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## Meridians 7:2

Paula J. Giddings

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## Editor's Introduction

### Home is where . . .

For women especially, the idea of home evokes longing, centeredness, shelter, critique—and, too often, violation. Many of the essays in this issue of *Meridians* speak to a discourse of home in all of its meanings.

“Going Home: A Feminist Anthropologist’s Reflections on Dilemmas of Power and Positionality in the Field,” by M. Cristina Alcalde, explores the dilemmas, rewards, and difficulties of conducting feminist research in her birthplace of Lima, Peru. Alcalde reflects on how her various roles as an academic and advocate with “partial insider status” speak to the potential for both effecting social change from within and reproducing the very same asymmetries of power based on race, educational status, and class that she seeks to remedy through her work.

“Race, Tribal Nation, and Gender: A Native Feminist Approach to Belonging,” by Renya Ramirez, calls for a “Native feminist consciousness” that breaks down what she calls the categorical hierarchies that privilege “race” and “tribal nation” over women’s concerns and deny the feminist aspirations Native women. This essay is an important addition to the critiques of how nationalisms construct female subjects in both geographically defined and imagined communities—especially those that are under duress.

A feminist critique of nationalism—a nineteenth-century concept that conflates the social structure of those communities with the patriarchal family—is evident in *Abeng*, the novel by the Jamaican novelist Michelle Cliff. In “Reconfigurations of Caribbean History: Michelle Cliff’s Rebel Women,” Jennifer Springer examines how Cliff re-visions Caribbean history by imbricating the role of “rebel” women in the building of Caribbean nations. *Abeng*’s genealogy of the “fighting spirit” of those who resisted traditional representations of womanhood is at once a historical necessity and a guide for younger generations of women.

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Silvia Schultermandl's "Writing Rape, Trauma, and Transnationality on the Female Body: Matrilineal Em-body-ment in Nora Okja Keller's *Comfort Woman*" looks at how the experience of rape is used in the novel both to protest against the violation of the female body as well as to reconcile the Korean American protagonist with the cultural "otherness" of her mother. More broadly, the essay is also a meditation on how the universal, culturally non-exclusive experience of rape can be employed as a common "language" to facilitate transnational feminist solidarity between women of different cultures.

Similarly, essay "The Erotic and the Pornographic in Chicana Rap," by Beauty Bragg and Pancho McFarland, uses sexuality in popular culture to construct transnational bridges. The authors examine the music of JV and Ms. Sancha, two female artists of Mexican descent, whose distinct approaches become a discourse on the contested meaning of female representation and sexuality in rap. The comparison of the two styles interrogates the boundaries between the "erotic," which empowers women and lays claim to their bodies, and the "pornographic," which objectifies and denigrates them. The essay also elucidates the challenges to women when they seek to occupy male-dominated spaces.

That challenge was evident during the U.S.-based Black Nationalist/ Civil Rights movement of the 1960s when Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture), infamously remarked that the only position for women in SNCC was "prone." Carmichael, leader of SNCC (the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee) was responding in part to a position paper written in 1964 by white SNCC members Mary King and Casey Hayden about sexist practices in the organization. The paper and the response to it by both whites and black men and women in the organization and beyond marked a historical juncture in the discourse about race and gender in the movement. This issue of the journal features an interview, conducted by Elizabeth Jacobs, with one of the co-authors of the position paper, Mary King, who reflects upon the past and current significance of this critical document and the controversy it inspired.

The quest to develop theoretical constructs that accommodate multi-voiced discourses and pedagogies both within and across our communities is the subject of "Beyond the Shadow: Re-scripting Race in Women's Studies," by Laura Gilman. In this essay, the author argues for a "conjunctural approach" that brings together intersectionality and whiteness studies

frameworks that resolve the critical tension between the implicit denial of race difference in order to maintain a coherent discourse of gendered inequalities and standpoints that seek to deconstruct false unities. To elucidate her project, Gilman juxtaposes incompatible perspectives and political commitments that emerge in real-life interactions.

The real-life interactions of mothers domiciled in prison is strikingly—and disturbingly—presented by Rickie Solinger in this art essay entitled, “Interrupted Life: Incarcerated Mothers in the United States.” For more than a decade, Solinger, a scholar who writes about the intersections of motherhood, race, and class in determining categories of the “legitimate mother,” has been curating art exhibitions on the subject. Most recently, her politics of motherhood project led her to focus on the growing number of women, and especially African American mothers, in the nation’s prisons. The “Interrupted Life” exhibit, which opened in 2006 at the California Institute for Women outside of Los Angeles, is probably the first to do so inside a women’s prison.

The voices of this issue’s poets; Mihaela Moscaliuc, Cathy Song, Lee Peterson, and Keli Stewart resonate with the emotions—and music—that the various registers of home inspire.