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Introduction

One of the most important missions of feminist scholarship is to recognize missing voices, perspectives, and representations. A major theme in this issue of *Meridians* is the restoration and re-visioning of those hidden, excluded, or marginalized aspects of our interdisciplinary discourses.

A significant yet understudied figure in American history is Edmonia Lewis (ca. 1843–after 1909), America’s first professional sculptor of African and Native American descent. This neoclassical artist produced extraordinary marble figures, the most famous of which was “The Death of Cleopatra,” which was featured to great acclaim at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876. Although there have been studies of Lewis’s life—a biography complicated by discrimination and that even included a poisoning accusation against her—less critical work has been done on Lewis’s work itself. In Naurice Frank Woods’s essay, “An African Queen at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition 1876,” “The Death of Cleopatra” receives a much welcome critique.

In “Queering Puerto Rican Women’s Narratives,” Lourdes Torres adds the specific cultural dimension to the intersectional analysis among Latina lesbian scholars of race, class, gender, and sexuality. Examining the memoirs by Antonia Pantoja and Luisita López Torregrosa, Torres, redressing an all too often missing dimension in the literature, pays particular attention to the national context, suggesting how shame implicitly conditions the articulation of Puerto Rican identity.

“Maroon Abolitionists,” by Julia Sudbury, examines the gender- and trans-gendered experiences of black women activists involved in the anti-prison movement. In this essay, the author makes visible the reality of

gender complexity in women's prisons in the U.S. and Canada and stresses how that complexity creates a unique abolitionist vision and practice.

Yu Shi's ethnographic fieldwork among working-class Chinese immigrants in the San Francisco Bay area reveals that traditional patriarchal practices are not only replicated in the U.S. but are actually "re-invented" in ways that sustain their power in new settings. Furthermore, as she notes in "The Formation of a Chinese Immigrant Working-class Patriarchy," these structural hegemonies (which also include race and class inequalities) negotiate with, depend upon, and are even constituted by antifeminist practices in the host country.

In separate essays, Erica L. Johnson and Jennifer Smith provide new perspectives on the work of the Jamaican-born writer, Michelle Cliff. Smith notes that the writer's novels are usually read as a celebratory reclamation of matrilineal history and resistance. Alternately, Smith comes to another explanation by foregrounding how Cliff constructs the female body through its connection to a futureless past.

Johnson's "Ghostwriting Transnational Histories . . ." demonstrates how Cliff, in the novel *Free Enterprise*, uses what the author calls the strategy of ghostwriting to redress the historical and historiographical lacunae regarding the role of black women in the U.S. and transnationally. *Free Enterprise* pivots around the narrative of the nineteenth-century black abolitionist and entrepreneur Mary Ellen Pleasant, who provided funding for the 1859 raid of John Brown. Brown, a radical white abolitionist, led a spectacular but unsuccessful slave insurrection at Harper's Ferry, Virginia (present-day West Virginia) and was subsequently found guilty of treason and hanged. Johnson notes how by enmeshing Pleasant's story with others, the author engaged in contrapuntal history-telling from all over the world, and through time.

Poetry by Laurie Guerrero and Daniel Martinez speaks of shame, survival, death, and memory, and *From the Archives* records our responses to the historic election of 2008. In this issue, our archival section, created, in part, to document our immediate and even raw reactions to momentous events, is dedicated to the election of Barack Obama. Among progressives, his successful campaign for the U.S. presidency inspired pride, disappointment, reflection, and the still unresolved tensions that pit race against gender. Our archives will serve as a reminder that intersection is still an easier issue to theorize about than to enact—and that the important thing is that we keep on trying.