

Editorial

Here we are in 2010; it's hard to believe we have entered a new decade. As some who have pioneered in Women's Studies begin to retire, we have, on the other hand, a group of graduate students who are forging ahead with new research and testing out new theories or combinations of approaches in the field. This special issue of *Atlantis* features both the pioneering work of Margaret Conrad, one of the founders of the Journal, as well as highlighting the productions of graduate student members of the Canadian Women's Studies Association. Margaret Conrad is honoured by a special edition of "Women's Studies in Focus," a peer-reviewed collection of five retrospective articles on her work introduced by Suzanne Morton of McGill University, whose research focus has also been Atlantic Canada. These five pieces speak not only to Conrad the researcher and practitioner in women's history, political history, public history and text book writing, but also to her contributions to planter studies, women's studies and Atlantic Canadian studies. To honour Margaret we have also used a photograph of Susanne MacKay's portrait of "Marg the Younger" as our cover. Finally, we offer you a co-authored essay (with Sasha Mullally) on "Women, History and Information and Communications Technology," a piece that ponders how women historians are faring in the communications revolution. Conrad and Mullally ask: will women in the profession overcome the "gendered digital divide that seems to be descending globally and locally?"

As editors of the Journal of Choice of the Canadian Women's Studies Association (CWSA), we invited submissions from graduate students who presented papers at the 2009 CWSA meetings at Carleton University in Ottawa during the annual Congress co-sponsored by the Canadian Federation of the Humanities and Social Sciences. We took this opportunity to demonstrate the high quality of graduate work in Women's Studies that is enriching the study of the social sciences and humanities in Canada. Of the many received and assessed,

we are pleased to offer you twelve of those papers that met our rigorous peer review standards. The first three deal with embodiment and body issues. Anita Shaw's "Media Representations of Adolescent Pregnancy," argues that media representations both reinforce and challenge the stigma attached to teen pregnancies. Using the film *Juno* and a Madonna music video, Shaw exposes the standard "Good Girl Life Plan" which envisions a white, middle-class young woman's trajectory from education to marriage and motherhood and the reinforcing discourse of "choice" that narrows the parameters of girls' lives, "stigmatizing those who venture outside the boundaries." Exposing these discourses can lead to alternative ones that refrain from assigning blame, Shaw suggests. Amy Gullage's "An Uncomfortable Fit" uses a qualitative methodology (discourse analysis) to explore how plus-sized women experience university where there are opportunities to discuss and construct subversive identities yet where there is also silence and lack of discussion about plus-sized bodies. Her paper suggests that there is potential for organizing communities to "disrupt dominant discourses of fatness" and find "new ways of interpreting, understanding and challenging discourses of fatness within universities." Our third article in this group, "Canadians Denied" by OmiSoore Dryden, utilizes queer diasporic analysis to reveal the construction of blood donors/subjects through a process of exclusion. Her paper provides an analysis of the Canadian Blood Services website and commercials which suggest a specific construction of the ideal blood donor as white, in control of sexual urges, monogamous, heterosexual and emblematic of the Canadian nation. Quoting Judith Butler in part, Dryden notes that the Canadian Blood Services organization thus relies upon "an un/acknowledged set of assumptions about the foundations of 'identity' that work in favor of those very hierarchies."

The second and largest group of articles focuses on various aspects of

feminism. Sharon Woodill's almost poetic discussion of "Complexity Theory and Ecofeminism" seeks to meld the insights of complexity theory derived from the physical sciences with ecofeminism's critique of hierarchies to create a "bi-focal vision" that accommodates blurred boundaries, ambiguities, and multiple realities. This vision allows the opening up of new spaces "where there is hope for something new, something hopefully better." Several papers probe the nature of sisterhood in global contexts. Maki Motapanyane's "Insider/Outsider" speaks to the complexity, diversity and challenges that occur within feminist research and practice. She explores the politics of cross-cultural and transnational knowledge production in the context of global inequality and as a South African researcher working in a Canadian academic context. For this author a central problem is to develop an ethic for conducting transnational research: "one that is open to negotiating relativism and hybridity within its parameters." In a related paper, Ethel Tungohan asks "Is 'Global Sisterhood' Elusive?" Focusing on the United Nations women's rights movement, Tungohan suggests that instead of ignoring differences among women by promoting the idea of a global sisterhood, we need to use an intersectional analysis that integrates collective and economic rights with women's rights. Similarly Benita Bunjun's "Feminist Organizations and Intersectionality" suggests the usefulness of intersectional analysis and draws on both theory and her own feminist practice to problematize the values of mainstream feminism including the concept of global sisterhood. Bunjun suggests that collective structures and processes potentially have the capacity to deal with power differences and exclusions that arise both within feminist organizations and without, as part of the process of building "transgressive and healthy organizations and communities..." Complicating the picture is Carol D'Arcangelis' "Theorizing Implications of Indigenous Feminist Relational Sovereignty" which attempts to elicit a dialogue among feminist scholars with Jacqui Alexander and Nandita Sharma on sovereignty-related issues, a dialogue that rejects neo-liberal

frameworks. D'Arcangelis proposes an indigenous feminist notion of sovereignty that is based on "relationality, interdependence, responsibility and balance." As she explains, this notion of sovereignty would apply to nature as well as human society and comes from a spiritual relationship with the land. Additionally, this idea of sovereignty is based on the role of indigenous women in preserving the well-being and balance of the nation as well as its traditions. For D'Arcangelis this rethinking of indigenous feminist views of sovereignty might assist in a general rethinking of national borders and encourage a more inclusive approach. The final paper, "Engaging with the State," dealing with feminist approaches and challenges, is by Lisa Boucher and it examines the familiar conundrum of state funding for feminist organizations, a theme implicit in the 1987 article, "Facing the State: The Politics of the Women's Movement Reconsidered," written by Sue Findlay for the collection *Feminism and Political Economy: Women's Work, Women's Struggles*, edited by Heather Jon Maroney and Meg Luxton. Findlay alerted feminists to the likely cooptation of feminist demands for equality in the token participation of feminist functionaries in the state bureaucracy. How far we have moved from that concern to today's complete shut out of equality-seeking groups and policies at the highest levels of power! Boucher outlines the current challenges facing feminist organizations in Canada where federal agencies no longer fund political advocacy work and simultaneously expect the third sector (voluntary and others) to fill in the gaps as cutbacks decimate public services. Boucher concludes that it is crucial for feminist groups to engage the state, to make demands upon it and to pressure the state for financial support for the third sector while also pressing for more autonomy in the organizations that make up the third sector.

Essays by Christine McKenzie and Anne Stebbins address violence and desire in educational settings. McKenzie's "Applying Analysis" aims to uncover how women of various backgrounds who have experienced violence find safe spaces in which to learn. A large portion of the responsibility for creating

these spaces rests with the educators who need to understand that they wield power in the classroom; engaging in self-reflexivity, educators can be sensitive to the different realities of differently located women students while refusing to essentialize them. Anne Stebbins utilizes the works of Freud and Lacan to explore the unconscious dynamics of desire in the classroom, especially through a detailed discussion of different models of transference. Grappling with the concept of transference (usually rendered as a one-way relationship from teacher to student), Stebbins suggests, facilitates an examination of non-hierarchical pedagogies that challenge the conventional roles of teacher/student and also acknowledges the place of desire in the classroom. Recognizing the positive benefits of passion and emotion in the process of learning is central to Stebbins' project.

The final paper examines the discursive constructions of constitutional discrimination claims in the United States and Canada. Caroline Hodes' "(Re)Producing Nations" adopts a Foucauldian approach and suggests that a new framework is needed for equality jurisprudence, one that "takes the discrimination out of the claimant's body and relocates it within the actions that constitute the discrimination," that is "reframing discrimination as a process that objectifies people...." Hodes' ultimate goal is to produce an anti-subordination framework for equality jurisprudence that does not "reify physical characteristics and grants citizenship status through the bodies they create." What is fascinating about this paper is the author's persuasiveness in suggesting alternative frames/lenses.

Our invitation to graduate student presenters at the Canadian Women's Studies Association meetings in Ottawa was so successful that we could not include in one issue all those papers that were eventually accepted for publication, so watch out for the next issue of *Atlantis* for more.

Finally, we want to alert you to our online features which include Sikata Banerjee's interview with the 2009 CWSA Annual Book Award winner, Norman Smith, author of *Resisting Manchuko: Chinese Women Writers and the Japanese Occupation*.

The Editors