

## Editors' Introduction

Welcome to our thirty-second general issue - which is almost literally bursting at the seams! It has been another busy year for feminist scholarship and organizing and we are pleased to report that our collection of authors, while once again representing a wide range of scholars, includes a significant number of new scholars. In addition to the articles that came to us through the Open Call for Papers, we have a cluster of articles that were originally presented at the conference on "Labouring Feminism and Feminist Working-Class History in North America and Beyond," held in Toronto in fall 2005. *Atlantis* was one of the co-sponsoring journals of the conference, whose aims included challenging established definitions of labour history and female activism and showcasing younger scholars' research. As editor of this thematic cluster, Ruth Percy, a conference co-organizer, has written a separate introduction below. We also thank Linda Kealey for providing us with our cover image of a sculpture honouring suffragists in Christchurch, New Zealand. It fits nicely an issue that has plenty to say about feminist identities and activism.

We begin with four articles on literature. In "Le développement de l'identité féminine chez Françoise de Graffigny: Cénie et Lettres d'une Péruvienne," Marijn Kaplan explores the feminism of this eighteenth-century writer through a comparison of the female protagonist, Zilia, in Graffigny's highly successful epistolary novel, *Lettres d'une Péruvienne*, published in 1747, and that of Cénie in the less-known play of the same name published three years later. While Graffigny's re-discovery as a feminist writer largely derives from her novel and its tragic Peruvian heroine, Zilia, Kaplan shows that Graffigny's more sentimental comedy, first performed to enthusiastic audiences at the Comédie Française in 1750, is also noteworthy for its exploration of the themes of feminine identity and feminism.

Cinda Gault's "'Not Even a Hospital': Abortion and Identity Tension in Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*," challenges older interpretations of the abortion plot in the 1972 novel as a metaphor for the dual victimization of women and of the Canadian nation under the onslaught of United States economic and cultural imperialism. She shows that a sensitivity to the fraught relations between national and gendered identities, as evidenced by how women are used and abused by nationalist struggles, allows for a re-reading that emphasizes the dilemmas faced by women in nation states that outlaw abortion - as Canada did at the time that Atwood wrote the novel - and impose other constraints on women's choices and freedom.

Turning to two of Atwood's more recent novels, Ellen McWilliams' "Keeping Secrets, Telling Lies: Fictions of the Artist and Author in the Novels of Margaret Atwood" explores Atwood's efforts to convey the distinctive features of female creativity and the paradoxes and dilemmas faced by female artists - including herself - through her portrayal of the female protagonists in *Cat's Eye* and *The Blind Assassin*. Adopting the concepts of *Bildungsroman* (novel of development) and *Künstlerroman* (novel of the artist), McWilliams suggests that in these novels Atwood combines fiction and critical commentary on the woman as artist and is involved in a conscious act of writing at both the personal and political level.

Laurie Kruk's "Mothering Sons: Stories by Findley, Hodgins and MacLeod Uncover the Mother's Double Voice" explores the literary and maternal feminist concept of the "double voice" that shifts between subject/object, passive/active, and resistant/conforming practices in three Canadian short stories. Each one provides emancipatory narratives that de-stabilise conventional gender scripts. Noting that the "double voice" holds an attraction for both maternal feminist critics (who see the mother role as culturally constructed

but also recognize the embodied experiences of mothers) and for Canadian writers, she explores how the stories, involving dutiful mothers and "mothering sons" who have refused to perform their patriarchal role, serve as the basis for exposing family secrets and social hypocrisies particularly damaging to women. The characters thereby deconstruct the patriarchal family and reaffirm communal values.

Our Women's Studies in Focus feature for this issue is "Infusing Feminism: A Discussion of Methodology, Pedagogy and Praxis" by Vicki Hallett, Emily van der Meulen, May Friedman, Diana Gibaldi and Claire Carter. Written as a conversation, the various contributions provide critical reflections of feminist graduate students on the challenges and dilemmas of carrying out feminist pedagogy.

In "When Black Feminism Meets Canadian Women's Studies: A Psycho-Social Analysis of Discursive Contradiction and Psychical Conflict in the Classroom," Jessica Ringrose describes how she carried out student interviews and observed classroom dynamics in order to explore how the insertion of a Black feminist curriculum (that centres race analyses and anti-racism and emphasizes difference) into a Women's Studies program (with its emphasis on commonalities among women) affected white and Black students in the classroom. Her research suggests that while white students felt challenged by the anti-racist curriculum, and on occasion rose to the challenge by recognizing their own racism, the continuing privileging of white women students served to marginalize the Black students who were expected to valorize the truth claims of the Black feminists being discussed and were troubled by classroom debates. She notes the need for further research on the potentially traumatic effects that Black students experience in the contradictory site created by the meeting of Black feminist studies and women's studies.

Jennifer Henderson, in "Can the Third Wave Speak?", considers the metaphor of feminist "waves" and finds it wanting. She argues moreover that the term

"third wave" feminism emphasises generational conflict, and so at once reproduces the problematics of identity politics and overlooks the complexity of feminist history. Henderson goes on to locate and define an alternative movement: cryptofeminism. This she identifies as an intellectual and political consciousness informed by the history of feminist thought. In the end, says Henderson, the current trends in feminism are in part responses to neoliberal imperatives. For that reason, it is crucial for feminists to interrogate our language and self-assumptions.

Zelda Abramson's "(Re)Producing Family: Women Surviving the Holocaust" examines the survival stories of several Jewish women survivors, stressing in particular the gendered features of women's remembered experiences of the Holocaust. Her analysis of the narratives of individual and collective survival so central to women's recollections highlights the ways in which women - more so than men - coped with the loss of loved ones in part by creating surrogate families with non-kin in similar predicament. The findings show us female agency even in intolerable conditions and confirm the findings of other feminist research on women and war.

In "Maintaining An Influence: The Sisters of Saint Martha, Charlottetown, Respond to Social and Religious Change, 1965-85," Heidi MacDonald reminds us that the modern welfare state, though heavily secularized in the post-1945 era, still owed some of its functioning to the activities of the Roman Catholic Church and its women religious. Specifically, she shows how one order in Charlottetown, and certain indefatigable women in particular, successfully carved out a niche for themselves within Prince Edward Island's health and welfare sector, particularly in the area of alcohol addiction, post-graduate education, and hospital services in spite of their continuing adherence to religious Catholic positions such as opposition to abortion.

Franca Iacovetta and Rhoda Zuk

Editors

NOTE ON THE COVER ART:

Located in Christchurch, New Zealand, the Kate Sheppard National Memorial honours the struggle of New Zealand women to obtain the vote, the first women in the world to do so on 19 September 1893. Margriet Windhausen completed the monument for the 100th anniversary of the event. Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) leader, Kate Sheppard (1848-1934), led the petition campaign for women's suffrage. See more at [www.christchurchartgallery.org.nz/Publications/1997/PublicArtInChristchurch/KateSheppardNationalMemorial/](http://www.christchurchartgallery.org.nz/Publications/1997/PublicArtInChristchurch/KateSheppardNationalMemorial/)"

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## Introduction to Labouring Feminism Thematic Cluster

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Ruth Percy, University of Toronto, cluster co-ordinator and editor, conducts research on working women's engagement with feminist ideas. A forthcoming article considers representations of gender in labour fiction and the fluidity of the labour movement.

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On the weekend of 29 September-2 October, 2005, an international conference on "Labouring Feminism and Feminist Working Class History in North America and Beyond" held at the University of Toronto drew almost 300 feminist labour scholars. The aim of the organizers, Franca Iacovetta, Rick Halpern, and myself, was to bring together a wide range of scholars to share research, debate theory, engage in dialogue across generations, and ponder the past, present, and future of feminist and gender labour history. We also wished to highlight the research of younger scholars and projects that centred immigrant, racial/ethnic, and transnational subjects. Despite our best efforts, the final program was not as racially diversified as we had hoped it might be,

though it was gratifying to be able to welcome several historians working on Latin American, African American, and immigrant workers. We were pleased with the multi-generational profile of our participants: they included undergraduates (who were taking a seminar with me and incorporating conference papers into their major research paper) as well as graduate students, recently completed PhDs, and established and senior scholars from North and South America, Europe, and Australia. Senior scholars mingled with graduate students and animated discussions moved from the seminar room to the lobby, courtyard, restaurant, and party. The energy and enthusiasm exhibited during the four days certainly indicated that, contrary to pessimistic claims about labour history's decline, feminist labour history is alive and kicking.

The sample of peer-reviewed articles that appear here capture some of the conference's central themes and concerns. Together, they address issues of ethnicity, race, community, masculinity, the state, and the gender and spatial dynamics of labour protest and labour movements.

The first four articles deal with Canada. Rhonda Hiner's "'They Said the Course Would Be Wasted On Me Because I Was A Girl': Mothers, Daughters, And Shifting Forms Of Female Activism in the Ukrainian Left in Twentieth-Century Canada" re-situates the subject of women on the ethnic left by highlighting the importance of multi-generational female networks as well as generational differences between radical mothers and their daughters in twentieth-century Canada. Male chauvinism, she shows, did not deter the first generation of women from playing critical roles in their radical community (a familiar pattern), and they passed on an important legacy to their daughters. Still, this younger generation of Canadianized women had a more ambiguous relationship to the male-dominated Ukrainian left and many of them moved away from it as they became active in the post-1945 feminist and peace movements and other non-ethnically specific social movements.

Portuguese workers have only recently received serious attention in Canadian labour history, thanks to scholars like Susana Miranda. In "'An Unlikely Collection of Union Militants': Portuguese Immigrant Cleaning Women Become Political Subjects in Postwar Toronto" she adopts a multilayered approach to Portuguese cleaning women in late twentieth century Toronto, viewing them as women, mothers, transnational subjects, community builders, and as immigrant workers with an ambiguous relationship to the state. Focusing on a dramatic 1984 strike, she draws out its broader significance, using newspaper reports to reveal both widely held assumptions about these supposedly submissive women and how their actions on the picket line - where they admonished both employers and the Canadian state for refusing to accord them the same rights as Canadian workers - challenged not only the racial-ethnic stereotypes but the myth that Canada is a benevolent nation to immigrants.

Jennifer Stephen's "Balancing Equality for the Post-War Woman: Demobilising Canada's Women Workers After World War Two" even more explicitly brings "the state" into labour history while also demonstrating the value of theoretically informed approaches that integrate class, race, and gender analysis. She revisits the subject of the Canadian state's wartime mobilization of "womanpower" but with a view to also explaining the less well-known state policies designed to train and to place women in "appropriate" jobs for the post-war era. Her work points to the contradictions between the labour bureaucrats' pre-occupation with clerical work for women and the grim employment realities of immigrant and low-skilled women in need of industrial jobs.

Cynthia Loch-Drake's "'A Special Breed': Packing Men and the Class and Racial Politics of Manly Discourses in Post-1945 Edmonton, Alberta" reflects the increasing importance of feminist-infused gender analyses of masculinity to labour history. She scrutinizes the meat-packing plants of post-war Alberta, documenting how the difficulty and dirtiness of the work helped shape

a "rough tough" masculine workplace culture that, in turn, fuelled an aggressive union militancy. Workplace dynamics, she notes, reinforced white male privilege, permitting white male workers, including white ethnic workers, to engage in racial taunts against newer immigrants of colour and otherwise assert their superiority.

Many of the conference participants were American historians, several of them specialists of immigrant and racialized subjects. With a focus on African American models, Laila Haidarali's "'Is It True What They Say about Models?': Modelling African American Womanhood On the Eve of the Civil Rights Era," also reflects a conference concern with disrupting the boundaries of labour history and its usual subjects. In considering the class, gender, and racial dynamics of the African American modelling industry, she argues that modelling offered women from a marginalized group the possibility of genuine mobility. In addition, she discusses the meanings attached to these models' bodies and *Ebony* magazine's promotion of race-positive images.

Our final two papers take us beyond North America. In "Missing Women: Recovering and Replacing Female Activists in Australian Labour History," Cathy Brigden addresses female activism by considering women in labour councils and federations in Australia. She maps the impact of women activists in the Victorian Trades Hall Council and explores how the use of separate organizing strategies resulted in an increased female presence in unions. She applies the insights of feminist social geography to heavily masculine spaces such as the union hall, where, she argues, women used spatial segregation to create a gendered space in order to increase their voice and agency.

The final contribution, a *Community Voices* feature by Michele Johnson entitled "Women's Labours in the Caribbean," is an activist-oriented piece that suggests how educators in classrooms and the wider community can teach the history of the Caribbean through women's physical, emotional, and cultural labours. In her overview

of the colonial era, she shows that the male-female dichotomy proved almost as definitive as the slave-free one; in the post-slavery years, the white-black dichotomy and racial hierarchies remained embedded in Caribbean society. While long subjected to a system of triple oppression, Johnson concludes, Black Caribbean women were critical family and community builders.