

Introduction

Sexualities and Feminisms

Janice Ristock and Catherine Taylor, guest editors

In this special issue on "Sexualities and Feminisms," we bring together an exciting collection of texts by Canadian and international scholars working from diverse theoretical perspectives on issues ranging from the experiences of lesbians in sport, to the cultural phenomenon of lesbian murder mysteries, to the voices of Costa Rican prostitutes, to rethinking the gendered psychoanalysis of desire. In thinking about the idea for this issue, we wanted to take up the challenge raised by the last five years of prolific theorizing about sexuality - the challenges it poses for feminist gender-based analysis, and in turn, the challenges feminist thinking holds up to inquiries into sexuality. The work presented here, as in the field of sexuality studies in general, tends to focus on marginalised identities, where important work is being done towards disrupting the production of heterosexual normalcy by what Foucault called the insurrection of subjugated voices - voices that in naming their own experiences expose the mechanisms of compulsory heterosexuality that "normally" go unmarked. In this issue we include articles that trouble heteronormative notions of identity by focusing on lesbian, transgender, and bisexual topics, and more generally on what Tania Trépanier here calls "valuing the narratives of hybridity and multiplicity" across the categorical divides between races, genders, and sexualities. It is interesting that our call for papers on the theme elicited no submissions that focus on feminist heterosexuality as a lived identity, surely a challenging and complicated one. While it is understandable that feminist scholarship focuses more on marginalised identity conditions than on dominant identities, and even that straight feminists feel somewhat disintitled to take up room in the

field of sexuality, we hope that in future issues there will be more feminist explorations of heterosexual subjectivities and experiences, desires and pleasures.

This issue opens with Eleanor MacDonald's analysis of the implications of transgendered people's experience not only for feminist theories of identity but for the prospects of coalitional work within and across political communities. Her article is followed by Patricia Elliot's article which also reflects on transgender theory drawing on Lacanian psychoanalysis and Kate Bornstein's work. Trépanier offers an autoethnographic inquiry which ends in a renewed call for valuing narratives over identity categories as a route to effective political and community action. In another take on the identity issue, Christine Overall focuses on various stigmatised identities associated with women in her philosophical critique of the assumptions on which the practice of outing is based. From these theoretical explorations we move to several studies in a variety of fields.

Working from the disciplinary framework of psychology, Cynthia Mathieson and Lynda Endicott examine the discourses of difference spoken by lesbian and bisexual women. Becki Ross's paper is a socio-historical study of the complicated, if ultimately normative, attitudes of volunteer workers to the women at a drop-in centre that operated in Toronto in the late 1960s. Her article is followed by Pamela Downe's report on her interviews with Costa Rican prostitutes, where she questions the compatibility of women's own narratives with feminist theorizing about the politics of selling sex. The section ends with Caroline Fusco's study of the experiences of

lesbians in the frantically heteronormative world of elite athletes.

The focus shifts from experience and identity to the area of cultural productions, both mainstream and alternative, in which heterosexuality is variously troubled and reinforced. Susan Heald's interview with performance artists and activists Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan begins this next section. Heald explores with Dempsey and Millan some of the connections and gaps between academic feminism and their own work as feminist artists. We are pleased to include this interview as a way of bringing in community voices to the pages of *Atlantis*. The cover of this issue is graced with a photograph from Dempsey's video, *We're Talking Vulva*. Pauline Greenhill takes an ethnographic look at the many layers of politically-laden coding through which the artists produced, and audiences responded to, Dempsey's "Cake Squish at the Festival du Voyeur." Articles by Rob Baum, Chris Fox, and Jill Ehnenn analyse the subversive work of three very different types of "lesbian novel" - the parodic Nancy Clue mystery series, Nicole Brossard's *Mauve Desert*, and contemporary lesbian romance novels, respectively. Kathryn Campbell continues this focus on cultural productions in her examination of the ways lesbians were represented in English Canadian print media in the 1950s and 1960s. This is followed by Jyanni Steffensen's article which reads Monica Treut's film *Seduction: the Cruel Woman* as "queering psychoanalytic and pornographic constructions...to feminist political, cultural and subjective advantage." Finally, Michelle Mawhinney offers a reconsideration of psychoanalytic understandings of desire as lack.

We are also pleased to include a feature on Sexuality and Pedagogy in keeping with *Atlantis'* commitment to bringing a focus on Women's Studies and feminist teaching into each issue. Two essays explore the "fascination of what's difficult" about sexualities and feminisms as they get played out in the dynamics of professor-student relationships when sexuality is on the academic agenda. Both present ethical dilemmas, Joanne Boucher's concerning sexual boundaries and Sharon Stone's on issues of identity boundaries that feminist teachers need to confront. This special

issue also includes several poems and, thanks to the efforts of review coordinator Ann Manicom, many reviews of current books directly related to the theme of sexualities and feminisms.

The most daunting task of editing this issue of *Atlantis* was in dealing with the high number of fine submissions - an embarrassment of riches that we were happy to cope with. We hope this special issue of *Atlantis* inspires more scholarship that explores the connections between feminisms and sexualities.