

## PRESENTER, PERFORMER, & CONFERENCE ORGANIZER BIOGRAPHIES

### **Meral Akbas**

*Presenter*

Meral Akbas is a doctoral student in the Sociology Department of the Middle East Technical University (METU) in Ankara, Turkey.

### **Lydia Bean**

*Presenter*

Lydia Bean is a PhD Candidate in Sociology at Harvard University, writing a comparative dissertation on religion and politics in Canada and the United States. Since 1999, she has helped build Friends of Justice, a civil rights organization that defends due process for all Americans. She also blogs for the progressive think tank New Vision and advises Sojourners, a Christian movement for social justice.

### **Rachelle Beaudoin**

*Presenter*

Rachelle Beaudoin is a new media artist who uses installation, sound, and performance to explore feminine iconography, role modeling, and social space. She attended the College of the Holy Cross where she studied Studio Art, Art History, and American Sign Language/Deaf Culture and played ice hockey. She completed her MFA in Digital Media from Rhode Island School of Design in 2007.

### **Bear Bergman**

*Keynote*

S. Bear Bergman is a writer, a theater artist, an instigator, a gender-jammer, and a good example of what happens when you overeducate a contrarian. Ze is also the author of *Butch is a Noun* (Suspect Thoughts Press, 2006) and three award-winning solo performances, as well as a frequent contributor to anthologies on all manner of topics. Bear is also a frequent lecturer at colleges and universities regarding issues relating to gender and sexuality, and has advised the staff of numerous institutions on their policies regarding transgendered and transsexual students.

### **Chris Bobel**

*Panel Moderator*

Chris Bobel is Assistant Professor of Women's Studies at the University of Massachusetts Boston interested in woman-led social movements, particularly those enacted in the context of the personal and the intimate. Her 2002 book with Temple University Press, *The Paradox of Natural Mothering*, examined activist mothers who choose alternatives in their parenting practices. She is currently at work on her 2nd book tentatively titled *\*Our Revolution Has Style\*: Menstruation, Resistance and \*Doing\* Feminism* -- a multi method investigation of what she calls *\*menstrual activism\**-- the diverse range of strategic efforts to challenge the dominant cultural narrative of menstruation as dirty, taboo and shameful. She is also the co-chair of the Graduate Consortium in Women's Studies.

**Jen Brandt**

Presenter

Jenn Brandt is a first-year PhD student in the Department of English at the University of Rhode Island and holds a Master's degree in Popular Culture from Bowling Green State University. Currently Ms. Brandt is a teaching assistant in the department of Women's Studies at the University of Rhode Island and an adjunct lecturer in the department of English at the Rhode Island School of Design. Her research interests focus on depictions of gender in the media and popular entertainment.

**Desiree Burch***Performer*

Desiree Burch is a writer, comedian, actress, New York Neo-Futurist and the Executive Director of The Hysterical Festival ([www.hystericalfestival.com](http://www.hystericalfestival.com)), a new festival for women in all areas of comedy, debuting in October 2008. She is the former producer/host of the Smut Reading Series at Galapagos Art Space and creator of four full-length solo performances, including "52 Man Pickup," a salacious evening of sex and storytelling most recently featured in The Black Comedy Experiment. Her work has been featured at an array of venues, including Ars Nova, CenterStage NY, Dixon Place, the Marquee, P.S. 122, Carolines on Broadway, Gotham Comedy Club, NY Improv, New York Comedy Club, The Producer's Club, Joe's Pub, in Seattle's Mae West Fest, The Estrogenius Festival, The HOT! Festival, the New York City Underground Comedy Festival, and the New York International Fringe Festival. She holds a B.A. in Theater Studies from Yale University and is a regular contributor at VH1.

**Glenda Carpio***Keynote & Panel Moderator*

Glenda Carpio is Assistant Professor of African and African American Studies and of English and American Literature and Language at Harvard University. Professor Carpio focuses on African American literature and culture, literature of the African Diaspora, and Anglophone Caribbean Literature. She is currently working on a manuscript entitled, "Black Humor in the Fictions of Slavery." Her writings and presentations include analysis of the works of Gayl Jones, Suzan-Lori Parks, and Derek Walcott. She is also co-editing an anthology of Caribbean women writers.

**Claudia Castañeda***Panel Moderator*

Claudia Castañeda teaches feminist science and technology studies in Boston area universities, and works as a writing coach for academics at all stages of the research/writing process. She is the author of *Figurations: Child, Bodies, Worlds* (Duke University Press, 2002), and other articles that focus on scientific and technological materialization of bodily differences including race, class, gender, and sexuality in broader circuits of power and exchange. Castaneda received her PhD from the History of Consciousness Program at University of California-Santa Cruz and spent 7 years in the UK before returning to the Boston area where she teaches at Emerson College and Brandeis University. She also works as a writing coach, Spanish-to-English translator, and editor.

**Amanda Crabb***Conference Organizing Team Member*

Amanda Crabb is a PhD candidate in Sociology at Northeastern University. Her research interests include gender, identity and immigration. She is disappointed that she could not find anything funny to put in her bio but still thinks she's funnier than Ethan.

**Carolyn Croissant***Conference Organizing Team Member*

Before she was an academic, Carolyn Croissant spent two years as a full-time ballet dancer. Newly ABD in the English Department of Tufts University, she is writing a dissertation on the relationship between sexuality and epistemology in late 20th century theater. When not reading, writing, or dancing, she spends her time thinking about the how-to elements of community building, petting her cats, and coming up with inventive ways to challenge her students.

**Jennifer Dorsey***Presenter*

Jennifer Dorsey has long been interested in the uses of humor. While an undergraduate at the University of Texas at Austin, she wrote an honors thesis on marginalized groups use of satire in stand up comedy. After graduation, Jennifer was a Teach for America corps member in Los Angeles. Jennifer worked as a middle school English teacher in the Watts neighborhood for six years. Jennifer is currently in her second year of doctoral studies at the Harvard Graduate School of Education in the Cultures, Communities and Education concentration. Jennifer is concerned with issues of social justice, school culture and the ways that people, especially adolescents make meaning of the messages in mainstream media.

**Meredith Evans***Conference Organizing Team Member*

Meredith Evans is a 4th year doctoral student in clinical psychology at UMass Boston. Her current research is in the link between objectification theory and hopelessness depression.

**Ayşe Evcimen***Presenter*

Ayşe Evcimen is a M.A. student at Hacettepe University in anthropology. She graduated from the Middle East Technical University in political science. The topic on which she is presenting is her thesis research topic. She is also interested in documentary. She will start a documentary project about the effects of the urban transformation project of Ankara Municipality on the residents in the coming year.

**Radhica Ganapathy***Presenter*

Radhica Ganapathy is a theatre artist and scholar currently teaching theatre at Penn State University Berks Campus. She is also working towards the completion of her Interdisciplinary PhD in Fine Arts, Texas Tech University. Radhica received her MA in Theatre with a directing focus from Miami University and a BFA in Art History from the Faculty of Fine Arts, Maharaja Sayajirao University, Vadodara, India. She has taught several courses in theatre and women's studies. Prior to her move to the United States Radhica worked as a professional actor in New Delhi, India. Major Research Interests: Women's dramatic autobiography, performance art, South Asian postcolonial theatre (focus: India), global feminism(s), cultural studies and critical writings on transnational identity, ethnicity, class, sexuality and gender(s), including transgender/transsexual subcultures.

**Katie Halper***Performer*

Raised on the mean streets of New York City's Upper West Side, Katie Halper is a comic, writer, blogger, satirist and filmmaker based in New York. Katie co-founded Laughing Liberally, a political comedy group and is an artistic director of The Tank, a non-profit performing and visual arts space in Tribeca. Katie performs comedy throughout the country and can be seen at venues including Town Hall, Symphony Space, and The Culture Project in New York, and at the Net Roots Nation (the

Convention formerly known as Yearly Kos) in Chicago and Las Vegas. Katie's political satire appears regularly on the Huffington Post, Alternet, *Nerve.com*'s Scanner, Working Life, Culture Kitchen, the political comedy site 23/6, and Participant Production's Social Action and media website *Takepart.com*.

**The Institute for Infinitely Small Things**

*Performer*

The Institute for Infinitely Small Things is a research institution dedicated to the discovery, creation, collection, construction, and documentation of all of the infinitely small things in the world, past, present, and future. We conduct creative, participatory research that aims to temporarily transform public spaces dominated by corporate and political agendas.

**Erin Judge**

*Performer*

In addition to countless hours spent in dark bars and hostile comedy clubs, Erin Judge's qualifications include a BA from Wellesley College in American Studies, with a concentration in Women's Studies. She graduated in 2002 and wrote her honors thesis on sexuality education in American high schools under the advisement of Susan Reverby of the Women's Studies department. Visit her web site, [www.erinjudge.com](http://www.erinjudge.com), for more information.

**Ethan Kennedy**

*Conference Organizing Team Member*

Ethan Kennedy is awesome. He'll probably graduate this Spring with a Master's degree in Gender/Cultural Studies from Simmons College. After graduation, Ethan plans on taking a break from the intoxicating world of academia with the naive goal of changing the world (for the better). He is currently accepting employment offers and donations to help pay off student loans. Sorry, cash only.

**Shane Landrum**

*Co-Chair, Conference Organizing Team*

Shane Landrum is a Ph.D. candidate in American History at Brandeis University and a member of the Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition. His dissertation focuses on the development of birth certificates and birth registration in the 20th-century US. A graduate of Smith College, he's passionate about bicycles and about demystifying the unwritten rules of academia.

**Meron Langsner**

*Panel Moderator*

Meron Langsner is a doctoral candidate in Drama at Tufts University and the Emerging Playwright in Residence at New Repertory Theatre this season through the National New Play Network. His publications include work in *Text & Presentation* (McFarland), *Puppetry International*, *The Fight Master*, and *The African American National Biography* (Oxford). Meron has presented at the American Society for Theatre Research (ASTR), Association for Theatre In Higher Education (ATHE), Comparative Drama Conference (CDC), Popular Culture Conference, and several other conferences. His work as a playwright has been performed around the country and overseas, and he is active as a director and fight choreographer in academic and professional theatre. He holds an MFA in Playwriting from Brandeis University and an MA in Performance Studies from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts.

**Andres Lombana**

*Presenter*

Andres Lombana is a graduate student in the Comparative Media Studies program at MIT and a researcher of the Project New Media Literacies. He has been involved

in different projects as an electronic music maker and has designed sound for film, video art, theater, interactive media and contemporary dance. He is currently writing his masters thesis on the comic sound of the Looney Tunes.

**Emily MacMillan**

*Co-Chair, Conference Organizing Team*

Emily MacMillan is a second-year PhD student in the sociology department at Boston College. She was a high school teacher in St. Louis for two years before coming to Boston. She is currently working on interviewing mothers about how they perceive and experience their relationship with their children's high school. She hopes to continue working in and researching the education system in order to help make it more just.

**Mal Malme**

*Emcee*

Karen "Mal" Malme is a theater artist, co-founder, writer and performer with Queer Soup Theater, which celebrated its fifth anniversary this past summer with their production "lost + found: the anniversary series" at The Boston Playwrights' Theatre. Mal performed in three of the pieces and contributed her original play "gutting" to the production, inspired by her experiences volunteering in New Orleans in the fall of 2006. Mal also tours her solo performance project "Still Married", which received a 2006 Artist Grant from The Cambridge Arts Council, to schools, colleges, and conferences, in an effort to encourage dialogue on same sex marriage. By day, Mal works as Dr. Mal Adjusted at Children's Hospital in Boston as a hospital clown for The Big Apple Circus Clown Care Program. Mal is also an advisor and board member with the North Shore Alliance of GLBT Youth (NAGLY).

**Elena Marx**

*Conference organizer & Presenter*

Elena Marx is a fifth-year PhD candidate in the History of American Civilization program at Harvard University. She writes and teaches about 20<sup>th</sup> century American popular culture, media studies, material culture, and performance studies. Her dissertation, entitled *American Wonderlands: The Construction of Fantasy in Early Cold War Culture* is a cultural history of Cold War representations of fantasy and the built environments of Disneyland, the Playboy Mansion, NASA, and the Interstate system.

**Lisa Messeri**

*Presenter*

Lisa Messeri is a graduate student in MIT's program in History, Anthropology, and Science, Technology and Society (HASTS). She is interested in the social study of outer space. Her interest in Pluto humor is part of a larger paper on the history and sociality of Pluto's demotion.

**Nora Morrison**

*Presenter*

Nora Morrison is a PhD candidate in the History of American Civilization at Harvard. She writes about popular music – especially African American popular music – and its role in American society, primarily after 1945. She has recently written and presented on rhythm and blues of the 1940s and 1950s, the early jazz of Jelly Roll Morton and W.C. Handy, and the music videos of Michael Jackson.

**Liz Mount**

*Conference Organizing Team Member*

Liz Mount is a Master's student in the Gender/Cultural Studies program at Simmons College. Her research interests include gender and sexualities studies, transnational studies, sociology and South Asian studies.

**Vijai Nathan***Performer*

In 1997, Vijai Nathan mortified her parents by giving up a career in journalism, canceling her wedding, and becoming a stand-up comedian- and she hasn't looked back since! Vijai has performed Smithsonian Institute's Freer Gallery, the Montreal International Comedy Festival and represented America (haha!) at the Smirnoff International Comedy Festival in South Africa. Backstage named her on of the Top Ten Comics to watch for her solo-show, "Good Girls Don't, but Indian Girls Do." In May she'll premiere her new show, "McGoddess: Big Macs, Karma and the American Dream."

**Marta Rivera Paczynska***Conference Organizing Team Member*

Marta Rivera Paczynska is a Ph.D. candidate in English at Tufts, working on a dissertation that explores intersections of family, sexuality, race, and national identity in 20th century anglophone Puerto Rican literature.

**Abby Paige***Presenter*

Abby Paige is a writer, actor, and scholar who has written for and performed in theater, film, television, and interactive media. She has performed and written stand-up and sketch comedy for fifteen years, including five years with the award-winning San Francisco collective Killing My Lobster. Paige was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship in 1998 to study political humor as a form of grassroots resistance to the Pinochet regime in Chile. More recently, she co-directed and co-produced of The Voices Project, a documentary theater project that received the Agency of Human Services Secretary's Community Award for extraordinary contribution to the health and well-being of Vermonters. She is currently an MFA candidate in Creative Writing at the Bennington Writing Seminars in Vermont. She resides in Montreal, Quebec.

**Janice Perry***Performer*

Janice Perry has toured internationally with her solo stage work since 1982. She's received multiple fellowships from the William Fulbright Commission and the US Department of State, the Vermont Arts Council and the NEA, and others. She teaches identity performance as an artist-in-residence at cultural and academic institutions worldwide. Her work has been adapted for radio, television and print in the USA and Europe (NPR, PBS, BBC 2, Channel 4, BBC 3). Perry's recent interdisciplinary, multi-media work expands traditional definitions of Performance. See: [www.janiceperry.com](http://www.janiceperry.com)

**Yael Sherman***Panel Moderator*

Yael D Sherman is a doctoral candidate in Women's Studies at Emory University. Her dissertation is on femininity and normalization in personal makeover shows. She is the author of "Tracing the Carnival Spirit in Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Feminist Reworkings of the Grotesque," published in *thirdspace*.

**Jimmy Stroup***Presenter*

Jimmy Stroup is a graduate student in California State University Fullerton's American Studies Master's program. This year, he was an editor for the latest edition of The American Papers, the annual CSUF American Studies Department publication. His research interests include transportation, baseball and the visual arts as cultural agent.

**Andi Sutton***GCWS Coordinator & Conference Organizer*

Andi Sutton is the Program Coordinator for the Graduate Consortium in Women's Studies at MIT. In addition to her role with the GCWS, Sutton is a performance artist whose work explores the ways performance art methodology can be used to create alternative models for community development and social engagement. She is a member of the National Bitter Melon Council ([www.bittermelon.org](http://www.bittermelon.org)), co-produces Platform2 (<http://www.janemarsching.com/platform2/>), and pursues an interdisciplinary collaborative art practice beyond her work in these collectives. Her artwork has been shown at venues throughout the US and abroad.

**Jennie Weiner***Presenter*

A native New Yorker, Jennie Weiner taught middle school and high school in Los Angeles, and worked extensively in curriculum development and student mentoring. As a senior research associate for the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) at the Milken Family Foundation, Jennie researched a variety of educational and pedagogical issues for TAP schools. Most recently, she has worked for the Boston Plan for Excellence serving as a research intern focused on studying the success of a teacher leadership and induction initiative. Currently, Jennie is in her second year as a doctoral student at HGSE focusing on systemic school reform and building internal capacity at the school site. Weiner resides in Somerville with her husband Jeremiah and their 67 pound Boxer, Clyde.

**Ryan Wepler***Presenter*

Ryan Wepler is a sixth year Ph.D student (ABD, expected graduation date: spring 2009) at Brandeis University. He is currently working on my dissertation, which focuses on humor's relationship to meaning-making and its social and political implications in the post-WWII American novel. The paper he is presenting is a version of a seminar paper that I he in the process of revising into an article. He is also currently working on an article about women's novelistic humor that explores the causes and implications of the heavily disproportionate use of humor by male novelists since WWII.

