PREFACE

Motherhood is as American as apple pie and as difficult as piecrust—crumbling, flaky, hard to hold, capable of being filled with all sorts of sweet or bitter contents—and not every woman's dish. The essays in this issue of *Feminist Studies* concern differences among women at the same time that they illustrate disciplinary and discursive differences within feminist scholarship. The first two essays tackle contemporary American feminist controversies about motherhood: workplace pregnancy policy and female infertility. Later in the issue, two others offer complementary views of lesbian subjectivity as a way of escaping patriarchal culture's insistence on Woman as always and only mother and (hetero)sexual object. By refusing to define women with reference either to motherhood or to sexual availability *to men,* these two essays discover a subjectivity that is "something else."

Lise Vogel's article on the treatment of pregnancy in the workplace deals with differences among women in an immediately political way. Sparked by the 1987 Cal Fed case, in which the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that states may provide pregnant women with benefits beyond those mandated for all workers in cases of temporary disability, Vogel's inquiry probes the dilemmas that such "special-treatment" laws pose for feminist policymakers and legal theorists. Should our goal simply be to ensure that both genders are treated equally in the public policy arena, or should socially constructed gender differences and biologically based sex differences like those associated with pregnancy be structured into the policy process? Vogel explores the history and theory informing this set of dilemmas, exposing the ways they have divided feminists in both the past and the present. She suggests a solution to which the politics of equality are central but which embraces diversity as well—diversity not only in the form of gender difference but also along other social dimensions.

Although Vogel shows how the policy issues surrounding pregnancy in the workplace have divided feminists, the next article treats an even more heavily charged aspect of the politics of reproduction—female infertility. Margarete Sandelowski's essay shows how infertile women come to feel deeply alienated from other women who become pregnant without any difficulty. Drawing on fictional and autobiographical representations of infertile women as well as her own interviews, Sandelowski sensitively portrays

the "faultlines" among women opened up by this issue. In addition to showing how infertility threatens female relationships, she explains the ways in which it serves to divide feminists who work on reproductive rights. Legitimate uneasiness about male and medical control over new reproductive technologies, as well as concerns about the exploitation of women's reproductive capacities on the basis of class and race, directly collide with the compelling needs of infertile women to become mothers. To address these conflicting claims, Sandelowski calls for a new feminist morality that has space for both individual agency and a collective approach to the situation of women as a group.

This issue of *Feminist Studies* also includes a review essay by Sandra Morgen on work and family in the lives of working-class women. Morgen discusses three major recent feminist ethnographies by Louise Lamphere, Karen Sacks, and Patricia Zavella, all of which delineate the complex relationships among class, ethnicity, and gender as they shape women's work culture and their family lives. In an appreciative yet critical treatment of these three books, Morgen highlights the way in which they transcend the work vs. family and structure vs. agency dichotomies embedded in traditional social science treatments of women's work.

Contradictions and connections within one woman's consciousness about her work, her class, her family, her closest female friend, and perhaps most important, her "place"—by the side of a country road—vividly inform Joanne Johnstone Francis's short story "Green Pastures," in which we are invited to share elderly Hanner's views of her world as it shifts around her. Hanner fights to save her land from flood and storm but cannot stop a fancy resort intruding on the mountain landscape. She relives her past not only in her own mind but also in her foster daughter's and her granddaughter's aspirations to leave the "home" Hanner loves for a "walk on the moon" or just a more comfortable life in Ohio. Until the American dream lures them into their separate, individual quests, Hanner and her female kin and friends, all strong women, care for one another.

The homey dialect of "Green Pastures" in itself raises questions about the connections between women's languages and women's consciousness and reminds us as readers of differences among ourselves, the authors of the journal's academic and theoretical essays, and the women whose options they examine—who may or

may not be ourselves as well. The next two essays in this issue posit the ties between (some) women as a force through which a lesbian subjectivity can develop outside of patriarchal paradigms. Penelope J. Engelbrecht and Teresa de Lauretis explore lesbian subjectivity as it emerges from lesbian practice; both imply that the value of a lesbian perspective for all feminists is the lesbian's ability to think otherwise than through prevailing heterosexual and dualistic models of self and other, subject and object, female and male; and both refer to Gloria Anzaldúa's *mestiza,* who inhabits a bicultural borderland, as a metaphor for lesbian subjectivity.

Engelbrecht stresses the need for a "thoroughly lesbian literary theory and critical method" that is grounded in "lesbian material reality." Because two lesbians in a relationship cannot easily be distinguished by the present/absent division of phallocentric heterosexism, lesbian reality demands the creation of a new model of desire in which a lesbian subject relates to a lesbian Other/self so that both are equal in power and value rather than one dominating the other. According to Engelbrecht, postmodern lesbian literary texts demonstrate this lesbian subjectivity while they controvert patriarchal views. Reading both Gertrude Stein's writings and her relationship with Alice B. Toklas, Engelbrecht argues that Stein criticizes the inadequacy of heterosexual models of love and poetry. Despite their verbal difficulty, Stein and other postmodern lesbian authors establish intimate "points of contact" with their women readers rather than distancing "points of view." Such postmodernist lesbian texts empower women through an active process of self-naming: "Lesbian subjectivity focuses on what *we do,* not what we 'are.'"

Teresa de Lauretis, too, is concerned with overcoming divisions between subject and object in patriarchal discourse and in feminist theories by focusing on women's "consciousness." Like Engelbrecht, de Lauretis contends that the strength of feminist theory resides in its "being at once inside its own social and discursive determinations and yet also outside and excessive to them." Reading several twentieth-century feminist theorists from Simone de Beauvoir to Catharine MacKinnon and Nancy Hartsock, de Lauretis defines feminist theory not as a single, unified perspective but as a "process of understanding." At this point in history, de Lauretis proposes that "an eccentric discursive position outside the male (hetero)sexual monopoly of power/knowledge" is necessary

to feminism. For de Lauretis, the lesbian is not an individual woman with a particular "sexual preference"; rather, the lesbian occupies a particular position in personal and political practice. By speaking out within and against feminism, lesbians and women of color have demonstrated the complex fields of power among women and reinterpreted "feminism as a community whose boundaries shift and whose differences can be expressed and renegotiated through connections both interpersonal and political." Outside or "in excess" of the institutions and structures of heterosexuality, de Lauretis's "eccentric subject" constitutes herself through a process of struggle. Defined in this way, such a postmodern subject retains political agency, social accountability, and the power to change herself and her circumstances as she rewrites herself in a new relation to her community and culture.

Finally, Paula Rabinowitz's review essay surveys another current kind of feminist language, that of film theory, in recent books by Teresa de Lauretis, Mary Ann Doane, Christine Gledhill, Tania Modleski, and Kaja Silverman. Rabinowitz analyzes their views on female spectatorship and female and male filmmakers and on "the relations among looking, gender, sexuality, and cinema." The five authors variously deploy semiotic, psychoanalytic, deconstructive, and historical theories to consider how women's desires are expressed and contained in film. Whereas in Hitchcock's films, the "endlessly repeating saga of madness, marriage, and motherhood begins to close in on the reader," these feminist film critics reveal possibilities for more rebellious and fluid positions for female spectators.

As we enter the 1990s, the current editorial board would like to acknowledge gratefully the contributions of four editors who have recently left the board. Rachel Blau DuPlessis, who served on the board and then as associate editor for creative writing for nearly fifteen years, and Heidi Hartmann, who was a board member for over a decade, have stepped down. Christine Stansell and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, both of whom worked as U.S. history editors for several years, have also departed. Their knowledge, acumen, and sheer hard work have been instrumental in establishing and maintaining the character of *Feminist Studies* as a journal committed to creativity, scholarly excellence, intellectual vitality, and social

change. We wish them all well in their ongoing ventures. We will sorely miss them.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank six people who have served on the board for shorter periods, as temporary replacements for editors on leave. Thanks to Eileen Boris, Micaela di Leonardo, Judith Kegan Gardiner, Nancy Hoffman, Alice Kessler-Harris, and Deborah Newman Ham for their extensive contributions of time, expertise, and insight.

Judith Kegan Gardiner and Ruth Milkman,
for the editors