



Spring 1995

# IRW NETWORK

## Transitions, Environments, Translations . . . Conference

Feminism as an international phenomenon in the twentieth century has provided the thematic framework for the Institute's programming over the past three years. Our ongoing discussions culminated in a major conference organized in partnership with the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton and held at both Rutgers and IAS from April 28 through April 30.

In what the Ford Foundation's **Alison Bernstein** dubbed an historic occasion *Transitions, Environments, Translations: The Meaning of Feminism in Contemporary Politics* brought together leading scholars and activists from fifteen countries to explore feminism's diverse articulations. The conference highlighted both the situation of women and the impact of feminism in countries and regions presently undergoing rapid and traumatic social and political transformation.

The first day focused on Eastern and Central Europe and the former Soviet Union in sessions organized thematically around questions of *Civil Society and Public Spheres, Nationalism and Women's Movements*. The second day included two panels on *Feminism and Environmentalism*, the first exploring the gendered politics of economic development and the second the contested meanings of nature in environmental movements.

A dynamic panel on *The Politics of Feminist Cooperation across the Lines of Race* brought **Mamphela Ramphela** and **Jacklyn Cock** from South Africa together with **Evelynn Hammonds** (MIT) and **Saidiya Hartman** (Berkeley) from the United States. On the final day the problems and possibilities of establishing women's studies in widely differing national and institutional contexts occasioned an impassioned discussion.

In the concluding plenary, participants attempted both to draw together the different strands of argument set out across the three days and to point to important new political questions raised by the very act of putting so many divergent feminisms in conversation with each other.

The three-day event was generously supported by grants from **ACLS**, the **Ford** and **Rockefeller Foundations**, and the **Rutgers Research Council**. A volume of conference proceedings edited by co-organizers **Cora Kaplan** (IRW) and **Joan Scott** (IAS) is to be published by Routledge in 1996.

Above right: *Transitions* conference participants Gail Kligman, Sabine Lang and Joanna Regulska.



## 1995-96 Thinking About Women Series

Next year's *Thinking About Women* lecture series--*Feminism Questions Modernity*--will investigate ways in which feminist questions continue to reconfigure the narratives of modernity and therefore of postmodernity.

Professor **Michele Wallace** (English, CUNY) will open the series on Thursday, September 28 at the Cook Student Center with a talk on "Bessie, Josephine and Freddie: Representations of Black Women in Early Sound Film." We will screen the films she discusses at a separate event; look for details at the beginning of the semester.

On Wednesday, October 18, Professor **Judith Butler** (Rhetoric, UC Berkeley) will speak on "The End of Sexual Difference?" at Art History 200.

The final speaker of fall semester (November 30) will be Professor **Susan Stanford Friedman** (English, University of Wisconsin at Madison); her topic will be "The New Geography of Identity and the Future of Feminist Criticism."

Our spring semester speakers will be Professor **Bonnie Smith** (History, Rutgers-NB), Professor **Drucilla Cornell** (School of Law, Rutgers-Newark and Political Science, Rutgers-NB), and Professor **Sara Suleri Goodyear** (English, Yale University). Professor Smith will address modernist constructions of masculinity on February 8; Professor Cornell's topic on March 21 will be "A Just Alliance: Rethinking Kant for Feminism." Professor Suleri Goodyear will discuss "Feminism and Minority Discourse in Postcolonial Literatures" on April 18.

Each *Thinking About Women* lecture begins at 4:30 p.m. and is preceded by a 4:00 p.m. reception.





*Women and Education* Keynoter **Ruth J. Simmons**

## Celebration of Our Work: Women and Education

The IRW adopted *Shaping the Vision: Women and Education* as the theme of its 13th annual *Celebration of Our Work* conference on May 23, as over 240 participants in 20 panels focused on how issues of gender and women's roles shape K-12 and higher education.

Keynote speaker **Ruth J. Simmons**, the president-elect of Smith College, gave an insightful and inspirational talk, "Raising Our Sights: Educating Women for Leadership." Dr. Simmons drew upon her own experiences as a parent and administrator at Princeton in noting the importance of working toward institutional change and flexibility in response to women's life circumstances. Citing parallels between post-Reconstruction era violence against African-Americans and the current conservative backlash, Dr. Simmons challenged her listeners to continue working toward high levels of achievement and equity in education and at work.

**Beth Hutchison**, IRW's assistant director, took main responsibility for organizing the conference, which provided an important opportunity for public school and university instructors and administrators from New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania as well as representatives from community agencies and state and local government to exchange ideas and information.

Popular sessions included a New Jersey Project panel on curriculum and classroom transformation, "Lesbian/Gay Issues in the Classroom and Beyond," a district case study of gender equity "From Principles to Action," "Encouraging Girls and Young Women in Math, Science, and Technology," a report from student researchers on "The Unequal Classroom," "Strategies for Changing Women's Studies," and "Resisting the Backlash: Rewriting the Right's Educational Agenda."

Generous support from **Beneficial Management Corporation** underwrote Dr. Simmons' appearance. The conference was co-sponsored by 13 centers and academic departments at Rutgers and such organizations as the **Associate Alumnae of Douglass College**, the **American Association of University Women - NJ**, and the **League of Women Voters of New Jersey**.

The *1996 Celebration of Our Work* conference will be held Tuesday, May 21 at Hickman Hall. The call for papers will be distributed during Autumn Semester.

## Towards 2000 94-95

The second year of our graduate/faculty seminar *Towards 2000* continued to find an enthusiastic constituency for a more informal venue in which both visiting speakers and Rutgers faculty can offer short provocative presentations on new and challenging scholarship on women and gender followed by longer discussion by participants.

How theory shifts our understanding of the constitution of gender as a category for analysis was the issue raised by **Mary Poovey** (Johns Hopkins) while **Diana Fuss** (Princeton) asked us to consider the political uses of psychoanalytic theories of identification. **Claudia Tate** (George Washington) argued that psychoanalysis can help us understand some of the most puzzling texts in the African-American canon.

**Nina Cornyetz** and **Louisa Schein** (Rutgers) pushed us to consider the effects of cultural translations from West to East in China and Japan on our understanding of gender and race in postmodernity, while **Cynthia Daniels** (Rutgers) demonstrated how the social construction of male reproduction obscures the link between fetal health problems and paternal exposure to drugs and other toxins.

IRW visiting scholar **Janice Monk** (Arizona) looked at the political problems of translation thrown up by the transformation of an American book on women in the Southwest into a British-made film. Visiting scholar **Anastasia Posadskaya** (Moscow Institute for Gender Studies) and **Barbara Engel** (Colorado) closed the series by sharing with us the questions raised about research and interpretation in the making of their remarkable oral history of older Russian women.

## Conference Info

Conference programs for *Transitions, Environments, Translations and Women and Education* with presenters' names and paper titles are available on request from the IRW.



## Thinking About Women 94-95

New research on the construction of masculinity as well as femininity has been a growing area of feminist scholarship for some years, and a cluster of innovative talks in our 1994-95 lecture series, *Reinventing Gender*, highlighted its importance in understanding both the past and present of the meaning of gender.

**Chandra Talpade Mohanty** (Hamilton) explored the religious constitution of male nationalism in India and **Rey Chow** (UC Irvine) analyzed destabilization of sexual identity and imperialism in the film *M. Butterfly*. Reaching back in American history, **Carroll Smith-Rosenberg** (Penn) looked at masculinity and its discontents in the making of the early bourgeois nation, while **Alice Kessler-Harris** (Rutgers) showed us how making policy also made gender in earlier twentieth century debates on the federal income tax.

African-American womanhood was the subject of two riveting talks: **Deborah Gray White** (Rutgers) analyzed the complex factors that determined the ascendance of race and/or gender issues in African-American women's organizations, while **Evelynn M. Hammonds** (MIT) gave voice to some of the sounding silences that still remain to be addressed in feminist work on African-American women's sexuality.

## Other 1994-95 Speakers

In partnership with Rutgers Departments of English and Women's Studies, the Graduate Student Association and the Center for the Critical Analysis of Contemporary Culture (CCACC), the IRW co-sponsored and hosted a number of speakers during the year.

Legal interventions into domestic relationships provided the background for talks by **Ruth Busch** (University of Waikato, New Zealand) and **Rajeswari Sunder Rajan** (Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi). Ruth Busch, a short-term IRW visiting scholar, answered the question "What's Love Got to Do with It?" with an analysis of New Zealand judges' approach to domestic violence. Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, author of *Real and Imagined Women: Gender, Culture, and Postcolonialism* (Routledge, 1993) discussed the conflicting claims to authority of religion, family, and government in "The Ameena 'Case': Gender, Crisis, Nationalism."

**Alan Sinfield** (University of Sussex) spoke on "Diaspora and Hybridity: Queer Identities and the Ethnicity Model." Two of Alan Sinfield's recent books are *The Wilde Century* (Columbia UP, 1994) and *Cultural Politics - Queer Reading* (U of PA Press, 1994).

**Diane Elam** (Indiana University and McGill University), author of *Feminism and Deconstruction: Ms en Abyme* (Routledge 1994), investigated the possibilities and pitfalls of the utopian in feminist thought in "Feminism and Deconstruction Think Politics." **Lynne Segal** (Middlesex University, London), whose latest book is *Straight Sex: The Politics of Pleasure* (U of CA Press, 1994), spoke on "Feminism and the Politics of Pleasure."

## New Library Catalogue

Over the years the IRW has been acquiring feminist literature on a variety of topics and now houses not only books and periodicals such as *Signs*, *Feminist Review*, and *The Chronicle of Higher Education* but also working papers, bibliographies, newsletters, conference proceedings, and other hard-to-find resources.

Our Women's Studies intern, **Alissa Deakin**, organized the collection according to discipline, so it is easy to come in and browse specific topics. In consultation with Rutgers women's studies librarian **Jane Sloan**, Alissa also created a computer catalog so that complex multidisciplinary searches can easily be conducted.

The IRW library and the library holdings of the Center for Women's Global Leadership are shelved and catalogued separately, but housed in the same room. These diverse and unique collections should not be missed.



*Rethinking Gender* speakers **Carroll Smith-Rosenberg** (top) and **Rey Chow** (center).

Above, left to right: Guest speaker **Rajeswari Sunder Rajan** with Professors **Abena Busia** and **Cora Kaplan** (English).





## Negotiating Identities in the Americas: Race/Gender/Nation

The IRW's second annual graduate student conference on Saturday, April 1 attracted over 50 participants from schools in the tri-state region as well as the University of Texas at Austin and Howard University in Washington, DC. Sessions treated such topics as colonialism, community activism, sexual identity, reproduction and AIDS, and racial identity at various moments in the Americas.

In her keynote address "Postmortems: Facing the Black Male Corpse," **Deborah E. McDowell** (University of Virginia) took as her text the pictures of young black male corpses and mourning mothers that have become an increasingly common feature in daily newspapers. Publishing the black male corpse, Professor McDowell suggests, protects the privacy of white death and its mourners. The publicity given to maternal mourning obscures both the factual presence of mourning African-American fathers, and the physical existence of other, unphotographed corpses.



Above: Keynote speaker **Deborah E. McDowell** (center) with conference attendees **Cora Kaplan** and **Erika Romaine**.  
Top left: Graduate student conference organizers **Rachel Herzing** (Anthropology) and **Pat Sommers** (English) with Professor **Cheryl Wall** (English).

## 1995-96 Visiting Scholars

**Patricia Cholakian**, Hamilton College Spring 1996

Claiming Identity: Women and the Politics of Self-Representation in Seventeenth Century France

**Sara Dickey**, Bowdoin College Spring 1996

The Intimate Relations of Class and Power: Domestic Service in Urban India

**Elizabeth Faue**, Wayne State University 1995-96

Provisioning the Returning Soldier: Gender, Citizenship, and Veteran's Politics in the Welfare State

**Nancy Isenberg**, University of Northern Iowa 1995-96

Engendering the Law: Legal Fictions and Feminism in America

**Alison Laurie**, Victoria University of Wellington Autumn 1995

Lesbian Oral History in New Zealand and the U.S.

**Gail Reekie**, Australian National University Autumn 1995

The Discursive Effects of Historical Thinking in Debates about Illegitimacy and Teenage Pregnancy in Contemporary American Culture

## New Faces

Rutgers English professor **Marianne DeKoven** became the IRW Director on July 1, 1995. Co-founder of "The Gender Group," an interdisciplinary feminist colloquium of the English and History Departments, Professor DeKoven works in twentieth-century literary and cultural studies and feminist theory and criticism. She is the author of *A Different Language: Gertrude Stein's Experimental Writing* (1983) and *Rich and Strange: Gender, History, Modernism* (1991). Her current book project is on the 1960s and the transition to postmodernism, focusing especially on the role of second-wave feminism in that transition.

**Beth Hutchison**, formerly a visiting professor at the University of California at Riverside where she taught lesbian and gay theory and multicultural American literature, is completing her first six months as IRW Assistant Director. She works with the director in shaping every aspect of IRW's programs and is leading the Institute into the information age.

Professors **Dee Garrison** (American History) and **Phyllis Mack** (History and Women's Studies) were elected to the IRW Executive Committee this Spring, as were graduate students **Ruth W. Gilmore** (Geography) and **Julia Willis** (English).

Stepping down as IRW director after a busy and energizing three-year term, **Cora Kaplan** will be on leave completing a book on gender and the rise of racial thinking in Victorian Britain.





Among the participants at the *Transitions, Environments, Translations* conference were (standing, l to r) Svetlana Slapsak, Nanette Funk, and Anastasia Posadskaya; (center photo, above) Zakia Pathak, Jacklyn Cock and Alison Bernstein; (right photo) Eva Malek-Lewy, Mamphela Ramphela and Peggy Watson.

## 1994-95 Scholar Notes

### Svetlana Kupryashkina writes:

"It has been a very productive year for me at Rutgers. I continued work on my project 'Developing Women's Studies Curricula for Ukraine' which is aimed at teaching short-term, non-credit courses at several institutions of higher learning in Ukraine, including women's gymnasia and lyceums. I was also part of an NGO Consultative meeting in New York and participated in other events dedicated to the forthcoming World Conference on Women and NGO Forum in Beijing. I presented 'Women's Studies: Limitations of Research' at the *Transitions, Environments, Translations* conference held by IRW and the Institute for Advanced Study. In all, I have done seven papers of different formats and completed one larger survey on women in Ukraine."

**Janice Monk**, Executive Director of the Southwest Institute for Research on Women (SIROW) at the University of Arizona, examined the work and careers of women geographers to assess how considerations of gender are implicated

in the development of the field. She writes that her project is "premised on the notion that knowledge and professions are historically and culturally constructed, and that in order to understand their development we need to examine characteristics of the practitioners, the values and experiences that shape their practice, the institutional contexts in which they create knowledge, and the larger social, cultural, political, and economic contexts in which scholarship is embedded."

**Anastasia Posadskaya** from the Moscow Center for Gender Studies has been working in collaboration with Professor **Barbara Engel** (University of Colorado at Boulder). Their project "Retrieving the Voices of Old Women of Russia" is based on oral histories of Russian women born before the socialist revolution of 1917. Findings will be published in both Russia and the United States. Anastasia Posadskaya also presented a paper on the development of women's studies in Russia at the

*Transitions, Environments, Translations* conference organized by the IRW and the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton.

### Catherine Sandbach-

**Dahlström**: "I have just spent a very stimulating five months at the IRW. The libraries at Rutgers have provided me with much of the material I need for my present project: an annotated anthology of British and American feminist and anti-feminist polemics written between 1840 and 1940. But, which is equally important, the seminar series at IRW has exposed me to current developments in feminist scholarship. The exciting ideas presented by speakers in the series have given me new insights that I hope to process and feed back into my teaching at the English Department of Stockholm University, Sweden. In addition, I have been provoked into reformulating an analysis of Virginia Woolf's *Three Guineas* as dystopia that I now aim to disseminate: thank you!"



## Seminar: Toward 2000

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The IRW's faculty/graduate student seminar *Toward 2000* will continue in 1995-96 as an ongoing reading and discussion group dealing with current issues and future directions in feminism as we approach the new millennium.

We will meet three Wednesdays per semester from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. and welcome your input concerning issues and readings you would like the seminar to address.

## IRW to have Internet Home Page

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When classes begin next Autumn, look for the IRW's new home page in the Rutgers INFO system. The home page will provide information about IRW visiting scholars, events, conferences, and other projects.

The hypertext system will also allow us to provide both more detailed information about our speakers and their topics and fast-breaking news about event locations and schedules.

## Scholar Database Update

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Last year the IRW collected information about Rutgers scholars whose research and teaching are relevant to women and questions of gender.

We are currently exploring how best to make that information available to the Rutgers community and possibly beyond. The constraining cost of printing hundreds of copies of a directory and a desire to provide up-to-date data have led us to consider using the Rutgers INFO system (accessible internationally through the Internet). Please contact **Beth Hutchison** if you would like more information or would like to provide input.

We will contact IRW affiliates in Autumn 1995 with a status update, an invitation to change previously submitted information or add a new listing, and news about how and when you can expect to access this important networking tool.

## Summer Hours

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The IRW office is closed during July and August, but we'll be answering mail and returning telephone messages throughout the summer. We're open full-time as of the day after Labor Day.

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IRW Network - 6



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