anything but a family! Families have secrets: incest, adultery, clandestine rivalries... Spouses get divorced, children fight over wills, siblings refuse to speak to each other... I will not have it!"

Needless to say, the flustered graduate student did not push the matter further.

Told in jest, the anecdote also lays bare real longings and anxieties that accrue upon the notion of family in its relation to sex and the law, understood as both a set of written statutes and an assemblage of broader cultural norms. Setting aside for a moment the historical and cultural contingencies that make family a multiform social construction, it seems safe to say that for most people family simultaneously invokes a positive model of social communion and a site of discord. Tensions are the result not only of interpersonal dynamics between family members, but also of wider systemic forces that determine which relationships qualify for legal and social recognition as family units, that legitimate some sexual and familial bonds by stigmatizing others, and that provide regulatory scripts for how families should behave, if only they could attain the ideal.

In keeping with *disClosure's* mission to elicit interdisciplinary and generically hybrid reflections on matters of far-reaching interest to the field of Social Theory, the journal's twentieth anniversary issue *Family, Sex, Law* brings together scholarly essays, poetry, visual art, and interviews organized around the promises and risks of family. Contributors working in the United States, Ireland, and elsewhere in Europe on topics relevant to those and other sites of an increasingly transnational social terrain examine manifold intersections of family, sex, and law from a variety of perspectives.

With respect to its scholarly articles, the volume begins with meditations by Ellen Lewin, Andrew Clark, and Osvaldo Di Paolo on the strategies used by traditionally marginalized groups to gain access to marriage as a means of legally recognizing families. Lewin and Clark examine debates surrounding marriage for gays and lesbians in the contemporary United States. Both writers long for a loosening of the heteronormative claim to exclusively heterosexual marriage, but they voice distinct anxieties about the best ways to achieve more equitable marriage laws. While Lewin contends that gay and lesbian activists need not turn to mental health arguments in their struggle for same-sex marriage, Clark critiques the 2003 court decision *Lawrence v. Texas* for its potential to both queer and straighten the national body. Clark's considerations on race, class, and nationality—factors previously sidelined in discussions of *Lawrence*—enrich his evaluation of that case's legacy. Finally, the fictional film analyzed by Di Paolo shows how a woman's desire to have six

concurrent husbands simultaneously reinforces and subverts traditional gender roles and power hierarchies in Mexico.

Di Paolo's contribution heads off a series of essays concerned with cultural texts produced outside the United States or in the transnational flux of diaspora. A discussion by Betsy Dahms of playwright Sabina Berman's "The Mustache" foregrounds a second Mexican work that contests historically dominant gender norms in that country. Although the characters He and She strive to eschew heteronormative restrictions in their gender performances and sexual relationships, they must also confront insecurities generated by their queer refusals. Similarly, women in the Irish chick lit examined by Mary Ryan find themselves caught between well-worn patriarchal gender definitions and new possibilities opened by feminism. Ryan argues that Irish chick lit resists facile categorization as anti-feminist, for it dramatically exposes contradictions faced by contemporary women in Ireland *vis-à-vis* motherhood, sexuality, and domestic violence. Motherhood and the physicality of sex recur in Rachel Tudor's examination of the construction of identity in a postcolonial context in Sara Suleri's memoir-elegies *Meatless Days* and *Boys Will Be Boys*. The texts blur generic boundaries to explore identity as a process of becoming located at the intersection of the self and others, gender, ethnicity, history, and law.

The final article returns *disClosure* to its home base in the southeastern United States by situating a family conflict in the Southern Gullah culture at the crux of petty struggles between family members and the more expansive social impulses that lead them to dispute their ownership over heirs' property. Brian Grabbatin and Jennie L. Stephens read the 2001 court case *Wigfall v. Mobley et al.* as a battle between legal and cultural epistemologies that place contrasting emphasis on the exchange value of land in a capitalist economy or its use value for the material and emotional survival of a deeply-rooted family.

Interspersed throughout *Family, Sex, Law* are poems, interviews, and works of visual art that establish dialogues between themselves and with salient themes in the lengthier articles. With their carefully calculated poses and attire, the mannequins captured in photographs by Andrea Angeli emphasize the performativity of gender also made clear by metatheatrical devices in the play analyzed by Dahms. Likewise, two poems by Jessica Beaufils complement the emphasis on motherhood and interpersonal connection addressed elsewhere in the issue, including in Tania Zivkovic's painting "My Protector." Moving from a desire for wholeness to a state of fulfillment, Beaufils's poetry intertwines the frustrations and joys of renewing human life through childbirth. While her poetic voice addresses an interlocutor in the belief that intersubjective communication is possible, the speaker of Daniele Pantano's three poems seems utterly alone. The poetic voice mentions a wife, a brother, a grandfather, and children without ever inscribing an addressee in the poems. Traumatized by a violent "patrimonial recipe" from which he

cannot escape, the speaker seals himself off from empathetic relations in hermetic poetic diction.

Dialogue and human contact also figure prominently in both the form and content of this issue's two interviews with speakers from the 2010 Spring Lecture Series of the Committee on Social Theory at the University of Kentucky. Marianne Noble talks with the editors about her work on empathy and genuine human contact in a theoretical climate that treats anything authentic with suspicion. Similarly, Eithne Luibhéid explains how biopolitics foster some contacts at the expense of others, especially when people of varying gender, sexual orientation, race, and class move across and within porous (trans)national borders.

The mixed media format of Shannon Sigler's collage "Sugarmama" nicely encapsulates the intentions of the 2011 edition of *disClosure*. Just as Sigler draws on diverse materials such as sewing patterns from the 1950s to visualize the circumstances faced by women who work to support their partners, *Family, Sex, Law* unites contributions marked by varied political perspectives, methodological practices, and generic conventions to reflect on family as it is conceived as both a paradigm for social harmony and a locus of intense debate. We invite you to join us in exploring these tensions as *disClosure* celebrates its twentieth anniversary.

Acknowledgements

This issue of *disClosure* would not have been possible without the assistance of Derek Ruez and David Hoopes, editors of last year's volume *Consuming Cultures*. We are also indebted to Dr. John Erickson for his continued guidance as faculty advisor to the journal. Drs. Anna Secor and Suzanne Pucci have headed the Committee on Social Theory during this edition's production. The team-taught, interdisciplinary course "Family, Sex, Law" offered under the auspices of the Committee by Drs. Srimati Basu (Gender and Women's Studies), Andrea Dennis (Law), Patricia Ehrkamp (Geography), and Marion Rust (English) provided the inspiration for this issue. Many thanks to Naomi Norasak for her careful attention to logistical matters and for all her crucial work for the Committee, as well as to Sarah Schuetze and Donna and Ben Lane for their help with copyediting and transcriptions. Finally, we thank this year's *disClosure* collective, and wish Eir-Anne Edgar and Tim Vatovec best of luck with the 2012 issue *Self/Story*.

Collective Members

Eir-Anne Edgar is a Ph.D. candidate in English at the University of Kentucky. Her research focuses on feminist, queer, and African American texts of the Cold War era and issues of American citizenship. She will serve as co-editor of *disClosure 21: Self/Story* (2012).

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Rebecca Lane is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Geography at the University of Kentucky. She is interested in issues of gender, health, biopolitics, and the state. Having recently finished her M.A. thesis on public breastfeeding, she is now researching medical landscapes of the non-citizen for her dissertation. Rebecca is co-editor of *Family, Sex, Law*.

Derek Ruez is a Ph.D. student in the Department of Geography at the University of Kentucky. He is broadly interested in cultural and political geography, urban studies, and social and political theory. He is currently revising his M.A. thesis analyzing September 11th and Hurricane Katrina as cultural traumas, while also beginning work on a dissertation examining secular and sexual nationalisms in liberal democracies.

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Tim Vatovec is a third-year Ph.D. student in the Department of Geography at the University of Kentucky and is a recipient of the institution's certificate in Social Theory. His research interests are broad and include rural homeland security issues, cultural landscapes, and queer theory. He will serve as co-editor of *disClosure 21: Self/Story* (2012).

Jeffrey Zamostny is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Hispanic Studies at the University of Kentucky. His dissertation research focuses on modernity and sexuality in commercial literature from Spain between 1900 and 1936. Jeff's publications appear in *MELUS* and *Decimonónica*. After completing his tenure as co-editor of *disClosure*, he will serve as Editor-in-Chief of the bilingual journal *Nomenclatura: aproximaciones a los estudios hispánicos*.