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CSW
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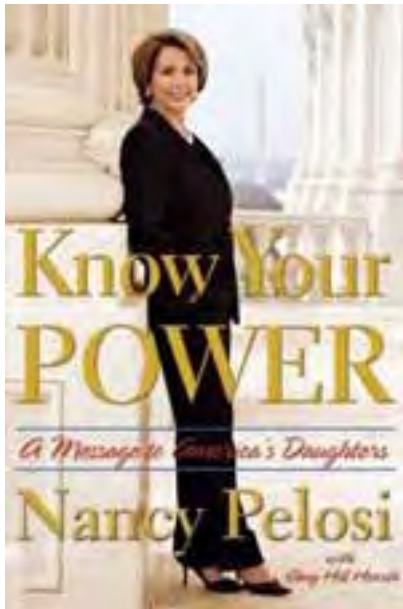
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Madame Speaker Knows her Power



ON THURSDAY, APRIL 16, the Honorable Nancy Pelosi, the first woman Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, came to UCLA for a visit. Speaker Pelosi was on campus for “A Dynamic Discussion with Nancy Pelosi,” an event to celebrate her book, *Know Your Power: A Message to America's Daughters*. Speaker Pelosi holds the highest

ranking political position of any woman in U.S. history and, after the Vice-President, is next in line to the U.S. Presidency. (I noted that her fairly substantial security detail included many women). She spoke movingly about her first meeting in the White House after being elected Speaker. She had been in the White House many times before, of course, in large meetings with committees that she chaired or on which she served. But this time, she was escorted to a much smaller room with the President, the Vice-President, and the two other members of the senior congressional leadership. As she sat, she realized she was the first woman to ever be in that room, included in these discussions and she felt all around her, crowding her chair, all the women who had made her presence in that room possible. Throughout her eloquent, witty, and cogent remarks, Speaker Pelosi presented herself, clearly and unequivocally,

as a progressive, a feminist, a pro-gay rights activist, and a pro-choice Catholic mother of five who has found and knows her power. At a small reception before the public event, Speaker Pelosi spoke passionately about the importance of research and scholarship and of academics sharing in public and policy discussions over challenges the country faces today. Science, the law, and women's leadership were key themes. Speaker Pelosi wrote her book to encourage girls and women to “know their power”; she is a stunning example of where that can lead. CSW shares her vision and sense of mission and was proud to co-sponsor this event, along with the Department of Women's Studies, and the Williams Institute, who organized it.

— Kathleen McHugh

A Conversation with Gil Hochberg on “Queer Politics and the Question of Palestine”

An interview by Hoda El Shakry

An Associate Professor in the Department of Comparative Literature at UCLA, Gil Hochberg received her Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley. Her work focuses on the intersections of trauma studies, psychoanalysis, race theory, and postcolonial theory, particularly in the context of contemporary Israel and Palestine as well as North Africa. Professor Hochberg has published essays on a wide range of issues including Francophone North African literature, Palestinian literature, gender and nationalism, and cultural memory and immigration, as well as exile and literary production. Her first book, *In Spite of Partition: Jews, Arabs, and the Limits of Separatist Imagination* (Princeton University Press, 2007), examines the complex relationship between the signifiers “Arab” and “Jew” in contemporary

Jewish and Arab literatures. She recently talked with Hoda El Shakry, a doctoral student in Department of the Comparative Literature at UCLA, about her current projects, including a special issue of *GLQ: Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*.

On May 12, Professor Hochberg will appear at CSW's Works in Progress II, a multidisciplinary symposium featuring recipients of CSW Faculty Development Grants. For more info, visit our website.

Can you tell us a little about the special issue that you are organizing for GLQ?

The special issue is tentatively called “Queer Politics and the Question of Palestine.” It came about through several conversations I had with a number of individuals regarding the need to regenerate an explicitly political discourse in the realm of Queer Studies.

Palestine has come to represent, for many of us, the center of a very complex political situation that one ought to address in one way or another in order to be ‘political.’ It became apparent to me that, with respect to Palestine, there is an unquestionably heterocentric and heteronormative agenda in nearly every attempt to address the situation, regardless of the political stakes.

In large part, the most telling event that propelled this issue happened a few years ago. There was an event at UCLA during which a famous Israeli anti-Zionist historian came to speak about the horrible conditions in Gaza and the West Bank. When we entered the lecture hall, there were these pamphlets on the seats that valorized Israel's advancement with respects to gay rights, and it struck me as odd that these were there. I later discovered that these pamphlets were

placed there by a number of individuals in attendance that identified themselves as queer Jews. Towards the end of the talk, one of these individuals addressed the speaker and asked: “Given Israel's record for protecting gay rights, how do you account for the fears by Israeli gays for a one-state solution?” The speaker responded by saying that he was more concerned with protecting the lives of Palestinian children than with the rights of gay men to have sex. The reaction to his response was extremely celebratory and included applause and cheers, and a rather clear moment when the queer man was very publicly shamed.

At the time, this exchange made me very uncomfortable, and it took me a while to analyze the nature of this discomfort. Of course, it is unquestionable that we all think that the lives of children are more important

than the sex life of any man or woman—gay or straight. But something about the answer, both its performance and its reception, caused a certain shift in the power dynamic. So while the question may have come from a provocative or even antagonist place that represented Israel as the liberal state and Palestine as homophobic, the response created a situation where suddenly the power dynamic was mapped very differently onto the heterosexual man. In his response, the speaker essentially ‘outed’ himself, stating: “Well maybe as a heterosexual man, this doesn’t seem to be so important for me.” The heterosexual man therefore presented himself as the one capable of thinking “straight.” He was the one who could see that the lives of children are more important than sex, while the man’s question was framed as simply a concern about who he could have sex with. At that moment, queer politics was trivialized as a mere sexual issue in opposition to “real” politics.

What I am hoping that this special issue of GLQ will do is to dare to look at this very uncomfortable meeting between “queer” politics and “real” politics. I am trying to see if we can come up with some meeting points, questions and answers, in a way that complicates the question without recirculating centers of power in an either racist or heterosexist way. I really believe that there

is a way that you can successfully be aware of various forms of discrimination and how they interact without being either racist or heterosexist.

How does this project fit in to your work more broadly speaking?

Initially I wasn’t sure if I wanted to do an edited volume on the issue or work on it myself. I even thought of the project as a potential second book. It became clear to me pretty early on that I wanted to do a work strongly invested in forms of representation and political activism that included multiple points of views, voices, and sites of encounters. I believed that working with different writers from different locations would be the most politically and discursively productive. In the process, I tried very hard to include diverse voices, despite encountering a number of challenges in this vein. The recent tragic events in Gaza certainly didn’t make things easier. The fact that certain people are actually under fire really affects the writing of each of the pieces and what it is possible to include and what it is not, in a way that doesn’t exist in many other contexts.

This work is bringing me back to the issues of sexuality and gender that used to be very central to my work. My earlier publications were more focused on questions of gender and sexuality, mostly in the context of femi-

nism and nationalism. As I was working on my first book, it was very difficult to accommodate everything. I was working on questions of partition and separatism and quite consciously chose to evacuate the gender component, since at the time I felt it was the only way that I could make progress on the project. And so for me, this is mainly a return to what I see as in many respects, the most distracting mode of thinking. I believe that once sexuality and gender enter the equation, it shifts how we analyze various forms of power, counter-power, postcolonialism, Marxism, and globalism. Suddenly, all these theories that we employ to think about the distribution of power become very unsettled and messy and leave you uncomfortable, particularly with respects to the question of Palestine.

In American academia in particular, people are very uncomfortable making statements about their engagement with forms of power, despite their interest in analyzing and labeling various “good” and “bad” types of power. I am willing to delve into somewhat dangerous waters by asking difficult questions about this “good” and “bad” power: who and what it serves, and how these demarcations are made. Sometimes, in order to say something that matters and avoid recirculating the very same ideas about who is good and who is

bad, you simply can’t be concerned with being polite.

Your contributing essay to the collection is dedicated to the film-piece *Chic Point: Fashion for Israeli Checkpoints* by the Palestinian visual artist Sharif Waked. How did you become interested in this project and where did you first encounter Sharif Waked’s film?

I first saw the piece a few years ago through a friend in London where it was showing at the time. Initially I did not see the entire film but only some of the stills, and I was immediately fascinated. I wrote an email to Waked himself and asked if I could get a copy of the film. He responded that he was putting together a book that would be a collection of essays based on the exhibition catalogue and sent me the film. I still think it is one of the most interesting pieces produced about the conflict in general, and more specifically, about representations of checkpoint.

What is the premise of the film?

Sharif Waked’s seven-minute film is titled *Chic Point: Fashion for Israeli Checkpoints* and was released in 2003. The film is divided into two main parts: the first shows a colorful fashion show on “the latest in

checkpoint fashion” where the models—a mix of Palestinian and Israeli men—parade down a catwalk modeling clothes that have been modified for easy removal and visibility in the context of a checkpoint body search. The second part of the film shows a series of black and white archival images of Palestinian men at various Israeli checkpoints in different stages of being searched. In conjunction, the two segments of the film demonstrate both the daily violence and harassment of checkpoints in the context of the Palestinian body, as well as the complex nature of desire, sexuality, and gender in the context of the crisis.

What is the critical potential of Waked’s film, and how does it challenge the standard representations of the crisis as simply being about oppressors and the oppressed, colonizers and the colonized?

I think that the answer would have to be that the piece places desire in the center of its exploration. Certainly, the film complicates the binary of the oppressor and the oppressed, though one still has to be careful. It is very clear that there is a power inequality between armed and uniformed soldiers blocking the movement of unarmed Palestinians who need to pass through

these checkpoints in order to facilitate their mobility. That is very clear. The question that is more complicated, however, is whether in this distribution of power, there is a more productive way to read this both in terms of political activism and in terms of modes of representation, even in such a clear dichotomy. I think that at the risk of sounding optimistic or perhaps falling under accusations about an investment in subversive politics, it nevertheless is important to maintain the idea that politics really is about fine-tuning. To merely identify time and again where the source of power is and how omnipresent it is, simply isn’t productive. I don’t think that this empowers the disempowered (in this case those trying to cross the checkpoint), but even more so, I am talking about the community who ends up viewing these representations of the checkpoint: who they identify with and how they identify with them. If we are calling for the creation of some kind of community around representations, I think that a community that is organized only around a sense of injustice, subjugation, humiliation and victim-hood, then that is not a recipe for an empowered community.

In my reading of this piece, it clearly subverts common representations of, for example, Palestinian men as suffering from a so-called crisis of masculinity where they

are stripped of their manhood and humiliated in the face of these hyper-masculine soldiers. Therefore in addition to trying to say something critical about the mapping of a national conflict onto this masculinist narrative, I am also trying to say that one needs to move beyond speaking about these images of Palestinian man, or women more generally, as being in a position of complete subjection. And this can be done by actually allowing that body under the control of the gaze and scrutiny of the soldiers to be read as a teasing body, a seductive body, one that plays or toys with its own sexuality and forbidden desirability. What we need to read, in my opinion, is that its own being desired represents a form of empowerment. I do not mean empowering in the sense that it can “break down” the checkpoints, but rather empowering for the kind of community it builds among the viewers. These communities are empowered by irony and the ability to tackle this situation with language, an explicitly political language at that, that dares to bring sexual politics, indeed queer politics, in direct dialogue with anti-occupation and nationalist discourse and more specifically, in dialogue with a leading trope of nationalist discourse in the Israeli-Palestinian case, which is the myth of masculinity and the crisis thereof.

How in your opinion does “queer politics” (or more broadly speaking, an exploration of the relationship between structures of power and questions of gender and sexuality) open up new possibilities for representing the conflict in addition to challenging the very modes and politics of representation? In other words, what does it mean to “queer” the Palestinian question and why does it need to be “queered”?

Why “queer politics?” is probably one of the more difficult questions to answer, even if it seems like an obvious one. I actually debated for a long time whether or not “queer” politics was the right approach to take. It was mostly because of the objections to the term “queer” that I decided to keep it. I think “queer,” a term scholars have been trying to define since the 1990’s, is in use and circulating, and it comes with baggage of both potential and criticism. In this issue, I am trying to rid the term of some of this baggage, such as the accusation that it is a Western term mapped onto other contexts. But I believe that to attempt to evade that criticism by simply using other terms is really just a shortcut. Any attempts to try to do that within the position of the American academy are bound to reach their limits, since this is a term in circulation. To try to

see how this term could be used in different contexts and to complicate it is another thing entirely, which I do hope to achieve in this issue. I disagree that a term like this is untranslatable due to its western history. I also disagree with the message that this presents in terms of the neat divisions of the world into centers of various cultural interactions that are sealed off from one another; and if they have any impact at all, it is always the one-sided effect of the perpetually empowered west imposing itself on the east. It is a similar argument to my analysis of the meaning of power in the context of the checkpoints. I chose “queer” therefore because it is available, in circulation, and the dominant term, and we need to come to terms with it. We need to deal with it also in relation to Palestine as we do in many other contexts. I don’t think that there is a better term that moves productively between gender, sexuality, and other modes of existence and representation. “Queer” does allow that space from sexual orientation so to speak, that other terms do not, and it also lends itself to talking about the politics of representation in a manner that other terms do not.

For me, what it means to do a queer reading in the context of Palestine is first and foremost to foreground the conflict in sexuality, and to insist that sexuality and

the politics of sexuality are not secondary, that it is integrated with politics and is a part of the language of national politics as politics par excellence. So in some ways it is simply a means of undressing national politics to talk about what it really is. It is also to insist that not to queer the question of Palestine and its discourse, is not only to avoid bringing in sexuality, but more crucially, it is to continue to give credence to the heterosexist and homophobic frame that surrounds the entire discourse of the conflict. It is not a question of whether we are going to bring in sexuality or not. Rather, it is about whether we are going to continue to produce heterosexist discourse under the guise of some kind of naturalized heteronormative narrative about being more concerned with life than sex; or are we going to try to create a less violent discourse around this very violent conflict.

Like irony, humor seems to play a very central role in Waked’s video piece. In light of various critical conceptualizations of laughter and humor (such as Freud or Bakhtin), what is the political potential of humor in *Chic Point*?’

Humor is extremely effective in Waked’s film, particularly in the pairing of the fashion show and the archival images, and

the order of their representation. Of course, the archival images are in and of themselves certainly not funny. Even the suggestion that one would look at the archival photos in any context that is humorous is itself perverse. But there is something about that perversity that is very important to explore, precisely because it is so politically daring. The film pushes the boundaries by representing the archival photos as having tantalizing and pornographic potential. Such an image on its own (for example, of a naked and blindfolded man facing tanks and guns) might offer emotional catharsis, but as a political commentary it really doesn’t do much. What is interesting in Waked’s piece is the coupling of these archival images with campy fashion in a way that changes the very nature of these images. It is not a pairing one would normally expect, so I think it also says something very serious about humor. The piece essentially calls for a reconsideration of the central place of humor as an effective political instrument and means of building community; and not simply as a release, which is one of the more common representations of humor. The place of humor in a context that is explicitly not funny, and the perversity of this, is productive in re-presenting the division of power and nature of oppression such that we can see through the cracks, including

that manner in which power is distributed against the grain. It is therefore about alternative representations of existing forms of power and counter-power, as well as a call for us to look out for them, to embody them and to host them.

Hoda El Shakry is a doctoral student in the Department of Comparative Literature at UCLA. Her doctoral project explores the historical, clinical, anthropological, literary, and linguistic relationship of psychoanalysis to the region of North Africa often referred to as the Maghreb. Working in Arabic and French, her work seeks to genealogically read the intellectual history of psychoanalysis and psychiatry against the literary and ethnographic tradition of the Maghreb.

“RISK” IN SOCIAL THEORY

WHERE ARE THE FEMINIST VOICES?

by Mary Fox

To read the front page of a newspaper or to work in many disciplines is to encounter the notion of risk. Stated simply, risk refers to the possibility that something negative may occur or that something positive may not occur. Most of the time risk connotes the possibility of a negative event, but in some quite specific contexts, ‘risk’ and ‘risk-taking’ take on a positive meaning, either in privileged contexts or when limits are being voluntarily explored or expanded. The New York Museum of Metropolitan Art’s 2004 exhibit, “SAFE: Design Takes on Risk,” reflects the increasing prominence of risk discourses and the kinds of ambiguous roles that risk and safety have come to play (Antonelli, 2005).

Because work with risk occurs in many disciplines, the term risk often carries cross-disciplinary connotations. Yet the meanings of risk

or the conventions of its analysis in one field are not necessarily those of another. Risk in regulated areas, such as for procedures with medical radiation, may be estimated quite differently from the social risks of, say, homelessness. Risk analysis in economic areas has developed its own conventions, which until recently carried with it the positive connotations of the applied physical sciences and statistics.

While the technologies of risk analysis have grown in scope across the disciplines, a fuller understanding of the social uses of this risk apparatus has led to important critical thought on risk itself (Lewens, 2007; Taylor-Gooby and Zinn, 2006). The need for such work on risk in social theory is apparent from the variety of ways risk is portrayed, often uncritically, in language. The linguistic examples below are followed by a



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discussion of risk in social theories and a consideration of feminist theories and risk.

THE LANGUAGE OF RISK

Risk-taking in investment, corporate governance, military engagements, and extreme sports has until recently enjoyed a connotation of privilege. In some of these contexts risk-takers have been less available for scrutiny, surveillance, or regulation than might otherwise be the case. Conversely, to be risk-averse in these domains has carried the connotation of timidity and incapacity for leadership. Apart from the above domains the connotation of someone's *taking risks* often varies depending on their gender, race, ethnicity, or sexual identification; in marginalized groups the meaning is frequently negative.

Risky behaviors as a term of analysis frequently has been used in the social sciences for actions of those on the margins, such as individuals engaging in unhealthy regimens or those involved with criminal operations. Behavior that is normative and that involves risks, such as vehicle driving or motorcycle riding, is usually discussed with other terminology.

At-risk individuals are those who engage in risky behaviors or who are subject to conditions that individually they are not fully able to manage. When applied to a person, their "at-riskness" becomes linguistically and statistically a part of them (Lupton, 2005).

A rich critical literature theorizes risk and attempts to account for the above terms and their social applications. Familiarity with this literature is a key to grasping the uses and mis-uses of risk concepts in areas central to social scholarship, research, welfare, and governance.

CRITICAL RISK THEORIES

There is no single, overarching theory of risk, and probably should not be, given its complex social nature. Risk can best be understood through particular approaches that reflect a variety of ideologies, points of view, and versions of social theory (Zinn, 2008).

In the United States, a technical and scientific approach to risk has been applied in fields such as economics, business, health, medicine, psy-

chology, and in many areas of the social sciences. These empirical approaches assume that specific risk events are observable and measurable, and their likelihoods can be calculated statistically. Thus in the professional literatures and in the media one learns of the 'risks' of homelessness, of breast cancer, of toxic exposures, of global warming, and so forth. Critical science studies can demonstrate that each risk 'fact' is the end product of a set of interests, varieties of funding, and selective research (Taylor-Gooby and Zinn, 2006). Even the neurobiology of risk perception shows that the apperception of risk is a highly complex subjective process.

In *The Risk Society*, the German sociologist Ulrich Beck offers another level of analysis, arguing that developed countries have become 'risk societies' in which the control of risk has become a central organizing social principle. Beck argues that the production, circulation, and trade of risks have exceeded the production of goods in determining social structures. In Beck's theory, power is thus viewed as the ability to exert more or less control over one's risks as an individual and as a society.

Important debates currently address the responsibilities governments should have toward known risks. For example, the European Union has adopted the 'precautionary principle' that argues that even in the face of inconclusive evidence about a product's harm, regulations should err on the precautionary side. In recent years, the

United States has typically required greater evidence of harm and risk than the EU for products before evoking its regulatory powers.

Theories of governmentality, such as those of Foucault, have viewed the ways that risk discourse acts to exert pressure on people to achieve normative success in order to manage their behavior. When individuals deviate from norms, fail to self-monitor, or require state surveillance, they often are said to be engaging in risky behaviors. Thus non-normative behavior can evoke various forms of risk apparatus and its discourse as a form of control.

Sociocultural studies of risk provide thick descriptions of risk transactions by those embedded in particular social contexts. Such work does justice to risk as a multi-determined phenomenon in fluid association with risk knowledges, agents, structures, social forces, and laws (Tulloch and Lupton, 2003). Sociocultural theorists often show an awareness of feminist thought and the female subject, but do not frequently make these their main discussion in risk research.

FEMINISM AND RISK

Remarkably, few scholars have explored risk from feminist points of view. An important exception is Deborah Lupton's work on risk and agency. Lupton considers the gendered subject who often uses local and contextual information to create knowledge of risks that

are at once realist and personally constructed. Her work has the advantages of standpoint theory and suggests rich areas of inquiry into the ways that given risks become gendered and in turn create a gendered subject.

Feminist points of view in law and political science would have a great deal to say about the stakes in risk that are affected by gender. For example, life course factors and reproductive factors may need to be analyzed in terms of differential risks. A feminist legal scholar would want to interrogate the ways that marginality becomes associated with at-riskness, which in turn evokes the state's apparatus of surveillance and control, while privileged risk-takers often suffer no such fate. Risk distribution and risk attitudes might be read as re-installing the unequal social privileges that feminist activism has worked to interrogate and to interrupt.

Feminists who work in the sciences or empirical social sciences may wish to note the very specific ways that risks are calculated that often reflect the social biases from which they emerge. Also, by interrogating the risks that go uncalculated, one finds evidence of social values at work that need critical note. Does finding a homeless youth "at-risk" for given problems individualize that issue without sufficiently interrogating either the obligations of larger social entities or failing to respect the youth's capacity and agency? Clearly risk calculations need careful understanding, scrutiny,

and critical awareness of the uses that they serve.

Risk analysis has become a major force in the effort to make decisions in complex situations under conditions of incomplete information. Social theories of risk reveal processes deeply involved in the human condition, from neurobiological levels to Beck's 'risk society' itself. Feminist perspectives will enrich and be enriched by participation with risk analysis and theory.

Mary Fox is a Research Scholar at the UCLA Center for the Study of Women.

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Rewriting the Written

FTM Self-Making and the Performance of Possibilities in Sean Dorsey's Uncovered: The Diary Project

BY BO LUENGSURASWAT

June in San Francisco is undoubtedly the most Prideful month. The Annual Pride Parade, the National Queer Arts Festival, and the Frameline International LGBT Film Festival are merely a few of the million queer events listed on the city's June calendar. While such a variety of queer arts events and venues might speak to an increasing visibility of the LGBT community in general, certain populations—transgender and gender non-conforming people in particular—still remain largely underrepresented and marginalized. Among hundreds of films screened at Frameline each year, only a handful of them are concerned with transgender and gender-variant issues. Out of thousands of queer events and social gatherings,

Sean Dorsey. Courtesy of Lydia Daniller

gender non-conforming people could count the times when no one makes assumptions regarding their identities. Even at LGBT community centers, gender-variant and trans people often report having experienced harassment when using restrooms that correspond to their self-proclaimed gender. For them, the letter “T” in the LGBT acronym by no means guarantees that their identities and desires are respectfully acknowledged both within and outside the queer community.

Against this backdrop of marginalization, many gender-variant artists develop creative approaches to communicate their experiences, transforming and transcending the reality of gender, and connecting with others who share their journey of self-making and empowerment. One up-and-coming transgender and gender non-conforming artist is Sean Dorsey, founder and artistic director of Fresh Meat Productions, an internationally recognized cutting-edge transgender and queer arts organization based in San Francisco. Dorsey is a female-to-male (FTM) transgender choreographer and dancer, whose work is a powerful fusion of modern dance, spoken words, and theatrical performance, which positions gender non-conforming bodies and desires at the center of storytelling. Dorsey has performed at venues throughout the Bay Area, across the United States, and abroad. Fresh



Lost/Found:
Tales from the
Margins of
Masculinity.
Courtesy of
Lydia Daniller

Meat Productions has been named the Bay Area’s “Best Dance/Performance Company” by *SF Weekly*, as well as “one of the international dance scene’s most promising choreographers” by *BalletTanz*, Europe’s leading dance magazine. Dorsey’s most recent work, *Uncovered: The Diary Project*, premiered at Dance Mission Theater in San Francisco and performances ran from from January 29 to February 1, 2009.

Uncovered: The Diary Project is comprised of two performance pieces, *Lost/Found* and *Lou*. *Lost/Found* is a fifteen-minute excerpt of Dors-

ey’s 2007 show, *Lost/Found: Tales from the Margins of Masculinity*. In this piece, Dorsey explores the notion of masculinity from various male perspectives, namely transgender, queer, and straight, through his autobiographical childhood story. The performance begins by Dorsey narrating his frustration with the “Diary for a Young Girl” that was given to him as a child. Through dance and spoken words, Dorsey negotiates his way around the expectations of womanhood with a great sense of humor. One day, while strolling down an aisle of books at a thrift store,



**Louis (Lou)
Graydon
Sullivan.
Collection
of the GLBT
Historical Society
of Northern
California**

Dorsey discovers the “Diary for a Young Boy,” an exact counterpart of the diary that he originally possesses. In this newfound diary, he meets the “Diary Boy” whose struggle with masculinity is written on the pages (performed by Brian Fisher). As Dorsey flips through this unfinished diary with an attempt to “find” his “lost” boyhood—in other words, to mold his sense of maleness after biological (queer) masculinity—he discovers that there is no one right way to embody masculinity and consequently reflects on his journey to self-acceptance. Dorsey notes, “More than being about masculinity, [the] show is also about being human—imperfect, hopeful, joyfully ambitious, resilient creatures that we are. We, all of us, can feel so lost out in the margins, but what (and who) we find there can be remarkable and marvelous. I wouldn’t want to be anywhere else.”

Dorsey continues to explore the margins of masculinity in *Lou*, the central piece of *Uncovered: The Diary Project*. This performance is an homage to Louis (Lou) Graydon Sullivan (1951–1991), a pioneer female-to-male transgender activist and scholar who significantly contributed to the establishment of the FTM community. Sullivan’s best-known accomplishment was to challenge the homophobic bias of medical institutions that prevented gay-identified transmen from obtaining medical

treatment, primarily due to the fear of “creating” homosexuals. As the first gay transman to physically transition, Sullivan made possible what was previously deemed impossible. Not only was Sullivan’s transition an actualization of his life-long dream to socialize with gay men as a man, but it was also a validation of homosexually identified transpeople’s gender identities—that gay transmen are not initially “straight women” and lesbian transwomen are not simply “straight men” as they are often believed to be. Unfortunately, Sullivan passed away from AIDS at the age of thirty-nine, shortly after completing his physical transition. Following his death, the San Francisco FTM community support network that Sullivan started was renamed the Lou Sullivan Society to honor his life and spirit.

Lou is the culmination of a year-and-a-half research process, in which Dorsey intensively researched transpeople’s personal writings and meticulously hand-transcribed Sullivan’s journal entries from library archives. For him, the process of writing Sullivan’s words was an important part of internalizing and embodying Sullivan’s experience. In this performance, Dorsey and the three supporting dancers—Brian Fisher, Juan de la Rosa, and Nol Simonse—remarkably portray Sullivan’s moments of struggle and joy. The constant questioning of identity and the drive towards an actualization of desire are the themes that weave

through the piece. From the initial attraction to gay men and confusion over self-identity, to the corporeal embodiment of maleness and sexual involvement with gay men, Dorsey embodies the intense and powerful shifts in Sullivan’s sense of self until the moment of his death.

One of the most memorable scenes in *Lou* is when Sullivan (Dorsey) and his lover (Simonse) lie side by side on the dimly lit stage caressing and quietly making love. Both of them giggle while reading through Sullivan’s diary, especially at the part where Sullivan wrote about the start of their relationship: “Here’s you and me...almost a year ago... December 18th: He just kept going... So then we made love...again, passionately...and slept (a little). He is everything I’m looking for...and this was the first time I wrote: I love him.” Sullivan’s lover teasingly wonders, “Him’...Me?” Sullivan whispers, “Yes, You.” The scene ends with Sullivan and his lover wrestling for the diary.

The climax of Sullivan’s life (and Dorsey’s performance)—the ability to fulfill his dream of becoming a gay man—is immediately followed by Sullivan’s discovery of his HIV-positive status. In this subsequent scene, the performers appear on stage one by one in formal white clothes and mourn over Sullivan’s “short-lived” dream. The feelings of regret and despair are strongly suggested by the dialogue, yet meditative back-



Uncovered: The Diary Project. From left, Brian Fisher, Sean Dorsey, Juan de la Rosa, and Nol Simonse. Courtesy of Lydia Daniller



ground music, warm magenta lighting, and the performers' slow and solid movements rather evoke a sense of hope for Sullivan's remaining time and the future of the FTM community.

While Lou Sullivan helped shape the FTM community through laying an organizational foundation for support networks, advancing knowledge about FTM identity, and connecting FTMs cross-continentially, Sean Dorsey transforms the landscape of FTM and gender-variant communities by artistically narrating the possibilities of life beyond the conventions of gender and, therefore, powerfully bringing together those who share similar experiences and desires. Although Dorsey's performances speak to the struggles often faced by gender non-conforming people, the themes of self-discovery, uncertainty, non-belongingness, and marginalization in his work also resonate with the experiences of a conventionally gendered audience. Dorsey's ability to connect with both trans and non-trans audiences is crucial, since such a connection illustrates that gender-variant and trans people do share certain insecurities and desires with the conventionally gendered majority and that they, too, are human.

Author's note: For more information on Sean Dorsey's work and upcoming Fresh Meat performances, please visit <http://www.freshmeatproductions.org>. For an extensive interview with Sean Dorsey, see Jenna Humphrey's "Trans Dance: A Cup of Tea with Choreographer Sean Dorsey," <http://www.freshmeatproductions.org/press/0710teaparty.pdf>.

Bo Luengsurawat is a first-year M.A. student in the Department of Asian American Studies at UCLA and a Women's Studies concentrator. His thesis examines the experiences of female-to-male transgender Asian Americans and Asian immigrants through FTM artistic and cultural production. His research interests include cultural studies of popular culture and the intersection of transgender and disability studies.

A SYMPOSIUM
**Processing the
Lesbian Archive:
The "Access
Mazer" Project**

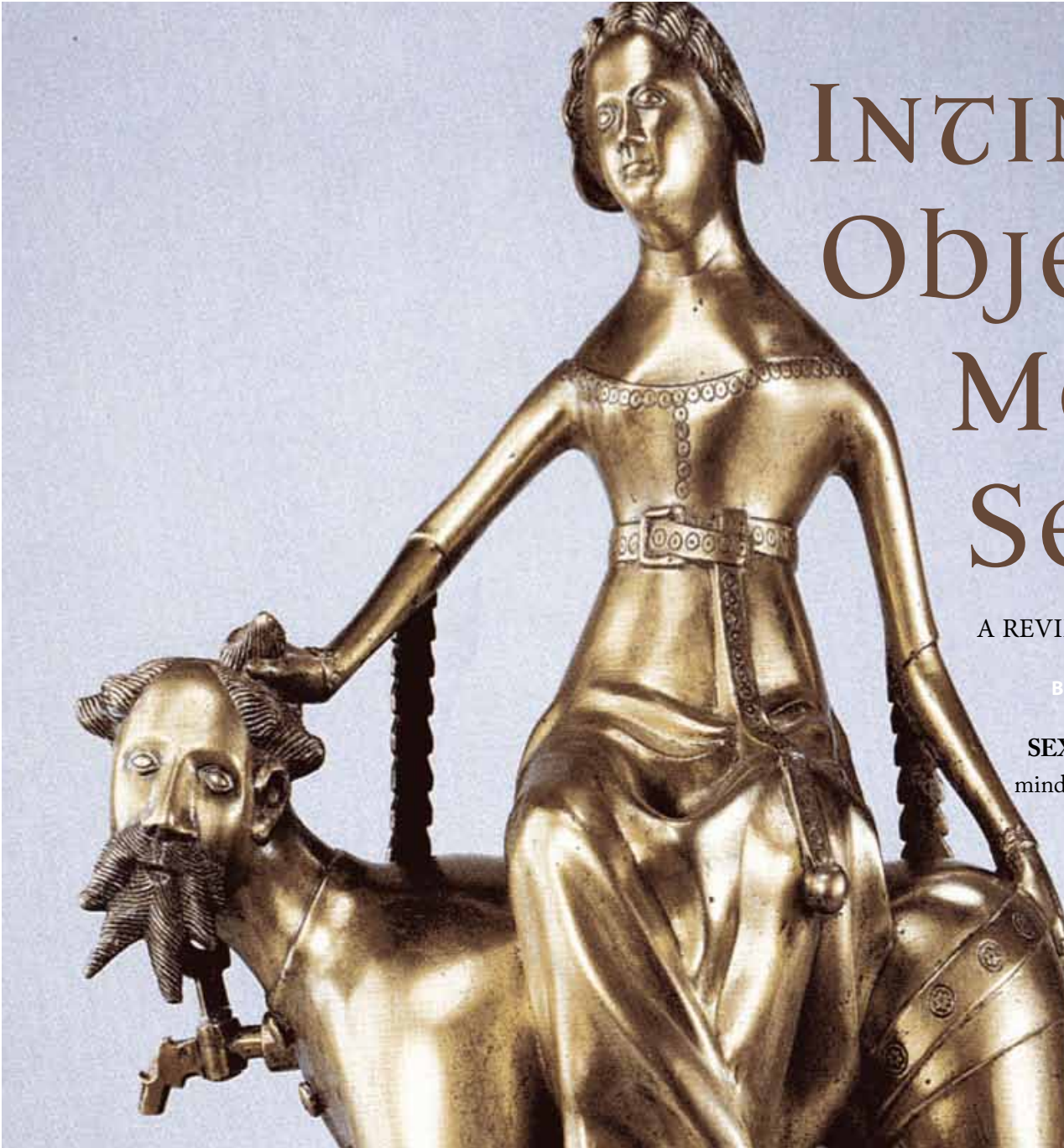
Ann L. Cvetkovich
Professor of English,
University of Texas, Austin

TUESDAY, MAY **5**

Library Conference Room,
Young Research Library
1:30 pm - 3:30pm

This event will celebrate the completion of a two-year project and will feature a keynote by Cvetkovich and a panel discussion with some of the graduate students who worked on the project: T-Kay Sangwand, James Hixon, and Candace Moore.

Cosponsored by the UCLA Center for
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INTIMATE OBJECTS AND MEDIEVAL SEXUALITY

A REVIEW OF CMRS MEDIEVAL SEXUALITY 2009

BY ANDREA F. JONES

SEX IS NOT EXACTLY the first thing that comes to mind when most people consider the Middle Ages, but a conference held in Royce Hall on March 6th and 7th amply demonstrated that there is, indeed, plenty to think about when it comes to medieval sexuality. “Medieval Sexuality 2009,” hosted by the UCLA Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies and sponsored in part by the Ahmanson Foundation and cosponsored by the Center for the Study of Women, brought a host of scholars from many disciplines and several

countries together in discussions of topics ranging from marriage to pilgrimage, heresy to confessionals, erotic images to medical theory, and transgendered bodies to metrosexuality.

Unsurprisingly, then, the conference, organized by James A. Schultz of Germanic Languages and Zrinka Stahuljak of French and Francophone Studies, uncovered a number of intriguing themes and crosscurrents, only one of which was the provocative witness of intimate objects. Pilgrims' badges, combs, and prayer books all provide us with hints about how medieval people thought, talked, and enacted sex.

Both Karma Lochrie of Indiana University at Bloomington and Ann Marie Rasmussen of Duke University offered considerations of the apparently obscene pilgrims' badges that have baffled scholars for centuries. Pilgrimage to holy sites was an extremely important part of late-medieval culture, and these

decorations allowed those who had undertaken the dangerous journeys to remember and display the pious intentions that had led them there. Usually, the badges present an image associated with the saint to whose shrine their owners had traveled. Badges commemorating the extremely popular shrine of St. James at the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, for example, might be in the shape of a scallop shell; however, Lochrie and Rasmussen discussed images more profane than sacred: capering vulvas and penises.

Noting an embarrassed museum docent's inadvertently hilarious explanation of these little figures as reminders of where their wearers had been, Lochrie explained that we do not know anything about the context for displaying these cartoonish renderings of genitalia. She forwarded the possibility that these items were meant as multilayered parodies, "toy artifacts" that play with both the convention of

sacred badges and the behavior of those who wore them. Noting, for example, that a badge depicting a penis-crowned vulva carried on a litter by several penis-creatures bears striking resemblances to Marian imagery, Lochrie wondered whether it was an image of a "Blessed Vulva Mary," a satire on the conspicuous piety of religious processions in which images of saints were carried through the streets. She also proposed that we might think of these items as "queer souvenirs" that "eroticize the insatiable desire for divine contact."

Rasmussen, on the other hand, speculated that at least some of the profane badges—chivalric penises on horseback and performing vulvas on stilts among them—might be rooted in anxieties about the tension between *fabren* (travel) and *heimat* (home) that is symbolized by the idea of the traveler. The mercenary knights and nomadic acrobats satirized by such im-



Unsurprisingly, then, the conference, organized by James A. Schultz of Germanic Languages and Zrinka Stahuljak of French and Francophone Studies, uncovered a number of intriguing themes and crosscurrents, only one of which was the provocative witness of intimate objects. Pilgrims' badges, combs, and prayer books all provide us with hints about how medieval people thought, talked, and enacted sex.



Kren referred to widespread scholarly opinion that women had little to no authority over the content of books that were created for them, but speculated that the *Grandes heures* of Anne of Brittany, twice Queen of France, contains evidence to the contrary. For one thing, Anne herself commissioned and paid court artist Jean Bourdichon to illustrate it—and the pictorial content offers some unconventional, gendered differences from the standard program.

ages, she added, were part of the class known as *fabrendelete* (traveling folk) in the Holy Roman Empire, people who were both part of and disruptive of the social order. The parody offered by the profane badges, she argued, might work to defuse some of those tensions. Rasmussen concluded that the “riddle creatures” shown on these badges very likely had more than one meaning, perhaps operating as part of Carnival culture, reminders of visits to brothels, or protective talismans.

Diane Wolfthal of Rice University examined another common personal item from the Middle Ages with a talk on combs, proposing that they are striking examples of how medieval and modern sexualities differ. She asserted that, during the Middle Ages, combs were far less utilitarian objects than they tend to be now: both the images carved onto the combs themselves and images of combs appearing in contemporary

paintings, manuscript illuminations, and literature reveal the comb’s status as a sexualized object.

Generally shaped like a widened, capitalized letter “h,” medieval combs had two sets of tines extending outward from the crossbar—one for the coarser work of detangling the hair and another, finer set for smoothing it. The crossbar often was wide enough to allow for carvings and, Wolfthal pointed out, those carvings usually were erotic. Ranging in subject matter from quasi-devotional images of a nude Bathsheba to depictions of lovers in a garden or even copulating couples, such handiwork sometimes was accompanied by phrases enjoining the comb’s owner to “take pleasure” or “have mercy on me.” This last text apparently has a witty double meaning, in that its speaker could either be the implement itself or the lover who offered it as a gift.

In fact, evidence from scenes

on mirror cases and instructional texts for would-be suitors tells us that these combs often were given to women as love tokens, and Wolfthal contended that they could also operate as fetish objects. For example, combs often were made from wood, but the most desired material was ivory—not simply, she suggested, because of its exotic rarity, but also because the white, smooth surface imitated the idealized attributes of a woman’s skin—and because the combs tend to be about the size of a woman’s hand. Since the comb also came into contact with a part of the body that had erotic associations—the loosened hair—and usually was concealed, they could simultaneously serve as representations of its owner and her lover.

Both Thomas Kren, curator of manuscripts at the Getty Museum, and William Burgwinkle of King’s College, Cambridge presented papers on images appearing in devotional books in-

tended for individual use. These manuscripts, generally about the size of a modern paperback or smaller, were meant to provide portable, daily inspiration and frequently contain appropriate illustrations to accompany the text. Kren discussed a book of hours commissioned by Anne of Brittany early in the 16th century, and Burgwinkle analyzed an illuminated manuscript of the *Golden Legend*, the preeminent medieval collection of saints' lives. Intriguingly, both of these books offer provocations to the flesh, as well as to the spirit.

Kren referred to widespread scholarly opinion that women had little to no authority over the content of books that were created for them, but speculated that the *Grandes heures* of Anne of Brittany, twice Queen of France, contains evidence to the contrary. For one thing, Anne herself commissioned and paid court artist Jean Bourdichon to illustrate it—and the pictorial content offers some uncon-

ventional, gendered differences from the standard program. In particular, he explicated the reoccurring appearance of attractive young men—often in various stages of undress—that sets this manuscript apart from others of the time. It was far more common for such books to contain images of naked women, as is the case in a complementary manuscript Bourdichon produced only a few years earlier for her second husband, Louis XII. In particular, Kren focused on comparably titillating images of a nude Bathsheba in Louis XII's hours and a bound, scantily clad St. Sebastian—and other men—in Anne's.

Burgwinkle, examining the first French translation of the *Golden Legend*, cited it as a demonstration of sexuality as being primarily about “the insertion of affective relations into nearly every realm of social discourse,” rather than about sex itself. A depiction of the martyrdom of St. Julian of Antioch, for exam-

ple, shows him wearing nothing but what Burgwinkle called a “g-string” as he is beaten by his tormentors. Indicating that previous events from St. Julian's life also occupy the panel, Burgwinkle commented that “the torture of the naked saint was, we could say, there all along,” inseparable even from such episodes as the mutual vow of chastity with his wife, St. Basillissa. Other illustrations, including the simultaneous castration of St. Querius and breast-torture of his mother, St. Julita, repeat this dynamic—as do, he noted, some of the writings of the theologian Alain of Lille and the mystic Ramon Llull.

These fascinating investigations of medieval material culture represent only a portion of the conference's offerings, a fact which indicates the variety of medieval sexualities, the diversity of current scholarly work on this topic, and the richness of conversations yet to come. The involvement not only of so

many outstanding scholars, but also of ten UCLA divisions, programs, and departments in addition to the Center of the Study of Women ensures that we have much to look forward to.

Andrea F. Jones is a doctoral candidate in the Department of English at UCLA.

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1500 PUBLIC AFFAIRS BUILDING 722203

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UCLA CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WOMEN
BOX 957222

LOS ANGELES, CA 90095-7222

PHONE/FAX

310 825 0590 / 310 825 0456

EMAIL

csw@csw.ucla.edu

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EDITOR/DESIGNER

Brenda Johnson-Grau

EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS

***Sarah Cho, Vivian Davis, Rebecca Dean,
Katie Shields, and Marjan Yahyanejad***