Editor's Introduction

This issue marks the 33rd volume of *Atlantis*!

In addition to a small cluster of articles that emerged from the Nova Scotia-based Healthy Balance Research program, we offer a series of articles on a broad spectrum of feminist topics written from a variety of disciplinary perspectives and 4 book reviews. We also draw your attention to our website - msvu.ca/atlantis - where, at the link to this issue, browsers are free to download more than a dozen other book reviews, and where we carry an ever-growing special feature comprised of book reviews of all the CWSA Annual Book Award winners (2003-2007) and exclusive article-length interviews with the authors.

Following the articles in the Healthy Balance cluster, we begin with two articles that investigate some of the limitations and complexities of global and provincial struggles for gender equality. In "Governing through Accountability: Gender Equality and the United Nations," Sally Cole and Lynne Phillips engage in a critical analysis of the UN's gender equality policy initiatives, focusing on one international organization, UNIFEM, as a case study. Based on research into UNIFEM's more recent strategic plans, regional activities in Latin America, and its 30th Anniversary Gala in New York in 2006, Cole and Phillips argue that the UNIFEM's gender equality efforts have increasingly been framed by what they term "the technologies of an audit culture." Rooted in "the political and economic rationalities of late neo-liberalism," this expert-driven and results-based management framework, they assert, limits how gender equality is envisioned, calculated, and approached at the international and regional levels.

Our Community Voices feature considers the question of women's equality from a more localized perspective. In "Transformational Leadership Without Equality is Neither: Challenging the Same Old System," Leah Levac reflects on her participation in and the efficacy of the University of New Brunswick-sponsored *21 Leaders for the 21st Century* initiative, which was designed to foster young leaders and engage them in public policy dialogues on some of the current economic, social, and educational challenges in New Brunswick. She asserts that this initiative and its offshoot, 21inc., has the potential for advancing an equality agenda by creating opportunities for young women to participate. At the same time, she suggests that in order for social change to be inclusive, it is necessary for such initiatives to be attentive to both leadership structures and to the kinds of systemic barriers that women and marginalized groups face that inhibit them from accessing formal leadership positions or in fully participating in discussions about New Brunswick's future.

The next two articles explore issues related to women's bodies and by using an intersectional lens draw attention to the ways in which such factors as racialization, sexuality, and age differentially shape women's lives. In "Normative White Femininity: Race, Gender and the Politics of Beauty," Kathy Deliovsky analyzes the operations of hegemonic racialized and heteronormative feminine and beauty ideals in North America. Drawing primarily on the narratives of twenty-four interview participants, she points out that normative white femininity produces a variety of self-regulatory practices among privileged white women. She further emphasizes, however, that as a highly racialized category, normative white femininity creates the yardstick against which women from non-Anglo ethnic and racially marginalized groups are hierarchically positioned and

measured with the attendant consequences for how they are read as Other.

"Envisioning the Future with Aboriginal Breast Cancer Survivors" by Roanne Thomas-MacLean, Jennifer Poudrier, and Carolyn Brooks examines the experiences of a particularly understudied group of women: young Aboriginal breast cancer survivors. As part of a Saskatchewan-based research project, Visualizing Breast Cancer, which uses both interview and photovoice research approaches, the authors focus on the stories of and photographs taken by six Aboriginal women who were in their early forties or younger at the time of diagnosis. According to the authors, three main themes emerged from the research: shame and silence; resilience and strength; and the identification of various forms of needed support (economic, emotional, medical, etc.). In the latter case, the authors conclude, such supports must be much more attuned to differences among women, most notably their racial and cultural background, age, and economic situation.

The fostering of productive dialogues - political and theoretical - is an overarching theme of the next two articles. Julie Nagam's article, "Transforming and Grappling with Concepts of Activism and Feminism with Indigenous Women Artists," explores the complex relationship between Indigenous women artists/writers, feminist politics, and activism. Based on a reading of selected Indigenous women writers and interviews with three Indigenous artists, all of whom have differing commitments to feminism, Nagam calls for a fundamentally redefined and decolonized feminist politics in which Indigenous women's issues and concerns are integral to struggles against all forms of oppression.

In "Mapping the Surgical Landscape: Resonances and Divergences between Theories of Cosmetic and Transsexual Body Modification," Beth Pentney and T. Garner unpack similarities and differences between feminist theoretical perspectives on cosmetic surgery and trans theoretical discourses on sex reassignment surgery. They argue that while feminist and trans theorists have both articulated discourses of conformity, agency, and subversion when analyzing these two types of body modification, scholars in each respective discipline, with few exceptions, tend to diverge when it comes to discussions of identity and the concept of transition. The authors attribute these theoretical differences largely to the influences and distinctions made by the medical establishment, which they argue have had a constraining effect in how the body and body modification are being conceptualized. In attempting "to address some of the theoretical limitations in considering these two forms of body modification as either entirely distinct or merely the same," they encourage feminist and trans theorists to continue the "work of (re)conceptualizing bodily practices."

Cyberspace is the main site of investigation for the authors of the next two articles. Ellen Whiteman's, "Just Hit Send: An Analysis of Activist Themed Email Forwards" engages in a thematic and textual analysis of activist-based cyberjunk and examines its relationship to feminist activism. Drawing on a compilation of 67 email forwards categorized into three main areas (activist activity, feel good/guilt narratives, and hoaxes), the author asks, "what motivates people to forward them, what need [do] they serve and what, if any, effect [do] they have on activist movements"? In addressing these questions, Whiteman explores the construction of feminist/activist identities, the collapsing of public/private space, and the issue of time.

In "Embodied Value: Egg Donation, Visuality, and Cyberculture in the United States," Kate Boulay investigates the predominant visual representations of whiteness in the US fertility industry's commercialized cyberculture. Basing her analysis on interviews she conducted with fertility clinic and third party agency personnel and on a close reading of one

clinic's egg donor recruitment advertisements, the author argues that, despite textual references to "ethnicity" in egg donor recruitment campaigns, "the only racial category" represented visually "with any regularity is the category 'white'." She posits that, by "drawing on a longstanding visual shorthand of whiteness" and racially-coded notions of "legitimate" and "illegitimate" motherhood, the industry is attempting "to proclaim its own legitimacy" at a time when, despite high demand, the proliferation of assisted reproductive technology remains contested in US society.

We end the issue with two literary analyses. Neta Gordon's, "Sacrificial Pets and Maternal Instinct in Gloria Sawai's 'Mother's Day' and Barbara Gowdy's *Falling Angels*" considers the interrelated themes of hierarchically-ordered human-pet relations, kitten deaths, and the myth of maternal instinct in Sawai's short story and Gowdy's novel. In so doing, she demonstrates that "the death of the kittens in Gowdy and Sawai's texts operate as violently symbolic depictions of the way the women are required not only to sacrifice themselves to the institution of motherhood, but also to think of this sacrifice as natural, as a fulfilment of domestic instinct."

In "Brenda Bowman at Dinner with Judy Chicago: Feminism and Needlework in Carol Shields's *A Fairly Conventional Woman*," Wendy Roy challenges interpretations of Judy Chicago's *A Dinner Party* (1979) and particularly Shields's fourth novel (1982) that have cast both works as "too middle class, too domestic, and not truly feminist." In a careful reading of *A Fairly Conventional Woman*, Roy maintains that such interpretations ignore the extent to which the novel narrates the coming to consciousness and politicization of a woman artist/quiltmaker in the late 1970s and early 1980s and explores such themes as the "gendered aspects of the arts-crafts divide" as well as "the role of women's sexuality and domestic activities such as quilting and food preparation as impetuses for social change."

Our cover photo by Brad Gibb shows an iceberg just off the tip of Fort Amherst on the south side of St. John's harbour where in the 1770s the British built the structure to defend Newfoundland's major fishing port. The iceberg calls to mind global warming and the cool summer of 2008 for those on the east coast of Canada.

As readers can see, the articles published in *Atlantis* cover a broad spectrum of important issues that tackle global questions such as poverty, women's equality and leadership, the role of international organizations in the struggle for gender equality, women's bodies and health, transforming feminism, white femininity and representations of women, among other themes. They remind us of just how connected our struggles are with women around the world.

Introduction to Healthy Balance Thematic Cluster

Stephanie Mason, Barbara Clow, Brigitte Neumann and Carol Amaratunga

The Healthy Balance Research Program was a 5-year project ending in 2007 that examined women's paid and unpaid work in Nova Scotia through a combination of research methodologies and community involvement. Healthy Balance was funded by the Canadian Institutes for Health Research and supported by the Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health, the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women and the Institute for Population Health, University of Ottawa.

The program's collaborative structure, comprised of four research teams (Surveys, Portraits, Secondary Analysis and Qualitative Analysis) and the Equity Reference Group (comprised of women from traditionally under-represented Aboriginal, African Nova Scotian, immigrant and disabilities communities), ensured a complementary approach to women's health issues for academic research and relevant population groups.

The Healthy Balance Research Program focused on the roles of women in Nova Scotia as unpaid caregivers. Findings demonstrated that in 2005, an estimated 36% of Nova Scotians provided care to someone with a long-term condition, mental illness, or temporary difficult time (Keefe *et al.* 2006). More women than men (Keefe and Side 2003) provided assistance with personal care and household chores (Fast 2005; Keating *et al.* 1999), a statistic that may validate, for some, the belief that women are "natural" caregivers.

> Culturally prescribed gender norms establish expectations, both broadly accepted and contested, that women will adopt roles as unpaid caregiver (Oxall and Cook in Gahagan *et al.* 2007).

> Women's identities, while historically, culturally, and geographically varied, typically have been constructed around ideals of nurturance, compassion, and self-sacrifice, which shape expectations about their caregiving responsibilities.
> (Aronson 1991 in Gahagan *et al.* 2007)

In the articles that follow, Healthy Balance Program researchers and community partners explore the effects of women's unpaid caregiving. Carolina Crewe's article, "Great Expectations for Lesbians to Provide Unpaid Care," investigates gender expectations, social stigma and policy barriers for lesbians to provide unpaid caregiving. Case studies used underline the need for non-heteronormative practices within healthcare, legal and financial systems.

"A Healthier Balance of Expertise: An Innovative Model for Community-University Alliances in Health Research," by Carolina Crewe and Barbara Clow, explores the role of equity reference groups and policy advisory committees in community-university alliances such as the Healthy Balance Research Program. The benefits of shared experiences in caregiving and knowledge translation to affected communities are measured against the challenges of effective participatory models and conventional research and policy outputs.

The Healthy Balance Research Program has afforded non-profit sector and academic institutions the opportunity to collaborate in meaningful ways, as shown by research on women's unpaid caregiving, and acts as a model for the best that community and research has to offer each other.

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