PREFACE

If one strand of Second Wave feminism was a valorization of motherhood in terms that respected women's capacities, energies, and sheer domestic labor, this issue of *Feminist Studies* contains evidence of broader and more critical understandings of motherhood as a set of varying global practices and as a field of shifting ideologies, always in relationship to such other ideologies as those of nationalism, religion, and "racial purity" in specific national and historical contexts.

In an important corrective to earlier studies, "Writing Feminist Genealogy: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Racial Nationalism, and the Reproduction of Maternalist Feminism," Alys Eve Weinbaum examines Second Wave feminism's canonization of Gilman as role model and foremother, a glorification that consistently underplays Gilman's racism and nativism. Yet Gilman's utopia united by its common progenitress was not just incidentally tainted with the eugenic ethnocentrism of Gilman's time but was also constituted through it. Weinbaum shows that Gilman's maternalism was constructed through a racist essentialism that fixed on racial purity–white Anglo-Saxon racial purity–as the guarantor of a highly evolved moral society, free of the imperfections of supposedly lesser races. Weinbaum explicates Gilman's genealogical obsessions in light of a very different concept of genealogy, one derived from Nietzsche and Foucault. "How might a self-reflexive investigation into Gilman's feminism invigorate contemporary antiracist feminism," Weinbaum asks, "by making it attentive to the racism and nationalism that are constitutive of the type of feminism Gilman proposed" as well as to those traits within the more recent "feminism that seeks to rediscover and reclaim" her. Such an investigation is especially timely now that Gilman's evolutionary bigotry is echoed by current forms of social conservatism.

Paula A. Michaels's article, "Motherhood, Patriotism, and Ethnicity: Soviet Kazakhstan and the 1936 Abortion Ban," underscores the importance of historical and local contexts for understanding state reproductive policy. She examines the twists and turns of policy, as Soviet officials focused on women's health and reproduction as a means to further political and economic interests of the state. The legalization of abortion throughout the Soviet Union in 1920, considered progressive at the time, was based less on concern for the rights of women than on the conviction that legalized abortion was a necessary, but temporary, measure to

help cope with the postwar economic crisis. Similarly, the subsequent 1936 ban, although framed in terms of concern for women's health and well-being, was impelled by the desire to ensure population growth. Although studies from Nazi Germany and other countries have shown the ways in which state policies on women's health and reproduction are shaped by political and military interests, Michaels's study adds two important caveats. First, she shows how policy formulated at the center may be implemented differently and have differential effects in peripheral regions, such as Kazakhstan. Second, she shows that the effects of policy differ for different women in a multi-ethnic society. Kazakh women, unlike Slavic women, were almost totally unaffected by the liberalization of abortion, because they relied on traditional indigenous health methods and did not have medical abortions. However, in an interesting reversal from the usual finding that state policies more negatively affect minority women, Michaels finds that Kazakh women benefitted disproportionately from pronatalist policies that granted cash subsidies to mothers with large numbers of children, and they were also idealized as examples to be emulated.

In "The Changing Face of Catholic Ireland: Conservatism and Liberalism in the Ann Lovett and Kerry Babies Scandals," Moira J. Maguire locates a pivotal historical moment in two sensational media events that took place in Ireland in 1984. Although the death in childbirth of a fifteen-year-old convent schoolgirl in an outdoor grotto sacred to the Virgin Mary brought forth wide public questioning of the exclusion and indifference that consigned the girl to this sad end, the media persecution of an adulterous unwed mother falsely accused of murdering her baby galvanized an angrier public response. The women who rallied behind the accused baby killer, Joanne Hayes, did not reject Roman Catholicism, Maguire argues, but they did reject "those attitudes and policies that bred hypocrisy, ignorance, and shame, and that held only women accountable for violations of society's moral codes." These two public controversies over unwed mothers, Maguire believes, marked a crucial transition from a longstanding Catholic conservatism that conflated motherhood, mother Church, and the Irish nation to the more individualistic liberalism that now prevails in Ireland, where one in five births occur outside marriage.

Developing in a different direction than individual liberalism is another contemporary and growing phenomenon, that of trans-

national family formations, the subject of Rhacel Salazar Parreñas's article, "Mothering from a Distance: Emotions, Gender, and Intergenerational Relations in Filipino Transnational Families." Family formations in which individual family members migrate abroad to work in order to provide income for the support of the family in the home country are not new. What is new, especially in the case of contemporary Filipino migration, is that a large percentage of such migrants are women, many of whom are mothers leaving children behind. This shift in the gender composition of migration is due to the changing labor demands of metropolitan centers for service workers, both domestic and commercial. Parreñas examines the emotional consequences for both mothers and children of prolonged separation. After examining mothers' and children's different perspectives on the experience, she explores the effect of ideology on emotion, demonstrating that both mothers' and children's emotional pain is exacerbated by a gender ideology that allocates emotional labor to women, thus minimizing credit for parenting by fathers and for breadwinning by mothers.

Motherhood as the basis for women's activism is one of the themes in Martha Ackelsberg's review essay, "(Re)Conceiving Politics? Women's Activism and Democracy in a Time of Retrenchment." In her essay, Ackelsberg examines four anthologies and two monographs on women's organized struggles in a wide variety of contexts, ranging from the United States and Latin America to Africa, the Middle East, and Europe. Two of the volumes explicitly incorporate mothering or motherhood in their titles; most deal with how women's activism has generally taken the form of community-based struggles around basic needs. However, these volumes also include studies of women who embrace racist, homophobic, anti-immigrant, and other right-wing movements, thus confounding any easy assumptions about women's natural predilections for nurturance and empathy. Ackelsberg presents a rich and complex analysis of the questions raised by these volumes regarding the possibilities of local democratic participation in a time of economic globalization, the dismantling of welfare safety nets in Europe and the United States, and harsh economic conditions in Latin America and Africa. Among the interesting paradoxes she finds is that in the United States and Europe, which claim to be democracies, women activists rarely in-

voke the language of democracy, speaking instead of themselves as community workers; conversely, "in Latin America and elsewhere, the rhetoric of democracy remains a powerful tool for opposition movements even though the possibilities of meaningful democracy seem limited by what are termed 'economic realities.'"

The creative writing in this issue resonates with the themes of the scholarship, particularly the various meanings of parenting in differing social contexts. Several poems published here stress the individuality of parents, focusing on their autonomous desires and not on the perspectives of their children. Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg's poem, "Weaning the Breast," humorously personifies the mother's breasts as "tender mammals . . . curled into themselves/Asleep in the cradle of bra" before the arrival of the infant who latches on to them as avidly as a "female mosquito." In time, however, the breast may "wean itself/Like a self-cleaning oven." In two poems, Aurora Reynoso's "Hombre y Mujer" and "Housekeeping," parents feel the mute pull of children's needs. A father holds a child's hands like a flapping bird; a woman sees the thwarted plums of a shaded fruit tree like unripe babies, and adults in a quiet house respond to sleeping children with their "mouths/Mouths. Always/open." The weathered man in Elisabeth Lewis Corley's "Near Foaling" watches a girl swinging on a farm gate. Attuned to the needs of animals, his arms call out to her, "Come soon. I can deny you nothing."

Sarah Kennedy's poem, "Shopping," features a more rebellious persona, a farm wife who says she "should have been taking care of the children" but instead seeks an end to monotony, restlessness, and endless chores in the costly fantasy world of "very expensive department stores./There, everything is beautiful/And everything's for sale." Another rebellious woman is the childless factory worker in Rebecca S. Mills's story, "Circumstances," who finds a late-life adventure with a man imprisoned for the rape of his own daughter. Far removed in time and social class is eighteenth-century scholar Elizabeth Elstob, celebrated in Becky Gould Gibson's poem, "Daeg-Weorc," a woman whose constraints and opportunities allow her to understand "the silences of women," and to write a grammar that "will give them/voice, the womb of their speaking," so acting as "midwife to mother, her own mother tongue."

If several essays in this volume critique maternalist essentialism, Bernice L. Hausman's review essay argues against a gender essen-

tialism she finds even in the trendy territory of "Current Transgender Theory." This theory, she says, erroneously valorizes a queer proliferation of genders and erroneously condemns purportedly essentialist feminism for policing the category of "woman." For Hausman, this transgender theory is inadequately radical because it accepts gender as a necessary system for social organization and personal expression, leaving concepts of gender intact even as individual bodies are available for gender modification. But gender should be understood, she claims, not as a range of bodily typologies achieved through a "techne of the body" but as a concept for analyzing power systems. "Insisting on new gender categories," as many current transgender theorists do, she asserts, "will not transform political debates or the nature of the struggle we engage against gender normativity. Instead, a proliferation of gender categories as fundamental ontologies of being will only mire radical gender politics in an ill-defined coalition sensibility. . . ." Instead, "what we (gender deviants. . .) really need" is to "'give up on gender' as a fundamental goal," a process that may begin through imagining "a different sense of embodiment in relation to gender and sex."

The critique of prior feminist pieties and the injunction to return to fundamental feminist questions also runs through the forum on U.S. academic feminism edited by Anke Finger and Victoria Rosner under the title, "Doing Feminism in Interdisciplinary Contexts." Its participants–three cultural critics, a biologist, and a geographer–are all invested in questions motivated by feminist inquiry, yet they wonder whether in U.S. academic settings today, feminism poses less of a problem for academic institutions than does interdisciplinarity itself. The modern university administration, they stress, may be more interested in what Robyn Wiegman calls "managing diversity" than in opposition to academic women's studies or in support of the feminist goals of social engagement and transformation. Following up her comments in an earlier forum in *Feminist Studies*, "Disciplining Feminism? The Future of Women's Studies," Susan Stanford Friedman continues to reflect on women's studies as a pioneer in interdisciplinarity. Wai Chee Dimock agrees that interdisciplinarity should "encourage us to rethink the terms, the scope, and possibly the limits of feminism," understanding that feminism is "not an integral entity, not autonomous and inviolate" but is "plural across time" and cul-

tures. Environmental psychologist Cindi Katz, whose disciplinary training is in geography, worries that even as interdisciplinary studies programs seem firmly established, they "continue to exist within an environment where unrelenting disciplinary claims to knowledge hold sway." Wiegman argues that interdisciplinary units must fight for the institutional developments, including full-time faculty and departmentalization, that could give them "the authority to claim interdisciplinarity as an intellectual project in its own right." Feminist scientist Banu Subramaniam explains how "variation" and "diversity" need not simply be "problems needing explanation," and she argues that "in an interdisciplinary feminist framework, diversity can be refigured as the norm rather than the problem."

In "Enduring Traditions and New Directions in Feminist Ethnography in the Caribbean and Latin America," Carla Freeman and Donna F. Murdock raise the questions of whether and to what extent feminist scholarship within particular disciplines and fields reflects or departs from dominant analytic frameworks. They note the endurance of region-specific gatekeeping concepts that dominate theorizing and define the central questions in area studies. In the case of Latin America and Caribbean studies, the central gatekeeping concept has been that of "economic dependency." Feminist scholars of the region are in a sense part of the tradition; hence they emphasize questions of political economy, women's labor, and issues of production and reproduction. Freeman and Murdock find in five recent feminist ethnographies an impressive range of complexity, including some attempts to do broader comparative work as well as attempts to capture fine-grained variability even within circumscribed case studies, and in some innovative methods, such as detailed study of a few women's lives. Thus these ethnographers have responded to the critical challenges posed by postcolonial studies and feminist ethnography at the same time that their work reflects the continued endurance of regional analytic frameworks. And finally, differences as well as continuities are foregrounded in the work of Caribbean artist Annalee Davis, who explores internal journeys as well as her migrations among the islands.

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