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Reconceiving Surrogacy

By Alison Bailey

In the context of her observations about science and race, Sandra Harding once observed that “the Baby M case could be the forerunner of the use of poor and third world women’s wombs to produce children for economically advantaged European American couples” (1991, 203). Today, Harding’s predictions are practically a reality. Commercial gestational surrogacy is quickly becoming a transnational phenomenon. Couples from the U.S., South Africa, and Europe travel to fertility clinics in India, Guatemala, Russia, and the Ukraine, where services are significantly less expensive. Women in the U.S are also becoming surrogate mothers for couples from countries where surrogacy is either strictly regulated or banned.

My discussion focuses on India, where surrogacy has become an almost \$445 million a year business, and which is well positioned to lead the world in making commercial gestational surrogacy a viable industry. There are no laws regulating surrogacy in India, although the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has established guidelines. Policies and contracts vary from clinic to clinic, and facilities range from corporate five-star hospitals to well-known smaller clinics like the Akanksha Fertility Clinic in Anand, Gujarat.

There is no standard fee for surrogacy in India. The media describe surrogacy as a bargain for Westerners and the opportunity of a lifetime for poor Indian women.

In the U.S. the entire process typically costs between \$40,000 and \$80,000, with surrogate mothers receiving between \$15,000 and \$25,000 of this sum. In India the costs are significantly less. At one clinic, the medical procedures, payment to the surrogate, airline tickets, and hotel stays for two trips to India run about \$25,000, but prices can go as low as \$12,000, with women paid between \$2,000 and \$10,000. Disparities are the result of market forces and gender- and class-based cultural prejudices. As one clinician reluctantly admits, “Brahmans get paid more than so-called ‘untouchables’ or lower castes. A fair-skinned, educated middle-class Brahman who speaks English will fetch that much more” (Subramanian, 9).

Although payment for surrogacy services is low by Western standards, many Indian women describe surrogacy as the opportunity of a lifetime. Most earn the equivalent of between three and fifteen years pay in nine months—enough to turn around many families’ fortunes. What are feminists to think about this?

Since the 1986 Baby M Case, feminist discussions of commercial gestational surrogacy have followed closely the theoretical lines drawn by Western feminist theory, and have used women’s surrogate experiences in the global North as the tacit reference point. Discussions raise standard concerns about the value of women’s labor, the commodification of motherhood, economic coercion, baby selling, and reproductive autonomy. However, outsourcing surrogacy ought not to be met with a parallel exportation of Western feminist (*cont’d*)

Inside This Issue

- 1-4 Feature Articles
- 5-7 Student News
- 7 Faculty News
- 8 Graduates and New Students

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scholarship and policy. U.S. feminists cannot not simply extend our post-Baby M arguments to non-Western cases and think that we have captured fully the issues central to the lives of surrogates in the global South.

Surrogacy must be understood contextually. In the case of India, we need think about surrogacy work not as a moral tug o' war between those who see surrogacy as a choice and those who think of it as exploitation. Rather, we need to understand surrogacy in the context of women's health.

According to the Center for Reproductive Rights, India has the highest maternal mortality rate in the world. In some Indian cultures, girls and women are fed last and least, and these social practices leave 85% of pregnant women anemic and more susceptible to disease. They also face additional risks of falling into a cycle of multiple pregnancies in their efforts to have children that survive.

Child marriage is still widely practiced in many parts of India, and 50% of all girls are given away in marriage before they are 18. Adolescent pregnancies carry greater risks, and in the absence of medical care these risks are elevated. High maternal mortality rates, as well as rates of maternal injury, infection, and disabilities during pregnancy, delivery, and after, correlate strongly with lack of access to family planning options and to skilled birthing assistance.

So, the real question here is not about whether surrogacy is immoral, or whether it ought to be legal. A better question to ask is: Should surrogacy be promoted in a country with a poor record on women's health? Women working as surrogates make good money and receive housing, nutritious food, and free medical care. In many cases this means that such basic human rights are extended to women when they gestate the children of the wealthy, but not when they gestate their own children. Since many surrogate web sites are aimed at white Western infertile heterosexual couples, we might argue that more value is given to Indian surrogates when they give birth to white children than when they do to their own brown babies. Contradictions are a strong feature of injustice: It is here where our conversations must begin.

Center for Reproductive Rights. 2008. *Maternal Mortality in India: Using International and Constitutional Law to Promote Accountability and Change*. New York: Center for Reproductive Rights.

Harding, Sandra. 1991. *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?: Thinking from Women's Lives*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, p. 203.

Subramanian, Sarmishta. 2007. "Wombs for rent: Is paying the poor to have children wrong when both sides reap such benefits?" *Maclean's* July 2.

Consumer Capitalism and the Body

By Becca Chase



On April 1-3, The Women's and Gender Studies (WGS) Program hosted Susan Bordo, author of *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* and Professor of English and Gender and Women's Studies at the University of Kentucky.

She gave two lectures: "Anne Boleyn: Lessons for Modern Culture," for the Visual Culture Symposium; and "Beyond Eating Disorders: Why We Need to Rethink Everything We Thought We Knew," the keynote address for the WGS Symposium. Bordo also visited Dr. Tom Gerschick's "Sociology of the Body" class and spoke to a special seminar of graduate students arranged by Drs. Ann Haugo and Rebecca Saunders.

Illustrating her symposium lecture with dozens of images from popular culture and advertising, Bordo argued that consumer capitalism is much to blame for the disordered eating and distorted body images that have affected girls, women, and to a lesser extent boys and men. To sell products, she claims, media have successfully promoted a culture of indulgence and obsession. In fact, she showed many images of ads that incorporate the words "indulge" or "indulgence" in the ad copy, especially in ads for fat- and carbohydrate-rich foods; and ads for perfume with names like "Urge" and "Obsession."

A woman, joyously swinging a shopping bag with the word "shopaholic" printed on the side, breezes out of a department store. A ten-year-old girl, sporting her own shopping bag and dressed in designer fashions and make-up, strikes a decidedly adult sexual pose. Through a series of such juxtapositions, Bordo demonstrated how advertisers market adult fashion and sexuality to girls and women, seducing them into "needing" designer fashions and designer bodies.

Bordo acknowledges that disordered eating can be a response to sexual abuse and other traumas. The main trajectory of her talk, however, was to analyze (*cont'd*)

problems related to body image in the context of consumer capitalism. No matter how much we diet, exercise, and consume, we can never attain the body that the media train us to desire. Advertising keeps us off balance, dissatisfied. On the one hand we are surrounded by rich and delicious foods that, when eaten, cause us to crave even more. On the other hand, we are bombarded with images of skinny models and celebrities. No wonder some of us struggle with bulimia, indulging our cravings by bingeing, then purging and/or working out for hours every day to keep off the weight. No wonder others of us struggle with anorexia, convinced that if we eat even normally we will succumb to the temptations all around us and lose control.

In her opinion, contemporary consumerism—nonessential spending on junk food, apparel, and luxury items—mirrors the economic excesses in the world of finance; and she suggests that it is time to reset our attitudes about the relationship between our bodies and our consumer habits. However, Bordo realizes how difficult that is. It is hard to resist when faced with an ad depicting a Dove bar with dark chocolate delectably melting as it is poured over vanilla ice cream, the stick pointing enticingly toward the viewer. The constant exposure to marketing every day and everywhere makes us vulnerable.

To leave us with hope, however, Bordo introduced us to her daughter, Cassie, a sturdy 11-year-old girl who has so far resisted marketing and peer pressure. With her adolescence on the horizon, we wish Cassie the best!

Dr. Bordo's visit was co-sponsored by the Women's and Gender Studies Program; the Office of the Provost; the College of Arts and Sciences; the English, History, Philosophy, and Sociology and Anthropology Departments; MECCPAC: A Dean of Students Diversity Initiative; and the Illinois State University Harold K. Sage Trust.



Audience members at the 14th Annual Women's and Gender Studies Symposium

Drew Anastasia on Changing Voice

By Jenna Goldsmith

On Monday, March 16, Illinois State University welcomed Mr. Drew Anastasia, ISU alum and University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee doctoral student



Drew Anastasia and Paula Ressler

in Rhetoric and Composition. After visiting several classes to talk to students about his experience transitioning from female to male, Anastasia gave his talk, entitled “Confessions of a Karaoke Junkie: How I Came to Narrate My Gender Transition by Losing My Voice,” to an enthusiastic audience of FLAME, Pride, and other ISU students and faculty members.

Anastasia began his transition from female to male in 2005. As a woman, Angie (Drew's birth name) identified with the lesbian separatist movement. However, his identity as a female, situated within a gendered female body, became increasingly more frustrating and problematic to him. In March of 2005, he took the name Drew; he began testosterone injections in January 2006. From January to August of that year, when he had top surgery, Drew's identity gradually shifted from “genderqueer” to “trans.”

As a former member of the ISU Women's Choir and former member of the UWM Men's Choir, Anastasia's research interests are closely tied to identity as it relates to voice and the communities that form around the human voice. Over the course of his transition, Anastasia recorded his voice as it deepened. During his lecture he showed a video in which he juxtaposed his voice at various stages of transition, from Angie's adult feminine voice up to the deep masculine voice Drew possesses now, with home video clips coinciding with the transition.

On a broader scale, Anastasia struggles with his role as activist. “If I want to be trans, I've got to work for it,” Anastasia said. His relationships with lesbian separatists have been jeopardized, and his allies in the women's movement have challenged his position as a feminist. Because he can maneuver within society as a man, he struggles with the privilege white, heterosexual men are afforded in our culture. However, as a trans man, Anastasia understands the gender oppression, (*cont'd*)

sexism, and homophobia women and lesbians face, and remains a radical feminist. As an activist and scholar, Anastasia wants to continue building coalitions and understanding among local communities of color, feminist communities, and queer communities. To conclude his talk, Anastasia reminded audience members that violence against trans people affects everybody, and that our work in ending oppression for all people is not done.

Mr. Anastasia's visit was sponsored by the WGS Program, FLAME, and MECCPAC.

Understanding Human Catastrophes

By Becca Chase



Illinois State University English Professor and WGS affiliated faculty member Lynn Worsham presented “The Humanities in an Age of Catastrophe” as part of the College of Arts and Sciences lecture series on Tuesday, April 28. In her intellectually challenging and deeply moving lecture,

Worsham explored the unprecedented violence and resulting trauma that has characterized the 20th and 21st centuries.

She began with an onslaught of brutal statistics, accompanied by an unrelenting series of illustrations. The number of people killed by their own governments during this time is estimated at 262 million, a figure that does not include the many millions of soldiers who lost their lives in wars. Genocides, suicide bombers, the training of child soldiers, spree killings; as well as chronic hunger, preventable disease, and enforced migration—these are some of the forms of violence that have become a regulating principle of life, Worsham argues.

Growing up in the segregated South, and coming into adulthood witnessing the violence of the Civil Rights years and the Vietnam War, she developed a compulsion to deal with what she calls “the most urgent social problem of our time.” To explore this problem of endemic violence Worsham has taken an interdisciplinary approach, drawing on the works of scholars in many disciplines, including rhetoric, sociology, psychoanalysis, neuroscience, and media studies.

“How will we belong to this time?” Worsham asks. She challenges us to reconnect to a common humanity. At the heart of the problem, she thinks, are our basic vulnerability and our tendency to react with violence to

perceived threats to our survival. Agreeing with feminist philosopher Martha Nussbaum, she believes that we need to “discard demands for omnipotence and admit that we don’t control the world,” and recognize the equal dignity of all individuals. Not an easily attained goal, but Worsham’s unsparing investigation of violence and its accompanying trauma helps us to viscerally realize how urgent it is that we pursue the solution.

Feminist Guerrillas Invade ISU

By Sheila Majumdar

It’s not every day that you see full-grown primates just giving bananas away, but those who attended *Reinventing the F-Word: A Presentation on Art, Film, and Pop Culture* (sponsored by FLAME) were treated to an event surpassing the troupe’s fruit-flinging entrance. The Guerrilla Girls, a New York City-based artist activist group, graced the stage of Illinois State University’s Brown Ballroom, gorilla masks and all. These women have been championing the F-word (feminism) since 1985, using posters, billboards, books, and demonstrations to critique and protest discriminatory practices within the art world.

The dynamic duo who spoke, using the pseudonyms Kathë Kollwitz and Frida Kahlo (famous deceased artists), are two of the founding members of the Guerrilla Girls. They rattled off quotes and showed slides of art from ancient times to the 21st century, illustrating the shocking and thoroughly ingrained nature of sexism in Western culture. Using satire, statistics, unashamed self-promotion, and just enough cross-dressing (thanks to an unwitting but game audience participant), “Kollwitz” and “Kahlo” described the progression of the Guerrilla Girls’ awareness-raising efforts, making a strong case for the art world’s continuing need for an anonymous conscience.

Judging from the Q & A session, those of us with a feminist agenda came with the expectation of partaking in a magnificent rallying of the troops. What we received was a much-needed wake-up call. When it comes to achieving widespread effective change, this group of artists is absolutely right: Diversity and multiplicity within feminism is key. The Guerrilla Girls have no plan for passing their furry, thought-provoking torch, but as long as they are active, they will be beacons for the feminist world, inspiring the rest of us to come up with our own innovative forms of feminist retaliation!

This event was sponsored by FLAME, YWCA, ISU Sexual Assault Prevention and Survivor Services, and the University Program Board.

Student News

Student Accomplishments

Julia Drauden was an intern in the ISU Publications Unit this semester and will continue her internship through summer 2009.

Jenna Goldsmith presented “The Consequence of Gender: An Examination of Sharon Block’s *Rape and Sexual Power in Early America*” at the 12th Annual Undergraduate English Studies Symposium on March 26. She also presented “Queering the Blues: Channeling Lower Frequencies through Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*” at the 14th Annual Women’s and Gender Studies Symposium on April 4.

Brandy Peak was presented with the Anne M. Sendlak Memorial Scholarship and the Women’s and Gender Studies Achievement Award at the 14th Annual Women’s and Gender Studies Symposium on April 4.



Brandy Peak, the recipient of Anne Sendlak Memorial Scholarship, with Anne’s father, Bill Sendlak



Dr. Joseph Laurenti with Luellen Laurenti Scholarship recipient Breanna Mull

Congratulations, graduates!



Magan Belcher is graduating with a WGS minor.



Bryan Asbury is graduating with a WGS Graduate Certificate. (Artwork by Devin Prendergast)



Christine Hall, Megan Carey, and Jodi Sullivan are graduating with WGS minors.



Heidi Van de Voort, Valerie Vasilou, Jacob Long, and Tamara Howard are graduating with WGS minors. (Artwork by Jan Brandt)

Pride Report

By Jenna Goldsmith

This spring, ISU Pride hosted the 11th Annual Charity Drag Show to a sold-out Brown Ballroom, raising over \$2,000 for the ISU Institute for LGBT/Queer Studies and Affairs. Most recently, Pride took part in the National Day of Silence to commemorate the silencing of many gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer people through verbal and physical abuse, murder, job discrimination, unequal legal status, etc. This was the first year that students filled both sides of the poster Pride displays on the Quad with signatures to show support for the event.

Pride members are optimistic about next semester's activities. This year, Pride has focused on retaining membership, planning new and interesting meetings and events, encouraging feedback from general members, and developing a stronger relationship with Illinois Wesleyan Pride. Speaking about last fall's Support Love rally, Ashley Clark, this year's president of Pride, said, "We were all so full of passion and optimism as we marched that night, and I think it brought out the best sides of many of us. I really hope we can keep that sense of community and passion in everything Pride does in the future."

At the April 29 annual Pride banquet, the gavel was passed to the new co-presidents, Toni Melesio and Steve Erbeck. The RSO's vision for next fall is to increase visibility on campus and forge stronger alliances with LGBT groups from other schools and groups in the Bloomington-Normal community.



Pride members Toni Melesio and Val Ilyukhina commemorate The Day of Silence on the Quad.

It Affects Me

By Brandy Peak

What affects me is very likely to be different from what affects you, but we are all affected by gendered violence. That is the basis for a week-long campaign hosted by FLAME called It Affects Me. On Monday, April 13, FLAME sponsored Tracy Bovee, a cast member of the 2009 *Vagina Monologues* and a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor who specializes in trauma and eating disorders. She discussed the phases of post-traumatic stress disorder and the process of healing once exposed to trauma. On Tuesday, there was a presentation by Heartland Community College students from the Democratic Republic of Congo about the war engulfing the region. They discussed the ways in which natural resources and minerals are exploited by some of their countrymen at the expense of women, children, and other citizens. On Wednesday, FLAME sponsored The Clothesline Project, a moving visual display of t-shirts on clotheslines that depict messages from victims of sexual assault and domestic violence. The final event, on Thursday, was a lecture performance by the Guerrilla Girls (*see article on p.4*).



T-shirts line the Quad for The Clothesline Project.

"All Gussied up"

"All Gussied up," an exhibit of original work by Connie Richards (shown right with her collage "at least donate a dollar to save them"), opened in the Women's and Gender Studies Gallery on April 21. Using a hybrid of techniques, including embroidery, ironing, beading, and fabric collage, Richards connects notions of domestic life to the fashion industry and advertising, using historical, social, and cultural references. She challenges our perceptions about women in advertising, giving us a sense that something about these situations is unacceptable.



Rallying for Reproductive Justice

By Brandy Peak

A group of feminist women and men organized a counter-rally to the anti-abortion demonstration called “Cemetery of Innocents,” staged annually on the Quad by a group of ISU Catholics. The night before the rally we made posters with slogans such as, “Pro-woman, Pro-child, Pro-choice,” and “Abortion: Never an easy choice—Always her choice.” The main goal of the rally was to gather signatures for Illinois HB2354, which has been re-referred to the House Rules Committee and will be reconsidered next year. This bill focuses on the reproductive health of all women, including women on social assistance. A major strength of this bill is that it protects against forced sterilization. People with disabilities are still fighting for such protection, and many people of color also have been forcibly sterilized over the past many decades. HB2354 counteracts such ableist and racist practices. While pro-choice ralliers maintained a respectful distance from the other demonstration, anti-abortion activists continually engaged us in dialogue. Meanwhile, we collected roughly 200 signatures on HB2354 petitions. This counter-protest was a productive means to let ISU know that there is a pro-choice community here.

Faculty News

Prof. Beier Leaving for Appalachian State

Lucinda Beier, Professor of History and WGS affiliated faculty member, has accepted the position of history department chair at Appalachian State



University in Boone, North Carolina, and will be leaving ISU this summer. Dr. Beier joined ISU in 1991 as a research administrator, had joint appointments on the History and Politics and Government faculties from 1994-2004, and was tenured in History in 2004, where she has been since then. Trained as an historian of medicine and public health, she has done research on the history of health culture (emphasizing women’s roles and experiences) in 17th-century England and 20th-century Britain and the United States. Beier’s most recent publications are *For Their Own Good: Transforming English Working-Class Health Culture, 1880-1970* and *Health Culture in the Heartland, 1880-*

1980: An Oral History. She has been actively involved with the WGS Program, partnering on community-based projects, participating in planning efforts, helping to launch the WGS research group, and teaching courses with gender studies content. We will miss her very much, and we congratulate Prof. Beier on her new position!

Faculty Accomplishments

Pat Badani guest-edited the spring 2009 issue of *N-media*, 5:1, entitled *Foreignness and Translation in New Media*.

Alison Bailey presented her paper “Reproductive Justice and the Globalization of Commercial Gestational Surrogacy” at the Philosophical Inquiry into Pregnancy, Childbirth and Mothering Conference, University of Oregon, Eugene on May 14-16; and “Reproductive Justice,” an informal seminar for the ISU Department of Physics on April 24.

Dawn Beichner presented “Family, Prison, and Reentry: The Role of Family Reunification among Currently and Formerly Incarcerated Women” at the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences meetings in Boston, MA in March.

Ann Haugo published “Persistent Memories: An Interview with Spiderwoman Theater” in *Performing Worlds into Being: Native American Women’s Theater*, edited by Ann Elizabeth Armstrong, Kelli Lyon Johnson, and William A. Wortman (Miami University Press, 2009).

James J. Pancrazio published his book *Enriqueta Faber: Travestismo, Documentos e Historia* (Editorial Verbum, 2009).

Mary Trouille presented “A Match Made in Hell?: Bellart’s Contradictory Views on Failed Marriages in His Defense of Mme de l’Orme (Paris, 1803)” at the Annual Meeting of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies in Richmond, VA in March; and “Law, Literature, and Life Experience in Accounts of Wife Abuse in Eighteenth-Century France” (work-in-progress) for the Department of Languages, Literatures, & Cultures, Illinois State University in March.

Georgia Tsouvala received a New Faculty Initiative Grant to conduct research in Greece this summer.

Amy Wood published her book *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890-1940* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

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Congratulations, Graduating Minors!

Magan Belcher, Political Science
Megan Carey, Communication Studies
Christine Hall, Mass Media
Ryan Henneberry, English Studies
Tamara Howard, Journalism
Jacob Long, Journalism
Brandy Peak, Sociology
Jodi Sullivan, Global Studies
Heidi Van De Voort, Music Education
Valerie Vasilou, Political Science

Congratulations, Graduate Certificate Students!

Bryan Asbury, Communication Studies
Courtney McKinney-Whitaker, English Studies

Welcome, New Minors!

Sonja Jordan, University Studies
Michelle McCabe, Psychology
Tim Rockwell, Biological Sciences Education
Mary Sturm, Psychology
Kara Triner, Social Work
Jacob Wilkins, Politics and Government

Welcome, New Graduate Certificate Students!

Kirsten Kelly, Curriculum and Instruction
Kelly Smith, English Studies