

## preface

THIS ISSUE OF *Feminist Studies* presents an array of articles exploring political, economic, legal, and discursive forces in very different societies and times. The range of forces examined include neoliberalism in contemporary Brazil and in post-Soviet Cuba, laws regulating women's speech in early twentieth-century Ireland, classical liberal Western influences on Egyptian street literature, and institutional narratives about women's aggression in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Scandinavia. Woven throughout are people's innovative responses to forces that appear beyond their immediate control: from the highly politicized Brazilian feminist attempts to construct coalitions across widening class divides, to Cuban discourses of nostalgia as a means to reassert dearly held moral values, to Irish women's use of "uncharitable" speech to assert themselves in the context of family and community conflict, to Martha Rosler's striking vision of art in the interstices of everyday life. Our featured fiction and poetry grapple with problems related to racism, destructive relationships, and deteriorating health. This issue's book review essay on posthumanism and race challenges us to rethink agency by incorporating non-human matter and animals, while also remaining vigilant against colonial conceptual frameworks.

Questions of religion, nation, and the regulation of women's comportment figure prominently in Marilyn Booth's article, "Islamic Politics, Street Literature, and John Stuart Mill: Composing Gendered Ideals in 1990s Egypt." Booth identifies how the ideas of nineteenth-century philosopher John Stuart Mill lurk in surprising ways within street literature and conduct manuals circulating in Cairo in the late

twentieth century. She places an Arabic translation of John Stuart Mill's 1869 *The Subjection of Women* (found for sale in a Cairo street in the 1990s) in conversation with edicts for women's comportment in popular street novels *Wajhun bila makiyaj* (A face without makeup) by Muna Yunus and Ibrahim Mahmud's *'Awdat fatat* (Return of a young woman). Booth suggests that in "subterranean fashion, such works are in dialogue with the ways that Western liberal thought, for better or for worse, has shaped patterns of thinking, behavior, and consumption across the globe."

Cara Delay's article, "Uncharitable Tongues: Women and Abusive Language in Early Twentieth-Century Ireland," also considers state regulation of women's comportment. Delay uncovers the history of prosecution of "unruly" women who used gossip, scolding, yelling, and other forms of "uncharitable speech" against neighbors and family in order to make an impact on their lives and on the nation. Their transgressions were swiftly met with state juridical response. As Delay argues, women's acts "blurred the prescribed lines between public and private, frustrating the efforts of religious and secular authorities to contain women within the domestic sphere." As the new Irish nation sought to present an image to the world of the idealized Catholic woman, the press and courts attempted to make an argument that "female outspokenness was often a more serious offense than male violence."

In her review essay, "Animal: New Directions in the Theorization of Race and Posthumanism," Zakiyyah Iman Jackson offers a fresh perspective on the contingencies of the modernist subject by taking us inside the debates in posthumanist animal studies. Since the 1990s, this field has reconceived human agency as "a network of relations between humans and nonhumans, replacing the figure of sovereignty with the process of enmeshment such that intentionality is de-ontologized." Jackson points out, however, that posthumanist scholars have often claimed a "seamless, patrilineal link" to poststructuralist challenges to Enlightenment rationality, in this way bypassing parallel critiques by theorists of race and colonialism. She challenges the burgeoning field of animal studies to take "the politics of race as its point of departure," finding important contributions by each of the authors she reviews—Seshadri's insights on the problematic binary between speech and silence; Lundblad's insistence on the link

between a racialized conceptions of human animality and discourses around homosexuality; and Chen's centering of the subjectivities of queer, trans, and/or disabled people of color in posthumanist discussions of biopolitics.

Martha Rosler's artistic career consistently interrogates the uneasy realities of women's political and social conditions. Art historian and curator Karen Moss's essay, "Martha Rosler's Photomontages and Garage Sales: Private and Public, Discursive and Dialogical," discusses Rosler's investment in overturning a limited view of aesthetics in order to include commentary on women's experiences. She chronicles Rosler's various photomontages and exhibitions riffing on "garage sales" between 1973 and 2012, and argues that "they debunked the modernist ideology of aesthetic autonomy that artistic value exists independently from social, economic, and political conditions." From the earliest garage sale, Rosler put everyday items from both private and domestic realms into visual and textual dialogue with the major political issues of the day, thereby "attracting and engaging various audiences beyond the art world, an important aspect of her practice." Moss brings into clear view Rosler's presentation of the quotidian as an essential element of feminist practice.

The next cluster of articles draws more broadly on the social sciences. Elise Andaya's ethnographic study, "Relationships and Money, Money and Relationships: Anxieties around Partner Choice and Changing Economies in Post-Soviet Cuba," explores the way nostalgic discourses about kinship and romance in the Soviet era express contemporary anxieties about shifting social hierarchies. In the early years of Cuban socialism, state rhetoric acclaimed the building of a new society in which, over time, relationships based on material interests would give way to those based on love, equality, and mutual respect. But these utopian dreams encountered hard realities with the fall of the Berlin wall, the end of Soviet aid, and the onset of economic hardships. Two decades later, Andaya finds widespread, cross-generational lamentations about what are perceived as increasingly instrumental personal liaisons among young people on the island—with a particular focus on women's choices. However, she points out, it is a "nostalgia for things that never were." Under early socialism, too, kinship relations often followed the lines of material advantage, with Communist Party officials with their access to consumer goods being the

sexual partners of choice. Today, those with a foot in the remittance and entrepreneurial economies have replaced these high-status prospective partners of old. Rather than representing a new phenomenon of deteriorating moral values, Andaya argues, “the discourses around love and partner choice form a powerful language for articulating hopes and fears around the burgeoning economic stratification in Cuban society and its consequences for the production of gendered socialist citizens.”

Anthropologist Nathalie Lebon’s work also untangles the effects of money on human relationships, but these are political relationships rather than romantic engagements. In “Taming or Unleashing the Monster of Coalition Work: Professionalization and the Consolidation of Popular Feminism in Brazil,” Lebon traces the history of the cross-class alliances among feminists over the last several decades and of the challenges of constructing coalitions across difference. In the early years of dictatorship, middle- and working-class women collaborated closely, but over time the social distance between them grew wider as the more privileged groups gained access to funding and their organizations became increasingly professionalized. While women from the *bairros* continued to work as volunteer activists and to combine redistributive with recognition claims, many professionalized feminists moved toward engagement with the state and with international institutions such as the United Nations. Lebon chronicles the encounters of these two groups based on extensive fieldwork with Brazil’s National Feminist Network for Health, Sexual, and Reproductive Rights, illustrating the painful, if unintended, exclusions in a movement dominated by those with the education and skills to participate in institutionalized politics. However, Lebon finds that professionalization does not invariably undermine cross-class collaboration. In another case, the role of the feminist NGO *Sempreviva* Feminist Organization (SOF) in the Brazilian chapter of the World March of Women has produced a lively, mass-based feminist movement. The success of this endeavor, Lebon argues, reflects not only SOF’s core identification with working-class solidarity, but also the renewed political space for redistributive claims during the 2000s. Coalition work may be a “monster,” as Bernice Johnson Reagon once called it, but Lebon urges us to consider its crucial importance for feminists and offers insights into how it might be tamed.

Rounding out this trio of contributions from feminist social scientists is Jennifer Schwartz's article, "A 'New' Female Offender or Increasing Social Control of Women's Behavior? Cross-National Evidence." Schwartz takes on the question of whether girls and women are, in fact, becoming more violent as a result of factors including the feminization of poverty and the feminist movement itself or whether rising female arrest statistics are an indication of new forms of social control that have expanded the definition of violence to include more minor acts of aggression and violence by women. Schwartz evaluates these claims, drawing on quantitative data from three Scandinavian countries and the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada. She finds that neither female homicide nor imprisonment rates in any of the six nations have increased and concludes that, "on balance, girls and women are not any more violent today than in the past." Instead, new forms of regulation that extend the definition of violence to include less serious behaviors have produced a "net-widening effect" that sweeps more women into the statistics on criminal forms of aggression. Schwartz also finds that the United States and the United Kingdom are anomalous in their higher rates of female representation at the pre-imprisonment stages of the criminal justice system. She suggests that this could be related to "a new culture of crime control and criminal justice policy" in these countries in the mid-1990s, which responded to a political climate in which greater punitiveness and social control were viewed as successful election strategies.

The creative pieces in this issue deal with the tensions between the ordinary and the extraordinary issues that frame our lives. Whether it is the slow deterioration brought on by Alzheimer's in Deborah Paredez's "Auguste Arrives"; the assessment of the self in relation to others in Loretta Oleck's "The Five People"; or an encounter with small-town racism in Rae Paris's "Welcome to Healdsburg," the poetry and fiction here present everyday minutiae as a resource from which we derive existential significance.

Taken together, the articles, essays, and creative works in this issue highlight the vast range of disciplinary and geographic interests that are the hallmark of this journal, its authors, and its readers.

Matt Richardson and Millie Thayer,  
for the editorial collective