

L. TIMMEL DUCHAMP

DE SECRETIS MULIERUM

Those who resort to authority to win an argument privilege rote memory over intelligent reasoning.

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Leonardo da Vinci

ELENA:

Two months ago you e-mailed me a request for access to journal and diary entries, notes, letters and any other documents that might shed new light on the first historical research projects to use the PSD and the disputes they engendered. As an historian, I should be the last person to impede another's research project. Consequently, my conscience began to prick me soon after I refused you, and before I knew what I was about I found myself immersed in all the pertinent personal documents in my possession and revisiting areas of my memory I would have thought long gone. And so on those days when my health permitted, I undertook to dictate a rough, colloquial account to my computer. The enclosed is the result. I hope you find it useful (though as you will see it is sadly unpolished). I believe when you've read it you will understand why I could not open my journals, notebooks and other computer files to you.

You have my permission to excerpt passages for direct quotation, but I must ask that you allow me to reread and correct such passages as I deem necessary. (I shamelessly plead health problems as an excuse for the sloppiness of my prose.)

I would like to take this opportunity to express my confidence in and pleasure that such an astute and meticulous an historiographer as I know you to be has taken on this project. Wishing you all good fortune for your project,

Jane Pendler

THE PSD WARS IN THE INTERNATIONALHISTORICAL ESTABLISHMENT:THE OPENING SKIRMISHby
Jane L. Pendler

If countless numbers of people throughout history have wished for an early menopause, probably no one wished more devoutly for it than Thomas Aquinas. No doubt he literally prayed for it morning, noon, and night. A picture comes to mind of him kneeling in his cell, pleading with the Virgin for release from a burden even Job hadn't been forced to bear. Somehow, some way he managed to preserve his secret in an era lacking any conception of privacy (or rights thereof). Perhaps he considered that despite his having been born female God especially favored him. For it surely must have seemed a miracle to him that his deception escaped detection.

I made an admiring observation to this effect to Teddy Warner the night of the afternoon we discovered the "ugly but fascinating truth" (as I once heard Judith Lauer, the prominent medievalist, characterize it). The man just didn't see

it,
though, and snapped at me that if I couldn't appreciate the fact that the whole project had been thrown into jeopardy, that this second "impossibly devastating revelation" was "simply catastrophic," I should at the very least keep my silly facetiousness to myself.

What he meant, of course, was that I should keep my mouth shut and give him "some empathy for chrissake" (which is the second or third most important thing graduate-student lovers are for). (Lovers? Rather, I should say, sporadic sexual partners. Did he think of me as his lover? Probably not. Probably he used [in the privacy of his own thoughts] something jazzed up, like "mistress," or tacky, like "girlfriend." To which I even [or especially] all these years later say: YUCK.)

I've often entertained the disloyal suspicion that if the PSD Lab hadn't been packed with an international spread of luminaries, Teddy would have tried to hush up this second revelation of "mistaken gender identity" (a term that had already been coined by some fool in an article in Past and Present and not only stuck, but along with the more economical "gender-disguise," made it into the popular vernacular by way of the New York Review of Books' series of pop essays on Past-scan Device issues). Though his spouse Marissa was present at this grand soiree, I happened to be at Teddy's side (along with the three PSD groupies he'd picked up from Princeton, Yale, and Harvard since that first PSD venture--peeping in on Leonardo-- came down). Like everyone else, I had my eyes glued to the stage [which the physicists called "the holo-tank"]. Cameras were poised and ready to shoot from all sides. And as all of us historians waited, Marissa and her colleagues, seated at their keyboards, mice, and monitors, played (it seemed) at being SF-movie scientists. Then, suddenly, there he was, Thomas Aquinas, at mass, on December 6, 1273 (or so we all hoped, since the ostensible reason for peeping on him was to find out just what the hell had happened to him during that mystery mass). A great, collective sigh went up at his so verititious, life-sized presence on the stage before us. Who could mistake the man for anyone but the sainted theologian? He was gargantuan, of course. (Prior to the scan, everyone's favorite anecdote about him concerned the hellish time the Cistercians had getting his corpse down their stairs after his death.) The awe-inspiring sight overpowered me. I remember thinking it was lucky light waves don't carry odors: but then the raunchy stench of pre-modern times is one of the details with which we pepper our students to erode their godawful romanticism about certain overly Hollywoodized areas of the past, and so it might not have been strictly his dingy, greasy appearance that provoked such an irreverent thought.

We watched with bated breaths, some of us literally on the edge of our seats.

(Three persons, at most, were allowed at any given time to move around the perimeter of the stage, since any more than that would have blocked the view for the rest of the observers.) Every now and then I would tear my eyes from this vivid image of medieval reality to snatch glances at the renowned and eminent historians sharing the moment with me. Several had declared themselves skeptics [particularly the French, who Teddy claimed were annoyed at having been outdone by mere Americans, who the world had begun to assume were dead in the R & D department. And though Teddy himself could not take the credit for this fabulous example of American R & D, his wife had had a great deal to do with it). Still, the stage held us transfixed, skeptics and "believers" alike. Most of the younger members of the contingent muttered incessantly into the mikes of their pocket terminals. (I didn't dare, of course, since I held the place of honor beside Teddy.) Each gesture was noted for future analysis, every piece of clothing scrutinized and committed to memory. In those early days, we lapped up every drop and crumb the lab allowed us because we feared each scan might be our last.

The PSD belonged to the government then (as it still does today). Any technical explanation of how the PSD functions would be over my head --presuming the NSA ever allowed it to be divulged. (In those early days, as far as we historians were concerned, the PSD might as well have been magic.) But because it was so high-tech, we were all aware -- or should I say afraid -- the PSD might malfunction. Most high-tech systems and objects, after all, eventually do.

Our attention riveted on the stage, we saw the mass through. If old Thomas A. had a vision or a breakdown, it was not apparent to us. Of course we had known before we started that the date might not be right. One can expect medieval dating to be off sometimes by a year (meaning modern calendars don't always match the old ones), and though we had a specific date, we had no way of knowing whether it might not be our December 6th or 8th. Time used to get all jumbled up back then, and every now and then a few days would be tacked on here and there, or erased, to make the mess right.

Marissa suddenly approached and, bending over Teddy, said very quietly: "Do you want us to keep tracking him?"

"Sure, why not," Teddy said. "Might as well get a look at how the Dominicans lived." His tone was so casual I shot a look of incredulity at him. But when I saw he was grinning, my breath whooshed out in an explosion that nearly ended in the giggles. And so for the next few hours we watched Thomas pray, eat, think and write. The cameras rolled the entire time. Eventually we wearied of sitting for so long and began taking short breaks (for coffee, food, the toilet) -- excepting Teddy, who could not bring himself to leave the room for even five minutes.

The moment of revelation occurred about five hours into the scan. Thomas

lumbered into a stone cell bare of all but a pallet on the floor, a crude table consisting of a pile of rocks topped by a thick, unsanded slab of wood, a crucifix on the wall, a sconce holding a torch, and a prie-dieu in the corner. Two young boys followed, bearing on their shoulders a pole from which hung two huge steaming buckets. These the boys left in the cell. Thomas then not only shut the door behind them, but also drew a bolt.

"My god!" Teddy said. Like me, he was taken aback at the very idea of a bolt on a monk's cell. Others exclaimed, too, and soon we were all up there (in violation of the rule), circling the stage. Teddy leaned sideways, so that his mouth was near my ear, giving me a whiff of his personal (to me sexy) smell. "Private quarters for VIPs of Thomas's stature is consistent for the Dominicans, but a bolt! Still, I suppose a towering intellect like Thomas attracted his confreres sexually like a magnet attracts iron, and so perhaps it was necessary." Trust Teddy to cite Warner's Law #3: Genius is power of the intellect, and is therefore an aphrodisiac. "At the limit," he would often lecture, "consider how Gertrude Stein, an old, fat, ugly dyke, had young soldiers panting after her. Don't let anybody kid you: Essex was after more than the perks Elizabeth's favoritism could get him. When it comes to power, it makes even the physically most unattractive man or woman utterly irresistible." Never mind, of course, that Teddy himself reacted badly to women in positions of authority, and had a real problem with the superstardom Marissa had achieved as a senior member of the PSD team. But there he stood, shaking his head and chuckling so beside himself he nodded and winked at his colleague and rival Barry Bayle.

I nudged Teddy's arm with my elbow. "What do you suppose the sainted father is going to do?" I whispered. "Masturbate?"

Teddy cackled loudly, proud of his protegee's grand irreverence, and probably hoping Bayle had heard.

But Thomas didn't masturbate, no. He bathed. And he did not take off the robe, but merely shifted it around. (Well, it was cold. And thirteenth-century religious considered it sensually tempting to see one's own body.) He started by slipping the robe down to his waist. Then layer after layer of binding he unwound from his chest, and clearer and clearer it became that his breasts were the size of watermelons! In seconds I grew so hysterical I was soon terrified I'd burst out laughing. I remember holding myself all scrunched up, my chin tucked low, shivering. I kept thinking, I can't believe I'm seeing this, while my mind scrambled for an explanation. Perhaps a combination of severe obesity and a hormonal disorder? I remember thinking that medical historians would soon be writing dozens of papers speculating on the possibilities . . . And so we all watched him wash and then rebind his breasts and draw the robe back up over his shoulders. And then . . .

Oh god. Even now, decades later, I have a hard time with this. (I remember this

part so very clearly.) It was such a shock. We should have been prepared after Leonardo, but . . . But really, this was different. Leonardo was lovely, graceful, physically fit. And not menstruating. But Thomas, well, he suddenly, before our very eyes, became this mound of flesh stripping off a thick bundle of bloody rags from between his legs . . . According to my journal, my first thought was that he'd castrated himself. (The idea being that the vision or breakdown had already occurred, recently, and he'd taken a knife to his genitals in consequence thereof.) But no. No. As he removed the last of the rags, it became indisputably clear. Though exceedingly obese and forty-seven, both of which conditions might be assumed to have interdicted it, there could be no doubt that Thomas was female, and that the rags were not from castration, but menstruation.

In the case of Leonardo, I'd been so gleeful and exhilarated to find that his sex had been female that I'd just about laughed my head off with pleasure. But this . . . somehow this was different. For one thing, the coincidence was troubling. For another thing, one could find nothing joyful in this furtive scene involving a bolted monastic cell, bloody rags Thomas washed on the spot, and bindings meant to conceal his true secondary sex characteristics from the word.

The whole thing made me sick. I wanted to leave the room, but knew better than to try. Teddy cursed and cursed only half under his breath, and all around us people carried on low, tense conversations that I suspected were precursors to screaming matches. By the time Thomas finished washing the rags, the water he wrung out of them was running pink. He did not hang them to dry, but refastened them to his crotch. I suppose that was the worst, thinking of that wet mess between his thighs, no doubt chafing them badly in the chill, dank December air. I swear you could see him shivering. My own body shuddered with tension, and my jaw ached, and I felt a fleeting twinge of cramping in my uterus, as though in sympathy.

Afterwards Thomas sank onto his knees before the prie-dieu. We could not hear his words, of course, since the scan doesn't pick up sound. But I could imagine his weariness, disgust and despair. When oh Lord shall this burden be lifted from me, I could easily believe he prayed (in Latin, of course). Staring at him, I realized he'd practiced a lifetime of unimaginable deception. Later, the awesome achievement of it impressed me. But that afternoon, watching him in the thin gray light of the cell, I felt instead like crying.

Teddy spent the evening at my place. Marissa usually worked late, and always did so after past-scans, since in the first hours following a scan her team always made an evaluation and analysis of its technical aspects and combed through the data they referred to as "telemetry." Though the Thomas Aquinas project had been a concession to Teddy's campaign to get the historical community at large to accept past-scanning as a legitimate resource of the historian and not of particular interest to either his or my own research, he and I did a postmortem of a sorts, too.

Of sorts: namely, while I stood at the stove sauteing pancetta and onion for pasta alla carbonara, Teddy paced in the hallway outside my tiny kitchen and railed furiously about "the godawful mess we're in now!" "Did you hear that bitch, talking about American hoaxes?" he demanded of me as I turned the flame under the saute low and lifted the top on the pasta cooker to check the water.

"No, I didn't catch that one," I said, breaking eggs into my cherished copper bowl. "My French ear only works when I've got subtitles for confirmation." I hefted the whisk and bounced it lightly against my fingers. "Anyway, I suspect that anything so mindlessly derogatory must derive from simple jealousy."

"Jesus! You really didn't get it, did you! Do I have to spell it out?"

I knew I was taking my life into my hands with my answer, but glancing over my shoulder, I said, "I would have thought you'd be doing dinner with them tonight.

I mean, it's wonderful, your being here, but maybe you'd have a chance at changing their opinions of the PSD if you talked a little with them?" The voice

in which I said this came out disgustingly timid and innocent. I should have chided him boldly. After all, he was always on at me about taking every opportunity to make myself known to those in the field "who count."

He missed the irony, of course. (He always did.) He glared at me. "My conversational French is terrible. I can ask for the toilet and a room and archival documents, no sweat. But my accent sucks. And you know the French. Anyway, they're Barry's colleagues, not mine." He snorted. "Did you see Barry? He just sat there gaping at the holo-tank, like the proverbial peasant getting his first glimpse of the city." Teddy sagged against the refrigerator. He looked

so distraught I stopped beating the eggs and turned and gave him a hug.

"Just remember, you've got Science on your side," I said softly into his ear. "There's no way they can dismiss the PSD out of hand simply because they don't like what it's throwing back at us."

Teddy sighed. "You poor, dear, naif." He stroked my face. "What you don't yet understand -- for all that I've been trying to din it into your head since the first course you took with me -- is that legitimacy is a consensual construction. 'Science' is a belief structure. And though the national security

guys and the physicists may all think mathematical theorems provide the last word on truth, that's not how it works in the humanities and social sciences --

which is to say, in the Real World. By itself, the Leonardo thing could be taken

as a fluke. All right, so we've uncovered one of history's bizarre little secrets. What we knew about Leonardo meshed with the revelation. So Leonardo was

female? Aha, everyone says, that explains all those peculiarities of character that even Freud was driven to try to elucidate. But Thomas Fucking Aquinas?"

Teddy turned away, to resume pacing. Laboriously I rubbed a hunk of Parmesan against the smallest holes of my clunky metal grater. "Aquinas was a toweringly

brilliant mind -- and a misogynist to boot. So where do we draw the line, Jane?

What if we go again, and the PSD shows us Descartes was just pretending to be male? Or Newton? It's so obvious, something's not right. It's simply impossible

to know for dead certain that what they're showing us in that holo-tank is really from our past."

I looked at him, to see if he was serious. "Then where could it have come from?

You know Marissa isn't playing with you. And they'd need a team of historical experts to have created that kind of detail." I forgot to pay attention to what

I was doing, and so shredded my finger. Angrily I dropped the grater and cleared

the cheese that had blood on it out of the bowl. Then, cursing, I charged for the bathroom (and collided with Teddy in the hall, of course).

While I washed and bandaged my fingertip, Teddy said: "I'm not saying there's a

deliberate hoax. But when you start thinking about it, you realize any number of

crazy explanations could be dreamed up that would still sound saner than this shit about both Thomas Aquinas and Leonardo being women pretending to be men.

It

would be more credible, for godsake, to claim that aliens were sending us these

pictures!"

"All those old rumors of Pope Joan," I said half under my breath, knowing I was

just asking for a lecture on the sexually inadequate fourteenth-century cardinal

and his reasons for inventing the tale.

He stared at me as if I'd gone mad. "You're thrilled!" he accused me. "You just

adore the idea that two of the most brilliant minds in European history were women!" He shook his head. "It's not going to make a damned bit of difference, Jane. Even if people did accept past-scans as legitimate, it wouldn't change the

way they think about women." His eyes pitied my simplicity. "Believe me."

I stepped out of my one-person-max bathroom into the hall, making him back most

of the way into the living room to let me pass again into the kitchen. "Just suppose," I said. The water was boiling furiously, so I broke linguine into it as I talked. "Let's play 'what if' for just a second. What if the past-scan showed the real truth. And what if, moreover, we were to discover through additional past-scans that other 'towering intellects' were also women masquerading as men. We know already that a number of women disguised themselves

as men throughout the middle ages, early modern period and into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Some of them were even soldiers." I threw him a grin over my shoulder. "In the earlier period, we know of instances from the very few

that were unmasked and punished -- sometimes with death and banishment, since those were typical penalties for women caught wearing male clothing. And in the

later period, when death and banishment weren't the penalties, we know of particular instances because women sometimes revealed it when it wouldn't harm them to do so. But suppose the people who washed Thomas's body for burial were so horrified to discover his true sex that they decided to keep it secret, since

the very idea of a woman being so brilliant was too threatening to allow out?

And ditto for Leonardo and anyone else who may have come down to us as men but were really women?" I poked the strands of linguine apart with my wooden fork. "Just ask yourself: What if?"

"Preposterous!" he said. "Absolutely preposterous!"

I smiled at him as sweetly as I knew how. "But we're playing 'what if,' Teddy. Granted, it's preposterous. But stretch your imagination: what if it were all true?"

The long and the short of it was that he wouldn't play that particular "what if." The very idea of it exasperated him beyond bearing. In fact, only the chirp of Teddy's personal phone (which he carried with him everywhere) saved us from one of our increasingly frequent gender tissue quarrels. So while he took the call in the living room, I poured myself a glass of Chianti and rushed through the final stages of the carbonara -- contemplating how unlikely it would be for Teddy and me to be still "seeing" one another if he weren't my advisor and I his student.

I can hardly think of a single area of our lives in which Teddy Warner and I agreed. He wanted a disciple, not a maverick for a student; I wanted an advisor, not a guru. I loved wine; he eschewed any substance or activity (other than sex) likely to threaten his control. He loved goopy-crustied pies with sickeningly sweet fruit fillings; I thought red pepper was the neatest thing since sliced bread. He grooved on Wagner and all three Strausses; I was a Beethoven, Mozart and Bach freak. But all these things were simply a difference in personal taste, you say? All right, then, let's get down to fundamentals: Teddy Warner thought history is all about men being virile, dynamic and getting their rocks off (whether literally, metaphorically or symbolically), and that every event and conceptualization thereof is best expressed in the terms of a phallic metaphor. I, on the contrary, believe that history is the story of struggle and resistance against and sadly often a submission to domination, oppression and the constant pressure of stupidity, greed and inertia. Ideally, I'd like it to be a record of a few brave souls fighting the status quo. Teddy had always been a declared "social" historian. But when push came to shove -- as it had with these revelations of gender-disguise -- Teddy like most males in the discipline proved to be more Catholic than the pope. He'd spent years putting down the Old Guard's Great Men/diplomatic approach to history. But that night of Thomas Aquinas's unmasking it became obvious that Great Men were Teddy Warner's bottom line.

"That was a producer at CNN," Teddy said when he'd finished the call. "They wanted a comment on the report that another prominent historical figure had been revealed by the PSD as a woman passing as a man." His mouth twisted into its most sardonic version of a smile. "I wonder who thought that up -- 'passing.' And they wanted to send somebody to interview me, and requested some tape -- though when I asked which part they wanted, a shot of the tits or the bloody rags and crotch, they couldn't back down fast enough." He cackled. "It

apparently hadn't occurred to them that showing definitive proof wouldn't fly on a family-oriented station like CNN."

I handed him the bowl of pasta to carry into the living room. "How did they find out? Somebody must have been busy. Did they say who called them?" Though the first scan had been jammed with media reps, the only journalist I had noticed present for Thomas's unveiling had been a stringer for Science.

Teddy grimaced. "The News-Gazette put it out on the wire." I followed him into the living room with my glass and the bottle and settled onto my knees across the low round table from him. "I forgot they were even there. One hardly thinks of the local rag as a representative of the media at large."

"Are you sure you wouldn't like some wine?" I said, only half to needle him. Too busy chewing to speak, he shook his head. "So when's the interview? Tomorrow?"

He raised his eyebrows at me. "I declined," he said haughtily. And lofted another mess of pasta into his mouth.

I put down my fork. My appetite tended to be low-to-nonexistent when I ate with him under circumstances that passed for ordinary with us. But this announcement floored me. Teddy Warner passing up the chance to appear on CNN? I stared at him as he ate, at his luxuriant auburn hair, eyebrows and neatly trimmed beard, at his bright green, thickly-lashed eyes, at his heavy white coarse-skinned hands and grubby nails. I'd been assuming he'd been avoiding his colleagues in a sulk. But Teddy Warner give up the best chance he'd ever get for publicly asserting the PSD's legitimacy as a tool for historical research?

He caught me watching him. "What is it? Did those bloody old rags wreck your appetite?"

I shook my head and took a big gulp of wine. "I don't understand. Doing an interview would have given you a chance to plug the PSD. So why aren't you doing it?"

He smiled at me as though I were a silly child too clever for her own good. "It's simple, Jane. A: I'd have no control over the interview or what they'd do with it. And B: The sooner I can dissociate myself from the damned thing the better chance I have of escaping being labeled a crackpot." His smile grew bitter. "Which is to say, I'm hoping that though I'll be taken for a dupe, I'll be excused as one who eventually saw the light." He dug with his fork and spoon into the pasta bowl to get another serving, but of course the strands of linguine all glopped together into a clinging mass he found impossible to manage. For almost a minute he fought vigorously (dare I say manfully) to control the mess. I had to lower my eyes to my plate as his struggle grew comical. The last thing I wanted was to get him pissed off at me for laughing inappropriately. "You've got too damned much cheese in it," he fumed. (Actually,

the only thing wrong with the pasta was that I'd forgotten to grate nutmeg into the egg and cheese mixture.) Settling for a much larger second serving than he wanted, he glared at me, "Anyway, the sooner you drop that Leonardo project, the better. At this point it's just a waste you'll have to write off to experience. A pity. I imagine it's added a good six months to the time you'll be taking for the dissertation."

I felt the blow viscerally, in my solar plexus. If before I'd been too excited to eat, now I was too nauseated. "You're serious?" I said. "You actually intend to dump the PSD just because it showed you something you didn't want to see?"

"It's quite obvious it's phony," Teddy said between bites. "What we saw today was somebody's idea of a joke -- a bad joke. You're probably too young to recall, but there were once these pair of . . . chemists, I believe they were. Who thought they'd discovered a cheap, simple method of inducing fusion through a simple chemical reaction. They went public prematurely. You can imagine the media circus they created by doing so. Studies started coming out against it when other scientists couldn't reproduce the experiment in their own labs, but they continued to insist they were fight. And they got the entire scientific community against them for it. In the end, they were relegated to crackpotdom. If I stick with the PSD now, that's what will happen to me. Which is to say I might as well kiss my career goodbye."

What Teddy wanted most in the whole wide world was the "call" (as he put it) to Harvard. He longed for it the way little boys and girls long to be first picks for kickball teams, rather than among the last few players neither side's captain wanted. It had never occurred to me that such a desire could impair Teddy's sense of adventure or his integrity. Teddy Warner, playing it safe? No way. His work had earned the reputation of being dangerous, bold, imaginative, audacious. In European history, Teddy Warner was the cutting edge. So how could he back down now, just because he feared being labeled a crackpot?

I downed the wine left in my glass and poured myself more. "Are you saying you doubt the technology?" I met his eyes. "The NSA doesn't seem to have a problem with it. And what about Marissa? Has she expressed doubts? Surely you can trust her to tell you the truth!" From all that Teddy had told me about his wife, and from the few occasions I'd spoken with her myself, I knew she was as arrow-straight as they came. Even if she discovered Teddy was screwing around (which he claimed she'd never notice because she was too wrapped up in her work), Marissa wouldn't exact vengeance by using the PSD to perpetrate a hoax that would humiliate him. (It would imperil her own career, for one thing -- even granted she would do such a thing, which I simply could not conceive.)

Teddy scowled. "Who knows what the NSA is using it for? All we know is they've gotten the President to ban civilian access to scans less than three hundred years in the past. Maybe it works for more recent history, and goes haywire for scans of earlier history. Who knows? And frankly, at this point I don't much care! It's plain as the nose on your face, Jane. The damned thing's unusable!"

It was like arguing with a child! Only unlike a child he could not be made to submit to reason, and was in effect in the position of parent here -- telling me that he was going to take away my shiny new toy because it was too exciting for me to play with. In the hours since Thomas's true sex had been revealed, a thousand new ideas and questions had been crowding my thoughts, affording me a tantalizing glimpse of a revolutionary way of doing history, which I now saw could never be the same. Except that Teddy wanted to see to it that it would be the same. I read it in his eyes, how deeply the day's revelation had shaken him. And how all he could think to do in response was to deny that anything had been revealed. I began to see that it wasn't the fear of being taken for a crackpot that upset him, but the idea that Thomas Aquinas had lacked . . . testicles.

"The earth is flat because everybody says so," I said softly. "Right, Teddy? What happened to scientific truth and experimentation? It was you who insisted that we couldn't go wrong with scrapings from the bones of the dead, that if the scan showed that Leonardo was really female, we had no choice but to accept it, and work from there."

Teddy put down his fork with exaggerated deliberation and leaned halfway across the table toward me. "With Leonardo, it made sense." His eyes looked strangely, almost frighteningly, flat, and gray rather than green. "It was easy to believe he was a woman. After all, everyone always took him for gay. The personality and behavior that had been puzzling became suddenly comprehensible. And Leonardo's father, when his first wife failed to produce not only a son but any child at all after three years of trying, probably had some crazy idea about boosting his reputation for manliness by passing his illegitimate spawn off as a boy. Comprehensible, if not entirely understandable. But Thomas Aquinas? That's a whole other kettle of fish, my dear. And even if you could convince me to swallow it, you'll never in a thousand years get other scholars to believe it. And if one can't believe any particular scan, then he can't believe any. It's that simple." His eyes kindled, blazing a sudden wild green rage at me, making me shiver a little. "And if you want to continue in history," he said, "you'd just better learn to accept it." I'd never been on the receiving end of his direct anger before. But I knew, looking at him, that if I persisted I'd be getting a full no-holds-barred blast of it.

Teddy's personal phone chirped, breaking the moment. Thinking it might be Marissa, I snatched up my plate and the pasta bowl and made for the kitchen. While I scraped the linguine into a plastic container and then washed the bowl I wondered what it was about Thomas Aquinas that made the revelation so "impossible." Teddy kept referring to him as a "towering intellect." Was that the key to his distress? Was it the belief deep in his heart that only men could be that brilliant that made Teddy need to cast doubt on the past-scan? When I thought of all the articles he'd been firing off, about "trusting Science" and not "going the way of the dinosaur," I had to wonder.

When I finished washing my plate and the bowl I started on the pasta cooker, then went on to the copper bowl and whisk and finally the saute pan. I mused on what little I knew about Thomas Aquinas, and was startled to recall he had studied for a while under Albertus Magnus --to whom had long been (falsely) attributed De Secretis Mulierum, a much reprinted collection of superstitions on the dire properties of menstrual blood.

"You could say that that call just put the finishing touch on an outstandingly lousy, rotten day," Teddy said as I was just about to start drying.

I turned to look at him leaning against the doorway in his best forlorn-little-boy style. "What is it?" I said, thinking that nothing could be worse than Teddy's ditching his project and insisting that I ditch my own.

Teddy sneered. "The Vatican apparently has decided to stick in its two cents. Imagine, His Holiness was outraged at the aspersions we've cast on the great sainted Thomas."

"So? What does that matter?"

"What does that matter?" Teddy repeated incredulously. "For starters, it means he's intending to forbid all clerics--which means bishops on down to the lowliest parish priests -- from letting us take scrapings from the bones of bodies buried on Church property. Which is bad enough. But it also means that if we were to continue with the PSD we'd have to spend a good half of our time battling a constant barrage of attacks from Church-supported scholars and publications around the world."

Most of the remains of Italian and French people were to be found in Church crypts and cemeteries. Though Teddy's specialty was France, because of the Leonardo case I'd more or less switched my focus to northern Italy. Neither of us, though, would be likely to switch to Germany or England just to chase the PSD. "From how many remains have we already taken tissue samples?" I asked.

He shrugged. "Maybe half a dozen. Which the Pope can't stop us from using now."

He grinned briefly. "Hell, knowing the Vatican is against it is almost enough to make me want to go on with it to spite the assholes."

Hmm. Would this be some thing to play on, to keep him from bailing out? The thought raised my spirits, and I laughed. "You know, I didn't even pay any attention to the pair of Dominicans who were there today watching. Wearing suits they look just like anybody else. I suppose they were the ones who passed on the word to the Vatican."

Teddy nodded. "And there were a couple of Jesuits, too. And you know what? They probably loved every second of it. Jesuits are a breed apart. Always causing trouble in the Church, from the word Go. I'd be willing to bet they weren't the ones who tattled to Papa."

I groaned dutifully at the pun, so that he would know I got it. (With Teddy I always had be working to maintain my rep, no matter the situation, time or

place. People like Teddy never stop assessing everyone around them for wit, intelligence, insight and knowledge, and god help the person who forgets for a moment who all the Popes were during the Great Schism and the dates and places Councils were held to try to heal it. A fetish, I think of it. Not quite as bad as having to take prelims every other week -- but close.)

"Christ, it's been a long day," Teddy said suddenly. He opened his arms wide, the signal for me to come close. I moved in and pressed close, letting myself be drawn into a typical Teddy-kiss. Always he held his lips tight, as though to guard his mouth from my tongue while he thrust his own into my mouth. But wasn't that the story of our sex-life? Still, the very smell and feel of him excited me, and so I as usual tried to trick him into opening his mouth wide, first by engaging aggressively with his tongue and then, when that failed, by stroking and squeezing his balls until his penis was hard. (Small, but hard.)

Which made him pant and shake (though not open his mouth wider) and pull away to say: "Hey, lady. Feel like some well-earned sexual recreation?"

I tightened my grip on his balls (carefully, though, aware that Teddy would hold it against me if I inadvertently caused him to cramp). "How did you guess?" I murmured. He loved hackneyed dialogue during sex, I've no idea why. The first few times we went to bed I tried to resist it, but eventually had to give up. Teddy liked to have his way, and was used to getting it. Unless it was important, it was better not to aggravate him.

And so I didn't.

After Teddy had gone I wanted very much to play cello. But at that hour I knew the neighbors wouldn't stand for it, so I settled instead for calling my old friend Lydia, who spent the off-months there in town, raking in bigger bucks from the workshops and lessons she gave than she got from her prestigious (but poorly-paid) symphony gig.

"I forgot to ask him whether this means I have to try to find summer work or take out another loan," I said to Lydia after I'd given her the lowdown on the day's developments. "It's too late to get a teaching gig. And as it is I'll have to get him to apply a little pressure to get me a teaching assistantship for the fall." I sighed. "And here I thought I was set with an R.A. for the rest of my graduate student days."

"Jane, I have to say it," Lydia said in her "I'm-telling-you-straight-kid-so-you'd-damned-sure-better-listen voice. "The man's a jerk. He's emotionally immature, sexually inconsiderate, and oblivious of the difficulties our generation has to face. He blithely assumes that everything's the way it was when he was a graduate student. He probably imagines you'll just fall into a job, because you're so brilliant."

"How can he imagine that?" I said crossly. It was one thing for me to criticize Teddy. But Lydia always made me feel disloyal when she did, especially since Teddy would kill me if he knew I had told anyone about the sexual side of our relationship (though it was I who had everything to lose through discovery,

and
he only a very little, since it 'wouldn't mean the end of his career). "He must
notice that everyone the department hires comes with gold-plated letters from
their professors at Harvard, Princeton, and Yale."

"Well let me ask you this, to change the subject slightly," Lydia said. "Do
you
think this time-machine or whatever you call it is a fake? Or faulty?"

I gave myself time to consider the question -- and discovered certainty.
"Definitely not," I said. "I'm sure it's right. It just looked too good,
Lydia.
You should have seen it--I don't know how anyone could have reconstructed the
place so perfectly. I could practically smell the stone and dirt and smoke
endemic to those places in winter. There was filth on the stone floors -- even
around the altar. And in Thomas's cell -- rodent droppings! On his pallet! I
mean, who would gratuitously think up that! And it gave you the feeling that
in
summer the place would be swarming with insects. Well, Naples, you have to
expect that, of course. This was December. The walls were sweating with
humidity. You could just about feel the damp chill clinging to your skin. And
there's old Thomas wearing his wool robe, which probably scratched no end, the
hem of it utterly, disgustingly, filthy . . . "

"Sounds delightful," Lydia said.

"Get rid of any ideas that vacationing in a monastery would have been a relief
from the anxieties of the world," I lectured. "Granted, there were exceptions
--
because we're always reading about corrupt, luxurious places needing
reformation. But in most religious houses, not only did you have to spend a
lot
of time praying, but the food tended to be awful, the accommodations wretched,
and you had no privacy -- with a few exceptions. Some orders required even the
abbot to sleep in the dorm with his subordinates. Fortunately for Thomas,
anyway, the Dominicans, though mendicants, provided privileges for their
scholars and abbots. And of course, just looking at him, you can see that
Thomas
didn't exactly starve. But then we had the opportunity to see him at a meal,
and
it looked as though he did pretty well for himself, at least in the size of
the
portion he was served."

"So you're saying it was too authentic to have been faked."

"Right. Anyway, what possible motive could the physicists and the NSA have for
duping us? If there isn't really a time-scan device and they're for some
reason
trying to give us the impression there is, then you'd think they'd show us
what
we'd expect to see." Irritated by the light, I got up, switched off the lamp,
and flung open the window so that I could look out into the mild June night

"Ye-es," Lydia said, "but conversely, if the NSA wanted to make you think the
thing was useless, then feeding historians something they'd be bound to reject
would be a perfect -- if expensively devious -- tactic."

The suggestion hit me like a blow in the gut. "Jesus, Lydia, thanks. If the

Devil ever wants an advocate, I'll be sure to send in a recommendation for your services."

"On the other hand," Lydia said thoughtfully, "there's obviously a limit to how much they can fake, even for the NSA. Wouldn't you think?"

"What I want to know is why they won't allow anyone to get more than three hundred years closer to the present.[1] You know, Lydia, when I reminded Teddy of how Leonardo on recording his father's death credited the old litch with ten sons and two daughters -- which is to say, one son by the third wife and nine sons and two daughters by the fourth -- he omitted himself from the tally, Teddy saw the significance at once. A slip, Freud called it. But then Freud thought the formality of the notation was weird, when it was basically following the ritual of the day. The appropriate question is, how would Leonardo describe himself to himself? As his father's oldest -- albeit illegitimate -- of eleven sons? Or as his third daughter who just happened to be passing herself off as a man?" I sighed. "The entire subject of Leonardo is vexed with such ambiguities and riddles. He loved indulging in pretense and disguise -- he actually wrote a fictitious letter he never sent to the Viceroy of the Sultan of Babylonia, presenting himself as an engineer who had worked in the East, providing a long description of places he had never in his life traveled to, much less worked in. Anyway, there are many riddles and enigmas that have stymied scholars who have tried to make a study of Leonardo's life. And I declare it now loudly and forcefully (as Teddy would always have me make any statement): the past-scan revelation, I believe, can settle most of them."

"Ah," Lydia said. "Sounds like we're preparing to invoke Occam's razor."

The idea tickled me. "With Leonardo, yes!" I said. Maybe, arguing thus, I would have a chance to hold onto my PSD project after all. "With Thomas, of course, it's a bit different. But you do realize, don't you, that we have very few hard facts about anyone's childhood for most of preindustrial European history. Most of what we have are anecdotes, repeated over and over as tradition. For instance, it's speculated that Thomas of Aquinas might have had a brother who was a poet. But no one can say for certain. Any biographical detail, basically, is iffy. And if legends, myths, gossip and speculation are major sources of biographical fact, well you can imagine how much credence we can place in the tradition should new historical material come to light challenging it."

"Query," Lydia said. "Just when are you -- if, that is, you are -- going to start referring to Leonardo and Thomas as 'she'?" The question made me guffaw in surprise. Oddly enough, it hadn't at that point occurred to me that I might need to change the pronouns. (Which is to say, I hadn't yet started to consider whether their gender designations should be changed strictly to accommodate their sex.) "But speaking of challenges," Lydia continued, "maybe you can get him to listen to reason. Challenge him to test the past-scan. If I've

understood

the little bit you've told me about the methodology, you can keep tracking the same person with little extra trouble. So why not do it! And if it is all simulated, then they'll have to fake a breakdown of the machine, right? Since they can't possibly keep up with the demand, especially if they're given no advance warning about what dates you're interested in pursuing."

I switched the receiver to the other, cooler ear. Lydia's suggestion made sense

But if as I guessed Teddy had an emotional need to shut down PSD use by historians, he'd probably oppose such a test. After all, he'd actually said that

he'd be more willing to believe extraterrestrial aliens were feeding us the images before he'd believe that Thomas Aquinas had been female.

"You know," I said, "maybe I should have a talk with Marissa Warner. What do you

think?" The idea scared me half to death, but when it came to the PSD, Marissa was where it was at.

"I don't know," Lydia said cautiously. "Do you think she knows . . . or guesses, about you and--"

"No! Of course not!" (Horror of horrors!) "But I am -- or rather was --assigned as a research assistant to a PSD project, you know."

"Well I wish you luck," Lydia said.

Hah. I wished me luck, too.

Walking in to campus the next morning I allowed myself to be drawn into a reverie about Thomas and Leonardo (rather than working out what exactly I should

-- and should not -- say to Marissa Warner). The almost diametrically opposed attitudes toward their assumption of gender-disguise had begun to obsess me. Unable to sleep after talking to Lydia, I'd studied my computer-generated still

images from the scan we'd done of Leonardo and my notes on the scan on Thomas, and dictated a few ideas to my computer as they occurred to me. (Considering the

bizarreness of the scan results, the kind of thinking one does in the middle of

the night is just about appropriate.) I could not get out of my mind how joyfully Leonardo had bathed and dressed his female body (which, by the way, had

immediately struck me as bearing a marked similarity to his painting of John the

Baptist-cum-Bacchus: right down to the breasts, too). But of course someone who

infused his paintings with such tender erotic sensuality had to have taken pleasure in his/her body. And add to that Leonardo's persistent playfulness -- his love of disguise and invention . . . and yet his care to avoid intimate sexual relationships that would put him at risk of public exposure (though probably he assumed that if worse came to worst at least one of his patrons would save him from the harshest penalties of the law). While Thomas poor --poor

Thomas, afflicted with the notion that woman exists to serve man sexually as sewer! And bearing the burden of a disguise that enmeshed him in a constant

commission of what he himself characterized as a serious sin, Thomas who believed it all, who took authority seriously, who was so earnest and heavy and careful in all his work -- no doubt always fearful of exposure, and aware that before his God he was sunk daily and perpetually in egregious sin . . . Poor, poor, Thomas!

A comparative study of the ways in which they coped with this common circumstance of their existences would be fascinating, I decided. But it wouldn't fit the standard periodization, or be acceptable as a dissertation project -- at least not in my department, even if Teddy were to agree to it.

I wanted the project. I needed it. I had to be allowed to pursue it.

I resolved I would, whatever it took.

And so I arrived at Bohr Annex in a state of intense excitement and determination. Though I hadn't made an appointment with Manssa Warner, I marched straight down to the PSD lab to see if she was around and would see me.

She was and she would. She asked me to come in and sit down and poured me a cup of coffee from the thermos she kept on her desk. Her smile as she handed it to me lit her face with dazzling vitality, bringing to my notice (for the first time) the beautiful hazel eyes behind the coke-bottle thick glasses. Strange to say, we'd never talked to one another alone before, though we were often in a large group together. I had expected her to be gruff and difficult and generally impatient to be squandering her time on her husband's graduate student. And so her warmth took me aback (and made me feel, of course, unworthy of it and terribly, terribly guilty). For the first few minutes I couldn't stop myself from recalling the little Teddy had ever said about her (all of it negative and bitter), as though to compare -- nearly incredulously--that previous image I had had of her with the woman sitting before me. Teddy's bitterness, as I recall, centered on his acknowledged dependence on a woman he thought he should be "man enough" to leave. Marissa, by his account, just about ignored him, spending most of her waking hours in the lab. Yet she had left him three years before when she'd discovered him in an affair. Only after six weeks of his "groveling" (Teddy's word) had she returned, conditional on his "good behavior." She was more like a mother to him -- he claimed -- than a wife. He feared, he said, he was getting old in spirit, wanting the comfort of marriage though it "stifled" and "diminished" him.

And then he'd always been defensive about the fact that history wasn't a "proper science."

"I suppose you can guess why I'm here," I said after thanking her for the coffee.

Her eyebrows rose above the thin black wire frames of her glasses. "To schedule your Leonardo scan-sessions, I presume."

I sighed. "Oh. Then I guess Teddy didn't tell you he intends to scrub both his project and mine."

Her eyes widened. "Well no. I worked late here last night, which meant he was asleep when I got in. And he was already in his study dictating to his computer when I woke this morning. So we haven't really had a chance to talk yet."

I swallowed, and without warning my eyes filled with tears. "He's upset that Thomas was revealed as a woman," I choked out. "He says it has to be wrong. That the scans are a hoax."

Marissa groaned. "Isn't that just like the man! Nicked his male ego, I suppose. Threatened his gender superiority. So what else, but that the past-scan device must be to blame!" She shook her head and sighed.

To my deep shame and embarrassment, I broke down into loud choking sobs, the kind I usually confine to my pillow.

Marissa shoved a box of tissues at me. "Better you do this with me than with Teddy," she said. "He thinks that women cry only to manipulate men."

While men, of course, when they cry do so to express profound emotion and soul."

I think I started crying because only at that moment did I take in the hard cold reality of Teddy's pulling the plug on our past-scan projects. And then, I believe, I continued crying because I felt not only guilty for sleeping with this woman's husband, but also for listening to her belittle him in words I could only (privately) agree with. "I'm sorry," I mumbled, trying to get my face under control. I used up a good half-dozen tissues blowing my nose and mopping my eyes. And then I made myself look at her directly. "I can't believe I did that. But I'm so upset. Because I do believe in the past-scan. Obviously it's not the be-all and end-all for doing history, but it's certainly worthwhile as a tool, and god knows has in just two scans raised an important new set of questions about European history." I sniffed and blinked as my eyes filled again. (It was awful, being so emotionally out-of-control before Marissa Warner of all people. But I was beside myself with distress at realizing the loss.) "I'll was all set to spend the summer working on the scans." I sniffed. "And if I can't do more scans, then I don't see how I can continue my study of Leonardo, since what I have will be too incomplete to make much more of than a pile of speculation."

Marissa leaned back in her chair and steepled her fingers against her nose. "I don't see why we can't just go ahead and schedule your Leonardo scans right now," she said.

I stared at her, and blinked madly to clear my eyes. "You mean, even though Teddy is pulling the plug on our projects?"

She shrugged. "The grant money's been allocated, and is in the lab's account,

Jane. And the general rule with grant money is to spend what you have. Because the government will sure as hell take it back if you don't."

"But Teddy --"

"Don't tell him," Marissa said. "Until he formally withdraws from the project, we have every reason to go on as planned." Her mouth curved in a smile both sly and sweet. "We'll expedite your scans and delay the paperwork notifying the NSF of the cancellation. It won't be difficult to do more of Leona trio, you know, since we already have the fix on him. Or --" Marissa's smile widened into a grin -- "should I say her."

My heart began to beat uncomfortably fast. "Can we do the scans right away -- say this week?"

Marissa nodded. "Sure. We don't have anything else particularly pressing on the schedule. We could run one tomorrow, if you like." She frowned. "The only problem is, doing it on the semi-sly, you won't have any historians around as witnesses other than whoever you can scare up at such short notice."

I bit my lip. "Yeah. I know. But it will be on film. And will be recorded as digitized data in the computer. Which should be good enough." The protocol hadn't yet been established, so I didn't know if that was true, but it was certainly better to do the scans short of proper witnesses than not at all.

"Good," Marissa said. "Then we'll see you tomorrow morning at eight sharp, ready to go." She winked. "And I won't mention a word about it to Teddy."

Deception, deception, deception -- not quite the playful variety that Leonardo liked to practice. It's no wonder I left Marissa's office both excited and sick to my stomach with anxiety.

Leonardo developed this idea of a universal "science of painting," that is to say an understanding which is both alienated and investigative of what there is in the world, right up to the furthestmost limit which astounded his contemporaries. The whole of his creative thought involved an Intellect which observed from an alienated point of view, which looked with attention. He was, in other words, a painter who had reached such heights of folly that he could not possibly have been limited by painting or art in general and who was, indeed, obliged not to be an artist. Art was not bestowed upon him, it was perceived by insight. Leonardo was the greatest artistic project of the Renaissance.

-- L.M. Batkin

One of my notebook files, <GENDIMP>, labeled "Ramifications for the way we conceptualize gender in history and the wider implications thereof," shows a burst of activity at this time. In the space of two days I apparently produced pages of questions, and several more of observations that struck me as possibly pertinent. I wrote, for instance, "Shakespeare, Boccaccio, and many others frequently port rayed fictional women disguising themselves as men. But seldom the converse (though only males, to be sure, played those women disguised as men

on stage)." And, "Brantome wrote: 'It is better that a woman give herself over to a libidinous desire to do as a man, than that a man make himself effeminate; which makes him out to be less courageous and noble. The woman, accordingly, who thus imitates a man, can have a reputation for being more valiant and courageous than another.'" Also, "Joan of Arc was punished more for her transvestism and assumption of a male role par excellence (i.e., soldiering) than for anything else." And another: "According to Montaigne, a Frenchwoman left her home town, assumed male dress, became a weaver and married (a woman). She was found out -- and consequently hanged. Montaigne said 'she said she would rather endure [hanging] than return to the state of a girl.' Her wife was apparently not punished." It seems I began compiling these orts not only because the revelation of gender-disguise by Thomas had excited my imagination, but to defend the facts that Teddy had chosen to scorn.

I presented myself that next morning at the PSD lab stretched to the limits even of the resilient young body I then possessed, from having missed two successive nights of sleep. One's perceptions become strangely skewed by prolonged sleeplessness, and I had, besides, been imbued with a mission that involved making an end run around my advisor and lover. A persistent voice in my head constantly reminded me that when he discovered Marissa and I had been plotting behind his back he would see it as our having ganged up on him, in the treacherous way that women are commonly said by men to do (which is how I knew he would put it). And indeed I did feel treacherous . . . You must understand, I had never circumvented authority in that way before. Throughout my childhood and adolescence my style had always been head-on confrontation and defiance. While others might simply do as they like and face the music later, I never dreamed of doing so, for I knew that for me the doing would thereby be spoiled. But never had the doing been so important to me. And though I knew Teddy could ruin me professionally if he chose to, one part of me trusted him -- foolishly, perhaps, since I knew well how viciously he could turn on people who had disappointed him.

But of course deep in my heart I thought I was different. I thought I was immune, that I was a special case. I believed that for all the roughness in Teddy's professional treatment of me, when push came to shove he would feel protective. His habitual roughness with me, I reasoned, was simply his bending over backwards not to be influenced into "softness" by our relationship.

I had given the lab the dates I'd selected and told them to run them in whatever order they preferred. The first past-scan had been in 1490 (in Milan), which had put Leonardo's age at about 38. It had been difficult to decide where to place my four new cuts. His most productive years, of course, were in middle age, but since I was more interested in tracing aspects of his peculiar gender situation, I decided to concentrate on his earlier years -- 1456 (at age four), 1466 (at

fourteen), 1476 (at twenty-four) -- and place only one scan in his later years, 1517 (age sixty-five). I could have no way of guessing when he hit menopause, so I saw no point in trying, and instead went for a peek into how he was handling old age (remember: in quattroceto Florence forty was considered to be a "grave" age), particularly in light of speculation about his drawings depicting the biblical Flood.

On arriving at the lab a few minutes before eight, I learned that they had gotten a "fix" on an August morning in 1466. (I had arbitrarily chosen the eleventh, on the assumption that it would provide sufficient margin for missing the Feast of the Assumption, since I wanted to see how Leonardo spent an ordinary summer's day in adolescence.) It was strange. The cameras were set up, ready to roll, but the lack of audience (besides me) gave me a bad feeling in the pit of my stomach. I felt as though I were cheating. The art historians, when they learned they had missed a real-time past-scan of Leonardo, would be furious, and would probably raise every sort of hell with Teddy, Marissa, perhaps even the NSF (which was paying for all of the historical scans).

I turned on my computer and pinned the mike to my collar (which I could use since there would be no one to mind my speaking aloud). "Ready?" one of the graduate-student physicists on the team asked.

And there he was, Leonardo, a lithe, sweet-faced, barelegged teenager hopping from rock to rock, crossing a shallow, fast-moving stream. The sun poured down a molten radiance that caught the golden lights in the long curly red hair carelessly tied back with a piece of leather. I regretted that our view of his surroundings was so limited, but felt so certain he was in the hills above Vinci that I could almost smell the olive, cypress and wildflowers I even then associated with its summers.

Three-quarters of the way across, Leonardo paused, precariously balanced on two teetering rocks, to stare closely at the bank. For a few seconds he reached behind him, to fumble at the sack tied to his back, but almost toppling, apparently considered better of it and hopped quickly onto the bank. Impatiently he pulled the sack off his back and dug into it. Out came a rectangle of slate and chalk. For a few minutes he sketched with intense concentration. Twice he put the slate down to lean over the edge of the bank to refresh his memory.

"We might be able to get a close-up of the slate off the film," Marissa called to me.

The art historians would be interested, but a good look at the sketch didn't much matter to me. Frankly, I loved simply watching the long brown fingers wielding the chalk. I had never seen such physical grace in a teenager.

When he finished, he drew from the sack a thin panel of wood with several half-inch-deep blocks spaced along the sides. This he tied to the slate, presumably to prevent the chalk from smearing. Did he have paper at home he could use? (His father was, after all, a notary.) Or, being short of paper, would he eventually just erase it, without ever making a hardcopy? Paper had been expensive, of course. Too expensive, perhaps, for a teenager's sketches?

Leonardo spent the next couple of hours walking, more or less uphill. He paused often to examine leaves and flowers and insects, and every now and then would get out a fresh piece of slate to sketch. And when at last he came to another (or perhaps the same) stream, he stopped to rest. There he drank with his cupped hands from a small rill of foaming water and ate a lunch of bread, cheese, olives and garlic. Afterwards he arranged the sack under his head, stared up at the line of the hill above him, and dropped into sleep.

By this time I was wanting a break, too, but I hated to tear myself away. I had this image of Teddy happening into the lab, discovering our treachery, and blowing up with rage. And so I wanted to savor every drop while I could. Anyway, I was afraid I'd miss Leonardo taking a piss. Though I had no doubt his sex would be the same as in the first scan, I wanted another instance for confirmation.

For Teddy. For other historians. And for the art historians

-- not for myself.

I got that confirmation about fifteen minutes later, when Leonardo woke from his nap. He yawned, he stretched, he squinted at the sky above. Lethely he leaped to his feet and bounded back from the stream into a dense stand of olive trees, where after taking a quick look around, he squatted, slipped his culotte-like shorts down around his ankles, and peed.

I chortled loudly. I couldn't help it. The sight tickled me, and made my heart sing. Needing to pee myself, I called out to Marissa that I'd be back shortly, and made for the nearest women's room. Teddy might rage at me, Teddy might even disown me. But I would be right.

For the remainder of that week I avoided answering my phone or setting foot in the Department of History. Frustrated, Teddy left me a few dozen e-mail messages, to none of which I made any reply. I knew, of course, it would be only

a matter of time before he caught up with me, but with all my heart, mind and soul I wanted that to be later rather than sooner. It wasn't only that I feared he'd discover my treachery. It would be an apter characterization to say I had become infatuated, obsessed, had perhaps even fallen in love with Leonardo. When

not watching a scan or studying tapes of scans, I immersed myself in his texts and in reproductions of his paintings. And all the rest of the time I walked about in a daze, images of the beautiful Leonardo playing through my mind. Walking through the hot summer afternoon from Bohr lab to my apartment, I would

see him, as though superimposed on the lush green grass and rows of maple lining the quiet summer streets, holding his hand still for the butterfly that had lighted on it. And I felt wrapped in one of the most extraordinary aspects I had discovered of him, the breadth and depth of his solitude, a quality I never

before imagined available to anyone in those times. (Even monks were not allowed solitude -- or were rather punished with it, since few people apparently ever wanted to be solitary in pre-modern Western Europe.) On reflection I understood that it had been an essential ingredient for the development of his ravenous interest in and thoughtfulness about the world around him. Yet it charmed me, for it seemed an almost magical feat for him to have achieved -- being left alone with his thoughts, to look at his world and to think about it.

I loved him, I think, for that alone. The rest -- his acuity and tenderness and extraordinary sensitivity -- were the whipped cream on the chocolate. And as though his approach to the world were contagious, I began to see the world around me differently, too. And his paintings -- oh, I wondered, how could I have missed so much? That he had painted the young Virgin Mary, receiving the annunciation from the angel, reading from an elephant folio, moved me deeply. I knew that a depiction of Mary reading was commonplace in Renaissance iconography, but his Mary seemed not only literate, but scholarly, perhaps because he depicted her seated before such monstrously huge pages and I could recall only octavo prayer books, missals, hours and the like, in other Renaissance paintings. I needed to talk to an art historian about it, I knew. But that I put off, too -- not wanting yet to share my love with any other.

Teddy caught up with me the Friday night after the Monday on which we had first watched Thomas Aquinas wash his bloody menstrual rags. I found him sitting on my back porch, smoking nicotine. I had never seen him smoke before, and though after sex he often said he wished he could have a cigarette, I'd never taken in the idea. I concentrated on it now as though it could distract me from the trembling in my knees, pitching in my stomach and heat in my face.

"Well, Ms. Pendler," he grated. I hesitated at the bottom of the steps, reluctant to mount them and put myself within range of his touch. "So you didn't leave town or have a fatal accident. It's been four fucking days that I've been trying to reach you, Jane. Do you have any conception of how worried I've been?"

"I'm sorry," I said in near abjection (relieved that he apparently hadn't yet learned the worst). "But I've been busy. And upset," I added -- thereby triggering a whining, defensive spiel: "I mean, my whole life's been turned upside down. You're making me give up my project, I've lost my summer employment, and now I have to figure out what the hell to do for a dissertation topic!" Considering how guilty I felt, this thinly disguised expression of anger was probably the best I could have done.

He, of course, missed the anger and saw only self-pity. "Come on, Pendler, grow up," he said. "You're a big girl." (His making that particular statement could only remind me of the degrading things he often said to me during sex, since it was an expression he liked to use, presumably to justify the "adult" things he was saying to me. I have no idea whether he consciously made the connection in his own mind when he used these particular words to me that night, but surely

must have done so unconsciously.) "You've got to learn to roll with the punches," he said. "That's part of being a scholar. All this is really no different from being scooped, which is something that happens to the best of us." He ground out his cigarette on the cement and heaved himself to his feet. "Anyway, if you were upset you should have been talking to me instead of brooding yourself into hysteria." And though he was standing on my back porch, in broad twilight, he opened his arms and said, "So come here, poor baby, and get yourself a hug."

I hated it when he talked to me like that. Of all things I wanted to tell him to get off my porch and leave me alone. But I couldn't. Not at that point. I had always been careful about the timing on every occasion I had attempted to break with him. (Not that he'd ever been careful in his. One of the times he'd done it had been at the end of a term during my first year in graduate school when I was still being required to write examinations.) If I broke with him now, I knew it would be unquestionably disastrous for my career when he discovered my treachery. I suppose I hoped he'd be more . . . generous if we were still "together" at the time. And so I muzzled my resentment and mounted the stairs and pulled him inside for a more private embrace.

Which led to bed (even though we'd already made our usual quota of once a week), and thence to frustration on my part, since though I invariably got wildly excited, I always failed to achieve orgasm with him (except for one odd, memorable occasion when Teddy allowed himself to loosen up to the point of dropping his constant, excessive self-consciousness). Which always left me in a grouchy, bitchy mood afterwards. Which began to be the case that night, even though I had been enraptured by Leonardo for hours before.

I didn't stay grouchy, though, since before Teddy left he got a call that changed everything (or so I thought then). As usual when he answered his personal phone, I left the room (this time for the bathroom, to mop myself up and relieve my bladder). When the call went on and on, I began to consider taking a shower -- until Teddy suddenly appeared in the doorway and announced dramatically: "Judith Lauer, if you can believe it, has decided she wants a piece of the action." His face twisted into a sneer. "I should have guessed the feminists would be onto this thing like flies on a horse turd. It seems she's jetting in for the weekend, to get a look at the Thomas Aquinas tape. And maybe to apply for an NSF grant herself." Teddy crossed his arms over his chest and leaned his head back against the doorframe. "Imagine, she wants to do a scan or two in Thomas's childhood." His voice fairly oozed venomous sarcasm. "Medieval history, she claims, will never be the same." He closed his eyes and sighed. "It's obvious what she's up to. Given her efforts to move heaven and earth to change the periodization of European history to reflect gender issues, she's probably hoping these scans will finally achieve the impossible."

I had admired and been excited by Judith Lauer's work since the time I'd first read an article of hers in *Speculum*. And I would have loved to have studied with her -- only by the time I read that first article I had already made my bed (so

to speak), and so was stuck with Teddy. How I'd raved to Teddy -- only to be met with a scathing denunciation of the Lauer Thesis. "History is not a series of epiphenomena," he had lectured me. "Christ! The next thing I know you'll be claiming that Toynbee and Spengler were legitimate historians!" And so I'd muted my admiration, and more or less secretly devoured every piece of work by Lauer I could lay my hands on.

I followed Teddy back into the bedroom. Should I ask him to introduce me? But no. I'd only have to hang around the lab all day reviewing tapes and I'd be bound to meet her. And if by a stroke of luck that should happen without Teddy's being present, I could introduce myself, and tell her how much I admired her work . . . Only . . . no. That would be silly. I didn't want to come off as a gushing Judith Lauer groupie. I was a scholar myself (or attempting to be one).

Teddy plopped himself down on the edge of the bed. "I pointed out to her, of course, that without sound there's little concrete data that can be gotten from the tape, and that the shot is always narrowly centered on the figure being tracked. But that didn't raze her in the slightest; she just started babbling about birth scenes and body language." Teddy sighed. I couldn't help thinking of how he'd dismissed such negative aspects in his essays defending the PSD, and had insisted it wouldn't necessarily make history more biographically determined than it already was.

I pulled on an oversized tee-shirt and sat cross-legged on the foot of the bed. "Maybe this is a sign that you should stick with the PSD," I said. "Though the Lauer Thesis isn't exactly popular, no one calls Judith Lauer a crackpot." Hardly -- given that she had recently been appointed head of Berkeley's Medieval Studies Institute.

Teddy frowned at me. "That Judith Lauer thinks God's just sent her a personal message of confirmation doesn't change a thing. I would be serving you very poorly if I let you go on with your project. So my advice is to ignore Judith Lauer. *Comprenez-vous?*"

I got up from the bed. "Would you like a glass of wine or juice?" Teddy's "advice" was always meant to be read as a command. Past conflict had made that clear enough.

Teddy shook his head. "I have to be getting home," he said -- then shot me another frown. "For some reason I'm getting the feeling that you're not listening to me, Jane."

By now I was in such a high state of mixed irritation and excitement that I almost said "Trust me," the way he was probably about to do. "I always listen to you, Teddy," I instead sought to soothe him. "I could probably recite back to you more of your speech verbatim than anyone else you know." Which was no exaggeration.

Teddy wasn't soothed, though. While I would never call him sensitive, he was

certainly always acute. He probably sensed the difference in me, and somewhere deep in his unconscious had tumbled to my unaccustomed manipulation of him.

All of which led to another night of insomnia -- which I spent, of course, absorbed in Leonardo. Though Teddy, of course, later accused me of plotting to leave him for her from the second I heard she would be visiting, I don't believe

I did. You see, I hoped that Teddy, on discovering my fait accompli, would come

around. It was the scan of Thomas that bothered him, not that of Leonardo. I didn't believe it would be all or nothing vis-a-vis the scan, and I trusted him

to do the right thing, even if it took him a while to see what it was.

Hope springs eternal, you might say.

As I look back down the decades, though I have long since forgiven myself for the pooriness of my judgment in having embarked on (and re-embarked on I can't remember how many times) a sexual liaison with Teddy Warner, I am still chagrined to think of my failure to read Trouble within moments of meeting Judith Lauer. When she strode into the departmental office toting only an attache case, I just knew from the tall, confident way she carried her short-in-inches body that I was looking at the historian I so admired. She tossed a smile at the graduate students clustered around the coffee-maker (naturally the only other people around, it being Saturday) and sailed straight

on in, making a beeline for Teddy. Since their fields did not overlap, they had

met only a few times at pre-modern French (or more generally European) conferences. But she greeted him as though they were old acquaintances.

"Hello,

Teddy, how's it going," she said as she briskly pumped his hand.

"Hello, Judith," Teddy said in his usual robust manner (no doubt doing his best

to break a bone or three in her hand during the shake). "I'd like you to meet Lane Pendler. She's in Early Modern, at the dissertation stage. Until this recent fiasco with Thomas, she was working on Leonardo."

Judith flashed me a look of interest. "Really? Lucky, lucky you!" And she pumped

my hand, too. I sent Teddy a sidelong look and said something about how glad I was to meet her. Judith quickly returned her smiling attention back to Teddy.

"I

don't believe we've met since the Conference on Sexuality in Pre-modern Europe,

Teddy. You know, the one in Toronto where Joyce Nestor dumped a pitcher of cream

over you after you finished your abominably misogynist presentation." Judith nudged her elbow into Teddy's hip, and her grin broadened. "Lord, I can still remember the look on your face as the cream worked its way out of your hair and

down into your beard."

Teddy chuckled. (Which is why I assumed he didn't mind her trotting out the old

story -- one I hadn't heard before.) "Joyce Nestor always was a spiteful little

bitch," he said. And his grin matched Judith's.

"But what I've since learned is that there's apparently a tradition of dousing misogynist speakers with cream," Judith said. "I gather the first time it was done to Edward Shorter, back in the 1970's, in the bad old days when women historians were expected to listen graciously to whatever crap their male colleagues might care to shovel." [2]

Teddy burst into raucous laughter (naturally drawing the attention of the graduate students, who'd probably been listening to every word Lauer had spoken anyway). "Count on you to invent an historical tradition to back your pet anecdotes," he said. "I'm surprised you haven't worked the incident into the Lauer Thesis yet."

Judith winked at me. "Oh but how do you know I haven't?"

"Well meeting you again has been utterly delightful, but I'm afraid I have a prior obligation, Judith. I'm sure you won't mind if Jane does the honors?" Teddy looked at me. "You have time to show Judith the lab, don't you?"

I was thrilled. I assumed that because of his snit about Thomas Aquinas Teddy simply didn't want to have any more to do with the lab (and, too, I knew he generally disliked Judith for being both feminist and successful), so I found nothing odd in his dumping the job on me. "I'd love to," I told the object of my admiration -- and was startled at how quickly Teddy raced out of the office--without either saying goodbye or mentioning lunch to Judith (which I didn't realize until later).

As we walked the three-quarters of a mile to the Science Campus, Judith sketched out possible scenarios for explaining the incidence of "gender-disguise" in pre-modern Europe. "In the first place," she said, "there are a surprising number of infants born with problematically ambiguous genitals. Nowadays in such cases, if the infant has anything resembling a penis, they make surgical and hormonal corrections to create or confirm male sexuality. Now, though they obviously didn't use corrective surgery and hormonal therapy in preindustrial Europe, I've no doubt if they thought they saw a penis they declared the child male, since nothing could be more important socially and economically. In some cases, however, the 'true' sex of the child doesn't become apparent until adolescence. Nowadays, of course, these things are caught at birth through DNA tests. But even as late as the nineteenth century there were cases of adolescents being told to choose which sex they felt was their true sex -- and then to adopt the appropriate behavior for that sex and stick to it. Herculine Barbin was only the most famous of such cases, and that because she left an autobiography that Foucault chose to showcase." Judith scrunched up her nose. "Jesus! Am I smelling what I think I'm smelling?"

"It's manure," I informed her. "The University has a number of experimental projects, including work on UV-tolerant strains of corn."

"Great. And that's where they've put this project? In some corn field?" I pointed past the Architecture Building. "About half a mile south of here. It's not only the PSD project that's sited there, but the entire Science Campus."

Judith resumed: "So that's one way in which Thomas and Leonardo could quite innocently have been identified as male, and then turned out to be female."

"And then there's deliberate subterfuge by the parents," I remarked. "That's a possibility, too."

Judith nodded. "Yes. In both cases -- both were born to Italian families with high social expectations -- it would have been of paramount importance to produce boy children. Thomas's family had very specific, ambitious plans for him, from early childhood. They even locked him up for a year when he insisted on joining the Dominicans. But he prevailed, and Poor went his brilliant ecclesiastical career. But he was stubborn . . ." According to my journal, at this point Judith frowned, and halted us dead in our tracks. "Oh what I'd give to hear their argument with him -- since they had a lot to lose by the revelation that he was female --if indeed they had connived to pass him off as male."

"But there's no sound with the PSD," I said.

We resumed walking. "No. Of course not." She shot a smile at me. "But we can get a look at his birth, am I right?"

It was a brilliant idea -- and one I hadn't thought of. I But then it had never occurred to me that Leonardo's genitals might have been ambiguous at birth, and thus led to a mistake in sex identification.) If only I hadn't already had the scan of him done at four years of age! I had only one left, which I intended for one of the last years of his life. "I don't see why not," I replied to Judith's question (uncertain whether it was meant rhetorically). "If, that is, you have the exact day."

Judith groaned. "Damn! How can I be certain? Can't I just ask them to track back to the first appearance of the DNA?"

"I don't know," I said. "Wouldn't there be DNA as soon as the embryo is formed?"

Judith gasped. "I've just realized! Though most saints' bodies have been so plundered for relics you usually can't tell much from the bones, completeness of the skeleton is irrelevant for getting good DNA samples. Has anyone done a proper analysis of the DNA itself? To confirm the sex?"

How my heart raced! Surely, I thought, not even Teddy could dispute an analysis of Thomas's and Leonardo's chromosomes! Alas, it was at this point, agog with (shared) excitement, that I made a prize fool of myself. Though I'd fantasized swearing Judith Lauer to secrecy and telling her about my covert scans of Leonardo, I hadn't seriously considered doing it. But her idea of checking the DNA for sex went to my head like wine on an empty stomach.

Elated -- no, ecstatic -- at the prospect of obtaining definitive proof even Teddy couldn't refuse, I effusively blabbed to Judith as easily as I routinely bared my secrets to Lydia.

"Well," she said when I finished, "that's fascinating. But to have done the scans secretly -- surely that was a mistake. Think of all the people who will have wanted to have been present! Scans aren't cheap, are they." She sighed. "I suppose I'll have to be satisfied, myself, to look at your tapes of them until

I
can get a grant of my own."

"But it was the only way I could have done them," I said defensively. "Teddy is pulling the plug on the project. The grant is in his name. The lab only did it because the money for the scans was already in the account and they were able to delay the paperwork canceling the project."

Judith Lauer's eyebrows shot high into her forehead. "I see. Well. I take it you'll be switching advisors."

My elation vanished. It was like being fantastically drunk for three or four minutes and then getting walloped with the world's worst hangover and total, utter depression. "I don't know," I said. "Teddy's the only Early Modem person in the department."

She shook her head. "I don't know Teddy Warner very well myself. But I wish you luck in mollifying him."

"Well," I said, "maybe when the DNA's been typed for sex . . ."

Judith shrugged. "Perhaps. But I wouldn't count on it."

"Maybe I could find a woman to work with." (Thinking, of course, of Judith Lauer herself. Foolish, foolish girl.)

Judith raised her eyebrows. "Change departments at the dissertation stage? And from a department like yours, Teddy Warner or no?" Her question dismissed it even as a possibility. Her eyes narrowed in quick sidelong scrutiny. "Unless you've by any chance got an Ivy League background to start with?"

Hah. I miserably shook my head.

"But listen, to get back to Thomas Aquinas," Judith said briskly. "Have you considered the implications for our understanding of his philosophy of the holomorphic composition of the human being? Everyone always attributed his insistence that the soul and body are one being to his having been strongly influenced by Aristotle. But consider -- he wrote four biographies of saints, three of whom were women, and to all four of whom were attributed a variety of somatic miracles. Thomas Aquinas was the original antidualist! I tell you, despite all that shit about women as passive reproductive agents that he spouted just like everyone else of his day, Thomas's attitude toward the body was new and different." Her laugh was exultant. "And to think that all along it was probably because he was female!"

Bohr Annex loomed before us. "The lab is in here," I said, barely managing to keep my eyes dry and my voice steady. I opened the door and held it for Judith Lauer to pass. As we stopped briefly at the security desk to pick up a visitor's badge for Judith, I realized my days of access to the lab were numbered, and that it would probably be wise to get copies of the tapes I wanted while I could. I knew Judith Lauer was right about Teddy. DNA verification or no, he would want nothing to do with the PSD, not even a student working on tapes of its scans. The thought was cold, and hard, and heavy in my belly. For the first

time I could remember, I went down the steps into the second basement without the faintest trace of joy in my heart.

Teddy, I knew, would win.

I lived the next week and a half as though on borrowed time. I was obliged to suffer through Teddy's "debriefing" me on Judith Lauer's visit to the lab, but once I finished the last scan I left a note saying I would be out of town, and then holed up in Lydia's spare room. I continued to check my e-mail, of course, expecting each time I logged on to find a scathing denunciation of my treachery in my message queue. Rumors from the lab would naturally leak, I thought. Or since Judith Lauer had likely gossiped, word would work its way back to Teddy. It was only, I kept warning myself, a matter of time.

I broke cover on receiving e-mail from Ben Levine suggesting that I see him about two possibilities for employment. I went into campus full of trepidation, yet hoping that, it being an early Thursday morning of the week before the summer session was due to begin, I wouldn't run into Teddy. Ben greeted me with his usual shy smile and seated me in his vinyl arm chair. He'd found a summer grading assignment for me, he said; and -- best of all -- he told me that if I wanted a teaching assistantship, he'd be pleased to have me back on his Western Civ team in the Fall. (It seemed an opening had been created by a third year student choosing to leave for a nonacademic job). And then he opined that it was a "damned shame" my project had been canceled. If the government allowed scans to be run in his period, he said, he would certainly not hesitate to use them. People generally think of economic historians as hard edged and no-nonsense, and certainly that was the impression one would get reading Ben Levine's monographs on postmodern France. In fact, Ben was a romantic, with deeply nostalgic feelings about traditional French culture. And so I wasn't surprised when he began daydreaming aloud (as he often did when it was just the two of us talking) about all the little mysteries he'd enjoy resolving with scans, and about how interesting it would be to get a look at life before the various networks had been established, and so on, if only they could be done so close to the present.

We must have been having too good a time with our speculations. Suddenly, like a cold front swept down from the Arctic, Teddy appeared in Ben's doorway. "Jane," he drawled as if it were two syllables -- and a declaration of proprietorship. "I had no idea you were back in town." He nodded coolly at Ben.

My face creaked and stretched into a stiff facsimile of a smile. The cold fingers of anxiety creeping over the back of my neck made me shiver in spite of the mid-June heat. And when I took a good look at Teddy, and saw that he not only had acquired a brash cut since I'd last seen him but had shaved his beard and mustache as well, my anxiety shoved me nearly into permafrost. He looked like a stranger; only his voice and posture were familiar. Since Teddy stressed in both his lectures and his own research that every aspect of one's appearance

and behavior signified, I couldn't help but think it must have to do with the PSD imbroglio -- and with my (and Marissa's) treachery. "I just got in this morning," I said feebly. "Ben's found me some employment."

Teddy smiled tightly. "That's marvelous, simply marvelous, Jane. When you finish here, come on down to the office, will you?"

Ben didn't keep me long since I wasn't much good for shooting even the mildest breeze after that. My hands were cold and sweaty and my knees shaking violently when I stepped into the corridor. Coward I might be, but I knew the showdown had to come, and that prolonging it would keep me from working and sleeping, and would royally trash my body. So after a quick duck into the women's room, I marched my bod down the corridor -- long, dim, echo-prone -- listening to the shuffle of my sandals on the ancient linoleum, eyes focused balefully on the rectangle of light flowing out of Teddy's office onto the dark corridor floor, wondering what I was going to say when he told me he knew what I'd been up to.

Poised on his threshold, I flashed back to how tense and intimidated I had been the first few dozen times I'd visited him in his office. Other graduate students taking his courses or teaching for him generally indulged extreme gallows humor before such visits, to try to defuse the generalized sense of dread he inspired in most of us. It had been a long time since I'd felt that afraid of Teddy. "Knock, knock," I said, miserably panning my eyes over the mess of papers and books on his desk.

"Well, Pendler?" His voice was a low growl. "And just what do you have to say for yourself? Hmmm? Got a good defense lined up, have you?"

In the quick-mounting silence I looked everywhere but at him.

Teddy heaved a great, weary sigh. "You could at least do me the courtesy of letting me know when you're leaving town -- and giving me some idea of when you're expecting to return," he said.

I snatched a quick look at his face. Could that be what he was pissed at me for? My ears buzzed and my vision dimmed. For a few cold and sweaty seconds I thought I was going to pass out. Of course, I told myself, it still could be that he knows, but is setting me up . . . But no, I knew Teddy. Though he usually played his hand adroitly and astutely enough in departmental politics, he'd have no reason to take so much trouble to get me. Why bother when it would make him feel better simply to stomp me?

While I stood there dithering, Teddy got up and did the nearly unthinkable. He came around his desk, closed the door -- notwithstanding the presence of half a dozen colleagues up the corridor as likely as not to notice -- and clamping his arms around me, fastened his lips to mine. "God, Jane, I missed you," he said hoarsely into my ear. "Why the hell didn't you give me some notice? Unless --

"Teddy drew a little away to look at me -- "but hey, I haven't got competition to contend with -- or do I?"

Just Leonardo, I wished I could say. I disengaged myself. I rubbed my cheeks and chin. It had been a long time since anyone had given me beard-burn. "You know we shouldn't have the door closed," I said softly as I pulled it open again.

Teddy mimed tearing at his hair, but sank meekly into the vinyl chair set at a right angle to the vinyl couch [which was my place, of course]. The situation was intolerable. It had been bad enough to have been deceiving the entire department by carrying on sexually with Teddy, but to find myself deceiving him, too, was suddenly more than I could stomach.

Grimly I dumped my book bag on the section of the couch closest to Teddy and seated myself on the other side of it. "Ben Levine and I were just talking about the PSD," I said.

Teddy rolled his eyes and shook his head at my apparent idiocy. "Come on, lady, give me a break. Let's just drop the subject -- for good --and everybody will be happy. All right?"

"But really, Teddy," I said. "He says that though it does seem to be quite a large coincidence that both Leonardo and Thomas were shown to be female, it doesn't shake his confidence in the PSD. In fact he says he's been wishing he could do scans apropos his own research."

"My good friend Ben Levine is an admirably competent postmodern Europeanist," Teddy said evenly. "But when it comes to preindustrial Europe, the man don't know shit."

"What does that have to do with it?" I said. I drew a deep breath. "What, do you think that maybe Ben doesn't fully appreciate just how brilliant Thomas Aquinas was? And that if he did, he'd realize that it's totally impossible he could not only have lacked testicles, but been a menstruating freak otherwise known by the designation female?"

Teddy's eyes smoldered. I half-expected smoke to start pouring out of his ears. "Jane, you don't know what you're talking about. And you're getting shrill. I'd just chill out on this if I were you."

So. I had now officially become shrill. And ignorantly garrulous. I've always hated those kinds of arguments, and tried to avoid them. You never really could win them. But this was my work, my future, my passion on the line. I had to at least try. I folded my hands and stared down at them for a few seconds, then looked back at Teddy and said as calmly as I could, "Come on, Teddy. This isn't a dictatorship here. And nothing has ever been so important to me as my

dissertation project. Yet you make your fiat and tell me we can't even discuss it. Why, Teddy? Why can't we discuss it?"

Did I expect him to tell me the subject upset him?

Teddy pulled his tense, trembling lips into a sad semblance of a smile.

"Come on, Jane. I shouldn't have to tell you the answer to that."

Always, since the time we'd first screwed, he'd expected me to read his mind, as an attribute of what he called me at such times as he was feeling warm and fuzzy toward me -- "a good woman." I tried another tack: "What about the others'. You know, the clones. Did you discuss it with them?"

His eyes narrowed. "Really, Jane, your jealousy of them has always been absurd. They and everybody else know you're my best student."

A low blow, since I called Teddy's PSD groupies that mostly to amuse him. "Did you?" I said. "Talk to them about it?"

He shook his head. "There was no need. They understood perfectly my mistrust of the scans." His lips pursed. "Mark and Cyrus say they'll be considering a transfer, once they have time to get their bearings. Jake --" Teddy's upper lip cuffed, disdainful as ever about his least-favorite student--"says he's not sure what he wants to do."

So he was losing his disciples. But it made sense. They hadn't started their dissertation projects yet, and weren't even past prelims. Their investment in the PSD had been minimal. (I ignored the little voice in my head preaching at me to comfort him for the loss of all his male students.) "I keep wondering, Teddy," I said very softly, "what it was about Thomas Aquinas's gender-disguise that convinced you the PSD was a fake. I mean, it was all right with Leonardo. Why draw the line at Thomas?" And I thought of his current piece in the New York Review of Books noting how lavishly Leonardo squandered his time, how indecisive he'd often been in his creative ventures, how willing he had been to devote himself to Sforza theatricals and dances, how seldom he finished any of his projects, and speculating on the possibility that the strain of maintaining his gender-disguise had diminished the fulfillment of his apparent artistic and scientific potential. If I asked him, I knew he'd say now that nothing Leonardo had finished could ever be comparable to Thomas's Summa Theologica.

He shook his head. "As I've said again and again, once was possible, twice preposterous."

"And if we'd done Thomas first? Would you have accepted it then.?"

"Jesus, Jane! Just what the fuck are you trying to say? That I'm a misogynist

jerk?"

"The government doesn't think there's anything wrong with the PSD," I said.

"Then the government is imbecilic!"

"And Marissa?" I said, thinking of the conversations I'd had with Lydia about Teddy's pre-Thomas attitudes toward Marissa's role in the project. "She's like a plumber," he had once said to me. "A master plumber, granted. But a plumber all the same. The mathematician who dreamed up the theory is the one who should be getting the credit. Marissa just applied his ideas." Though Teddy had been proud of the significance of Marissa's role in the project, he'd never taken it as a sign of a particularly gifted mind. "Technologists are like bureaucrats," he had said another time. "For them research is simply a matter of standing the grind."

"Marissa is obviously mistaken," Teddy said, as if that were the end of it. "And now, why don't we change the subject. Maybe go for coffee?"

"I don't believe Marissa is mistaken," I said. "She's got a first class mind, Teddy. All her critical faculties are intact. If she had thought there was the faintest possibility of error, she would have let me know before taking me through the rest of my Leonardo scans."

"Marissa is competent, but not infallible," Teddy said -- and then gasped as my words registered. He stared hard at me. "Did you just say what I thought you did?"

I drew a deep breath. "Yes, Teddy, I did. Marissa ran the scans for me that same week we did Thomas. So that we'd get them in under the grant, before it was canceled."

"You fool," he said.

"I had to do it. Because I have to do the project."

"And I'm a fool," he added. "Having been utterly and thoroughly misled by someone I thought I could trust, someone who I thought cared about me. And all the while you're sneaking around behind my back, plotting with my wife." His face had darkened to about the shade of a ripe plum; under the harsh fluorescent lighting I could see what his beard had previously concealed -- the oldness of his neck and jaw, the prissy thinness of his mouth. "I suppose you flattered her and told her it didn't matter what I thought. And she, of course, was only too delighted to help you, just to spite me. The bitch." Tears stood in his eyes. "Both of you," he said hoarsely. "Bitches."

I writhed with the guilt scorching my face. Why did such arguments always have to get so personal? I wonder now, would Teddy have made the same judgment about one of the clones, if he had done it? Perhaps, but I doubt it. He probably would

have gotten furious, but would also have felt grudging respect for the balls it showed, and maybe even have allowed him to get away with it. Men like Teddy were always quick to claim that women made everything personal. Yet at the same time they applied the rule to keep one's professional life compartmentalized only to women. (After all, the rule that women had to take any amount of "teasing" and "humor" from their colleagues as "good sports" obviously didn't apply to men. Teddy, faced with Lauer's "humor" and "joking" at his expense, had been furious.

Though I myself had thought it egregiously obnoxious of her to tease him just seconds after shaking his hand, in retrospect I imagine she did so to pre-empt an equivalent strike from him.) Not, of course, that I saw his reaction as unduly "personal" while I was sitting there groping for some way to explain --or

rather excuse -- my treachery. I had not only deceived him, I kept thinking, I had failed him. (Only much, much later did it occur to me to wonder if it hadn't

been he who had failed me.) "Not to spite you," I said quickly, sorrowfully. I had to blink back tears that sprang to my eyes in sympathy with his. "It's just

so important to me, Teddy. And Marissa believes in the PSD, and saw how important my project is to me, and thought there was no reason I shouldn't be allowed to run the scans that had already been officially approved. I'm sure she didn't do it to hurt you, any more than I did!"

"Judith Lauer's already enough of a crackpot that it doesn't matter if she gets herself tarred with fakery," Teddy grated. "But understand this: there's no way I'm letting a crackpot dissertation pass. Capisce?"

"And if she does prove that Thomas Aquinas's DNA is female?"

"After so many centuries the body could be anybody's," he said wearily. "And there's always a fifty-fifty chance it's female. So DNA typing would prove zilch, Pendler."

A sudden spurt of anger came to my rescue. It was the same old thing, I thought.

He wouldn't even listen. How horribly, intolerably unfair of him, even if he was

upset. And irrational -- since, I believed, if he'd only discuss it in a reasonable way he'd have no choice but to see that there was nothing to be upset

about (apart from my having sneaked around behind his back). But there was no reasoning with him. I grabbed my book bag and stood up. "Not many people think Judith Lauer is a crackpot," I said. "Some people even think she's brilliant." That was below the belt, of course, but his declaration that he wouldn't allow my dissertation to pass was bouncing about in my head, bruising, abrading, inflaming me, making me want to strike out blindly, and knowing the one sure thing he couldn't stand was listening to others taking Judith Lauer seriously.

Teddy sprang to his feet. "Got a crush on her, Jane? Then transfer to Berkeley,

why don't you. Anyone who works with me has got to do what it takes to write a first-class thesis. You want to come in here and talk about possibilities for

a

new topic, fine. Just pick up the phone and we can arrange it. Otherwise, I don't want to see your face around here until you've come to your senses!"

I backed out of his office quickly, aware that the entire corridor must have heard his last sentence, and intimidated by the fists he held tightly to his sides. Not that I thought he would hit me. Rather, I didn't want to precipitate

an explosion (which, apart from everything else, would be likely to reveal our sexual intimacy to whoever happened to be around). And so, shaking I beat it out

of there, out of the building, off campus, and back home, gradually becoming aware that I'd lost my parent-bird, my parent-nest, my parent-protector, that I

was on my own, forced to find my own worms, build my own nest, fight off all threatening predators myself. Did I hope Teddy would come around? Yes, I did. Did I hope that when I'd done my study of Leonardo he'd say I'd gotten it so right that it couldn't have been any other way? Of course. Did I hope that Teddy would not view me as his enemy? Certainly.

Teddy didn't come around, he rejected my dissertation (on the grounds that it was "unduly speculative"), and when I didn't come crawling back begging for forgiveness and a second chance to do it his way, I found myself on his enemies

list, right up there with Judith Lauer (and probably Marissa, from whom he was divorced all of five years later). For a long time it seemed he had beaten me (if not Judith Lauer).

But though I was never awarded a Ph.D. or held a conventional position at one of

the top departments in the country, Basic Books published in both print and cyber editions *A Life as a Work of Art: Leonardo da Vinci and Gender-Disguise*, a

monograph based on my dissertation work. Moreover, the PSD has become an entirely respectable tool, for primarily what in Teddy's day were considered the

"fringe" areas of history -- women's history, African history, Native American history, other ethnic histories -- besides the more mainstream dance history and

art history. Perhaps most galling for Teddy was that Judith Lauer's work on Thomas Aquinas not only won a great deal of respect and acclaim, but prepared the ground for an all-out assault on the periodization scheme of European history, as she had long been advocating. And finally, though access to physical

remains in Europe quickly came to be restricted, a sufficient number of cases of

gender-disguise have been brought to light (in perhaps as high as eight percent

of all pre-modern European scans done to date, including the noteworthy case of

another prominent medieval philosopher, Jean Buridan) to force a serious reevaluation of such interesting problems as the relation of sex to gender, the

question of gender and genius, and the development of a very sophisticated notion of how gender is constructed in particular social and political contexts.

Such cases have, by suggesting a correlation between the frequency of gender-disguise and the constriction and peril normally assigned to women in a given time and place, underscored what we have long known about women's status

in European history -- namely, that their situation steadily worsened with the Renaissance and Reformation (notable for the capital punishment of a million women for "witchcraft" and heresy), into the Enlightenment, right up to the mid-19th century (at which time historians variously erased and ignored documentation of the daily work, responsibility and achievements of medieval women because their received ideas about gender rendered the evidence incredible).

I am pleased, Elena, that you have, as a tentative secondary thesis in your study, posited a relationship between attitudes toward women within the subject of history on the one hand, and toward the women who write history on the other.

I have long believed that Lauer's work on Thomas Aquinas made it for the first time appear reasonable for women historians to put forward very bold original theories without being either ignored or dismissed as crazy. Historians like Mary Ritter Beard, Eileen Power, Natalie Davis and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, who each stood out as exceptions that proved the only-males-excel rule, posthumously suffered either attacks on their credibility or oblivion. Though after the scan the first impulse of non-medievalists was to deny that Thomas Aquinas had been outstandingly brilliant, medievalists could not do so. (Has anyone told you the joke that circulated soon after the publication of Lauer's work, that the only medieval monk we can confidently label as male without DNA analysis is Peter Abelard, because he was castrated, which could not have been done had he not had testicles?) Except for diehards like Teddy Warner, Lauer's work on Thomas broke a barrier, viz., the unconscious adherence in most of us to

Plato's dictum that though women can excel, no one woman can ever be as good as

the very best men. At the same time we had to acknowledge that Thomas was the most brilliant of medieval European thinkers -- Lauer's fresh take on his work made that crystal dear -- concomitantly we had ungrudgingly to recognize that Judith Lauer was among the most brilliant of historians.

You did not say one way or the other in your request for materials whether you have read my study of Leonardo. To pique your interest enough to undertake to do

so if you haven't, or to refresh your memory if you have, I append here an excerpt from the introduction of A Life. Since it came out before Judith Lauer's

monumental work on Thomas Aquinas, I believe it may be counted as the first stone in the fascinating edifice the PSD has enabled to be erected.

From the Introduction of A Life as a Work of Art: Leonardo da Vinci and Gender-Disguise:

The first chapter opens with filmed excerpts of a past-scan of a January, 1490 afternoon and evening in Leonardo's life. [For print editions of the text, flat

"stills" are provided in lieu of digitized film footage.) The setting is the Sforza court in Milan, where Leonardo served a number of functions for his patron. In the opening footage we see him giving an unidentified young man a dancing lesson -- teaching him to exhibit the "virile" strength, agility and grace Renaissance dances were largely designed to flaunt. In successive shots we

see him supervising the construction of expensive ephemera for some sort of pageantry, going over plans (presumably for an engineering project) with Ludovico Il Moro himself, then dining in private on rice, vegetables, bread, and

wine, reading and sketching for two hours by candlelight, and finally

sponge-bathing and retiring to bed for the night. But why begin a discussion of Leonardo's life in medias res, so to speak?

Though Leonardo is a familiar subject, we seldom think of him as a courtier. We may have long recognized him as an exemplar of the "Renaissance Man," but we have persisted in eliding the areas of his life and accomplishments that have left few or no permanent traces. Leonardo's female sex had -- until the advent of the Past-scan Device --fallen into that category, as had his activities as a courtier and, indeed that aspect of his personality we might call "playful," "world-traveling" and "loving perceptivity" (to borrow the terminology of the 20th-century feminist philosopher, Maria Lugones). An analysis of this hitherto unexamined side of Leonardo provides us with a useful means of framing and contextualizing his life.

Although the analysis that follows pays considerable attention to Leonardo's gender-disguise, I would like to offer a few prefatory remarks here as to why Leonardo chose to continue the disguise long after it must have become clear to him that he was not anatomically male, whatever his father might have told him. A number of historians of Florence have remarked (thereby dismissing the subject altogether) that "women in Renaissance Florence were cattle." Since we have good reason to believe that only sons were valued by their parents, we should not be surprised to find that parents discovering talent and intelligence in a child, or any other suggestion of "male" qualities, might insist that the child is indeed male, and then conspire so thoroughly with the construction of the fiction as to come to believe it themselves. Leonardo himself writes in his notebook

And whereas, at first, a young woman is unable to defend herself against the lechery and predation of men, not even when under the protection of her parents or within the walls of a fortress, there always comes the time when it is necessary for the fathers and relatives of young women to pay a high price to those who wish to sleep with them, even when the women are rich, noble, and beautiful; it would seem that nature wishes to extinguish the human species as an utterly useless thing to the world.

Louise Ducange's study of rape in Renaissance Florence confirms what a modern reader might take as hyperbole. The magisterial archives of Renaissance Florence bespeak the constant threat of abduction and rape even from a woman's own home. Rather than exaggerating, Leonardo here observes the situation succinctly (and a tinge quizzically) -- informed by the usual sense of his larger, "world-traveling" perspective. In what follows I hope to make the case that we may infer a great deal about Leonardo's perception of women as human beings (rather than "cattle"), and that our understanding of this perception will shed new light on the extraordinary expressions we find in the faces of the women he painted, as well as in his highly original depiction of nature. For while we

have no choice but to attribute male gender (and therefore male pronouns) to Leonardo, it is my contention that Leonardo still saw the world with a woman's eye, and sketched and painted it with a woman's hand. Indeed, one sex and another gender together made one sensitive and brilliant human being, an individual greater than the sum of his and her parts.

1 Back then we were still rather wide-eyed and naive about the uses to which the NSA were putting the PSD. It's perfectly obvious now that besides not wanting to expose any of the many embarrassments of US history to the general public, the main reason was the NSA's desire to keep the public from realizing that by taking DNA from living persons they could scan even the most immediate past. It's my belief that the NSA allowed historians to use the PSD because they guessed (correctly) that for a while at least it would give people the impression it worked only in the reasonably far past. Domestic and foreign regulations to preserve privacy came only after a federal prosecutor introduced a past-scan as evidence in court (thereby unleashing a firestorm of concern that ringed the globe).

2 Edward Shorter, in case the name is as unfamiliar to you as it was that day to me, is reputed to have earned his initial notoriety among women historians by advancing the claim that women did not experience orgasm until the invention of romantic love in eighteenth-century Europe supposedly made it possible.