

preface

THIS ISSUE OF *Feminist Studies* features essays that highlight the complex intersections and divergences of gender and sexuality, of work and leisure, in times of peace and war. The first two essays connect rhetorics of masculinity and of warfare in ways that have disempowered and damaged women. In “‘No Official Requirement’: Women, History, Time, and the U.S. Space Program,” Marie Lathers analyzes the 1962 hearings of a subcommittee of the U.S. House of Representatives that was convened to investigate possible gender discrimination in the qualifications established for astronauts of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). Several women pilots with extensive experience had applied to become astronauts on space missions, and Jerrie Cobb and Jane B. Hart argued that they were well qualified to fly in space. Cobb said that they should have a chance for “a place in our Nation’s space future without discrimination. We ask as citizens of this Nation to be allowed to participate with seriousness and sincerity in the making of history now, as women have in the past.” However, Jackie Cochran, a World War II pilot, agreed with the testifying male astronauts and congressional representatives that women’s participation would slow U.S. competition in the space race with the Soviets, a demand that took precedence. The catch-22 provision that barred women was a ruling that only pilots with jet test-pilot experience could apply to be astronauts, and no women were admitted to the military schools that provided such training. While the women argued that words such as “qualifications” and “experience” in the call for astronauts should be interpreted more broadly, the opposition claimed this qualification was not discriminatory, but a necessary way of selecting the most appropriate candidates. Ironically, as the hearings were being held, President Lyndon Johnson had already decided to prevent U.S.

women from taking to space, which they were finally able to do only after the political pressures of the women's liberation movement in the 1970s.

Whereas in the rhetoric of the space program, women lack the proper qualifications for space flight and military service, in current rhetorics of fear and terrorism, it is warfare itself that is gendered: nuclear danger and conventional warfare are masculinized, while bioterrorism is feminized as sneaky, treacherous, unpredictable, lethal, and unfair. Ruth Cecire demonstrates in "Bioweapons: Postmodern Ruminations on a Premodern Modality" that weapons function as gendered

interpretive keys to larger cultural and psychological subtexts. As instruments of death and destruction, they ignite our imagination by tapping unconscious intimations of personal extinction. As projections of our inner demons, weapons evoke dread and/or denial; as conduits for cultural norms they mark the changing configurations of "the barbaric"; as societal "defense" mechanisms, weapons serve to sanitize inner rage by operationalizing it.

Biological and chemical weapons have been outlawed by international conventions, whereas conventional and nuclear weaponry are still considered makers of men and avenues of heroism. Cecire argues that the pariah status of bioweapons is related to the feminizing and "weaponizing" of disease and that this social detraction is, in turn, related to a new global world order in which poor countries and insurgent forces can stand up to the massive military deployments of countries like the United States by mobilizing inexpensive and invasive forms of bioterrorism.

Three of the poets featured in this issue explore the consciousness of women caught within such gendered regimes of death and destruction. Israeli peace activist and poet Dahlia Ravikovitch, who died in 2005, uses apocalyptic Old Testament allusions to describe a "whirlwind" and a house "divided against itself, / one half polished and well-arrayed, / the other burnt black as a coal," as she grieves her divided nation and her own loss of custody of her son. Emma Bolden puts herself in the consciousness of women persecuted as witches in the European Middle Ages to reveal the other side of a massive crime against women in history, particularly single women, women outsiders "Running from the Village at Midnight," or

midwives officiating at moments of birth and death who are punished for acceding to demands for their knowledge, for herbs, as “prim lips” “spit” at the “threshold” of the outcast’s home. Julie R. Enszer’s poetry also voices outrage against unnecessary violence and early death, but she seeks to put mourning in proportion. Responding to Judith Arcana’s grief at the loss of two inspiring feminist writers born in the 1920s, Grace Paley and Jane Cooper, Enszer reminds us that “[t]his is death / in its natural order, . . . / women my grandmother’s age die,” in contrast to the premature deaths of friends with AIDS. Yet Enszer also speaks of consolations, of the rich donor who for a moment can touch another man’s hair “tenderly,” and even of the triumphs of activism and nostalgia for its struggles: “we made this world. / Changed what it means to be queer” / “Once we were the match. / Once we were the flames.”

Ostensibly about a subject synonymous with death and destruction, Diana Kurz’s Holocaust paintings, as revealed to us through Evelyn Torton Beck’s art essay, depict portraits not of victims, but of “ordinary people still full of life who unapologetically take up space.” As Beck notes, the paintings—of people in Kurz’s family and others who perished in the Holocaust—are Kurz’s “work of repair: their story is also her story, for as she realizes, *they* who did not escape could easily have been herself. . . . These portraits are a link to the past and her legacy to the future.” Elegantly locating the philosophy of Kurz’s paintings through a quest to explain why the painter began this series, so different in style and content from her earlier work, Beck allows us to visualize Diana Kurz’s process of memory, loss, and repair—a journey that resonates with Beck’s own past as a Holocaust survivor. These are not depictions of “violence and destruction” as much as “loss and preservation,” Beck tells us, which seek to “engulf the viewer” through their size, color, subject, and form, capturing the brutal contrasts of the everyday and embedding these in “reminders of the historical reality,” as “prayers that serve as a kind of Greek chorus” to tell a different story when seen from the vantage point of history. These devices are as effective as the Emily Dickinson poems to which Beck alludes: they “foreground the colorful portraits . . . telling the whole truth, but ‘telling it slant.’” The Holocaust paintings serve in effect as “memorial candles,” as Beck evocatively characterizes them: enduring portraits of “the specific

extending into the universal, a memorial to all the innocents who have been killed the world over in wars and genocides, which have not abated in our time.” Ultimately, Beck notes, “Kurz’s project of bringing the dead back to life in the form of art validated my own sense of loss and opened a space for me to celebrate my own dead”—a journey (and representation) that is at once powerful, moving, and above all, alive.

As war is traditionally gendered male, so is waged work, and this set of associations is related to the prestige of wage labor and the devaluation of leisure that has hampered campaigns for more balanced lives. In her article, “Hours for What We Will”: Work, Family, and the Movement for Shorter Hours,” Kathi Weeks focuses on the movement for shorter working hours in the United States in the 1990s. She argues that this campaign “should be conceived as both a *demand* and a *perspective*” that reveals “the current organization of work and the dominant discourses that surround it,” thus serving “as both a call to act collectively and an opportunity to think differently.” Drawing on three different cases for shorter hours—each encapsulated by a representative text—Weeks persuasively argues that a critical evaluation of their underlying rationales might serve to create a “more compelling, broadly appealing demand and a richer, more generative perspective.” Such a demand calls for the destabilization of the traditional family and of conventionally raced and gendered divisions of labor as anchoring tropes. Instead, it fashions itself around the “goals of freedom and autonomy.” The first text Weeks highlights is Arlie Russell Hochschild’s well-known study, *The Time Bind: When Work Becomes Home and Home Becomes Work* (1997). While making an important argument for rethinking the values of our work-obsessed culture, Hochschild frames her thesis in terms of the family, implicitly privileging specific family forms and thus naturalizing and idealizing the institution. Such an argument, Weeks contends, perpetuates a normative model of the family and overlooks the gendered division of labor, even as it makes an important case for reexamining conceptions of work and articulating the importance of shorter hours. The second case, illustrated by “The Post-Work Manifesto” by Stanley Aronowitz et al. (1998), does not privilege the family in its arguments for a shorter work day. Instead, it emphasizes time for “what we will” (including leisure time) but remains limited by circum-

scribing conceptions of work to waged (men's) work, insufficiently interrogating gendered constructions of work and divisions of labor. It thereby calls merely for a rearrangement rather than a reduction of paid work time. The third text Weeks examines is Valerie Lehr's *Queer Family Values: Debunking the Myth of the Nuclear Family* (1999), which "recognizes the relevance of the household to the topic of work hours but seeks to avoid advancing a normative discourse of the family." By decentering the heterosexual family, this perspective allows us to get beyond the limited framework that pits "work" against "family." Rather, this approach focuses the movement on "expand[ing] the range of possibilities," thereby articulating a demand for shorter hours of waged labor that permits "the time to imagine, experiment with, and participate in the kinds of practices and relationships—private and public, intimate and social—that 'we will.'"

But, of course, heterosexuality is not always synonymous with the family. For some young women, heterosex is a way of achieving autonomy outside the family, while for other women, sex is already waged labor that may or may not be governed according to "what" the women "will." Amy Schalet's review essay on teenage heterosexuality in the United States looks especially on the "unique dilemmas that teenage girls faced in negotiating their sexuality in the post-sexual revolution era." Feminist works since the 1970s set the terms for understanding the pleasures and dangers of sexuality, while conservative forces restricted dialogue with their unsubstantiated claims about the dangers of premarital sexuality and virtues of abstinence. Schalet surveys the last decade's qualitative scholarship on teen sexuality that fills in our knowledge, especially of the early sexual experiences of heterosexual girls. Victims of love unprepared for abandonment, cagey samplers of sexual experience, or negotiators for mutuality, the teenagers interviewed give clear evidence of the difficulties of finding sexual subjectivity and agency in this era of conflicting expectations and gendered double binds. Schalet says the good girl/bad girl dichotomy needs to be abolished along with the girl/boy double standard, while the scholarship she surveys suggests the ways that social class underlies both girls' experiences of sex and their judgments of one another. Valuable as this scholarship is, Schalet suggests that it needs more sense of the institutional constraints on adolescents, not just of their indi-

vidual choices. Such scholarship would also benefit from coordination with larger scale public health studies that are currently empirically broad but theoretically thin. Furthermore, Schalet says scholarship on adolescent sexuality needs more attention to the experiences of girls of color and of all boys, preferably by researchers with whom the teenagers will willingly share their experiences. Schalet finds that the white female scholars she reviews probe their girl informants, but their accounts of boys' sexuality merely hint at conflicts underlying their terse responses. The "empowerment model" that Schalet seeks can put forward a positive endorsement of sexual experience, primarily for older adolescents, as opposed to the dangers model currently in force. Adolescents need adult guidance and information that they are now rarely getting, Schalet concludes, in order to have the "physical and emotional self-knowledge to protect themselves against destructive external forces" and to build relationships of intimacy and trust.

Rachel Schreiber's "Before Their Makers and Their Judges: Prostitutes and White Slaves in the Political Cartoons of the *Masses* (New York, 1911-1917)" analyzes graphic art, exploring satirical representations of those who profited from the sex work of others. In particular, Schreiber looks at the art and political cartoons of John Sloan, George Bellows, and Glenn Coleman, who were especially known for their sketches of working-class women and prostitutes in the New York-based magazine, the *Masses*. Using the cartoons and art work in this "socialist-in-predilection" journal as a lens through which to access "oppositional voices on issues surrounding prostitution, including but not limited to the issue of white slavery," Schreiber highlights the gendered double standards and the moral panics occasioned by shifting public/private boundaries and new forms of women's labor and mobility at the beginning of the twentieth century. Contrary to mainstream media images, the *Masses* cartoons allow for a far broader range of female subjectivities and sexualities than a simple dichotomous characterization of either "virtuous or vice-ridden," she argues. Their alternative images reveal the young working-class women as active agents in their own right, attempting to live independent lives in an urban environment. Moreover, these images highlight the broader social structures, such as "the male client, the judicial system, and commercial

interests” that produce the figure of the prostitute. Such graphic forms of satire reveal the ways in which fear about women’s changing public place in urban society anchored the moral panics and specter of white slavery of the period. Political cartoons in the *Masses* serve, in this respect, to reveal a far more complex picture of women’s subjectivities, sexualities, agency, and labor histories than is available through the mainstream media.

Another kind of artist than those who drew for the *Masses*, poet Dana Sonnenschein takes a humorous look at art and the self-importance of the artist. In “The Collapse of Distance between Subject and Object,” the artist’s model offers the artist some helpful corrections, showing she is not a mere elegant form to be sketched but a perceptive practitioner herself. And in “Knitting,” the speaker reflects on how “any thing / may be composed of one line / looped back and forth upon itself,” although the work of artistry may all unravel and need to be knitted again.

We close this issue with two reports from the field on the mixed effects of feminist activist efforts. Jen Marchbank reports on the closing of undergraduate women’s studies programs in Britain, on the media’s gleeful gloating, and on the continued viability of women’s studies scholarship and research. Eileen Boris and Lisa Levenstein recount the efforts of feminist scholars, from a variety of disciplines, as they attempted to wield influence over the political process involved in developing the economic stimulus policies of the Obama administration, endeavoring to ensure that women are not left out of the stimulus programs as they were left out of most of Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal programs.

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