

From the Editor

The papers published here in Part I of our forum, "On Collaborations," should be read not only as preliminary investigations into the processes of collaboration by feminist scholars and women writers, but as acts in the ongoing feminist project of challenging and transforming patriarchal structures in the academy. These papers, and the ones that will follow them in Part II of "On Collaborations" (Spring 1995), on the one hand interrogate collaborations when these become silent collusions with authoritarian or totalitarian institutions (as in the collaborationist writing of Occupied France that Elizabeth Brunazzi describes); on the other hand they propose—indeed, in several cases, enact—alternative modes of mutually acknowledged, reciprocally empowering intellectual collaboration. The first university to reward collaborative work by scholars in the humanities will not only be sponsoring interesting publications, but will also be promoting a different sort of society in literary studies. A collaborative literature department would look as different from today's hierarchical model as collaborative feminist scholarship looks when contrasted to traditional criticism. These are large claims, and more experiments (such as those undertaken by several of the papers published in this two-part forum), in conjunction with close consideration of the many issues involved in collaboration, are necessary to bear them out. But we need high expectations to imagine and promote changed institutions.

Since I discuss this issue's forum papers in greater detail in the forum preface, I will not say much more here about it, but I would like to note that the articles following the forum may themselves benefit from being read in the context it provides. No writing—as post-60s historicist and poststructuralist scholarship has shown—occurs in a vacuum. As Jael B. Juba (the pseudonymous author-character of Joyce Elbrecht and Lydia Fakundiny's paper) puts it, there is "no choice as to our cosmic working conditions, of course—all falls into place in the collaborative chain—but perhaps there is some chance option as to whom and what we collaborate with, some possibility of fleeting escape from the cosmic collaborative web when our work with others proceeds from moment to moment garbed in the feeling of choice." In the context (or "working conditions") of this forum, a reader of the articles that follow is more likely to notice the ways in which feminist scholarship emphasizes not the isolation of solitary

scholarly “genius” or the momentary illusion of “originality,” but the solidarity of a broader feminist endeavor and the communitarian goal of cumulative knowledge and insight; the issue of collaboration reminds us, moreover, that no feminist essay would now be publishable without the more fundamental political work of collaborating scholars that preceded it. Yet at the same time raising the question of collaboration in feminist studies alerts us to how far we are from accomplishing some of the goals with which feminist literary criticism began or of even imagining an end to the changes we invoke.

Susan Gubar’s essay, “Eating the Bread of Affliction,” unfolds the very particular network of religious affiliations—and dis-affiliation—in which her own coauthored scholarship has developed over the years. A probing renegotiation of identity questions at stake for her personally, Gubar’s essay also gradually reveals the extent to which these issues go to the heart of feminist criticism itself. Elizabeth A. Petrino reexamines Emily Dickinson’s poetry in the generic context of popular child elegies being written in her day by other women writers, like Lydia Sigourney. Petrino’s comparisons lead her to a critical distinction between poetry that colluded with patriarchal norms and Dickinson’s more skeptical rewritings of the child elegy (between collaborationism, as Brunazzi might see it, and collaboration that admits “asocial elements,” as Susan J. Leonardi and Rebecca A. Pope envisage it). Similarly, Christine Colasurdo reevaluates Louise Bogan’s poetry in relation to Bogan’s male peers (as well as previous criticism of Bogan) in order to analyze the differences between, for example, MacLeish’s monological poetics and Bogan’s “dramatic ambivalence”—Bogan’s effort to include “you” in her poetry, even when “you” are hostile to her. Finally, among the articles in this issue of *Tulsa Studies*, Laurel Bollinger’s essay on Jeanette Winterson’s revision of the Book of Ruth in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* leads her to an interpretation of its ending that contravenes readers’ common skepticism about mother-daughter bonding. Bollinger focuses on how Winterson elaborates an alternative literary model of development such that the protagonist learns to define her “gender and identity” not according to the dynamics of the oedipal model—where individuation depends on radical separation from the mother—but according to a dynamic that stresses female loyalty as much or more than separation. Jeanette—Winterson’s protagonist—wants to belong and to minister to a pentecostal church “largely organized and managed by women”; she seeks “complete devotion” to and from her women lovers; and she maintains filial loyalty to her mother, choosing finally to return to her despite their divergent beliefs. Bollinger’s Winterson chooses, as in the original sense of “conversari” (as Elbrecht and Fakundiny dis-

cover), for mother and daughter, woman and woman, to “abide” together, despite the fact that they are *not* the same, to “keep company” with all their differences.

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