

Newsletter of the UCLA Center for the Study of Women



# *update*

**SPRING 2014**



# 7000 in Solidarity

A CAMPAIGN AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT

*Did you know...*

1 in 3 women and 1 in 6 men are survivors of sexual assaults and rapes<sup>1</sup> that occur while they are in college? That means that 7000 of the students currently attending UCLA will be sexually assaulted or raped before they graduate.



People of all genders and sexualities can be targeted, and even more will be faced with the opportunity to intervene. **It is our responsibility to stop sexual assault** and support survivors in our campus community.

***Join the fight to stop sexual assault!***

<sup>1</sup>Finkelhor, David, et al. "Sexual Abuse in a National Survey of Adult Men and Women: Prevalence, Characteristics and Risk Factors," Child Abuse and Neglect, 1990.



**TAKE THE PLEDGE**

*I pledge to...*

- 1) Only Engage in Consensual Sexual Activities
- 2) Be an Effective Bystander in Preventing Others from Acting Without Consent
- 3) Support Survivors of Sexual Assault

TO TAKE THE PLEDGE OR JOIN THE CAMPAIGN, VISIT  
[usac.ucla.edu/7000insolidarity](http://usac.ucla.edu/7000insolidarity)

## Revise and Consent

SECOND-WAVE FEMINISM made significant interventions in raising consciousness and setting up legal, medical, and psychological support infrastructures for people who had been raped. Nevertheless rape, sexual assault, and pervasive and destructive myths about these crimes are still very much with us, especially on college campuses. We live in a rape culture, where representations of forced or violent sex, ranging from primetime to the Internet, present overtly nonconsensual sex, frequently as passionate and “hot” (think *Scandal* and *Game of Thrones*) in scenes that blur the lines, à la Robin Thicke, between sex and what is clearly rape (Cersei, Olivia, and Quinn all say “no”). Rape victims are still asked by authorities: “What were you wearing?” and “Had you been drinking?” And blame for rape still seems to shift inexorably from the perpetrator to the victim. As is often observed, people reporting sexual assaults or rapes suffer stigma and doubts about their credibility that do not inhere to victims of other crimes. The displacement of blame occurs in beliefs about rape as well. Despite numerous studies that indicate only 5% of rape and sexual assault victims report the crime to authorities, studies of various

populations, most notably police officers and college students, indicate that as many as 50% of these groups believe that the majority of rapes are falsely reported and should not be taken as credible.

Students and faculty at UCLA have launched a number of initiatives to intervene in this culture. At UCLA, the Healthy Campus Initiative (HCI) is working on a number of innovative projects to enable the UCLA community “to make healthy choices” across a spectrum of life and work areas. Together with the Student Wellness Commission (SWC), they are supporting an undergraduate group, 7000 in Solidarity, to do a study that, says group representative Madisson Goorman, will explore “what UCLA students understand is consent, bystander intervention, [support] resources, stigma, and underreporting.” 7000 in Solidarity is a group of assault survivors who have devised a simple pledge, comprised of three points and available at <http://swc.ucla.edu/7000insolidarity/> that they encourage everyone to take:

1. Only engage in consensual sexual activities.
2. Be an effective bystander in preventing others from acting without consent.

3. Support survivors of sexual assault.

The standard of consent shifts the frame of responsibility away from victims to assailants—a person who is drunk cannot consent; a person who is unconscious cannot consent—and the emphasis on bystanders extends responsibility, again away from the victim.

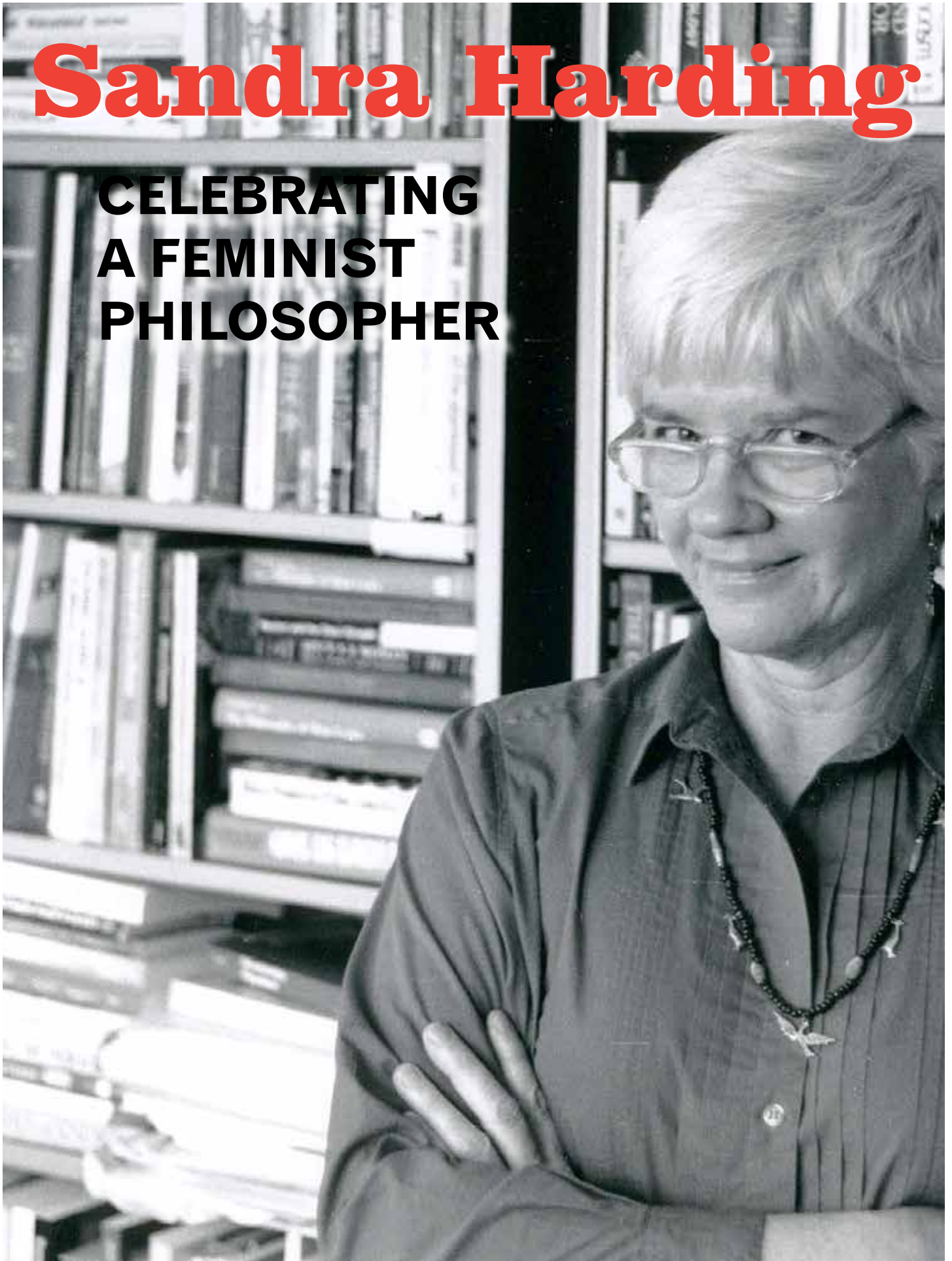
Sarah Wilbur, a Graduate Student Researcher (GSR) at HCI, has been developing another project with World Arts and Cultures Professor Victoria Marks titled “Action Conversations.” Set to launch in Fall 2014, the project will involve dialogues concerning abusive gender relations with a UCLA sorority - led “Action Conversation” on this topic. Intended to bring adversarial populations together in “healthy” conversation, the project will allow participants to receive course credit and will culminate in a performance / presentation / event of some sort in December 2014.

CSW supports these interventions and projects and we look forward to events and engagements that feature their progress and outcomes in the next academic year.

– Kathleen McHugh

# Sandra Harding

**CELEBRATING  
A FEMINIST  
PHILOSOPHER**



**P**HILOSOPHER OF FEMINIST and postcolonial theory, epistemology, research methodology, and philosophy of science, Sandra Harding is an esteemed colleague, an influential academic, and a tenacious activist for women everywhere. A Distinguished Professor of Education and Gender Studies at UCLA, Harding is retiring from UCLA this year. During her career, she served as CSW from 1996 to 1999, as a consultant to several UN organizations, and as co-editor (with Kate Norberg) *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* from 2000 to 2005.

“It has been thrilling to know Sandra during the years I’ve been at UCLA and see her fabulous mind at work,” says Professor Jenny Sharpe, the current chair of the Department of Gender Studies at UCLA. “She has done so much to put feminist studies at UCLA on the map not only in terms of her own spectacular scholarship but also institutionally, from her work with our department and the research center to her bringing of *Signs* to UCLA, during which time, as a member of its editorial board, I had the pleasure of working more closely with Sandra.”

Her scholarship has advanced feminist, antiracist, multicultural, and postcolonial studies of the natural and social sciences and feminist epistemology and philosophy of science. One of her key contributions as a philosopher was the development of the research standard of strong objectivity, a component of standpoint theory. She used the term to describe research that is grounded in the



experiences of those who have been historically excluded from the production of knowledge. Grounded in androcentricism, the much-vaunted notion of “objectivity” in research actually leads, in Harding’s view, to the privileging of some knowledge projects over others and the effacement of the experience of women and other marginalized groups. In a recent interview with Nina M. Flores of *Ms.*, Harding described standpoint theory in this way:

*Standpoint theory is a theory of knowledge, but in most disciplines it is regarded as a methodology, a way to do research. Standpoint approaches use the differences between a dominant group’s values and interests and those of subordinate groups to provide research that is for the subordinate group—that answers the kinds of questions they want answered. Standpoint is a logic of research that seems to emerge every time a new group steps on the stage of*

*history. For instance, ex-colonized groups, the civil rights movement, the LGBTQ movement and other groups ask similar kinds of questions. They may not use the language of standpoint theory, but they tend to say, “Well, from the perspective of our lives things look different (Ms. Magazine blog, July 19, 2013).*

Harding’s academic career began with an undergraduate degree from Douglass College (Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey) in 1956. Seventeen years later, she earned a Ph.D. in philosophy from New York University. Her first academic appointment was in an experimental critical social sciences college at the State University of New York in Albany. She soon moved to the University of Delaware, where she held appointments in the departments of philosophy and sociology and the women’s studies program, where she served as director.

Arriving at UCLA in 1994, she was



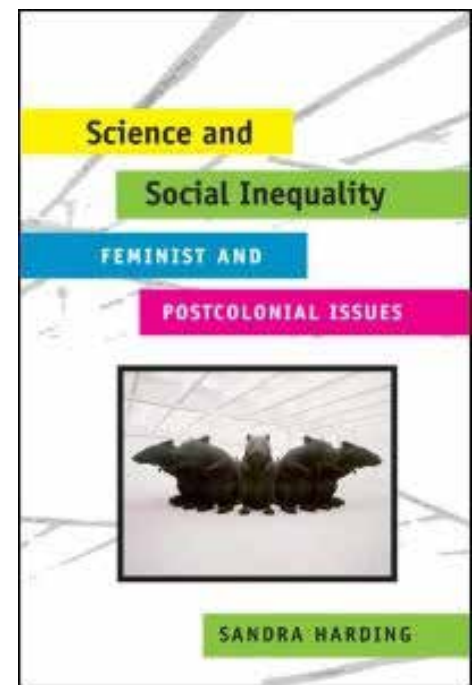
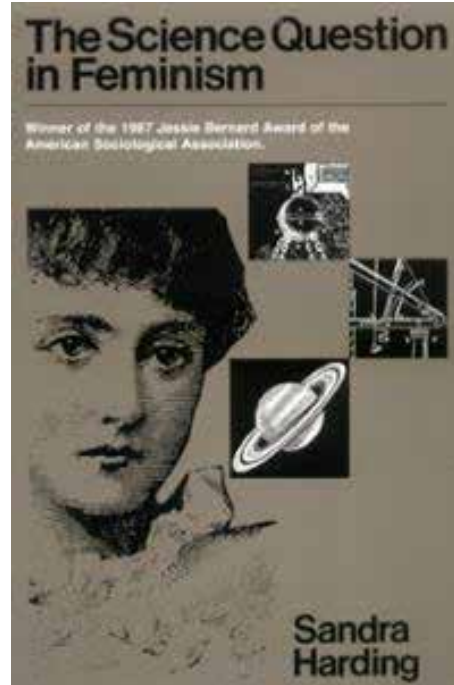
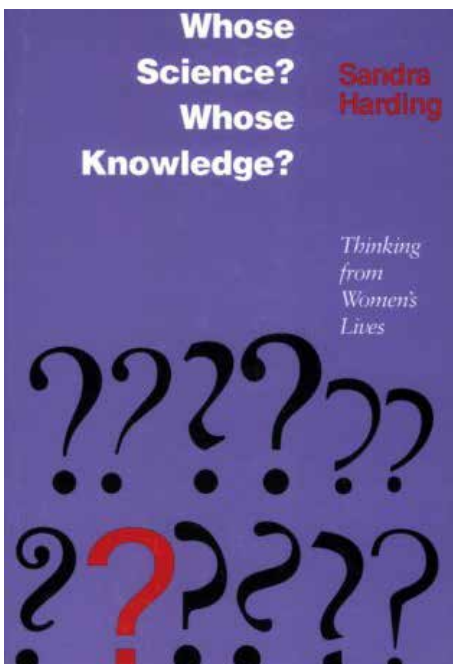
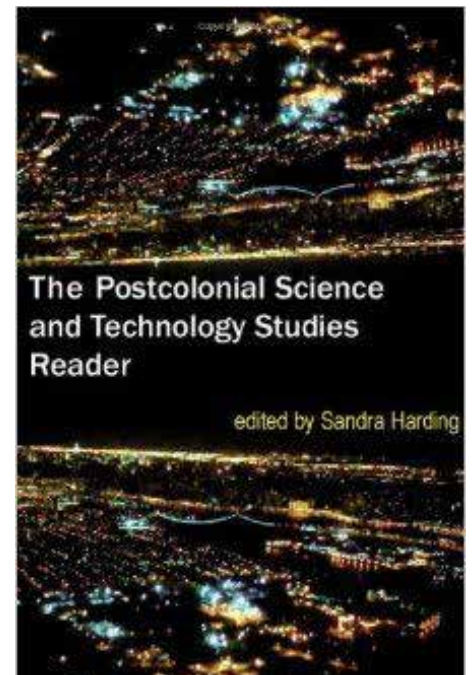
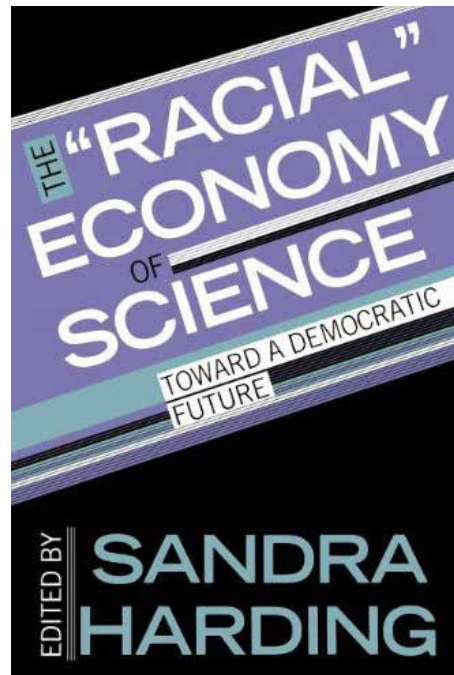
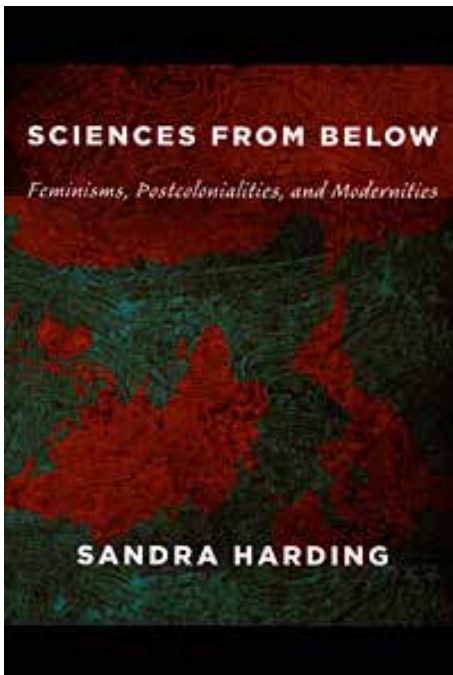
an Adjunct Professor of Philosophy and Women's Studies from 1994 to 1996 and then was appointed CSW Director in 1996. Under her leadership, CSW developed new and creative programs and events, and offered sixty lectures and conferences each year on topics including "Feminist Controversies" and "Gender and Science." Catharine Stimpson, Patricia Hill Collins, and

Adrienne Rich were a few of the distinguished speakers during her tenure. Two major publications—Going Public: Women and Publishing in Early Modern France (Cornell University Press) and Encountering the Glass Ceiling: Gender, Values and the Structure of Work (UCLA Institute of Industrial Relations)—came out of CSW conferences that were held during Harding's

directorship.

"Sandra's reputation as a feminist trailblazer was instrumental in bringing [Signs] to UCLA," noted Kathryn Norberg, an Associate Professor in the Department of History at UCLA and Harding's immediate predecessor as CSW Director. Renowned around the world, *Signs: Journal of Women in Society and Culture* "challenges the boundaries of knowledge concerning women's and men's lives in diverse regions of the globe." The journal prides itself on its continuous efforts to investigate alternative research methods to reach "social transformation" through feminist, queer, and antiracist goals. Between 2000 and 2005, Harding co-edited the journal with Norberg. Norberg shared these memories of Harding's editorial contributions:

*Sandra was particularly instrumental in "stirring up" and husbanding to completion special issues and forums. She worked with faculty from UCLA, different UC campuses and institutions around the world to bring these collaborations to fruition. In 2003, Sandra herself edited "Gender and Science: New Issues" (volume 25, number 3), which showcased feminist analyses of an array of disciplines from anthropology to zoology. Several of the most frequently cited articles in Signs appeared in that special issue. During her tenure at Signs, Sandra worked with and mentored about twenty-four graduate students who served as research assistants. Those students benefited from Sandra's broad knowledge of academic feminism and her extensive contacts. Through her work*



at Signs, Sandra steered academic feminism in new directions and made UCLA a center of feminist thinking.

Harding is author or editor of twelve books, including such influential volumes as *Sciences from Below: Feminisms, Postcolonialities, and Modernities* (2008), *Is Science Multicultural?*

*Postcolonialisms, Feminisms, and Epistemologies* (1998), *The Science Question in Feminism* (1986), and *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge: Thinking From Women's Lives* (1991).

Bonnie Shulman, *Technology and Culture*, called *Sciences from Below* “a stunning synthesis of research from post-positivist, feminist, and postcolonial science studies scholars.” On *The Science Question in*

*Feminism*, Barrie Thorne, Professor of Sociology and of Gender and Women's Studies at UC Berkeley, wrote in the *American Journal of Sociology*:

*Gender imagery, such as talk of “hard” and “soft” data and of nature as a “she” to be “conquered,” permeates the cultures of science... [This book] demonstrate[s] that such imagery is more than surface detail; the social*





organization and symbolism of gender are deeply implicated in the making of modern science.

And she continued, “In *The Science Question in Feminism*, Sandra Harding reviews and synthesizes over a decade of feminist writings about the natural and the social sciences (the latter emphasis makes her book especially pertinent to sociologists). She identifies different philosophical positions and examines their virtues and problems, developing a framework that I found immensely clarifying.

Notable among her edited volumes are *The Postcolonial Science and Technology Studies Reader* (2011) and *The “Racial” Economy of Science: Toward a Democratic Future* (1993), a collection of essays that critiques the racialized nature of the sciences. “This magisterial, compelling, and important collection pushes the boundaries of postcolonial studies in urgent ways.” wrote Ania Loomba, co-editor of *South Asian Feminisms*, about *The Postcolonial Science and Technology Studies Reader*, “It charts the richness and depth of knowledge systems across the non-Western world, delineating their differences from, contributions to, and marginalization by what is thought of as Western science. This book makes it impossible to ignore the interconnections between long histories of imperialism, the dynamics of the Cold War, and the asymmetries of globalization, or to isolate science from social relations. It also maps the ground on which we can imagine a different future.”

About the importance of *The*



*“Racial” Economy of Science: Toward a Democratic Future*, Carlye Honig noted in *Science, Technology, & Human Values* that “this book of essays, collected from across several decades and edited by professor of philosophy Sandra Harding (University of Delaware), is an ambitious project, and extremely successful in exposing the racist absurdities that have been supported by and have flourished within modern science since its inception.” *Library Journal* also lauded the collection: “The classic and recent essays gathered here will challenge scholars in the natural sciences, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and women’s studies to examine the role of racism in the construction and application of the sciences. Harding... has also created a useful text for diverse classroom settings.”

Harding’s accolades, awards, and honors also include visiting professorships at the University of Amsterdam, the University of Costa Rica, the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, the Asian Institute of

Technology, and the University of Costa Rica. Phi Beta Kappa chose her as a national lecturer in 2007. She received American Education Research Association Award for Distinguished Contributions to Gender Equity in Education Research in 2009. In 2013, she received the John Desmond Bernal Prize from the Society for the Social Studies of Science. It is awarded annually to an individual judged to have made a distinguished contribution to the field. She has also served on the editorial boards of numerous journals in the fields of philosophy, women’s studies, science studies, social research methodology, and African philosophy.

Harding is a treasure. She has enriched the academic and cultural landscape around the world and deepened our thinking in so many ways. UCLA has been lucky to have her in our midst. We wish her all the best in her retirement—knowing full well that she is unlikely to slow down and that she will continue to make contributions for many years.

# THINKING GENDER

24TH ANNUAL  
GRADUATE STUDENT  
RESEARCH  
CONFERENCE



**W**HEN I TOOK ON THE JOB as Thinking Gender coordinator back in August 2013, one thing I did not anticipate was how emotionally invested I would become in the people, presentations, and ideas involved in this conference. Much to my delight, over the course of the past seven months, I have become attached, in every sense, to this exciting conference!

In the spirit of Thinking Gender conferences of years past, we had an excellent attendance record and hosted student presenters from near and as far away as New Delhi, London, and Hong Kong. A total of 36 institutions and 35 disciplines were represented throughout the conference. Multidisciplinary panels like “Homeland Insecurities: Domesticity, Gender, and Nationalism” and “Controversial Indulgences at Work, Home, and Play” enabled rich conversations across fields as diverse as anthropology, comparative literature, ethnic studies, and education (to name just a few). “Controversy” also emerged as a thematic concern across many presentations in papers such as those discussing fixed term Islamic marriage, the impossibility of queer desire, the roles of Miley Cyrus and the Kardashians in popular culture, anarchy-feminist pedagogies, and so on. Our fantastic moderators identified salient connections across papers, provided thoughtful feedback, and facilitated stimulating dialogue. Presenting in front of a packed room, the plenary panel entitled, “Somatic Pleasures and Traumas: Seduction, Senses, and Sexuality,” featured a diverse group of papers that problematized concepts of pleasure in issues of health, media representations,

trauma, and colonial history. I was honored to present on the plenary along with Krista Kane, Elizabeth Williams, and Ben Raphael Sher. Our moderator, CSW Director and UCLA professor, Kathleen McHugh, asked poignant and insightful questions that provoked a lively and thoughtful Q&A.

Many rooms throughout the day were filled to capacity, and conversations inspired by panels spilled out into hallways, continuing over lunch and well into the reception. Although I was thrilled to meet and speak with many presenters and moderators, I so wished I could defy quantum mechanics and watch all the presentations, each of which was carefully selected by a committee that consisted of CSW Assistant Director Pamela Crespin, Dr. Mirasol Enriquez (a two-time Thinking Gender Coordinator alumna), PhD candidate Jacob Lau, and myself. Despite not being able to attend every panel, some of my favorite moments of the day occurred when I could finally pair faces with papers—truly a fleshing out of ideas!

The Thinking Gender conference would not have been the resounding success it was without CSW Director Kathleen McHugh’s fearless and brilliant direction; CSW Managing Editor Brenda Johnson-Grau’s intense creativity; CSW Assistant Director Pamela Crespin’s thoughtfulness and good cheer; CSW Administrative Specialist Liliya Teper’s organizational mastery; CSW Programming Coordinator Kimberlee Granholm’s enthusiasm and eagerness; and last, but not least, all of our lovely GSRs, work-study students, and volunteers! We are also very grateful to CSW donors and Westwood Trader Joe’s, Thinking

Gender moderators, presenters, and attendees for helping to fulfill a day filled with the passionate exchanges of ideas and information.

Thinking Gender is internationally known for providing an intensely supportive and enjoyable environment for graduate students to present their work, and this year was certainly no exception. We have received many heartfelt emails and evaluations recounting positive experiences, and we hope that the dialogues that began at this conference will continue. Meanwhile, we are pleased that the 24th annual Thinking Gender conference has a digital second life. Many of the papers presented at the conference will soon be available on California Digital Library: <http://www.escholarship.org/csw>. Our in-house photographer, affectionately referred to as “the paparazzi” during the conference, took over 100 pictures throughout the day, which can be seen on our new Facebook account: <https://www.facebook.com/thinkinggenderFacebook>. Please also visit our YouTube site to view a select number of panels that we were able to videotape: <http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLfCY6fk9oYB-TAw8n99H4oj64RTHAwfXE>.

Although it is with bittersweetness that I will pass the torch to the next Thinking Gender Coordinator, I know that s/he will have an equally rewarding experience in wonderful and capable hands. Stay tuned for Thinking Gender 2015!

**—Mila Zuo**



*Mila Zuo is a PhD student in the Cinema and Media Studies program at UCLA.*

# Through a Bar

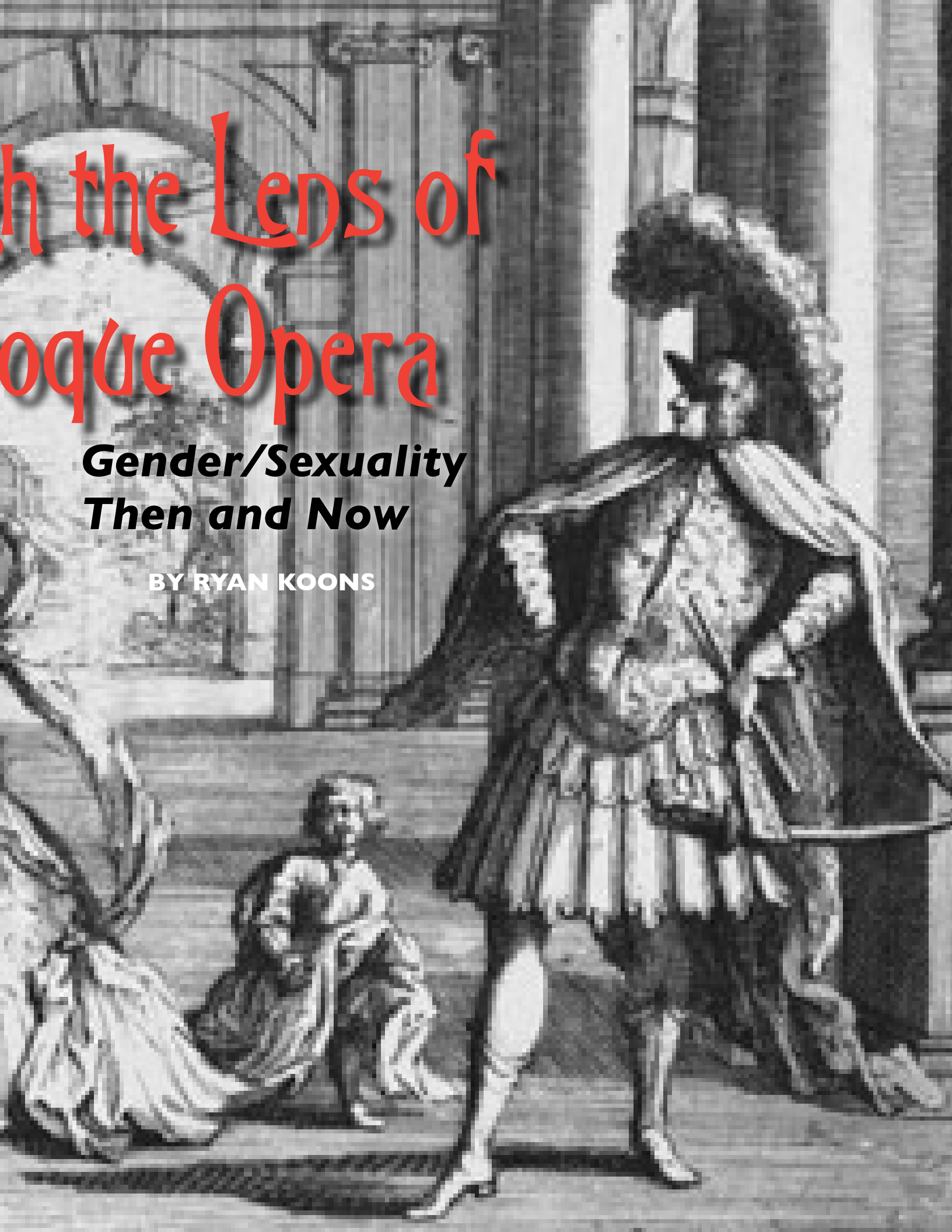


Figure 1: Gaetano Berenstadt (*left*) and Senesino (*right*) flank Francesca Cuzzoni in a 1723 caricature by John Vanderbank of Handel's *Falvio* (Kelly 2004:43).

# h the Lens of oque Opera

**Gender/Sexuality  
Then and Now**

BY RYAN KOONS



**W**ILLIAM FAULKNER once famously wrote, “The past is never dead. It’s not even past” (1950:73). This idea that the past is always present is at the heart of this paper. Nothing is created in a vacuum, and while the cultural constructs of historical eras differ vastly from those of the present, they crucially inform the here and now, being not dead, or even completely past. Of course, a comparison of historical and contemporary attitudes is something of an artificial construct in and of itself; while we might perceive past voices only through a glass, darkly, via diaries, documents, and art, these voices can enter into a dialogue with the present only through mediation by a third party, in this case, myself.

For that is what I want to do: take several voices from the past and, hoping that I do not put too many words in their mouths, contrast their constructed realities with related constructs in the present. The culture-scape is baroque opera in the years 1724 and 2005. The lens is Georg Frideric Handel’s opera *Giulio Cesare in Egitto*, or “Julius Caesar in Egypt.”<sup>1</sup> I examine gender and sexuality interpretations that result from what has been called the “castrato problem.” While this and many other baroque works were written specifically for castrati, the vocal superstars of the baroque

1. There have been several attempts to untangle the sexuality of Handel himself—indeed, a cantata text written for him by Cardinal Pamphili in 1707 directly compares Handel to the mythological Orpheus who, even then, “provided a double emblem of musician and homosexual” (Harris 2001:2). Although it is beyond the scope of this paper, Handel’s sexuality adds yet another layer of signification to this narrative (Thomas 2006).

era, the cessation of castration as a practice has thankfully forced contemporary opera directors to make a variety of choices when casting roles originally written for castrati. The resulting performances move beyond heteronormativity, and reinforce the characterization by culture scholars Corinne Blackmer and Patricia Smith of opera as a very queer art form (1995:8).

### THE CASTRATI

To appreciate the nuances of contemporary stagings of baroque opera, we must begin with the history of the castrato. Castration is the surgical removal of the testicles.

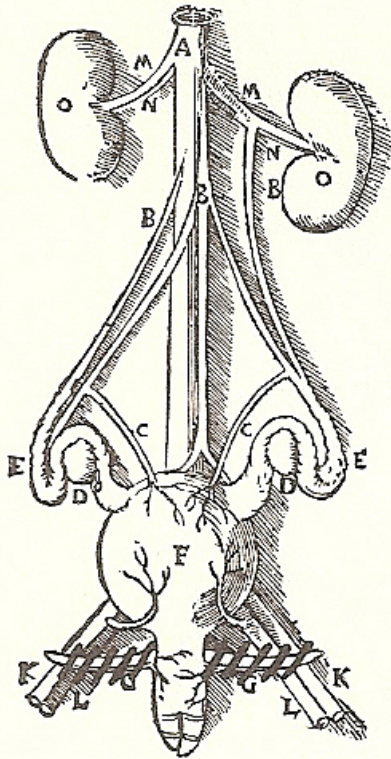
The practice of castrating boys for their singing voices—what has been called aesthetic castration, or castration for the sake of art—dates back to church choirs in early medieval Constantinople and twelfth-century Spain, although there have been eunuchs throughout history.<sup>2</sup> Boys were castrated before the onset of puberty in order to preserve their fine high singing voices, a goal unfortunately not always realized. When conducted before puberty, the surgery altered hormone levels in the male body and resulted in a comparatively plastic skeletal structure; a rounder, softer, and hairless face; and a body that was significantly larger than that of the average man (see *figure 1* on previous page).

During the Renaissance era, hearing a castrato sing was the privilege of the European elite, and these upper classes often included men of the church. In 1589, Pope

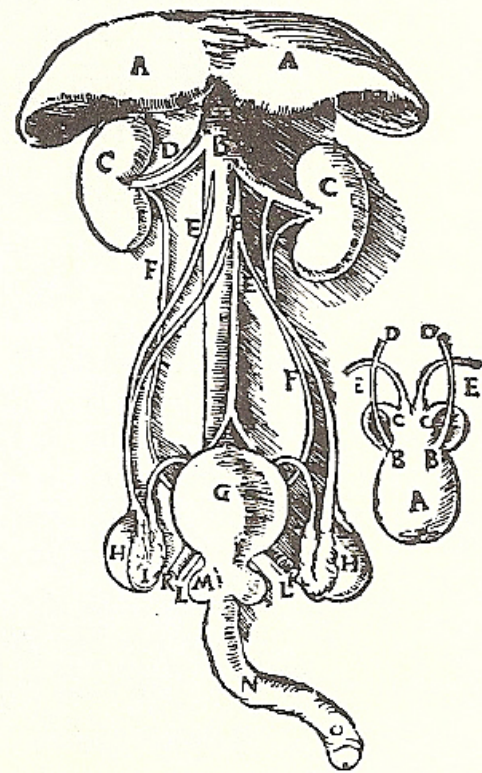
Sixtus V issued a papal bull approving the recruitment of castrati for the choir of St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome, continuing the biblical edict from first Corinthians that women “shall keep silence in the churches.” However, those recruited had to have lost their genitals through “tragic accident.” As the castrati rose in popularity, the number of “tragic accidents” escalated, and it was estimated that some four thousand Italian boys were castrated per year by the early eighteenth century (Berry 2011:18).

While most castrati just barely eked out a living in church choirs, fame and fortune could be found on the operatic stage (Berry 2011:37). Some of the earliest operas—for example, Monteverdi’s 1607 *Orfeo*—featured castrati, and the tradition continued well into the 1700s. Now in the present day, the practice of castration has thankfully ceased, and directors staging baroque operas deal with the “castrato problem” when making casting decisions. Despite several interesting attempts to re-create it using computer technology—notably the BBC documentary *Castrato* and the film *Farinelli, il Castrato*—the baroque castrato’s vocal timbre no longer exists. Contemporary directors, therefore, have a variety of options open to them that can only approximate the castrato sound. The vocal line might be transposed down an octave, of course, to be sung by a bass or baritone. But alternatively and more interestingly, the original vocal range might be maintained by assigning the role to a male falsettist or countertenor—that is, a man who sings primarily in his falsetto—or to

2. See for example, essays in Tougher (2002).



¶ Diese Figur zeiget an die innerliche gestalt eines weibs/ mit sampt den geburt gliedern / gefäß des samens: vñnd andern bericht. A. Bedeut die großblutader / daher alle andere glieder nahrung haben. B. Ist die weisse samadern. C. C. Ader so die bermütter begreifen / daher die frucht auch nahrung bekompt. D. D. Sindt weibs zeuglin. E. Damit werden die weibs zeuglin vmbgeben / seindt ein theyl samens. vñnd ein theyl der herza- dern. F. Die bermütter gleich der blasen gestalt. G. Die gestalt der Bermütter / daran sie dem rucken vñnd nebenst angehefft. H. Das innerlich mundeloch der Bermütter. I. Das eußerst der Bermütter. die scham. K. L. Stämm odder äst der blutadern der schenckel. M. N. Harngång vñnd den Nieren. O. Bedt Tieren.



Das neben klein figur lin/ ist die blase/ mit sampt der harn vñnd same adern.

a woman. Casting countertenors or women rarely results in performances that read as heteronormative to modern audiences. To examine these audience interpretations, I wish to contrast the meanings of historical and contemporary constructions of gender and sexuality as they relate to *Giulio Cesare in Egitto*.

**GIULIO CESARE**

Handel premiered *Giulio Cesare* in 1724 as part of the sixth season at the Royal Academy of Music, also known as the King's Theatre, in the Haymarket of London. Like most baroque operas, it has many plots, subplots, and even sub-subplots! The main storyline follows Julius Caesar just after he has defeated and invaded Egypt. Much of the plot includes political (and romantic) maneuverings

on the part of Cleopatra as she attempts to seduce Caesar into supporting her as the sole ruler against her brother, Ptolemy. Cleopatra's servant and confidant, Nireus, provides comic relief.

In my analysis of gender and sexuality, I focus on these three male characters: the title character Julius Caesar; Cleopatra's brother, King Ptolemy of Egypt; and Cleopatra's servant Nireus. The premiere cast featured castrati in all three roles: Senesino, Gaetano Berenstadt, and Giuseppe Bigonzi, respectively. The 2005 Glyndebourne Festival Opera version instead features two countertenors as Ptolemy and Nireus and a woman *en travesti*, or in drag, playing Caesar.

**Figure 2: From 1542, the female reproductive system (at left) and the male reproductive system (right) illustrating the penis/vagina isomorphism (Laqueur 1990:86).**

## GENDER AT THE PREMIERE

Although we do not know as much about the actual premier of *Giulio Cesare* as we would like, scholars have been able to uncover a great deal about sexuality and gender constructs during this era. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, words we use now to construct gender and/or sexuality identities like “gay,” “lesbian,” “queer,” and “heterosexual” did not yet exist.<sup>3</sup> Nor are they particularly appropriate. The Galenic model of biological sex still held sway, in which “men and women were arrayed according to their degree of metaphysical perfection,” with men, of course, being more perfect than women (see *figure 2*) (Laqueur 1990:4-5). This model, also called the one-sex model, posited that men and women are essentially the same, the only difference being the genitalia physically expressed *outside* the male body (that is, the penis and testicles) are expressed analogously *inside* the female body (that is, the vagina and ovaries) (Laqueur 1990:4-5). Terms like “homosexual” and even “bisexual” did not have a place in this model, and men who practiced sodomy “were thus no different, no more effeminate, in their basic identities” than men we would now describe as heteronormative (Freitas 2009:114).

In this one-sex model, the castrato, much like the pubescent boy, functions as a kind of middle ground. Many seventeenth-century works of literature, art, and records of everyday life (nearly all of which

3. Indeed, “homosexual” did not appear in print until 1869 in Germany in a pamphlet by the novelist Karl-Maria Kertbeny.

were produced by men) repeatedly characterize the boy as an object of desire. Although significantly rarer, the castrato also fulfills a similar role. Scholars note that castrati were called “feminine men,” “perfect nymphs,” and “more beautiful than women themselves,” descriptions that reinforce the castrato as a sexual and gendered middle ground. Perhaps more usefully, musicologist Dorothy Keyser characterizes the castrato in baroque society as an ambiguous figure, a blank canvas upon which any sexual role might be projected (1987/88:49-50).

The castrato as a blank canvas combined well with a period construction of “Italianness” in Great Britain.<sup>4</sup> This era witnessed a phenomenon called the “Grand Tour,” an opportunity for British men of the upper classes “to escape the prying eyes and gossiping tongues of London polite society and indulge their passions, notably classical art and the ‘sodomitical vice,’ in the place that was thought of as synonymous with both: Italy” (Thomas 2006:173). Musicologist Roger Freitas has documented the castrato Atto Melani, who had several homosexual affairs with patrons; it is likely that other castrati also had sex with men (2009:101). Consequently, noblemen returning from the Grand Tour brought back an understanding and perhaps an appreciation of the increasing Italian tolerance for sodomy. The Grand Tour additionally functioned to connect the concept of sodomy with anything Italian, including the Catholic Church, priests, and of

4. For more on the complex sexuality of the castrato, see Dame (2006).

course, castrati. Therefore, the blank canvas of the castrati might easily include projections of sexual desire from audience members by virtue of their Italianness. This held true for women as well as men, especially because for women, the castrato was safe. No matter what sexual acts a woman might perform with a castrato, he was physically incapable of causing any scandalous pregnancies. Therefore, a woman’s reputation would remain intact, even after an entertaining affair. Thus, in addition to aesthetic pleasure, the arias of Senesino or perhaps merely seeing Gaetano Berenstadt walk on stage had the potential to kindle sexual desire in any audience member.

Beyond the body of the castrato lies his voice. While I dislike disassociating the voice from the body, the fetish in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries for the soprano vocal range cannot be ignored. This fetish begins in 1580, when Duke Alfonso d’Este formed the *concerto delle donne*—a small ensemble of accomplished female singers—to entertain his new bride in Ferrara, Italy. The *concerto delle donne* soon became very famous, and attracted many new compositions. As their fame grew, their high tessitura became increasingly sought after, leading, some scholars propose, directly to the emergence of the castrati (McClary 2012:99).

Musicologist Susan McClary suggests that, upon hearing the *concerto delle donne*, many male spectators and artists might not only have “responded to the sound as an object of desire but actually coveted the subject position itself” (2012:100). Although these musicians



and composers could hardly turn themselves into castrati, they could compose for them and promote them. Therefore, the soprano voice, whether it originated in a female or an altered male body, became an important fetish that could ignore gender demarcations. This leads directly to the often queer contemporary performances that result when casting roles written for castrati.

### **GLYNDEBOURNE GENDER**

In solving the “castrato problem,” the Glyndebourne chose to cast two countertenors, and a woman in drag in a production that mixes together British colonial, 1920s jazz-age, exoticized pseudo-Egyptian, and Bollywood aesthetics. Some contemporary audience interpretations of the resulting Glyndebourne production might include: Caesar and Cleopatra as a lesbian couple and the Egyptians as effeminate or homosexual men. These interpretations result from a combination of the bodies and voices of the actors, the costumes they wear, and the manner in which they portray their characters. This last component combines actual dance choreography with more general movement style, and the quality of movement—what we might call the choreographic timbre—is often more important than merely observing which parts of the body locomote. Of course, connecting movement with concepts or stereotypes of gender and sexuality is never easy, all the more so when one attempts to avoid oversimplification of remarkably complex cultural constructs.

From the point of view of at least one modern lesbian, there is an

***Contemporary directors, therefore, have a variety of options open to them that can only approximate the castrato sound. The vocal line might be transposed down an octave, of course, to be sung by a bass or baritone. But alternatively and more interestingly, the original vocal range might be maintained by assigning the role to a male falsettist or countertenor—that is, a man who sings primarily in his falsetto—or to a woman. Casting countertenors or women rarely results in performances that read as heteronormative to modern audiences. To examine these audience interpretations, I wish to contrast the meanings of historical and contemporary constructions of gender and sexuality as they relate to Giulio Cesare in Egitto.***

“interplay of erotically charged identification and difference” in casting a woman to play the character of a man (Blackmer and Smith 1995:5). This is especially true in cases where the male character must romance and/or rescue the heroine. Corrine Blackmer, Patricia Smith, and H el ene Cixous speak to the power of opera in general—”that seemingly forbidding and improbable realm of artifice—

[where a woman could], through the power of her voice, transcend her gender and, more than love, rescue her own sex” (1995:5). In *Giulio Cesare*, one such moment happens vocally in the duet between Cleopatra and Caesar: “Caro! – Bella! Pi  amabile belt ” (2:15-2:37 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KITTcoolR84>). Here, as Susan McClary might say, Sarah Connolly and Danielle de Niese’s voices “intertwine, take turns



**Figure 3: Christophe Dumaux reprising his 2005 role in the 2013 Metropolitan Opera production of *Giulio Cesare*. Photo courtesy Marty Sohl/Metropolitan Opera**

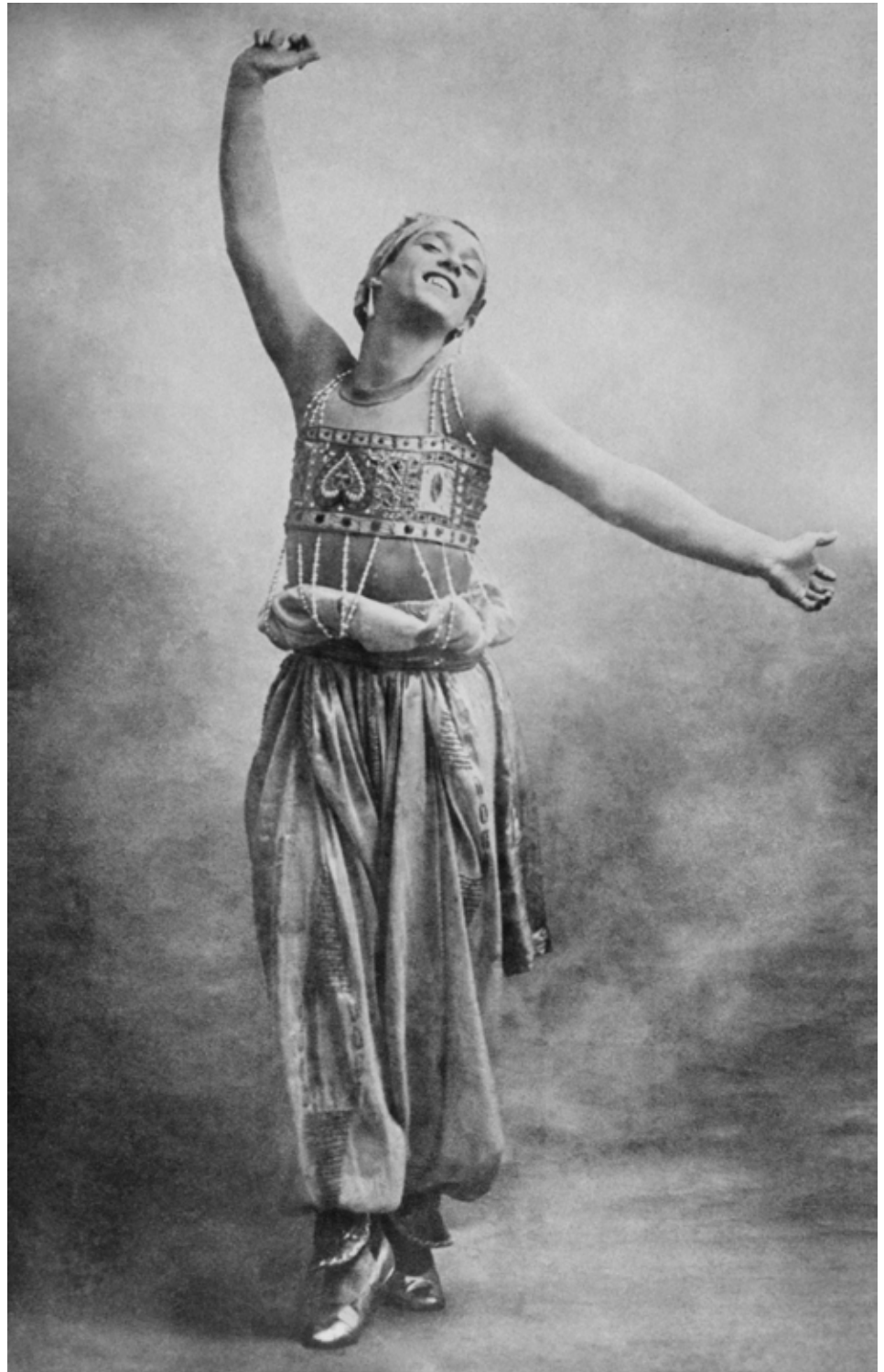
being on top, rub up against each other in aching dissonances, [and] resolve sweetly together” (2012:101). Caesar might be a man, but Sarah Connolly is not, and there are distinct same-sex erotic moments in this duet as a result.

In addition to the charge created by two high voices originating from two female bodies entwined in a (seemingly) heterosexual love duet, there is the question of the choreography. Connolly performs a very masculine Caesar, who swaggers around the stage with a decisive step, or who sits with feet planted firmly apart, a body full of straight lines with few curves. The stereotypically masculine movement quality that Connolly brings to the role is thrown into high relief when contrasted with Ptolemy’s immature or somehow “gay” movement quality in the recitative preceding Caesar’s aria “Va tacito e nascosto” (0:12-0:30 and 1:05-1:35 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2CJXIJCJSH4> ).

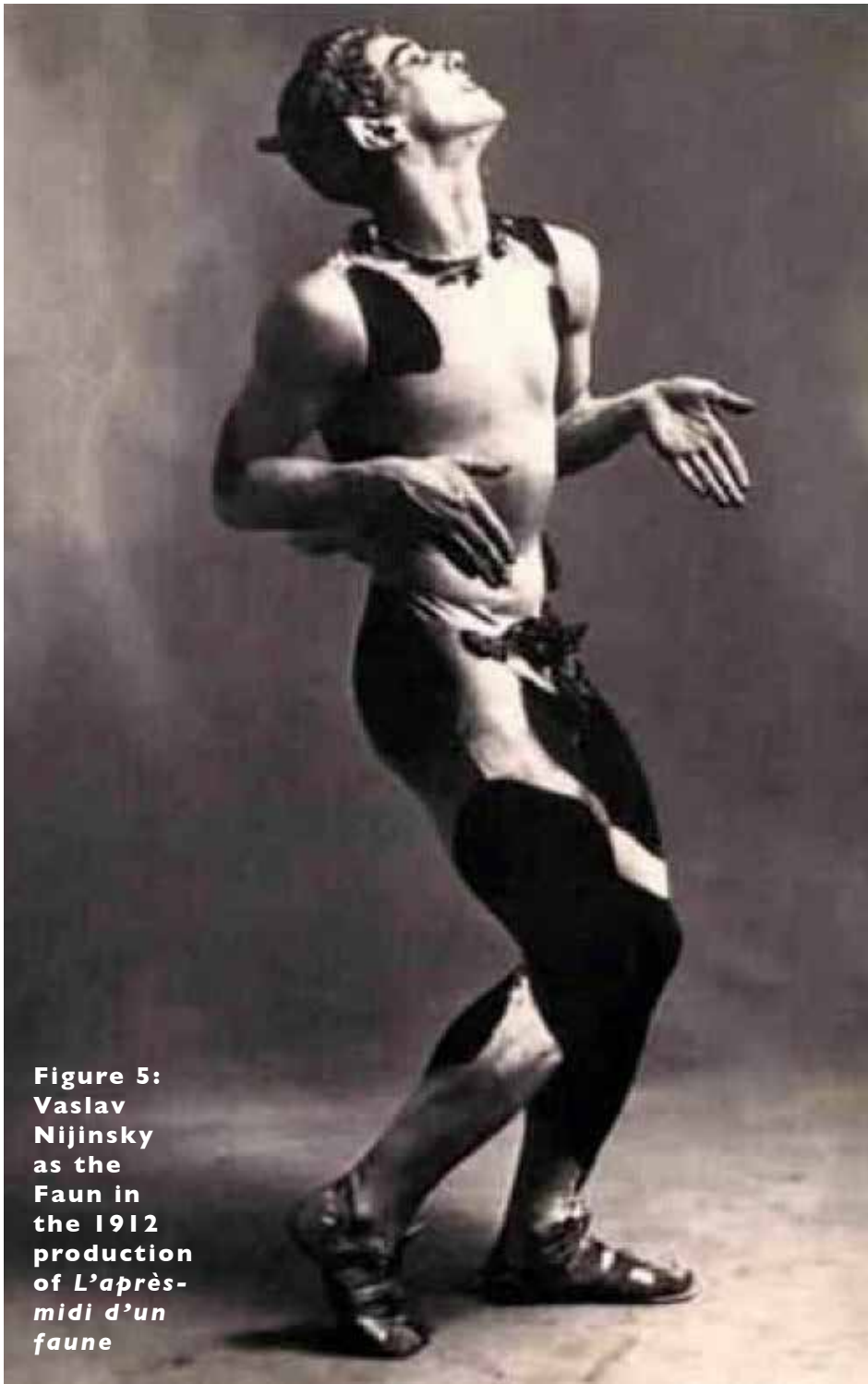
In contrast to the strong Caesar, countertenors Christophe Dumaux and Rachid Ben Abdeslam perform their Egyptian characters as homosexual, even effeminate. Both actors are thin, lithe men, and throughout the production both combine feminine costumes and/or movement qualities to great effect. For example, there is the gender bending outfit Ptolemy wears during his aria “Belle dee di questio core.” The costume is evocative of that of belly dancers, and comprises a turban, earrings, stylized wrist cuffs, a top that combines a belly dancers breast band with the harness worn in a leather bar, a sirwal or punjabi pants, and a

robe, which Ptolemy removes to great hilarity from the audience (see *figure 3*). His costume is reminiscent of that worn in 1910 by Vaslav Nijinsky, the queer choreographer for Les Ballets Russes, in their production of *Scheherazade* (see *figure 4*). In his aria, Ptolemy alternates stereotypically gay, feminine, or effeminate movements with hypermasculine gestures. For example, the luxuriant manner in which he removes and swirls his robe and slinks around the stage as compared with the pose in front of the mirror and the somersault, which have an almost violent flavor to them. In addition, there exists a choreographic quotation which, while evocative of stylized ancient Egyptian art, also comes from Nijinsky: toward the end of the video clip, Christophe Dumaux references Nijinsky's Faun in *L'après-midi d'un faune* from 1912 (see *figure 5*). The inclusion of these reference to Nijinsky, who holds an important place in LGBTQ histories, further queers this aria (0:00-1:00 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LbjffjOhn7Q>).

There is also the aria "Chi perde un momento" sung by Nirenus. In this dance sequence, Nirenus and his— interestingly male and not female— backup dancers perform a Bollywood number with campy and effeminate gestures. Their hands form sinuous curves, at times as though as they are manipulating skirts, and they clearly have fun with the stereotype of the gay man with limp wrists. Additionally, their extensive hip movements are more typically associated with women, as is the hand on the hip. All three performers also exchange occasional flirtatious glances (0:17-



**Figure 4: Vaslav Nijinsky in *Scheherazade*, 1910. Photo courtesy Library of Congress**



**Figure 5:**  
**Vaslav**  
**Nijinsky**  
**as the**  
**Faun in**  
**the 1912**  
**production**  
**of *L'après-***  
***midi d'un***  
***faune***

0:45 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCzzGWge9kl>).<sup>5</sup>

The characters of both Nireus and Ptolemy are realized by countertenors. Countertenors are defined as men who develop their

5. I am very grateful to Jaedra DiGiammarino, Kaitlyn Jurewicz, Layla Meyer, and Turya Nair for their input in describing and analyzing these different choreographies.

falsetto range, sometimes called the head voice. Although both male and female voices are capable of realizing a plethora of high and low pitches, we find it strange when a woman sings very low and particularly strange when a man sings very high. Contemporary Euro-American cultures by and large construct

masculinity as characterized by a lower vocal register. Deviation from this expectation is cause for surprise. Therefore, while both Christophe Dumaux and Rachid Ben Abdeslam augment their performances with stereotypically feminine and campy choreographies and costumes, the heart of the perceived effeminacy of their characters lies in their tessitura. The conflation of high male vocal tessitura with alternative or deviant sexuality and/or gender identity has existed since the renaissance of the countertenor voice in the 1940s with the British countertenor Alfred Deller. From all appearances a Kinsey zero and devoted family man, Deller was plagued throughout his career by perceptions that he was a eunuch or otherwise abnormal. The stereotype continues, to the point that even now heterosexual countertenors often feel they have to come out of the closet as “straight.” Consequently, the first note sung by a countertenor on the operatic stage immediately reads as some kind of queer to contemporary audiences, for surely any “normal” man would choose to sing in his chest voice. Creating the character with stereotypically gay movement timbres merely augments what the voice began.

## CONCLUSION

The castrato’s physical absence from the stage results in performances that open spaces to comment on contemporary gender and sexuality norms and identities. Caesar, that strong and masculine Roman general, becomes a strong and butch lesbian. Ptolemy, the inefficient Egyptian king and politician, becomes a villainous

fairly. The servant Nireus becomes a sissy or pansy. Stereotypical masculinity and femininity are questioned, altered, and otherwise queered through the very act of answering the castrato problem. However, no matter what option a contemporary director chooses—whether to transpose the music down for a bass, or cast a woman in drag, or countertenor—the sound and/or the sex of the contemporary performer still differs from that of the castrati. In comparison, the bass sings too low, the woman in drag is too female, and the countertenor’s voice sounds too thin and reedy. The difference, perceived through the vocal timbre or body of the contemporary actor, creates comparisons with what might have been. The castrati are also still fetishized, as evidenced by the recent surge of interest in Baroque repertoire in general and in the number of countertenors recording albums explicitly dealing with the castrati.<sup>6</sup> In the very attempt to replace them or sing anew their music, their absence re-creates their presence. As contemporary performances signify and re-signify the original powerhouse acts of the castrati, those baroque-age celebrities are still present, and their voices might still be heard through the very fact of their absence: they are not dead, they are not even past.

6. For example, see Bach (2009), Fagioli (2013), Hansen (2013), and Jaroussky (2007).



Ryan Koons, an ethnomusicologist and documentary filmmaker, is currently completing his PhD at the University of California, Los Angeles. His research interests are varied and include

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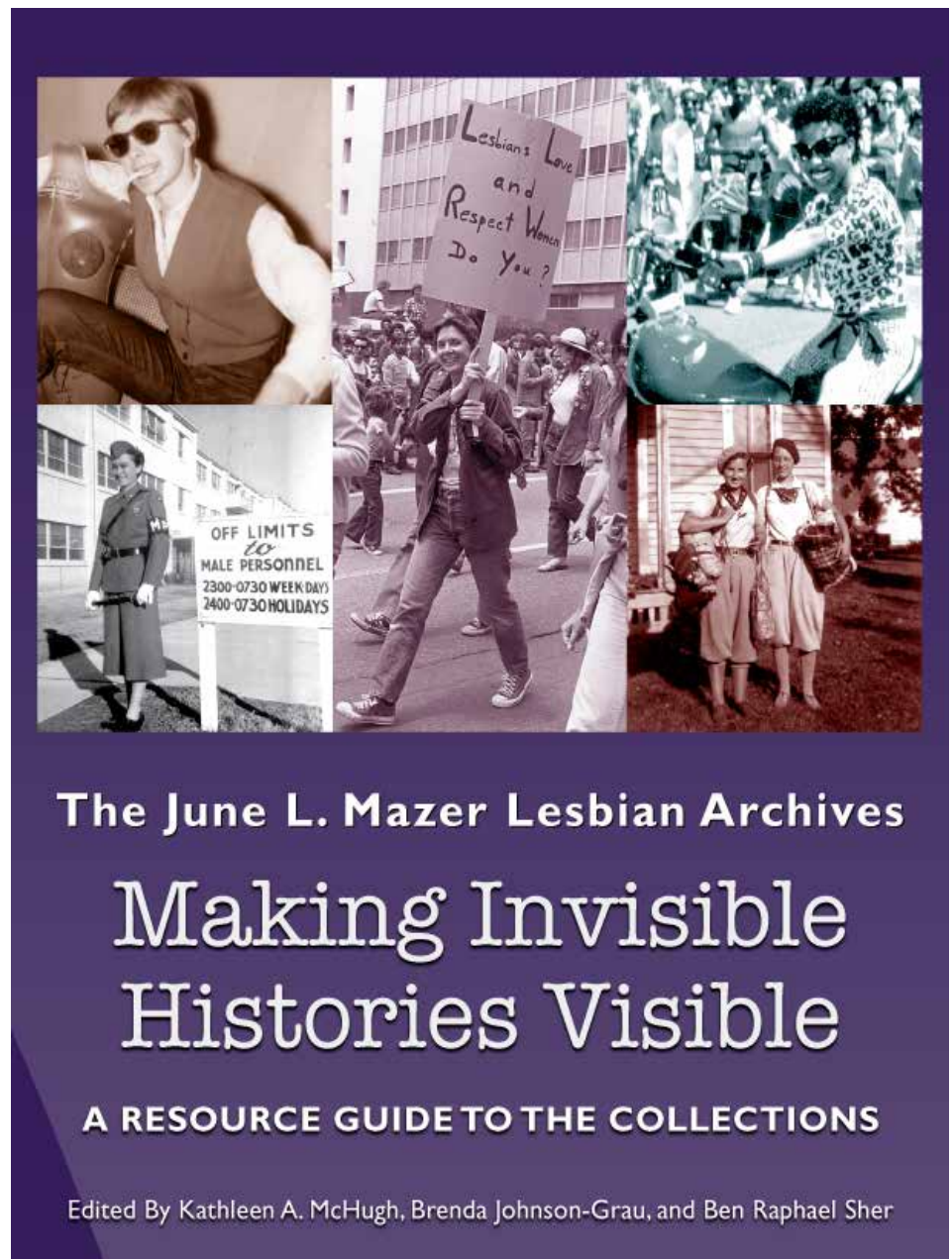
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# *making invisible histories visible*

## Hurrah! Resource Guide to the Collections of the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives is in print!

WE ARE VERY PLEASED to announce that the resource guide to the collections of the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives is now in print. Edited by Kathleen A. McHugh, Brenda Johnson-Grau, and Ben Raphael Sher, it contains short essays by some of the participants in the project and provides information on all the collections that were processed. Funded in part by an NEH grant and completed through partnership between the Mazer Archives, CSW, and the UCLA Library, "Making Invisible Histories Visible: Preserving the Legacy of Lesbian Feminist Activism and Writing in Los Angeles" is a three-year project to arrange, describe, digitize, and make physically and electronically accessible two major clusters of Mazer collections related to West Coast lesbian/feminist activism and writing since the 1930s.

As the project is being completed, we have published this volume to share an overview of the project and materials with researchers, archivists, and the community. In addition, we are hosting a capstone celebration event at the Charles E. Young Research Library from 4 to 6 pm on May 16. There will be a panel with presentations delivered by some of the participants in the project. This event will feature Col. Margarethe Cammermeyer, a Vietnam



veteran, Bronze Star recipient, and Mazer Archive donor, who, with her lawyer, UCLA Law School Alum Mary Newcombe, successfully challenged

the ban on gays and lesbians serving in the military. Cammermeyer and Newcombe will be discussing the political and legal actions involved.

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