

PREFACE

This issue of *Feminist Studies* continues our interest in Third World women and the politics of development. For the first time, we also begin an issue with the work of a Puerto Rican, Rosario Ferré's moving talk, "The Writer's Kitchen," and her first published short story, "The Youngest Doll" (1970). Taking as her special theme the death of the old plantation culture and its replacement by modern, North American industrial values, Ferré's writing, in the best tradition of contemporary Latin American fiction, combines symbolism and allegory with feminism and sardonic political commentary.

The theme of colonialism reverberates through another essay in this issue, Mervat Hatem's "The Politics of Sexuality and Gender in Segregated Patriarchal Systems: The Case of Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Egypt." Seeking the roots of Egyptian women's modern oppression in eighteenth-century Egypt, Hatem argues for a complex relationship between internal social forces and the external pressures resulting from French and English invasions. Her essay is also further evidence that heterosexual and homosexual relationships are socially constructed and continually changing.

Stifling norms of female behavior are also explored in Beth Kowaleski-Wallace's "Milton's Daughters: The Education of Eighteenth-Century Women Writers" and in Barbara Caine's "Family History as Women's History: The Sisters of Beatrice Webb." In the first essay Kowaleski-Wallace discusses the "imposter syndrome," the self-repression and inauthenticity that literary daughters like Hannah More took upon themselves when they were seduced into the role of "daddy's girl" by their "benevolent" patriarchal fathers. In the second article, Caine demonstrates how the sisters and daughters who most fully accepted the social mores of the late nineteenth century were often the most unhappy in their limited role of wife and mother, but she also suggests that those who revolted did not necessarily find fulfillment either. Indeed, at different ages, different sisters could be labeled "successful."

Several essays in this issue touch upon the reemergence of conservative forces and the extraordinary success of the New Right in capturing the terms of public debate on such widely varying issues as military expenditure, American foreign policy, and abortion rights. Elizabeth Fee and Ruth Finkelstein, in their review essay

"Abortion: The Politics of Necessity and Choice," discuss the effectiveness of the antiabortion movement and argue that we must develop an equally strong proabortion stand that moves beyond private rights to social necessity. Ruth Milkman, meanwhile, warns, in her summary of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's long affirmative action struggle against Sears, that in a period of conservative resurgence like the present, we must be particularly alert to the political dimensions of our work, keeping firmly in view the ways in which our formulations can be politically exploited.

In the context of the conservative present, analyses of our feminist past may also help us forge new tools for struggle in the years to come. Judith Sealander and Dorothy Smith's in-depth study of "The Rise and Fall of Feminist Organizations in the 1970s: Dayton As a Case Study" is one contribution toward the rethinking of our immediate past. The problems of internal divisions, of retaining new recruits, and of erratic funding will be familiar to many readers. But Sealander and Smith avoid simple conclusions, pointing to a record of successes and failures. A second essay on the women's movement, Azar Tabari's controversial "The Women's Movement in Iran: A Hopeful Prognosis," asserts that a feminism based upon civil liberties is at the cutting edge of opposition to the current regime in Iran. In reply to those who have sought to accommodate the Arab women's movement to an increasingly retrograde religious leadership, Tabari makes a forceful argument for rebuilding a powerful modern movement, one that places equal opportunity and equality before the law at its center. Both essays, like this issue's Commentary on the Nairobi Women's Conference by Nilüfer Çağatay, Caren Grown, and Aida Santiago, remind us that after nearly twenty years of feminism change has not come as quickly or as fully as we had hoped. But like the other essays in this volume they also reflect the analysis and self-reflection so necessary to our continuing struggle.

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for the editors