

Editorial

One of the pleasures and challenges of editing a Women's Studies journal is to try to represent the rich diversity of feminist knowledges in Canada and around the world. We were re-reading some of the very early issues of *Atlantis: A Women's Studies Journal*. The very first issue, in the Fall of 1975, had no editorial, although the editors explain the title of the new journal: "Atlantis was an ancient kingdom, an island in the Atlantic which disappeared during an earthquake. Fabulous stories are told about the beauty of the people who lived there and the kind of civilization they created. We take Atlantis as a symbol of the lost kingdom which women are striving to rediscover by discovering themselves." The issue contained articles on sex-roles, women in higher education, housework, the Canadian suffrage movement, childhood, women and the revolution in Portugal, women and literary criticism, and so on - a range of interests, concerns, disciplinary approaches and styles that we could repeat today, nearly a quarter of a century later. But today, we not only still have the voices, concerns and issues of 1975, but a whole new set that provides us, in 1999, with a wider range of struggles, fuller, richer diversities of backgrounds and approaches, better sensitivities to the exclusions that characterise our society, and above all, with a more rounded and appreciative understanding of what constitutes "feminist knowledge."

Atlantis: A Women's Studies Journal is a scholarly journal. We provide an opportunity to read articles based on the most rigorous academic research, and argued cogently and clearly. These are sometimes rooted in traditional disciplines and sometimes they cross disciplinary boundaries or emerge from interdisciplinary fields of study. You will find both kinds of scholarship in this issue. You will also find creative work, which we regard as an equally valid and rigorous form of feminist knowledge. Some articles and contributions challenge previous definitions and distinctions and

open our eyes to new possibilities. Fyre Jean Graveline's "Trickster Teaches: Doing Means Being Done To," which opens this issue, is a good example of this kind of frontier work. Beautifully written, it challenges us to understand the very nature of scholarly work and what goes on in universities (not always the same thing). It was interesting that, as editors, we spent some time trying to decide if this piece was "academic" or "creative," deciding in the end, of course, that it was both - or neither. It means that the Editors and the Editorial Panel have to develop (and keep on developing) flexible, appropriate and sympathetic guidelines and procedures for handling *Atlantis* material.

This article is followed by one from Elaine Power, which arises out of her own experience of doing research. It attempts to answer that age-old but vital question, "How do we know what we know?" and it provides a clear and convincing route through some of the current epistemological debates. Jane Helleiner's article goes back to a topic raised in the very first issue of *Atlantis*, and discusses the place of children and childhood in anthropological study and in relation to feminist insights. Both of these "academic" papers show how feminist scholarship is constantly questioning the received wisdom in the light of actual women's experience. In Susan Cormier's poem, found on a latter page of the issue, we see a similar questioning of language and the use of words.

Many *Atlantis* readers will be familiar with the feminist electronic news list PAR-L. Michèle Ollivier and Wendy Robbins, who instituted the list, discuss the background to the project and present an analysis of the users of the list and the uses to which they put it. In an increasingly electronic age this feminist claiming of space is a vitally important political act, as well as an innovative piece of scholarship. We follow this with an interview with H  l  ne Dallaire, conducted by Natalie Beausoleil. This interview shows us another kind of

knowledge, and re-focuses us on the integral connection between our academic work and our practical politics, as well as on the inseparable connection between the university and the community. Dallaire is a long time activist/academic who has worked especially with minority francophone women outside of Quebec, most notably on issues of health and physical activity.

Our (more or less) regular features - interviews, Community Voices, Women's Studies in Focus - all help to focus our attention on the diversity of "knowledges" in our feminist community. One of the basic principles of *Atlantis* is that the distinction between "theory" and "practice" is false and dangerous. All truly feminist practice is profoundly theoretical: all feminist theory ought to have a resonance and a relevance in the practical world. All too often these activities are separated. While we are committed to breaking down the false distinctions within "feminist knowledges" and to working towards an integrated understanding of knowledges, we know we are not there yet. *Atlantis: A Women's Studies Journal* still does not reach, or meet the needs of those thousands of feminist activists and community based groups who work in every corner of Canada to help women become their true selves, to resist oppression and to change our social, economic and cultural lives for the better. At *Atlantis* we want to provide material to and recognition of such individuals and groups, their ideas and their strategies and of integrating this with our more traditional role as a "scholarly journal."

In this issue, you will find this aspect of our journal represented in several contributions. We are happy to present an edited version of a series of conversations held among successive Presidents of Mount Saint Vincent University. This university is, of course, the publisher of *Atlantis*, itself a sign of its commitment to women, but the conversations show us the many ways in which the Presidents have worked for the good of women's education over the years. Their approaches and priorities change from President to President, but the common theme of understanding that a university for women is, and should be, different remains

constant. We found it fascinating, as we reviewed the tapes of the Presidents' discussions, to see how each generation of feminists learned and honoured the generation and the accomplishments that had preceded them. Each generation has different challenges and new ways of approaching them, but feminism also needs to recognise and learn from our foremothers. We hope that this edited discussion will give readers some flavour of this kind of intergenerational learning. In this context, we hope that readers will enjoy and appreciate our cover picture of nuns at play in the garden of their convent at Valleyfield, Quebec, in 1991. We thought it honours the continuing work of Sisters like those who developed Mount Saint Vincent University for women and draws attention to the very different images of active and self confident women that we might otherwise have. A commentary on the exhibition catalogue of *The Convent Series*, which includes this photo, can be found in the Book Review Section.

Muriel Duckworth has been an activist in both the peace and women's movement for many years. Several generations of Canadian activists have honoured her work and learnt from her example. Muriel recently addressed a gathering at the Congress of the Social Sciences and Humanities (AKA "the Learned's" - a piece of academic flummery that she rightly lampooned), and we are proud to present a brief version of Muriel's words on this occasion. Muriel's reflections are tied in with other accounts of the ways in which activist women have struggled for peace and non-violent solutions. Leigh Brownhill provides an account of recent peace protests in Ontario. Frances Early offers a brief tribute to Barbara Roberts, a life long feminist and peace activist, who died last year, leaving us all the poorer. This section also reproduces a pamphlet produced by peace activists in Halifax to protest the recent bombing in Yugoslavia, thereby allowing us to share another kind of scholarship - the writing of persuasive but catchy "street literature."

With the conversation among the Mount presidents in mind, we turn to another piece on education with Linda Eyre's practical critique of New Brunswick provincial government policies and

practice in terms of the education and training of women, situated in the context of the Beijing Platform for Action. Aysan Sev'er's article returns to another key topic in feminist thought - that of sexualised violence against women and girls. In this case, she provides a context in which to try to understand such extreme expressions of violence, such as the Montreal Massacre, placing an emphasis on men's economic and social power, but re-connecting violence with a society in which we all live, and for which we can take some responsibility.

We round out this issue with pieces that enable us to reflect on women's cultural expressions. The first, by Susan Gingell, is a series of reflections on Elizabeth Mackenzie's art installation entitled "Radiant Monster." This installation, and Gingell's commentary, enable us to re-visit the idea of pregnancy and the pregnant female body. Next, *Atlantis* is proud to publish the winning essay on the topic "Women Writers" from a competition held at the 19th Annual Conference of the Atlantic Association of Undergraduate English, February, 1999. This essay takes a Queer look at Gertude Stein's "The World is Round." We welcome this opportunity to present the work and priorities of new feminist scholars to *Atlantis* readers. Finally, Danielle Fuller analyses the stories of Helen Porter, a Newfoundland writer, uncovering the notion of "survival" in Porter's accounts of everyday female life and using standpoint theory to understand some of the implications of Porter's work.

The Open or General issues of *Atlantis*, which alternate with Special Issues, allow us to present a wider range of work than is possible in the more focussed Special Issues. Our contributors come from all parts of Canada, from many disciplines and from inside and outside academia. Together, they provide a glimpse of the range and variety of work being carried out by feminist knowledge makers in Canada today.

Keith Louise Fulton and Marilyn Porter