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From the Editors

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FROM THE EDITORS

We are proud and excited to introduce the inaugural issue of the *Journal of Feminist Scholarship* (*JFS*). The fundamental aims of *JFS* are to offer an open-access academic forum for the publication of innovative, peer-reviewed feminist scholarship across the disciplines and to encourage productive debates among scholars and activists interested in examining methodological directions and political contexts and ramifications of feminist inquiry. As a field of human endeavor whose political goals are inseparable from the intellectual perspectives it embraces, feminism has both matured and diversified tremendously over the past several decades of its dynamic development throughout the world. Its engagements and its effects are always necessarily global and local, historically rooted and intensely contemporary. As editors of *JFS*, we wish to contribute to the ongoing empowerment and expansion of feminist research while encouraging reflexive inquiry into the evolution of feminist scholarship and its relationship to political action.

We created the *Journal of Feminist Scholarship* because we felt it is a time to explore the state of feminist thought at the turn of the new century and a time to examine where feminism itself is heading in the future. To help launch this conversation, we turned to feminist scholars and activists and asked them to share their ideas about feminism and feminist scholarship today. We are pleased to present ten statements from significant figures in feminist movement and feminist studies: Amrita Basu, Jennifer Baumgardner, Debra A. Castillo, Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Agnieszka Graff, Elizabeth Grosz, Joy A. James, Michael Kimmel, Toril Moi, Karen Offen, and Amy Richards. These voices alert us to the transformative power of feminist scholarship in the classroom for younger generations, the open space of feminism that resonates with many voices beyond the Western core, and the enduring centrality of gender to feminist work. Further, we hear calls not only to engage in more substantive ways with non-Western and non-academic feminism, but also to connect intellectual work to real-world challenges and events more meaningfully and productively. We are reminded to hold onto the historicity of feminist thinking and experience and to recognize the contributions of anti-racist writers, artists, and activists to feminist scholarship in the US academy. We are pushed to invent new questions that address more than the individual—that turn to the world beyond the self—and that return us to valuable relationships like those between feminism and various art forms, while never losing sight of human freedoms and social justice. In addition to these inspiring statements, we have also received some very welcome expressions of support for our venture. For example, Moira Gatens writes that *JFS* is “an exciting and timely initiative that promises to reinvigorate contemporary feminist scholarship and challenge complacency. The open-access policy is brilliant and entirely appropriate to the aim of the journal to make a significant contribution to the urgent issues and concerns of interdisciplinary international feminist studies today.” We give our heartfelt thanks to all these voices for setting the stage for our inaugural issue.

With our first issue of *JFS*, we are pleased to introduce a regular section titled “Viewpoint.” We envision “Viewpoint” as a space to showcase new directions in feminist inquiry and practice and to feature commentaries on ongoing debates in contemporary feminist scholarship. We also see “Viewpoint” as a forum for reconsiderations of issues central to feminism at large, as well as a space to share information on innovative and useful resources for feminist studies. Our inaugural viewpoint essay comes from Eric Anderson, who explores the concept of “homohysteria” to trace how Western masculinity has moved from homosocial intimacy to prohibition of such intimacy and back again to acceptance, a movement that Anderson suggests creates “inclusive masculinities” and a positive shift in how Western cultures consider sexual and gender binaries.

For the main section of our first issue we selected four articles that demonstrate the breadth of contemporary feminist inquiry. Despite their differences, the articles combine well for our journal because they each demonstrate a different facet of feminist scholarship: exploration of feminist activism and critique of traditional systems (specifically, Taiwanese Buddhism); the application of a feminist theoretical framework to the contemporary issue of the “war” on obesity; the development of the notion of a gender continuum to deepen our understanding of masculinity and gender in contemporary US society; and analysis of revisionist practices in the arts from a perspective that brings focus on gender to bear on global historical and political concerns. When the reader stands further back from these articles, however, she cannot help but be struck by how much they are both embedded in the political and social present and yet remain rooted in the central concerns of feminist scholarship that can be traced back as far as Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (and perhaps even before): the tensions between religion and feminism, gender identity, socialization, women’s appearance, and female agency and representation.

Chiung Chen explores contemporary debate in Taiwanese Buddhism on the rules governing behavior of Buddhist nuns in “Feminist Debate in Taiwan’s Buddhism: The Issue of the Eight Garudhammas.” Chen shows how this debate has led to a greater awareness of gender inequality in traditional texts and the monastic system, but also how the controversy it generated has thrown light on the culturally and religiously specific restrictions faced by feminist reformers within Taiwanese Buddhism. Chen’s stress on understanding the Taiwanese debate within its historical, cultural, and religious contexts helps the reader apprehend the diversity of the needs of Buddhist women throughout the world and thus to understand that there may not be one feminist approach within Buddhism.

Talia L. Welsh examines the so-called epidemic of obesity in America and government responses to that epidemic through a feminist theoretical lens influenced by Foucault and socialist feminism. Welsh demonstrates, in “Healthism and the Bodies of Women: Pleasure and Discipline in the War against Obesity,” how the seemingly innocuous “good-health” imperative to lose weight for our own well-being is another way of controlling the bodies and lives of women. The regimen required to achieve the “healthy” body requires as much Foucaultian discipline as the more standard practices associated with beautifying women’s appearance. Welsh shows that this shift in societal focus on the appearance of women from looking good (presumably for men) to being healthy in order to take care of themselves and their children is ultimately directed at the poor, as it is the poor who are more likely to be obese and who lack resources to engage in elaborate weight-control regimens. In failing to become healthy, however, it is the individual who is blamed, while the systems and policies within which poverty is maintained are ignored. In this way, Welsh offers a new element to the feminist debate on body weight and female physical appearance.

In “Grappling with Gender: Exploring Masculinity and Gender in the Bodies, Performances, and Emotions of Scholastic Wrestlers,” Phyllis L. Baker and Douglas R. Hotek develop an alternative theoretical lens of a “gender continuum” for understanding gender and masculinity in contemporary US society through their empirical research of behaviors in scholastic wrestling. The young male scholastic wrestlers observed by Baker and Hotek exhibited standard “masculine” behaviors such as not showing emotion, but also forms of behavior that were “androgynous” or “feminine,” such as caretaking. Baker and Hotek conclude that our understanding of gender and masculinity requires a broader conceptual framework than that of gender binaries and hegemonic masculinity.

Finally, Patricia Lapolla Swier’s “New Age Fairy Tales: The Abject Female Hero in *El laberinto del fauno* and *La rebelión de los conejos mágicos*” offers a psychoanalytic reading of Guillermo del Toro’s

film *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006) and Ariel Dorfman's children's story *The Rabbits' Rebellion* (1986) that explores their engagement with the politics of memory and the transformation of social consciousness in, respectively, post-Franco Spain and post-Pinochet Chile. Swier adroitly conjugates perspectives and insights drawn from Joseph Campbell's writings on myth and Julia Kristeva's theorization of the abject in order to illuminate the gendered agency and representation of the young female heroes of del Toro's and Dorfman's narratives who traverse the hyper-virile nightmare landscapes of dictatorial violence and control in their symbolic quest for transcendence and reconciliation.

The double-anonymous review process followed by *JFS* necessitates that our manuscript reviewers remain unnamed, but we would like to take this opportunity to extend a thank-you to them as a group. The willingness of busy people who did not know us to act as reviewers is confirmation of a true alliance among feminist scholars, an intellectual and political community that we do not believe can be found elsewhere in academia.