



ROUNDTABLE 3

INTRODUCTION

Devoney Looser

Director: Jean-Claude Guédon

Editorial Board:

Wlad Godzich
Walter Moser
Michel Pierssens

Christie McDonald
Antonio Gómez-Moriana
Gilles Bibeau

Acknowledgments:

Surfaces would like to thank the following organizations for their support: Apple Canada for providing essential equipment, Industrie Canada, the SSHRC and MESSQ for funding, and the University of Montreal for infrastructural support.

Addresses:

SURFACES

Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal
Université de Montréal
C.P. 6128, succ. Centre-ville
Montreal, Quebec, Canada H3C 3J7

Tel.: (514) 343-5683

Fax: (514) 343-5684

INTERNET Access

World Wide Web:

<http://pum12.pum.umontreal.ca/revues/surfaces/>

Technical assistance: **guedon@ere.umontreal.ca**

Editorial inquiries: **guedon@ere.umontreal.ca**

ISSN: 1188-2492

Submission of Texts

Articles, reviews and notes may be submitted to the editors by electronic mail, on diskettes, or by mail. Please follow MLA style in matters of presentation and accompany your text with a three or four line abstract.

Any authorial alterations to already published articles must be submitted to the editorial board. Once accepted, an updated version of the article (coded v. 2, with the new date) will replace the original on the electronic network.

Copyright for texts published in **SURFACES** remains the property of authors. However, any further publication should be accompanied by an acknowledgment of **SURFACES** as the place of initial publication.

Citation of texts

Anyone wishing to cite a text from **SURFACES** should consult the journal at source in order to be sure of using the latest version and base textual references upon the pagination (/pp. xx/) inserted in the text rather than upon the foliation (footers). Those without access to electronic mail should contact the editors, who can furnish either a new diskette or printed copy.

Regardless of one's take on the issue of feminist generations, I think we must recognize that the anxieties located in this session's title are felt by and have been articulated by many. A myriad of articles and dialogues might be pointed to: the *differences* "Conference Call"; Jane Gallop, Marianne Hirsch, and Evelyn Fox Keller's "Criticizing Feminist Criticism"; Renate Klein's "Passion and Politics in Women's Studies in the Nineties"; Donna Landry's "Commodity Feminism"; Nancy K. Miller's "Decades"; and Madelon Sprengnether's "Generational Differences," among others. Darlene Hantzis and I have written an article responding to many of these pieces, recently published in Jeffrey Williams' anthology *PC Wars*.¹

However, it is my suspicion that most of our discussions of feminisms and generations have—up to this point—been in conversation rather than in print. Some conversations, of course,

¹ "Conference Call," *differences* 2 no. 3 (1990), pp. 52-97. Jane Gallop, Marianne Hirsch, and Evelyn Fox Keller, "Criticizing Feminist Criticism," *Conflicts in Feminism*, eds. Marianne Hirsch and Evelyn Fox Keller (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 1-8. Darlene Hantzis and Devoney Looser, "Of Safer Spaces and Right Speech: Feminist Histories, Loyalties, Theories, and the Dangers of Critique," *PC Wars: Politics and Theory in the Academy*, ed. Jeffrey Williams (New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 222-249. Renate Klein, "Passion and Politics in Women's Studies in the Nineties," *Women's Studies International Forum* 14 no. 3 (1991), pp. 125-134. Donna Landry, "Commodity Feminism," *The Profession of Eighteenth-Century Literature: Reflections on an Institution*, ed. Leo Damrosch (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), pp. 154-174. Nancy K. Miller, "Decades," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 91 no. 1 (1992), pp. 65-86. Madelon Sprengnether, "Generational Differences: Reliving Mother-Daughter Conflicts," *Changing Subjects: The Making of Feminist Literary Criticism*, eds. Gayle Greene and Coppelka Kahn (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 201-8.

have been staged public ones. E. Ann Kaplan and I put together a panel on feminisms and generations at MLA in 1993—a session that eventually grew into our forthcoming co-edited book by the same title. In 1994, the Women's Caucus of the Midwest MLA /pp. 4-5/ sponsored two sessions entitled *Feminist Generations/Generating Feminisms*. The upcoming National Women's Studies Association conference features *Generations of Feminism* as an organizing theme. And most recently, a conference entirely devoted to *Feminist Generations* has been announced for February 1996 at Bowling Green State University.

It is again my suspicion that many, many more conversations on feminisms and generations have happened (and are happening) as innuendo, hearsay, and gossip. I have certainly been a part of such conversations, primarily with my peers. There were times when we were anything but nice with our "us" and "them" rhetoric. My sense that this rhetoric has circulated on "sides" was confirmed last year when a prominent feminist inadvertently sent a private e-mail message to a high traffic listserv list—a nasty message decrying the evils of "younger feminists." Not surprisingly, I did not recognize myself in her characterization. This seems to me to be the crux of the issue of feminisms and generations: Few of us seem to recognize ourselves in the accusations and the caricatures. These stereotypes continue to circulate nonetheless and are by now well known. So-called "younger feminists" are not dutiful daughters, are careerists and theorists who are "not political enough," and are not sufficiently grateful to those who fought the battles that made their lives possible. So-called "older feminists" are bad mothers who long to see themselves in their offspring, who resent deviations from their second-wave plan, and who can't properly wield the power they've garnered. Certainly other features could be added to each list, and I

invite the panelists and audience members to further articulate and perhaps debunk some of these stereotypes.

As Susan Stanford Friedman suggests in *Feminism Beside Itself*, "An effort to historicize the positions and perspectives of each generation could foster the multiplicity of generational voices rather than the silencing of one by another."² I hope that our /pp. 5-6/ discussion will productively engage how and why these perceived feminist generational divisions circulate, what generational explanations reveal, occlude, or perpetuate, and what it might mean to speak to—if not "talk through"—our supposed differences.

Devoney Looser
Indiana State University

/p. 6/

² Susan Stanford Friedman, "Making History: Reflections on Feminism, Narrative, and Desire," *Feminism Beside Itself*, eds. Diane Elam and Robyn Wiegman (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 11-54.