Review Editor's Introduction

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As I write this Introduction the 2008 Republican National Convention is drawing to a close. John McCain's selection of little-known Alaska Governor Sarah Palin has taken the pundits by surprise, injecting new dynamics into the Presidential contest, and furnishing proof that political life is riddled with contingency. At the same time, the selection further accentuates, and perhaps even reduces to absurdity, a theme that has been at the heart of this campaign season largely due to the *Democratic* party primaries and their down-to-the-wire contest between Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton—the politics of difference. If the Democratic contest demonstrated that the politics of race and gender are central not simply to the Democrats but to the U.S. as a whole, the Republican convention has made it all but inevitable that for the first time in the history of the U.S. an African-American has broken the color line in Presidential politics, a woman has broken the gender line in Republican Presidential politics, and come January 2009 there will be either an African-American man or an (Alaskan American) woman in the White House as either President or Vice-President. This is extraordinary. At the same time, before this contest plays out to its conclusion—long after this introduction goes to print, and before it reaches you—there will no doubt be much tortuous discussion—and also posturing and denunciation—of the politics of race and gender and of the ways that these identities intersect with broader claims of citizenship.

It is thus quite fortuitous—and wholly a result of editorial production schedules, another instance of contingency—that so many of the books under review in this issue of *Perspectives,* ranging across many of our subfields, deal with these themes. Our American Politics section features four books on gender and the state: *Gender, Race, and Nationalism in Contemporary Black Politics,* by Nikol G. Alexander-Floyd; *The Women's Movement Against Sexual Harassment,* by Carrie N. Baker; *In an Abusive State: How Neoliberalism Appropriated the Feminist Movement Against Sexual Violence,* by Kristin Bumiller, and *A Mother's Work: How Feminism, the Market, and Policy Shape Family Life,* by Neil Gilbert. Another three are featured in our Political Theory section: *Constitutional Context: Women and Rights Discourse in Nineteenth-Century America,* by Kathleen S. Sullivan; *Surrogate Motherhood and the Politics of Reproduction,* by Susan Markens, and *Freedom's Orphans: Contemporary Liberalism and the Fate of American Children,* by David L. Tubbs. These books make clear that across a broad range of issues–from criminal violence to labor market access to social service provision to family law to foundational questions of civil rights and public identity—gender is a fundamental dimension of our political life.

Bruce Baum's double-review in the Political Theory section makes clear the similar centrality of race (a theme featured in last issue's symposium on Katherine Kramer Walsh's *Talking About Race*). And our review of Carole Pateman and Charles W. Mills's new book, *Contract and Domination,* deals with the broader theme of marginalization and marginality in political life, and with the similarities, differences, and intersections between race and gender as principal lines of identity formation and political contestation in American politics and politics more generally (this theme was also central to this year's APSA Presidential Address by Dianne Pinderhughes, which will appear in a forthcoming issue of *Perspectives*). At stake in these discussions are broad questions about the possibility of universal claims of justice, and the promise of democratic citizenship to deliver meaningful forms of freedom (a theme developed in Anna Kirkland's *Fat Rights: Dilemmas of Difference and Personhood*) and more effective and beneficial forms of social order (a theme developed in a more empirical vein in Scott E. Page's *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies,* reviewed by former APSA President Elinor Ostrom).

These themes are developed with great sophistication in our two featured exchanges. Kathleen Arnold's *America's New Working Class: Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in a Biopolitical Age* and Anne Marie Smith's *Welfare Reform and Sexual Regulation* offer two very theoretical, and very different, accounts of the intersection of race, gender, class, and the welfare state. Arnold draws on European political theorists Georgio Agamben and Michel Foucault to consider the "biopolitical" mechanisms whereby the contemporary regulatory state both respond to and reinforces class, race, and gender subordination. Anne Marie Smith offers

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a more empirically-based account of the complexities of class, race and gender as they play out in political conflicts over welfare reform. Each writer reviews the other's book, and then responds to the other's review. The exchange highlights the possibilities of fruitful dialogue between different genres of political theory and between more philosophical and more empirical approaches to political science. It also underscores the continuing importance of the welfare state and its contestation (a theme also engaged by two books reviewed in our Comparative section, *Why Welfare States Persist: The Importance of Public Opinion in Democracies,* by Clem Brooks and Jeff Manza, and *The Political Future of Social Security in Aging Societies,* by Vincenzo Galasso).

Our featured Symposium centers on Paul M. Sniderman and Louk Hagendoorn's *When Ways of Life Collide: Multiculturalism and Its Discontents in the Netherlands,* a book that draws on sophisticated survey research methods to offer an explanation of the challenges facing the politics of multiculturalism in the Netherlands and in liberal democratic societies more generally. The essays by political theorist Will Kymlicka and by Jonathan Laurence and Robert Rohrschneider, both experts in different aspects of European politics, make clear that the politics of difference is likely to be a site of continuing disagreement in political science as well as in the broader society. They also make clear that it is possible to develop broader forms of mutual understanding among people who think differently, given the right situation and the inclination of individuals to move outside their zones of comfort. At present there appear to be precious few such situations and inclinations in the broader political world. Fortunately *Perspectives* is a venue in which such experiments can be tried, and their "civic virtue" can be redeemed. As always, I thank this issue's many reviewers and symposium participants, who exemplify what is possible when the scholarly "politics of difference" is practiced with seriousness and care. And a willingness, at least sometimes, to push the envelope.

On this note, I offer special thanks to Simon Stowe for his terrific double-review of two very different, and very interesting, books on music and politics. When first Charles Hersch's *Subversive Sounds: Race and the Birth of Jazz in New Orleans* and then Bob W. White's *Rumba Rules: The Politics of Dance Music in Mobutu's Zaire* came across my desk, I knew instantly that I wanted them to be reviewed together. While I have never met Stowe, a recent piece of his suggested to me that he just might be the person for the job. So I asked. And he answered, producing a fine piece of writing in record time. Proof that our profession truly is a scientific discipline based on careful training and grounded knowledge, but also an intellectual community that can value both writing about art and the art of writing.

I close by noting that one of my terrific Editorial Assistants, Rebekah Tromble, has left us for the year, to undertake her exciting dissertation field research—funded by prestigious fellowships—in Central Eurasia. Before leaving Rebekah worked like a demon to get the Comparative section into more than perfect shape. She also helped me to organize forthcoming symposia on books by Robert Bates and by the late Charles Tilly. We already miss Rebekah. Fortunately Carolyn Holmes has stepped in without missing a beat, to join our experienced team of Luke Mergner, Margot Morgan, and James Moskowitz. And the beat goes on.

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