

INTRODUCTION

Heather Love

One of the first things I read in graduate school was Gayle Rubin's 1994 interview with Judith Butler, "Sexual Traffic."¹ It was an uncanny experience. In response to questions from Butler about the relation between feminism and lesbian and gay studies, Rubin reflects at length on her intellectual and political formation. She remembers reading "dirty lesbian novels" by "the Natalie Barney and Renée Vivien crowd" in the upstairs reading room at the Bibliothèque Nationale in the early 1970s for a thesis in lesbian literature; I read those same books in that same room in the summer of 1990, also for my senior thesis. Rubin also remembers how she came to rethink the politics of sex work and pornography in the late 1970s; I spent a lot of the early 1990s tracing the early history of the feminist sex wars. As for Rubin's discussion of sexology, the limits of psychoanalysis, the work of Michel Foucault, kinship, and the early history of "social construction" theory, these obsessions had not yet emerged for me, but they were about to. I spent the next decade or so working on these topics as part of an apprenticeship in queer studies. All that time, I thought I was just living my life, while I was in fact following in Rubin's footsteps—and, as I later came to realize, she had also traced out the path ahead.

As odd (and exhilarating) as I found this experience, my sense now is that it was not all that unusual. For those of us invested in activist histories, lesbian and gay archives, sexual politics, and queer feminisms, Rubin has a singular significance. She has been involved in the defining political events of the last few decades: working as a feminist, supporting sexual freedom and expression, arguing for the rights of sexual minorities, and documenting the costs of HIV/AIDS, urban zoning laws, and the rise of the New Right. At the same time, she has produced some of the most significant scholarship in feminism and gender and sexuality studies: her groundbreaking essays "The Traffic in Women: On the 'Political Economy' of Sex" (1975) and "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the

Politics of Sexuality” (1984) set the terms for feminist and queer scholarship.² Moving between scholarship and activism, and between academic and nonacademic settings, Rubin has been an exemplar for many of us. By integrating methods from anthropology, sociology, Marxism, psychoanalysis and sexology, deviance studies, history, and urban studies, she has laid broad foundations for our critical and activist interventions. In her current work, she challenges us to move beyond our particular investments and disciplinary training to confront pressing questions of belonging, inequality, and survival.

This special issue is devoted to the work of Gayle Rubin. It emerges out of a state-of-the-field conference in gender and sexuality studies held at the University of Pennsylvania, March 4–6, 2009, “Rethinking Sex,” which celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of Rubin’s essay “Thinking Sex.”³ The essay was originally published in *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, a collection edited by Carole S. Vance that emerged out of the Scholar and Feminist IX conference “Towards a Politics of Sexuality,” held at Barnard College on April 24, 1982. A key event of the feminist sex wars, the Barnard conference drew together feminist scholars, activists, and writers to explore the politics of sexuality; it also drew protests by Women Against Pornography and allied groups that resulted in the confiscation of fifteen hundred copies of the conference *Diary*, a seventy-two-page booklet that was to be distributed to participants (excerpts from the *Diary* are republished in the *GLQ* Archive in this issue). In taking Rubin’s essay as the occasion for “Rethinking Sex,” we sought to mark her influence on gender and sexuality studies and to consider the future directions for the field that her work and her career suggest.⁴ We also wanted to emphasize an alternate genealogy for queer studies, one that dates not to the annus mirabilis of 1990 (the year that Butler published *Gender Trouble*, David Halperin published *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick published *Epistemology of the Closet*, and Teresa de Lauretis coined the term *queer theory*) but to feminist histories of the 1970s and 1980s. While my graduate training had focused on a philosophical and literary lineage for the field, my own experience, intuitions, and desultory reading suggested other affiliations and genealogies. Finally, in response to scholarly narratives about the decline of queer studies, we wanted to demonstrate the vitality and range of interdisciplinary inquiry in gender and sexuality studies in the present.

In my invitation to Rubin, I asked her to reflect on the original contexts of “Thinking Sex” and on the changes—both intellectual and political—that have taken place in the decades since it was published. The essay has been canonized—most notably in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader* (1993)—as a point of origin

for sexuality studies, but it has often been read without significant attention to its original context.⁵ By organizing a general state-of-the-field conference around this essay, I wanted to test my hypothesis that the field as it is currently constituted owes an unacknowledged debt to feminism, and particularly to the debates about porn, S/M, and butch/femme in the late 1970s and early 1980s.⁶ Rubin's presentation, titled "Blood under the Bridge: Reflections on 'Thinking Sex,'" drew an audience of nearly eight hundred people on the conference's opening night. This turnout, as well as the palpable excitement in the room during the next two days, offered ample testimony to the liveliness of the field of sexuality studies as well as to a widespread investment in links between the sex wars and queer theory and politics. Rubin's essay, a version of which is published here, traces some of these links by mapping the activist and scholarly milieu out of which "Thinking Sex" emerged. In addition to "Blood under the Bridge," this issue also includes short pieces that draw connections between Rubin's work (with a focus on "Thinking Sex") and live questions in contemporary queer studies. In addition, Regina Kunzel provides an account of the conference in her review, "Queer Studies in Queer Times."⁷

Unpacking the complex relations between Rubin's work and sexuality studies is the task of this special issue. There is no doubt that "Thinking Sex" has had a shaping influence on the field. For the past few decades, scholars have relied on Rubin's clarifying analysis of sexuality as a "vector of oppression," to be understood as related to but distinct from gender hierarchy.⁸ Describing the regulation of sexuality through moral panics, antisex ideologies, and the scapegoating of sexual minorities and people with AIDS, Rubin called for developing "an autonomous theory and politics specific to sexuality" (309). The analytic separation that Rubin makes in the essay between gender and sexuality, as well as her insistence that resources are allocated according to a hierarchy of sexual behavior and identity, cleared space for the emergence of a conceptually rich, historically informed, and politically forceful field of inquiry.

If "Thinking Sex" seemed in many ways a clear choice as the basis for our conference, it proves remarkably difficult to pin the essay down to the year 1984. For one thing, since the collection *Pleasure and Danger* points back to the events of the Barnard conference, 1982 turns out to be an equally if not more significant date for the essay. Also, in her accounts of the germination of the essay, Rubin has consistently pointed to a broader intellectual and political context that put the roots of the essay several years further back.⁹ In "Blood under the Bridge," Rubin describes the "dense intellectual and social network" in which the central insights of the original essay emerged.¹⁰ Rubin has also insisted across her career on the

long history of sexuality studies. That genealogy, as she has repeatedly described it, includes not only lesbian and feminist work of the 1970s but also gay history, sociology, and anthropology as well as work in deviance studies, Chicago School sociology, midcentury urban studies, and sexology.¹¹ If it is hard to fix “Thinking Sex” in 1984 because its historical roots keep showing, it can also be hard to fix it there because the essay tends to slip forward into the future. So much of the essay’s influence depends on its republication. The most influential of these republications is its appearance as the lead essay in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader* (edited by Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin). While this placement of “Thinking Sex” has secured the essay a place in the canon of lesbian, gay, and queer studies, it has also been included in anthologies in several fields.¹² The essay’s influence is also an effect of its prominence in syllabi in gender studies courses as well as in courses in anthropology, sociology, and urban studies. Rubin’s essay begins, “The time has come to think about sex.” These well-known opening words point both to the essay’s timeliness — its intervention in the historical moment of the sex wars — as well as to its potential reanimation across many times.

The short essays that make up this special issue speak to the significance of Rubin’s legacy and her influence across several disciplines. These pieces consider a range of topics, including Rubin’s history in sex radical cultures (Susan Stryker); the significance of her work as a model of social scientific method (Steven Epstein); the relation between “Thinking Sex” and black feminism in the context of the original event of the Barnard conference (Sharon Holland); the ethics of sexual variance in different historical moments (Joanne Meyerowitz); sex radicalism and crip sexuality (Robert McRuer); the significance of “Thinking Sex” as a conceptual model in different national contexts (Neville Hoad); social class and sexual subcultures (Lisa Henderson); Rubin as a theorist of heterosexuality and the significance of “Thinking Sex” to current debates on sex trafficking (Vance); and the history of Rubin’s “passionate engagements” and the “affective surround” of the sex wars (Lisa Duggan). In adding to these powerful accounts of her work and her presence across the last several decades, I want to mention the points that I find most salient and energizing in “Thinking Sex” — the reasons I thought this essay made sense as the basis for a state-of-the-field conference in contemporary gender and sexuality studies. This list is not exhaustive but emphasizes what I see as the key lessons for contemporary scholars and activists, insights we have yet to absorb.

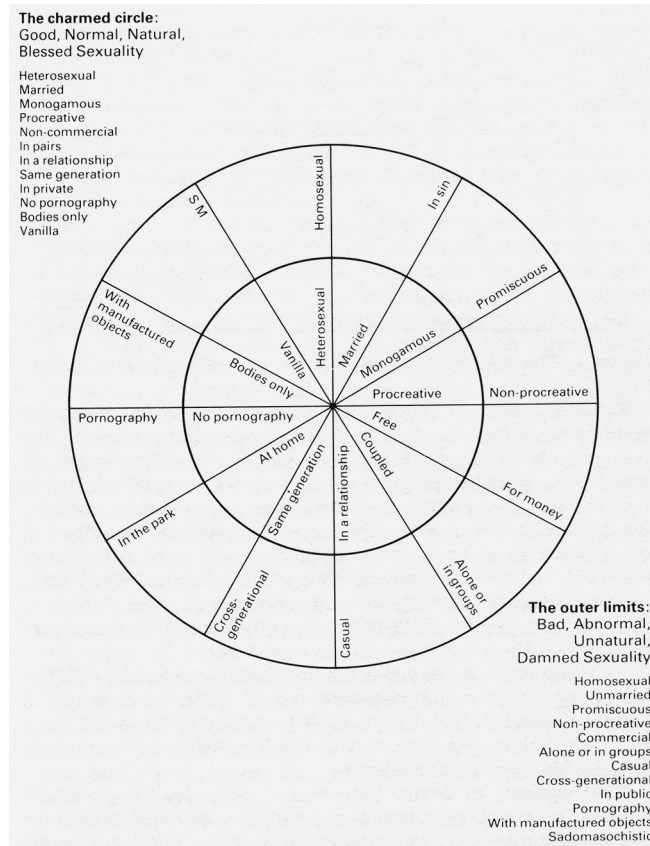
Sex-Radical Feminism

In the long run, feminism's critique of gender hierarchy must be incorporated into a radical theory of sex, and the critique of sexual oppression should enrich feminism. In the last section of "Thinking Sex" ("The Limits of Feminism"), Rubin suggests that feminism, despite its strength as a tool for analyzing gender, may not be the best tool for analyzing sexual practices and cultures. Reversing her emphasis on the "sex-gender system" in "The Traffic in Women," Rubin called for an analytic separation between sexuality and gender. Rubin's critique of feminism has been overstated and taken out of context. As Rubin points out in conversation with Butler, "Thinking Sex" "assumed a largely feminist readership" (97). The essay was not meant as a dismissal of feminism; it was a feminist argument, meant as a corrective to a reading of sexuality solely through the lens of gender and through a particularly rigid and literal understanding of gender hierarchies. Still, if we understand "Thinking Sex" as an immanent critique, we must also recognize that in its call for "an autonomous theory and politics specific to sexuality," it points the way toward the emergence of lesbian, gay, and queer studies as a field separate from feminism. In this sense, the essay marks a parting of the ways between feminism and sexuality studies but at the same time marks a connection between these fields; in particular, it binds sexuality studies to sex-radical feminism.¹³ Although this genealogy of queer studies—out of lesbian S/M, butch/femme, and sex-work activism—is often forgotten, the sex-radical position staked out by feminists in the late 1970s and early 1980s was crucial to this history. The questioning of the subject of woman, the interrogation of the politics of desire, and the emphasis on complex intersections between sexism and homophobia were all key feminist topics that live on in the methods and preoccupations of sexuality studies. Insisting on these connections reminds us of the continuing need to develop a radical politics of sexuality that is attentive to gender hierarchy and to the social life of gender.

The Sexual Rabble

As a basis for sexual politics and scholarship, "Thinking Sex" offers a broad and inclusive vision of a coalitional politics of sexual outsiders. Although "Thinking Sex" considers the history of homosexuality and the politics of homophobia, Rubin's focus is on a much wider range of sexual minorities, what she calls the "sexual rabble" who occupy the "outer limits" of the graphic renderings of "the sex hierarchy" (see figs. 1 and 2). This group, exiled from "the charmed circle"

Figure 1. The sex hierarchy: the charmed circle vs the outer limits



of “normal” and “natural” sexuality, includes not only homosexuals but also sex workers, sadomasochists, fetishists, and those who engage in cross-generational intimacy or public sex. This coalitional model of sexual outsiders is, as Rubin notes in “Blood under the Bridge,” protoqueer. She mentions that this antinormative rather than identitarian basis for sexual politics is one of the things about “Thinking Sex” that she is proudest of. At a moment when the antinormative coalitions once imagined under the sign *queer* (and in earlier versions of lesbian and gay studies) are increasingly vulnerable, it would be worth remembering that Rubin’s original call for a radical politics of sexuality that emphasized links among marginal subjects and populations. While *queer* was supposed to name this coalition of the marginal, it has not always lived up to this potential. In her 1997 essay “Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens,” Cathy J. Cohen describes how *queer* has been used as another name for lesbian and gay; in the unlikely coalition of her title, Cohen suggests how *queer* might function across categories of sexual orientation to name the sexual marginality of poor people and people of color.¹⁴ Given the widespread commodification of the term, as well as its history of uptake

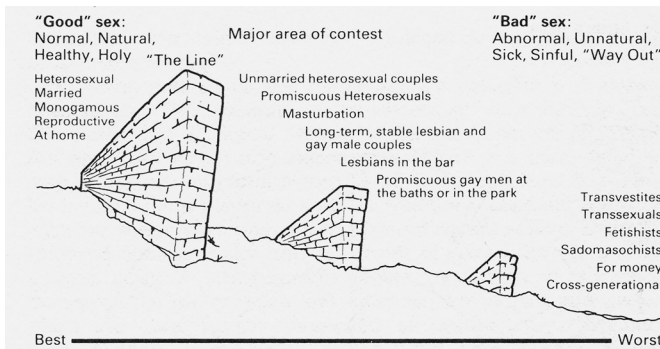


Figure 2. The sex hierarchy: the struggle over where to draw the line

in sexuality studies, it is not clear if *queer* can continue to do this work. Nonetheless, Rubin's essay stands as a crucial articulation of this possibility. Although the implementation of this model cannot be seamless—see, for instance, Hoad's discussion in this volume of the complexities of thinking Rubin's model in the South African context; Meyerowitz's account of the limits of both feminism and sexuality studies in addressing the range of historical experience, including what we might now call transgender experience; or Holland's discussion of the force of the black body as example and analogy in "Thinking Sex"—the focus on hierarchy and the real social effects of marginalization make this a promising model for a renewed politics of coalition.

Sexual Repression Is Real

"It is important to hold repressive sexual practices in focus" (277). In a critique of the reception of Foucault in "Thinking Sex," Rubin discusses a danger in overlooking the very real ways in which sexuality and marginal sexual communities are policed. She writes, "Because of his emphasis on the ways that sexuality is produced, Foucault has been vulnerable to interpretations that deny or minimize the reality of sexual repression in the more political sense" (277). Rubin strikes an exemplary balance in the essay between a Foucauldian account of the generativity of sexuality as discourse and an account of sexual stigma, legal controls on sexuality, and the granting of economic and social privilege to sexually normative subjects. Since Foucault's influence in sexuality studies has grown exponentially since the original version of this essay was published, Rubin's reminder about the ongoing repression of sexuality is relevant today. Throughout the essay, Rubin details how sexuality—on its own and in conjunction with other social factors—works as a vector of oppression; sexual minorities pay real costs for their position in society.

Rubin's attention to the specificity of sexual oppression—and its effects on all sexual minorities—is also important to recall at a time when critiques of the mainstream gay community can take attention away from the ongoing significance of “repressive practices”—particularly homophobia. In her account of the sex hierarchy, Rubin anticipates our current situation, suggesting that “long-term, stable lesbian and gay male couples” are moving up the hierarchy; they are less stigmatized and are beginning to be “accorded moral complexity” in a way that other sexual minorities are not (282). Still, she insists on the costs of sexual marginality even for these more privileged figures. She writes, “The system of sexual oppression cuts across other modes of social inequality, sorting out individuals and groups according to its own intrinsic dynamics. It is not reducible to, or understandable in terms of, class, race, ethnicity, or gender. Wealth, white skin, male gender, and ethnic privileges can mitigate the effects of sexual stratification. A rich, white male pervert will generally be less affected than a poor, black, female pervert. But even the most privileged are not immune to sexual oppression” (293). While ongoing critiques of the circulation of racial, economic, gender, and national privilege in gay and lesbian communities are crucial, Rubin's words act as an important reminder that queer studies today should continue to hold the repression of sexuality in focus. As she writes, “A radical theory of sex must identify, describe, explain, and denounce erotic injustice and sexual oppression” (275); Rubin reminds us of the urgency of denouncing sexual oppression, no matter who is the target of this oppression.

Benign Sexual Variation

Throughout her career, Rubin has insisted on the value of empirical research. In her interview with Butler, in particular, Rubin emphasizes the lack of respect for empirical work in the academy, particularly in comparison with work that is considered theoretical, or conceptually rich. She argues that “empirical research and descriptive work are often treated as some kind of low-status, even stigmatized, activity. . . . There is a disturbing trend to treat with condescension or contempt any work that bothers to wrestle with data” (91–92). Rubin offers a critique of a knee-jerk idealism, suggesting the difficulty and the rewards of thoughtful and rigorous empirical research. This emphasis on the importance of data takes on a particular urgency in the context of sexuality studies; Rubin argues that theories of sexual perversion (she focuses in particular on theories of sadomasochism) completely disregard the existence and experience of individuals and communities who engage in such practices or identify themselves with them. In his contribution to this volume, Epstein insists on the significance of

Rubin's anthropological training and emphasizes the importance of fieldwork and ethnography to her sense of sexual politics and ethics.

The ethical significance of the description of existing practices — instead of theory or prescription about what best practices might be — surfaces in “Thinking Sex” in Rubin's discussion of sexology. While a lot of scholarly writing about sexology has tended to focus on the pathologizing force of this body of work, Rubin emphasizes its descriptive richness. Approvingly referring to Havelock Ellis's *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* as “resplendent with detail,” Rubin argues that “sexology and sex research provide . . . a welcome posture of calm, and a well developed ability to treat sexual variety as something that exists rather than as something to be exterminated” (284). It was this emphasis on description that allowed Rubin to keep her cool and keep thinking — as Duggan argues — during the height of the conflicts in feminism. It also allowed her, for instance in the prescient and even-handed essay “Of Catamites and Kings,” to anticipate and defuse other conflicts, including the border war between butches and female-to-male transsexuals.¹⁵ As an ethical injunction forged in the context of the sex wars and an attempted clean sweep of “antifeminist” sex practices and gender embodiments, Rubin's call for description, data collection, and nonjudgmental taxonomy is something that we should keep in mind. She has given us a model of how to think in the middle of a crisis and how to avoid solving conceptual problems by militating against other people's existence.

A Happy Foot Soldier in the Fight Against Forgetting

In “Blood under the Bridge” Rubin borrows the phrase “the fight against forgetting” from Jonathan Ned Katz to talk about the importance of remembering and crediting the scholars and activists who came before us. Rubin has been fighting this battle for a long time, and her work of archiving and tracing genealogies has been as crucial as her conceptual, empirical, and historical research. Rubin's investment in this fight is legible in “Thinking Sex” — in her careful and generous list of acknowledgments, in her discussion of the contributions of late-nineteenth- and twentieth-century sexology, and in her crediting of “social construction theory” not only to Foucault but also to Allan Bérubé, John D'Emilio, Jeffrey Weeks, and Judith Walkowitz. Since the publication of “Thinking Sex,” Rubin has worked even harder to reconstruct forgotten lineages for sexuality studies, including tracing the importance of figures like Mary McIntosh, Kenneth Plummer, and John H. Gagnon and William Simon.¹⁶ “Blood under the Bridge” continues and extends this project of reconstruction and remembering.

In the context of Rubin's lifelong habit of “paying it backward,” my attempt

to identify “Thinking Sex” as a point of origin for sexuality studies did not fly at the conference. In the welcome statement published in the conference program, I wrote that “Thinking Sex” might “be said to have inaugurated the contemporary field of sexuality studies,” and I reiterated this claim in my opening comments before Rubin’s keynote. It was not the kind of thing that Rubin could allow. She has insisted that the history of the discipline is marked by amnesia and neglect; by emphasizing this point, she demonstrates not only her commitment to the archive but also her remarkable intellectual humility. So while, out of respect, I must withdraw this earlier statement, it still seems to me that “Thinking Sex” must be understood as a point of articulation for the emergence of sexuality studies. That is to say, the conceptual elegance and forcefulness of Rubin’s call for a distinct focus on sexuality crystallized an intellectual and political moment, and so made sexuality studies in the form that we recognize it possible. “Thinking Sex” reminds us to keep pushing backward, to join in the fight against forgetting, and to remember the many shoulders on which we — all of us — now stand.

This last point brings me to a final reason why it is important to revisit “Thinking Sex” now. It is clear from reading the essays and testimonials in this volume how important Gayle Rubin is as a model of intellectual, scholarly, and activist practice for so many of us in the field. With her searching curiosity, political passion, and intellectual humility and generosity, Rubin exemplifies the kind of engaged scholar many of us would like to be. Across the last several decades of her career, Rubin has moved between activist and academic contexts, writing for academic journals as well as community magazines and newsletters; in these contexts, she has put herself on the line again and again. Rubin has shown us how to honor commitments both to the accumulated wisdom and ethical practice of scholarship and to the experience of oppressed and outcast people. Thinking about Rubin’s personal example challenges us to reflect on our scholarly practice — about how we honor our debts to the past and to the various communities we answer to.

In my opening comments on the night of Rubin’s talk, I discussed my regret over not having been at the Barnard conference (I was eleven at the time, living in Kentucky). I was excited about being in the presence of both Gayle Rubin and Carole Vance, and, somewhat carried away by the moment, I described my feelings with a term I had recently learned from Ann Cvetkovich: F.O.M.S., or Fear of Missing Something. When Rubin took the stage, she expressed surprise at my fascination and said she wished there were a term that could express her feelings about that time — maybe F.O.H.B.T., or Fear of Having Been There. Encountering each other — with some disbelief on both sides, I think — across this divide

made me realize that there is a reason why that period is called the sex wars. In response to my request to write about “Thinking Sex,” Rubin had written an essay called “*Blood* under the Bridge.” The violence of the moment, transformed into a kind of retrospective glamour in my eyes, reemerged as violence. Part of what “Rethinking Sex” taught me was to recognize the pain and losses of this period, which I had encountered to that point mainly through the mode of hero worship, archival fetishism, and lesbian, feminist, and queer nostalgia. I was already used to thinking of my own erotic and gender dispositions — particularly my identification with butch/femme — as a way to embody histories of stigma, violence, and trauma.¹⁷ But I tended to think of the history that I had incorporated as farther in the past — in 1950s bars, for instance — whereas the sex wars were for me a period of glory and revolt, a proximate and enabling past. But like other kinds of wars, sex wars leave wounds that never completely heal.

It may be the case that the traumatic temporality of the sex wars keeps that time alive for younger generations of feminists and queers. There is no doubt, though, that many people took a lot of risks and incurred a lot of damage — to their careers, their reputations, and their sense of personal safety — in building the contemporary field of gender and sexuality studies. In honoring “Thinking Sex” and the contributions of Rubin and others during the sex wars, we thank them for the work they did in building the world we now live in. This world is a lot different from and better than any world I could have imagined when I was growing up, or even when I was reading those dirty lesbian novels in Paris or poring over records of the Barnard conference in the library. I look to Rubin’s writing to imagine what this world might look like ten, twenty, thirty years from now. In this sense, the first words of “Thinking Sex” still sound as urgent to me as ever: “The time has come to think about sex.” The time has come; it is coming; it will come again.

Notes

1. Gayle Rubin and Judith Butler, “Interview: Sexual Traffic,” *differences* 6, nos. 2–3 (1994): 83.
2. Gayle Rubin, “Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality,” in *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, ed. Carole S. Vance (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), 267–319 and Rubin, “The Traffic in Women: On the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex,” in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 157–210.
3. Many people contributed to planning, organizing, and realizing “Rethinking Sex.” I would like to thank members of the organizing committee: Erin Cross, Demie Kurz,

Shannon Lundeen, Luz Marin, Melanie Micir, Wally Pansing, Poulomi Saha, and Bob Schoenberg. We also had a great deal of support from across the University of Pennsylvania, especially from the Office of the Provost; the School of Arts and Sciences; the Alice Paul Center for Research on Women, Gender, and Sexuality; the Women's Studies Program; the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Center; and the English Department. I would also like to thank the Mellon Foundation and Dr. William J. Zachs and the Zachs-Adam Family Fund for their generous funding of the conference. A full list of sponsors (as well as conference speakers and the program) can be found at www.sas.upenn.edu/wstudies/rethinkingsex/.

4. Although "Rethinking Sex" was the first conference that I know of to commemorate "Thinking Sex," it is not the first conference to celebrate the anniversary of one of Rubin's essays. In 2005 the University of Michigan Institute for Research on Women and Gender organized a conference called "The Traffic in Women: Thirty Years Later."
5. Gayle S. Rubin, "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality," in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin (New York: Routledge, 1993): 3–44. By "original context," I mean both the specific publication context of *Pleasure and Danger* as well as the general context of debates in feminism in the late 1970s and early 1980s.
6. Although the historical links between feminism and queer studies remain underexplored, several critics have attempted to map the connections. Annamarie Jagose provides a helpful account that focuses on controversies over the reception of "Thinking Sex" in her essay "Feminism's Queer Theory": "Before there was queer theory—that is, before queer theory became the most recognizable name for anti-identitarian, anti-normative critique—feminist scholarship had already initiated a radically anti-foundationalist interrogation of the category of woman" ("Feminism's Queer Theory," *Feminism and Psychology* 19, no. 2: 160). See also Jagose, *Queer Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), esp. chaps. 5, 6, 7; Lisa Duggan and Nan D. Hunter, *Sex Wars: Sexual Dissent and Political Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1995), especially the introduction, where Duggan discusses queer's "girl-history" (14); and Heather Love, "Feminist Criticism and Queer Theory," in *A History of Feminist Literary Criticism*, ed. Gill Plain and Susan Sellers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 301–21.
7. This special issue represents only a fraction of the work presented at the conference. Over three days, thirty invited speakers and several local scholars addressed such topics as neoliberalism and sexual politics; transgender lives; queer diasporas; health and the 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. Rather than

try to represent everything that happened at the conference—as if such a thing were possible—this issue focuses on Rubin’s scholarship, her activism, and her legacy as a way to map out an interdisciplinary, empirical, and feminist genealogy for queer studies.

8. Rubin, “Thinking Sex,” 293.
9. See Rubin’s account of the genesis of the essay in “Sexual Traffic”: “‘Thinking Sex’ had its roots back in 1977–78,” (71).
10. “Blood under the Bridge,” 19.
11. For an account of the importance of social science in this genealogy, see Gayle Rubin, “Studying Sexual Subcultures: Excavating the Ethnography of Gay Communities in Urban North America,” in *Out in Theory: The Emergence of Lesbian and Gay Anthropology*, ed. Ellen Lewin and William L. Leap (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 17–68.
12. A list of the essay’s multiple publications would include Vance, *Pleasure and Danger* (1984), Abelow et al., *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader* (1993), *American Feminist Thought At Century’s End: A Reader*, ed. Linda S. Kauffman (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1993); *Social Perspectives in Lesbian and Gay Studies: A Reader*, ed. Peter M. Nardi and Beth E. Schneider (London: Routledge, 1998); *Sexualities: Critical Concepts in Sociology*, ed. Ken Plummer (London: Routledge, 2002); and *Queer Cultures*, ed. Deborah Carlin, assoc. ed. Jennifer DiGrazia (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2004). The essay has also been widely excerpted and translated. In recognition of the essay’s broad influence, we have decided to leave an inconsistency in the citations in this volume; different essays cite different publications that include “Thinking Sex,” and these citations leave a trace of the different ways that readers encounter Rubin’s work.
13. The significance of Rubin’s essay as a point of origin for sexuality studies—and as a departure from feminism—has been the subject of debate among several recent scholars. Judith Butler draws attention to the imbrication of gender and sexuality in “Thinking Sex” but that the essay has been instrumentalized as an origin point for a form of “lesbian and gay studies” that excludes gender from its purview. Butler, “Against Proper Objects,” *differences* 6, nos. 2–3 (Summer 1994): 1–26. For a significant counterargument, as well as an insightful account of recent debates, see Jagose’s “Feminism’s Queer Theory” (esp. 166–68), in which she argues persuasively that the form of lesbian and gay studies circulating in the early 1990s (and visible in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*) is more expansive and inclusive than Butler allows.
14. Cathy J. Cohen, “Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?” *GLQ* 3 (1997): 437–65.
15. Gayle Rubin, “Of Catamites and Kings: Reflections on Butch, Gender, and Boundaries,” in *The Persistent Desire: A Femme-Butch Reader*, ed. Joan Nestle (Boston: Alyson, 1992), 466–82.

16. For other accounts of Rubin's characteristic generosity and long memory, see the contributions by Stryker, Henderson, and Duggan in this volume.
17. For a reading of butch/femme in relation to histories of violence—as well as a redefinition of trauma in everyday feminist and queer contexts—see Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).