

PREFACE

Although this issue of *Feminist Studies* offers a sampler of topics and methodologies in feminist scholarship, theory, and creative expression, patterns emerge in the framing of issues, questions, even disagreements. The first two articles represent the achievements of feminist scholarship in recovering what has been lost or obscured in the past and in reconstructing the shape of our cultural and intellectual legacy. The third article applies concepts developed by feminist social historians to the experience of nineteenth-century women at once unique and representative of their class and era, and draws conclusions about women's roles in the public and private sphere relevant to current debates on that subject. The final two articles turn more explicitly to questions of strategy for our own times. They look, respectively, at the lives of contemporary evangelical women who ostensibly oppose feminism, finding potential allies, and at the texts of contemporary theorists who ostensibly support feminism, finding a deeper estrangement among "feminists" than many of us have been willing to acknowledge.

Paul Lauter's article on race and gender in the shaping of the literary canon documents some of the precise institutional and historiographic processes that led to the emergence of the canon of American literature as most typically taught, read, and criticized today. In detailing how the works of women and writers of color were excluded from the canon, he reminds us that the canon itself is a social construct, the product of an increasingly professionalized and masculinist literary establishment. He proposes not only the inclusion of "lost" texts but also, more significantly, an American literary history reconceptualized around categories less static and exclusive than the old "periods," more inherently inclusive of the literatures of women and people of color in the United States.

As Lauter provides the basis for reconstructing the canon of American literature, so Dianne Hunter contributes to the reinterpretation of the canonical psychoanalytic text. In nominating Bertha Pappenheim, the "Anna O." of Freud and Breuer's famous case history, as a foremother of psychoanalytic feminism, Hunter claims for female subjectivity an important role in the history of consciousness. She interprets Pappenheim's hysteria as a form of bodily discourse encoding a rebellion against the power of the father, a power inscribed in the symbolic order of language. In the course of transactions with Breuer, fraught with an eroticism that ultimately frightened him away, Pappenheim evolved and

named the cathartic “talking cure” that prefigured psychoanalysis.

Lauter’s and Hunter’s essays represent two different tendencies in the contemporary feminist analysis of culture and its linguistic artifacts. Lauter offers a materialist interpretation of literary history based on empirical evidence garnered from his research. Hunter follows Lacan and certain of the French feminists in her vision of personality development and disorder and in her willingness both to use and to challenge assumptions embedded in the specific discourse of psychoanalysis. Yet we should be wary of exaggerating the disparities. One of Lauter’s major contributions is to acknowledge the importance of historiography: that is, of the *language* used to conceptualize history. His proposal of new categories shares with the French feminists (and with American radical feminists) a belief in the power of language to shape what we see and in the power of re-naming to free us to see, and act, in new ways. Hunter turns to the unmediated historical facts of Bertha Pappenheim’s mature life as a feminist writer and organizer to support her interpretation of the proto-feminist rebellion inherent in Pappenheim’s hysteria. In exploring the intersections of history and discourse, both writers advance in complex ways our understanding of women’s contributions to both.

If the first two articles in this issue challenge the masculinist bias of the intellectual mainstream, so the next two, by Patricia Grimshaw and Carol Pohli, ask, respectively, for a recuperative feminist history and a recuperative feminist politics that will include the lives of women usually neglected by feminist scholars and feminist activists. Grimshaw’s article contributes to the feminist reinterpretation of nineteenth-century social history by asking us to consider the implications of American missionary women’s lives. She finds that although these women could enter the public sphere as moral reformers, once they became mothers, the ideology that had rationalized their public presence recalled them forcefully into their homes. This contradiction was deepened by the profound ethnocentrism of the missionary families, since mothers felt impelled to secure their children against influence by the very “heathens” they had come to save. Like Grimshaw, Pohli examines the lives and beliefs of religious women, in this case contemporary evangelical women of the Moral Majority. She proposes a feminist politics that will reach out to such women rather than one that will assume automatically their

monolithic hostility to feminist ideas. Pohli points to the evangelical tradition of moral reform, described more fully if less optimistically by Grimshaw, to support her view of evangelical women as potential actors in the public sphere. Although she describes all too vividly the “closets” of practice and belief in which evangelical women are confined, she refuses to concede the absence among them of what Hunter calls feminist subjectivity. If some of her data sound less hopeful than her conclusions, perhaps we can be comforted by her most persuasive evidence: her own transformation from evangelical to feminist.

Providing a happier counterpoint to the conflicted mothering of Grimshaw’s missionary women, Cheryl Clarke’s poem tells “a mother’s story” through the voice of a black mother of twins. With some exasperation and considerable pride, this mother allies herself with her daughters’ heresies, recognizing in their easy joint rebelliousness, their collaborative confounding of the adult world, an energetic challenge to a repressive social order—a challenge similar to, if differently inscribed from, that posited by Hunter in the life of Pappenheim. The poems by Naomi Replansky are more somber. Her speakers travel through changing psychic landscapes. “Changes of Climate” moves from arctic waste to fertile tropics to reveal the alternating pattern of deprivation and passion in the speaker’s life. Through metaphors of space and topography, also, the first two poems articulate the difficult inevitability of returning to ordinary, daylight consciousness after the unhindered voyagings of sleep or the transport of sexual or emotional intensity. Other poets have reminded us “how crude and sore/The journey homeward to habitual self.” Unlike the romantics in imagery or resolution, but like other contemporary feminist poets, Replansky in the second poem brings the prodigal daughter of altered consciousness home to the maternal body on reasonably good terms.

The final article in this issue is Judith Stacey’s important analysis of the “new conservative feminism.” Stacey locates in the recent works of Betty Friedan and Jean Bethke Elshtain popularized and academic versions of the political tendency indicated by the terminology of her title. Although Pohli believes that conservative Christian women affiliated with the New Right are not totally unaffected by, or permanently disaffected from, feminist ideas, Stacey argues that the recent ideas of self-identified feminists like the liberal Friedan and the more left-wing Elshtain in fact represent a conservative retreat from the most significant

and potentially transformative implications of two decades of feminist thought. Friedan and Elshtain valorize the family in disturbing ways, repudiate sexual politics as an arena of struggle, and adapt an essentialist position on gender differentiation that celebrates “female” qualities in a manner legitimizing the sharp distinction between masculine and feminine roles and spheres of life. In so doing, they ask us to forget what we have learned about the sex-gender system and about male domination. The logical destiny of their argument, she asserts, is classical patriarchy. Unlike Pohli, Stacey believes that *not* all women are potential feminists, and that differences in ideology and inclination may divide women—and feminists—more deeply than the comforting notion of “false consciousness” once suggested. Like Grimshaw, she concludes that an ideology valorizing female difference is less likely to ennoble the public sphere than to confine women to the private sphere, forever precluding a genuinely egalitarian society, in which gender disappears as a discriminatory social category. Stacey’s article maps out the terrain on which the struggle to define feminism and to identify its priorities will be waged in this decade.

This struggle over the meaning of feminism underlies the confrontation between some of the planners and participants in last year’s Barnard conference on sexuality and those women who boycotted and leafletted it. The editors of *Feminist Studies* regret the appearance in a recent issue of a Women Against Pornography leaflet that contained serious distortions of fact. We call your attention to our Notes and Letters section, which provides a fuller explanation from the editorial board as well as responses from all individuals named in the WAP leaflet.

The works of Cuban painter and printer Ana Rosa Gutiérrez conclude our essay section and grace our cover. The wood-block print on the cover presents an untroubled vision of childhood; the exuberant motif of children’s activities expresses the very essence of revolutionary optimism, saved from sentimentality by the sheer decorativeness of the patterns. The other print and the watercolor are both tributes—one explicit, one oblique—to cultural ties between Cuba and Vietnam. We thought that these spirited, unconflicted works might refresh our readers in this difficult moment in the history of liberation movements.

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for the editors