Editors’ Introduction: Taking the Next Step

Welcome to the second edition of the FOOTNOTES journal! Following the footsteps of our predecessors, our goal has been to ensure the continual celebration of feminist thought and theory at the University of Guelph. Over the past two semesters, we have kept ourselves busy by holding weekly meetings, late night layout parties, chasing after contributors, and sending massive amounts of e-mails. Our hope was to make FOOTNOTES a sustainable project, showcasing the amazing work that our wonderful Women’s Studies and ally students have continued to produce.

The Women’s Studies program has faced a tumultuous year, from budget cuts to threats of cancellation. Therefore, we feel that the publication of a feminist-minded journal is more crucial than ever. The original intention of the journal had been to showcase the work of the Women’s Studies department, underlying the importance of maintaining the program. Now, with the possibility of losing this integral part of our campus, we hope that FOOTNOTES will encourage students to continue to think critically about gender and the intersectionality of oppressions.

The support and interest in the project has been more than phenomenal. This year we have received an overwhelming amount of thoughtful and engaging papers, and were unfortunately unable to share them all with our readers. The amount of interest in the journal clearly indicates that there is a strong feminist voice at Guelph and this is something that we would like to help foster. By engaging in modern and contemporary feminist discourse, we believe that feminist scholarship will only continue to evolve and become a prominent concern within academia. At a practical level, we also feel that by allowing these undergraduate students to publish their work and engage in a discussion, that this will help prepare for their futures as activists, academics, and citizens of the world.

We also hope that the FOOTNOTES journal will encourage debate around issues of women’s safety at the University of Guelph. By fostering discussion and disseminating ideas about gendered experience, hopefully we can all do our best to make Guelph a safe, inclusive and accepting university campus.

For this journal, we hoped to achieve a multi-disciplinary approach in discussing gender and feminist issues. Therefore, we have carefully selected papers that reflect a wide range of subjects, perspectives, and concerns. Our contributors are also students from various programs that are not exclusive to Women’s Studies.

We open up our journal with three papers that explore queer theory in vastly different contexts. De Visser explores issues of lesbian identity in erotic poems by Adrienne Rich and Staceyann Chin and Sanader examines issues of nationalism and homoeroticism within nineteenth-century American realist painting. Schmidt’s paper
continues in an examination of visual culture by exploring fashion in 1920s Paris as it relates to lesbian subculture. These papers demonstrate how gender and sexuality are constructed and performed in various art forms, time periods, and cultures.

The next portion of our paper examines feminism and gender subjectivity in a transnational and global context. Betts looks at issues of safety and exploitation in a paper focused on sex tourism in Southeast Asia. Along with Betts, Slater explores issues of gendered exploitation by examining sweatshop labour and its representation in news media. Gordon’s paper takes an ecofeminist stance by forming a sophisticated critique of globalization and its effects on food security. Lastly, Fleming’s paper takes a more spiritual turn by focusing on the presence of Chinese women in Taoist religious practices. This section of the journal takes feminism outside of the local and engages in dialogue with feminisms across the world.

Yiu, Starling, and Baumander explore how the constructions of gender and race intersect throughout various historical contexts. Yiu examines the construction of black female sexuality through the icon of the Hottentot Venus, and explores how that racialized and gendered stereotype could be deconstructed. Starling takes a more literary approach and endeavours to show how the maintenance of normalized racial and gender lines are connected to upward economic mobility. In contrast, Baumander takes a critical look at the way the eugenics movement in Canada had an impact on the lives of women while examining the roles of women within the movement itself.

The last two papers refused to be categorized. Robinson-Assan attempts to identify useful feminist responses to anti-queer positions based in natural-corporeal discourse. Jeffers discusses the novel God’s Bits of Wood and the author’s vision for the future of women’s political action in the context of decolonization. These two papers provide a strong closing for a journal filled with exceptional examples of academic writing at the University of Guelph.

The process of making this journal has been an invaluable experience for us and we hope that it will be invaluable for you, the reader, as well. It hasn’t always been easy, and it has certainly been stressful but FOOTNOTES is a project that we are extremely proud of. Our only wish is that next year’s journal will continue to provoke thought and inspire discussion for all who seek knowledge and equality.

K. Sarah Yiu
Lisa Baumander
Daniella Sanader
Anastasia Zavarella

the FOOTNOTES Collective 2009