

## preface

THIS ISSUE OF *Feminist Studies* explores constructions of gender and sexuality evident in the negotiation of life in regions as far apart as South Korea, the Appalachian United States, Nigeria, Spain, and France. The articles examine the crafting of gender—and especially masculinity—through the shifting relationships between “tradition” and “modernity” in the twentieth century. These constructions, the articles and creative pieces argue, are not monolithic or uniform, but are complexly articulated through local configurations of identity and practice. Rebecca R. Scott illustrates, through support for an environmentally destructive form of coal mining in a small Appalachian town, how “traditions” of family-wage labor and gendered notions of masculinity and work structure present-day understandings of labor, citizenship, and belonging in the United States. Steven Pierce describes the economy of gender and sexual morality in Northern Nigeria, calling for a more dynamic analysis of gendered relationships that “cannot be reduced to a struggle between Islam and the West or between feminism and patriarchal reaction.” Nerea Aresti explains how the reality of life on the streets of Madrid exposed the contradictory and contested state of ideals of Spanish masculinity at the end of the 1920s, and Andrea Mansker explores the struggle of French feminists at the beginning of the twentieth century to weaken the ideal of the Republican mother in an attempt to draw attention to the restricted legal and social status of single women. Na Young Lee traces the influence of the Japanese regulation of prostitution in South Korea on the policies and practices of U.S. military bases there after 1945. This issue of *Feminist Studies* dramatizes the resilience and the determination with which groups as diverse as South Korean sex workers, working-class families in Appalachia, divorcées in Northern

Nigeria, and unmarried women in France have approached the economic and social constraints of gendered existence and evolved their own pragmatic ways to shape alternative ways of living.

Rebecca R. Scott, in her article, “Dependent Masculinity and Political Culture in Pro-Mountaintop Removal Discourse: Or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Dragline,” which won the 2006 *Feminist Studies* Award for graduate students, addresses the shaping of masculinity by local contexts. Analyzing the support of coal miners in Appalachian West Virginia for the environmentally destructive practice of “mountaintop removal” or MTR coal mining, Scott makes an elegant and complex argument about the ways in which gendered constructions of work—embodied in the image of the heterosexual white male breadwinner—intersect with, exemplify, and rearticulate understandings of freedom, citizenship, and belonging in the United States. Based on interviews with both laborers and management involved with the coal mining enterprise in Blair, West Virginia, Scott argues for the ways in which what she terms a “dependent” form of masculinity, shaped by the idea of male family-wage labor as central to “legitimate” work and citizenship, constructs and structures people’s supportive attitudes toward a practice that is destroying their environment and, ultimately, their very means of livelihood. Locating the environmental politics of MTR coal mining and Blair, West Virginia, within “hegemonic U.S. identity formations of whiteness, heterosexuality, and masculinity,” Scott shows us how this specific story is as much a story of negotiated masculinities as a “U.S. story of morality and freedom.”

Steven Pierce, in “Identity, Performance, and Secrecy: Gendered Life and the ‘Modern’ in Northern Nigeria,” examines the dynamic ways in which Hausa inhabitants of Kano and Ungogo, Northern Nigeria, use discretion and mutual tolerance to work around the strictures and gender norms of the Islamic state in which they now live. “Being ‘good,’” he notes, “is as much a matter of popular assessment as of actual conduct,” and sexual subcultures, some of them fairly recent, flourish in urban settings such as Kano. Although Islam and the family are still important contexts for the emergence of moral codes, many Nigerians employ *kunya*, “modesty,” as a way of enabling alternative, often nonreproductive, lifestyles. A number of these pre-date the arrival of late capi-

talism in Nigeria, and gendered life there reflects a premodern, as well as a postmodern, way of organizing gender.

The cultural negotiation of modernity and masculinity is also explored by Nerea Aresti in “Shaping the Spanish Modern Man: The Conflict of Masculine Ideals through a Court Case in the 1920s.” Aresti examines a notorious trial in Madrid in 1929, at which José González de la Cámara was tried for physically assaulting a young Colombian woman, María Otero, on her honeymoon. González made an obscene remark, known as a *piropo*, to Otero while she was waiting alone in the street, and then, after her husband struck him, González stabbed her in the stomach. The trial highlighted the conflicted nature of masculinity in Spain. There was a huge public outcry against González and the kind of decadent manhood he seemed to represent, but debate around the trial revealed the extent to which a more progressive masculinity was peculiarly hard to envision in the Spanish context. The dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, eager to shore up the conservative values enshrined in the new Penal Code, decided to make an example of González, issuing statements that suggested it would move swiftly to restore traditional Spanish manhood. Progressive sectors of society, on the other hand, used the example of González to imagine a different, more modern masculinity, one characterized by men who are rational, austere, and hard working. As Aresti demonstrates, “because there was no single unifying definition of a national stereotype of masculinity, and because the different alternatives were tied to more general political agendas, the evolution of Spanish politics was able to change the direction of the evolution of gender ideals drastically.”

The relationship between state ideology and the politics of masculinity is at issue also in Andrea Mansker’s “Vive ‘Mademoiselle’! The Politics of Singleness in Early Twentieth-Century French Feminism,” which won the 2007 Feminist Studies Award. Mansker focuses on the 1911 appeal of French feminist Arria Ly that women forego marriage in the name of feminism, permanently adopting the title “Mademoiselle” as an expression of the purity and independence of the state of virginity. Ly’s idea, like González’s court case, generated a widespread public debate and exposed some of the faultlines both in contemporary French feminist thought and in French republican ideals. Although French feminism in the early twen-

tieth century has always been perceived as pro-marriage and pro-maternity, Mansker shows that there were in fact considerable numbers of single women in France at that period whose interests were being served neither by the French state nor by French feminism. She uses an extended discussion of the social and legal implications of the title “Mademoiselle” to argue that French codes of honor made the establishment of autonomous selfhood for single women particularly difficult. However, becoming a “Madame” was an even worse fate: married French women could not sue in court, acquire or sell property, or work without the permission of their spouses. Ly argued that such was the stigma of being called “Mademoiselle” that women were prepared to trade in the majority of their civil rights just to acquire the status of “Madame.” Mansker concludes that “viewing the French women’s movement from the perspective of singlehood reveals a more wide-ranging and nuanced debate about women’s potential for citizenship than an analysis of suffragists’ maternal rhetoric might suggest.”

Gender and state policy in a time of war come to play in Na Young Lee’s article, “The Construction of Military Prostitution in South Korea during the U.S. Military Rule, 1945-1948,” in which she explores U.S. state policy in South Korea during its military rule of that country from 1945-1948. Lee argues that although the U.S. military government formally abolished licensed prostitution in the name of liberal democracy, it continued to regulate prostitutes and control the spread of STDs among its troops by utilizing the infrastructure created by the Japanese during their occupation of Korea. In other words, during U.S. military rule in Korea, despite public declarations to the contrary, “camptown” prostitution (the “market for sex around foreign military bases”) was both tolerated and regulated and can be seen, Lee argues, as a legacy of Japanese colonial policies and specific ideologies of gender and sexuality.

Masculinity is at issue again, juxtaposed against times of war and aggression, in the art work of Linda Stein, which is reproduced in our art essay. Jann Matlock places Stein’s work in the context of the “masculinization” of protection in the United States following the September 11 attacks. Stein’s *Knights* are unmistakably female, despite their body armor. Invoking Wonder Woman, which was created in 1941 to protect the coun-

try from an earlier war, Stein imagines a world in which women ward off danger and are remembered for it (unlike the female first responders who died on September 11, whose stories have been largely neglected by the media in favor of images of muscle-bound, intrepid men). Stein, who was one of the few interviewees to stand up to Sacha Baron Cohen in the film *Borat*, includes an enigmatic reproduction of Cohen in *Knights*, asking viewers to interrogate their ideas about masculinity, vulnerability, and global politics. The presence of Cohen attracts attention to the ways in which, increasingly, we are losing sight of the politics of the local; and Stein's use of found objects draws us back to domestic details and the everyday lives whose detritus speaks so profoundly of loss. Women are center stage in the drama of prevention and reparation played out in Stein's most recent work.

Calling for an expansion of the terms of the debate(s), Laura Hyun Yi Kang's review essay argues for, as the title indicates, a "Feminist Studies of Asian American Literary/Cultural Studies," rather than merely including Asian American women in women's studies or recognizing feminism as a gendered problem in Asian American studies. Reviewing three recent texts, Kandice Chuh's *Imagine Otherwise*, Elena Creef's *Imagining Japanese America*, and Gayatri Gopinath's *Impossible Desires*, each of which traces the contours of three different "impossible subjects"—Asian American, Japanese American, and queer South Asian diasporic female—Kang illustrates how these books serve less as "sites of origin and identity" than as "dense archives of cultural, discursive, and epistemological struggle . . . that highlight how these 'impossible subjects' have not been and cannot be contained within a single nation-space of belonging or historical narrative of becoming." In this process, Kang shows how these texts are part of a growing body of literature that not only deconstructs the category/subject "Asian American," but by that process, allows for the investigation of the relationship of Asian American studies not just with other disciplinary formations, but with other interdisciplinary fields, including but not limited to transnational studies and feminist studies.

Like many of the articles in this issue, the creative writing explores the negotiation of multiple, sometimes conflicting gendered expectations and contexts, the shadow stories and hidden worlds of contemporary society.

Emari DiGiorgio's poems present woman as both fighter and lover. In "His Daughter," men's tools are a metaphor for what women need to keep themselves safe in a world full of men with guns; but in "Her Geography" the woman's body unfolds into a tender and inviting ocean. "The Tab," by Feng Feng Hutchins, imagines the life of a little girl in Malaysia, left by her mother to take care of a drunken and abusive father and two younger siblings. The harshness of a world dominated by men is mediated through the mother's brusque instruction to her daughter never to owe anything to anyone. A similar feeling of powerlessness and exposure is examined in Linda Warren's poem "Eviction Sequence," in which a homeless woman imagines her various options to get a night's sleep. Finally, in Chere Sherrard's "A Woman's Ambition," an African American Republican politician is made uncomfortably aware of the cruel effects of her opportunistic political compromises on other black people when she is visited by spirits from the past, present, and future.

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