

## Preface

Where is a woman at home? In her body, her household, her country, her family, her marriage, her job? And what rights and responsibilities, what subjectivities and sensibilities, what protections and dangers come with being at home, between homes, homeless? The articles in this volume explore the physical, emotional, economic, ideological, aesthetic, and political dimensions of affiliation and alienation, desire and fear that accompany women's experiences of home in its multiple and competing dimensions.

The first two articles focus on bodies as sites of comfort, conflict, and commerce. In "Come Out, Come Out Whatever You've Got! or, Still Crazy after All These Years," Susan K. Cahn offers a powerful meditation on the ways that sexual desire and physical illness confound our sense of being at home with ourselves. Embracing a lesbian identity in 1975, at age seventeen, she was transformed from "a lonely gender misfit" to "a loud proud lesbian who had made the pilgrimage to the lesbian-feminist Mecca of Berkeley, California." Finding an emotional and physical refuge in this new-found world, Cahn was swept up in the tide of gay rights, feminism, and queer studies for twenty years, until she floundered on the alien shoals of a chronic illness. That illness, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, challenged the physical, psychic, emotional, and financial resources she had garnered over the previous two decades. In this eloquent and witty essay, she struggles with the meaning of her illness, with the ways that it echoes earlier debates over sexual orientation, and with its significance for rethinking issues of self and tolerance.

Pei-Chia Lan's article, "Working in a Neon Cage: Bodily Labor of Cosmetics Saleswomen in Taiwan," explores the working lives of cosmetic saleswomen in Taiwan, analyzing how their bodies are disciplined to "embody, promote, and deliver the beauty images and normalizing discourses to customers on the shop floor." Focusing on the commercialization of women's bodies as capitalists seek to make the culture of Western beauty familiar to Taiwanese women, Lan traces efforts at both regulation and resistance among women. Immersing herself in the experiences of those performing "bodily labor," Lan shows "how workers negotiate their identities in the contested practice of daily work."

Cosmetic saleswomen are never fully at home with the Caucasian ideals popularized by the media and multinational corporations. They alternately celebrate and critique the body industries that offer them minimal economic autonomy, complicated occupational and personal identities, and opportunities for individual and collective subversions of existing roles and images.

The creative work in this section explores further the myriad ways that bodies operate as sites of culture. Dramatizing the physical and emotional constraints of living between two cultures, S. Li's story, "My Sister and I: Whose Voice Are We Making?" takes her protagonist from rural China to the United States in search of an academic career. In her arresting portrayal of the difficulties involved in navigating between the China of familial memory and graduate school in the U.S., Li's story also addresses the political opportunities and problems of speaking about or for Chinese women and families in the context of a global, but still Western, feminism. As with Li's story, the poems in this section by Carole Anne Taylor, Dawn McDuffie, Sarah Avery, and Brianne Russell reveal the often delicate, sometimes harsh interplay of women with their bodies, families, and memories.

The second set of articles contemplate the fragility of "home" for women in a variety of contexts: personal, national, economic, familial, and political. In "Subaltern Cosmopolitanism: Community and Transnational Mobility in Caribbean Postcolonial Feminist Writings," Jamil Khader offers readers a persuasive analysis of how Puerto Rican feminist writers have responded to the trauma of U.S. imperialism through "the rewriting of home and nation in the diaspora." He explores the fallout of Puerto Rican migration to the United States, where new articulations of identity—a "subaltern cosmopolitan perspective"—are built through transnational networks. At the same time, what he terms "new social agendas" are crafted in response to women's alienation from both their metropolitan and originary "homes." In conversation with Khader's analysis, Annelise Orleck's review essay, "Gender, Race, and Citizenship Rights: New Views of an Ambivalent History," brings to our attention new scholarship on gender, race, and status that challenges traditional complacencies about the meaning of U.S. citizenship. Reviewing the arguments of Evelyn Nakano Glenn and Alice Kessler-Harris regarding the legal and economic construction of rights-bearing citizens, Orleck emphasizes how the hierarchical dependency of those who "belong" is created in part by the exclusion of those who are perceived to be marginal, such as migrant laborers and non-citizens.

Analyzing as Orleck does, the politics of entitlement, Elaine S. Abelson in her article, "'Women Who Have No Men to Work for Them': Gender and Homelessness in the Great Depression, 1930-1934" points to the historic invisibility of women among the ranks of the homeless. As her essay

on gender and deprivation during the Great Depression makes clear, even those agencies dedicated to providing for the homeless were reluctant to acknowledge the gendered effects of poverty because such an admission would have challenged the society's ideals of both the female homemaker and the male worker. Thus, during the 1930s, women were not allowed to stand in breadlines but were escorted instead through side doors to cavernous rooms where they received a meal and, if lucky, a bed. Elly Simmons's art provides a vivid counterpoint to Abelson's article. In her featured work, Simmons illuminates issues of home and homelessness, belonging and alienation among "American" women. The accompanying poetic tribute to Simmons by Jack Hirschman, echoes Khader's appreciation of the cultural and political work performed by artists grappling with injustice, abandonment, poverty, and various forms of resistance to all three. Hirschman claims that in the 1980s, the streets of the United States filled up "with open palms and a homeless misery that was different in quality from even the days of the Great Depression." The poems in this section by Donna J. Gelagotis Lee, Dawn McDuffie, Nancy King, and Rachel Norton also reflect upon the complexities of home, homelessness, and community.

The final two articles in this issue explore public challenges to conventional assumptions about domestic relations. Lisa Levenstein, winner of the 2002 *Feminist Studies* Graduate Student Award, examines in rich detail poor women's responses to domestic violence in mid-twentieth-century Philadelphia. Her title, "Hard Choices at 1801 Vine: Poor Women's Legal Actions against Men in Post-World War II Philadelphia," reflects her argument that for these poor women, the U.S. "legal system was both a resource and a constraint." In the post-Depression period, the court system did provide "unique mechanisms" to help poor women "address gendered aspects of poverty." At the same time, it often forced them to choose, for themselves and their children, "between freedom from violence and freedom from hunger." Tracing black and white women's use of Philadelphia's municipal courts in the 1940s and 1950s, Levenstein demonstrates their nuanced understanding of the court's powers and their collective ability to negotiate and reshape—although never control—the legal system from which they sought redress.

Few women caught in the conundrums offered by municipal courts in the post-World War II period were likely to be familiar with the sex radical challenges to conventional marriage articulated earlier in the twentieth century. Yet their lives and those of all the "women who had no men to work for them" suggest the continued salience of such critiques. Christina Simmons, in her article, "Women's Power in Sex Radical Challenges to Marriage in the Early-Twentieth-Century United States," offers a wide-ranging analysis of the literary, anarchist, bohemian, feminist, and black challenges to marriage that converged from the

1910s through the 1930s when sex radicalism flourished in the United States. Recreating the worlds of sex radicals, Simmons draws on writings by U.S- and Caribbean-born New Negroes, birth controllers, anarchists, and socialists to illuminate the various arguments made by women and men, black and white, against traditional marriage. Some challenged its patriarchal, monogamous character, others its procreative assumptions, still others the racial regulations and legal constraints that increasingly defined the institution. Simmons hones in on differences and disagreements among the various sex radicals but in the end argues that their collective if complicated hope for personal freedom and social connection offers powerful legacies for our own time. The poems in this section by Eileen Moeller, Dawn McDuffie, Paisley Rekdal, and Jennifer Firestone offer a glimpse of sex radicalism in our own time.

Throughout the twentieth century, feminist scholars and activists have deconstructed and reconstructed concepts of home, nation, family, marriage, and body. The articles, art, essays, stories, and poems that appear in this issue deepen and extend this tradition, making clear the connections between these critiques and the everyday lives of women, whatever their concept or experience of home.

Sandra Gunning and Nancy Hewitt,  
for the editors