

preface

THIS ISSUE CONTINUES A LONGSTANDING *Feminist Studies* commitment to publishing critical scholarship that explores the changing national and transnational contours of feminism and feminist activism. Raewyn Connell revisits the importance of taking seriously the problem of Eurocentrism, which limits access to feminist theoretical contributions from the global South, and she points to the possibilities of circulating translated texts (see links to sample texts on our website). Tomomi Yamaguchi's essay addresses a transnational translational dilemma: how a phrase — “gender free” — imported into Japan ostensibly from the global North, can be marshaled to resist feminist political gains through deliberate misrepresentation. Kathryn Moeller also traces the trajectory of a category — this time “adolescent girl” — as it is used in social marketing campaigns by the Nike Foundation in urban Brazil. Srila Roy's article reads the current moment of the Indian women's movement in the context of debates about its decline owing to neoliberalism and the role of NGO-based activism. Astrid Henry's essay explores parallels and contrasts between US Third Wave feminist thinking and *Fittstim*-feminists in Scandinavia, particularly in terms of their relationship to the state and their critiques of postfeminism and neoliberalism. In our concluding article, the winner of this year's *Feminist Studies*' Graduate Student Award, Heather Berg traces the varied politics attached to the sex trade in the United States, closely interrogating the emergence of the term “sex work” in the United States in the 1970s as a means of organizing labor in commercial sex industries. These essays all sketch feminism's changing position within the nation-state, even as they index the play of transnational feminist ideas through liberal and neoliberal discourses. They also point to the importance of Marxist or socialist feminism as an ongoing agonist for contemporary feminist analysis: Berg describes how “sex work” comes to have a liberal meaning as an “equal exchange,” obscuring it as another form of exploitative labor, while Roy and Henry pose leftist-feminist critiques of neoliberalization with a critical eye on the expanding space of feminist NGOs in India and Scandinavia;

Japanese feminism in Yamaguchi's account, on the other hand, is cast by its opponents as a "Marxist, evil scheme." Flaudette May Datuin's art essay dwells on how feminist interventions also occur in the context of nationalist struggle, and she highlights questions of violence and its representation. Themes of violence, gender, and representation are also reflected in this issue's featured poetry by Claudia M. Reder, Helena Boberg, and Kim Hyesoon.

"When it works," Raewyn Connell tells us, "theory provides a bridge between realities, both between different contemporary situations and between present reality and future possibility." More than three decades since women of color and diasporic scholars took Western feminism to task for its universalizing conceptions and global ambitions, Connell's commentary in this issue identifies a persistent Eurocentrism in the theories cited in contemporary feminist work on the conditions of economic and cultural globalization that shape contemporary life. In feminist intellectual production, as well as in most other fields, there is a "tacit assumption that the global South produces data and politics, but doesn't produce theory." Nor are feminists writing from Africa, Asia, and Latin America immune, as "the theoretical frameworks developed in the metropole become embedded in the intellectual work of the periphery," a process Connell refers to as "extraversion." The problem, she argues, is rooted in neocolonial inequalities in the economy of knowledge, which generate precarious or contradictory conditions for theoretical production in the global South and obstruct its circulation. In spite of the obstacles, authors in the periphery *do* produce their own theory, making crucial contributions to collective analyses of the colonial and neocolonial structuring of gender, a fact the author demonstrates through three examples from Latin America. Instead of a "mosaic epistemology," where knowledge systems based on different cultures, identities, or historical experiences assert their own separate and parallel claims to validity, Connell proposes an approach that reflects the increasingly interconnected world we live in: she imagines a goal "to create, within the worldwide counterpublic, processes for mutual learning and interactive thinking about theoretical questions," asserting that, "given the current shape of the global economy of knowledge, the vital need right now is to give recognition, indeed centrality, to theoretical work from the South."

Tomomi Yamaguchi's essay gives us another view of the troubled encounters between theories from the North—or the West in this

case—and realities on the ground in other parts of the world. Writing from Japan, where she is a feminist scholar, activist, and blogger, Yamaguchi traces the history and effects of the term “gender free,” which was imported in the 1990s from a US author by Japanese scholars within the state bureaucracy who interpreted it as a “non-confrontational” way to invoke “freedom from compulsory gender roles.” The term subsequently spread throughout government institutions, becoming intimately linked to efforts to implement gender-equality ordinances at a municipal level. As it penetrated local spaces, “gender free” aroused the ire of conservatives who used the term as a platform to inveigh against “extreme feminism” and other foreign ideologies that they felt were inappropriate for the Japanese context. In this case, the hierarchies among dominant nations come to light: in spite of Japan’s status as a world power, the Western origins of the controversial discourse initially gave it cachet among Japanese feminists and later provoked conservative nationalists who viewed it as a dangerous threat to Japanese culture. The essay also shows us the centrality of language to feminist struggles and the potential for unconscious slippages and intentional distortions as discourses enter into charged political fields. The vagueness of “gender free” discourse, alongside its lack of anchoring in concrete policies, Yamaguchi argues, allowed it to be given multiple, contradictory meanings by distinctive actors: the author who originally coined the term, the scholars who introduced it to Japan, bureaucratic feminists in state institutions, queer activists, and conservative “backlashers.” The effects on feminism were not salutary. The institutionalized feminists who took leadership of the movement in the 1990s, Yamaguchi suggests, erased the diverse history of Japanese feminism and suppressed internal critiques in the interests of fighting the backlash generated by “gender free.”

Transnational Western discourses have diverse trajectories and relationships to economic power. While “gender free” moved from academic text to mainstreamed feminist movement, in Kathryn Moeller’s work, the category of “adolescent girl” emerged from development practice and was canonized and disseminated by the Nike Foundation in its philanthropic brand, “The Girl Effect.” Like the “gender free” term, the discourse around adolescent girls contained competing meanings. As Moeller explains, “Its power and legitimacy are derived from the authentic desires and grassroots demands of marginalized girls and women.... [y]et, in addressing this inequality, the Girl Effect takes an instrumental

approach, branding adolescent girls as a means to development rather than as ends in and of themselves." Poised between childhood and womanhood, where, it is assumed, they will be responsible for the well-being of families and communities, adolescent girls are portrayed as unique carriers of the potential to end global poverty. It is "a precarious location in which she is simultaneously the potential savior of development and its universal victim in need of saving. It is the productivity of this basic contradiction that motivates her investors." The discourse is materialized by the Nike Foundation's "partners" on the ground in countries such as Brazil, where Moeller did fieldwork with an NGO contracted by the Nike Foundation to recruit adolescent girls for job training courses. The search for trainees, she found, produced what David Valentine has called "categorical complications," as the ostensibly universalized "adolescent girl" being sought turned out to be a very specific kind of racialized and classed female subject. The rejection of pregnant girls was particularly telling: the intervention came "too late" for them to delay reproduction and thus realize what Moeller calls their "Third World Girl potential." In the end, however, the discourse proved ephemeral and its effects less harmful to feminist aspirations than in Yamaguchi's case. When funding ran out, the Nike Foundation's local collaborators dropped the program and moved on, a reminder that development categories, even when backed by powerful economic actors, may have a transitory existence.

A different kind of sex politics marks Srila Roy's essay, "New Activist Subjects: The Changing Feminist Field of Kolkata, India." If an older, leftist generation of feminists who formed the first autonomous women's groups saw neoliberal economic policies as a direct threat to the Indian women's movement, neoliberalism may also have opened a space for the emergence of LBGT or queer organizing where sexual identities are articulated as the basis of an alternate feminist politics. Yet Roy also points to an important split in Indian queer-based feminist politics, between "identity-based" and "identity-neutral" forms of membership, challenging the very idea of sexuality as the subject of queer politics. Thus, members of Sappho—one of the queer activist groups Roy writes about—understand sexuality as a set of issues rather than as a set of identities. In turn, Roy shows how neoliberalism affects the class positions of poor rural women who form organizations that cannot survive without seeking donors and becoming NGOs that operate as "businesses" whose development agenda cannot be operationalized without the employment of

those very same poor, underpaid rural women. While much of the contemporary Indian women's movement has turned toward an exploration of caste and communal identities, Roy deploys an urban Kolkata to frame how sexuality and class are implicated in the feminist politics of India's post-1990s neoliberal economy.

Even as generational feminist shifts are important for understanding the Indian women's movement, so too, are they explored in Astrid Henry's essay "*Fittstim* Feminists and Third Wave Feminists: A Shared Identity between Scandinavia and the United States?" Exploring the parallels in the emergence of a "third wave" in two distinct areas of the global North, Henry points to the provocations of the term "*Fittstim*" itself—it means "school of cunts"—and the media coverage that made feminism "hot" for the publics of Norway, Finland, Denmark, and Iceland. Originally a derogatory term for the women's wing of the Swedish Socialist Democratic Party, *Fittstim*-feminists who appropriated the term were identified, like their Third Wave counterparts in the United States, with a more individualist or liberal politics that was less movement centered and more focused on middle-class lifestyle issues of work-motherhood balance. Third Wave feminists in the United States and *Fittstim* feminists in Scandinavia were thus critiqued for remaining trapped in post-feminist discourses of choice, empowerment, and freedom. Unlike their counterparts in the United States however, Scandinavian third wave feminism did not include a substantive critique of race or much work by women of color. This dynamic of exclusion resurfaces in Connell's exploration of the losses we suffer when feminist theory from the global South fails to have the same impact on feminist scholarship as that produced in the global North.

Heather Berg's essay, "Working for Love, Loving for Work: Discourses of Labor in Feminist Sex-Work Activism," is this year's winner of *Feminist Studies'* Graduate Student Award. In considering the merits of Berg's essay, the *Feminist Studies* editorial collective felt that her analysis broke new ground by moving readers beyond polarized debates into a complex and nuanced understanding of sex worker identities and issues in the United States. Berg's insistence that describing sex work as labor is to argue against "sex work exceptionalism"—the idea that sex workers are uniquely exploited because of sex and not, as other workers, by the changing forces of capitalism—is sure to unsettle both orthodox "pro-sex" and "abolitionist" positions. Indeed, Berg argues that classic

abolitionist positions are more often than not aligned with capitalist economic imperatives. Her essay situates the contested nature of sex work as pleasure or labor by remaining skeptical of “the evidence of experience.” At the same time in an analysis of four key texts in US sex worker activist writing, she is careful to respect the positive agency that informs sex worker testimony, remembering that “coercion does not foreclose resilience, resistance, and pleasure.”

The creative work presented in this issue uses beauty, heroism, and discordant images to find pathways through repression, pain, violence, and displacement. In her art essay, Flaudette May Datuin offers us insight into the life and work of Imelda Cajipe Endaya, the artist whose work is featured in this issue. Born in the Philippines, Cajipe Endaya came to art in the 1970s, a period of political ferment in her country and, as Datuin tells us, “refused to stand passively by.” Her printmaking, painting, collages, and installations reflect both intensely personal and fundamentally collective perspectives, an aesthetic where the “emotion becomes social and the social becomes emotional.” She explores national identity through historical images, and, as an immigrant to the United States, she searches for her own selfhood, using the “‘magic of cloth’—a material on which we imprint ourselves; at the same time, a border between our skin and the world around us.” Even in Cajipe Endaya’s techniques of assemblage, we see a complex relationship between feminist imaginaries and nationalist politics, as she uses the domestic art of scissoring to represent the violent turmoil of those times as a kind of ripping and tearing. Throughout her body of work, she searches for heroines and heroes, finding inspiration to guide her in martyred activists against the Marcos regime, unknown women artists, and revolutionaries from the late nineteenth-century struggles for Philippine independence. In Datuin’s words, Cajipe Endaya “imagines herself communing with the women she admires and from whom she is separated through geography and history. Being one with her heroines, she embodies their social selves, in the process aligning herself with the heroes’ bodies and with the nation’s ailing body politic.”

Poetry by Claudia M. Reder and Helena Boberg (the latter translated from Swedish by Johannes Göransson) explores the relationship between the mind, illness, violence, and loss. The mental images of “sense violence” in Boberg’s poem blur temporal markers so that “elastic time / compresses these moments / into meaningless rhymes,” while in Reder’s

poem, titled “Imago Mundi,” “when spoken words fail, and / metaphor fills that space, / bestowing illness with presence / and a self / even if only created / from utter calamity.” Reder’s self, born of disaster, speaks to Boberg’s exploration of twin violences — the one that leads to losing one’s mind and the other that is involved in treating it — as well as to her use of erotic imagery to explore the contours of rape and institutionalization and the disturbing sensations of violence enacted on the senses so that the memory itself is warped into slippery shapes and phantasms. This relationship between violence and the erotic is something that marks Kim Hyesoon’s poetry also (translated from Korean by Don Mee Choi). A woman’s crotch is both the site of the ripping creation of new moons poised over a well of reproductive waters and of odiferous and bloody desires, evoking links between individual and collectivity in the two poems we publish here. In “Moonrise,” as a woman gives birth, we feel both her solitary suffering and its universality, as her body becomes one with the night sky and the trees tremble with relief when she pulls the newborn up to her belly. The second of Hyesoon’s poems, “Bright Rags,” takes us on a mundane, everyday journey of women carrying water jars, but then it surprises us with its primal eroticism and “[a] pink flowering tree cleans the empty space.”

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