
3-1-2016

Meridians 13:2

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Recommended Citation

Giddings, Paula J., "Meridians 13:2" (2016). *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism*. 19.
<https://scholarworks.smith.edu/meridians/19>

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Editor's Introduction 13.2

Citizenship, belonging, solidarity. These are the themes that wind through this issue of *Meridians* and emerge in an array of cultural contexts: Indo-Caribbean, African American, Korean, Jamaican, Japanese, Egyptian, Mexican, and the Black Diaspora.

The essay “Indo-Caribbean Women from Trinidad and Guyana: Hardships, Conflict, and Resiliency” by Odessa Despot is an important addition to the literature on Asian Indian women who have immigrated from Trinidad and Guyana to the United States. Interviews with them reveal their encounters with gender relations, abuse, and cultural adjustment. Their testimonies brimmed with negative experiences, but a silver lining emerged: contrary to research that finds women competitive and subversive in their relations with one another, these interviewees reported that the support of their female peers was invaluable to their ability to cope with the hardships that they confronted.

Friendship-with-complications is the subject of “The Continual Search for Sisterhood: Narcissism, Projection, and Intersubjective Disruptions in Toni Morrison’s *Sula* and Feminist Communities” by Cassandra Fetters. The relationship between *Sula* and Nel in this celebrated novel has been grist for many a scholar’s mill; nevertheless, Fetters, utilizing the ideas of relational psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin, provides a fresh argument: the friendship of the two girls, largely structured by the patriarchal society in which it must flourish, is one based on “fusion or over-identification . . . not sisterhood”—and there is a difference.

The coming-of-age narrative, as noted by Wiebke Beushausen, is a primary mode of womanist Caribbean diaspora poetics. In “Sexual Citizenship and Vulnerable Bodies in Makeda Silvera’s *The Heart Does Not Bend* and Joan Riley’s *The Unbelonging*,” the author analyzes the genre and the content of two such narratives to delineate the intersectional relationship among sexual rights, bodily integrity, and citizenship in the Jamaican context.

Korean-born Jane Jeong Trenka came of age in rural Minnesota after she was adopted as an infant by white parents. In one of the few memoirs written from the perspective of a transnational adoptee, Trenka, who eventually returned to Korea to find her birth mother, wrote about her experience in a memoir, citing her alienation, longing, cultural crisis, and the unwholesome adoptive practices of Korea against which she has become an effective advocate and agent of change. In “Transnational Adoption and Life Writing: Oppressed Voices in Jane Jeong Trenka’s *The Language of Blood*,” Ina Seethaler analyzes Trenka’s controversial memoir and its challenge to “the dominant cultural imaginary of the altruistic adoption practice” and how the genre of life-writing undermines fixed identities and helps to construct identity-formation in transnationally adopted children.

When sixteen-year-old Nao, the protagonist in Ruth Ozeki’s novel, *A Tale for the Time Being*, is the victim of terrible bullying at her school in Japan, she embarks on trying out new identities, finally embracing the Internet and Zen Buddhism. Her choice offered Nao the opportunity to go beyond the bounds of her physical self. It also gives Marlo Starr, the author of “Beyond Machine Dreams: Zen, Cyber-, and Transnational Feminisms in Ruth Ozeki’s *A Tale for the Time Being*,” the opportunity to interrogate the perils and potential of disembodiment and cyber- and Buddhist feminisms.

In a recent issue of *Meridians*, Erica Johnson, writing about the Trinidadian Canadian writer Dionne Brand, and her text, *A Map to The Door of No Return*, used the term “neo-archive” to describe the strategy of creating a past—and psychic balance—by way of artistic reconstruction in the absence of traditional discourses of documentation. In “Archiving the Door of No Return in Dionne Brand’s *At the Full and Change of the Moon*,” Lauren Gantz explores how, in the novel, Brand also explores through her character Eula how such reconstructions sometimes fall short of catharsis. As a result, other survival strategies, such as forgetting and compartmentalization, are both needed and depathologized.

Such strategies are used to counter the pathological stereotypes that the non-white subject has been confronted with. While Brand's—and Gantz's—focus is the African Diaspora, Lily Martinez's is that of the border—an interstice between cultures where instability, illegalities, and other anomalies are perceived to transpire. In her essay, "Post-Colonial Consciousness and the Erotic in *Iracema: Uma Transa Amazônica* and *Caballero*," she compares the border experience of the Amazon in the 1970s and Texas in the 1800s, through the Brazilian film "Iracema" and the novel *Caballero*—sometimes called Texas's "Gone With The Wind"—co-authored by Jovita González and Eve Raleigh.

Colonial archives have provided the West with the image of the "exotic": "oriental" fantasies about Muslim women. Particularly at a time of focus on the Middle East, this imaginary prevails in contemporary discourse, notes Basuli Deb in "Cutting across Imperial Feminisms toward Transnational Feminist Solidarities." Deb analyzes the role of the "imperial" photographer, both male and female, and counter-narratives as depicted in the now iconic photograph known as the "the girl in the blue bra" that circulated transnationally during the 2011 uprising in Egypt.

In our "In the Trenches" feature for this issue, we are publishing an interview with Linda Burnham, the National Research Director of the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA). I first heard of Linda when she was involved with the Angela Davis Defense Committee in the 1970s and have been impressed with her record of activism ever since. Before Burnham co-founded the Women of Color Resource Center in Oakland, California, in 1989, she had been active with the Venceremos Brigades, the Third World Women's Alliance, the Alliance Against Women's Oppression, and the Line of March, among other organizations. A journalist and writer, she also edited the anthology *Changing the Race: Racial Politics and the Election of Barack Obama* (2009). The interview is a primer on what it means to live a life of activism and political commitment.