

preface

THIS ISSUE OF *Feminist Studies* both expands feminist history and interrogates that history as it has been institutionalized in women's studies programs. One set of essays revisits key moments in feminist art and the academy in the 1960s and 1970s, covering efforts to champion women's cultural production and autonomy. Other essays contribute to an ongoing refinement of transformative practices within the academy: they reflect on faculty hiring processes, syllabus construction, teaching practices, and the uses of technology. This issue also inaugurates a new multiperspectival format for News and Views, featuring three different commentators engaging with the question of women and the Arab Spring. Finally, we offer a cluster of poetry and fiction on the theme of disability.

The issue opens with a controversial challenge. Amy L. Brandzel, in her article "Haunted by Citizenship: Whitenormative Citizen-Subjects and the Uses of History in Women's Studies," argues that "the intellectual history of feminism" as revealed in current academic women's studies curricula, syllabi, and course readers is "an inherently flawed project" that continually re-institutionalizes whitenormativity and the unitary subject of feminism. Through an analysis of women's studies' program requirements, syllabi, and commonly assigned texts, she investigates the mutually constitutive relations between women's history and women's studies, concluding that "despite the attempts to centralize intersectionality and transnationality, women's studies is haunted by the historical telos of rights claims and citizenship aspirations of white women." What is at stake, she suggests, is the desire to "capture" feminism's unitary subject "before she has been dismantled by postcolonial studies, transgender studies, and poststructuralism." Rather than revising the intellectual history of feminism to make it "more inclusive," Brandzel proposes engaging students in the process of interrogating disciplinary structures of thought and pedagogical methods. She concludes: "Feminist scholars must be willing to think of feminism's history and futurity as not that which is waiting to be discovered, made

intelligible, and definitely not rectifiable but as a project that is necessarily immersed in . . . subjectivity, power relations, and knowledge production.”

If Brandzel’s essay interrogates how inclusiveness functions in women’s studies curricula, Becky Thompson’s article, “We Are All on Native Land: Transforming Faculty Searches with Indigenous Methods,” reenvisions the process of inclusion in women’s studies faculty searches. Her account of one university search committee’s efforts to facilitate the entry of women of color into the academy has many illuminating suggestions. Given that women’s studies programs include more people of color than university faculties as a whole, Thompson argues that we can do more to “offer sustained discussion of the methods and ethics we use (and hope to use) to continue to diversify the faculty.” Thompson notes that silences in the literature about the practices of affirmative action are caused not only by the mistaken idea that affirmative action is illegal but also by “our inability to recognize and confront the gatekeeping that is still practiced in the academy.” She recounts her experience as chair of a search for a scholar specializing in Native American studies, revealing the creative strategies used to “move beyond normative conventions” and make the recruitment process “culturally and racially specific.” The search made use of “Indigenous methods including recognizing the land upon which we do our work; valuing elders and women; emphasizing face-to-face interactions and community networking . . . valuing humility, humor, lived experience, reciprocity, and multiple truths; and recognizing that accountability to one’s people and ancestry may trump one’s commitment to an institution.” This approach, Thompson concludes, “becomes a way of developing our consciousness about wellness in the academy, about making room for the body in the academy, a commitment that moves us way beyond individual faculty searches and into the realm of reclaiming ourselves as teachers, learners, and healers.”

The next few articles revisit US radical feminism’s early (largely white) history with fresh eyes. Breanne Fahs, in “Ti-Grace Atkinson and the Legacy of Radical Feminism,” contends that “much of what is known about the birth of radical feminism has been lost in archives, stunted by its out-of-print status or otherwise obscured by mainstream feminist efforts to make feminism more palatable to a wider audience.” She

strives to create more opportunities “for intergenerational knowledge making and intermovement dialogue” through interviews such as this one of Ti-Grace Atkinson, whom Fahs describes as “a one-woman networking powerhouse.” The interview narrates a complex history of cooperation, conflicts, and contradictions in early East Coast radical feminism. Atkinson describes the gracious and energetic work of African American feminist Florynce Kennedy, whom she joined in defending white writer Valerie Solanas, despite their conviction that Solanas was mentally unbalanced and, although a fighter against injustice, not a part of the feminist movement. She also recounts reading Simone de Beauvoir in the summer of 1962 and developing what became an American radical feminist view of marriage and patriarchy.

A second article in this issue that expands our knowledge of white US feminist history is Jane Gerhard’s “Judy Chicago and the Practice of 1970s Feminism.” It is also, like Fahs and Salper in this issue, a firsthand recollection of the practice of 1970s feminism; Gerhard describes the workshops of artist Judy Chicago that produced the monumental 1979 installation *The Dinner Party*, now permanently housed at the Brooklyn Museum’s Elizabeth Sackler Center for Feminist Art, as well as the Los Angeles building *Womanhouse*. *Womanhouse* visibly articulated a critique of traditional female domesticity, and *The Dinner Party* project celebrated women’s culture, elevating arts such as embroidery and ceramic painting, previously maligned as mere crafts. Gerhard underlines how Chicago helped to create literal and metaphorical women’s communities through her art, but notes at the same time the contradiction between Chicago’s egalitarian commitment to women’s empowerment and her authoritarian rule over her own workshop. The workshops acted as an “autonomous male-free space” in which “groups of liberated women” might move toward creating “a more fair and equitable society.” Yet as Gerhard also records, “the experiences of disappointment and anger were as much a part of the experience of feminism in the 1970s as the admirable goals of sisterhood and female empowerment.” In order to finance the huge and technically sophisticated project, Chicago encouraged a legion of volunteers—about four hundred individuals by 1979—to devote themselves to the artistic workshop and to the intense personal relationships it fostered. This psychological intensity, which was

politicized by radical feminists in the late 1960s and early 1970s, became attenuated in popular feminism as a focus on individual women's personal transformations.

The male gaze, a central concern in early feminist ruminations on art and desire, is the focus of Monika Lee's poem "body double." In this short and deft work, Lee likens the experience of appraising her body to being observed from the outside, a voyeur of herself, as if "trained by his camera." The very problem that feminist artists dealing with the body sought to overcome—of being limited by a lens of heterosexual masculine desire—is recounted with arresting immediacy here.

Maura Reilly's essay, "The Paintings of Carolee Schneemann," provides this issue's other case history of an iconic feminist artist. Reilly traces Schneemann's works from 1957 to the present, highlighting the developments in her work from abstract expressionist paintings on canvas to painting constructions and kinetic sculptures and then to group and solo performances, installations, and films. In some of these performances, Schneemann used her body, hoisted by ropes into the air, as a sweeping brush to create the work. In Schneemann's "kinetic theater," the participants' bodies might function as both canvasses and paintbrushes, with film augmenting and recording the performances. Reilly validates Schneemann's goal of "a total integration of action and object" and her "redefinition of the painter . . . not as one who paints but one who works on the questions and problems of painting."

Ann Cefola's poem "Demoiselles 7" meditates upon the questions and problems of painting by following the multiple ancestries and interpretations of Picasso's 1907 work, *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.)*, which launched the Cubist movement. The fractured and angular "demoiselles" in the painting—actually, "five whores from the worst bordello in Barcelona"—talk back to the onlooker: "People adore us: We give them permission to fall apart. To love the wreckage." They tell of their complex lineage and roots in Ethiopia, the Middle East, and beyond, as well as "of what splintered women could do." They ask: "What if we celebrated a woman's contours? The body not exile but home." Cefola ends her contribution with a tongue-in-cheek reference to herself as author, as perhaps the subject of another

(fictitious) Picasso painting: “If only I—we—could go in peace to love and serve the whores. But I am just *A Girl Writing*.”

Continuing the reframing of 1970s feminism is Roberta Salper’s reminiscence of serving as a founding member of the nation’s first women’s studies program in her article titled “San Diego State 1970: The Initial Year of the Nation’s First Women’s Studies Program.” Like the accounts by Atkinson and members of Chicago’s atelier, this history is one of high goals, strife, contradictions, conflict, and accomplishments. Salper summarizes the experience as one of “extreme democracy and extreme authoritarianism.” The ten-course integrated program the women established in women’s studies in 1970 would be “the first time women’s experience would be the center of an academic program,” an exciting and pioneering accomplishment. However, factionalism and personal conflicts divided the program as some sought Ford Foundation funding and others categorically rejected corporate influence. Salper’s memories convey with vivid intensity the way that power, and its sharing, were understood in this historical moment.

The issue turns next to a contemporary moment—that of the seismic political shifts occurring in the Arab world in 2011. In *News and Views*, we feature the reflections of Lila Abu-Lughod, Rabab El-Mahdi, and Sahar Khamis on what these shifts have meant for the range of women involved. Their varied positions push readers to think carefully about how “women” are deployed as a category.

Bridget Harris Tsemo’s review essay, “Decentering Power in Pedagogy: From ‘Feminism’ to ‘Feminisms,’” takes into account efforts to reform contemporary pedagogical strategies in the arenas of theatrical practices, science classrooms, and distance learning as well as in more traditional women’s studies classes through a “liberatory pedagogy that challenges the patriarchal norms and hierarchical relationships that continue to haunt the feminist movement.” Because “stereotypes and negative constructions of the ‘other’ are perpetuated” even inside our classrooms, new pedagogical strategies are necessary to prevent the voices of women of color from being muted. The books reviewed here cover strategies that are diverse rather than univocal, although they cohere around common

themes such as harnessing emotions usefully within the classroom and motivating students to work for social as well as personal change.

Three creative contributions to this issue are clustered around the experience of disability. In Lana Hechtman Ayers's "View from Three Feet" (on the world as seen from a wheelchair) and Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz's "PD and the B-side" (on the symptoms of Parkinson's disease), the voices of those grappling with stigma, physical challenges, and bodily betrayals take center stage. In Heather Fowler's powerful short story, "Sight," about the rape of a young blind woman, it is her seeing mother whose voice we hear as she contemplates the simultaneous vulnerability and power of the daughter who is "foreign to her sometimes." She traces the blurry boundaries between sight and blindness, pretense and truth telling, autonomy and need in their relationship.

Just as Kaye/Kantrowitz's subject hovers between the "A-side" of normality and the "B-side" of "PD waiting to happen," the subjects of Emily Carr's series of poems, "Addiction," "Angel," "Child," "Door," "Evolution," "Identity," "Home," and "Present," also live "in the subjunctive," making tenacious claims to identity and clinging to different kinds of survival. There are losses—"negation of self" and "one-way living oblivious to the glass"—as well as struggles to protect what little one has to lose.

We close the issue with a review essay by Stephanie Ricker Schulte, "Surfing Feminism's Online Wave: The Internet and the Future of Feminism." Schulte brings to bear recent research on the question of whether the internet is a "vehicle for liberation through collective action or a distraction from the collective and from 'real' problems." Moving beyond earlier binaries between the virtual and the physical or between utopian and dystopian visions, current scholars discern gendered structures of power and opportunities for global justice movements. They take heart in cyberfeminist activist projects that avoid "male-controlled communication spheres and national boundaries to further their own transnational projects." Whereas "technoskeptics" emphasize women's victimization, particularly through such phenomena as a worldwide burgeoning of pornography, others argue for the importance of international solidarities made possible through the internet and for the need for online access to redress offline inequalities. In particular, cyberfeminism allows

some of the world's women not situated in the metropole to work toward decentering "the West, masculinity, and whiteness from both globalization and computer networking technologies." Schulte concludes therefore that contemporary feminism should write "dynamic media activism into its future plans."

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