

## PREFACE

This issue contains a number of highly original and timely studies and reflections that could be presented simply as "feminist studies," but for editorial purposes we have chosen to divide the issue into two halves. The first set of articles examines the ways in which relations of capital, class, gender, sex, and race play out differently depending on the unpredictable particularities of the local. The second half consists of two articles, an art essay, and a review essay that address how issues of "identity" play out in the public sphere.

The first two articles in the set that we have titled "Nation and Race, Sex and Work" analyze the workings of class-specific narratives of gender in colonial settings in the Americas. Eileen J. Findlay shows that, in the waning years of Spanish colonial rule in Puerto Rico, local nationalist writers' concern to articulate a "respectable" national identity led them to support a campaign against prostitution and also against the sexual and cultural practices of a segment of urban Puerto Rico. This study joins the growing literature on nationalism and sexuality and shows that the political project to create a Puerto Rican "citizenship" was, like so many other projects around the world, implicitly masculinized through the opposition of good (male) citizens to the "loose" women who purportedly threatened the physical and moral health of the emerging nation. Earlier in the nineteenth century, sexual/moral fears of a different sort fueled the project supported both by the British imperial authorities and by local notables to "import" white working-class women into British Columbia, as Adele Perry documents in her study. Perry's article contributes to the international literature on race, sex, and colonialism by focusing on a site in which most white men—miners and loggers mostly—were living either with aboriginal women or in single-sex households and communities. Although such arrangements persisted into the twentieth century, they were increasingly criticized as the all-white, working-class family became the norm.

Perry's insistence that processes of colonialism, class, and gender formation take very different forms historically is echoed in Leela Fernandes's study of the working-class communities of jute workers in today's Calcutta. Fernandes draws our attention to the ways in which criticisms—by male workers

as well as employers—of the morals of working-class women functioned to exclude them from factory jobs and, more generally, from the "proletarian public sphere," in an analysis that substantially revises the gender as well as the class character of Habermas's influential model of the formation of the "bourgeois public sphere."

Although in Calcutta women workers have to guard against sexual gossip, the Mexican factory workers in Leslie Salzinger's study often seek and initiate such gossip, partly to break up the monotony and asexuality of their work. Most labor force studies tend to generalize about the workers employed in the same sector in the same region; however, Salzinger pursues an innovative analysis of the differences in the ways that gender and sex are constituted in various sites in the same location—differences that are created by management as well as by the workers themselves. Along with these four studies of how global relations and processes work themselves out locally in ways that are often unpredictable, we have two poems that could be read as exploring this theme poetically: "I Need to Listen to What She Says," by Susan A. Manchester, and "Huitzilopochtli," by Mary Hope Whitehead Lee, about the great Mexican painter Frida Kahlo.

The articles in the second set in this issue explore issues of gender and sexual identity in the public sphere. Leila J. Rupp's detailed study of the interpersonal and sexual relations among first-wave feminists active in the international movement shows that the sorts of tensions that during the 1970s gave rise to the "lesbian/straight split" had very different meanings and implications sixty years earlier. In addition to documenting the way in which activists responded to romantic same-sex relations, Rupp also shows that the practice within American feminism of organizing women-only events gave many European women pause—a cultural difference which clearly has much deeper roots than most feminists today think. Rupp's historical study is followed by a review essay debunking the myth of the "gay disposable income." M.V. Lee Badgett's review shows, among other things, that some gay and lesbian authors are fostering a myth that homophobia is becoming extinct in today's enlightened workplaces and that the remaining prejudices can be overturned if all those white Harvard MBA's just come out

to their employers. For any lesbian or gay man who has heard, "Oh, you people have so much money; you don't have kids to support," Badgett's review will be a useful source of rejoinders.

The art essay also takes up issues of sexuality and identity, this time in relation to aging. Esther Hyneman's examination of her troubled relationship to her "subject" is a reflection on her own attitudes and her own troubled relationship with her "subject" more than an effort to capture the experience of other women. Her reflexive analysis raises interesting questions for those social scientists and historians who devote themselves to the study of "other" women.

Just as some of the authors in Badgett's review essay blame gay people who are closeted at work for the persistence of homophobia, so too much of the advice on breast cancer appearing in women's magazines and other popular formats performs a subtle blaming of the victim. Susan Yadlon's article analyzes the reasons why fat intake is still being discussed at great length in breast cancer advice despite scientific studies that do not justify a focus on eating habits as opposed to environmental factors. Yadlon also tackles the belief, widespread among many within the lesbian community as well as outside of it, that the "life-style" of lesbians consists of a series of risk factors for breast cancer.

We would like to take this opportunity to announce that James Brooks's insightful study, "'This Evil Extends Especially . . . to the Feminine Sex': Negotiating Captivity in the New Mexico Borderlands," published in Volume 22, no. 2, has won the Coalition for Western Women's History's Jensen-Miller Prize for the best journal article published in 1996 on the history of women in the American West.

With this issue, we also bid farewell to two longtime editors who are stepping down from the board. Between them, Rayna Rapp and Ellen Ross have accumulated thirty-two years of service to the journal. They contributed not only endless time and energy, intellectual enthusiasm, skilled nurturing of authors and their manuscripts, but also a spirited vision of feminist scholarship which will be deeply missed. We thank them for their contributions and wish them well in civilian life.

Finally, and sadly, we mourn the passing of Elaine Ryan Hedges who died this June at the age of 69. Elaine's work on the contributions of American women to literature and the arts opened new doors in and for feminist scholarship. In 1972, she founded one of the oldest and most respected Women's Studies programs at Towson State University in Maryland where she remained as director until last year. Elaine was an early and steadfast friend as well as a contributor to *Feminist Studies*. We published her famous essay, "The Nineteenth-Century Diarist and Her Quilts," in summer 1982. Professor emeritus in English, Elaine was a sensitive editor as well as an accomplished author. Her work included a classic edition of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *The Yellow Wallpaper*, a compilation of the writings of Meridel Le Sueur entitled *Ripenings: Selected Works, 1927-1982*, and, most recently, a collection of her own essays, *Listening to Silence*. She shall be missed.

Sandra Gunning and Mariana Valverde,  
for the editors