

Introduction

We're very happy to present our thirty-first general issue - this year's snapshot of the most current and pressing issues in women's studies and women's activism. In addition to the scholarly articles we describe below, we're happy to include a selection of book reviews. Thanks are owing to Adriana Benzaquen, who is concluding her term as a most capable book review editor. We encountered the cover image for this issue, L.M. Champagne's "No Place for a Garden," through the Winnipeg office of the Prairie Women's Health Centre of Excellence. Champagne's work, created while participating in PWHCE's photovoice project for low-income women, communicates a personal vision of women's lived experience of poverty.

Elizabeth Quinlan, in "Training in the Gendered Labour Market: New Realities, Requirements, and Rewards for Canadian Women," tests assumptions about structural barriers to women's participation in training by using structural equation modelling (SEM) to analyse data collected in the Workplace and Employee Survey (WES). Among other findings, she is able to extrapolate that women's domestic responsibilities possibly act as an incentive to training. Quinlan advocates more research into the effects on women's health and well being in light of their assuming ever more work.

Janice Ahola-Sidaway and Margaret MacKinnon's case study of one young woman's vocational biography, presented in "Duty, Passion and the (Re)Production of a Gendered Life: One Young Woman's Struggle to Craft a Meaningful Vocational Project," also concerns the links between education, paid work, and domesticity. Specifically, the authors are concerned with the way that gender pervades the youth transition process. Drawing largely on Pierre Bourdieu's reflexive sociology to analyse their respondent's "socialized vocational subjectivities," the authors conclude that her relational work - within both the family and the workplace - pervades her decisions about fields of study.

Shaheen Shariff and Rachel Gouin's "Cyber-Dilemmas: Gendered Hierarchies, New Technologies and Cyber-Safety in Schools" presents an

overview of cyber-bullying as the "emerging social cruelty in schools," one that is most frequently directed toward girls. The authors moreover consider the institutional "policy dilemmas" that result from virtual harassment. After reviewing the inconclusive nature of case law on the subject, and noting that the "virtual world is eerily similar to the real world," they observe that those wishing to stem cyber-bullying are often bedevilled by the anonymity of virtual harassers. Shariff and Gouin propose that if educators are to encourage "inclusive electronic discourse," they must begin by recognizing and rectifying the operation of gendered hierarchies in real classrooms as well as in cyber-space. Andrea King's article on Nelly Arcan's autofictional narrative *Putain* ["Whore"] takes as its starting point the sensationalism surrounding Arcan's psychoanalytic confession. The text has been viewed on the one hand as fitting within the tradition of *écriture au féminin* and, on the other hand, as contributing to the objectification and degradation of women. While print and broadcast journalists encouraged a readerly conflation of author and narrator, King argues that Arcan's own self-representation in media interviews as well as the ambiguities in the writing itself contributed and contributes to the generic confusion.

In "First Blood: How Three Generations of Newfoundland Women Learned about Menstruation," Marilyn Porter reports on what her respondents knew about menstruation, and from what sources, before menarche. She finds that maternal communication on the subject has remained vague and embarrassed. Porter goes on to employ a Foucauldian analysis of the body to account for both female unease about blood and women's anxiety about the association of menstruation with sexual activity. These concerns colour the respondents' memories - even for those who experienced menstruation itself as an affirming and significant rite of passage.

Michelle Webber focusses on the disjuncture between women's academic engagement in women's studies and the declaration of feminist identity in "'I'm Not a Militant Feminist': Exploring Identities and Feminist Hesitations in the Contemporary Academy."

Her twenty-one respondents range from those who were second-wave founders of women's studies as a discipline to those who are presently studying. Webber finds that many women retreat from naming themselves as feminists because of popularly circulated negative associations with that political stance. Instead, they integrate an interpretive framework learned in their programs into their personal lives. For these respondents, women's studies offers increased agency if not an incentive to collective will for change.

Naomi Black's "Feminism in Nova Scotia: Women's Groups, 1990-2004" perceives a link between women's actions and larger feminist purposes. She observes that in spite of "the current and recurrent dirge for feminism," overall numbers of groups have grown since 1990, although the activity of a significant number of overtly feminist groups has changed. Most strikingly, their work has been institutionalized. Ultimately, she perceives that women's groups, even those not identifying as feminist, are "the support system for feminism." Her appendices offer a useful resource for further information and study.

Margrit Eichler and Meg Luxton, in "Women's Studies in Focus," explain the intent of their workshop, "Feminist Challenges to Knowledge," held in Toronto in 2003, where eighteen scholars concentrated on the history and import of Canadian and Québécoise women's studies from the 1960s to the present. The workshop was a first step in a larger project of recording and analysing the impact of feminist knowledge on the nation's academies. The authors also introduce brief papers by Martha MacDonald and Shahrzad Mojab, who present their moving personal stories about coming to and taking part in the shaping of women's studies.

In "Representing the Reprehensible: Fairy Tales, News Stories & the Monstrous Karla Homolka," Romaine Smith Fullerton considers how print and broadcast media have framed Homolka's role in the sexual assault and murder of two adolescent girls from 1993, when it was believed her husband had enforced her complicity, and subsequently, when evidence made clear that she was cooperative rather than coerced. Drawing on the theories and insights of Judith Butler, Julia Kristeva, Patricia Pearson, and Frank Davey, Smith argues that journalists resorted to the fairy tale form to account for Homolka's behaviour, casting her

first as a Disneyfied Cinderella or Snow White - a passive, oppressed victim - and then as an evil stepmother or witch.

Our final article offers a Bakhtinian analysis of an American communist's proletarian novel published in 1939. Carolina Núñez Puente argues in "Meridel Le Sueur's Feminist Bildungsroman: When Class Meets Gender" that the novel, *The Girl*, exemplifies Bakhtin's definition of the most revolutionary form of novels of education: those in which the protagonist's consciousness changes to comprehend and meet fundamental shifts in the class struggle. Puente draws on theories of feminist dialogics to explore how the central character's class consciousness emerges from women's collectivity.

Finally, we hope you enjoy Lori Chambers' excellent interview with Ann Porter, author of *Gendered States: Women, Unemployment Insurance, and the Political Economy of the Welfare State in Canada, 1945-1997*, for which she was awarded the 2005 Canadian Women's Studies Association Book Prize.

Rhoda Zuk and Linda Kealey