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Editor's Introduction

This issue is the product of several departures, layovers, connections, and arrivals. Paula J. Giddings retired from Smith College and *Meridians* as of June 30, 2017, closing a successful twelve-year run as Editor. Paula is succeeded by Ginetta E. B. Candelario, a long-time member of the *Meridians* editorial group, who assumed the editorship as of July 1, 2017. Sarah LaBelle, *Meridians*' longtime Administrative Assistant, also departed after five years of dedicated and invaluable service to the journal. Our new Editorial Assistant, Leslie Marie Aguilar, comes to us—by way of Abilene, TX—from *Indiana Review*, where she served as Poetry Editor. Before leaving, Paula and Sarah began putting this issue together. The timing of their departure, however, meant that seeing it through to publication would entail several layovers and carefully timed connections during the transition process. As with all departures and arrivals, we are sad to bid our colleagues farewell, yet excited to arrive at our new destination. This is in part what makes the cover art for this issue especially fitting.

Favianna Rodriguez's *De Aviión en Aviión* (From Plane to Plane) is a "self-portrait" of her feelings while flying. A collage of airline ticket stubs from flights she has taken "to wonderful places," the piece is a vivid depiction of her life as an artist. From geographic locations like "Tokyo or Berlin or Mexico City or . . . Los Angeles" to resonant moments in time, Rodriguez's piece aptly presages our contributors deft and surefooted navigations of complex, contradictory, and at times inhospitable intellectual terrains and questions. As we approach the end of our second decade of publishing scholarship, essays, and culture works produced

by and about women of color, we have decided to return to our signature features. Similar to Volume I, Number 1, this issue includes Essays, Counterpoints, Cultureworks, Memoir, Media Matters, and In the Trenches pieces. As our founding Editorial Group outlined:

COUNTERPOINTS initiates a self-conscious examination of the analytical and political vocabulary of the fields in which feminists work . . .

IN THE TRENCHES asks where practical application and community activism take women around the world and in what forms these manifest themselves . . .

CULTUREWORKS will include creative work, interviews with artists, photo or art essays, poetry, short fiction, and drama . . .

MEMOIRS analyzes the formation of consciousness and examines the production of racial, sexual, and national subjects . . .

MEDIA MATTERS focuses on the debates, meanings, politics, and uses of visual, musical, or cybernet representations in popular culture . . .

IN THE ARCHIVES will publish documents from institutional or organizational repositories . . .

We open this issue with an essay by Barbara Tomlinson, whose intervention historicizes on-going debates about the meaning and (mis) uses of intersectionality as theory and elucidating metaphor. Tomlinson argues that “white reception of intersectional thinking” inside the academy repeatedly distorts intersectionality’s explicit movement beyond accepting white women’s subjectivity as the universal, fixed, and generative center of feminisms. She argues further that the geometric metaphors deployed by scholars such as Crenshaw (intersectionality) and Hill-Collins (interlocking) help to “provide insight into social relations and structures of power” that frame gender, race, and class—as well as other axes of inequality and domination—as dynamically and mutually constitutive concepts rather than being mere metaphors “caught in the vice of geometry.”

Likewise, Régine Michelle Jean-Charles’ piece on Marie Chauvet examines a tradition of scholars who focus their attention on Chauvet’s life, rather than her work. Jean-Charles argues that the excessive focus on Chauvet’s looks and repeated distortion of her biography illuminates how superficial, identitarian forms of intersectionality produce a milieu that names, claims, and frames Chauvet as a Haitian woman writer without the sort of rigorous intellectual attention that critical intersectionality affords

her body of work. Interestingly, and in keeping with our theme, it is from Haiti's transnational diaspora that the first serious engagements with Chauvet's work emerges.

Continuing with this exploration of the history of claims upon and uses to which feminist writing and scholarship is put in situ and internationally, Cornelia Möser traces the connections and disconnections between US and French feminist theorizing of sex, sexuality, and gender as it traveled transatlantically and was translated back and forth from the 1970s to the present. Möser argues that the social context in which feminists debated whether sexual liberation was possible within patriarchal and heteronormative societies—what such a liberation might look like or would require, and how it could be achieved—informed and was in turn informed by engagement with social theory (feminist or otherwise) produced in the US and France but translated and engaged with transnationally, with consequential effects all around.

Similarly Miglena S. Todorova tells the story of African American women, such as Angela Davis, who traveled to the Soviet Union in the 1970s as part of a broader history of Black internationalism and traveling US feminist theories. Todorova argues that the effect of these encounters on both the Black women and the ethno-racial minority women they met in the course of their travels was a necessary re-mapping of anti-racist, feminist transnationalism within and across the First, Second, and Third Worlds. Focusing on Muslim and Romani women in Bulgaria, Todorova illustrates how theories and activism emerged from critical intersectionality grounded in socialist and post-socialist contexts. Like critical intersectionality born of capitalist society's matrix of domination, socialist and post-socialist intersectional feminism centers and responds to interlocking oppressions and, consequently, informs transnational politics of solidarity among women of color across the world.

Finally, Julie Iromuanya explores the global black hair industry, its African immigrant iterations in the United States, and its representation in Chimamanda Adichie's novel, *Americanah*. Eschewing the simplistic framing of beauty work and the hair care industry as inherently structured by—and thus subservient to—patriarchal and/or white supremacist regimes, Iromuanya argues that African natural hair care agents are “nuanced” feminists who navigate gender, class, national, and neo-colonial

structures. They are women who pursue economic autonomy and advancement while supporting Africentric aesthetics of women like *Americanah*'s protagonist, Ifemelu, whose return to African hair styling presages her return to her true love in Nigeria after years living in the United States. Yet that return, while liberating in some ways, is in no way free of the costs and constraints of patriarchy's power and prerogatives.

Much like the essays in this volume, the memoir, counterpoint, media matters piece, and poetry take up themes of misperception, transformation, and dislocation while collectively inhabiting many worlds. Poems by Jacqueline Bishop, Karen An-hwie Lee, rose.elle.kiwi, and Lavinia Kumar arrive at vital junctures throughout the issue. Each resonates with questions raised by the issue's other contributors, and gives voice to its own subject and space. Traveling through China, Russia, the United States, and the transnational sphere, these poems syncopate with a rhythm that transcends borders.

Wendy Thompson Taiwo's *Memoir* tells of growing up and mothering as a Black Chinese American woman who rejects simplistic calculations of the causes and consequences of anti-Blackness. Our *Media Matters* selection from Janelle Marie Evans ruminates on how science fiction might offer the "best means for exploring and improving social inequality" because, by definition, it is outside the constraints of existing hegemony and invents a world of its own. "How to Write About Hawai'i," by Leilani Rania Ganser, is inspired by Binyavanga Wainaina's acclaimed 2005 satirical essay on colonialist writing about Africa, and captures the spirit of our *In the Trenches* category. Chamindra Weerawardhana, who critically interrogates feminist International Relations work and policies that sustain and produce a presumptive gender binary, explores discursive and ideological to impediments to the realization of gender equity and justice in her *Counterpoint*, "Profoundly Decolonizing? Reflections on a Transfeminist Perspective of International Relations."

Finally, and fittingly, we close this issue with an *In the Archives* piece: Paul J. Giddings' first *Editor's Introduction*, which appeared in Volume 5, Number 2, Spring 2005. Then, as now, *Meridians* was transitioning from one editor to another. Now, perhaps moreso than then, our broader national context makes our work more difficult, pressing and necessary. It is my sincere hope and aspiration to honor the legacies left by my three

predecessors, each of whom has modeled deeply committed, feminist, anti-racist transnationalism within and outside the academy. *Axé*.

NOTES

1. http://favianna.flyingcart.com/?p=detail&pid=35&cat_id=&utm_source=buffer&utm_campaign=Buffer&utm_content=bufferc2ea3&utm_medium=facebook.

WORKS CITED

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