

## PREFACE

In this issue of *Feminist Studies* we are proud to publish the winners of the *Feminist Studies* Award for the best graduate student essay submissions received in the last year: Victoria Rosner, Gillian M. Goslinga-Roy, and Ednie Kaeh Garrison. Together with the other essays in this volume, these emerging scholars weave together revisionings of popular culture, acts of individual and historical recovery, and moments in which women's opportunities are simultaneously foreclosed and enhanced. Each essay in its own way addresses the vexed and contradictory possibilities for feminist agency.

More than two decades of feminist scholarship have taught us that the act of recovery of women's voices is a troubled one. Yet once we are prepared to relinquish the easy answers, the task becomes immensely rewarding. Thus, the first three essays in this issue encourage us to explore the complex and compelling relationships between agency and social control across centuries and national boundaries. Jacqueline Letzter and Robert Adelson's essay, "French Women Opera Composers and the Aesthetics of Rousseau," is both a work of recovery and an analysis of the complex effects of political and social revolution on women as culture producers. Women opera composers and librettists flourished in France between 1770 and 1820, some with spectacular success. Despite a strongly conservative gender ideology, the democratization of the public sphere enabled women to feel that for the first time they could compete on more equal terms with men. Although the immensely influential Rousseau strenuously objected to women in the public sphere, the authors argue, his promotion of sentimental values, melodies, and simple harmony encouraged women to participate as the creators of opera. Through this essay we see once again that in moments of upheaval women often emerge as both the unexpected agents and beneficiaries of change.

As with the example of the French Revolution, the Second World War was a moment in American history that both highlighted and threatened women's agency and citizenship. Page Dougherty Delano's "Making Up for War: Sexuality and Citizenship in Wartime Culture" explores the multiple implications of women's use of makeup during wartime. Against the backdrop of international struggle, Delano argues, it was important for the U.S. war effort that American women embody the ideal of femi-

nine beauty as one social measure of national supremacy over Nazi Germany, which had banned its women from wearing lipstick to render more visible their "superior" Aryan features. Thus, the War Production Board exempted makeup from the list of restricted wartime industries. Yet, at the same time as they were seen as necessary for the national image of victory, lipstick-wearing women emerged as threatening figures embodying excessive modernity. As for the women themselves, they appear simultaneously to wield lipstick as a weapon, a source of protection, and as a mark of sexual agency.

Although Delano deals with the effects of World War II and the way consumer culture both enabled and curtailed possibilities for women's agency, Ednie Kaeh Garrison in "U.S. Feminism Grrrl Style! Youth (Sub)Cultures and the Technologies of the Third Wave" addresses similar possibilities in the contemporary nexus between consumption, popular culture, and technology. Garrison argues that through an alternative and oppositional subculture forged in a particular historical moment (the post-civil rights movement, the current backlash against feminism, the availability of certain technologies), young women are claiming agency for themselves by selectively using the available cultural tool kit in self-consciously political ways. The loosely networked, decentralized groups of young women adopt punk DIY (do it yourself) philosophies and democratized technologies to promote art and knowledge about issues ranging from child abuse and domestic violence to girl power and rock star elitism.

Responding with a more cautionary note to recent works of feminist film theory by Kaja Silverman and bell hooks, Eva Cherniavsky's review essay, "Visionary Politics? Feminist Interventions in the Culture of Images," contemplates the ways in which feminist critical practices suffer from, as she says, too narrow a focus "on the imaginary configurations internal to specific visual texts." Ironically, although Silverman and hooks seem to represent different camps in feminist discourse, with Silverman emerging out of a psychoanalytic framework, and hooks more focused on a critique of what Cherniavsky called "a corporate multiculturalism," both focus on the need to reinvent new cinematic images, with little attention to how meaning is altered in the globalized contexts of distribution and consumption.

Indeed, as Cherniavsky's review makes explicit, it is imperative

that we address the powerful cultural critique offered by postcolonial voices. Thus, Edna Zapanta Manlapaz's essay, "Literature in English by Filipino Women," delineates the different phases of Filipina writing in a language that signifies their country's history as the product of U.S. imperialism. Yet, because women and men began writing in the language of the colonizer at the same time, Manlapaz argues, the first generation of women writing in English did not suffer from the sorts of anxieties which afflicted women writers in the West. Yet, what stands as the "appropriate" topic for Filipina women writers, and what happens to the "native voice"? These questions of subject matter, and the choice between Tagalog versus English, have at different moments engendered many politicized, bitter conflicts. We include a selection of writing, chronologically placed, to offer the reader some sense of these long-standing debates in Filipina feminist writing, beginning with 1935 and ending with a poem from the Filipino diaspora in 1991.

As the next piece makes clear, for women of color especially, this need to speak out has never before seemed more urgent or more fraught. In her review essay, "On Waiting to Exhale: Or What to Do When You're Feeling Black and Blue, a Review of Recent Black Feminist Criticism," Sharon P. Holland takes us through the recent work of Madhu Dubey, Ann duCille, Karla F. C. Holloway, Deborah E. McDowell, and Cheryl A. Wall, stressing the ways in which their scholarship negotiates "across personal and institutional landscapes." Ranging from examinations of Black women writers in the history of the Harlem Renaissance and Black nationalism, to the merchandizing of race in the marketing of Barbie dolls and the O.J. Simpson murder trial, to social and political commentary on contemporary America, these women, says Holland, offer important critiques that, if heard, would severely challenge the institutional establishments that so often dismiss their contributions as part of a "culture of complaint."

Building on Holland's discussion, the final three pieces in this issue work together to close with strong and meditative statements on the question of "silences" in women's stories of themselves, their loved ones, and their families. Jacquelyn Dowd Hall's commentary, "'To Widen the Reach of Our Love': Autobiography, History, and Desire," addresses her struggle as a biographer with the deliberate gaps in information imposed by her subject, the southern activist Katherine Du Pre Lumpkin. Determined to "recover"

in some way Lumpkin's suppression of her lesbian relationship with radical economist Dorothy Wolff Douglas, Hall locates the roots of lesbian desire by examining Lumpkin's student years from 1912 to 1915 at Georgia's female Brenau College. But the subsequent discoveries teach Hall less about the integrity of the "fact" and much more about understanding "the line between knowledge and exposé," between the biographer's desire for the truth, and her subject's desire for inaccessibility.

Victoria Rosner's "Have You Seen This Child? Carolyn K. Steedman and the Writing of Fantasy Motherhood" and Gillian M. Goslinga-Roy's "Body Boundaries, Fiction of the Female Self: An Ethnographic Perspective on Power, Feminism, and the Reproductive Technologies" each reframe Hall's meditation in alternate disciplinary perspectives. For Rosner, the celebrated autobiography, "Landscape for a Good Woman," by British feminist historian Carolyn Steedman sheds much light on how memory and desire operate within the writing of history and the self. Thus, she urges our attention to the ways in which Steedman uses her historical obsessions with the eight-year-old watercress seller in Henry Mayhew's 1861 *London Labour and London Poor* to mediate her own unhappy, working-class childhood. According to Rosner, the long-dead watercress seller eventually functions as the object of Steedman's "fantasy mothering"; only in this way is Steedman able to resolve the painful and debilitating relationship with her own mother.

Although her essay narrates a "real-life" rather than imaginative relationship between a couple and their gestational surrogate, like Rosner, Gillian M. Goslinga-Roy is concerned with the slippage between actual experience of the subjects involved versus the rigidly controlled boundaries between parents and "womb donors" that are apparently enforced by reproductive technology. Through extensive interviews of her subjects, Goslinga-Roy suggests the ways in which class, gender, race, and discourses of motherhood shape the dynamics between the women involved, and structure their access to power. Ultimately, it is these social factors, rather than the dictates of technology, which finally fix the definitions of and differentials between mother and surrogate.

Sandra Gunning and Raka Ray,  
for the editors