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From the Editors

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From the Editors

We are pleased to announce the publication of the ninth issue of the *Journal of Feminist Scholarship*. Across a diverse range of disciplinary frameworks and methodological approaches, the articles assembled in this issue all reflect on a shared theme of gendered corporeality and embodiment, as the authors bring into their respective analytic focus Black feminist atheism reaffirmed through female and trans bodies; legal and testimonial discourses about rape, possibly the ultimate attack on the body; gendering of bodies of elected representatives in political sex scandals; and bodily self-fashioning and empowerment of roller-derby players.

In “She Had a Name That God Didn’t Give Her: Thinking the Body through Atheistic Black Radical Feminism,” Marquis Bey aims to pull apart the essentialist connection between Blackness and religiosity. Against the grain of their historically powerful alliance, the author examines what it is to be an atheistic Black feminist as both an epistemological and ontological commitment. Atheistic Black feminism, in contrast to theology, is a reaffirmation of the body, and Bey is especially committed to affirming the subjectivity and humanity of Black female and trans bodies as foci of antiracist resistance, in particular in the contemporary political context informed by the Black Lives Matter movement.

Tara Roeder’s “‘You Have to Confess’: Rape and the Politics of Storytelling” is likewise concerned with resistance in its discussion of narrative accounts of rape. Roeder highlights in particular memoirs of rape survivors, which, she argues, should be seen as a form of public testimony that enables victims of violence to reclaim their experiences and bodies from mainstream representational frameworks imposed by the legal system and mass media. Their personal testimonial storytelling becomes thus a political act with broad implications that has the potential to provide judges and juries with different views of rape and powerfully disrupt stereotypical notions filtering the popular perception of the crime of rape and its victims.

The intersection of state apparatus, gendered embodiment, and personal testimony also defines the scenario of Hinda Mandell’s investigation in “She Legislates, He Scandalizes: Reenvisioning the Impact of Political Sex Scandals on Assemblywomen in New York,” which offers an interview-based empirical study of the effects of sex scandals on women serving in the New York State legislature. The cumulative effect of scandals involving male legislators is perceived as contaminating both the public perception of the Assembly and the reputations of female lawmakers interviewed by the author. On the basis of their testimony, Mandell identifies patterns of representation that frame male bodies as a potential liability to the state and female bodies as assuming gendered characteristics traditionally associated with men: containment, stability, and rationality.

In “The Power and Joy of Derby: Women’s Participation, Empowerment, and Transformation in a Flat-Track Roller Derby Team,” John Paul and Sharla Blank employ ethnographic approaches to investigate women’s experience of derby through a sporting feminist perspective. They find that their subjects were moved to critically engage gender

ideology and relations beyond the roller rink, with some using the empowering effects of their derby experience to challenge gender inequities and harassment in the workplace. Thus, the authors argue, their observations to some extent run counter to previous literature on derby that suggests that “women’s physical empowerment does not lead to broader social empowerment and the challenging of gendered arrangements at large.”

In closing, this issue’s viewpoint, “Moving Forward/Looking Back: Reclaiming and Revising our Feminist Past and Searching for Solidarity” by Cassandra Denise Fetters, brings together personal anecdotes, feminist theory, and literary and popular culture references to seek answers to the ongoing question of how to promote a common-ground feminist social movement that still accounts for and respects difference. Fetters calls for learning from the feminist past—activist and academic alike—as a means to put contemporary debates among feminists into perspective and imagine new ways to merge theoretical thought with activism while effectively building solidarity amongst women despite their differences.