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## Meridians 3:1

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## Editor's Farewell

This issue is the last of the four issues of *Meridians* that brought me to Smith College from the University of California at Santa Barbara in my two-year post as Founding Editor. I now welcome Myriam Chancy of Arizona State University to her two-year post as next editor of *Meridians*. I trust she will enjoy working here as much as I have.

Being at *Meridians* in its foundational stage is an experience I have enjoyed enormously. The pleasures have been considerable: to be able to read essays, poetry, fiction, and other writings, often hot off the author's computer, is something that I shall miss greatly. As an editor, I have found working with writers to make their pieces even stronger extremely satisfying. I have also been touched by the incredible generosity of the outside readers who have frequently—as is common in the early phases of a journal's life—been given a very short period in which to return their assessments. Without exception, all the outside readers have entered into the spirit of reading for *Meridians*, for they have all written readers' reports that invariably have been constructive and helpful. Working with the journal designer, the marketing consultant, the people at the Ford Foundation, Wesleyan University Press, as well as at Smith College and Wesleyan University, has ensured that I have learned greatly from their experience in journal editing, production, marketing, and website development. And to the student interns—*besos, besos, besos a ustedes!* Finally, my greatest love and gratitude go to John, Cerina, and Amal for sticking with me through the past two years, with all of the attendant sorrows and anguish as well as the joys.

Despite this richness in my experience with *Meridians*, I think that what I have enjoyed most is seeing this new journal, as it tries to find its place inside the academy and in feminist arenas, be unashamedly confident of placing change at its center.

The journal itself has changed, of course. Many of the people associated with it during its first two years of publication have changed. This has led to a number of innovations at Smith College, Wesleyan University, and Wesleyan University Press. *Meridians* has changed the way the Ford Foundation looks at journal publication, seen most clearly through its

generous and renewed commitment for the next two years. Perhaps most importantly, the journal is part of a small group of publications that aims to shift, if not change, what is considered to be legitimate academic/scholarly writing. Change is what *Meridians* is about—a change in knowledge and knowledge production—because it provides, in Ruth Simmons’s words (in this issue), venue, legitimacy, and support so that women of color in the First World and women living in the Third World can share their/our ideas widely.

This theme of change is present in many of the pieces included in my final issue, visible through reference to memories, histories, futures, and resistances. The significance of memory lies not only in its being essential for all human relationships but in the recognition that any engagement with memory necessarily embraces a sense of history. The embracing of history compels us simultaneously to imagine the future, which in turn can create a desire to resist the seeming inevitability of inequality—past, present, and future. Memory, history, future, resistance—these are always part of the *Meridians* project and are especially present in this issue.

Thus, Radhika Coomaraswamy suggests that “there are no essential traditions, only essential memories that pick and choose from the anthology of the past.” Rita Arditti also echoes the significance of memory in her essay by reminding readers that the protests of the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo draw on collective memory—they challenge historical amnesia in Argentina—not for reasons of revenge but to focus on the futures of their children and grandchildren. Barbara Harlow’s historical meditation on Ruth First highlights the complicated tensions of liberation politics in apartheid South Africa, and opens up spaces in which there can be discussion of what constitutes feminist political practices. The pieces by Ayesha Khan, Elise Young and Zengie Mangaliso, and Sunaina Maira all hint, at the very least, at imagining the future: Ayesha Khan by discussing her conversations with Afghani women refugees in Pakistan as conversations not “only” about the horrors they have experienced but as conversations about how women can reclaim the future; Young and Mangaliso by reporting on the joint political work conducted by South African and African American women; and Sunaina Maira through centering youth cultures and styles. Finally, Christine Benvenuto’s “Hindsight” is a testament to young people, the imagining of futures, and the resistance entailed by such an imagination.

If change lies at the center of the *Meridians* project, then it is not

surprising that resistance is a constant theme in *Meridians*, and is present in many forms in this issue. Marjorie Agosín's poem "I don't do lunch" and the interview with Sanda Lwin talk about resistance, the former through her insistence on love, and the latter through Lwin's determination to see Asian American studies become a legitimate area of study within the East Coast academy. Terry Kawashima also analyzes resistances to "visualized race" by considering how a "state of confusion and peril" emerges with the donning of unexpected racial accessories such as a yellow head of hair on a "Japanese" face, which, in turn, destabilizes monolithic notions of how "race" is to be characterized, something that may also be seen in Michelle Smith's poem "Claudia Rankine." Undoing or unpacking prevailing ideas is an essential component of resistance, which may be seen in Farideh Farhi's lively essay on three videos about women living in the Middle East, in which she questions the privileging of histories as the main means for comprehending women's agency by arguing that temperament is also important for political commitment. The politics of writing are subtly explored in Rochelle Holt's short story, "Pride Cometh Before a Fall," while Dyan Mazurana's essay on art, work, and women's bodies provides a set of interconnections that both shape and are shaped by the interconnections of race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and class. "Ironing, Ironing," by Nellie Wong, also insists on the dignity and pleasures in human labor, echoed, both literally and otherwise, in Catriona Esquibel's "Irony," and in the irony of circumstances presented in Ruth Sanabria's poem "Snow." The two conference reports included—about the second Color of Violence conference and the celebration of the re-publication of *This Bridge Called My Back*—along with the poem "Alien 2," by Vaneeta Palecanda, demonstrate how key it is for women—all women—to discuss the complexity of their feminist politics, so that the coming together of different groups of women on different issues is done with full knowledge of those politics.

I have always loved complexity, not merely because it ensures a more accurate lens through which the amelioration and elimination of inequality can be imagined, but because complexity usually opens the way for conversations about what to do. Complexity means that even as we take sides on crucial issues (and how could we not in thinking about the world at this moment?), this taking of sides becomes not a final decision but a starting point for thinking more deeply. To acknowledge complexity provides the first step away from unthinking and often violent decisions, and towards being able to actively engage with difference so

that feminism, race, transnationalism become the meridians and the interconnections of our work to turn the world upside down and towards greater equality.

Finally, my hope for the journal is that even as *Meridians* becomes well established, it replicate only the best elements of the academy and keep its distance from some of the worst excesses of hierarchy, power, and racism that one can encounter within this contradictory institution. Suniti Namjoshi's poem, "Among Tigers," tellingly reminds us of this cautionary note: even if "sometimes I think I almost belong," I know to "keep my distance from those massive jaws" (Namjoshi 1988).

As we work inside and outside the academy for change—in memories, histories, futures, resistances—I hope we can strive to fulfill the promise of *Meridians*. The world is in need of it.

#### WORK CITED

Namjoshi, Suniti. 1988. "Among Tigers." In *Charting the Journey: Writings by Black and Third World Women*. Edited by Shabnum Grewal, Jackie Kay, Lilliane Landor, Gail Lewis, and Pratibha Parmar. London: Sheba Feminist Publishers.