

PREFACE

"Have we fallen into a mesmerized state that makes us accept as inevitable that which is inferior or detrimental, as though having lost the will or the vision to demand that which is good?"

—Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*, 1962

As we write this preface, the landscape of New York has changed in the wake of the terrorist attacks against the World Trade Center, and America gears up for war with enemies both inside and outside the country. A few voices protest the logic of fighting an unseen enemy and warn of the senseless waste of more innocent lives; but we fear that these voices will remain, as Michael B. Smith in this issue argues that Rachel Carson's did, marginal, marked by the dominant voices as crazy, emotional, and unpatriotic. The articles in this issue of *Feminist Studies* all address, in one form or another, the extraordinary power of mainstream institutions to appropriate, distort, or silence dissent, whether that dissent be in the form of the butch lesbian, the murderous wife, or the environmentalist. But the voices we publish here also explore the loud and diverse history of feminism and other modes of resistance, discussing what they reveal about feminist ethics and feminist citizenship, a discussion that becomes more urgent as each day passes. The articles in this issue demonstrate that in spite of the power of representations to render certain bodies and ideas visible or invisible, those bodies and those ideas—their "will" and their "vision," as Rachel Carson puts it—will continue to trouble mainstream institutions, even when those institutions seem to be at their strongest and most united.

We begin with Stacy Braukman's article, "'Nothing Else Matters but Sex': Cold War Narratives of Deviance and the Search for Lesbian Teachers in Florida, 1959-1963," in which she examines the activities of the Florida Legislative Investigation Committee, created in 1956 by state senator Charley Johns to investigate subversives throughout the state. Braukman concentrates on the late 1950s and early 1960s, years when the committee focused its attention on homosexuals in Florida's public education system. The committee questioned dozens of teachers and students, removing some from their schools and colleges and pressuring many others to resign their positions. Using original transcripts of hundreds of interviews, Braukman looks specifically at the committee's campaign against lesbians, arguing that the committee

saw lesbians, as they did male homosexuals, as sexual predators who were bent on recruiting young people to their way of life. Lesbians were thus implicitly aligned with communists and other subversives as security risks and as infiltrators.

Ann M. Ciasullo's article, "Making Her (In)Visible: Cultural Representations of Lesbianism and the Lesbian Body in the 1990s," asks: how has the lesbian been allowed to enter the mainstream? Examining the spate of magazine articles and recent television and film representations of lesbians, Ciasullo wonders about the paradox of the lesbian being invisible even as she is hypervisible. The lesbian bodies being represented, she argues, are made "comfortable and comforting." In contemporary mainstream cultural representations of lesbianism, there is always a *but*, always the possibility that "she who is lesbian (e.g., Anne Heche) can 'unbecome' lesbian (e.g., Anne Heche)." It is the butch body, the body which challenges, that remains invisible, marginal. It is the stereotypical butch who must remain invisible because she does not conform to the heterosexual notion of desirable woman, consumable woman. The butch therefore is the abjected lesbian body—working class, masculine, distasteful.

The meanings of feminism, and its relations with femininity, are examined in Lynn M. Voskuil's discussion of Victorian femininity in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's 1862 novel *Lady Audley's Secret*. In this novel the heroine appears to be a model of angelic womanhood but is unmasked by the end of the novel as a murderous bigamist whose sanity is questioned by both her doctor and her husband. In her article, Voskuil concentrates on the ways in which assumptions about the bodies of middle-class women were central to the concept of authenticity in nineteenth-century England. Lady Audley's successful performance of Victorian femininity suggests that Victorian femininity itself may be no more than an act, an idea which destabilizes the notion of authenticity itself, and with it, the middle class's belief in its own superiority and depth. Voskuil develops her reading through discussions of George Henry Lewes's manual for actors, *On Actors and the Art of Acting* (1875), and Henry Maudsley's *Body and Mind* (1871), both of which reflect in different ways on the relation between the individual self and its expression through the body. The final ambiguous diagnosis of Lady Audley as "mad" anticipates both Lewes's account of authenticity in the theater as the simultaneous expression of the individual self and

of a common humanity, and also Maudsley's discussion of mental illness as a disease in which the body can disguise, as well as reveal, the inner self. Voskuil argues that the theatrical nature of femininity in texts such as *Lady Audley's Secret* should alert us to the complex meanings of authenticity in our own theory and practice, particularly when that theory and practice has to do with women and the lives or identities they inhabit.

Eluned Summers-Bremner, in "Waving, not Drowning: Personal Narratives, Feminist Pedagogy, and the Gesture in Psychoanalysis," continues the focus on the ambiguities of self-expression and resistance in her account of teaching a women's studies course for which the main assignment was to produce an autobiographical or biographical "life-text." The assignment generated a crisis in the classroom in which both the limits and the possibilities of institutional feminism were expressed in a peculiarly intense form. Students were uneasy at the potential clash between the "feminist discourse of 'sisterhood,' of women empowering themselves through sharing privileged personal information with each other, and the competitive, hierarchical structure of the academy in which students submit work to be graded in pre-set terms according to which personal information is assumed to be irrelevant." In response to this sense of crisis, the texts they produced were designed, like Lady Audley's masquerade, both to reveal and to protect the self. Students found images for concealment (wrapping paper, boxes, glass jars, cling-film, padlocks) that at the same time gestured toward the possibility of transparency. Many explored what Summers-Bremner calls "reverberative languages of silence," evading the damaging structures of a language in which they have been reduced, according to Summers-Bremner's reading of Irigaray, to "the sign of (lost) satisfaction." The students' texts gestured toward a freer, more performative space in which the self could be simultaneously explored and concealed.

Much of the creative work in this issue also takes up the question of place, particularly the ways in which homes—domestic locations—both house and hide the lives they sustain. Shelley Kiernan's four poems offer vivid images of loss and disappointment, fended off by the "small sufficiency" ("Red Beans") of work in the kitchen. Zephyr Teachout explores the ambiguous dynamics of anorexia, and Jennifer MacKenzie uses settings such as the garden and the kitchen to suggest the presence of secrets and forgotten histories.

Feminist scholarship has been consistently critical, exposing gaps in our understanding of the world and ourselves. It has tempered and fundamentally changed the face of poststructuralism, postcolonial and diaspora studies, and ecology. "Restoring Feminist Politics to Poststructuralist Critique" developed out of a roundtable discussion organized by Susan Lurie and Carla Kaplan in response to the publication of Lurie's book, *Unsettled Subjects: Restoring Feminist Politics to Poststructuralist Critique* (Duke University Press, 1997). Contributors Susan Lurie, Ann Cvetkovich, Jane Gallop, Tania Modleski, and Hortense Spillers reflect on the ways in which a poststructuralist critique of the concept of identity contributes both to feminist analysis and challenges the terms in which that feminist analysis has so often been conceived. Cvetkovich considers what she calls "the strategic power of anecdote" to resist the abstraction of theory; Gallop calls for more careful attention to the "social location" of our diverse identities and identifications; Modleski wonders how we can "revive the feminist movement" by developing a language that is accessible beyond the academy, noting that the "question of how to get back to feminist politics cannot . . . be answered solely from within theory or within the academy"; and Spillers asks what, in our era, "an active political stance" might be, suggesting a new agenda for the "feminist-as-citizen." As Gallop notes in her post-conference reflections, most of the papers addressed the issue in terms of "the relation between academic feminism and the larger non-academic culture." In Gallop's view, partly shaped by her own experience as a talk-show guest after the publication of *Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment*, feminist scholars need to become much more aware of the context-specific nature of much of their writing if they are ever to communicate to a broader public. Modleski, on the other hand, sees a much more intimate relationship between academic and nonacademic discourses, arguing that discussions within the academy tend to be informed and often constrained by the assumptions of mainstream culture, even when feminist issues such as sexual harassment are at stake. Finally, Cvetkovich celebrates alternative modes of cultural production and distribution such as zines or gatherings like the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival.

Parama Roy's review essay of five recent major works on transnational and postcolonial feminism highlights questions of the gendered nature of intellectual production in the diaspora. Be-

ginning with Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan's edited book, *Scattered Hegemonies*, Roy traces the way more recent books have addressed the "gendered character of women's experiences of globality with a consideration of the ethical implications of various modes of transnational practice." She asks, "what might constitute a "globally discerning (rather than a simply well-intentioned) feminist ethics."

Michael B. Smith probes the gendered nature of the virulent attacks on Rachel Carson following the publication of *Silent Spring*, a searing indictment of the indiscriminate use of chemicals by the petrochemical and agriculture industries. Carson, a predecessor to early feminists, was particularly threatening, Smith argues, because she was "a woman, an independent scholar whose sex and lack of institutional ties placed her outside the nexus of the production and application of conventional scientific knowledge." Smith analyzes the criticism levied at Carson by both the scientific establishment and popular press. The science community mocked the "faddish" and "amateurish" nature of Carson's science while the popular press highlighted her excessive "emotionalism." The power of the anti-Carson rhetoric was so great, Smith argues, that it had a chilling effect on environmental discourse for a period of time; and indeed, contemporary critiques of the petrochemical industry or agribusiness continue to languish at the margins.

In spite of this marginalization, voices such as Carson's continue to inspire activist movements today, and women from around the world continue to speak out, not only as feminists but also as citizens of a global economy and environment in which we are all implicated, and on which, as Carson warned, we ultimately depend. We can only hope that the ethical "will" and "vision" toward which we all continually struggle will, in the end, prevail.

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for the editors