Monica Brasile and Andrea Davis, "Goddess Juice."

FemINism and yOuNg AliVe and WELL

by Candis Steenbergen

L'auteure avance qu'à l'instar de ceux qui nous ont précédés, les féminismes des jeunes femmes d'aujourd'hui apparaissent sous plusieurs formes :ils ne sont pas tous sous la même étiquette, ils ne suivent pas tous la même ligne de pensée, ils ne sont pas tous nécessairement d'accord; ils ne partagent pas tous les mêmes motivations, rêves et priorités. La nouvelle génération des jeunes féministes émerge, réagit et agit à l'intérieur d'un moment particulier de l'histoire, tout comme les féminismes d'hier ont réagi au climat socio-politico-culturel de leur époque.

A number of North American publications incited reports of the arrival of the next generation of feminists: self-proclaimed "dissidents" who herald the coming of feminism's last breath.

Efforts to define "feminism" and attempts to determine the boundaries of the "women's movement" have always been problematic. Characterizing a *feminist* (or worse: *the feminists*) has been even harder. "Feminism," as Geraldine Finn has noted, "does not speak with one voice" (299). Feminists have *always* expressed their desire for social, political, economic, and cultural change in a variety of milieus. Feminist activity has *always* assumed a wide range of forms: from militant political activism, to silent volunteerism, to academic research and writing, to the creation of works of art, to so much more. Feminist historians acknowledge that the women's movement in Canada has always had a "diverse, complex, and shifting reality," and agree that feminists have *never* followed a unified political ideology (Adamson, Briskin and McPhail 9). While all feminisms share certain characteristics, significant differences in political strategy, in vision, in attitudes towards men, in understanding the roots of women's oppression, and in setting priorities also typify the Canadian women's movement ideology (Adamson *et al.*; Hamilton).

Feminism itself has altered and evolved over time as the intricacies of women's positions in society have changed (Wine and Ristock; Adamson *et al.*). In the early moments of the contemporary women's movement, second wave feminists identified, named, analyzed, and resisted women's oppression, particularly as it existed in the private lives of "ordinary" women. The decade that followed has been called "a phase of expansion and consolidation," a period in which the women's movement grew in size and visibility, as well as in organizational and strategic terms (Tremblay).[1] In the 1980s, many of the battles fought by the mainstream women's movement concentrated on institutional policy and political change. The strategies adopted by the women's movement through all three decades were employed in reaction to the political conditions of their struggles. But they were also the result of constant internal checks and balances performed by and among women of strikingly different political persuasions (Hamilton).[2]

Feminism in the last decade has been no different. By the early 1990s, the battlegrounds for feminist struggles had altered again. As early as 1993, Manon Tremblay noted that:

> ... Over the course of the last few years, the feminist movement has devoted itself primarily to fighting to maintain what women have gained in a climate of political conservatism, of financial austerity, and of the affirmation of a neo-conservative right wing. In addition, the antifeminist undercurrent which is currently developing in the West has led to the belief that the feminist movement has lost its *raison d'être* with women now having achieved equality with men. (276)

At the beginning of the new century, Tremblay's "undercurrent" is a commonly heard reproach of feminism and its proponents. The "diversified, multifaceted, and enriched" nature of feminist activities has been re-interpreted (and perpetuated by popular media) as demonstrative of an antiquated, ineffectual, "splintered and fragmented" women's movement (Hamilton 80). The evidence supporting those charges has been even more unsettling. The arrival of a number of North American publications in the very recent past—written predominantly by young, female iconoclasts—incited reports of the arrival of the next generation of feminists: self-proclaimed "dissidents" who herald the coming of feminism's last breath.

In the United States, "feminism's daughters" appeared in the form of Katie Roiphe's *The Morning After: Sex, Fear and Feminism* (1993), Christina Hoff Sommers' *Who*

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Stole Feminism? How Women Have Betrayed Women (1994), Rene Denfield's *The New Victorians: A Young Woman's Challenge to the Old Feminist Order* (1995), and—of course—Danielle Crittenden's *What Our Mother's Didn't Tell Us: Why Happiness Eludes the Modern Woman* (1999) and Wendy Shalit's *A Return to Modesty: Discovering the Lost Virtue* (1999), to name just a few. Almost perfectly paralleling the introduction of *Ally McBeal* to the television-consuming public, the entrance of these young voices—all straight, white, and well-educated voices, I should add—announced the "coming-of-age" of the heirs of the sexual revolution and the new faces of feminism. *Women have made it*, they say. *Get over it.*

Canada has not been without similar voices. In 1992, Amy Friedman published *Nothing Sacred: A Conversation With Feminism.* Using Queen's University as a model, the American-born author asserted that feminism had mutated and that she was no longer comfortable identifying with what the movement had become. Over the last 30 years, she argued, feminism has grown terrified of recognizing differences among women, and has not retained the sacredness of the personal. Individual stories, she asserted, now served only as "fodder for a statistical mill" (42). Friedman's agitation with academic feminism was multifaceted: she "deplored [the] sloppy, inaccurate, lazy language" used by proponents, was angered by the promotion of "female knowledge as distinct from male knowledge," and was dismayed by the apparent feminist belief in "ultimate solutions" for the atrocities of the world against women (42, 44, 58). She stated:

> ...The new feminist rhetoric ... was beginning to sound like other versions of revolutionary fanaticism, and revolutionary fanaticism, we all know, has sparked some of the most heinous regimes in humankind's history. No matter who the enemy. (60)

According to Friedman, feminism lost sight of its original goals and fixated on romanticized images of women as powerless victims, encouraged self-pity, and sought to gain strength in martyrdom.

In 1995, Canadian journalist Kate Fillion published *Lip Service: The Truth about Women's Darker Side in Love, Sex, and Friendship.* Fillion discussed the myth of female moral superiority, and attempted to deconstruct a number of existing stereotypes, including "woman as victim," and "woman as saint." She stated that women today adhere to conflicting paradigms:

Self-determination is what women want, but the

Fillion denounced feminists for attempting to achieve sexual liberation through the perpetuation of dangerous dichotomies and through the preservation of an age-old sexual script.

> myth of female moral superiority tells us that women cannot be actors in their own right. Apparently, women are too pure to harbor negative feelings and too virtuous to make mistakes. Agency—having some control over one's own life—is confused with happy endings. When things turn out well, women are given full credit, but when something goes wrong, we are absolved of responsibility. (318)

Based on her own observations and a handful of interviews, Fillion denounced feminists for attempting to achieve sexual liberation through the perpetuation of dangerous dichotomies and through the preservation of an age-old sexual script, and argued that, consequently, "the common language used to discuss sexuality in the public arena ... [has been] predicated on women's passivity and oppression" (223).

The next year, Donna LaFramboise (also a journalist) published *The Princess at the Window: A New Gender Morality.* LaFramboise attacked "establishment feminism," that group of "people who are recognized by society at large as legitimate feminist spokespersons" (1996: 8). Citing Ann Landers, *Ms*, Marilyn French, and Catherine MacKinnon, LaFramboise asserted that "the lunatic fringe has taken over main-stream feminism" (1996: 33). Arguing that highly questionable ideas have been elevated to feminist dogma, she claimed that feminism has become extremist, self-obsessed, arrogant, and intolerant. LaFramboise was alarmed by the speed at which such "sloppy thinking" has permeated the rhetoric of popular culture and has influenced public policy, and stated that traditional methods of examining women's issues have become obsolete (1996: 48). LaFramboise argued that

feminism has perpetuated the myth of female martyrdom, stated that feminists have deliberately maintained such fictions to ensure its survival, and differentiated between "a feminism that *informs* one's opinions and a feminism that *dictates* how one should think" (1996: 323).

Friedman, Fillion, and LaFramboise presented limited analyses of feminisms past shortcomings and future directions. All three generalized "North American feminism" as a unit based upon their own observations, anecdotes, conversations with friends, content analyses of newspaper columns, and a variety of studies on white, heterosexual, able-bodied, educated, middle-to-upper class women. All of the authors were former students (or graduates) of women's studies departments, and all three targeted the work of feminists in the academy, yet all failed to illustrate an in-depth knowledge of feminist theory or of the history of the women's movement. All of the authors used items from the popular press, provided snippets of contentious quotations from select feminist theorists (mostly American ones), and relied heavily upon personal interviews. All three expressed concern for the current state of feminism, and all provided instances in which mainstream second wave praxis has "failed," but none provided viable alternatives. All three viewed tolerance and flexibility as key elements of future strategies for the women's movement, yet none succeeded in achieving a sound blend of analysis, theory, and practice.

A third wave has appeared within the women's movement; a generation of young women actively addressing the complexities of women's everyday experiences and the personal and structural relations affecting them.

Perhaps most interesting about this supposed "new generation" has been their preoccupation with sex. Those who received the most public attention contend that the women's movement advanced a single, antiquated vision of what constitutes "good" feminism, and "good" feminist sex through the promotion of women's victimization and men's inherent lechery. Their texts present feminism as the mastermind behind stringent sexual and moral codes, as the promoter of a villain-versus-victim mythology, and as archaic protectors of "political correctness." To many, the 1970s granted empowerment and sexual agency to women:

> At the beginning of the sexual revolution, a truce was declared in the gender wars for a few brief years—at least among some segments of the population. Rather than being used as leverage, sex was freely enjoyed. Men and women reveled in each other's beauty, sharing their bodies comfortably and lavishly. (La Framboise 1999: A18)

To LaFramboise, the point of the sexual revolution was freedom: "freedom from appalling ignorance, senseless guilt, and needless fear" (La Framboise 1999: A18). And, instead of just enjoying their newfound freedom, "the feminists," desperate to maintain their stronghold on public conviction, continued promoting their webs of untruth: date rape, marital rape, sexual violence, and so on. "The feminists" just weren't getting it.

In these accounts, feminists are portrayed as anti-men, anti-sex, and obsessed with notions of women as hapless victims and therefore *all* feminists hate men, believe in the essential "goodness" of women, lack a sense of humour, and are preoccupied with sexual danger. Fillion and LaFramboise, however, are the antithesis of the second wave stereotype: they are "successful and independent, and less likely to espouse 'dangerous' feminist ideals" (Whelehan 240). As we all know, sex makes for good copy, and mainstream media latched on to the existence of these "new feminists" with vehemence. *Time Magazine's* 1998 cover story (slyly asking "Is Feminism Dead?" under the face of TV's McBeal) certainly added fuel to that fire (Bellafante). Accepting the insurgence of writings as an indicator of women's successful liberation and the impending demise of feminism, popular discourse perpetuated the idea that Canada, as it approached the millennium, had entered a "postfeminist"[3] era.

Feminist commentators were swift in their criticism of the three Canadian-published books, their authors, and their American counterparts. One reviewer attacked their "highly selective, blinkered vision," and stated that their texts were little more than "in-your-face rant[s]" supported by "extraordinarily inflated ideas" about the prevalence and influence of feminism in Canada (Hurley). Myrna Kostash attacked Fillion for presenting second wave feminism as "a monolithic movement reducible to a single tendency," and suggested that this new generation believes that feminism is anti-male, and that "mainstream feminists hate the very idea of sex with men" (1996: 13). By the year 2000, the presence of a new generation of women, concerned with little more than individual gain, the consumption of material goods, and the exertion of their own enlightened power, was branded into the public mind. The image of the "new modern woman" of the millennium was "bad girl," one who has rejected the "tyranny of contemporary sexual politics" brought about by feminism and who has been aggressively taking matters into her own hands (Dennis 3).

As the last decade's media frenzy suggests, a new generation of women has emerged, aggressively analyzing, rethinking, and challenging the assumptions and strategies of feminism's diverse histories and theories. Unfortunately (but not surprisingly), the popular press pinpointed the wrong group of women. A third wave has appeared within the women's movement; a generation of young women actively addressing the complexities of women's everyday experiences and the personal and structural

relations affecting them. Their critiques—as varied as the feminisms that have come before—are intended to further the feminist cause, not to slander the movement or its proponents. Nonetheless, there has been a tendency to deem *any* comment or criticism of feminism or the women's movement made by women under the age of 35 suspect. The inclination to clump all young women into the media-friendly, postfeminist category has been strong, leading many to assume that the next generation *does* in fact think the war's been won, that the sole pursuit of pleasure and possessions is paramount, and that feminism, in effect, is passé. Charges by the second wave that younger women are "reinventing the wheel" have been rampant, and have led many to believe that there is "nothing new" about third wave approaches (Greer).

As problematic (and historically inaccurate) as they are, the works of Fillion, LaFramboise, and others (and the reviews, critiques, and attacks that followed their publication) have served four auspicious purposes. First, they (albeit unintentionally) publicly announced the "coming of age" of feminism's daughters; those women who grew up with feminism as their birthright and who have come to feminism (or feminist activism) in a markedly different manner than their predecessors. Second, they illustrated that the landscape for feminist activism and theorizing *has* mutated over the last three decades, and that some women are indeed reaping the benefits—sexual and otherwise—of the second wave women's movement's labour. Third, and unwittingly again, they sparked a new and necessary dialogue on generational (and inter-generational) feminisms and on the women's movement's future directions—one that has just begun to take shape. Finally, their fixation on the successes of the sexual revolution and the assumed failure of feminists to recognize them has prompted a much-needed reexamination of feminism's engagement with sexual politics and the body. Ironic, isn't it, that ideological one-upmanship and petty name-calling inadvertently created spaces in which these issues could be discussed.

Despite the mass visibility of postfeminists, young feminist women—raised with feminism as a familiar concept since their birth; the beneficiaries of many of the successes of the women's movement; and those who know that there are still challenges remaining and obstacles to be jumped for women—exist and work and resist in the millennium. And, like the "popular kids" of their age group, many of them are vigorously engaged in exploring the intersections of sexualities, sexual pleasure, and feminism—and challenging some of the feminist strategies of the past as a result. The differences between the two, however, are significant. For one thing, most young women with legitimate concerns and critiques of feminism and the women's movement have not lined bookstore shelves with mass-market bestsellers, done the talk-show circuit, nor made countless headlines. Instead, their voices appear in independently-produced zines, in book reviews hidden in the backs of journals, on walls and across public advertisements, in non-mainstream publications, and in other, less-conspicuous (and *less* financially rewarding), spaces. Third wave feminists also understand and recognize that there is no feminist monolith, or any feminist "establishment" trying to take all the fun out of sex.[4] As well, young women see the historical specificity of the women's movement's engagement with and inquiries into issues of sexuality and body politics. They might not be thrilled with the way things turned out and want to revisit older strategies and theories (and question and confront those who pursued them), but most have the rationale not to blindly point fingers.

Women's sexual freedom was one of the key feminist goals of the late 1960s and early 1970s, and women's right to sexual pleasure and to control their own bodies symbolized their right to social equality.[5] Women formed woman-centred collectives and organizations and utilized public spaces as forums to speak about, challenge, and try to resolve, sexual discrimination and lingering postwar repression.[6] One objective was to denounce and dispel the inaccuracies of "those heterosexual practices predicated on the assumption of the priority of a male sexual urge and a male right to sexual pleasure" (Hamilton 65). Activists sought to expose the double standard that celebrated men for "sowing their wild oats" and divided women as "whores" and "virgins." In public and in the home, feminists challenged socially enforced domesticity,

They sparked a new and necessary dialogue on generational (and inter-generational) feminisms and on the women's movement's future directions—one that has just begun to take shape.

> To wrest control away from the state, the medical establishment, institutionalized religion, pharmaceutical companies, advertisers, pornographers, institutionalized censorship, [and] the violence of men. (Pierson 98)

The struggle for reproductive rights, the revelatory discovery of the clitoris as a site of sexual response, and the publication of woman-centred journals, created "a thrilling sense of new possibilities" for women (Tiefer 115).

The "sexual revolution" has been characterized by a surge of public interest in sexuality, an increased focus on the successful pursuit of sexual activity and performance, and the publication of texts concerned with maximizing pleasure.[7] The perceived acceptance of alternative forms of sexual expression, the annihilation of taboos against premarital sex, the subversion of the institutions of monogamy and marriage, and the encouragement of sexual

self-expression also led to announcements that a sexual revolution had begun. The generation that came of age in that era contested sexual assumptions and challenged traditional notions of sex, marriage, and family structures. To activists in radical movements, including members of student movements and the New Left, the eradication of sexual inhibitions was pertinent to their cause. In many cases, the liberation of sexuality was "an essential part of the New Left idea of 'living your politics': the sexual revolution ... was a democratic utopia to be realized in the present—something one *did*, here and now" (Connell 60-61).

Although the "flower power" years have been depicted (in retrospect) as the "permissive moment" in history, members of the new feminism and gay politics began to ask "permissive for whom?" (Connell 61; see also Parr). The open-minded ideologies of some failed to construct the utopia that it promised for all. As Kostash recalled, the women's movement,

> Expose[d] the operations of much of the sexual revolution for what they were: fraudulent. Double standards prevailed in the vocabulary of sexual put-down, [and] responsibility was evaded in the rhetoric of non-possessiveness.... (1996: 113)

Despite the egalitarian overtones, the discourse of the time,

> Seemed to be serving a very old conservative agenda: women servicing their men—their activity stripped out of any deeper personal, social or political context which might highlight conflict, confusion or any number of other troubling incongruities of experience. (Segal 99; see also Kostash 1980)

In retrospect, the "sexual revolution" failed to liberate most women from exploitation or from firmly established gender roles. Instead, the fluid perceptions of sexuality,

> Only partially modified behavioural prescriptions for women in a sexual relationship and ... the use of contraceptives [fell] in line with conventional gender-role demands, leaving women vulnerable to both old and new kinds of exploitation. (Greenglass 120)

Sexual emancipation proved more complicated than was originally thought as,

> Endless doubts and heartbreaks about non-monogamy, about faked orgasms, about the political correctness of heterosexuality more or less stifled that first wave of sexual liberation. (Valverde 9)

By the mid-1970s, mainstream feminist praxes had turned its attention away from the personal aspects of sexuality and focused predominantly on legal, political, and social policy-making and change, and in that climate "it was virtually impossible for lesbian, bisexual, or heterosexual feminists to claim the right to sexual pleasure" (Ross 113). Concentrating instead on policy-based issues that they could mobilize around and effectively influence, the now "mainstream" feminist movement became focused on male sexual violence, the legalities of the *Divorce Act*, pornography, and the political and legal battles regarding rape and sexual assault. The sexuality debates had begun to change, and analyses of sexual danger rapidly superseded discussions of women's personal empowerment, pleasure and desire.[8]

The 1980s witnessed a "revival" of interest in the issue of women's sexuality and sexual pleasure, as well as a challenge—by feminists, to feminists—to the perceived fixation on the potential "dangers" of sexuality. Right-wing thinkers and organizations also grew at this time, scrutinizing sex education curricula and contesting the scope of legal rights for lesbians and gay men. As well, anti-feminist writers and groups (such as R.E.A.L. Women) captured the popular media's attention and made mega-headlines. Despite (or perhaps because of) increased attacks by traditionalists and the backlash against feminism, a new vision of an older strand of feminist thought began to emerge. "Pro-sex" feminists wanted to revive dialogue on pleasure and desire and reasserted the need for sexual expression and exploration as a necessary step towards women's liberation.[9] The objective was to "eroticize equality":

> ... It's time to seriously rethink Freud's old question: what do women want? We know what we don't want, and we are beginning to understand how we got into this mess. So the question about our erotic needs keeps coming back to us—the return of the repressed—and we ask the old question with a new emphasis: What do *we* women want? ... Eroticism is about the *what*, the brass tacks of sex. (Valverde 9)

Pro-sex perspectives often called for a reconnection of the complexities of women's personal sexual experiences with theoretical critiques of male violence. While helping to return the issues of pleasure and desire to the sexuality debates, the works of pro-sex feminists were harshly criticized for typecasting second wave feminists as perpetuators of stringent moral standards and anti-sex. In retrospect, it was apparent that the moment for reexamining and perhaps revising feminist theories on and engagement with sexuality had not yet arrived.

When the next generation of women came of age in the late 1980s and 1990s, sexuality was again a hot topic—one that pervaded (and continues to drench) virtually all facets of popular culture, the media, and mass-market advertising. The growth and intellectual development of young women today has been marked by a greater overall

Jennifer Moreau, "Portrait of Louisa as a Young Bandita," 9.25" x 6.25", 2001.

awareness of sex, sex identities, and sexualities, and a resurgent interest in the role that sexual identity plays in their everyday lives. The establishment of women's studies in schools, the inclusion (albeit paltry) of feminist and queer theory in other fields of study, and strong and vocal lesbian and gay voices have all contributed to their awareness. Young women also grew up with an expansion of cultural influences: music videos, cable TV, improved satellite communications, the internet, and specialty magazines; all of which have affected and shaped their outlook. Advertising specifically and pop culture generally have become increasingly sexualized and young feminists have acknowledged that "as women become more powerful in real life, their clothes got tighter and shorter in the make-believe-it's-real world of television" (Timson 52). In many ways, postfeminism emerged at an opportune moment in history: feeding off of the backlash of the '80s and utilizing the public fixation with and consumption of sexuality to their advantage.

While not receiving publicity on par with postfeminist literature, the desire to analyze body image, self-esteem, desire, sexuality and sexual pleasure has been strong in third wave writings to date. To many, those pursuits have revolved around continual self-analysis and personal negotiation, an attempt to reconcile the desire to create their own version of "femininity" and the fear of betraying their allegiance to feminism and the struggle for female empowerment. For some, that has translated into a strong defiance of pre-constructed notions of what constitutes a "beautiful" female body and activism against fat-phobia. For others, it has meant indulging in beauty culture: fashion magazines, makeup, hair products, and slinky fashions previously viewed as fodder for the male gaze:

> For me, being a femme means that I take pride in wearing just the right shade of lipstick, drawing the perfect black line above my eye-lashes, keeping my legs smooth, and smelling good. Being a femmenist means knowing I am just as attractive when I don't wear makeup, shave, or put on perfume. (delombard 29-30)

The emphasis has been placed on redrawing the boundaries of beauty, femininity, and sexuality, and the roles they play in every person's quest for self-empowerment.[10] Others have critiqued the mythologies surrounding the "free love" era, asserting that while the sexual revolution,

> Was largely about women saying *yes* (to really prove themselves liberated) a new movement is empowering them to *also* say no, *along with when, where and how*. As a result, women are more closely examining what turns them off—and also what turns them on. (Kamen 1998:140)

Young feminists are conscious of the use of sexuality

and sexualized images of women in the media that consistently support and perpetuate traditional sex roles and sexual identities, and actively strive to make sense of manipulative media techniques in their work. A number of young feminist scholars, writers, artists, activists, and critics of the mass media have attempted to link their connection (and attraction) to the hyper-sexualized culture of consumerism and consumption with their identities as women, sexual beings and feminists. The editors of *BITCH: Feminist Response to Pop Culture* explain the rationale:

> We are supposedly living in a new age—one that some have dubbed postfeminist. Feminism is over, they say. Just get over it. But television demonstrates that most people still think what a woman is wearing is more important that what she's thinking. Magazines that tell us, both implicitly and explicitly, that female sexual urges are deviant—while reminding us that maintaining our sex appeal is the only way to wring commitment out of a man, without which our lives will be sad and incomplete in spite of dazzling careers and intense friendships. Billboards urge us to fork over our hard-earned cash for the glittery, overpriced wares of companies that depend on our unhappiness and dissatisfaction for their profits.

The negotiation between the attractive, processed, advertised, and consumable version of female sexuality and the difficulties of translating it into a lived reality, has been substantial in third wave analyses to date. In many respects, the approach has been to acknowledge the mixed messages pervading popular culture and account for the "problem desires" that often result. Not surprisingly, the craving for sexual empowerment has paralleled young women's questioning of reality, of the sexual revolution, and—necessarily—of their feminist "brand."

While young feminist perspectives regarding sexuality have just begun to emerge, much of the writing to date begins from a location similar to pro-sex feminists: where the early second wave feminists left off. Early feminist writings that emphasized women's sexual freedom did not ignore the existence of sexual danger in many women's lives. Instead, they argued that women's sexual freedom could not occur without a more thorough sense of women's realities as well as a realization of the need for social, economic, and political rights.[11] It's just that one ended up absorbing the other. The complex sexual context of the current time has made a reconnection of the two necessary and unavoidable, and young women's activism has reflected that. In organizations and campus centres, young feminists have created pamphlets, how-to manuals, and newsletters on everything from surgical operations to enhance, sculpt, or rejuvenate the vagina, to tips on body piercing and tattooing, to info on the morning-after pill, to AIDS awareness.[12] Third wave reactions to body politics coalesce neatly with the intentions of early second wave discussions on the body.

In response to the often contradictory conditions surrounding women's sexual lives in the 1990s, young women have sought to combine radical perspectives on sexual theory with the everyday occurrences of women's lived experiences. That has translated, so far, into a reinterpretation of both personal and collective identities, an interrogation of the women's movement of the past and of the current period, as well the creation of new visions for the future. Mariana Valverde has noted that there have traditionally been two genres used by women to talk about sex: the intellectual application of a number of abstract theoretical frameworks to women's sexual experiences and desires, and "the confessional." The new generation of feminists values both, and has been actively attempting to combine the two strategies in a concerted effort to work through the "lived messiness" of women's lives. The potential that explorations of women's sexuality has is "infinite and incalculable," but the myriad of problems, issues, and concerns facing young women also indicates that their "sexual project is just beginning" (Crosbie xii).

Of course, the issues of sexuality and body politics covered herein are only fragments of the kinds of work that young women are currently engaged in. Like the waves that came before, the third is as difficult to define and as arduous to label and their activism has been as problematic—or more so—to pinpoint. Like their forerunners, their feminisms come in a myriad forms: they don't all adhere to the "feminist" label, they don't follow a single agenda, they don't necessarily agree,and they don't share the same political motivations, priorities, or dreams. Their realities are as diverse, fluid, and complicated as the environment in which they resist. Whether feminism's "third wave" overshadows postfeminist ideology in the public's eye remains to be seen, but a number of things are certain. The new generation of young feminists is emerging, reacting, and acting within a particular moment in history, just as the feminisms of the past have changed in reaction to the ideological, social, cultural and political climates within theirs. The future of feminism in Canada is not postfeminism; it is a strongly supported, vigorously active, dynamic group of young women who are determined to flex and bend their feminisms with where the world takes them, pushing the women's movement into the next century.

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[1]Tremblay notes that the 1970s marked the institution-

alization of the women's movement with the establishment of state organizations like the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women.

[2]Hamilton noted that "feminists disagreed not only on the explanations for women's inequality, oppression, and subordination, but also on the means to transform their situation" (54).

[3]"Postfeminism" is used herein to denote young women who have gained notoriety for their pop-criticisms of second wave feminism only. It should be noted that the term "postfeminism" has been used positively in many contexts to describe what I am calling "the third wave."

[4]For a satirical look at one woman's quest for "the feminist establishment" (and for a job therein) see Kamen 1996.

[5]The feminist interest in sexuality and sexual pleasure certainly didn't begin in the 1960s. It has *always* been at the forefront of feminist inquiries. For a thorough look at sexuality in the postwar years, see Adams.

[6]The contemporary gay liberation movement emerged from the New Left as a unified force during this period (see Kinsman).

[7]The Kinsey reports (male sexual response in 1948 and female sexual response in 1953) definitely had an effect on public discourse on sexuality. As well, the 1950s also introduced two major additions to pop culture: rock'n'roll, and *Playboy* magazine.

[8]These discussions continued at the grassroots level. Mainstream feminists, the more visible, public "face" of the women's movement switched their focus to more political, policy-based issues.

[9]In 1985, the Women's Sexuality Conference was held in Toronto, announcing the resurgence of "feminists who wanted to get beyond the lesbian versus heterosexual divide and to welcome women of all sexual preferences, celibate and bisexual women included, to the pursuit of an enhanced understanding of women's sexuality through co-operative discussion and study" (Pierson 108).

[10]The complexities of the body have been addressed through the analysis of "the politics of hair." See Trass.

[11]It should be noted that Valverde (1995), Kinsman, and Ross have all illustrated that pro-sex feminism, gay/lesbian cultural formations, and the pursuit of sexual pleasure through "alternative" means have always existed in Canada, and they did not dissipate when the mainstream women's movement began to target violence and policy issues more actively in the mid-1970s. They just didn't get props.

[12]See AGENDER (Carleton University) and *Challenge the Assumptions!* Both illustrate a concern articulated in the mid-1980s, expressed in McCooey.

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DESI DI NARDO

Demise of Her

shhh
below me
somewhere
sidling stealthily
is a small, sullen speck
rearranging pictures of me
replacing me with shadows
perfecting most of my poses
slithering, slinking, slowly
she is frivolous, and fierce
she spies at the window
slyly, smugly by herself
snooping, staring
she is below me
sticking to walls
singing and smiling
consoled by her voice
sullying my space with
her serpentine presence
she will never know
she can never be me
because way down
below me, she
doesn't exist

Desi Di Nardo is a writer in Toronto. She has published a review and poetry in The Literary Review of Canada. *Currently, she is working on a novel and a collection of poetry.*