

2009

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## Recommended Citation

Tyburczy, Jennifer (2009) "The Time Has Come to [Re]think Sex," *Criticism*: Vol. 51: Iss. 2, Article 9.  
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.wayne.edu/criticism/vol51/iss2/9>

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## The Time Has Come to [Re]think Sex

### **Cover Page Footnote**

I dedicate this review to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, who inspired all of us to rethink sex, sexuality, and gender in profoundly world-changing ways. She lives on through her passionate, innovative, and, as perhaps she might say about something she liked and admired, "textured" scholarship, as well as, of course, through the people who knew her well and loved her fiercely. This review is also for you.

# THE TIME HAS COME TO [RE]THINK SEX

Jennifer Tyburczy

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Conference Review: "Rethinking  
Sex: A State of the Field  
Conference in Gender and  
Sexuality Studies," University of  
Pennsylvania, 4–6 March 2009

With the aim of celebrating the life and work of Gayle Rubin and commemorating the 1984 publication of her essay "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality," Heather Love and her conference committee expertly curated a conference lineup of "thirty scholars working within a range of disciplines about the most significant and pressing questions in gender and sexuality studies." In so doing, "Rethinking Sex" suggested the current scheme for the discipline in unexpected ways that will, especially at a time of global movements and migrations, neo-liberal ideologies, and negative affects, inspire a return to the archives, the tracing of realist genealogies, the reconfiguration of modes and methods for knowledge transmission, the reinvigoration of theoretical and pedagogical choreographies (not forward, but sideways or, even, spiral), and the recognition, as Gayle Rubin said twenty-five years ago, of "the political dimensions of erotic life" (35).<sup>1</sup>

The conference organization was reflective of Heather Love's own philosophy (as articulated in her 2007 book *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*) that the field needs to critique simplistically celebratory accounts of the queer past in order to create a queer future more in line with ever-diversifying queer constituencies. It seemed a consensus at the conference that in order for "queer" to open up intellectual, political,

and sexual possibilities we need to relinquish nostalgia for what was, is, and will be, always and everywhere, a intrapolitically fraught sexual community. Particularly in today's global economic crisis and the vicious competition for resources, security, and a financial leg to stand on, we must recognize that we feel "bad" and analyze and use these energies to reinvigorate sexuality studies to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. "Rethinking Sex" was just as much a conference about conducting sexuality research as it was a conference that suggested ways for undoing particular epistemological frameworks for understanding sexuality.

For Love, "Rethinking Sex" mobilized a fantasy to actualize those "storied conferences of the past," such as "Pleasure and Danger" at Barnard College in 1982, where Rubin first delivered "Thinking Sex" as a talk.<sup>2</sup> In the midst of what Lisa Duggan and Nan D. Hunter have named the "sex wars" and during one of the most volatile decades in the history of sex education in the United States, the conference was, to make an understatement, controversial. Antipornography and antisadomasochism feminists targeted the conference and tried to shut it down. Calls came in claiming that harm would befall the women at Barnard because of the conference. Barnard President Ellen V. Futter, whose suspicion was apparently aroused

by these phone calls, confiscated the conference handbook. Leaflets circulated by Women Against Pornography called the conference participants "deviants." The Helena Rubenstein Foundation dropped its funding for the event. Still, eight hundred people gathered to attend, and the conference was sold out.

Thus, Rubin devoted a significant portion of her keynote address at "Rethinking Sex" to the emergence of academic work on sexuality, of which, she humbly noted, she only played a part (e.g., she mentioned other trailblazers such as Alan Bérubé, Joan Nestle, Jonathan Katz, Jeffrey Weeks, Marjorie Garber, Esther Newton, and George Chauncey). Entitled "Blood Under the Bridge: Reflections on 'Thinking Sex,'" Rubin's keynote was a graphically rich and historically dense journey backward in time to revisit the context out of which "Thinking Sex" emerged in an academic and political landscape that was hostile to sexuality scholarship. Rubin reminded us how her controversial presence at conferences such as "Pleasure and Danger" accompanied a larger struggle in the academy at the time. Namely, according to Rubin, conducting research on sex and sexuality issues was the equivalent of "academic suicide."

On an optimistic note, Rubin assessed the current academic environment as one of "sea change" and commented that pursuing

queer scholarship is no longer a "death sentence" for university research careers. Perhaps the relative calm and quiet with which "Rethinking Sex" proceeded (one Penn graduate student commented that many students at the university were not even aware that the conference was taking place) was a direct result of this "sea change" in the academy, notably the institutionalization of gender and sexuality studies at top research universities; or, as Valerie Traub explained during the graduate student open discussion, the "quietness" surrounding the conference could be construed "as a good thing," an indication that queer scholars have successfully navigated their way to tenured positions and that the scholarship of Rubin and other senior academics presenting at "Rethinking Sex" have achieved a kind of alternative canon status. Rubin's insistence on viewing sex and sexuality as intricately interwoven in the fabric of everyday life, politics, and the law, as well as the emphasis on interdisciplinarity in the academy, have also laid the groundwork for sexuality scholars to simultaneously speak of and about sexuality while also attending to, according to the program's "Welcome" address,

intersections with gender, race, class, and disability; neoliberalism and sexual politics; transgender lives; queer diasporas; health and management of

bodies and populations; pedagogy and the institutionalization of gender and sexuality studies; sexual practice, pleasure, and community; new imaginaries of kinship and sociality; globalization and its effects; histories of HIV; the politics of emotion; and the queer afterlife of conflicts in feminism.

Queer and sexuality studies, at least for the scholars presenting at "Rethinking Sex," has emerged as a highly theoretical, rigorous, and respected area of study. Yet, in her opening remarks, Heather Love acknowledged a profound sense of "FOMS" (*fear of missing something*), and I wonder if it was the heightened sense of danger surrounding the incorporation of "sex" into the academy at "Pleasure and Danger" that Love and others feared they had missed in being born "too late."

Although "Rethinking Sex" came and went without one verbal attack of "antifeminism" or "sex perversion," Rubin pointedly argued that the panics forged in the name of sexual security are far from behind us. Since 1984, according to Rubin, the antigay right has become an even bigger apparatus, "a subterranean system of roots and tubers ready to sprout under the right conditions" that "we ignore . . . at our [own] peril." What troubles Rubin today is how the charmed circle of heteronormativity has

been taken up by “the racist white supremacist right” to define the parameters of citizenship and the scope of national human rights. Twenty years ago, Rubin argues, no social conservative or white supremacist group would have associated homosexuality with the disqualification of citizenship. Rubin’s talk argued that these efforts to link citizenship, race, and homosexuality point to a troubling trend of using sexuality as way of measuring who and what is American.

Rubin’s keynote reminded the audience that while sexuality studies has emerged as a major institutional force in the academy, many of the attacks waged against queers and other heteronormative failures “look (and sound) like the ‘good’ old days” of 1984. In a comment looming large on the mind of every audience member during the worst economic crisis of any of our lifetimes (no need for FOMS here), Rubin sums up the dangerous relationship between sexuality and economic recession; namely, that it provokes “looking for someone to blame on the bottom rung of the [sexual] system.” Twenty-five years ago, Rubin opened “Thinking Sex” with these words:

To some, sexuality may seem to be an unimportant topic, a frivolous diversion from the more critical problems of poverty, war, disease, racism, famine, or nuclear annihilation.

But it is precisely at times such as these, when we live with the possibility of unthinkable destruction, that people are likely to become dangerously crazy about sexuality. . . . Consequently, sexuality should be treated with special respect in times of great social stress.

The two days that followed the evening of “Blood Under the Bridge” approached sex and sexuality with the utmost respect during these “very perilous and very dangerous times.”

Nine panels, a music concert by Matmos (Drew Daniel and M. C. Schmidt), the electronica “thought experiment” duo best known for their work with avant-garde pop princess Björk, and two film screenings by filmmaker Abigail Child followed Rubin’s keynote. In homage to Jasbir Puar’s concept “queer assemblage,” Matmos composes their queer soundscapes with the unexpected collisions of objects (things, yes, but also objects of desire). The result is an unreliable, inherently inauthentic format that simultaneously pays reverent homage to predecessors (such artists as film director James Bidgood [*Pink Narcissus*, 1971] and DJ Larry Levan) and the theoretical underpinnings of their phonic pastiches. On the second night of the conference, Abigail Child screened two of her films: *Mayhem* (1987), which explores radical sexuality, innovative editing techniques, and what

she referred to as the "queerness of form," as well as her documentary, *On the Downlow* (2008), which portrays the everyday experiences of various African American men living on the down low in Cleveland, Ohio.<sup>3</sup>

The panels coalesced around a collectively felt and urgent need to rethink sex now, especially in terms of theorizing queerness and queer experience. They also brought to bear a burgeoning concept from the "affective turn" in theoretical scholarship, what J. Jack Halberstam calls "queer negativities." In his presentation "Unthinking Sex," Halberstam demanded the interrogation of the "wrong myth of the plucky queer as heroic fighter against repressive regimes, and remarkable emergence from repressive regimes." Halberstam asked, "Where might political resistance take a surprising form? How might we replace those comfortable terms?" His answer: In a feminist stance (e.g., Saidiya Hartman) or queer femininity (e.g., Lynda Hart) that reshapes politics in the name of an antiheroic disintegrating queer subject; in the disavowal of a meager choice between life and death (as in the children's film *Chicken Run* [2000]); in "vacuation, refusal, negation" and a new voice, a passive voice, a "radical masochism," or an unbecoming, passive sort of politics that provides an alternative to mastery and the desire to dominate.

Continuing the investigation of queerness and negativity, Lisa

Duggan's and José Esteban Muñoz's panel on "Hope and Hopelessness" proposed that "queerness" might be the answer, the strategy of escape (says Muñoz citing Daphne Brooks's notion of escapology), that "signal[s] a certain belonging through and with the negative." Duggan (who spoke against the privileged affects associated with hope and its narratives of normative happiness, as well as the revolutionary possibilities of "bitchy" queer hope) and Muñoz (who supported an educated kind of hope, one infused with concrete utopianness distinct from Ernst Bloch's concept of consciousness) ultimately agreed that hope/lessness named a dialectical relationship, a critical modality, a new mode of collectivity that moves "always sideways, never growing up."

Undoing epistemological frameworks for understanding sexuality involves a process of thinking and feeling a way out of mythic and unrealistic narratives of where we have been, where we are, and where we need to travel. Three panelists that employed critical modes of feeling backward through the archive were Michele Mitchell, Gayatri Gopinath, and Neville Hoad. In her talk, "A Unique Compoundness? A Tentative Sexuality and Intersectionality," Mitchell focused on the pathologization of intraracial sexual relations and what she calls "an archive of trauma collected and distributed by W. E. B. Du Bois and Carolyn Bond Day

for black nationalist purposes.” For Mitchell, as for Gopinath in her presentation, “Archive, Affect, and the Everyday: Queer Diasporic Re-Visions,” unpacking the complexities of identity and relationships to privilege and moving beyond categories demand an intersectional return to the archive. While Mitchell focused on the performative effects of the archive for passing forth knowledge about the gendered and sexualized African American body, Gopinath primarily drew on the feminist anthology *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, edited by Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (1981), the artwork of Allan de Souza and Chitra Ganesh, and especially Saidiya Hartman’s most recent book *Lose Your Mother: A Journey along the Atlantic Slave Route* (2007) to suggest the consistent failure of the archive to “raise the dead,” an allusion to Sharon Holland’s book *Raising the Dead: Readings of Death and (Black) Subjectivity* (2000). Like Hartman’s experience in the dungeons of the slave castles in Ghana, explained Gopinath, the abject material of destroyed bodies propels the imagination of lives outside of history. Through her rich collage of artistic, literary, and theoretical choices, Gopinath argued that the “anti-monumental, the nonvisual, non-tactile, the excessive and the abject” or the “debris of daily life” provide necessary time and space travels to get at the heart of gendered, raced,

and sexed histories and the re-creation of who and what is missing.

If queer negativity, like feeling backward through the queer archive, requires previously undreamt-of intersections (à la Matmos), then Neville Hoad’s talk, “Critical Native Informants: ‘Thinking Sex’ from South Africa: Then and Now,” mobilized his fantasy of how South African nationalists would put Rubin’s “Thinking Sex” to work today. Recognizing the epistemological nationalism of Rubin’s essay, Hoad’s presentation applied “Thinking Sex” to South Africa in 1984 and 2009. To do so, he referred to the famous graphics in Rubin’s essay (the charmed circle and the outer limits) and argued that, twenty-five years after, they still provide compelling representations for ordering sexual value biased toward the American and Western European contexts.

If Hoad’s presentation belongs to the vanguard of archival scholarship, it also belongs to the burgeoning field of transnational sexuality. As scholarship about queers of color has shown, “queer” can and does operate within a matrix of infrastructural and superstructural class and race identity-based politics that privileges queer whites and bourgeois class aspirations. Meanwhile, transnational sexuality scholars have discussed the historical intersections between queerness, colonialism, and globalization, questioning whether queer bodies and queer studies are too



attached to their liberal referent. As stated by David Eng, moderator of the panel "Globalizing Sex," "travel does strange things to [sex]." Namely, "sexuality becomes a developmental discourse" that attends to issues of sovereignty, decolonization, and immigration. Gayatri Gopinath, Lisa Rofel, Martin Manalansan, and Neville Hoad made up the "Globalizing Sex" panel, but other scholars, such as Carol Vance, Jasbir Puar, and Marisa Belausteguigoitia, also mobilized sexuality studies on a transnational stage.

At the conference, the concept of "trans" (as in transnational and transgender) emerged as an object and a method for studying various kinds of border crossings. In her opening comments to the panel "Rethinking Sex, Rethinking Gender," Susan Stryker called for ethical responsibility in transgendered studies, especially as it becomes institutionalized in the academy. Like Sharon Holland and J. Jack Halberstam, Stryker argued that transgender studies might provide a new frame of reference (much like "queer" did for feminism) that can problematize social categories of belonging and push beyond homonormativity and gender normativities that are based in "white Eurocentric projects for mapping and containing all kinds of being."

Continuing this critique of homonormativity and the consistent call at the conference to take on

and work through affective responses to nonnormative perspectives and experiences, Sharon Holland's presentation "Murder S/He Wrote" examined the very sobering topic of brutal violence against transgendered individuals, particularly the undermediated murder of black queers such as Sakia Gunn. Holland proposed expanding the politics of recognition to include those who fail to pass (or who can not or do not try) as monolithically raced (causes less anxiety) or monolithically gendered (causes extreme anxiety). Ruminating on whether human relations have become property relations (a human right to inhumanity), Holland argued that the violent targeting of transgendered individuals of color signals a "Jim Crow mentality applied to gender."

"Trans as a category," said Dean Spade during his talk, "Beyond Recognition," "is still incoherent, local and regional, unorganized and diffuse." Now is the time, he continued, to make demands beyond inclusion and recognition that attend to, on a theoretical level, the dangerous intersections of trans theory with liberal and neoliberal fantasies such as privacy (and figuring privacy as some kind of universal), antiexclusion and hate crime law, fantasies of visibility, and the freedom to work. In an argument reminiscent of Rubin's critique of feminism in the early 1980s, Spade called for the recognition of "uncomfortable

alliances between trans issues and police forces.” “If we’re in the middle of the institutionalization of trans studies,” asked Spade, “how can it be anticapitalist, antiracist, and anti-able-bodied?”

“Rethinking Sex” focused on analyzing the systems of late capitalist power that dangerously, and at times violently, suppress and control sexual bodies. The collectively felt anxiety about how sex, sexuality, and gender norms become institutionalized led to two additional conference themes, which I will encapsulate as privilege and neoliberalism and a new politics of care and sexual safeguarding. In “The Neo-New Deal and Why Obama Doesn’t Want Us to Think about Sex,” Janet Jakobsen diagnosed the current sociopolitical moment as a “neo-new deal” one run by a uniquely American form of Christian-secular alliances that regulate race, class, and gender through the mechanisms of sexuality. She predicted that “[w]e are headed into a new social formation, [but] it will not be socialism.” Instead, sex will remain a dividing and divisive issue for today’s leadership, more so than the Obama administration wants it to be. Drawing on Rubin’s earlier essay, “The Traffic in Women” (1975), Lisa Rofel’s presentation, “The Traffic in Money Boys,” also looked at cosmopolitan, desiring subjects, but in the context of the recent neoliberal transformation of China. Rofel positioned Cui Zi

En’s 2003 film *Feeding Boys*, with its biting queer commentary, as a critique of how bodies and desires become commodities in the neoliberal world. For Rofel, the film questions the entire apparatus of normalization in China and, like her ethnographic work, calls attention to the tension between sex work, desire, and capitalism. In “The Charmed Outer Limits of Queerness and Class,” Lisa Henderson also addressed the intersections of money, labor, desire, and the stabilities and instabilities of privilege, but as they are played out in mainstream (e.g., *Brokeback Mountain*, 2005) and queer (e.g., *By Hook or by Crook*, 2002) cinema. Her presentation explored how a politics of queer friendship and solidarity provides a social and political force integral to queer survival and argued for queer attachments that recall the intersection of class and sexuality in the formation of social networks.

A new politics of care and sexual safeguarding, as suggested by Steven Epstein, Carol Vance, Martin Manalansan, Robert McRuer, and Jasbir Puar, involves careful attention to the circulation of affects, racial/national/disabled stereotypes, and overly simplistic media narratives within global late-capitalist structures. In his presentation “The Great Indiscussable: HPV Vaccination and the Politics of Queer Biocitizenship,” Steven Epstein insisted that sociology of science should not only

focus on how knowledge gets produced, but also on how knowledge fails to get produced. Epstein argued that "nonknowledge production" about sexuality and health is related to issues of biocitizenship and the representation of the biomedically excluded, which in the case of Epstein's talk are men having sex with men who are at increased risk of rectal cancer caused by human papillomavirus (HPV). In "Zombies of Globalization: Women Trafficked into Reactionary Sexual Campaigns," Carol Vance critiqued grand narratives of global sex work, arguing that the media creates twenty-first-century sex panics by converting speaking subjects into "zombies," or undead brought back to life without speech or free will. Overwhelmingly ubiquitous and one-dimensional media representations about sex trafficking, said Vance, extend to nongovernment and government mobilizations and the "not totally misplaced moral concern" with the victimization of trafficked people; unfortunately, explained Vance, most of these reports ride on a "technique of melodrama" that extends the term *trafficking* to all forms and situations of sex work.

Martin Manalansan's talk, "Servicing the World: Flexible Filipinos and the Unsecured Life," proposed a theory of "affective labor" that incorporates "living, habitation, everyday life, love, escape, and, of course, hope." Concentrating on affective regimes of global care

workers from the Philippines, Manalansan argued against the essentialist notion that "Filipinos are a caring people," locating instead a violent gender universalism behind the stereotype: this gender universalism is constituted by heterosexual and reproductively active Filipina women whose undervalued labor in a globalized labor market is needed to uphold first-world domesticity.

Robert McRuer's presentation, "Disabling Sex: Notes for a Crip Theory of Sexuality," called for a reconceptualization of the categories of disability and sexuality, and proposed the need to queer the ways in which the state deploys sexuality. A *crip theory* of sexuality, McRuer argued, is wary of the ways in which the state discursively positions the care of sexual minorities, especially how disability is often made to function as a reliable sign of something else (e.g., degradation, eligibility, other people's generosity). Riffing on McRuer's theory of "disability culturalism," Puar argued in her presentation "Prognosis Time" that forms of barbarism and nationalism reinscribe norms of race, gender, class, and region that create undeniable privileges. She lamented the exclusion of affect, ambivalent or otherwise, from the notion of political change and proposed the need to work "towards a geopolitics of affective capability." Puar suggested that the "affective turn" in the humanities and social sciences

simultaneously demonstrates capital manipulations of affect that harness bodies and resistances to surveillance. For Puar, queer theory illuminates the need to expand the category of who is disabled, and queering disability in prognosis time involves expanding debility to include aging, the impacts of neocolonial intervention, postcolonial work on body capacity, immigration, poverty, and other global inequalities.

“Sex is not a thing,” Lauren Berlant wrote in *South Atlantic Quarterly’s* recent special issue, “After Sex? On Writing since Queer Theory”; “it’s a relation.” The final theme emerging from the conference was this concept of sex as relational. In “Father Knows Best,” Leo Bersani continued his exploration of new and unfamiliar relational configurations and asked whether there can be a nonsadistic form of knowing the other, as opposed to the violently affective approximation to knowing the desires of another in order to master those desires. While he admitted that psychoanalysis has misled us into believing that intimacy depends on knowledge of others’ personal psychology, he also postulated that disinterested pursuits of psychoanalytic knowledge, or what his book with Adam Phillips, *Intimacies* (2008), calls “impersonal narcissism,” are the key to understanding both the (divided) self and the other. Meanwhile, Jennifer Terry’s “Objectum-Sexuality” disrupted the assumption of sexual desire

between humans and focused instead on “object sexuality,” a putative newcomer on the landscape of nonnormative sexualities where humans develop relationships with objects, not as fetishes, but as amorous partners. In bringing “objectum-sexuality” to the attention of the conference participants, Terry began to theorize an as-of-yet unexplored sexual referent: a nonbinary orientation emerging from animism, or the belief that all things are animated.

“So many of us want so much from sex, and from the study of sex, so many of us want relief from rage,” began Lauren Berlant and Lee Edelman in their joint presentation “Sex Without Optimism.” What does it mean to be pro-sex without pan-optimism? To answer this question, Edelman and Berlant rhetorically performed a rethinking of sex for themselves and the conference audience. The following is a list of what they came up with:

Sex is:

- a willingness to experience corporeally the shock of discontinuity
- an encounter with non-knowledge (citing Steven Epstein)
- an undoing of the subject
- jouissance and libidinal unruliness
- a relief from not knowing how to live
- a threatening cause of precarious life

- not productive, not moving toward synthesis or overcoming difference
- a site for experiencing intensified encounter with accustomized ways of being
- not the negative force Western cultures make it out to be (if only it lived up to such a description!)
- something different from pleasure
- that which breaks us
- that which disorganizes assurances about what we want
- that which guarantees nothing but confusion
- not "you make me feel safe" (which only attempts to neutralize sex's risk)
- part of a comedy of misrecognition
- a tragic comedy of inflation and deflation, both affective and political
- the prospect of an encounter with the sublime
- an economy of danger
- an antianesthetic space
- not a mechanism of social cohesion or "armored happiness"
- no claim to the good, proper, substantial ground for redress
- a claim to self-definition through a resistance to the omnipresent imperative of pan-optimism

In many ways, Berlant and Edelman's presentation offered a poetic summation on the queerness of negative affects: namely, they critiqued the imperative of optimism as a kind of armor with which subjects fortify a "happiness regime" linked to the violence of a desire to overcome and the determination to master and dominate (as critiqued earlier, especially by Halberstam and Bersani). They added to this ongoing conversation an interrogation of archives of adorability: those "smiley-faced representations" that invoke the "privilege of bland normativity" and "anesthetize feeling, protecting against it."

Heather Love ended the conference with a discussion on pedagogy (with panelists Marisa Belaustegui and Deborah Britzman) on the principle that the transgenerational transmission of sexual knowledge requires the continuation of "storied conferences" such as "Rethinking Sex." The conference, then, became a two-day classroom, a space for the passing on of knowledge from senior scholars to junior and emerging scholars in the field of gender and sexuality studies. That is a type of inheritance and a kind of future, I would wager to say, that even Lee Edelman would support.

For two days in March 2009, we gathered to celebrate what Gayle Rubin taught us in this project of queer theoretical and cultural heritage, illuminating unknowing

and unthinking regulatory sexual regimes and the devaluation of particular bodies in a hierarchy determined by market value, neoliberal ideals, and the tenacity of age-old phobias, panics, and white supremacy. Rubin and the panelists at “Rethinking Sex” reminded us how much we forget and how much we are bound to forget as we move, not ahead, but through the “spirals” (to borrow Marisa Belausteguigoitia’s concept of queer movement) of sexual history. Like Lisa Duggan, the conference called us to model our work on the “angry, witty, creative, hilarious, alarming, analytically brilliant, and politically engaged” approach of “Thinking Sex.” Twenty-five years later, as Sharon Holland noted in her introduction to Rubin’s keynote, “we have just begun to talk about sex, really.”

—Northwestern University

## NOTES

I dedicate this review to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, who inspired all of us to rethink sex, sexuality, and gender in profoundly world-changing ways. She lives on through her passionate, innovative, and, as perhaps she might say about something she liked and admired, “textured” scholarship, as well as, of course, through the people who knew her well and loved her fiercely. This review is also for you.

1. 2009 seems to be a year for “Rethinking Sex” at more than one location and in more than one way. About two weeks before Penn’s conference, the University of California at Berkeley

held the two-day conference “Queer Bonds.”

2. Rubin also mentioned the 1986 conference “Feminism, Sexuality, and Power” (what she referred to as “Barnard II”) at Mount Holyoke College (South Hadley, Massachusetts) and “Act III” at the Australian National University in Canberra in 1993. The controversial 1997 conference “Revoluting Behaviors: The Challenges of Women’s Sexual Freedom” held at the State University of New York (SUNY) at New Paltz should also be included in the genealogy of “storied conferences.” Valerie Traub suggested that I also include the “Gay Shame” conference held at the University of Michigan in 2003. Also in 2003, Northwestern University organized the conference “The Ends of Sexuality: Pleasure and Danger in the New Millennium.”
3. The film had originally been contracted by the mainstream gay television channel, Logo, but was subsequently canceled after producers viewed Abigail Child’s footage and realized that the film would be an academic and respectful documentary and not, as they were hoping, an exposé on secret sex lives.