

Preface

Feminists in the United States and beyond have always imagined themselves to be defiantly resistant, agents of transformation. Yet, precisely because feminist practices inevitably arise out of the very cultural and political modalities they seek to challenge, the question remains: in what ways are such practices also sites of erasure and cooptation? The scholarly and creative work in this issue tackle a number of important topics long familiar to feminists: racialized appropriation; war, power, and female embodiment; the realities of exclusion and inclusion; sexual discrimination, abuse, and resistance. Representing a number of points of view, these texts engage in a lively conversation about the responsibilities, possibilities, and some of the failings of feminism in a variety of historical and cultural arenas. As a group, the articles teach us not so much that battles are lost or won between well-defined adversaries for or against feminism, but that some of the most crucial and subtle conflicts are those within and among feminists themselves.

For instance, our first cluster of articles addresses the consequences of hidden histories of experience that have generally been rendered invisible against the backdrop of more established feminist narratives of political activism. Thus, Carrie N. Baker's "Race, Class, and Sexual Harassment in the 1970s" reminds us that a great deal of the development in U.S. sexual harassment law was pioneered by women of color—and working-class women at that—long before Anita Hill challenged Clarence Thomas before the nation's television cameras in the 1990s. Baker argues that in many ways white middle-class feminists have helped perpetuate the assumption that they are the primary targets of sexual harassment, thereby masking the larger dimensions of the problem for all women and thus hampering full eradication. Similarly, Teresa C. Zackodnik, in "I Don't Know How You Will Feel When I Get Through': Racial Difference, Woman's Rights, and Sojourner Truth," discusses the questionable usage made by U.S. feminists, past and present, of the images and purported words of the ex-slave turned abolitionist and woman's suffragist, Sojourner Truth. Zackodnik shows us that often the most stirring narratives of female heroism can mask a dangerous and distorting naturalization of race, class, and sexuality. Touching on the related themes, Jessica

Dallow's, "Reclaiming Histories: Betye and Alison Saar, Feminism, and the Representation of Black Womanhood," provides an in depth analysis of the black mother and daughter artists, Betye and Alison Saar, and their attempts to create new visual languages for describing the black female body. By telling a multi-generational story, Dallow challenges long-standing assumptions of both the history of African American representations of the black female nude, as well as the fraught racial politics of twentieth-century women's art. In conversation with these scholarly essays are a number of creative pieces by Deborah Selbach, Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Mitsuye Yamada, and Elizabeth Rees, all of which offer sometimes subtle, sometimes deliberately disturbing views of ordinary people surviving crises, or war, or making peace with uncomfortable histories.

The second cluster of articles engages centrally with female embodiment to interrogate the stories we tell ourselves about bodies, epistemologies of "experience," the place of bodily death for the living, visualities, and corporeal transformations through speaking the body. Two of the articles in this cluster additionally address feminist critiques of expert techno-scientific discourses and practices concerning the female body, as well as alternative feminist knowledges that imply reimagining the female body otherwise. Michelle Murphy, in "Immodest Witnessing: The Epistemology of Vaginal Self-Examination in the U.S. Feminist Self-Help Movement," explores some of the meanings, implications, and effects of the vaginal self-exam in the radical feminist self-help movement of the 1970s, mainly for white middle-class women participants. Murphy historicizes feminist collective self-exams to question, critique, and partially recuperate the mode in which feminists deployed experience as evidence about the body. In contrast to the "modest," so-called objective and disembodied (white male) expert gynecological witness to the medicalized vaginal exam, Murphy views feminist women collectively performing the vaginal self-exam as "immodest" political agents. The self-examining radical feminists display their embodiment in the act of visualizing their marked bodies, interpret and constitute their bodies through self-observation, and affirm themselves and all women as a sex class through this collective act. As a creative contrast, poet Marcella Fleischman Pixley and fiction writer Marjorie Saunders provide quite different perspectives on bodies and embodied witnessing.

Stephanie Hartman's article, "Reading the Scar in Breast Cancer Poetry," continues the thematics of the body, fear, witnessing, agency, and healing. In Hartman's account, the well-known feminist poets, Marilyn Hacker, Hilda Raz, Audre Lorde, and Lucille Clifton, creatively transform the living post-mastectomy female body by reimagining the scar. The poets Hartman discusses begin where Murphy's vaginal self-examiners left off, with Second Wave U.S. feminist conceptions of the body as demedicalized, whole, and as a site of women's agency. As with

Murphy's speaking, self-observing, self-knowledge-producing subjects, the poets Hartman discusses privilege their own gaze, reconstitute their own bodies, produce corporeal knowledge, and break oppressive silences. Instead of the hidden vagina that can be productively made visible in feminist practice, here the poets reformulate and reappropriate for themselves that which is all too visible post-mastectomy: the scar. Across their poems, the feminist poets all, albeit differentially, reconstitute the body marked by the scar in invented geographical and relational terms, be it through imagined maps (Hacker), new landscapes (Raz), frontiers (Lorde), or a companion (Clifton). In this process they metamorphose the body from organic matter to inorganic and back again.

The third cluster continues to address thematics of visibility, invisibility, and of marking, but they shift into the register specifically of geopolitics and regimes of oppression. Like the articles in the first and second clusters of this issue, these pieces center on revealing the voices and experiences of otherwise hidden subaltern subjects. However, they deal very centrally with issues of inclusion and exclusion. For instance, the poems by Rita D. Costello and Judith Sornberger bring our attention to places and spaces of disenfranchisement and the rich and varied practices of self-invention undertaken by women and their communities. In her 2002 *Feminist Studies* Award-winning article, "Happy Heterogeneity? Feminism, Development, and the Grassroots Women's Movement in Peru," Annalise Moser discusses the politics of elite and grassroots volunteer women's organizations in Peru and the shifting politics of cooperation and competition among women's groups, which often opens the door for manipulation by the state as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Moser is especially careful to foreground the voices of working-class women, who are often sidelined by more visible elite women activists.

Rounding out the specific theme of subalternity and the larger topics of this issue of *Feminist Studies* are two illuminating book review essays on the subject of class, home, and displacement, and gender and citizenship respectively, by Renny Christopher and Heidi Tinsman. Christopher focuses on a combination of scholarly studies and nonacademic memoirs, all of which explore gendered, working-class, queer identities, in conversation with questions of shame, loss, home, and belonging. Her choice of memoirs covers a variety of regional perspectives, from the South to the Southwest to California, although the academic texts offer broader analyses of capitalism, labor, the family, and the articulation of gender and sexual agency. Tinsman offers a commentary on three new books addressing the rise of nationalism and citizenship in South America and the Middle East. For her it is crucial that all scholars appreciate the rich and highly consequential analytical frameworks feminists have to offer on the topic of republican citizenship. This new scholarship offers

numerous examples, from Peru and Chile to Lebanon and Syria, of allegiances across class, politics, caste, and gender lines that emerged in the context of state formation. Tinsman foregrounds the agency of women in the formation of national identities, even as "citizen" itself became a term eventually and continually gendered masculine and requiring the near banishment of women to the home.

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