

Editors' introduction

Given that global recession, economic activity and recovery have preoccupied media outlets for months now, it seems particularly fitting that the largest cluster of articles in this Open Topic Issue of *Atlantis* directly addresses issues of women's paid employment and considers these issues across a wide range of workplaces and in historical and contemporary contexts. Together, these articles openly challenge the continued silence about a lack of occupational equality, in terms of wages and opportunities, between women and men, amongst men and amongst women. They reveal and analyze the significant gap between liberal ideals about equality in paid employment and its everyday realities - a gap that continues to be overlooked in prime time news and print coverage about the global economic crisis and its drastic implications. Rounding out this issue, but not unrelated to how we think about and understand equality and the detrimental effects of social and economic inequalities, are articles examining the intersections of individual and group identities with physical, cultural and geographical spaces, articles examining contemporary constructions and challenges to femininity, articles offering direction about how and where we undertake critical feminist scholarly research and interim reports from larger, ongoing research projects. Together, they comprise an issue of *Atlantis* that stands as a testament to the importance, vibrancy and relevance of feminist scholarship in times that, while projected as uncertain, are ripe for change.

The examination of workplaces and employment in this issue ranges from specific professions, including architecture and engineering, to the institutions of the military, the academy and political representation, to considerations of transient workers. Cynthia Hammond's article, "Past the Parapets of Patriarchy? Women, the Star System, and the Built Environment" challenges the strictures of the profession of architecture. Hammond considers the status of women in the profession in North America, analyzes the effects of

lingering sexism and the "star system" on architects and "explores some of the women leaders shaping architectural futures." Kendra Coulter's aptly titled, "Patriarchy at the Pink Palace: Gender and Work Inside the Ontario Legislature" opens up an understudied workplace to scrutiny, that of provincial politics. Based on ethnographic research carried out inside the Ontario provincial legislature, she examines "cultural politics amongst political staff and representatives, to understand how male power is inscribed and how a hegemonic masculinity prevails across the physical space of the workplace." Her analysis investigates the gendered division of labour, power and authority, and exposes overt sexist behaviours that reaffirm, reproduce and discipline "adherence to hegemonic masculinity." What is striking about her findings is how all political parties reproduce contradictory expressions about the need to elect more women to political office in Ontario. Striking contradictions between the ideal and realities are also evident in Nancy Taber's "The Profession of Arms: Ideological Codes and Dominant Narratives of Gender in the Canadian Military." Taber analyzes Canadian military policies, outlined in publications, manuals and video productions, "to construct a gendered narrative of the military as a way of life." This narrative restricts the highly venerated ideological codes of "duty, honour and service before self" to male military personnel, and in doing so, excludes female military personnel, thereby producing "gendered ruling relations of the Canadian military." Maureen Baker's article, "Perpetuating the Academic Gender Gap" examines the persistence of the gender gap in post-secondary employment. Drawing on a body of international scholarship and interviews conducted with thirty academics from two New Zealand universities, Baker argues that family relations interact with institutional expectations and priorities, such as requirements for peer review and externally funded research, in ways that slow women's progression, when compared with men's, through the academic

ranks. Despite efforts to accommodate women and their progress through the academic ranks in post-secondary institutions in New Zealand, women continue to lag behind their male counterparts. This lag is at least partially explained by the gendered nature of personal lives and disproportionate familial responsibilities and by university policies and priorities that perpetuate the existing gender gap in the recognition of contributions and achievements.

Crystal Sissons and Heather Tapley contribute historical perspectives on some aspects of women's paid employment. Crystal Sissons' examination* of the contributions of well-known Canadian engineer and feminist, "Elsie Gregory MacGill: Engineer, Feminist and Advocate for Social Change" demonstrates MacGill's ability to bridge the largely male-dominated profession of engineering with feminist public involvement. MacGill integrated, Sissons argues, her public responses to male engineers who resisted women's occupational integration with public participation in feminist issues and efforts. MacGill served as a Commissioner on the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada and had a long-standing involvement, including a term as President, in the Canadian Federation of Business and Professional Women's Club. Heather Tapley's article, "In Search of the Female Hobo" takes up the absence of female transient workers across the American landscape, despite the fact that "research suggests that one girl for every twenty boys took to the road by the early twentieth century." As transient workers, Tapley argues female hobos were assumed to mimic the behavior of male hobos; however, their labour was differently constructed through bourgeois ideas about female sexuality that were "predominantly fixed under the appellation of 'prostitute.'" Tapley argues that female hobos, as workers, are denied a place in "historical accounts of anti-capitalist mobility," and in kinetically and spatially diverse employment histories.

Scholarly examinations at the intersections of individual and group identities and spaces - in theatre, community and university resources and classrooms - are included here. Tara Williamson's article, "'I'm All

of Everything That I Am': Constituting the Indigenous Woman, the White Woman and the Audience in Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues*" critically examines the silence of Indigenous women who do not speak directly in the play about their vaginas, but whose place in the script reinforces stereotypical views about Indigenous women. Williamson, through a process of rewriting, offers an alternative text that better reflects the agency of Indigenous subjects and challenges white superiority "as it is constituted by the play," its staging and in its performances. Rachael Sullivan's "Exploring an Institutional Base: Locating a Queer Women's Community in Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada" examines how lesbian, bisexual and queer women's identities intersect with and across physical spaces in the "rural city" of Thunder Bay, in North West Ontario. Focusing on perceptions about community-specific resources, Sullivan argues that university-specific spaces, such as Pride Central, constitute understudied sites of inclusion and exclusion. They foster spaces of inclusion by providing shared resources, building and sustaining social networks and community and facilitating feminist organizing; they are also spaces of exclusion based on their limitations as highly regulated, institutional and class-specific spaces. Jane Baskwill, Susan Church and Margaret Swain's article, "The Boy(s) Who Cried Wolf: Re-Visioning Textual Representations of Boys and Literacy" takes up the construction of binary gender identities as they are produced and reproduced in classrooms, primarily in Nova Scotia. Drawing on the experiences of student-teachers, textual representations, and provincial education documents and publications, the authors document the construction of a gender binary, manifested in gender segregated classroom practices that construct a "master narrative" about masculinity. Recognising the limitations of this "master myth" for educating girls, Baskwill, Church and Swain offer some concrete alternatives to the construction of dominant classroom masculinities and to the entrenchment of binaries based in gender and social differences in classrooms and in literacy education.

Contemporary constructions of and

challenges to femininity frame analyses in two additional articles in this issue. Diane Naugler's "Credentials: Breast Slang and the Discourses of Femininity" itemizes and examines the range of "colloquial names given to female breasts as a common and popular representational practice" that is symptomatic of a gendered social order that "constructs proper femininity and feminine and masculine subjects" and "normal women." Naugler argues that "breast slang" reinforces normative standards and expectations of appearance and constructs ideas and expectations of "ideal breasts" as "recognizable femaleness," by creating imperatives about size, symmetry, race and embodiment. Charity Marsh's article, "Reading Contemporary 'Bad Girls': The Transgressions and Triumphs of Madonna's 'What it Feels Like for a Girl'" examines pop icon Madonna's music video and stage performance of "What it Feels Like for a Girl," as well as images, language and lyrics that challenge constructions and representations of "bad girls." Marsh's analysis is indebted to Haraway's cyborg metaphor to "cultivate new possibilities" and challenge the possible dismissal of bad girls who may appear complicit in systems of power and privilege.

Critical questions related to how and where we undertake multidisciplinary feminist research are specifically raised by three articles included in this issue. Kim Anderson, in "The Mother Country: Tracing Intersections of Motherhood and the National Story in Recent Canadian Historiography" contests the political terrain of motherhood and nation that "assume a prominent place in the public domain during times of change or crisis." She directs feminist researchers toward the "tensions related to gender, sexuality, class, race and ethnicity in the formation of the nation" and to "oppressive and exclusionary elements of nation-building in our past." Amber Gazso and Ingrid Waldron, in "Fleshing Out the Racial Undertones of Poverty for Canadian Women and their Families: Re-envisioning a Critical Integrative Approach" argue for an approach that moves beyond a "feminization of poverty thesis" by exposing, theorizing and contextualizing gendered and racialized discourses and policies. Renée Bondy's "'Get Thee to a Nunnery': Uses of English Canadian Convent Archives Across

Feminist Disciplines" offers a brief glimpse into the uses of English language convent archives by feminist researchers. This rich array of resources, she suggests, is well suited to future feminist investigation. Along with suggestions about how researchers might better utilize English convent archives, she urges feminist researchers, across the disciplines, to recognise the contributions made by women religious in developing "richer and more nuanced analyses of Canadian women's history, culture and experiences."

Two articles included here provide glimpses into larger, ongoing research endeavors. Njoki Wane's article, "African Canadian Women and the Question of Identity" draws on primary interview and focus group data with one hundred Black women of African ancestry residing in Canada, and illustrates some of the tensions that emerge as complementary and competing identities are negotiated, contested and/or shift in Canadian contexts. This research comprises part of a comprehensive research project examining how feminism is constituted amongst Canadian women of African ancestry. Similarly, Susan Brigham and Catherine Baillie Abidi's article, "International Female Migration to Atlantic Canada through Internet Mediated Match-Making Agencies" is part of a larger, collaborative research endeavour investigating the policy implications and representations of Internet mediated match-making agencies, often referred to as "mail order bride" agencies, in Canada, the United States and beyond. Using a case study approach, primarily in Nova Scotia, they identify some of the concerns and complexities that may arise from these mediated match-making relationships for policy workers responsible for settlement and education and for advocates and researchers. All of these articles are tucked in behind the cover with a striking image entitled "Volcanic Sands," by photographer Angela Reid.

Readers are encouraged to download a new collection of book reviews at the *Atlantis* website - www.msvu.ca/Atlantis. In addition to book reviews, we continue to publish online, peer-reviewed interviews with the authors of the Canadian Women's Studies Association/ L'association canadienne des études sur les

femmes Annual Book Prize. This year we present Marie Lovrod's interview with Sheryl Nestel, author of *Obstructed Labour: Race and Gender in the Re-emergence of Midwifery*, the 2008 winner. *Atlantis* has honoured each winner since the inception of the Award with the published interview, a plaque recognising this honour, and a gift subscription to *Atlantis*. We encourage readers to attend next year's CWSA/ACEF awards ceremony to be held at the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences in Montreal.

Carrying on with our tradition of publishing important, vibrant and relevant feminist research, the next issue of *Atlantis* will be a special topic issue dedicated to publishing peer-reviewed research undertaken by CWSA/ACEF graduate student members. It also recognizes the contributions of Dr. Margaret Conrad, on the occasion of her retirement as Canada Research Chair in Atlantic Canada Studies at the University of New Brunswick, Fredericton. Marg Conrad was a founding member of the Acadia-based collective that published the first issue of *Atlantis* in 1975 and was a co-editor with Susan Clark and Donna Smyth from 1977-1985. She has played, and continues to play, a key role in the Journal over its thirty-four year history.

The Editors

* From a paper first presented at *Breaking Boundaries, Forging Connections*, a conference held April 11-14, 2008 at Mount Saint Vincent University by Dr. Lorraine Code, Nancy's Chair 2007-08.