

# Newsletter

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*From the Desk of Rosie Tong &  
Laura Shanner, Network Coordinators*

Dear Friends,

As we look forward to the North American autumn holiday of Thanksgiving (which occurs in different months in the US and Canada), we find we have so much to celebrate regarding FAB's activities. Many people have been pitching in to ensure that FAB's momentum stays strong – we want to take this opportunity to thank you all for your energy and commitment.

Rosie and her assistants have set up a new page on the web site to post course syllabi, bibliographies and short articles (up to 2000 words) to share with colleagues and others who check out the site. Contributions should be sent to Rosie, who will review them to ensure they are appropriate to the FAB commitments. Please allow 4-6 weeks for the item to be posted.

We would also like to thank Becky Holmes and the Country Representatives for their efforts in contacting members who have not yet renewed their membership. If you haven't updated your membership yet, or if you aren't sure whether this has been done recently, please contact your Country Representative (see list on p. 11) or Sonia Narang at <joinfab@fnr.umass.edu>. Remember, we have no dues, but contributions made out to the Audre Lourde Scholarship fund are gratefully accepted to assist members with low incomes to attend FAB events (contributions can be mailed to Anne Donchin, Treasurer - address p. 11).

As you read through this Newsletter, focus on the book review section. It is particularly good this issue and includes a very informative review of the Anne Donchin/Laura Purdy volume that's an outgrowth of FAB2 in Japan. Congratulations Anne and Laura. You make us all proud to be FAB members.

The big news, of course, concerns the FAB 2000 conference, Sept. 19-20 at Imperial College in London, UK. Several items throughout the newsletter give more specifics, but we'd like to highlight the key decisions and opportunities here.

We want to express our deep appreciation to the International Association for Bioethics (IAB) for being so helpful, cooperative and generous with support to make the FAB conference possible alongside the IAB conference (Sept 21-24, same location). Sept. 21 has also been set aside as a "FAB Half-Day" at the IAB – what a wonderful way to highlight feminist contributions on the international scene! Special thanks goes to Alastair Campbell, head of the IAB planning committee, and Donna Dickenson, our on-site liaison in London. (Note from Laura: Rosie has done most of the planning and communicating on the North American end. Thank you, Rosie, for a terrific job!) Our FAB members on the IAB Board, Florencia Luna and Sue Sherwin, have also been key figures in pulling the conference together.

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There are several ways for you to be involved in the conference. We are planning to apply to the Ford Foundation and possibly additional sources for grants to defray costs for people with limited resources, particularly speakers from countries that are underrepresented within FAB. Pat Farrell has agreed to shepherd the Ford proposal and Alison Brookes will assist with other sources. Anne Donchin, who successfully won a Ford grant for FAB 1998 in Japan, will collaborate with our next team as they prepare proposals. We are looking for other foundations which might be willing to fund speakers whose institutions cannot bear the expense. If you have suggestions, please send them on to Anne Donchin (address on p. 11). We also need a grants committee to screen requests for travel funds from the FAB treasury. Please let Anne know if you are willing to serve.

The deadline to submit abstracts to the Program Committee is February 1, 2000. You may submit a proposal for a panel discussion or individual paper to be presented at the FAB conference (19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>). The IAB is organizing the "FAB Half-Day" at the IAB (Sept. 21st). All the speakers for that event will be specifically invited. Proposals for the IAB conference proper (Sept. 21-24) must be sent directly to the IAB. Further info on the call for abstracts is located on page 3 of the newsletter. We especially encourage proposals from members in the developing world to balance perspectives from richer nations.

Although the program is far from complete, we can announce a few of our plenary speakers and panels in development. If you are interested in being a commentator for a plenary address, or contributing to a plenary panel listed below, please contact the panel organizer – that person is responsible for hand-picking a balanced and representative group of presenters. Presentations not accepted for a plenary panel are encouraged to submit the abstract for consideration in the general FAB program. If you don't have a current address for the person you need to reach, please contact Sonia Narang at [joinfab@fnr.umass.edu](mailto:joinfab@fnr.umass.edu) (the membership information address) for further info.

#### **FAB 2000: Sept 19-20**

Plenary Invited speakers/panels:

Mary Mahowald: *Genetic Disabilities, Feminism and Caregiving* (Panel)

Hilde Nelson: *Feminist Bioethics Reconsiders Justice* (Main Speaker with Commentators)

Annette Dula: *Race and Gender in Bioethics* (Panel)

Juan Guillermo Figueroa: *Assessing the Incorporation*

*of Gender Perspective in Reproductive Research in Developing Countries* (Panel)

Anne Donchin: *Feminist Perspectives on the Work of the British Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority* (Panel, including Margrit Shildrick and Alisa McLaren)

Laura Shanner: *Maternal-fetal Relationships* (Main Speaker with Commentators)

Laura Purdy: *Medicalization, Medical Necessity, and Feminist Medicine* (Main Speaker with Commentators)

#### **IAB – FAB Half Day: Sept 21**

Plenary Invited Panelists

##### **Panel One:**

Sue Sherwin (Canada): *Moral Perception: How Global Perspectives Can Inform and Expand Moral Capacities in Healthy Ways*

Respondent: TBA

Rosie Tong (USA): *Why Bioethics Must be Global to be Just: Some Feminist Perspectives*

Respondent: Anne Donchin

##### **Panel Two**

Donna Dickenson (UK): *Property and Women's Alienation from Their Own Reproductive Labor*

Dr. Khan (Pakistan): *Research Ethics and Global Justice for Women*

Hasna Begum (Bangladesh): *The New Genomics in Developing and Developed Nations*

##### **Lodging at the Conference:**

100 rooms at the rate of £35 (including full English breakfast) have been set aside at Imperial College for FAB members. This is a very low rate and we owe much to Alastair Campbell and Donna Dickenson for securing it for FAB. In addition there are a variety of rooms available at area hotels for a variety of prices. We will publish a list of them on the Web Page and on the Listserv as soon as we get the information.

As you can see, the two conferences will offer an extraordinary display of feminist approaches, and we are really excited to see the program taking shape. We look forward to your abstract proposals, grant writing efforts, and other many wonderful contributions that make FAB work.

**Rosie Tong and Laura Shanner**

# FAB 2000, London

## Call For Abstracts

### Third International Conference of the Network on Feminist Approaches to Bioethics

*"Feminist Bioethics at the Turn of the Century: Globalizing Gender Justice, Women's Autonomy, and Human Care"*

*London, U.K. 19-20 September 2000 (Tuesday and Wednesday)*

The Conference will be held in conjunction with the International Association of Bioethics Congress, which convenes 21-24 September 2000 and which will feature a half day of FAB papers on the 21st. All FAB conference attendees are welcome and encouraged to attend the IAB conference as well.

At this point FAB is soliciting contributions in the form of solo papers or panel papers for its Conference on September 19-20. Any theoretical, practical, or policy paper related to gender justice, women's autonomy, and human care is welcome. The deadline for receipt of abstracts is **February 1, 2000**.

**Papers:** Those wishing to have a proposal considered for a concurrent paper presentation should submit the following by February 1, 2000: 1) Your name, affiliation and contact address (phone, fax, email, mail); 2) A title and an abstract no longer than 150 words to be included in the IAB program materials; 3) A two-page summary of the paper, outlining your reasoning and identifying key conclusions.

**Panels:** Panels consist of 3-5 members, organized in advance, to provide different perspectives on a specific topic. Panels will last 90 minutes, with approximately 60 minutes of presentation and 30 minutes of discussion. Those wishing to organize 90-minute panels should submit the following by February 1, 2000: 1) Names, affiliations and contact addresses (phone, fax, email, mail) for all members of the panel. Please identify the panel coordinator; 2) A title and an abstract no longer than 150 words to be included in the IAB program materials; 3) A two- to four-page summary that includes each presenter's contributions to the panel, any audience participation expected, etc.

Messages of acceptance and refusal will be communicated to paper/panel submitters by **April 1, 2000**.

Please send three hard copies of your paper as well as a disk to Rosie Tong (address p. 11).

## Travel Grants

FAB is again offering small travel grants (up to \$500) to FAB3 for members who have exhausted all other means of funding. Preference will be given to members from developing countries who are contributing papers. To apply, please send your abstract and summary of your paper (as specified in the call for papers) along with a brief statement of need to the FAB treasurer, Anne Donchin (addresses on p. 11). Watch the listserv for announcement of deadline.

**Grant Committee.** If you would be willing to serve on the selection committee to screen travel grant applications, please notify Anne Donchin.

**Contributions.** If you are able to contribute to FAB's travel grant fund please send your check made out to The Audre Lorde Fund for Bioethical Research to the treasurer at the address specified on p. 11.

# Book Review Section

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A review of **Embodying Bioethics: Recent Feminist Advances**, edited by Anne Donchin and Laura M. Purdy. Rowman and Littlefield, 1998. 256 pages, \$63.00 cloth; \$23.95 paper.

Anne Donchin and Laura Purdy are well known to readers of this newsletter: their work in the field has provided some of the essential framing for the intellectual project of feminist bioethics. In this new volume they have collected fourteen essays on emerging topics that, together, constitute a wide-ranging account of the creativity and originality at the intersection of the philosophy of feminism and the practice of feminist bioethics. Hence, the volume speaks both to the challenge of addressing the body that is the subject of bioethics, and of inhabiting the body and the lived experience of the woman in bioethics.

The essays included in this volume were developed mostly from talks that were given at the first International Conference on Feminist Approaches to Bioethics in San Francisco, in 1996. As a volume of recent FAB papers, it provides a fine and current account of the new directions in our field, and offers both a broad introduction to what is meant by feminist thought in bioethics and an introduction to some of the clearest thinkers in the discipline. For anyone teaching bioethics, this volume is a critical collection of cutting-edge work on central issues in the field: disabilities, research ethics, fetal reduction, infertility, and public policy. It will be not only a fine book for feminist bioethicists, but a basic text for courses in feminist theory, women and medicine, or bioethics and feminist thought.

*“For anyone teaching bioethics, this volume is a critical collection of cutting-edge work on central issues in the field. . . .”*

The book is organized into three sections. The first, “Redirecting Bioethical Theory” takes on several philosophical issues. Of particular interest is the chapter on the ethics of care, which offers a careful analysis of “care” as a theory. Here, Alisa Carse and Hilde L. Nelson raise the important normative question, “Why should we care?” and offer far more than the usual descriptive or essentialist arguments. Their attempt to rehabilitate care theory in the light of four standard complaints that are lodged against it allows the reader to reflect on the possibility that “after we bring the moral work of caring to the table . . . we can begin to articulate unromanticized, realistic, and just conceptions of what this ethic should entail” (p. 29). Just this sort of careful argument is what is needed for critical thinking about the complexities of nurture as argument in feminist thought.

The second section of the book is focused on the issue of reproduction, familiar terrain for books about feminist thought, but it offers several new perspectives, raising unique questions, for example, of reproduction and the environment (“Abortion, Chernobyl and Unanswered Genetic Questions,” by Laura Shanner) and of lesbian couples and their status as “infertile couples.” Also of interest is the issue of disabilities and genetics, and elective fetal reduction. Mary

Rorty animates key questions of the informed consent practices in fertility clinics, but then casts an even wider net by raising issues of policy, class, and race in what she names “the fertility industry.” Anita Silvers offers yet another perspective in a thoughtful essay that not only examines the social construction of disability, but also uses a case study to explore the reproductive choices faced by Deaf families. The section concludes with

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Wendy Rogers's analysis of menopause. In asking whether menopause is a disease, her article raises critical questions about the nature of the "normal" and the medical gaze itself. What are we seeing when we "see" menopause as abnormal functioning? What does this teach us about how we construct a world of the normal and the disabled ill? This question is one that Silvers also takes on in her work, and it's this sort of interconnectedness of theme and motif that is one of the best things about this book. The nearly seamless way that the very different essays are quilted together, reflecting the careful sensibilities of the editors, would make the book a tremendous asset to any course plan. This second section in particular will be invaluable in any class that addresses reproductive choices, genetic counseling, or basic issues of marginality and the construction of difference itself in medicine.

The final section of the book takes on the problem of how feminist theory can be transformed into a concrete praxis of feminist bioethics. This section ranges from the issue of professionalism, the problem of co-optation, and the notion of voice (in Barbara Nicholas's essay on strategies for consultation) to a concrete vision for transforming research in feminist directions, in a chapter by Francois Baylis, Jocelyn Downie, and Susan Sherwin. Their move "from theory, to practice, to policy" (p. 253) allows for the next step in feminist bioethics, one dearly needed, beyond critique, to the realpolitik of what feminist social norms might look like.

"Many of us are 'outsiders within,'" notes Nicholas, ". . . more than guests but not quite 'family.' Like in-laws . . . we belong, but in a particular and peculiar way" (p. 241). Here she is talking of bioethicists, but she also means to transform the way we are in/outside by noting that feminism knows much about this tension. In thinking about the challenges of the bioethical role for feminists, and in a careful examination of what it will mean to move "from the margins to the center," we have in this book a

wonderful account of where we have come, what we are thinking, and what we are determined to accomplish. This book will have a place in any bioethics library that takes seriously the work of envisioning an inclusive bioethics, in which we all, all in our peculiar ways, belong.

**Laurie Zoloth**, *San Francisco State University*



A review of **Altered Conditions: Disease, Medicine, and Storytelling**, by Julia Epstein. New York: Routledge, 1995. \$75.00 cloth; \$25.99 paper.

In *Altered Conditions*, Julia Epstein aims to consider how body and culture are related: "How has Western culture produced explanatory narratives about the body within the domain of medicine? How are medical narratives instrumental in the production of embodied stories in the law, in social ideologies, and in human experience?" (p. 1). To achieve this aim, she examines three types of body-related issues illustrating her thesis that a variety of social factors play a role in how bodies are viewed.

Modern medicine, she says, holds that it can study and tend the body without paying attention to subjective and cultural conceptions about the body's state. But this is not true: "It is by now accepted that diseases are cultural artifacts and social constructions as well as biological processes, and that individually, historically, and socially determined subjectivities impinge upon the relation of the body to the self" (pp.1-2). Indeed, cultural stories about the body are intended to restrict behavior—especially sexual behavior—within narrow social norms.

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Part I is taken up with discussion of the definitions of disease, the history of medical record-keeping and patient narratives, and how theories of history, narrative, and ethnography apply to the way medical stories about the body are told. Her goal here is to clarify how cultural ideas affect medical language, how biomedical conceptions of the body affect social views, and the extent to which we assume that it is possible to establish what is normal for human bodies. The two chapters advance several thought-provoking claims. For example, function and perceptions of normality may be inversely related (p. 16). More broadly, stories create medical and social categories by assigning cause and effect to bodies' signs and symptoms, which she takes to be illustrated by AIDS (p. 17). In fact, stories influence how we distinguish between "normal" and "aberrant" bodies, and can destroy lives as thoroughly as disease can. In the next chapter, she expands her claims about stories: "Narrative can be said to underpin all Western epistemologies" (p. 25). The first claim provides much food for thought, the second has already received substantial attention; both are plausible, and Epstein provides good support for them. The last claim is much more expansive, and it is not clear to me that she succeeds in making her case, although both make fascinating reading.

The three chapters in Part II attempt to show how these claims are played out in three concrete contexts, hermaphroditism, infant malformation, and AIDS. The chapters contain a wealth of historical detail and are riveting. The chapter on hermaphroditism (complete with illustrations of many permutations of the condition) concludes with the claim that ambiguous sexuality has been viewed as a fundamental threat to established social norms (two sexes, heterosexuality) and has elicited "the heaviest artillery available to the professional discourses of medicine and jurisprudence that establish human definitions and boundaries" (p. 122).

The chapter on "dangerous wombs" focuses on the fears engendered by the mystery of childbearing, and upon women's influence on the outcome, especially the connection between their experiences and malformation. Epstein suggests that the latter debate was a manifestation

of the impulse to hold women responsible for their babies' problems, which was in turn connected with controlling women's bodies and minds.

The chapter on AIDS emphasizes the role of narratives in distancing vulnerable others from "us," once again suggesting how "we" could avoid "their" fate by toeing the line. Epstein concludes: "It is the contagion of the Other that we fear, and this fear stokes the repressive fires of body languages and body politics. . . . Once we have a story to explain the unknown, the foreign, the alien, then we can be reassured that it will remain safely unknown, foreign, alien, and that our bodies will continue to serve as containers and as fortresses" (p. 186). This is not a new insight, but Epstein makes it in a particularly compelling way.

The chapters in Part II are especially engrossing, and the book, over all, opens up a new way (at least, new to me) of thinking about the ties between conceptions of the physical body and culture. However, from my perspective as an analytical philosopher, I am troubled by the (unnecessarily?) opaque writing and the relative lack of sustained argumentation. I was dazzled by some of the insights, the brilliant juxtapositions of ideas, the gripping details, but it sometimes struck me as something of a jumble rather than the compelling unfolding of a thesis. For example, at the beginning and end of the book, Epstein analogizes the balkanization of nations with the medical balkanization of the body into ever more minute medical specialties. But this analogy seems strained, and it would take considerably more argumentation to convince me of its relevance to her story. Nonetheless, I believe this book contains valuable insights that will lead to more adequate ways of setting human bodies in context; it is also a fun read.

**Laura Purdy**, *University of Toronto*



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A Review of **Diagnosis: Difference: The Moral Authority of Medicine**, by Abby Wilkerson. Ithaca: Cornell, 1998. 185 pages, \$39.95 cloth; \$15.95 paper.

Once the norms of a practice come to define that practice, it takes courage—often great courage—to challenge them. If serial presentations are the norm at academic conferences, it takes courage to organize around meaningful participation. If high heels are the norm for business dress, it takes courage to wear something comfortable. If heterosexuality is the norm, it takes courage to come out as bisexual or gay.

But then again, if you have always been outside of or excluded from a practice and its norms and done things in your own way, then not only would you (probably) not see what you were doing as courageous, but you (probably) wouldn't define yourself relative to the practice or its norms. ("Probably," because, given the role that the media and public rituals of inclusion and exclusion play in the promotion of norms, it may be difficult not to see oneself as inferior for failing to live up. Moreover, as Wilkerson points out, one of the hallmarks of oppression is internalized hatred and shame about one's "otherness.") You also wouldn't see yourself as "different." If you had never had ambulatory mobility, you wouldn't identify with the practices of walking and jogging. If you were a proud, black woman, you wouldn't identify with white male privileges.

Philosopher Abby Wilkerson's *Diagnosis: Difference* both embodies these two orientations and shows the dynamic between them in health care and health care ethics. In the book, she critically examines a number of paradigms, including the model of rationality that forgets about embodiment; the paradigm of liberal individualism that normalizes individual choice and agency and in so doing privileges the perspective of the white man of means; the distributive justice paradigm that, in its attention to equality, ignores the insidious sources of inequality; the dichotomy of the "natural" and the "social" that ignores the socio-cultural influences on health and health problems (and conceptions of health); and the model of selfhood that definitionally excludes disability.

The constructive antidote to these is Wilkerson's "anti-oppression model of medical knowledge and care." Based on what she calls a "material-semiotic" analysis of health and health care for women, people with AIDS, and gays, lesbians, and bisexuals, Wilkerson offers a framework for medicine "as an arena for social change rather than social control" (p.145).

For those unfamiliar with this unfortunately clunky postmodern phrase, "material-semiotic" is a descriptor for the assumption that "human experience is always mediated through culture" (p.8). Starting from this assumption, Wilkerson lays bare the ways in which our intellectual and practical paradigms support, promote, and reinforce the subordination and marginalization of various social groups and the individuals that compose them. For example, she explains how both the dominant medical approach and the distributive justice paradigm are counterproductive in meeting the needs of battered women. Physicians rarely discuss domestic violence with their female patients or ask about it in the history and physical. Why? Because the medical paradigm pathologizes the individual battered woman rather than addressing the social context for violence against women. Likewise, the distributive justice paradigm—our dominant conception of justice—frames violence against women as an "affliction that happens to befall some women randomly" (p. 129). In other words, because it "domesticates" violence against women, it can only call for things such as health care access for victims of abuse. This solution, however, does not and cannot address the conditions of patriarchal oppression in which violence against women is embedded. In a parallel case of the way in which our intellectual frameworks disadvantage the sick poor, Wilkerson argues that the dichotomy between the "natural" and the "social" encourages us to see the diseases of the poor as "facts of nature" rather than the results of social practices that disproportionately harm members of oppressed groups.

Bioethics and most of its standard texts are based on the liberal paradigm, with its norms of autonomous agency and distributive justice. Wilkerson's book provides a great service in revealing the limits of these standard tools and

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the ways in which they paradoxically contribute to oppression. She does this in large part by a close and critical analysis of theories offered by Gauthier, Daniels, Boorse, and Dickman. In this way, Wilkerson's book embodies the type of courage that I mentioned above. She is very definitely contesting the norms of the practice of bioethics.

Within the context of her own argument, however, there is a possible problem with this type of challenge, namely, that it risks appearing like the model of heroic individualism. This model of heroism is typified by "whistle-blowing," which places the burden of social change on the lone individual. To the extent that Wilkerson's analysis is part of the larger praxis of feminism, with its vision of participatory change, however, she avoids this potential pitfall. Thus, Wilkerson is at her best when she departs from a challenge to specific theories and offers her own vision of radically transformed health care ethics—one which is based on a holistic view of human agency, respect for local knowledge, and inclusive, participatory action.

As bioethics becomes more mainstream and bioethicists become part of the systems they once questioned, it is all the more urgent that we heed Wilkerson's call to judge our work by the way in which it either subverts or reinforces oppression. One step in this direction will be to integrate the insights of this valuable book into the standard bioethics curriculum.

**Virginia A. Sharpe**, *The Hastings Center*



A review of **Pandora's Box: Feminism Confronts Reproductive Technology**, by Nancy Lublin. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998. 208 pages, \$57.00 cloth; \$14.95 paper.

The issue of whether technological intervention into the processes of reproduction is of harm or benefit to women has been endlessly rehearsed in the last couple of decades without any sign that the debate is either exhausted or resolved. And nor could it be with so many different forms of technology at stake, and indeed such a multiplicity of different women whose lives are directly or indirectly affected. Nancy Lublin well understands the complexity of the questions involved, and the title of her new book, *Pandora's Box*, instantly conjures up the image of a proliferation of technologies, almost impossible to grasp, to which feminism must turn its attention. So what can Lublin offer to lend clarity to the situation without merely reiterating old arguments or performing an over-simplistic reduction of her material to the easy cases?

Right from the beginning she makes her intentions plain: first that she wants to arrive at a praxis-oriented approach that acknowledges the diversity of experiences and preferences among women; and second that the point of her overview of technological interventions is not to claim that they all operate in the same way or have the same consequences, but that a consistent response is possible. As she says, if feminists are to respond efficiently to rapid development, then "a coherent set of standards against which specific new devices can be measured must be devised" (p. 13). For Lublin, both these aims entail that a refusal to decontextualise reproduction from its social, political, legal, and ethical parameters. And her turn to materialist feminism as providing the kind of theoretical and practical base is well argued. Nonetheless, Lublin is quite clearly critical of argument for argument's sake (or for gaining tenure, as she acidly remarks), and her instincts are toward an activism that can draw on the insights of very different forms of feminism.

It is perhaps toward this end that *Pandora's Box* gives a lot of space to outlining the technophilic and technophobic perspectives of the last several years with regard not simply

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to the new reproductive practices, but also to the issue of abortion. For me, Lublin's reprise of earlier positions is perhaps the weakest part of the book in that the arguments seem both over familiar and somewhat simplistically represented. One problem is that it is often difficult to discern which parts are simply descriptive of views then held by earlier writers, and which are the author's own assessments. The device of presenting her own critique as almost an afterthought to each chapter misfired badly I felt, particularly where the arguments she was recalling had long since moved on. The exposition of opposing radical feminisms as either deploring or celebrating women's reproductive capacities seemed almost prone to caricature, as did the extraordinary claim that Donna Haraway is one who venerates technology and reveres the ability to control and explain nature (p. 23). At very least, Lublin should be aware that Haraway frequently utilizes an ironic approach.

In contrast, where the book gained strength and edge was in Lublin's confident analysis of issues such as choice, consent, and privacy rights that are often seen as the crucial markers of the feminist response to reproductive technologies. Lublin, quite rightly in my view, sees enormous dangers in adopting a seemingly positive set of concepts, both ethical and legal, placing individualism above a collective feminist consciousness that understands the power relations of gender. Moreover, the interests that are served primarily are those of the white, Western middle class. Although, as the author acknowledges, the legal concepts and cases drawn on are all specific to the States, she makes a clear and convincing case that supposedly "neutral" liberty rights depend upon an unrealistic conception of women. Nonetheless, Lublin is not prepared to ditch the potential for women of more appropriate legislation to resolve such problems as the need for both nondifferential access to, and remedy against, reproductive technologies. Although urging a pluralistic approach that values self-determination, her belief is that equal protection law could provide social justice to women. In a world of rapid technological change, our best hope lies in the institutional and state valuing of the difference of women, and among women.

**Margrit Shildrick**, *Staffordshire University*

A review of **Leaky Bodies and Boundaries: Feminism, Postmodernism and (Bio)Ethics**, by Margrit Shildrick. London: Routledge, 1997. 252 pages, \$75.00 cloth; \$22.99 paper.

Bioethics is so heavily influenced by Enlightenment views of moral agency that it makes a perfect topic for postmodern feminists. Bioethics textbooks usually begin with traditional ethical theories and then attempt to apply them to clinical and research issues. But for postmodernists, and especially postmodern feminists such as Margrit Shildrick, the standard consequentialist and nonconsequentialist approaches are suspect. What is postmodern about Shildrick's work is the radical questioning of Enlightenment notions of moral agency that are so much a part of conventional ethical paradigms. And what is new is her emphasis on reinscribing women's embodiment in ethics.

In *Leaky Bodies and Boundaries*, Shildrick presents a well argued critique of moral agency. She takes issues with, among other things, the privileging of rationality. With her title, she suggests that traditional ethical categories are permeable; women's experiences cannot be tightly circumscribed within these categories. Pregnancy, for example, defies the categories of self and other, fundamental categories in ethical theory. Her critique of moral agency in the early chapters is remarkable for its extensive use of feminist and continental theorists. In keeping with postmodernism, Shildrick regards the body as discursively constructed. Using Vesalian drawings from the sixteenth century and borrowing from Foucault's work, she charts a brief history of the female body and shows how women's reproductive organs are compartmentalized as "discrete entities to be directly managed." Among her many insights are her comments about disability, how disability is overdetermined for women since women are already devalued in relation to men.

Two chapters are of special interest to feminists: Chapter Four on Feminist Ethics and Chapter Six on New Reproductive Technologies. Feminist ethics, for Shildrick, needs to be open and responsibly address differences. While there is passing reference to class and race, it is unfortunate that she leaves these differences largely

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unexamined. Using the work of Irigaray, she creatively argues for a radical sexual difference, one that understands the feminine in a way that somehow escapes the usual problems of sexual binaries. It will be refreshing to phenomenologists to learn that feminist ethics, for Shildrick, also needs an emphasis on women's embodiment. Here she borrows heavily from the phenomenological notion of the lived body. As she attempts to reinscribe the bodies of women in ethics, she appeals to the "valorisation of women," a central feminist goal, she claims, but one that is not defined, though it obviously excludes essentialist forms of female empowerment.

Chapter Six, on new reproductive technologies (NRTs), is the only one with an applied focus and was the most interesting part of the book for me. Here we get a chance to see what a postmodern feminism can offer bioethics. Shildrick shows how NRTs disrupt "natural" motherhood and challenge traditional notions of motherhood as women's identity. The difficulty here is in valuing women's reproductive bodies without reinforcing conservative notions of femininity. Shildrick skillfully uses a radical understanding of sexual difference to allow for diversity among women with regard to our reproductive (and non-reproductive) desires. Her critique of FINRRAGE may be of special interest to FAB members.

It is hard to deny the leakiness of traditional ethics once Shildrick points it out to us. This alone makes the book a valuable one for feminist bioethics. But there is much more to *Leaky Bodies and Boundaries* than this. The book raises interesting philosophical questions about the conditions for ethics that are important to the future of bioethics.

**Julien S. Murphy**, *The University of Southern Maine*



A review of **Disability, Difference, Discrimination: Perspectives on Justice in Bioethics and Public Policy**, by Anita Silvers, David Wasserman, and Mary B. Mahowald. Lanham. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999. 343 pages, \$54.00 cloth; \$18.95 paper.

In an engaging series of essays, Anita Silvers, David Wasserman, and Mary B. Mahowald attempt to understand and answer such questions as: What is disability? What is the moral significance of difference? In what ways are those with disabilities equal to everyone else? To what extent are lives with disabilities worth living? How do philosophical theories situate people with disabilities? How ought our theories to change, given the actual experience of people with disabilities? What should our social response be to specific individuals with disabilities and to the disabled as a group? The culmination of their efforts, *Disability, Difference, Discrimination: Perspectives on Justice in Bioethics and Public Policy*, significantly furthers debates about disability, difference, and social policy.

The major part of the book is devoted to each author's presentation of her or his preferred theory of justice from which to assess obligations to those with disabilities. Focusing on the widespread social exclusion of individual people with disabilities, Silvers believes that nothing is owed, as a matter of social justice, to specific individuals because they have disabilities. Such distributions of "benefits" to individuals in fact reinforce the bias that isolates them. Silvers argues instead that the suffering of disabled people as a group ought to be addressed by constructing and retro-fitting public spaces and goods (such as computers) so that they are accessible to, and usable by, the disabled. Once this is accomplished, individuals with disabilities can develop and exercise their talents without the stigma of being needy. Silvers's conception of social justice for the disabled is formal in that it aims to ensure inclusion of everyone, regardless of disability by structuring social processes.

In contrast to Silvers, Wasserman believes that compensation to individuals with disabilities is morally required. But he argues that such compensation need not contribute to discrimination and social exclusion if

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compensation is understood to be part of the structural arrangements of a just society. Compensation, on this view, is understood as the accommodation of individuals' needs, interests, capacities, and ends with society's limited resources. Wasserman argues that a theory of distributive justice must be developed that will (1) measure fairness of resource distribution according to a notion of well-being that takes actual flourishing of individuals into account, and (2) determine acceptable amounts of inequality.

Mahowald clearly distinguishes between differences and equality, noting that equality has to do with different things having the same value. Accordingly she attributes equal value to different people. Too often, however, discrimination occurs when some assume that differences indicate inequality. Mahowald proposes that social priorities be set through a feminist standpoint in which the perspective of nondominant people be used to correct the inevitably limited perspectives of dominant people. In this way, the needs and interests of all involved will be mediated in a process that attributes equal value to each.

One of the strengths of this collection is the open engagement of the authors with each other in debate. Their responses to each other's arguments draw out points of agreement and clarify where and why theoretical differences occur and what a comprehensive social response to disability must entail. In many cases, friendly amendments to each other's theories are offered. Tying the three essays together, Mahowald argues that respect for equality requires both distributive and formal justice. Both in these responses and in an afterword by Lawrence C. Becker, questions are raised that indicate what some of the next steps in the debate about disability and social policy might be.

Those at work on policy development relevant to the disabled will find this book most useful. It will be of interest to many in bioethics and health care law and to many others concerned with the interests and needs of people with disabilities or with creating just communities.

**Carolyn Ells, Dalhousie University**

### Call for Participation

From July 15th to October 15th 2000, on the occasion of the world exposition in Hanover, Germany (EXPO 2000), the International Women's University will offer 900 female students from all over the world the opportunity to participate in a postgraduate program in English which will be centered in Hanover. The subjects on offer and the universities taking part in the program are as follows:

**Body:** *Experience, Politics, Concepts (University of Hanover, University of Bremen)*

**City:** *City and Gender (University of Kassel)*

**Information:** *Women Entering the Information Age (University of Hamburg)*

**Migration:** *Women, Identities, and Systems in Transit (University of Hanover)*

**Water:** *Water and Life (University of Hanover, University of Applied Sciences, Suderburg)*

**Work:** *Women's Work between Integration and Disintegration: A Comparison of Western, Middle and Eastern Europe (University of Hanover; Technical University of Clausthal)*

In order to become a participant, you are expected to commit yourself to one of the project areas, and your academic specialization should be from a related field. Very good knowledge of English is required, knowledge of one further foreign language, preferably German, is desirable, but not essential. Students who need financial support are encouraged to apply for available scholarships.

All applicants will be evaluated individually by admission committees on the basis of their academic and personal qualification and potential without regard to social status, race, religion or age.

Application forms can be ordered at: ifu@daad.de, or DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service), Ref. 220 (ifu), Postfach 20 04 04, D 53 134 Bonn. For further information, check [www.Int-Frauenuni.de](http://www.Int-Frauenuni.de). (includes possibility to download application form and ifu-booklet).

Application Deadline: **November 30th, 1999**

# FAB Announcements

## Membership Status???

If you find a question mark after your name on the address label, that symbol means we haven't heard from you since 1997 and that we don't know whether you really are receiving this Newsletter—or even whether you wish to continue receiving it. Please let me know! I've tried to contact many of you, often in vain. We want to have up-to-date records about you in our hard-copy file.

Readers with that question mark: we ask you please to print a renewal/update form from my web site and post it to me as soon as possible:

[www-unix.oit.umass.edu/~fholmes/renew.html](http://www-unix.oit.umass.edu/~fholmes/renew.html)

Or you can e-mail, fax, or phone me to request a form. If you wish to withdraw your membership, please also let me know.

Some of you may prefer to read the Newsletter on the web site and not receive a hard copy, and yet would like to be official FAB members. Members in this “no-hard-copy” status still receive our ballots and special mailings about FAB-related conferences. If you prefer this status, request it via e-mail.

You can easily recognize the tremendous amount of volunteer labor it takes to produce our publication. And we depend on our Audre Lorde Fund to cover some clerical assistance, database and web-site management, as well as our special wish: travel grants to help members attend our international conferences. If you haven't yet contributed to the Fund, please do so right now: this will increase the number of grants we can offer for FAB3 in London. Send your checks made out to “Audre Lorde Fund for Bioethics Research” to Anne Donchin, Treasurer (address p. 11), or to me.

**Becky Holmes**, *Membership Secretary*

## At Last We Can Network!

The database of FAB members is at last accessible on the internet. Simply go to the FAB website—[www.uncc.edu/fab/joinfab.htm](http://www.uncc.edu/fab/joinfab.htm) and click on “Directory of Members.” This will bring you to a cyberspot on your Membership Secretary's website where you'll find all our members in alphabetical order. Using the “find” command on your internet server, you can find all members in any city or country you expect to visit. For those members who list their interests, you can find feminists to invite to join a panel you are organizing or simply some kindred spirits. And this list will be updated frequently when we learn about address changes, typos, and new members.

This on-line Directory is not exactly the same one we use for basic information about you, nor the one from which we produce our mailing labels. Perhaps you'd prefer not to have your phone or fax number on line. Or, if you use your home address to receive the Newsletters, you might prefer your work address in the Directory. Please look at your listing and then e-mail me should you wish to request changes.

**Becky Holmes**, *Membership Secretary*

[joinfab@fnr.umass.edu](mailto:joinfab@fnr.umass.edu)



## FAB Members at CBS Conference

Several FAB members will participate in the 1999 Canadian Bioethics Society conference in Edmonton, Alberta Oct. 28-31. On two evenings, Jeff Nisker and Vangie Bergum will be staging a play called “A Child on Her Mind,” based on Vangie's book of that name which traces the transition from woman to mother through narratives of pregnancy. Sue Sherwin and our good ally, Alastair Campbell, will join Godfrey Tangwa of Cameroon in a public lecture by IAB members to open the conference on Oct. 28 on the topic: “Ethics, Culture and Health Care for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.” Jocelyn Downie and Michael Burgess will present concurrent symposia on (respectively) End of Life Issues and Ethics and Cultural Diversity. FAB members presenting in concurrent paper sessions include Vangie Bergum, Elisabeth Boetzkes, Michael Burgess, Carolyn McLeod, Michelle Mullin, Jason Robert, Laura Shanner, Christy Simpson, and Vicki Smye. We look forward to seeing many more FAB members there!

For further information about the conference, please see the website at: [www.ualberta.ca/~cbs1999](http://www.ualberta.ca/~cbs1999).

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Contact these members who have volunteered to be country representatives if you want to initiate a group project, receive back copies or membership application forms, etc. If your country is not included and you would like to volunteer, send a message to Wendy Rogers, below right.

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# Calendar of Events

## Call for Papers

**From the Other Side of Prosperity - Women Speak Out**, Bronxville, NY, March 3-4, 2000. This interdisciplinary conference will focus on women's activism against various trends, including issues on poverty, welfare, racism, human rights and health care. They welcome proposals for papers, panels, and workshops on grassroots struggles today and in the past, in both U.S. and other countries. Please send a one-page abstract and a one-page c.v., including e-mail address to: Mary Reynolds, Women's History Graduate Program, Sarah Lawrence College. Tel: 914-395-2405. Fax: 914-395-2283. E-mail: mreynold@mail.sl.c.edu. **Deadline for submission: October 31, 1999.**

**3rd National Policy History Conference**, Bowling Green, OH, June 1-3, 2000. Invites papers and panels that explore the relationships among women, gender, and public

policy. Historians, political scientists, sociologists, economists, activists, and members of the policy community are invited to submit proposals for papers or panels. Contact: Don K. Rowney, Bowling Green State University. Tel: 419-372-2030. Fax: 419-372-7208. E-mail: drowney@bgnet.bgsu.edu.

**Deadline for submission: November 1, 1999.**

**Gender and Social Policy in NWSA Journal**. Call for papers for a Special Issue on Gender and Social Policy: Local to Global Fall 2001. They invite contributions that explore the impact and interaction of social policies with gender locally, nationally, and globally. For information on topics contact Jean C. Robinson, Audrey Thomas McCluskey, Office for Women's Affairs, Indiana University. Tel: 812-855-3849. Fax: 812-855-4869.

**Submission deadline: January 31, 2000.**

**Gendering Ethics/The Ethics of Gender: An International Interdisciplinary Conference, University of Leeds, England, June 23-25, 2000.**

This conference will be the first major international, interdisciplinary feminist conference in the United Kingdom. It will address issues of ethics within feminist scholarship. Among keynote speakers are: Seyla Benhabib (USA); Sabina Lovibond (UK); and Joan Tronto (USA). For more information on topics contact Sasha Roseneil and Linda Hogan, Center for Interdisciplinary Gender Studies, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT. E-mail: gender-studies@leeds.ac.uk. **Send 200 word abstract by February 1, 2000.**

**Writers Needed for Philosophy News Service**. The Philosophy News Service would like to hear from scholars who might be interested in writing monthly (or less frequent) updates for different areas of philosophy, including feminist theory. The pur-

pose of these updates is to keep philosophers throughout the world informed about the most recent and important developments, resources, and opportunities in each area. For more information contact Richard Jones, Owner, Philosophy News Service. E-mail: richard@philosophynews.com. Website: www.philosophynews.com.

**Women and International Development Publications**. Michigan State University's Women and International Development (WID) Publications Series invites you to submit your manuscript for review. Individual papers in the series address a range of topics including women's historical and changing participation in economic and political spheres, intra and inter-family role relationships, gender identity, and women's health and health care. For more information contact: Dr. Anne Ferguson, WID Publication Series Editor. E-mail: wid@msu.edu. Website: www.isp.msu.edu/wid/.

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## Courses, Seminars, and Conferences

### October

**Expanding the Boundaries of Ethics**, The Canadian Bioethics Society 11th Annual Conference. Edmonton, Alberta, Canada., October 28-31. Details from: Website: www.ualberta.ca/~cbs1999. Tel: 780-492-6676. E-mail: CBS1999@ualberta.ca

**Second Annual Meeting of the American Society for Bioethics and Humanities**, Wyndham Franklin Plaza, Philadelphia, PA, October 28-31. Sponsored by ASBH and Duke University School

of Medicine. Details from: Jennifer Reinard, ASBH Second Annual Meeting, Website: www.asbh.org. E-mail: info@asbh.org.

**Genetics and Ethics**, America's Center, St. Louis Executive Conference Center, St. Louis, MO, October 29-30. Sponsored by the Interdisciplinary Ph.D. Program in Health Care Ethics at St. Louis University. Details From: Gerald Magill, Ph.D., Saint Louis University Center for Health Care Eth-

ics. Tel: 314-577-8195. Fax: 314-268-5150. E-mail: magill@slu.edu.

### November

**Talking Gender & Sexuality**, Aalborg University, Aalborg, Denmark, November 5-6. Details from: www.sprog.auc.dk/~paul/conf99.

**1999 Annual American Medical Women's Association (AMWA) Meeting**, San Francisco, CA, No-

vember 10-14. Details from: American Medical Women's Association. Tel: 703-838-0500. Fax: 703-549-3864.

**Future Trends in American Health Care**, Wyndham Franklin Plaza, Philadelphia, PA, November 10-12. An international conference sponsored by the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine Office of Program Development in collaboration with the Center for Bioethics and the National Institutes of Health Center for Complementary and

## Courses, Seminars, and Conferences

Alternative Medicine. Details from: University of Pennsylvania, Office of Continuing Medical Education. Tel: 215-898-6400.

**Sex, Gender, Culture**, The Third Annual History and Theory Conference, University of California, Irvine, November 13-14. Details from: Fiona Brigstocke at: fibrigst@uci.edu or call the UCI Department of History at 949-824-6521.

**Ethics and Genetics: Advanced European Bioethics Course**, Nijmegen, The Netherlands, November 18-20. Organized by The International Programme in Bioethics Education and Research. The course aims to educate the participants on a range of subjects which currently are the focus of ethical debates as a result of the Human Genome Project. Details from: Bert

Gordijn, Ph.D., Catholic University of Nijmegen, Department of Ethics, Philosophy and History of Medicine.

Tel: 31-24-361-5320.  
Fax: 31-24-354-0254. E-mail: b.gordijn@efg.kun.nl. Website: www.azn.nl/fmw/onderwys/ukgene.htm.

### December

**Bioethics in the Urban Context:** A National Symposium, New York Academy of Medicine in New York City, December 2-3. Sponsored by The Center for Urban Bioethics at the New York Academy of Medicine. Details from: Department of Medical Education, The New York Academy of Medicine. Tel: 212-822-7273. For more information, e-mail Sharon Meekin: Bioethicssymposium@nyam.org.

**Controversies in Women's Health**, San Francisco, CA, December 2-3. CME credits: 13.5 hours AMA Cat 1. Details from: Cliff Brock or Andre Vaughn. Tel: 415-476-5208. Fax: 415-476-3542.

### March, 2000

**Feminist Expo**, Arlington, VA, March 31-April 2, 2000. The Feminist Majority Foundation is holding its second "Feminist Expo." The conference will bring together feminists from a wide range of disciplines: media, law, arts, politics, medicine and health care, etc. Details from: Alice Cohan, Feminist Majority Foundation, 1600 Wilson Blv., Suite 801, Arlington, VA. Tel: 703-522-2214.

**Women's Lives, Women's Voices, Women's Solutions: Shaping a National Agenda for Women in Higher Education**, University of Minnesota, March 27-29, 2000. Details from: Jennifer L. Longnion, National Teleconference for Women in Higher Education. Tel: 612-626-7550. Fax: 612-626-9192. www.umn.edu/women/wihe.html. Early registration deadline is November 1, 1999.

### April, 2000

**The Color of Violence: Violence Against Women of Color**, University of California, Santa Cruz, April 14-15, 2000. Details from: Andrea Smith. Tel: 831-460-1856. E-mail: andysm@cats.ucsc.edu.

Check our FAB's Updated Website!

[www.uncc.edu/fab](http://www.uncc.edu/fab)



## Get Involved in FAB

### To Join FAB

Members receive the bi-annual newsletter, which contains helpful announcements of upcoming events and opportunities, book reviews, and articles of interest to those working in feminism and bioethics. To join, send a request for a membership form with your name and address, either by mail or electronically to Becky Holmes (see page 11). Or print a membership form from the FAB website: [www.uncc.edu/fab](http://www.uncc.edu/fab) or from [www-unix.oit.umass.edu/~fholmes/joinfab.html](http://www-unix.oit.umass.edu/~fholmes/joinfab.html).

### To Contribute to the Newsletter

We welcome contributions of all sorts: articles, announcements of upcoming events, information about articles or books you have published or find useful, reviews of books. Book reviews are organized by Hilde Nelson. Any other contribution should be forwarded to Maggie Little (both addresses on p. 11). *It's particularly helpful if you can send them in electronically.*  
**Deadline for submissions to the next newsletter is March 15, 2000.**

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## Feminist Approaches to Bioethics