Dear Colleagues,

It seems hardly possible that another year has passed, but here we are in the middle of recruitment, reappointment and tenure season, closing down one academic year and already prepared to another. As always it has been a year full of transitions, not simply for us but the university. The first year of a second term gives pause for reflecting on our continuing and growing legacy after roughly 46 years. In July we will say goodbye to Yana Rodriges from the central office of WGS so we thank her for her four years of such diligent and heartfelt service, the first three as Director of Graduate Studies, and the past year as Undergraduate Director. Wonderful as the collaboration within these walls has been, I hope everyone will forgive me however when I say that for me the highlight of our time together was having dinner with you and Radhika in Accra! (Somewhere there is a picture of us dining in a converted Ghana Airways DC-10 now a very slow food but wonderful restaurant parked on the edge of a runway on the airport grounds). I was so very honored when you asked me to give the keynote address to the International Association of Feminist Economists during your tenure as President. It was such a treat to welcome you and the IAFE meeting in my home town, how very cool a coincidence!

Dr. Abena P. A. Busia

The Feminist community at large is also seeing the transition of Signs from Rutgers to Boston as Mary Hawkesworth concludes her truly visionary years as editor. For one remain in awe of the transformation she and her team have generated in the decade the journal has been here. We only need to look at the Signs@40 to appreciate the fruits of her vision and we as an institution have basked in the reflected glory of her leadership. The editorial office for the journal has now moved to Northeastern University under the editorship of Suzanna Danuta Walters. Andrew Mazzaschi as Deputy Editor and Miranda Outman as Managing Editor are migrating to Boston with the journal. C. Laura Lovin, current Acquisitions Coordinator and Publicity Manager, will begin a two-year Marie Curie postdoc position at London South Bank University. We wish them and the new team they are joining all success as they continue to steer Signs to even greater heights.

We also say goodbye to our indefatigable Mellon Fellow Annie Fukushima who has contributed so much to us in her two years here and wish her all the best in what we know will be an extraordinary career.

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REVIEW OF THE YEAR

Letter from the Chair Continued...

I would like to thank Lindsey Whitmore for all her work this year, especially for remembering to mark in this issue, the 45 years of our existence as a program and department. As part of the IWL, we are making plans to weave the radical difference the existence of women over the last nearly 95 years has made to the life of this institution, into the commemorations of the 250 years of the university's existence through the coming academic year.

So much for looking back, I would like to signal three things to look forward to: First, you can have no idea how very excited I was when I learned that graduate students had invited to be the keynote speaker for their "Human Futures" conference on April 24th. They have in their wisdom chosen a scholar from whom I have learned much, Alexander Wehelye of Northwestern University, whose Rutgers English dissertation I was truly privileged to direct some fifteen years ago (time truly is relentless). It will be a joy to see him here. On the same day, the IWL will be welcoming the incomparable Ava Duvernay, director of Selma, as this year's Angelolectader, introduced by Brittny Cooper, to whom much thanks for securing the visit of this important guest to our campus.

Next as one of those who scarcely know one end of a football field from another, I was among the sceptics about the move so am pleased to report that I have found an unexpected ray of solace in RU joining the big 10! Discovering the academic side of the conference as institutionalized in the Committee for Institutional Cooperation has the year to draw to a close on an unexpected high note of possibility. WGS and IWL played host the days before Spring Break to a workshop of Chairs and Program Directors of WGS departments (in the various permissions and possibilities of our naming) of the CIC. Of the 18 possible attendees, we had representatives from 10 organizations including ourselves. It was an exhilarating two days because it gave rise to truly enriching discussions and jump started us into many possibilities for collaboration including, thanks to the indefatigable Mary Hawkesworth, the possibility already of an online graduate course for spring 2016, which would be available to graduate students at all CIC institutions. The working title for the course is: Feminist Futures: Diverse Intellectual Careers and Entrepreneurial Leadership.

Finally, as always, we all owe a great debt of gratitude to Monique Gregory and Suzy Kiefer for the way they continue to make WGS a welcoming space to be, while get an incredible array of tasks beyond the call of duty done on time, and with grace. In a year that has been for me personally very challenging on a number of fronts I am truly grateful for their ability and willingness to make sure "the center holds" for all of us.

All good wishes to all of us, whatever faces us next.

NEWS FROM THE GRADUATE PROGRAM

This year we welcomed Dr. Jasbir Puar to the position of Graduate Director. Dr. Puar returns after two years of research and fellowship, first as the 2012-13 Edward Said Chair of American Studies at the American University of Beirut and then as a 2013-14 Society for the Humanities Fellow at Cornell University. Dr. Puar has hit the ground running in her new position. She's created a host of brand new events and workshop series to foster conviviality, mentorship, and support within the graduate student community. The expanded repertoire of WGS graduate programming has drawn faculty and graduate students from around Rutgers into the department to engage with our cutting edge research, teaching practices, and activism.

One successful addition is the Convivial Conversations series, which re-imagines the department's previous Research Briefing format for sharing developments in research and practice. Convivial Conversations feature a dialogue between WGS faculty and graduate students doing work in similar areas. The first conversation featured Prof. Carlos Decena and Katy Gray conversing convivially on trigger warnings and classroom pedagogy. Other convivial pairings have included Prof. Ethel Brooks and Snezana Otasevic on "Garbage, Disruption, and the City," Prof. Jasbir Puar and Rasha Moumen on "War in/on the Middle East," and Prof. Marisa Fuentes and Catolina Alonso Bejarano on "Colonial Times: Enslavement and Migration."

The graduate program also hosted several workshops as part of the new Demystifying Academy Graduate Student Workshop series. Prof. Brittny Cooper and Mellon Fellow Maya Mikdashi collaborated on "Academic Freedom and Public Intellectual Work," where they spoke about the challenges of balancing academic commitments and public scholarship in their experiences with Crunk Feminist Collective and Jadaliyya, respectively. Prof. Kyla Schuller offered a mid-November workshop, "Writing without Anxiety: Project Management for Grad Students," and Prof. Marisa Fuentes offered a late-January workshop on fellowships and external funding. April brings another workshop in this series: "Management Boats at Rutgers: What it Means for Us!" with Sherry Wolf, Rutgers AAUP-AFT Contracts Campaign Coordinator in conversation with WGS graduate students involved in union organizing. In addition to these formalized events designed to demystify academia, Prof. Kyla Schuller offers Grad Professionalization Drop-In Office Hours on Thursdays from 10:45am-1pm to support students with funding and fellowship applications, job market materials, and publication, among other things.

To generate a greater sense of community and transparency within the department, we've also begun hosting Town Hall Meetings once a semester. The first in October focused on discussions of trans inclusive practices and departmental histories of diversity; the second in February focused on recent shifts in graduate funding, more mentorship.

Dr. Puar has continued to meet with graduate students on a regular basis to develop course plans and goals for finishing the PhD. Based on feedback from graduate students, she has also developed a pedagogical mentorship program, which ensures graduate student instructors will be evaluated by faculty for job market portfolios and expanding teacher efficacy. Drawing on feedback from the October Town Hall Meeting, pedagogical supports for graduate students who teach the 101 course are also being developed by Undergraduate Director Yana Rodgers. Graduate Assistant Lindsey Whitmore has also designed a Sakai site (WGS Resource Repository) that organizes and catalogs relevant PDFs, web and video content, syllabi, and other teaching materials to support TA pedagogy. If you would like to be added to the Resource Repository and do not yet have access, please email lindsey.whitmore@rutgers.edu.

As spring steadily approaches, the graduate program will also host the Human Futures Graduate Student Conference on April 24 (see page 13), and recruitment for next year's cohort continues. Thanks to everyone who has worked so diligently to make this year a more connected and supportive one for WGS graduate students.
**NEWS FROM THE MA PROGRAM**

The MA program has several exciting developments to report in 2015. In graduation news, four students completed the program in May 2015: Roya Aminrourmand, Kimberly Rose Buckley, Daniela Gutiérrez, and Amelia Hawbaker. Roya will begin a PhD in Clinical Psychology at Nova Southeastern University in Fall 2015. Amelia and Daniela each began PhD programs at Indiana University in Fall 2014 in Sociology and Gender Studies, respectively. Jeremy LaMaster completed the MA in October 2014, and has accepted a position as Administrative and Research Coordinator at Douglass Residential College. Bo Jia and Isabella Restrepo are slated to graduate this spring.

Mahaliah Little recently published her essay, “Why Don’t We Love These Hoes?: Black Women, Popular Culture, and the Contemporary Hoe Archetype” in the collection Black Female Sexualities (Rutgers University Press, 2015). The anthology, which features a foreword by Melissa Harris-Perry, is edited by Trinimiko Melancon and Joanne M. Braxton.

WGS MA students continue to participate in the GEMMA European Exchange Program. Sponsored by the European Commission, GEMMA is comprised of a consortium of European universities that offer master’s degrees in Women’s Studies. MA students may visit two European universities to complete coursework and benefit from scholarly mentorship. Last year, WGS sent Hiba Alkhtar to study in Granada, Spain. You can read more about Hiba’s experiences on page 17. This year, Jessica Renshaw will study abroad in Bologna, Italy.

Finally, Rena Miller continues to generate education and advocacy around issues of transgender equality on campus through speaking events. Rena has spoken in four WGS undergraduate courses, in addition to a large presentation for students from all sections of the Douglass Residential College capstone course Knowledge & Power: Issues in Women’s Leadership at Voorhees Chapel in March.

**NEWS FROM THE UNDERGRADUATE DIRECTOR**

The Department of Women’s and Gender Studies has more good news to share about the undergraduate program. We have just launched another minor program of study: Gender and Media. This new minor brings our total number of minors within our department to four: (1) Women’s and Gender Studies, (2) Social Justice, (3) Critical Sexualities Studies, and (4) Gender and Media.

Complementing any major, the Gender and Media minor is a cross-unit, interdisciplinary undergraduate minor offered jointly by the School of Arts and Sciences (SAS) and the School of Communication and Information (SC&I). The Department of Women’s and Gender Studies is the sole SAS contributor to courses included in the minor. AT SC&I, the Department of Journalism and Media Studies is the primary contributor to the minor.

The Gender and Media minor provides a course of study designed for students interested in a combination of theory and practice perspectives on the representation and production of gender in the media. Students will apply technical skills as media producers with the ability to add their own critical voices and unique perspectives. Students will also demonstrate critical thinking skills that enable them to critique and improve current conditions of media production and consumption. They will articulate, create, examine, inform, and improve systemic and individual power dynamics of the contemporary landscape for gender and media.

The new minor has just been programmed into Degree Navigator, so students can begin to sign up for the minor now. We will even have a few graduating seniors who will graduate with this minor in May because of courses they had already taken, and their enrollment in two WGS courses being offered in Spring 2015 for the first time: a senior seminar on Gender and the Media, taught by Professor Kyla Schuller, which will count as the capstone course for the minor this semester; and a new course (Gender, Digital Media, and Social Curation), taught by Katherine Gray, that was designed specifically for the minor. Many thanks also go to Professor Ethel Brooks, who worked hard during the previous academic year to design this minor and get it approved by the SAS curriculum committee.

Interested students can find out more about that minor at http://womens-studies.rutgers.edu/undergraduate/minor-in-gender-and-media.

**Number of Majors and Minors**

Another positive development relates to our majors and minors. We have shown a healthy track record in terms of growth that exceeds other humanities departments. At the time of preparing this newsletter, our department has 78 declared majors, and a total of 228 minors (174 in WGS, 25 in Critical Sexualities Studies, and 29 in Social Justice).

**Continued Success of Online Certificate Program**

In the previous academic year, the department launched, in collaboration with the Institute for Women’s Leadership and the National Nurses United (NNU), an innovative online Certificate Program in Women’s Global Health Leadership. This program seeks to engage students, health care providers, nurses and other community members in conversations about vital issues related to health and healthcare. The program, initiated by WGS faculty member Mary Hawkesworth and PhD alumnae Kelly Coogan-Gehr, has rapidly multiplied its enrollment from its initial 35 students during the spring of 2013 to the current 87 students this spring semester 2015.
NEWS FROM DOUGLASS LIBRARY

Margery Somers Foster Undergraduate Multimedia Award: We continue to celebrate the creativity of Rutgers undergraduate students with the Margery Somers Foster Undergraduate Multimedia Award. The award recognizes students' creative expression of the complex dynamics of gender, ethnicity, nationality, class, and race issues in their digital and multimedia projects. The "Celebrating Creativity" event, when we honor the winners, is scheduled for Thursday, April 16, 2015, 3-5PM at Douglass Library. The story on the 2014 winners is available at the MSF Center blog. (msf-center.blogs.rutgers.edu)

New Journals: Using creative solutions in the midst of shrinking budget, we have added new online subscriptions to two journals—Transgender Studies Quarterly and Feminist Media Studies. Both titles are represented in our catalog. Our online access to TSQ is from May 2014. The online access to FMS is more comprehensive and includes issues from volume 1, 2001 to present. Both journals will help support the many investigations of students and scholars affiliated with the Department, especially students in the Critical Sexuality and Gender and Media minors.

HathiTrust: Rutgers is now officially a partner of the HathiTrust Digital Library (hathitrust.org) and the link is included in the libraries' databases A-Z list. Once on HathiTrust's website, you need to log in (button on upper right of the screen) and select "Rutgers University" from the dropdown menu. The benefits of being a partner include the ability to create your own custom collections and to download all public domain books (~4.9 million) as PDFs. Being a partner of HathiTrust has no bearing on the HathiTrust Research Center (htrc2.ptc.indiana.edu), which offers a range of systems and tools.

Swank Digital Campus: Swank Digital Campus is a new library service that provides online streaming access to feature films for instructional use. The Libraries will arrange to make available up to twelve titles that instructors designate "required viewing" for students in any course. All Swank titles must be embedded in Sakai or Blackboard or another course management system. Requesting a streaming title in no way interferes with our acquisition or your use of a DVD in the classroom. Contact Jane Sloan (jsloan@rutgers.edu) to request a new title for your course, or to obtain a link for currently licensed film, visit libguides.rutgers.edu/OnlineVideo. Please include your course number and title, and the number of students. The Libraries now lease over 120 feature films from Swank that cover many topics including gender, race, culture, religion and sexuality. You can search for titles in Swank Digital Campus Catalog. The list of films currently "leased" is available at libguides.rutgers.edu/OnlineVideo.

3D Scanners: In addition to the two 3D printers, last fall we installed a 3D scanner in the Fordham Commons, Douglass Library. If you are interested in using it, contact Stacey Carton (sacarton@rulmail.rutgers.edu) for an appointment.

Should you have any questions, inquiries, suggestions or recommendations, please do no hesitate to contact me (kdenda@rutgers.edu). I would love to hear from you. -Kayo Denda

2014-2015 Visiting Scholars

◊ Dr. Nian He joins us as a visiting scholar from the School of Foreign Languages and Cultures at Nanjing Normal University, Nanjing Jiangsu, China. She is undertaking joint research with Mary Hawkesworth about radical feminist movements in the United States in the 1970s. She is also participating in this year’s IRW Seminar on Feminist Optics.

◊ Three scholars from the Center for Women in Politics and Public Administration at the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics and Administration in Vietnam visited May 20–June 12, 2014 to explore women's leadership strategies in the U.S. Linh Chau (Research Associate), Luong Thu Hien (Executive Director), and Pham Thu Hien (Associate Director) trained as partners in the NEW Leadership Program run by the Center for American Women in American Politics. They are currently working with Mary Hawkesworth, Mary Trigg, Lisa Hetfield, Joanna Regulska, Ann Graham, and Mona Lena Krook to develop a women’s leadership program and mentoring program in women's leadership at Ho Chi Minh National Academy. Mary Trigg, Lisa Hetfield, and Mona Lena Krook will facilitate a two-week workshop in Hanoi May 15-22, 2015.

◊ Didem Ünal Abaday, a PhD student in Political Science at Bilkent University, Ankara, Turkey is working with Prof. Zakia Salime on the theoretical portion of her dissertation, "Public Sphere and Women Intellectuals in Contemporary Turkey: Narratives on Feminist Identity." Her travel here was funded by a fellowship from TUBIAK (The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey).

◊ Dr. Sandra Ponzanesi, Professor of Gender and Postcolonial Studies at the Department of Media and Culture Studies at University of Utrecht, Netherlands, visited as a GEMMA Scholar in 2014. Dr. Ponzanesi’s research focused on digital diasporas among migrant youth in transnational contexts. While at Rutgers, she worked with Professors Julie Rajan and Judith Gerson.

◊ Dr. Aleksandra Różańska of the Women’s Studies Centre and the Department of American Studies and Mass Media at the University of Łódź, Poland is actively involved in coordinating the GEMMA Program at her institution. She visited here to research American media in the post-9/11 era, including representations and narratives of Muslim minorities with a special emphasis on constructions of gender.

◊ Céline Herbiert is a GEMMA exchange student currently pursuing an MA in Women’s Studies from University of Utrecht, Netherlands.
MELLON POSTDOC:
MAYA MIKDASHI

Maya Mikdashi is a current Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Associate in Women’s and Gender Studies and the Institute for Research on Women at Rutgers University (2014-2016). While at Rutgers, Maya is completing her book length manuscript titled Sex and Sectarianism: Secularism, Secularity and War in Contemporary Lebanon. In her manuscript she explores the ways that secularism travels and is articulated across the vectors of sexual and religious regulation in the contemporary, war on terror era Middle East. Maya’s two research “sites” are the court archives of Lebanon’s highest court dealing with the question of religious conversion, and ethnography among both religious converts and self-titled activists for secularism, whom she calls “da’wa secularists” (a rough translation would be “evangelical secularism”). The book length manuscript asks about the continuities and ruptures between “classical” secularism and this new, evangelical secularism. By doing this, the genealogy of the war on terror and its racial and sexual ontologies, and the genealogy of secularism itself, are complicated by rerouting it through different histories and archives, alternative epistemic backgrounds and genealogies of religion and sovereignty, and different human bodies.

Maya is currently collaborating through an article with WGS professor Dr. Jasbir Puar on the relationship of Queer Theory to Area studies for a forthcoming issue of Gay and Lesbian Studies Quarterly (GLQ). Maya is also collaborating with New York-based artist Carlos Motta on a visual essay that explores a fantasy of queer history through constructing a correspondence between two women in 18th century Lebanon and Colombia. This work was commissioned by Paris-based curators as part of a larger project on the concept of the unnatural, particularly in law. Her forthcoming publications include an article on sexual difference and state sovereignty for the Oxford Handbook of the Middle East and a review article on transnational personal status/family law for Feminist Studies. While at Rutgers, Maya continues to edit and write for Jadaliyya, an e-zine that she co-founded and that is centered on critical approaches to studying the transnational Middle East.

Dr. Maya Mikdashi has a PhD in Anthropology from Columbia University (2013). In the spring, she is teaching the undergraduate Social Justice Capstone Seminar: Gender, Sex, and Revolution in the Middle East and Beyond.

WGS @ NWSA — San Juan, Puerto Rico

Left: Nafisa Tanjeem and Abena P.A. Busia  
Right: Nafisa Tanjeem, Snezana Otasevic, and Abena P.A. Busia
By Kyla Schuller

"Trans-Dyke. Reluctant Polyamorist. Sadomasochist. Recovering Scientologist. Pioneering Gender Outlaw." Performance artist and writer Kate Bornstein has been embracing labels and exploding gender for decades, inspiring generations of trans and feminist activists. Yet until this year, Auntie Kate’s magic had never been rendered on screen. We are living in a stellar moment for queer documentary film, and this fall Women’s and Gender Studies brought two important practitioners to campus. Sam Feder, award-winning director of Kate Bornstein is a Queer & Pleasant Danger and Sini Anderson, director of The Punk Singer: A Film About Kathleen Hanna, screened these now works in New Brunswick and had rousing post-show conversations with enthusiastic students.

Not only does Sam Feder’s moving documentary portrait reliably bring its audiences to tears, they are a special kind of tears: the pleasant agony of feeling the tender precarity of life. Viewers accompany Kate as she visits dear friends (and discusses their public BDSM performances), dons a bib to eat New Year’s Eve lobster with her partner, sex educator Barbara Carrellas, and returns to her childhood stomping grounds on the Jersey Shore. Intimacy gradually builds until suddenly the viewer finds themselves breathless, utterly enveloped within Kate’s devastating dramatization of her mother’s reaction to her coming out as trans. What makes Kate’s reenactment so powerful is that she recounts the story from her mother’s point of view, employing her considerable theatrical skill to embody her mother’s tone, diction, and gesture. The result is a portrayal of unforgivable abnegation—Kate’s mother cuts off all contact with her—from a place of affective intimacy. In Kate’s performance, intimacy is a repertoire, the product of deep familiarity with a person’s being in the world, such that to truly know a person provides some sustenance, even through periods of utter betrayal. When the film closes, after Kate’s reflection on her own cancer diagnosis, with her haunting, repeated invocation to “do whatever it takes to make your life more worth living. Just don’t be mean,” it has already provided a powerful suggestion: recognize one another, your trans allies, queer kin, and fallible families, affectively and emotionally.

The screening was followed by a conversation about trans lives and media among Feder and two outrageously eloquent undergraduate student activists, Vanessa Gonzalez and Avatara Smith-Carrington, and was moderated by Professor Kyla Schuller (hey, that’s me). Hosted by the Tyler Clementi Center and co-sponsored by multiple Rutgers units, the event was the culminating event of Trans Awareness Week at Rutgers and was attended by over one hundred students and faculty.

In November, Sini Anderson screened her important documentary about leading third wave feminist and riot grrrl Kathleen Hanna, The Punk Singer in the Douglass Lounge to an audience of fifty. Stitching together interviews with Hanna and leading feminist musicians and music critics, the film traces her path from her early days fronting Bikini Kill to her recent return to the stage as part of The Julie Ruin, an impressive comeback after years of disabling neurological Lyme Disease. Capturing the in-your-face energy of punk feminism, the film inspired important discussions about feminist film and activism with Sini Anderson and moderator Debra Zimmerman, the current Laurie New Jersey Chair in Women’s Studies. As Sini advised inquiring students, glued to their chairs for the hour’s discussion: don’t ask for access to the art worlds you want to be part of; dare your friends to make art, start showing it in public, and gradually build the art world you want to see. It was an inspiring event of feminist mentorship, on film and in the flesh.

"Intimacy gradually builds until suddenly the viewer finds themselves breathless, utterly enveloped within Kate’s devastating dramatization of her mother’s reaction to her coming out as trans."
Women's and Gender Studies celebrated 45 years of innovative and interdisciplinary course offerings at Rutgers—New Brunswick in 2014. WGS as we know it today developed from a few courses first offered in the early seventies at Douglass and Livingston Colleges and later at Rutgers. Each college initially sponsored separate Women's Studies programs. Douglass' program was the most visible, headed by Elaine Showalter from English with the strong support of then Dean Margery Somers Foster. The English, History, and Political Science departments in all three colleges were especially active in developing new courses in the field: anthropology, sociology, and philosophy were early participants as well. The creation of the new Center for the American Woman and Politics in 1971 at Eagleton forged the first link between the Women's Studies program and a research institution. By the mid-seventies a Women's Studies Institute (later renamed the Institute for Research on Women under Catharine Stimpson) was organized to coordinate the three collegiate Women's Studies programs.

Women's Studies brought attention and distinction to Rutgers immediately. For example, Cheryl Wall offered what is believed to be the first course on Black Women Writers in the country. Hiring scholars focusing on women and gender took place in several departments in each of the New Brunswick colleges in the seventies. Reorganization in '81-'82 was a major setback for the program. Occupants of Women's studies lines were obliged to become members of existing departments and the three programs were consolidated into one campus-wide initiative. The program lost its full-time faculty and was relegated to inadequate space in a series of basements. Only the faculty strength built in the seventies enabled the program to survive and ultimately thrive. During the eighties support from outside the university was crucial to the continued growth of Women's Studies. For example, the Institute for Research on Women was awarded one of the first major Rockefeller Foundation grants in the field. These outside initiatives supported Women's Studies as the faculty developed and gained approval for a major in 1984. Enrollments in Women's Studies courses grew consistently, and the number of majors increased steadily.

The MA program, established in 1994, joined a graduate certificate option created in 1985. After a successful campaign to change the status of WGS from a program to a department, WGS officially became a department in 2001. We graduated our first PhD, Zenzele Isoleke, in 2007, and have since garnered top national rankings in graduate education. Happy Birthday, WGS, and here's to another 45 years of compelling and critical scholarship and activism!

Be sure to check out some of the archival materials below, gleaned from the depths of the WGS office. For a closer look at WGS Newsletters and department materials through the ages, visit womens-studies.edu/resources/wgs-newsletter. We especially recommend taking a closer look at the Fall/Winter 1993 edition! 

*Text excerpted from Department of Women's and Gender Studies Program to Department Report, June 2000*
Feminist Scholarship through Four Decades

During her 10-year editorship of Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, Professor Mary Hawkesworth brought the journal to Rutgers and made Women's and Gender Studies the institutional home of one of the first and most prestigious feminist academic journals in the world. In 2015, the journal celebrates its 40th anniversary, and prepares to move to its new home at Northeastern University, under the editorial guidance of Suzanna Danuta Walters, Professor of Sociology and Director of the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program.

Before the journal's departure from Rutgers and in celebration of the 40th anniversary, the Signs team at Rutgers undertook a two-year project utilizing tools in digital humanities to explore and visualize key themes and shifts in the journal's rich 40-year history. Under the leadership of Mary Hawkesworth, Deputy Editor Andrew Mazaschi, a recent PhD graduate in the department, and English Professor Andrew Goldstone, research assistants Susana Galán and Lindsey Whitmore and Acquisitions Coordinator and Publicity Manager C. Laura Lovin (also a recent PhD graduate in the department) developed Signs@40, a digital constellation of topic modeling, editorial curation, and commentaries.

Signs@40 debuted at a 40th Anniversary Celebration held at Douglass Library in November 2014. In addition to a panel that discussed the specific digital humanities techniques used in Signs@40, the event also included a conversation between Founding Editor Catherine Stimpson and Founding Associate Editor Donna Stanton about the journal's early years, an exploration of the evolution of Signs cover art by art historian and Signs Associate Editor Susan Sidlauskas, and a discussion with Kayo Denda, Women's Studies Librarian, about the journal's role in libraries and archives.

By Lindsey Whitmore

As a bright eyed, curious first-year PhD student on fellowship with just a little extra time on my hands before I began teaching in my second year, I applied to the position of Research Assistant at Signs with little knowledge of what, exactly, that might entail. On the one hand, I was incredibly intimidated by the prestige of the journal. I had encountered its intellectual legacy and contemporary critical force just a few semesters prior in my master's program at NYU, as well as during my undergraduate time at Mount Holyoke, where I entered as a first-generation college student with very nascent, albeit very inquisitive feminist leanings.

In those earlier days, articles such as Emily Martin's "The Egg and the Sperm" radically challenged the given-ness of the world around me as I began to see what, exactly, it meant to be a feminist thinker in a world largely dominated by other kinds of knowing. In fact, the early Signs pieces that I encountered in my first year seminar, "Cultural Representations of Women," revealed to me that there were actually different ways to produce knowledge about the world, and that feminism was as much about making changes on the level of how we know what we know, as it was about reproductive rights or women's labor. Later, intimate encounters with José Esteban Muñoz's "Feeling Brown, Feeling Down" and Chandra Mohanty's "Under Western Eyes: Revisited," provided an entirely new set of tools through which to disassemble and reconfigure my own emergent critical position. So although my sense of intimidation was strong as I embarked on my new position, I also brought with me a sense of familiarity and great passion; I knew that this journal was and continued to be a hub of pre-eminent feminist knowledge production, and the chance to be even on the periphery of that was beyond exciting.

With this sense of being perched on the unknown at the center of my own reflections, I'd like to use this time to give a little insight into how we got to where we are today. The evolution of Signs@40 is due largely to the ongoing work of a team that evolved and morphed based on the many different strengths, investments, and critical insights that a shifting array of contributors brought to the table. For me, becoming a part of that cast of creators was the most fulfilling part of this project.

So, back to March 2013. In our first weeks of work at Signs, fellow Research Assistant and WGS graduate student Susana Galán and I attended staff meetings and became acquainted with what felt like the very secret, deep inner workings of the journal. We quickly received our main task from Mary Hawkesworth: the 40th anniversary Signs was fast approaching and we were to begin exploring how we might visually and/or digitally open up the rich archive of the journal for both critical exploration and creative engagement.

Our first route into this task centered on Word Clouds—those aesthetically pleasing collections of differently sized keywords assembled together based on the prominence of a particular word (FEMINISM or GENDER) within a larger body of text. Word Clouds seemed to be a bit too static for
our needs, though. We struggled with how to identify relationality and movement. At this point, we were also faced with the sheer immensity of the archive we were working with. The breadth of Signs’ 40 years of feminist scholarship became clear to us in a very different way—how to handle all these words! During these initial weeks, Susana and I also met with Kayo Denda—Women’s Studies Librarian at Douglass—for the first in several sessions of brainstorming and mentorship. Kayo offered up immense insight into Signs’ 30th Anniversary in 2005, and introduced us to the archive of materials at hand from that period of reflection and celebration.

Next up was our return to a previous noble attempt at organizing the Signs archive into a comprehensive database. We supplemented basic editorial information on articles in the last 10 years of publication with more detailed information on every single article from 1975 onward, including information about special issues, academic disciplines, and geographic areas of focus. With the generous support of Professor Dana Britton, we mobilized our database and tried our hand at NVIVO, a qualitative content analysis system. We found that NVIVO was ultimately useful for manually coding documents, but not for the automated generation of key terms, or for tracking changes over time. With the added frustration of wrong file extensions and names for over sixteen hundred individual PDF files painstakingly indexed in our database, this approach fell into the digital humanities rabbit hole. This brought us eventually to the fascinating DH work of Dr. Andrew Goldstone. To contribute, and I found myself in the midst of increasingly unknown digital territory. With the guidance of Andy and Andrew, I was suddenly working from the command-line on my Mac and becoming familiar with—if not quite mastering—the realm of open source programming. Some days, I felt a little bit like a hacker. These are areas I’d never dreamed I would encounter in my graduate work in WGS. Yet still, with patience and increasing skill, our team came up with newer and more precise topic models of the Signs archive.

With ongoing decisions about visualization, accessibility, and aesthetics, Signs@40 began to emerge as a constellation of tools and routes into new feminist scholarship. Mary’s guidance and foresight throughout the entire two years has been phenomenal, and it is through her deep encouragement and support that we as a team felt like we were producing something of value. It’s been a challenge and a pleasure to watch this project evolve over the past two years from Susana and I sitting by ourselves with our database in the basement of Voorhees Chapel to offering up what we have today. I’ve pushed my own boundaries intellectually and technically in helping to create the topic model and through editing curated contents in areas I am passionate about in my own work. I’ll end with a thank you to all who allowed my first few years of doctoral study to be infused and sustained by the past, present, and future of Signs.

Curated Tables of Contents
Edited lists of topics over forty years

Each table of contents below is designed to highlight topics that have remained of enduring interest over Signs’ forty years of publication. By no means comprehensive, each list of twenty articles points to the diverse, and sometimes competing, approaches to these broad, overlapping areas of feminist thought and gives a sense of how approaches have transformed over time. In addition to representative articles, links are provided to relevant special issues, article clusters, symposia, and topic pages in the topic model browser. By reading across lists, sidebars, and topics in the topic model, we hope that readers can glimpse the diverse editorial approaches that have shaped the contents of the journal as well as the immense complexity of feminist thought over the past four decades.
RETHINKING THE ASIA PIVOT
Challenging Everyday Militarisms and Bridging Communities of Women

This fall, a series of events presented by the Institute for Research on Women and the Center for Women’s Global Leadership departed with this key question: “As the United States turns to Asia through military might and neoliberal economic maneuvers, what are its implications for the people, the land, and other species in the region?” Throughout November and December, “Rethinking the Asia Pivot: Everyday Militarisms & Bridging Communities of Women” brought together digital artists, transnational discussions in a webinar, and scholarly and activist discussions in panels to explore this question from multiple perspectives. Together, these events called for new interventions in thinking and practice regarding the ‘Asia Pivot,’ and explored the role of the visual plays in (re)shaping how one may see (or not see) a military turn to Asia.

The ‘Asia Pivot’ connotes the historical and contemporary militarized turn to the Asia-Pacific by the U.S., ranging from the illegal annexation of Hawaii in 1898 and the occupation of the Philippines and Guam (as well as Puerto Rico and Cuba) at the end of the Spanish American War to the occupation of Japan and South Korea during and after World War II. The ‘Asia Pivot’ also references the ongoing buildup of military bases in Jeju Island and Henoko, Okinawa. Critical attention to these events reveals widespread environmental degradation, gender-based and sexual violence, health disparities, and numerous other material effects. The artists, activists, and academics that participated in “Rethinking the Asia Pivot” explored the ramifications of these ongoing ‘turns’ to Asia, with a particular focus on everyday experiences and community-making practices.

“Rethinking the Asia Pivot” first emerged from a small committee initially convened in late 2013 by Dr. Annie Isabel Fukushima, Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow at the Institute for Research on Women and the Department of Women’s and Gender Studies. The committee included Suzy Kim, author of Everyday Life in the North Korean Revolution, 1945-1950 and Kayo Denda, head librarian at the Margery Somers Foster Center at Douglass Library. These scholar-activists came together in response to news of President Obama’s plans to visit Asian countries to discuss the Transpacific Partnership as military buildup continued on Jeju Island and Okinawa and the rape of military personnel by their peers made regular headline news. Dr. Fukushima was also inspired by an art exhibit at the Sonoma County Museum. “Camellia Has Fallen” featured the works of artists reflecting on the 1948 mass execution of approximately 60,000 residents on Jeju Island by the South Korean government because the island was thought to be Communist. Artists and curators were looking for the next home for the exhibit, and Dr. Fukushima was inspired to bring these digital works to Rutgers.

The kickoff event in “Rethinking the Asia Pivot” featured an international webinar that brought together activists from Guam, Japan, Mexico, Okinawa, the Philippines, and South Korea. Activists discussed the impact of militarisms on communities and how they work to build peace and genuine security in their communities. The webinar took place during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence Campaign, a global advocacy campaign coordinated by the Center for Women’s Global Leadership at Rutgers. The 16 Days Campaign runs annually from November 25th (International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women) through December 10th (International Human Rights Day), making the link between gender-based violence and human rights.

“Rethinking the Asia Pivot” also included screenings of six films that discuss the ghosts of Jeju that haunt the present; the migrations, dislocations and spectacles produced through the making of the Panama Canal; and the relation between water, sexual economies, and bases in the Philippines. Artist works featured included: Michelle Dizon’s “Basing Landscapes,” Dalida Maria Benfield’s “Hotel Panama,” Kacyoung Lee’s “Burning Island,” “The Dawn of Jeju 43” by Manamongs, Im Heung Soon’s “Sungsi,” and “Reiterations of Dissent” by Jane Jin Kaisen.

The events culminated in an International Symposium on December 4, featuring Cynthia Enloe as the keynote presenting the talk “How Asian Feminists are making us all Smarter about Militarism.” Enloe is research professor in the Department of International Development, Community and Environment at Clark University in Massachusetts. Presenters on three panels discussed themes related to history, technology, visuality, narrativity, representation, strategies, policy, and violence. Digital works were on display throughout the symposium in order to engage the visual culture of the pivot to Asia.
By Ashleigh Greene Wade

On Friday, April 24, 2015, the Rutgers Women’s and Gender Studies Department will host its first graduate student conference: “Human Futures.”

“Human Futures” invites graduate students, faculty, and the wider public to examine futurity by holding emergent theories that deexceptionalize the human in tension with those that place race, gender, sexuality, and ability at the center of analyses. Along these lines, we hope to engage in dialogue regarding: intersections of more-than-human forces, non-anthropocentric visions, and human subjectivities; understanding the human experience beyond the liberal Human subject of Western Modernity; subjugated knowledges that offer non-anthropocentric views of the human; and the role of the humanities and social sciences in mediating oppositional approaches to the human, futurity, posthumanism(s), and antifuturity.

We are very excited and proud to host our keynote speaker, Alexander G. Weheliye whose recent book Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human addresses many themes that we hope to bring forth at the conference. In this text, Weheliye draws from works of Black feminists, especially Hortense Spillers and Sylvia Wynter, to complicate bare life and biopolitics as theorized by Giorgio Agamben and Michel Foucault, respectively, ultimately centering race in constructions of the human. A Rutgers alum, Weheliye completed his PhD in the English department and currently serves as Associate Professor and Graduate Director in the African American Studies Department at Northwestern University.

In addition to Weheliye’s keynote address, there will be three student panels that discuss the human subject beyond the liberal Human, intersections of human/animal subjectivities, and cyborgian assemblages. The planning committee received a wide range of proposals representing diverse academic and geographical areas. The final list of panelists come from CUNY, NYU, Arizona State, UC Santa Barbara, and University of Washington. Several students from our WGS department will be presenting at “Human Futures,” including Max Hantel, Mahalal Little, Alexandra Smith, Miriam Tola, Alessa Valentin, and Tosa Yingling. Additionally, professors Sylvia Chan-Malik, Kyla Schuller, and Carlos Decena will serve as panel respondents. Other Rutgers departments represented by the panelists include Anthropology (Marlaine Martin), Comparative Literature (Carolyn Ureña) and History (M. Dale Booth).

Students among the conference planning committee include Carolina Alonzo, Jenna Brager, Katy Gray, Jasleen Singh, Alexandria Smith, Karuna Srivastav, Ashleigh Wade, and Lindsey Whitmore. We extend our thanks to all of people in the department who have helped put this conference together, including Dr. Jasbir Puar, Graduate Director; Monique Gregory, Department Administrator; and Suzy Kiefer, Administrative Assistant.

“Human Futures” will take place in the conference room of the Ruth Dill Crockett Johnson building at 162 Ryders Lane. For more information, updates on the conference schedule, and registration for the conference, please visit humanfuturesconference.wordpress.com.
**Faculty Highlights**

**Prof. Nikolai G. Alexander-Floyd** received the National Conference of Black Political Scientists 2014 Presidential Award. She recently published an article, "Why Political Scientists Don't Study Black Women, But Historians and Sociologists Do: On Intersectionality and the Remapping of the Study of Black Political Women," in volume 16 of *The National Political Science Review* (NPSR). She has co-edited, along with Julia Jordan-Zachery, "Black Women in Politics: Identity, Power, and Justice in the New Millennium," *NPSR*, vol. 16 (2014), and co-edited, with Tiffany Willoughby-Herard, a forthcoming symposium in the *NPSR* on Black women in politics, as well. She has been asked to join the Editorial Board of *New Political Science*. She continues to serve on the Editorial Boards of Signs; Feminist Economics; Politics and Gender; and Women, Gender and Families of Color.

**Prof. Radhika Balakrishnan** served as a featured speaker at several events in New Delhi, India during the month of October 2014. On October 30, 2014, she spoke at a seminar on "Debt, Power, and Crisis: Social Stratification and the Inequitable Governance of Financial Markets," demonstrating how economic and social rights provide an alternative framework for financial governance. The seminar was hosted by the National Council of Applied Economic Research. On October 28, 2014, Dr. Balakrishnan led a seminar on "Using Human Rights to Assess Economic Policy," hosted by the Centre for Economic Studies and Planning at Jawaharlal Nehru University. Finally, on October 27, 2014, Dr. Balakrishnan gave a talk on "Rethinking Economic Policy: The Radical Potential of Human Rights," organized by the Programme Women's Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (PWESCR), UN Women and South Solidarity Initiative.

**Professor Abena Busia**, chair of WGS, and Dr. Ousseina Alidou, Affiliate Faculty and Director of the Center for African Studies, are recipients of Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowships. They will be travelling to the Center for Gender and Social Policy Studies at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ille-Ife Nigeria to hold intensive short-term workshops related to the work of the partnership between CAS and UNESCO in an ongoing initiative co-developing a curriculum in gender and transformative leadership for Africa, and serving as consultants for the establishment of a new graduate program women's and in gender studies.

**Prof. Charlotte Bunch** received the CUNY School of Law Dean's Award in March 2015, and was re-appointed to the UN Women Global Civil Society Advisory Group for two more years—2014-2016. She also delivered the Sunila Abeysekera Memorial Lecture in September 2014 in Kathmandu, Nepal, and lectured at the XII South Asian Sangat. She delivered the Keynote at the Third Annual Law Women Summit at NYU School of Law on "Women in Conflict: Gender, Violence, and Peacekeeping" in February 2015, and served as an Expert to a session of the UN Working Group on Discrimination Against Women in Law and Practice in January 2015. Professor Bunch also joined thirty seven women in a month-long Feminist Capacity Building Course on Gender, Sustainable Livelihoods, Human Rights, and Peace at TEWA, Dhapakhel, Kathmandu, Nepal in September and October 2014.

**Prof. Sylvia Chan-Malik** completed work as guest editor on the publication "Asian American Religions in a Globalized World" for *Amereasia Journal*, which came out in March 2014. She co-wrote the Introduction with Dr. Khyati Joshi, as well as moderated a discussion for the article, "A Space for the Spiritual: A Roundtable on Race, Gender, and Islam in the United States" in the same issue. Her essay "Islam in the arts in the USA" was published in the *Routledge Handbook of Islam in the West*, edited by Roberto Tottoli, in July.

**Prof. Carlos Decena**

co-authored Salud y condiciones de vida de los refugiados colombianos en Quito. Quito, Ecuador: Editorial Abya Yala, 2014. He also received a Fulbright Specialist Grant, U.S. Studies—Women’s Studies at Centro Latinoamericano de Economía Humanidad in Uruguay in May 2014. He served for the fourth consecutive year as Faculty Facilitator of the Alternative Spring Break delegation to the Dominican Republic, “Witnessing Social Change.”

**Professor Zakia Salime**


**Prof. Annie Isabel Fukushima**

published “Beyond Supply & Demand: The Limitations of End Demand-Strategies” in Human Trafficking Reconsidered: Rethinking the Problem, Envisioning New Solutions, edited by Kimberly Kay Hoang and Rhacel Salazar Parrenas, in March 2014. She also co-authored a chapter with Julietta Hua, “Calling the Consumer Activist, Consuming the Trafficking Subject: Call and Response and the Terms of Legibility,” which appears in Documenting Gendered Violence, edited by communication studies scholars Lisa Cuklanz and Heather McIntosh in February 2015.

Dr. Fukushima was invited to present many talks over the past year, including, “An American Haunting: From Exclusions to the Ghost Case,” at the Department of American studies Colloquium at Rutgers University in April 2014 and “Watching in Pain and Pleasure: Representing Women of Color on Screens” at the American Studies Association Annual Conference in Los Angeles in November 2014. Dr. Fukushima also co-organized an international conference, Rethinking the Asia-Pivot (Nov. 25 – Dec. 4, 2014), a multi-media event that included an international webinar, digital exhibits, and a symposium. She recently accepted a tenure-track position in Ethnic Studies and Social Work at the University of Utah.

**Prof. Kyla Schuller**

gave two invited talks this winter, presenting “Impressions ‘Deep and Lasting’ Race, Sexuality and Affective Heredity Before the Gene” as part of the Speaker Series at UC Berkeley’s Center for the Study of Sexual Culture on March 2, 2015 and “Queer Vitalisms: Sensation, Sentiment and Sexuality in 19th-Century Biopolitics” at New Matters and Queer Life, a small conference convened at Yale University, on January 30.

**Prof. Jasbir Puar**
delivered two keynote addresses this fall semester. The first, “Crip nationalism: from narrative prostheses to disaster capitalism,” was given at the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies Symposium: Citizenship and Migration at the University of Helsinki, October 22-23. Dr. Puar also delivered “The ‘Right’ to Maim: Disablement, Palestine, and Disaster Capitalism,” at Space, Race, Bodies: Geocorporographies of the City, Nation, and Empire at the University of Otago, New Zealand, December 8-10. She gave the Lionel Cantu Memorial Lecture at University of California — Santa Cruz in November. In the Spring, she delivered a keynote at the 2nd Critical Social Psychology Conference in Barcelona, speaking on Affect, Embodiment, and Politics.

**Professor Mary Trigg**

was invited to serve as the 2014 Adele Ramos Salzer Lecturer at Newcomb College Institute of Tulane University. Her April 2014 visit to New Orleans included the keynote talk “What’s Feminism Got to Do With It? Women’s Leadership for Social Change.” Her book, Feminism as Life’s Work: Four Modern American Women through Two World Wars was published by Rutgers University Press in 2014.
Cheers!

Graduate Students Publish, Win Fellowships, and Garner Recognition

Kevin Allred has appeared on CNN, MSNBC, Huffington Post Live, and the new pop culture and politics show "So POPular" hosted by Janet Mock. Over the year, he has been invited to present excerpts from his "Politicking Beyoncé" course at Binghamton University, Cooper Union, Claremont McKenna College, University of Illinois at Chicago, Centenary College of Louisiana, Philadelphia University, and Hunter College.

Carolina Alonso Bejarano received the 2014 Graduate School of New Brunswick Undergraduate Teaching Award and was also awarded the Graduate School's Dissertation Teaching Award. The Graduate School gives two awards each year to graduate students who have shown excellence in both teaching and research and who propose to offer an upper-division undergraduate course in the major in the area of the student's dissertation research. Carolina will teach the course "Decolonial New Jersey: Feminism, Citizenship, and Migration in the Garden State."

Jenna Brager presented "The Heavyweight Champion and A String of Pearls: Postmemory, Family Archives and Historical Fictoning" at the Association for Jewish Studies Annual Conference in Baltimore and also organized the panel "Archival Time Machine: Queer Cultural Production and Ephemeral Worlking" at the American Studies Association Annual Conference in Los Angeles. She has two essays forthcoming in 2015: "The Selfie and the Other: Consuming Viral Tragedy and Social Media (After)lives" in the International Journal of Communication (University of Southern California) and "Unknown Woman: The Visual Politics of Looking Back" in The Holocaust in History and Memory, Vol. 7 (University of Essex).

Max Hantel was awarded a two-year postdoctoral fellowship at the Gender Research Institute at Dartmouth (GRID). Max will take part in a seminar on "Gender Matters: Feminist Ecologies and Materialities." He also published "Toward a Sexual Difference Theory of Creolization" in the Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy, 22.1.

Susana Galán was the recipient of a Bevier Fellowship from the Graduate School of New Brunswick. This highly competitive award supports dissertation-stage graduate students with a stipend and partial tuition remission in the later stages of their time at Rutgers.

Laura Lovin won a two-year Marie Curie Postdoctoral Fellowship from the European Commission. Her research project is "The Race, Class and Gender of Transnational Urban Labour: Romanian Workers in the Cities of London and NYC," and her collaborating institution is the Weeks Centre for Social and Policy Research at London South Bank University.

Rasha Moumne was awarded a Social Science Research Council (SSRC) Dissertation Proposal Development Fellowship, which will allow her to do fieldwork in Lebanon this summer. She also presented " Producing the Nation: Sex Panics and Racialization in Lebanon" in the panel session "Gender in the Making" at the 2015 Midle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies Graduate Conference at Columbia University.

Rosemary Ndubiuizu received a National Women's Studies Association Graduate Scholarship to support work on her dissertation, "Where Shall the Monsters Live? Tracking Undeserving Poor Discourses in Affordable Housing Debates." She also published "(Black) Papa Knows Best: Marion Barry and the Appeal to Black Authoritarian Discourse," in National Political Science Review's Special Issue on Black Women in Politics, Vol. 16.

Stephen Seely published "There's Nothing Revolutionary about a Blowjob," co-authored with Drucilla Cornell, in Social Text 32.2. He is currently working on a book manuscript with Drucilla Cornell, which is forthcoming from Polity Press.

Stina Soderling received the Five College Fellowship and Visiting Instructorship in Gender Studies at Mount Holyoke College (2014-2015). She is teaching an advanced seminar titled "Queer Ecologies" at Mount Holyoke in Spring 2015.

Louise Tam published "Neurasthenia Revisited: Psychologizing Precarious Labor and Migrant Status in Contemporary Discourses of Asian American Nervousness" in Disability and the Global South 1.2.

Nafisa Tanjeem was awarded the Linda Rothman Award for outstanding undergraduate teaching in 2014, as well as a Hybrid Course Conversion Grant from Rutgers Summer Session.

Lindsey Whitmore received a 2015-16 Seminar Fellowship at the Institute for Research on Women. Her project, "Practicing Queer Economies of Care," will be part of the seminar’s theme on Poverty. She also received a 2014 Hybrid Course Conversion Grant from Rutgers Summer Session for the course 988:318: The Gendered Body. Her roundtable contributions to a special issue of Feminist Formations titled "Institutional Feelings: Practicing Women’s Studies in the Corporate University" are forthcoming in 2015. She was also the assistant editor of Signs@40, a digital humanities project exploring the 40-year archive of Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society.
Scenes of Fear and Courage in Cairo

By Susana Galán

On January 29, 2015, dozens of women stood on Talaat Harb Street, one of the main arteries of Downtown Cairo, holding flowers and posters to protest the killing of Shaimaa al-Sabbagh, a 31 year-old member of the Popular Socialist Alliance and a poet. Shaimaa was shot by a masked riot police officer as she and a group of activists marched towards Tahrir Square to lay a commemorative wreath on the eve of the fourth anniversary of the 2011 Egyptian Revolution. Five days later, a small number of women returned to the place where Shaimaa was murdered to show the military regime that they were not afraid. Yet, they had good reasons to be. Since the military coup of July 2013, the regime has systematically repressed any form of political dissent—no matter how large or militant—with extraordinary violence, including the firing of tear gas, birdshot and bullets and the indiscriminate detention of participants and passers-by. The women who participated in the protest were also visibly afraid as they congregated in the nearby Café Riche shortly before 2:00 pm, the scheduled time for the gathering, exchanging last words before the protest with fellow male activists, who could not take part in an action that had been explicitly organized as women-only.

When I arrived in Cairo last September to conduct nine months of dissertation fieldwork studying collective forms of resistance against street sexual harassment and assault in Egypt, the massive protests that had filled Tahrir Square in the years that followed the 2011 Revolution had progressively disappeared following the passing of a new law that criminalized free assembly and public expression in November 2013. The gender-mixed vigilante groups that used to patrol the square after late 2012 to prevent and stop the mob sexual assaults that had become a common occurrence in demonstrations stopped operating in June 2014, when their volunteers started to risk being arrested under charges of forming and training armed militias by the newly elected government of General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. Initiatives that had been instrumental in the fight against sexual violence in political settings in the last two years were inactive, shaken by the imprisonment and death of so many loved ones. The NGOs and women’s associations I had established contact with in previous visits to Cairo in the summers of 2012 and 2013 were now under stricter scrutiny by the authorities, especially with regard to their collaboration with foreign entities and external funding, and showed reluctance to talk to international researchers and to host visitors in their offices for fear of imminent police raids.

Egyptian women have increasingly mobilized to reclaim their right to occupy the streets without fear of sexual violence with innovative practices that include the formation of communities of women teaching self-defense to other women...

Beyond the activist scene, fear also appeared at the center of Egyptian women’s everyday experiences on the streets. After decades of prevalent street sexual harassment, the multiplication of mob sexual attacks inside and outside the spaces of protests after the 2011 uprisings further aggravated the already ingrained—and often exploited for political and economic purposes—image of public space in general, and Downtown Cairo in particular, as a dangerous place for women. Phrases like “I never walk alone on the streets” became unusually common in my field notes, albeit only in conversations that involved upper-middle- and upper-class women who could afford to navigate the city in a private car and had access to the privatized spaces that have mushroomed in the upscale neighborhoods and the desert since the 1990s. At the same time, following the 2011 Revolution, Egyptian women have increasingly mobilized to reclaim their right to occupy the streets without fear of sexual violence with innovative practices that include the formation of communities of women teaching self-defense to other women and the organization of gender-mixed intervention and community mobilization groups on the streets and in public transportation. Unlike previous forms of anti-harassment activism, these responses do not rely on the state for the protection of women or the punishment of the perpetrators, but instead make a political claim on public space by encouraging women to fight back against harassers and urging passers-by to react to street sexual violence. From the proliferation of these autonomous initiatives across Cairo to the women’s protest organized in response to Shaimaa’s murder, the impact of these small acts of defiance against the fear of sexual violence and military repression and their contribution to the emergence of new forms of subjectivity and modes of relation that challenge authoritarian, patriarchal and neoliberal logics of security in urban spaces are the questions that currently guide my dissertation research in Cairo.
My teaching is inspired by the same commitment to transformational politics that informs my scholarship and political commitments. In my research, I organize with undocumented workers in New Jersey and I try to understand the legal and social processes that resulted in their categorization as "illegal." In my teaching, I approach any given topic in the same way I do immigrant illegality: I take a normalized "fact of life," I explore with my students the actual socio-historical processes that produce and reproduce such a fact, and I invite them to reflect upon alternative understandings of its production.

As a recipient of the 2014 Graduate School of New Brunswick Teaching Award, my main teaching strategy is the reevaluation of the traditional power dynamics within the classroom. Beyond allowing students to make decisions as to the format or content of my courses, through my teaching at Rutgers I have explored other ways to engage with my students and push them to think critically about and beyond the classroom. For example, after reading on swarm networks for one of my Science and Technology graduate classes, I told one of my "War: Critical Perspectives" sections that we were now to behave like a headless swarm. From that point on I sat with my students in a circle and let them converse about the readings without much intervention. By the end of the semester all the students in that section agreed to do their final project collectively; they organized a weekend event called "Take Back Rutgers" during which they raised awareness on university expenditure and joined the student union in their mobilization to protest tuition hikes. This action contributed to Rutgers' subsequent decision to institute the lowest increase in tuition in a decade. The swarm experiment, which took place during my first year as a teacher, taught me I have much to learn from my students.

In a more recent example, my "Producing Identities: Decolonial Perspectives from the Americas" course had an outside-of-the-classroom component. I invited students to choose a medium not traditionally associated with the classroom (arts, crafts, performance, activism, organizing, to name just a few examples) and asked them to use it as a lens to reflect upon the effects of colonialism in their lives. We discussed the particularities of each project both collectively and individually during the first weeks of class, and we shared our progress through weekly pictures that we streamed at the beginning of each class. I participated with a project as well, a collaborative weekly comic strip, which switched my role as a teacher from observer to participant and changed the dynamics of the classroom. The results of this approach were outstanding; students really embrace the class material when they are allowed to use their imagination and out-of-the-classroom strengths to process it. The fact that students are working on different things while being accountable to each other creates an atmosphere of solidarity and collaboration that opens up the floor for profound in-class discussions, which extend beyond the classroom.

There are other ways in which I encourage students to think for themselves and not to simply accept the information I give them. I often bring guest speakers to class whose political ideals are different from mine. Twice during the semester I ask students to anonymously evaluate the class and my work so I can make adjustments. I also stay abreast of popular culture events and media to discuss with students issues that range from the politics of this year's Super Bowl ads to nationalism in the latest episode of America's Next Top Model. I constantly remind my students that, just like them, I see the world through my personal experiences, which helps create a classroom environment where students feel safe to express their opinions and ask questions.

Despite my structuring of the class in a way that is open-ended and personal, my approach to teaching is in no way "hands off." I believe that one of the truly transformational aspects of education is our ability as teachers to tell our students what to read, and the number one requirement in my classroom is being prepared for class. I am a great believer in the power of public speaking so it is mandatory for my students to participate at least once every class, and I make sure this requirement is met by calling on them and asking questions at random. I know from experience that the possibility of being called on puts serious pressure on students to finish their readings and attend class. I have also found that the more students are forced to stay involved in the classroom the more inclined they are to start participating at their own rhythm to avoid being put on the spot. I ask a lot of my students, and I have not been disappointed to this day.

Education is for me, above all, an opportunity for a group of people to take time to think together. Given its critical approach to normalized entities and institutions, I find the field of gender studies a particularly well-suited terrain for the discussion of alternative ways of being and doing in the world. As such, my primary goal as a Women's and Gender Studies teacher is not to reach definitive answers on the problems of exclusion and exploitation, but to give my students the tools to look critically and carefully at the world, so they can stop for a minute, look around, and know that things can be different.
Hello to the wonderful Rutgers Women’s and Gender Studies Department from Granada, Spain! I wanted to take some time to fill you in with an update on the incredible opportunity I’ve been lucky to have studying at the Instituto de Estudios de Género y La Mujer here at the University of Granada. Classes here have been an education in themselves, but, perhaps more than that—I’m happy to note—has been the education I’m earning through everyday life in Granada. This is as far a departure from the fast-paced norms of New Brunswick and the general NYC area as it can get.

Take the siesta, for instance. Almost every day from about 3pm to 5pm, Granada takes a breather. Stores and restaurants close, people disappear from the streets, and the world is tranquil as people use the break for a nap or an extended lunch. At around 5 or 6 you see things coming to life again—doors are unlocked, street vendors uncover their goods, people venture out to run errands. To account for the break, the typical office closes not around 5pm, as we are used to, but 7 or 8pm, and with a renewed sense of vitality and activity.

For me, this trip has felt like a break from the everyday and a period for healing and renewed vitality. In the GEMMA program, for example, classes are not structured at set times and days of the week, but rather they float around. I had tons of classes throughout October and December, but for almost the entire month of November my schedule was completely free. At first I wondered what I was going to do with that time, and that’s when I realized that my feminism education here in Granada is something that is meant to be more than what I’d learn in the classroom.

I have always wanted to study abroad, and I am so grateful to have been selected for the GEMMA Program for the 2015 year. I will be studying at the University of Bologna, in Bologna, Italy, and I can’t even begin to say how excited I am. While I am in Italy, I will be attending classes part-time, and will be spending the remainder of my stay doing archival research for my Master’s Thesis. My primary research interests surround the intersections of sex, gender, and sexuality in music history, and the voice, more specifically. I plan to focus my thesis on Italian Opera during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, examining the ways that sex, gender, and sexuality contribute to the perceptions of opera characters and their individual voices.

In Italian Opera, many roles were often played interchangeably by men, women, and castrati (men castrated during childhood to preserve the pre-pubescent voice). It was not uncommon for women to perform male roles, or vice versa. I am constant-ly surprised at how the versatility of the human voice was featured in opera, blurring gender roles on stage in favor of a spectacular musical experience. While castrati are no longer used in music performance, many operas that contain gender-swapped roles are still performed today. I believe that these operas are a door to understand how gender, sex, and sexuality were perceived on- and off-stage during this time.

I plan to examine opera libretti and manuscripts at the International Museum and Library of Music of Bologna, producing translations, use in my thesis. I hope to show that the strict gender roles of the time were not present on the Opera stage, and that quality acting and musical performance was valued above all else, including expectations about gender, sex, and sexuality. In addition to visiting the library/archive in Bologna, I also plan to visit the Italian Women’s Library, which is also located in Bologna. There are over 60,000 books and pamphlets, 3,000 periodicals, 500 archives, and 5,000 museum objects all focused on the lives of women in Italy and the rest of Europe. Between the Italian Women’s Library and the International Museum and Library of Music, I believe I will find interesting and interesting sources to use for my thesis. I hope to find time to travel within Italy as well, seeking out other archives and Opera Houses to explore and enhance my research.
Undergraduate Students Participate in Women’s Worlds Conference in Hyderabad, India

In Fall 2013, Women’s and Gender Studies held a university-wide competition for scholarships to participate in the 2014 Women’s Worlds Congress in Hyderabad, India. We raised funds to support the participation of nine undergraduate students who were chosen through the scholarship competition. The students enrolled in an independent study with Professor Mary Hawkesworth and completed research papers, which they submitted to the Conference Program Committee for consideration. All nine were accepted for presentation at the Congress, which was held in August 2014.

Presentations from Rutgers students at the Women’s Worlds Congress were organized in a panel titled “Empowering Women and Girls: Tactics of the Millennial Generation,” which was chaired by Institute for Women’s Leadership Director Lisa Hetfield. Drawing on insights from women’s individual and collective experiences, papers explored diverse tactics of social change that range from agricultural practices, business management, and microfinance to the visual and performing arts, creative writing and blogging, and consciousness-raising programs on campus and in community.

Below is a selection of undergraduate paper titles and participants:

- “Women’s Economic Empowerment: Evaluating the Impact of Microcredit Programs on Women in Pakistan,” Shamama Siddiqui
- “Visual and Performing Arts as a Strategy to Empower Economically-Disadvantaged Girls in New Jersey,” Cierra Kaler-Jones
- “Social Media for Social Change: Muslim Women Challenging the Mainstream Media Narrative in the Post-9/11 United States,” Juhi Farooqui
- “Envisioning the Consequences of Armed Conflict: Images of Congolese Women in Social and Print Media,” Eden Mesfun
- “From Local Culture to Imperial Morality: Sexual and Reproductive Health Challenges of South Asian Women Immigrants in the USA,” Srutika Sabu

2014 Undergraduate WGS Awards

Eleanor Brilliant Award for Outstanding Senior in Women’s & Gender Studies
Vera Hinsley

Gilda Morales Award for Outstanding Student Activist
Jamie S. DiNicola

Dorothy Hamilton Balliet Award for Outstanding Research
Lai Wo

Dee Garrison Award for Justice and Peacemaking
Yasmin Abdur-Rassaq

Elizabeth Hallowell Award for the Advancement of Women’s Rights
Gabrielle Rossi

Douglass College Women’s and Gender Studies Alumnae Prize
Marie Ferguson
Feminist Tidbits

MA students Tracy Martin, Latoria Valentine, and Jessica Renshaw catch up before Dr. Nikol Alexander-Floyd's course Agency, Subjectivity, and Social Change.

MA student Jasleen Singh preps for class.

First-year PhD Ashleigh Green Wade and Department Wonder Woman Suzy Kiefer.

Second-year PhD Katy Gray and third-year PhD Jenna Brager.

WGS work study extraordinaire Jess Mazzeo.
Name ________________________________
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____________________________________
____________________________________
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