

## PREFACE

As Cora Kaplan notes in her review essay in this issue of *Feminist Studies*, there has been a shift in feminist thinking in the direction of more serious and thorough "explorations of the social and psychic scenarios of mothers and children." A maternal narrative of some kind has informed second-wave U.S. feminism from the beginning, of course, in the form of the search for "foremothers" and for early matriarchies. But, as Kaplan suggests, the writings of Nancy Chodorow and Carol Gilligan (in the late 1970s and early 1980s), together with the reproductive experiences of a generation of young women who were feminist activists in the 1970s, generated a new cycle of thought about the meaning of the maternal. Kaplan, however, in reviewing two recent studies of authors often viewed as feminist "foremothers" (Woolf, Rhys, Stead, and Lessing), ends her review with the warning that metaphors of maternity and/or sisterhood "offer no simple or benign solutions to the inequalities and oppressions that women (and men) face today at every turn." Yet this recent intellectual and creative strand—skeptical, sophisticated, deconstructing, often playful and impious about maternal "verities"—is visible in a variety of forms in articles included in this issue.

Stacy Alaimo's "Ecofeminist and Cyborg Interventions: Challenges for an Environmental Feminism" outlines an approach to environmentalism which, while skeptical about Donna Haraway's welcoming of technology, also questions the ecofeminist reliance on maternal metaphors (Mother Earth, Mother Nature, the rape of the planet). These admittedly appealing figures of speech are too compatible with traditional patriarchal images of women, Alaimo argues, to fuel a powerful international movement; instead, they lead politically to efforts to get mother in the kitchen recycling and using biodegradable cleaners rather than to attacks on the world's colossal industrial polluters. Philosopher Iris Marion Young, in her "Punishment, Treatment, Empowerment: Three Approaches to Policy for Pregnant Addicts," takes on a subject rarely explored in her discipline, the debates now raging over the best approach to a group of undeniably "bad mothers," pregnant women who use illegal drugs. A growing number of states and cities have been punishing such women with loss of child custody, mandatory treatment, and even prosecution for child neglect or abuse. "There is a particular rage often being directed at *mothers*," in particular, she argues because most of this legislation and regulation does not offer parallel punishment to men or to nonpregnant women. Young looks at more reasonable and effective alternative programs to get addicted women safely through pregnancy.

Children have two mothers (but no fathers) in Joanna Russ's science fiction classic, *The Female Man*. However, in "Empathic Ways of Reading: Narcissism, Cultural Politics, and Russ's *Female Man*," Judith Kegan Gardiner argues that empathy is particularly appropriate as a feminist reading strategy not because of its supposed links to maternal nurturance but because it can be a "means of collectively processing both utopian desire and feminist anger into a will to effective action." Gardiner suggests that antihumanist critics' suspicions of emotional responses to reading is too restrictive, and she illustrates her contention that empathic reading strategies can work with and across differences of race and gender by a brief look at reactions to Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*.

Creative work in this issue also deals with maternity in its many forms and meanings. In "Between Parents," Joan Cusack Handler's irreverent rereading of Genesis, the narrator speaks to God as one parent to another, accusing God of whimsical and harsh treatment of his children for a minor infraction. "Why would eating the apple,/ a child saying *No, Dad, I must do it my way,*/ cause such an uproar?" Susan Tichy's searing "In a Charity Clinic" re-creates an abortion experience in which the sagging and awkwardly made-up face of a female clinic worker focuses some of the subject's attention away from her pain and regret.

We selected Molly Hite's unsentimental autobiographical story "Mother Underground" for this issue as another illustration of the new wave of feminist probing of motherhood—and daughterhood. The mother, a tidy suburban housewife who stood bizarrely over her daughter while she washed window sashes with a toothbrush and cleaned the inside of the toilet with a razor blade, was declared a lunatic by the daughter's first (of many?) therapists. But now, in her own middle age, the daughter is prepared to abandon her role as victim and to recast her mother as a part of U.S. history in the 1950s, "the very intelligent woman forced into an obsession with the home by history, which had turned on her, proclaiming it had proved her essential dependence in an economy newly glutted with employable men."

Our Lady of Guadalupe, dark-skinned, Indian-featured patron saint of Mexico, is a central metaphor for the San Francisco Chicana artist and community activist Yolanda Lopez, who is the subject of this issue's art essay. One of Lopez's earliest projects (1977), *Three Generations of Mujeres*, consists of three huge and extraordinary black and white drawings of herself, her mother, and her grandmother in realistic style, which, the artist comments, were made to "work against traditional commercial stereotypes" of Latina women: "the sexy bombshell or the passive, long-suffer-

ing mother." The next year, she drew the three women again in pastels. The mother and grandmother, with their ordinary clothes and objects representing their ties to daily life, are flanked by angels, and posed against a radiant halo of light usually reserved for depictions of saints. Lopez drew herself too, but she is photographed (wearing jogging clothes and a huge cape) rather than painted and jumps triumphantly out of the artwork both breaking and continuing the maternal line of descent.

Lopez, in her art, has explored race and its connection to this ancient goddess as a "pan-Mexican icon of motherhood and *mestizaje*." Indeed, it is the interconnection between race and gender that is the focus of another grouping of articles in this issue. Drawing on the scholarship by and about women of color, Amy Kaminsky's "Gender, Race, *Raza*" and Susan Fraiman's "Geometries of Race and Gender: Eve Sedgwick, Spike Lee, Charlayne Hunter-Gault" both illustrate the new ways in which academic feminism is attempting to address its earlier neglect of race and to theorize about race and gender. Using what she calls a "comparative gender-conscious approach" to examine configurations of race as they occur in and between Spain, Spanish America, and the United States, Kaminsky presents a nuanced reading of Hispanic racial formation via a close study of nomenclature. Her essay is an example of how gender destabilizes and complicates racial identity at the same time that it acknowledges when and why women of color "invoke race as a political mechanism" in the struggle against patriarchy and white supremacy.

Fraiman's essay is concerned with a more insidious form of white male supremacy. Through five scenarios, ranging from the 1989 story of the Central Park jogger to Spike Lee's treatment of women and the coverage of the Gulf War by women journalists, Fraiman examines recurring images of men bonding through women. Beginning with the model of the erotic triangle presented in Eve Sedgwick's *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, Fraiman evokes race and rape to illustrate that "the traffic in women may involve male status as much as eros." But she ultimately seeks to refute a model of gender studies which implicitly relegates women to intermediary roles between men and even makes women complicit with racism and exploitation. To her way of thinking a better model is one that puts the focus back on women "to slighted representations of our bodies and ourselves, the geometries of our relations, however, problematized and embattled 'we' may be."

The short story by Patricia Duncker, "The Stations of the Cross," must be placed in a category of its own: the interview horror story, which reads like an academic's anxiety dream. The narrator's martyrdom and then as-

cent into "heaven" are playfully depicted in her itchy stockings, aggravating dress and collar, and tight shoes, ripped off and tossed away as the hundred pigeons of a fellow motorist roar into the sky, above the row of fourteen crosses high up on the mountain.

Marilyn Mobley and Ellen Ross,  
for the editors