

## Editorial Transience & Permanence

This third issue of *Tiresias* has been longer in the making than the previous two, but we think it has been worth the wait. We not only received a record number of contributions from all across the continent, but we are also proud to count Prof. David M. Halperin as a contributor, to include an interview with the Uruguayan writer, singer and performer Dani Umpi, and to offer what we think is a very interesting, provocative and engaging array of articles (among them our first publication in Portuguese) on politics, sex and sexuality.

As we all know, if anything defines being a graduate student it is transience, not only because we all are, sooner or later, going to leave the place we have become familiar with and not often see friends and acquaintances we have grown used to interacting with, but more conspicuously because every project we start is or feels transitory: a seminar followed by another seminar, a paper by another paper, a chapter by another chapter. Overwhelmed by the increasing pressure of pursuing graduate studies and thinking about life thereafter, we turn to our graduate student colleagues to express our concern but, even if by sharing our similar experiences we find solace, support and inspiration, we mostly end up accepting that, given the working reality of the world, we are in a privileged position. And both—frustration and enthusiasm—are indeed valid.

As we were trying to think through the nature of this paradoxical situation, the experience of transience in graduate studies, an internal debate regarding our position and our role within academia came up. Are we considered workers and/or students? Are we being exploited or do we enjoy a privileged position? How do we reconcile our positions within academia? What is our role within academic

space and how does *Tiresias* develop such spirit as a force for change that, in turn, orients our work and relationships?

This year two seemingly unrelated events brought us face to face with just how transient life is for the non-tenured academic. One of the longest serving lecturers in our department was forced to leave our department after signing a three year contract because our same department refused to sponsor her for the green card necessary to fulfill that contract. As members of the department and co-workers with the Lecturers, we want to express our deep concern not only about a personal and labor problem but also about our goals as an academic institution. Second, our own graduate school, despite fierce opposition from its own graduate students, particularly our student instructor union, is still threatening to change enrollment policies. The proposed changes will be financially draining and generally detrimental to our community. We have to wonder who such policies serve, when clearly it is not us or the general educational standards of this university.

These incidents highlight our slippery position within academia. On the one hand, we enjoy an incredible privilege—the chance to study with brilliant professors and receive comprehensive healthcare at a time when so many find themselves unemployed and without their basic needs being met. On the other hand, this privilege does not always afford us a voice within university discourse and while we anticipate the material comforts of a middle class, tenured life, we don't have them yet. So while we see some benefits of the system, our ability to fully participate within the same system is less sure. Furthermore, while our current situation is only one of transience, we realize that the stability that we look forward to is not in the future of all of our colleagues and students.

*Tiresias* was partially created to reflect on this condition and experience of transience and has become, over the past two years, one space (out of many, hopefully) where we as

graduate students can share and discuss ideas, privileging thereby collective thinking over the individualistic nature of graduate research; privileging, that is, the *project* rather than the individuals, the permanent reflection rather than the transient condition. Moreover, we thought of *Tiresias* as a meeting place where “older” students could meet and work with “newer” ones, those who would then take over the project, rethink it, and modify it according to their interests, till they become the “older” students and “new” ones take over, so as to avoid *Tiresias* from ossifying: comfortableness and content are thought’s greatest threats.

Ultimately the job of the graduate student is to think and challenge. As *Tiresias* has shown us, there is no better way to do this than in community. While transient and not entirely sure of our position, we find that together, in solidarity with each other, students outside of our department and our many coworkers, lecturers and faculty alike, there is inspiration and strength to work towards a better academia.

