

PREFACE

The contributions to this spring's issue cluster mainly around family and work, two central arenas in the lives of women. In addition to fiction and poetry, authors used the research strategies of a number of social sciences: history, sociology, and policy studies. Rather than assigning family and work to separate "fields" or "spheres," the contributors see these strands as tightly intertwined in the daily lives of women.

Margaret K. Nelson's Vermont examination of working mothers who use family daycare providers for their children, and of the providers themselves, is a fascinating study in the blending of business and pleasure, family and market values. The mothers expect the daycare-providing women to lovingly adopt the children they care for daily, giving them special attention and afterhours care if necessary. And the mothers want, and need, good value for their money. The daycare workers, however, are torn between their own motherlike love for the children they are paid to look after and their resentment, as workers, at the poor pay, long hours, and extra pressures that go with the job. Anne Machung, in her study of a group of Berkeley seniors ("Talking Career, Thinking Job") describes the students' fantasy world in which family pleasures and career fulfillment are fully compatible. The college women aim for high-powered careers, for husbands and children; these career-oriented women believe they can have it all. The majority of their male peers, with some reservations, to be sure, accept career goals as normal for women. Yet nearly all the students assigned women special skills at and responsibility for childcare. What they have not digested (or really experienced) are the implications of this special domestic charge for women's professional lives in a labor market quite unsympathetic to the circumstances of working mothers.

For European aristocrats, of course, love was work, and Mary Tudor, whose marriages are the subject of Barbara J. Harris's "Power, Profit, and Passion," felt the burden of serving as an object of exchange in her brother Henry VIII's campaign to improve relations between England and France. Although she was quite clear about her own preference for the Duke of Suffolk, Mary seriously carried out her charge to marry the ailing French monarch, Louis XII; for the (fortunately for Mary) short life of the husband she found quite repulsive, Mary Tudor was courteous, obliging, even flirtatious.

Another large cluster of pieces explores the family and women's attachments to mothers and children as sources of pain and deep pleasure, sites of power as well as bondage: the haunting milk carton images of missing children in Alicia Askenase's poem, "Missing Narrative"; the sharp tensions and sudden resolutions between the snazzily dressed mother and daughter in Heather Thomas's "Wild Pinx"; or Muriel Dimen's fearless exploration of her own experiences both of transcendence and of loss as a childbirth coach and helper for a close friend, a woman having a child on her own. Emily Tall's translation of a Russian magazine feature, V. Rudenko's "Mothers and Daughters," is another sensitive portrayal of groups of women whose lives are both locked together and in conflict; it is remarkable not only for its emotional power but also for the fact that this perspective, clearly influenced in some measure by feminism, was first published in the late 1970s in a popular Russian weekly. Eileen Boris's review of two recent books, by Elizabeth Ewen and Christine Stansell, on poor women in nineteenth-century New York, points to the central place of women in their family roles as providers of food and shelter in the creation and survival of working-class and immigrant communities. Transmitters of everything from religious rituals to healthcare advice, guardians of morality and of the streets, it was wives and mothers who gave structure to the lives of the uprooted and impoverished masses of New York City in its meteoric rise as a center of U.S. industry. Here too, as both books demonstrate, mothers both shelter and control their daughters, and teenagers challenge their mothers for time and money to spend on themselves.

Women's studies scholars were early convinced that gender was far more than an issue in family life; but it has taken decades of empirical and theoretical work on women, families, and state formation to show how modern national states in particular have been founded on certain notions of male citizenship and family headship, female subordination and domesticity. Two of this issue's contributors explore, in very different ways, questions of women and state policy. Robert G. Moeller's study of the (re)creation of West Germany as a state after 1945 demonstrates wonderfully how particular images of domestic women and of nuclear families, wildly inaccurate in Germany where three million adult men had been killed and millions more had been injured and incapacitated, were

mobilized to construct a new de-Nazified nation in opposition to the specter of communist East Germany where womanliness and motherhood had been engulfed, as West German social scientists put it, by the state and the party.

Sara M. Evans and Barbara J. Nelson analyze the implications of a very different, feminist-inspired state (with a small "s") policy, comparable worth as legislated by the state of Minnesota for all public employees. The structure and historical realities of the U.S. labor force, segregated by gender and race, needed more than affirmative action policies to successfully redress job discrimination practices. "Comparable Worth: The Paradox of Technocratic Reform" discusses the problems and possibilities of this reclassification system as implemented recently in Minnesota, in 1986 and 1987. The authors see comparable worth as a double-edged sword because it is a policy largely imposed by employers advised by outside consultants, with only minimal intervention by unions or workplace associations.

Lynn Bolles and Ellen Ross,
for the editors