

PREFACE

From the vantage point of 1987, it is increasingly clear that the meaning of motherhood—in state policy, in medical practices, in the workplace, as well as in the lives of individual women—is a contested domain. The cultural politics of motherhood appear in many of this issue's articles. Rosalind Pollack Petchesky's "Fetal Images: The Power of Visual Culture in the Politics of Reproduction" begins by decoding the power of *The Silent Scream*, the New Right's notorious and influential piece of antiabortion video propaganda. Debates over abortion in the 1980s are often centered on fetal images as created by the technology of sonography. In piercing the sonogram's seemingly "scientific" objectivity, Petchesky links the way they are read to the larger framework of modern American visual culture. At stake in the contest over visualized fetuses is not only the male medical control of pregnancy, or the feminist critique of technology, but the lived, concrete experiences of individual, pregnant women who now also have visual access to their fetuses. The fetal image may represent the first snapshot in the family album or an oppressive obstacle against an abortion decision, depending on its political deployment.

Among the small town and rural residents of upstate New York in the mid-nineteenth century, baby pictures had a different meaning, as Josephine Gear demonstrates. Posed formally or informally, in lace or in cambric, it is the baby's image which created its mother's status in the community, a status which prosperous mothers asserted differently than did the poorer wives of the district. And it is from the child's vantage point that Lynda Schraufnagel constructs "Carnival," a forgiving fantasy that elaborates a mother's oppressive marriage and subsequent abandonment of her children. Images of naked women infuse Ellen Gruber Garvey's "Life With Bodies: An Essay," where the experience of "undressing for success" in a Wall Street health club in the 1980s triggers powerful memories of maternal bodies viewed through the fascinated eyes of a young girl. The maternal bodies draped comfortably over children and one another, in steam rooms and beaches in the 1940s, contrast with today's disciplined aerobic female forms.

Changing images of motherhood also lie at the core of Deborah

Rosenfelt and Judith Stacey's "Second Thoughts on the Second Wave." In a provocative reading of three recent and much-discussed texts, they charge second wave feminists with having paid insufficient attention to the importance of intimacy, marriage, and motherhood in the lives of American women. They argue that, however distorted, the concerns of "postfeminism" demand our attention, lest the women's movement become fossilized. These are controversial issues and *Feminist Studies* editors warmly invite other articles in response to this important debate.

Another theme in this issue is the oppression and liberation of women in the Middle East. In "Emancipated but Unliberated? Reflections on the Turkish Case," Deniz A. Kandiyoti criticizes the view of Islam as the transnational locus of women's oppression and urges us to recognize the power of the varied state policies that affect women throughout North Africa and the Middle East. The situation of Turkish women, who were de veiled and enfranchized as early as the 1920s, can only be understood in this more historic and complex fashion. Western feminist theoretical concepts and their limitations for the study of non-Western women are central to Kandiyoti's analysis.

The feminist insistence on the connection between gender and labor in the organization of households is key to Florencia E. Mallon's "Patriarchy in the Transition to Capitalism: Central Peru, 1830-1950." In the highlands of eastern Peru, the ongoing transition between peasant and capitalist relations of production cannot be understood without an analysis of gender. Women's labors lie at the core of this transition. The implications of Peruvian regional history for other times and places where peasantries predominate are clear.

Judith Wilt's "Desperately Seeking Verena: A Resistant Reading of *The Bostonians*" is an attempt both to penetrate the mystery of Verena Tarrant's "real" personality in James's *The Bostonians* and to demonstrate a "resistant" – feminist – reading of an overtly anti-feminist novel. Is Verena simply seduced away from her feminism and her Boston marriage with Olive Chancellor by the virility and passion of Basil Ransom, as viewers of Christopher Reeves's undulating muscles in the film version were to assume? Or does she more actively choose her future?

In this issue's art essay, Leslie Milofsky comments on the life and work of the Polish sculptor and fiber artist Magdalena

Abakanowicz. Her expressive, massive forms, which have been exhibited all over the world, defy the categories of artistic genres separating craft from art and ignore, mix, and play with those of gender, as well.

Rayna Rapp and Ellen Ross,
for the editors