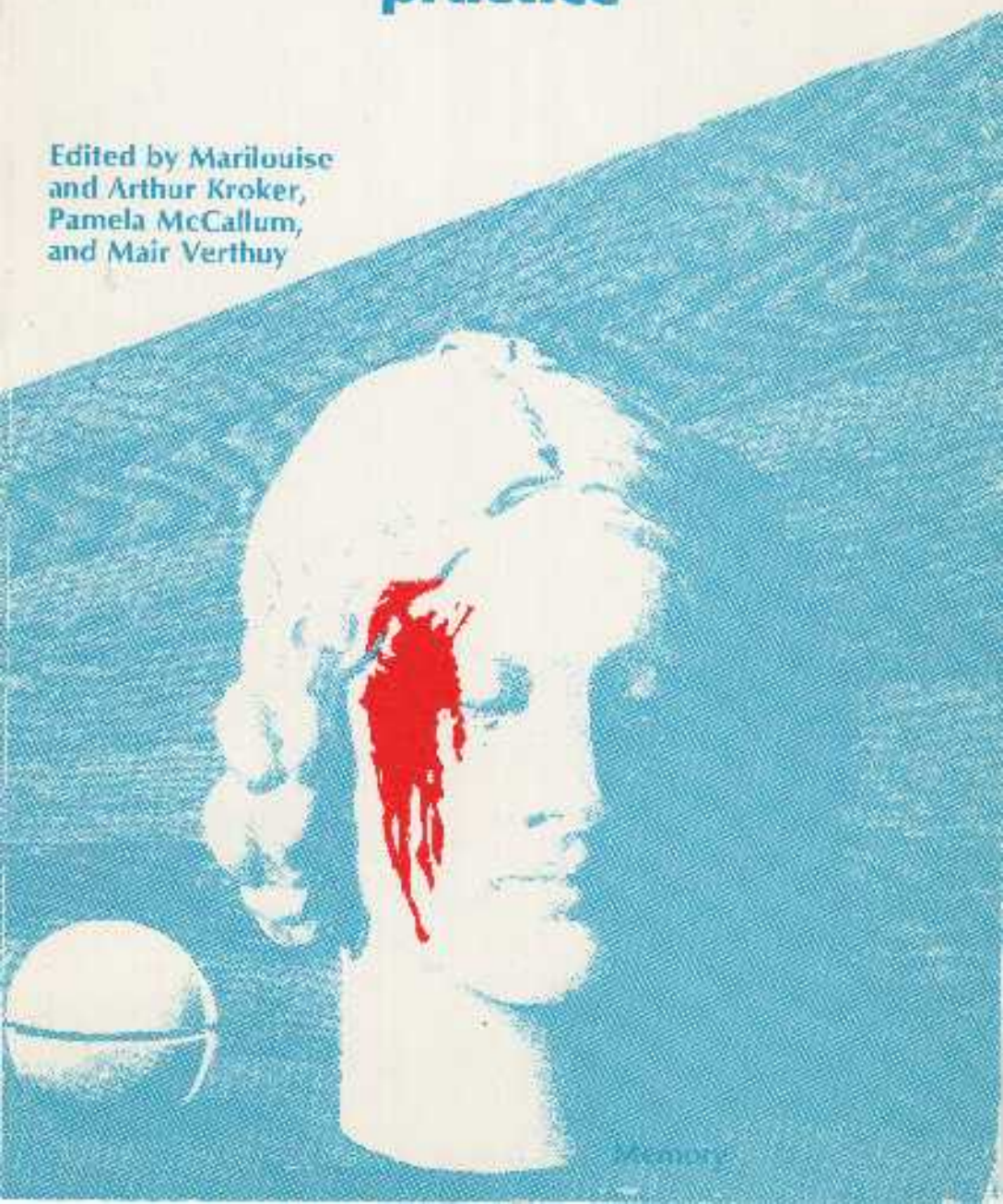
FEMINISM NOW

theory and practice

Edited by Marilouise and Arthur Kroker, Pamela McCallum, and Mair Verthuy



FEMINISM NOW

theory and practice

Edited by Marilouise and Arthur Kroker, Pamela McCallum and Mair Verthuy

CultureTexts series

Montréal

Published simultaneously as the *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory/Revue canadianne de théorie politique et sociale,* Volume 9, Numbers 1-2 (1985).
ISSN 0380-9420

New World Perspectives
7141 rue Sherbrooke ouest
Montréal, Québec H4B 1R6

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Title: Feminism now: theory and practice

(CultureTexts)

ISBN 0-920393-03-9 (bound). – ISBN 0-920393-01-2 (pbk.)

I. Feminism – Addresses, essays, lectures
I. Kroker, Marilouise
II. Series

HQ1111.F44 1985 305.4'2 C85-090066-2

Typeset at Composition G.L., Inc. Montréal,
Printed at The University of Toronto Press, Toronto
Printed and bound in Canada.

Contents / Sommaire

PREFACE

The Phallocentric Mood: "bored but hyper"

What's feminism now in the age of ultracapitalism? What's the relationship of feminist critique to the much-celebrated and perfectly *cachet* world of postmodernism?

Everything is being blasted apart by the mediascape. The violent, advertising machine gives us a whole, schizophrenic world of electric women for a culture whose dominant mode of social cohesion is the shopping mall; whose main psychological type is the electronic individual, and where all the old (patriarchal) signs of cultural authority collapse in the direction of androgyny. What makes, the *Eurythmics*, Cindy Lauper, and Carol Pope with *Rough Trade* so fascinating is that they play just at the edge of power and seduction, just at that zero-point where sex as electric image is amplified, teased out a bit in a kind of ironic exhibitionism, and then reversed against itself. These are artists in the business of committing sign crimes against the big signifier of Sex. If it's true that we're finally leaving the obsolete world of the modern and entering postmodernism, then the earliest clues to the geography of this new terrain is what happens to images of women in the simulacrum of the media system. And why? Just because images of power and sexuality in the age of ultracapitalism are an early warning system to what's going on as we are processed through the fully realized technological society. *Power and sexual oppression*: that's the electronic junkyard of rock video, from the Sadeian sneer of Billy Idol to the masturbatory visuals of *Duran Duran. Power and seduction*: that's the dismembered mediascape of women as objects — women as cigarettes, beer bottles, perfume, cars, even bathtubs and weight machines. The art critic, Craig Owens, might write in *The Anti-Aesthetic* that "there is an apparent crossing of the feminist critique of patriarchy and the postmodern critique of representation", but if that is so, then there's also a dark side to this happy intersection of critiques. And that dark side is the real world of media, power, and sexuality.

The Calvin Klein ad says it best. In an ironic reversal of the sexual stereotypes of the 1950s, it flips the traditional (patriarchal) images of women and men. It's man as a gorgeous hunk of flesh (the model's actually a descendant of Napoleon: that's sweet revenge for a lot of pain); and the woman, well she's ultracapitalism triumphant: a packaged and seductive image of women initiating and dominating sex and, as Bruce Weber (the photographer of the ad says), "it's woman even as protector." Sure, a little staged sex for a little staged communication: electronic woman flashing out of the media pulse with a little humanity. This ad is perfectly

cynical just because it emancipates, by reversing, the big signifiers of sex (woman as a '50s man: so much for an unconfused critique of the representation of gender in the advertising system) to sell commodities (perfume in this case). But it's also a wonderful example of what Andy Warhol in *Interview* has recently nominated as the dominant mood of the times: "BORED BUT HYPER". What's the fate of feminism then in the age of postmodernism? It's *processed* feminism: that's the radical danger, but also the real promise of feminist critique in technological society. The electronic machine eats up images of women: even *(most of all?)* emancipation from the patriarchal world of gender ideology is simultaneously experienced as domination *and* freedom. For feminists in the mediascape: it's no longer "either/or", but "both/and". Feminism is the quantum physics of postmodernism.

"blood from the head"

René Magritte's painting, *Memory*, captures perfectly the paradox, irony and ambivalence of the feminist challenge to an age which is typified by the death of the social and by the triumph of culture. *Memory* is postmodernism *par excellence*: here there is no hint of representational logic. Everything is schizophrenic (the disconnection of objects and meaning), chillingly silent, and bleak to the hyper. It's life on the fast track of schizoid images. But there's also a radical edge to *Memory*, and that's just what makes this painting the mark of a real transgression against the alien landscape of the processed world. In the midst of the real consumer world of object consciousness (Magritte's surreal and dream-like imagination is just a precursor of television *as* culture), blood flows from the head of the woman. It's just this sign of blood (memory) flowing from the head of the woman which is a silent and haunting reminder of just that which has been lost by the triumph of technicisme in twentieth-century experience. Everything in *Memory* screams out *our* imprisonment in a disembodied and inhuman landscape of dead images, but the sign of blood from the head also speaks of the possibility of *embodied remembrance*, signifying both the trauma of postmodernism and the wound of memory which refuses to close.

Feminism Now: it's just like Magritte's brilliant depiction of blood from the head as rupture and transgression. *Memory*: that's the radical promise of feminist critique which is, against the global, cultural amnesia of the modern century, the historical remembrance of *temps perdu* and of better possibilities not yet achieved. *Memory*, of both a past yet not written and of a future yet not dreamed, is the truly, and perhaps *only*, radical political terrain in postmodernim. In this age of culture triumphant, when we have TV screens for heads, Sony Walkman's for ears, and when the real (embodied) world is just a poor and disappointing approximation of the (disembodied) hyper-reality of the processed world of high technology, it's "blood from the head" as the cut which marks the promise and peril of feminism now.

The essays on feminist theory and practice in this volume are in the nature of the wound that refuses to close against patriarchalism in postmodernist guise. They represent a calling back to feminism as a universal politics, the rupturing of the silence of the suppressed as "we objects object", and the writing of the text of a new feminist discourse.

Marilouise and Arthur Kroker
Montréal

AN INTERVIEW WITH SUSAN SONTAG

© 1982 Thomas Victor

Since the mid-sixties, Susan Sontag has been a highly visible figure on the New York intellectual scene. Her first book was a novel, The Benefactor *(1963), and since then she has published two other works of fiction, a second novel,* Death Kit *(1967), and a collection of short stories,* I, etcetera *(1978). However, Sontag's reputation is based primarily on her essays which have done a great deal to propagate her enthusiasms for European writers, thinkers, directors: Levi-Strauss, Barthes, Resnais, Godard, Benjamin, Canetti, to name a few. Sontag is persuasive not only because she is a good writer, but also because she conveys an impassioned involvement with her subject. To a variety of cultural concerns, Sontag brings the same rigorous scrutiny. Her trenchant analysis often takes the form of regroupings of familiar points of reference. New lists, new contexts for quotations are themselves creators of novel ideas, as Foucault says of Borges, "breaking up all the ordered surfaces and all the planes with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things."*

Nonetheless, there are a number of paradoxes in Sontag's position as essayist which quickly become apparent. Sontag is fascinated by "the modern" in art and thought, but deeply suspicious of many aspects of modern life, as is especially clear in her best book of social criticism, On Photography. *Sontag prefers artists and thinkers who are resistant to easy assimilation by their audiences, but a good part of her writing career has been*

spent "explaining" difficult, recalcitrant writers, like Artaud. She is known as an interpreter of European, particularly French, writing in North America, but she denounces interpretation in an early essay, the title essay of her first collection, On Interpretation *(1966). In "life" as in "art" she repudiates the interpretive stance.* Illness as Metaphor *(1978) is an extended diatribe against those who would "interpret" tuberculosis or, especially, cancer as physical manifestations of psychic conflicts. In her essays Sontag avoids the first person singular, though her writing is very personal; in her fiction, however, she enjoys playing with narrative voice and persona, as is clear from just the title of her story collection.*

These paradoxes do not diminish Sontag's work; instead they contribute to the creative tension between aestheticism and social criticism, sensuality and intellectual rigour. This tension is especially evident in On Photography *where she diagnoses the "image-ridden" nature of our society and the fundamentally aestheticizing nature of still-images (as opposed to narrative, which can explain reality).*

In the last two decades, Sontag has published her essays primarily in Partisan Review *and* The New York Review of Books, *and they have been collected in three volumes:* Against Interpretation *(1966),* Styles of Radical Will *(1969), and* Under the Sign of Saturn *(1980). In 1982 her publisher, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux brought out* A Susan Sontag Reader, *an unusual consecration for a writer in mid career.*

We first interviewed Susan Sontag when she was in Montreal for a reading in October. We spoke to her again at her home in New York in early December.

Eileen Manion
Dawson College

Sherry Simon
Concordia University

* * * * * * * *

CJPST:

In your essay on Barthes you write that he "repeatedly disavows the vulgar roles of system-builder, authority, mentor, expert, in order to reserve for himself the privileges and freedoms of delectation". Would you say that this description applies equally to your own intellectual stance?

Sontag:

Well . . . yes. There's a lot of self-vindication in some of the last essays I've written. They are very personal estimates of people whose work has been important to me, though not necessarily important influences. I had not read Barthes when I wrote *The Benefactor* or the first essays in *Against Interpretation.* When I discovered Barthes he was above all for me a model of density and passionateness. There is no waste in Barthes' writing. I don't know another writer

who is so exciting to read, always. The essay I wrote on Barthes took me six full months to write and I think it's one of the best essays I've ever written. His work mattered to me a lot and I feel very haunted by him. He is the one French writer to have emerged in the post-war period who I am sure will remain a permanent part of our literature, as a writer — not as a semiotician of literary theorist.

CJPST:

In many of your essays you avoid the use of the first-person. One has the impression that you speak rather for a community. Is this the result of a conscious decision?

Sontag:

Where is that voice coming from? I don't think it's the voice of a community, at least not the sort of community I could take a census of. In fact the essays are extremely personal and yet operate on a strategy by which the first person is renounced. Eventually this formula becomes impossible and I'm finding now that I can't write them anymore. I've been asked to write an essay on Sartre for the *New York Review of Books* and at first I refused because I thought the project was too easy (and I'm glutton for punishment). In fact six months later I'm still working on the essay. Even a relatively easy topic like Sartre is becoming too difficult, because there's a first person who wants to be born in those essays and can't be. The essays are imploding in a way that makes them extremely difficult to engender. That's what's driving me back to fiction, not reluctantly. I have to come out of the closet of the third person and speak in a more direct way. On the other hand the last essays have become more personal. They are portraits which are in some sense self-portraits: the essays on Canetti, Benjamin, Barthes. And the Sartre essay is a kind of anti-self-portrait.

CJPST:

Do you think this problem has something to do with the fragmentation of the left in the States, that there is less of a community for you to represent?

Sontag:

I think that there is generally less of a community and that the fragmentation of the left is a symptom. I think that it is less and less possible to take for granted certain cultural references. That's what a community is: taking for granted certain assumptions, not having to start from zero every time. This is no longer true. The decline of education in North America and I suppose in Western Europe makes it harder to have a common body of references. You know that you can't make references to the Classics any longer and less and less to the English classics even.

CJPST:

You were one of the first to begin the process of importing contemporary French thought to America. What do you think the balance-sheet looks like now?

Sontag:

I didn't think of myself as importing. I thought it was more interesting to write about things people didn't know about than what they did. When I became aware that I was in fact "importing", I stopped doing it. The first French writer I knew well was Gide whom I read in my early teens. I in fact taught myself French by reading with a dictionary when I was about fourteen. I went to Paris for the first time when I was 18 and then, starting in my late 20s, I began to go a lot so that by my mid-30s I was mainly living there. So during that period (the 60s and early 70s) it seemed natural to write about things I was excited about. This included Godard, Lévi-Strauss. Now the new things happening in France don't interest me.

CJPST:

You're not interested in Post-structuralist French writers, then?

Sontag:

Their writing is not so interesting to me, but I'm not sure I have the basis to make the proper judgement. I know that I don't feel the need for this kind of theorizing. I feel that I've had enough theoretical speculation to last me a lifetime and I rather prefer the sources of that thought. For instance I'm extremely interested in the Russian formalists and have been for many years. I'm more drawn to their writing, which is expressive and literary, than to writing which is extremely academic or jargon-ridden. What I like about Barthes is that he is first of all a writer. When I read someone like Kristeva I feel that the academic cast of it is a barrier to me. On the other hand it does give you a big machine, a language, with which people can approach texts. I had the experience of teaching a seminar on first-person writing recently at Brown University. The students who had been trained in French critical theory wrote incredibly assertive, self-confident papers, full of ideas about how to use these texts. the students who had not been exposed to this approach simply paraphrased them. They are not even given training in the old-fashioned type of philological scholarship (like that of Auerbach, for instance, who is still a model to me). In other words I think part of the success which Structuralist or post-Structuralist thought in critical theory has had in literary studies in American universities is due to a theoretical vacuum.

CJPST:

At a 1982 Town Hall meeting to support Solidarity in Poland, you distanced yourself from allies on the left by criticizing American intellectuals' tolerance of repression in Communist countries. Have you been led to re-evaluate your own work in light of the ideas you expressed in this speech?

Sontag:

In fact the reaction to the speech was a media blow-up. I was not expressing new ideas but rather feelings I'd had since the mid-70s when I started to meet a lot of people, like Joseph Brodsky, who were in exile from Communist countries. I had to believe what they said about how terrible conditions were in these countries. The 60s (when I visited many of these countries) had been a great time of hope even for those in the Eastern bloc. All this ended in 1968 with the invasion of Czechoslovakia.

I had a very discouraging experience with an essay in which I was to discuss the relationship between intellectuals and the idea of revolution or revolutionary power. I abandoned it. It's quicksand! This was the first time in my life that I was bothered by the question of audience. The experience at Town hall made me realize that you can't limit your audience. When I gave that speech it was directed at a particular audience and I fully expected to be booed. When the speech appeared in the media it took on a different meaning. And so I began to think that if I'm writing about the romance of Communism, about intellectuals, who am I writing for? I'm not interested in giving aid and comfort to the neo-Conservatives. It's a crucifying dilemma. I was finally defeated by it. I spent a year and a half writing hundreds of pages and gave up. Since Town hall it's been a disaster and I'm still digging my way out of the rubble.

CJPST:

How important is feminism now to your work?

Sontag:

I certainly identify myself as a feminist. I have been told that I am a "natural" feminist, someone who was born a feminist. In fact I was quite blind to what the problem was: I couldn't understand why anyone would hesitate to do what they wanted to do just because they were told that women didn't do such things. The feminist movement has been important to me because it's made me feel less odd and also because it has made me understand some of the pressures on women which I was lucky enough to have escaped, perhaps because of my eccentricity or the oddness of my upbringing.

CJPST:

In the final paragraph of *On Photography* you say: "If there can be a better way for the real world to include the one of images, it will require an ecology not only of real things but of images as well." Do you have any thoughts about how we could develop such an ecology?

Sontag:

The last sentence of a book is, of course, where you have to stop. And the

answer to this question really involves a new argument which is also a political argument. The question of the social uses of photography opens out into the very largest issues of the self, of the relationship to community, to reality. Jean Baudrillard is a writer who addresses this question of the ultimate implications of the consumer society.

CJPST:

What do you think of Jean Baudrillard's work?

Sontag:

I'm very interested in his themes and particularly like his essay on the Centre Pompidou and the function of the museum in modern society. I'm very interested in Baudrillard's perspective, extremely rhetorical descriptions. I like his eye. I can't say that I come away with any sense of alternatives, because the way he describes always carries with it an imputation of inexorability. That tendency of social thought to generalize, to describe a leading tendency in a society in such a way that it seems that everything falls within its iron laws, is very common. Of course our own experience tells us that life is not as monochrome as these thinkers depict it. On the other hand they are very valuable because they alert us to transformations we are likely to take for granted. I belong rather to a more classical tradition of social analysis. Max Weber was a very important influence for me. I can't say I know how to change the society, but I share the feeling that this society is full of technology which depersonalizes people, which seems to drain a sense of reality from our lives. It's full of a lot of other things too. What interests me is to understand the nature of the modern. Ultimately that's what the essays in *On Photography* are about: another way of talking about the modern.

CJPST:

In *I, etcetera* one character says "My skull is crammed with quotations" and another says "We are ruled by quotations". Do you have a particular strategy for using quotations in your work?

Sontag:

What seems distinctively modern as a unit of thought, of art, of discourse is the fragment; and the quotation is one kind of fragment. I became aware, after the fact, that I was fascinated by quotations and lists. And then I noticed that other people were fascinated by quotations and lists: people as different as Borges and Walter Benjamin, Novalis and Godard. Using quotations was at first quite spontaneous for me, but then this use became strengthened through reflection. But originally this practice came out of temperament. I agree with Nietzsche and Oscar Wilde that ultimately ideas come out of a temperament or a sensibility, that they are a crystallization or a precipitation of temperament. It's not that you make up your ideas to justify your temperament but that it's the

temperament first. In the late essays collected in *Under the Sign of Saturn* I ended up writing portraits which seemed like assessments of the body of a work but are in fact portraits of temperaments that express themselves in art. I'm interested in the possibility of fiction which straddles narrative and essay. A novel is a "baggy monster", as Henry James said. You can include essay elements in fiction; this is a very nineteenth century practice. Balzac will stop to describe the sociology of a place or profession; Tolstoy will talk about ideas of history. That notion of including essay elements is very familiar, but there are more seductive modern examples: Central European novelists, like Broch.

CJPST:

Are you working on that kind of fiction now?

Sontag:

In fact after finishing the Sartre essay I'll be going to Cambridge, Mass. to direct a play by Kundera at the American Repertory Theatre.

CJPST:

In Kundera's last novel, *The unbearable lightness of being*, he suggests that Western intellectuals are in some way "condemned" to a kind of necessary but futile theatrical activity when they question political power. What do you perceive as the role of intellectuals to influence political events?

Sontag:

What Kundera's has to say is so shaped by his own historical situation that he comes as a messenger of bad news. His own posture was frozen ten years ago and things have changed very rapidly since then. Kundera is addressing a situation which is already obsolete. There is an understandable vindictiveness in people who come from Communist countries. They want to keep telling us that we were fools to think that we could make radical changes in our society. Though I understand their dismay, respect their suffering and don't understand the gullibility of some people who don't take in how repressive these societies are, I still think it's important to keep people of all kinds as active in civic matters as possible. Currently intellectuals in Western Europe and North America are extremely demoralized and shaken by the rise of a virulent conservative tendency (which some have even joined.) The way in which a certain kind of political idealism has been discredited and scorned makes the danger not that intellectuals keep on making fools of themselves, formulating political opinions when they might not be as informed as they might be, but that they retreat and leave politics to the professionals.

CJPST:

Your writing is impassioned and risk-taking . . .

Sontag:

It doesn't feel like risk-taking but I know that it is. I've been at it long enough to know the trouble you get into. I write essays first because I have a passionate relationship to the subject and second because the subject is one that people are not talking about. The writers or artists I write about are not necessarily those I care most about (Shakespeare is still my favourite writer) but those whose work I feel has been neglected.

CJPST:

Has the reception of your work influenced the way you write?

Sontag:

I'm more cautious about what I write. When I wrote *Against Interpretation* I was very innocent about the way work is used. I wrote those essays for the most part very quickly and they reflected some current interests and discoveries. In my own mind I had a model of the transmission of literary work which, at the time when I was starting to publish, was becoming obsolete. I thought there were such things as "little magazines" with a small, passionate, educated readership. When I was in my mid-teens, going to high school in Los Angeles, my dream was to come to New York and write for *Partisan Review* and be read by 10,000 people. Well I did come to New York and write for *Partisan Review*. But it turns out that already in the 60s among the 10,000 people who read the Review were a lot of editors for perhaps *Time* magazine, or *Newsweek* or *Playboy* who would want to take the work, recycle and amplify it. When you see your 40-page essay turned into a "hot tip" in one paragraph in *Newsweek*, you get anxious about the way your writing has been used. I have not liked many of the transformations and adaptations of my work. The work is not allowed to remain itself: it is duplicated. It's almost as if this is the fundamental procedure in modern society: duplication and recycling. Therefore when you are writing, you are — from society's point of view — only producing the first version which will then be processed and recycled... We live in a world of copies and we're fascinated when we encounter the originals (in a museum, for instance). In a lot of writing or intellectual discourse we're starting to use that model: "Oh, this is where it comes from!" I would like to concentrate on work which is more resistant to that procedure, as I think fiction is.

One of the things I've been thinking about a lot this year is the word processor. Most writers I know have switched to word processors. I haven't but I'm very curious about why people like it so much. I think it has something to do with the fact that at last writing, which has been such an old-fashioned, artisanal activity, even on a typewriter, has now entered the central domain of modern experience which is that of making copies, being involved in the world of duplicates and machine-mediated activities.

CJPST:

In your Artaud essay, you seem to be attracted to his writing precisely because he resisted easy assimilation.

Sontag:

There I was treating a more old-fashioned version of the question of reception by talking about the domestication of something which was basically wild. Some of the exuberance of my essay-writing has gone because I'm worried about the uses they could serve. Shortly after I wrote the essay on Canetti he won the Nobel Prize and a number of people said: "Oh, you predicted he'd get the Prize". That sort of reception — where everything is assimilated to the world of celebrity — makes me dream of becoming a more recalcitrant, harder to assimilate writer.

CJPST:

Would that be a writer who couldn't be quoted?

Sontag:

No, you can always be quoted. Quotation is a method of appropriation which is invincible, I think. It's not a procedure which displeases me, contrary to recycling. The quote is always fascinating because it changes out of context, becomes different and sometimes more mysterious. It has a directness and assertiveness it may not have had in the original. I think the quality of inaccessibility, the mystery, is important — that whatever matters can't be taken in on just one reading or one seeing. This is certainly a quality of the little of art that lasts.

Editors' Note: Susan Sontag read but did not edit the interview.

FEMINIST RADICALISM IN THE 1980's (I)

Angela Miles

Introduction

Many feminist radicals believe that men's dominance of women precedes the emergence of class domination and is the most profound condition of alienation, the deepest division of humanity within and from itself, upon which all other domination is built. If this is true the emergence of women acting consciously against their oppression holds the promise of a more complete challenge to domination than has ever been possible before. In so far as it articulates this challenge feminism represents, not only the interests of a new pressure group, but the potential for a new and broader progressive politics in general. A significant tendency of the women's movement has persistently claimed this large historical role for feminism. Its vision and forms of practice have, from the beginning, constituted a major break with the male defined world and politics. And it has presumed feminism to be a politique entier rather than a subcategory of any other politics.

The article published here is the second half of a longer monograph entitled *Feminist Radicalism in the Eighties* to be published by *CultureTexts* in Spring 1985. The first half of the monograph describes the history of this tendency of the women's movement from its inception. It thus traces the developments in theory and practice which laid the basis for the emergence, in the 1980's, of the kind of universal feminist politics that this tendency of the movement has always believed to be both possible and necessary. In this analysis special emphasis is placed on the emerging recognition of women's specificity rather than sameness with men as the basis for unique feminist values and a feminist vision which can:

— Challenge male claims of universality;
— Transform and broaden male definitions of human nature and such classic progressive values as justice, freedom and equality;
— Give real substance to the notion of non-alienated man [1] and bring it, for the first time, from a distant abstract goal to a concrete guide to practice.

The part of the monograph which follows below describes the universal feminist politics that the recognition of women's specificity as well as equality has made possible and is developing today in theory and practice.*

The Theory

In 1970 in her book, *The Dialectic of Sex,* Shulamith Firestone attempted to develop the kind of dynamic, historical and materialist analysis of sexual oppression that marxism had provided of class exploitation. Since she argued that sexual domination precedes and underlies class domination her analysis was not intended to simply parallel or accompany marxist analysis but to transcend it in a "materialist view of [the whole of] history based on sex."[2] This new understanding would open the way for a more throughgoing attack on domination in which active and conscious women — feminists — would be central agents. In this theoretical project she articulated the presumptions and intentions of feminist radicals of the time who expected to "go further" than male radicals and the New Left had done in their struggle for liberation. Her claims for the significance of sexual oppression and the necessarily central role of feminism in any struggle against domination also reflect a deep underlying belief that has persisted among feminist radicals since that time.

But Shulamith Firestone, in those early days, without the subsequent lessons of feminist practice and without the specifically feminist values that have developed in the intervening period, could not fully realise her project. Without the alternative values that emerge when the specific nature of women's activity and characteristics are taken into account as well as women's status as an oppressed group, her critique had to remain partial. She could not challenge man's definition of liberation, authenticity, humanity, nature, society or alienation, or the shape of his knowledge, technology, and science. Rather, her challenges remained piecemeal and did not amount to a fully fledged alternative perspective.[3]

---

* Other publications in which I have analysed the political importance of the feminist recognition of women's specificity include: "The Integrative Feminine Principle in North American Feminist Radicalism: Value Basis of a New Feminism, "*Women's Studies International Quarterly* IV, 4 (1981); "Ideological Hegemony in Political Discourse: Women's Specificity and Equality," in *Feminism and Canada,* Angela Miles and Geraldine Finn eds., Black Rose Books 1982.

Her work must stand, like the practice of the period, as a courageous and creative statement of intent and of faith. Feminist radicals of that time defined the depth and breadth of the feminist project and did not flinch at the enormity of the task. Since that time many feminists have sustained the commitment to that task in their refusal to compromise in the face of apparent contradictions, painful political lessons, frightening uncertainty and insistent reductionist calls of other feminists.[4] They have recognized the increasing variety of their personal, political, social and spiritual practice as important building blocks of an as yet unformed new politics. And, in fact, it is exactly this diversity of arenas and of participants that provided the ground for a specific female voice and female associated values to emerge.

This, in turn, has enabled the feminist critique of patriarchy to become an immanent critique which is at the same time a vision of the future and a basis for strategic development. This critique challenges marxism's claim to universality with a vision grounded in women's specificity and successfully addresses the question of the origins of domination itself in analyses that incorporate feminists' recognition of biology and psychology in a transformed and broadened historical materialism.

The question of the origins of domination has always been a more central question for feminists than for marxists. And the answer to this question is a crucially determinant factor in the shape of emerging politics. The fact that women's oppression is so deeply structured and rationalized in terms of their ability to give birth and that women's resistance is so immediately met by powerful socio-biological opposition means that feminists have dealt centrally with questions of biology. From Simone de Beauvoir, Juliet Mitchell and Shulamith Firestone's escape from biology to Susan Griffin and Adrienne Rich's embrace of biology, feminist theory has always explicitly recognized its importance.

Feminists' deep interest in the question why men* dominate each other and women has meant that they have also consistently included a psychological component in their analysis. Marxists who have addressed the psychological aspects of oppression have mainly asked why men* are psychologically vulnerable to domination. For they tend to presume that the question of why men* dominate is answered by the existence of surplus value. Some feminist analysis is satisfied with a similarly inadequate position, answering simply that men* dominate women and each other because they have the resources, or in order to protect their privileges. But unless one accepts the socio-biological or liberal notion of innately aggressive or competitive, acquisitive man* it must remain problematic why the existence of surplus or other resources for domination are actually used by some to dominate others.

Feminists faced with oppression by husbands, lovers, brothers and sons have been forced to deal with this question in ways that marxists have not. The result has been the attention to psychological factors evidenced by references throughout the literature to men's ego needs, fear of castration, womb envy, fear of women, birth envy and so on.[5] In the absence of a fully fledged theory these biological and psychological insights were often reductionist and earned

frequent marxist dismissal as idealist, psychologist or biologically determinist. But the biological and psychological themes represent a feminist awareness, based on lived experience, of the depth and complexity of relations of domination. Women's experience is a fine protection against the kind of economism that has bedeviled marxism and the psychological and biological themes have been important in the feminist reconstitution of theory beyond marxist materialism.

This feminist theory is neither monolithic nor complete but is beginning to emerge today in many forms and forums under the impetus of the increasingly complex practice of an expanding and diverse women's movement.[6] Mary O'Brien's book *The Politics of Reproduction* and Nancy Hartsock's *Money, Sex and Power: Toward a Feminist Historical Materialism* are two very different, yet surprisingly complementary works which clearly illustrate the nature of this new theory and the direction of its future development. The writers are both activists writing from questions that have arisen in their practice and that of others. They argue that theoretical work is essential to feminist political development and recognize at the same time that their own work, and indeed all theory, is ultimately rooted in practice. In fact the striking parallels which will become evident in their analyses, are eloquent testimony to this "living unity of theory and practice"[7] since both authors were unaware of the other's work at the time of writing.

Both are concerned not merely to analyse women but to reanalyse the world and in the process to contribute to the reconstitution of radical theory and radical practice in general. Mary O'Brien seeks a "theoretical basis for a feminism which can transform the world . . . a feminist praxis which has as its aim the making of a future, which is the making of history."[8] Nancy Hartsock seeks "to understand the gender as well as class dimension of domination[9] (in) a retheorization of power . . . which could . . . lead toward the constitution of a more complete and thoroughgoing human community."[10]

Both writers proceed by demonstrating that all civilized thinking in its varied forms, from Greece through Hegel and Marx, advanced capitalism and Freud, Marcuse and the existentialists, has been organized around the unexamined assumption of an essential and hierarchical dualism. They identify this dualism as the hallmark of patriarchal thought and deny its previously unchallenged universalism in an immanent critique which argues that dualistic world views are grounded only in male experience. They reflect man's* condition, not the human condition.[11]

But male ideology like bourgeois ideology not only masks/inverts but also creates/shapes reality. These feminists, then, deny that dualism is inevitable or essential to the human condition while recognizing that it has been men's* actual experience of that condition and has in fact shaped our world from the beginning of recorded time:

> The experience of the ruling group cannot be dismissed as simply false. This experience, because of the hegemony of that group, sets the dynamics of the social relations in which all parties are forced to participate (therefore) . . . a community grounded on a sexuality structured by violence, domination and death are (sic) made real for everyone.[12]

In locating the roots of dualism and domination in men's* lived experience of the world Mary O'Brien and Nancy Hartsock develop a materialist analysis of patriarchy. But theirs is a transformed materialism which incorporates and indeed privileges the relations of reproduction over those of production as the sight of a fuller and more developed analysis of the world. Mary O'Brien speaks of "two necessary processes in the experiential matrix of human nature . . . — the necessities to produce and reproduce"[13] and criticizes the "one-sidedness"[14] of Marx who ignored the latter. But hers is not a dualistic analysis which simply adds a parallel system of reproductive domination to Marx's picture as the socialist-feminist economic analyses have done. Instead, she "extends dialectical materialism to give a synthesized account of both poles of human necessity (in a) feminist theory of historical process which can transcend the unsatisfactory reductionism which has bedeviled male-stream thought."[16] For Nancy Hartsock, too, an analysis encompassing reproduction provides a broader and more universal understanding than male theory and ideology can offer for "beneath the epistemological level of production . . . one encounters the epistemological level of reproduction . . . a level at which a more encompassing and insistent historical materialism may be created."[17]

Shulamith Firestone also insisted, against Simone de Beauvoir's acceptance of "a priori (dualistic) categories of thought and existence,"[18] that these categories are not essential to human existence as such. Instead, she argued, they "sprang from the sexual division itself . . . Biology itself — procreation — is at the origins of dualism."[19] For her, "the natural reproductive difference between the sexes led directly to the first division of labour . . . (But) the 'natural' is not necessarily a 'human' value"[20] and we can escape from it today.

By locating the original dualism in biology and accepting male/female dualism as natural rather than constructed, Shulamith Firestone accepted patriarchal dualism as a true reflection of the world and had to pose her struggle for liberation against biology and nature. Hers was, in the end, a biological rather than materialist analysis. In contrast current integrative feminist theory refuses to accept that dualism (male/female or any other) is natural any more than it is essential. Mary O'Brien and Nancy Hartsock explain the denial of human and historical status to reproductive activity and to women as a central expression, institutionalization and protection of a dualism which reflects only men's* experience of reality. In reclaiming reproductive activity as a human process which provides a material substructure of history they show that the "material base of dualism is not static, brute, unchanging, ahistorical or inhuman."[21]

Men's denial of reproduction and the female in a series of theoretical and institutionalized dualisms (between culture and nature, public and private,

death and birth, life and necessity, mind and body, soul and flesh, emotion and intellect, subject and object) in fact "translates [and creates] *male* experience of separation . . . into a priori universal truth."[22] But it is not a true universal, for women's different lived experience of reproduction, motherhood and the sexual division of labour offers the material basis for a more integrated relationship to the world and others, and the potential, in this historical period, of an alternative consciousness and struggle for a non-alienated world.[23]

The grand re-visionings of human history and human struggle that Mary O'Brien and Nancy Hartsock present are closely argued in dialogue with the whole tradition of western political thought and major preceding feminist theory. It is impossible here to give any sense of the subtlety of their arguments or the complexity and depth of the detailed underpinnings of their meta-theory. Even so, the following schematic presentation will illustrate the radical and original nature of both critiques and the striking differences and similarities in these two attempts to build a feminist materialism which can sustain a universal feminist politics.

Mary O'Brien grounds men and women's different consciousness in their materially different experience of the process of reproduction. Men experience reproduction chiefly in terms of the alienation of their seed. While for women reproduction is an experience of mediated labour which situates them in time and integrates their biological, emotional and intellectual capacities.

Women's reproductive consciousness is continuous and integrative for it is mediated within the reproductive process. "At the biological level, reproductive labour is a synthesizing and mediating act. It confirms women's unity with nature and mother and child; but it is also a *temporal* mediation between the cyclical time of nature and unilinear genetic time. Woman's reproductive consciousness is a consciousness that the child is hers, but also a consciousness that she herself was born of a woman's labour, that labour confirms genetic coherence and species continuity."[24] Male reproductive consciousness on the other hand is splintered and discontinuous. The alienation of his seed separates him from natural genetic continuity so his is a consciousness of contradiction, of a series of opposites which cannot be mediated within the reproductive process. Men* must therefore act beyond reproduction to create artificial modes of continuity and to mediate these opposites.

The appropriation of the child (and women) is the almost universal mode of paternal mediation which creates:

> paternity not as a relationship to the child but as a right to the child. The assertion of the right demands a social support system predicated on the forced cooperation between men*... It is the historical movement to provide this support system which transforms the individual uncertainty of paternity into the triumphant universality of patriarchy . . . The creation of a patriarchate is in every sense of the phrase, a triumph over nature.[25]

It is also the creation of private space separate from public space where men* "make the laws and ideologies which justify patriarchy"[26] and create principles of continuity in politics, art, religion and property that are under male control. In this they add to their first biological nature a second and supposedly superior nature which they make for themselves. Thus, both the dualisms structured into man's* world, between the public and private and the social and natural for instance, and the dualism of male modes of thinking "emerge from his real separation from the natural world and from species continuity."[27]

> The mysterious gulf which male-stream thought has found separating animal from human, appearance from reality, spirit from matter, necessity from freedom and so forth . . . can be materially grounded in real human experience.[28]

For Nancy Hartsock the sexual division of labour in childbearing rather than birth underlies men's and women's different relation to the world. Women's reproductive labour provides the basis for an integrative sense of self. Their activity cannot easily be dichotomized into work and play, inner and outer or mind and body. It represents a unity with nature and involves processes of change and growth and a variety of relations with others from deep unity through the many levelled and changing connections mothers experience with growing children. In addition to this, the psychological developement of women mothered by same sex caretakers reinforces their integrative sense of a self in connection with the world and others. While men* mothered by opposite sex prime caretakers, develop a separative sense of self that "sets a hostile and combative dualism at the heart of both the community men* construct and the masculinist world view by means of which they understand their lives."[29]

Basing her analysis on the socio-psychoanalytic work of Nancy Chodorow and Dorothy Dinnerstein,[30] Nancy Hartsock argues that women develop their gender identity through identification with their mother while men must develop theirs in abstract difference from their mothers. This leaves men with a more fragile and separative identity which must be established and maintained over and against the other sex. Also, the nature of the oedipal crisis differs by sex:

> The boy's love for the mother is an extension of mother-infant unity and thus essentially threatening to his ego and independence. Masculine ego formation necessarily requires repressing this first relation and negating the mother. In contrast, the girl's love for the father is less threatening both because it occurs outside this unity and because it occurs at a later stage of development.

Therefore girls, but not boys, retain both parents as love objects. Their:

> gradual emergence from the oedipal period takes place in such a way that empathy is built into their primary definition of self,

> and they have a variety of capacities for experiencing another's needs or feelings as their own. Put another way, girls, because of female parenting, are less differentiated from others than boys, more continuous with and related to the external [and internal] object world.[31]

The fact that men's* sense of self is constructed against a mother who threatens their very being, shapes both the structures and world views of both capitalism and patriarchy in a deep-going hierarchical dualism. Masculinity is attained by escaping from the female world of the household and daily life into the masculine world of politics and public life. And this experience of two opposed worlds — one abstract, valuable and unattainable, the other concrete, demeaning yet necessary "lies at the heart of a series of [gendered] dualisms — abstract/concrete, mind/body, culture/nature, ideal/real, static/change — the first of each pair associated with the male and the second with the female."[32] Women's material life experience leads on the other hand to a world view to which dichotomies are false. Her relationally defined existence, experience of bodily boundary challenges and daily activity leads her to value the concrete and everyday life, to sense a variety of connectedness and continuity with other people and the natural world and to oppose dualism of any sort.

Clearly the material base of male supremacy that O'Brien and Hartsock are exploring is not restricted to narrow economic or production activity, for it recognizes the biological and psychological also, as material realities. This is a necessary revision if women's life experience is to contribute to our understanding of the world and if women are to be recognized as historical subjects. Thus these two theories have built on earlier feminist work to achieve with others a sea change in progressive political theory.

Yet the huge intent of their work ensures that it is both enormously impressive and necessarily only a beginning. The inclusion of women as defining actors on the historical stage involves a total transformation of the basic structuring premises of all earlier theory — including the feminist arguments for women's inclusion in the male half of a divided world. Mary O'Brien and Nancy Hartsock among others have shown us that this must be done and they have developed guidelines for its achievement. But both are quick to point out that their work represents "the mere shadow of a theory,"[33] "an anticipatory exploration"[34] which merely "opens a number of avenues for future work."[35]

They have clearly shown "in a still abstract way (that) the *general* relationship between the biological substructure and social superstructure of reproductive relations"[36] is a dialectical, historical and material relationship of key importance and that it is not enough to say only that the public realm moulds the "social relations of reproduction, for the forms of the public realm itself have material roots in the reproductive process."[37] The historical significance of the social relations of reproduction and the sexual division of labour can no longer be in doubt. But the long term careful research required to analyse the actual

historical relations between the two realms and to identify the dynamic of gender as well as class struggle as it has shaped history remains to be done: "The outlines, though not the substance, of an adequate theory of power grounded at the epistemological level of reproduction are now visible if only hazily."[38] What is required now is to undertake within the new integrative theoretical framework, the kind of detailed analysis of historically specific material interests and struggles that socialist-feminists have done so well within a less adequate framework. In the process, of course, our theretical understanding will increase and the theory itself will be developed and altered. The framework is in place to allow us to pursue the necessary analytical synthesis of the individual and collective, psychological and social, economic and cultural, class and gender, but the task has only begun.

Socialist-feminists, in their uneasy position between feminists and marxists, have clearly articulated the need for this synthesis and have claimed to represent its best hope. Zillah Eisenstein spoke for many when she said: "Marxist analysis is the thesis, radical feminist patriarchal analysis the antithesis, and from the two comes the synthesis of socialist-feminism."[39] But the economism of their approach and their tendency to address marxist rather than feminist questions[40] has meant that, despite their fine research, socialist-feminist theoretical achievement has largely been limited to a static dualistic analysis of two parallel systems of domination. Where socialist-feminists speak of bringing aspects of existing marxist and feminist analysis together in a composite theory, integrative feminists speak about standing marxism on its head. They see feminism's relation to marxism more like Marx's relation to Hegel or marxism's relation to liberalism. As Catherine MacKinnon phrases it: "Feminism stands in relation to marxism as marxism does to classical political economy: its final conclusion and ultimate critique."[41]

Catherine MacKinnon is referring here to the practice as well as the theory of feminism, for integrative feminists have a strong sense of the historical significance of the women's movement and feminism as praxis.[42] For them the revolutionary character of feminist theory reflects and contributes to the realization of the revolutionary potential of women's struggle in this period. Without the practice the theory could never develop, yet the theory is essential to that practice. Neither springs autonomically from women's experience. The female standpoint is not identical to the feminist standpoint which is achieved in struggle and requires both theory and practice, both of which, in turn, require each other.[43]

It was, in fact, that earlier practice that laid the basis for the emergence of integrative feminist theory. And feminist practice in the 1980's has continued to fuel and to benefit from integrative theoretical development. Until we see today, certain tendencies of the women's movement whose practice is beginning to resemble the universal politics this theory calls for.

This universal feminism retains the early sense of a new non-hierarchical, liberatory politics in the making and the commitment to varied, autonomous, non-sectarian and non-vanguard practice that will enable this new politics to emerge ever more fully. But this is now more firmly buttressed in theory. The

demonstration that "a feminist perspective grounded in female experience does exist"[44] helps feminists understand women's ability to work in supportive, non-hierarchical, process-oriented ways as the result not only of women's unambivalent interest in ending hierarchy, but also of women's more integrated and relational life experience, consciousness and psychological development. The sense that women will play a central role in liberatory struggle no longer rests only on intuition or the simple demonstration of women's oppression but is supported by the new analysis of women's structural position and material experience and interests.

Feminism's original, deeply radical, liberatory vision is also maintained and developed. The early opposition to all domination and the determination to build a struggle against alienation that includes its roots in gender as well as class has been strengthened by analyses which demonstrate the common origins of all domination in masculine dualism.

Many feminist radicals today are not only *against* domination they are *for* the integration of life that they have discovered is essential to liberation — the end of male dualism and the establishment of a community whose basic organizing principles are connection and co-operation rather than separation and opposition: Mary O'Brien has expressed it thus:

> Feminism presents and represents a fundamentally different experience of the relation of people and nature than that posed by male dualism. It insists, further, that the principle of integration can form the basis for a political praxis which is rational, humane and far more progressive than any gender-ically one-sided praxis, including Marxism, can ever be.[45]

And Nancy Hartsock echoes the sentiments:

> (Women's) experience of continuity and relation with others, with the natural world, of mind and body — provide (sic) an ontological base for developing a nonproblematic social synthesis, a social synthesis that need not operate through the denial of the body, an attack on nature, or the death struggle between the self and other, a social synthesis that does not depend on any of the forms taken by abstract masculinity.[46]

The articulation of this integrative vision is at the same time a fuller expression and exploration of a radical alternative feminist vision of the good life phrased in terms of positive values and not just opposition — the values of continuity, creativity, birth, co-operation, nurture, daily life, the body and nature. It calls for a:

> celebration of the life in life rather than the death in life,[47] . . . a move from war against nature and against life to policies of integration with nature and life,[48] . . . (the creation) of a unity of the individual and the species with nature (which) becomes a relation of co-operation to which neither nature nor time

> appear hostile[49] . . . and that celebrates . . . the unity of cyclical time with historical time in the conscious and rational reproduction of the species.[50]

In this process:

> the body — its desires and needs, and its mortality — would not be denied as shameful but would be given a place of honour at the centre of theory. And creativity and generativity would be incorporated in the form of directly valuing daily life activities — eroticizing the work of production and accepting, the erotic nature of nurturance.[51]

This gives substance to the abstract commitment to end domination and alienation and indicates clearly the depth and direction of change required. The integrative set of values and broad general analyses provide no immediate blueprint or programme of action, and indeed they cannot for the "future is not the product of the mind but the product of praxis, the product of theory and action."[52] But they enable feminists to envision the general shape and direction of desirable change. They provide a perspective from which to assess strategy and tactics and to develop a practice that is liberatory in the fullest sense.

This is clearly no longer a "feminism of the pseudo man"[53] which accepts patriarchal dualism and leaves women's lives and work invisible in a one-sided project of female access to the more valued male side of the dichotomies. It is not a feminism in which "the need for individual escape from the prison of the private realm has taken precedence over the need to destroy collectively the artificial barriers between public and private."[54]

It is, instead, a feminism which places at its centre a revalued female world. It is a feminism whose vision is not the entry of women into man's world but "the reintegration of men in general in the harmony of people and nature."[55] It asks women not simply to leave the private realm but to "struggle to transform and integrate public and private, and in doing so to transcend the alienation of one from the other."[56] For this feminism "the integration of women on equal terms into productive processes is a necessary but not sufficient condition of liberation. Liberation also depends on the reintegration of men on equal terms into reproductive process."[57] This is not a simple exchange of activity in two pre-existing equal and unchanged realms, it is an integrative transformation of life in which reproduction is privileged and "the human possibilities present in the life activity of women (are generalized to) the social system as a whole (raising) for the first time in human history, the possibility of a fully human community structured by a variety of connections rather than separation and opposition."[58]

This new specifically feminist vision is clearly a vision of general liberation which presumes to speak to and define the shape of progressive politics in general. It requires and supports the development of a feminist practice beyond women's issues and the articulation of a feminist perspective on all issues and the whole of society. And this politics is emerging within feminism today, fueled as much by the opportunities and requirements of practice as theory, and

articulated ever more consciously in the challenge of debate with opposing political tendencies.

The Practice

As the women's liberation movement has gained strength and brought power to increasing numbers of women, the diversity of participants both in developed industrial nations and the Third World has increased to include more women in disadvantaged groups and to enable those already involved to articulate new areas of vulnerability and difference. This has contributed tremendously to feminist strength in a number of ways. The struggle over diversity and its articulation has been a challenging and painful one from the very early days of the movement and it continues to be so. But it differs today in several significant respects. The criticism and struggle in the early period more often came from non-feminist women with prior loyalty to black or native or working-class groups, who denied the possiblity and desirability of unity and sisterhood across these divisions. Today it comes much more from feminists in these groups who see this struggle as a necessary part of building a genuine unity. The pain and anger and fear are still there but the process is recognized as a shared one, and it represents an attempt by those involved to share in defining feminism rather than to deny it.[59]

This has become possible because significant numbers of women from many more diverse groups are becoming feminist defined and because others, like Jewish feminists, with a long preceding history of feminist activism have also begun to define their specificity from within the movement in the name of feminism. The hope is that women's lack of psychological dependence on alterity and separation, relational sense of self and ability to acknowledge and deal creatively with emotion, combined with our very real shared oppression, will enable us to survive these divisions to build a stronger sisterhood.[60] And this seems to be borne out in practice where feminist radicals have recognized the importance of these struggles and have shown a consistent willingness to face the personal and political risks involved.

It seems today, that the articulation of increasing types and levels of difference has not narrowed self-defined groups of women but revealed ever richer networks of cross-cutting specificities. As black, disabled, lesbian, old, Jewish and working-class feminists find their voices women are discovering the richness of their shared specificities. It is becoming much more difficult for political groupings to build high walls between insiders and outsiders based on single reified characteristics of their participants. Because deep-going links with "outsiders" who share other important aspects of self are becoming more clearly evident.[61] This has meant that, unlike earlier periods, the current exploration of diversity has not, in general, been phrased in vanguard terms or in terms of mere tolerance.

Many feminist radicals are committed to building a movement which does not merely tolerate difference but celebrates it as a source of creative tension in the necessary struggle to redefine unity beyond sameness. Audre Lourde has

shown that "Only then does the necessity for interdependence become unthreatening."[62] This exploration of diversity could only be undertaken in a context where the potential for sisterhood is recognized and valued even though it is not automatic but has to be built. The affirmation of women's commonality in integrative feminist theory is clearly a reflection of this growing sense of potential unity and as such, an important contribution to the exploration of diversity. But it has been attacked in the name of diversity in a number of debates which raise important political questions.

Some have read the theoretical focus on specificity grounded in the sexual division of labour, reproduction and female mothering as a denial of lesbianism. The reply that all women (and men) are shaped by these arrangements and that the analyses therefore apply to lesbians and non-mothers as well as others fails to convince some. They deny that lesbians and non-mothers share this with other women and persist in the view that theory based on reproduction excludes these women and is therefore partial.[63]

Other critics do not deny that reproductive arrangements are a shaping force on all women, but argue that when these analyses fail to incorporate an explicit examination of heterosexuality as an institution they are partial and, ultimately reactionary: "feminist research and theory that contributes to lesbian invisibility is actually working against the empowerment of women as a group."[64] In her much cited article "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Experience," Adrienne Rich makes this point with reference to four key feminist texts,[65] two of which Nancy Hartsock uses to develop the socio-psychological part of her analysis of gender differences. She argues that analyses that do not explicitly problematize heterosexuality or document the extreme measures used to keep women apart and to enforce sexual relations with men, are implying that heterosexuality is "natural" and this amounts to collaboration with patriarchy's need to keep the deeply radical and subversive fact of lesbianism invisible. Her point is an important one and it was startling to realize in 1980, when her article first appeared, that so much central feminist theory did not incorporate enforced heterosexuality into its anaylysis. As she points out, this is even more disturbing when the theoretical framework could encompass it, as is the case with the works she discusses. She is not arguing that this theory is based on a presumption of heterosexuality that necessarily precludes any critical examination of it. Rather she is pointing to an important political weakness in feminism that has prevented this theory from being fully developed. Adrienne Rich, whose book *Of Woman Born*[66] focused on motherhood as a political institution, recognizes the relevance of reproduction to all women including lesbians. But she argues that sexuality also, especially sexual orientation, is a political institution and must be included as a central aspect of any feminist analysis. This does not necessarily invalidate the integrative theory that has developed since then but it does suggest urgent areas for further development toward an ever more comprehensive theory which recognizes diversity as well as shared patterns of domination and commonality. This debate and these criticisms, in published work and in working relations, will surely be a major source of new insights and theoretical development.

Other critics have questioned, not just the basis on which commonality is claimed for women, but the attempt at this stage to try to determine a basis. They argue that it is wrong to undertake the task of defining women's common voice before many groups of women have found their own voice. This, they say, is premature theorizing which may impose a shape on feminism that is foreign to less advantaged groups of women who are bound to be slower to develop the autonomy and power to share in its definition. They do not deny the role of theory but warn against theorizing a general feminism before the basis has been developed in practice.

Others have gone even further to reject the theoretical project itself rather than just its timing. They suggest that to attempt a general theory may be to inherit the worst of patriarchal totalizing tendencies. And they argue that not only masculine claims to universality but all universal claims must necessarily be false. By its very nature feminism must remain open and recognize its limitations and this must preclude any claim to any general truths:

> The desire to claim for feminist theory the greatest universality truth, comprehensiveness, etc., I think participates in the authoritarian or totalitarian view of theory. As feminists we should criticize any claims to completeness and universality on the part of theory. We should insist instead that any discourse is partial and perspectival.[67]

Mary O'Brien and Nancy Hartsock clearly recognize that their theory is not complete. But they do claim, and I claim too, that it and other integrative theory reveals inadequacies in earlier theory and opens the way to a fuller understanding of reality than any earlier theory. It is *more complete* in important ways than other theories, or at least it provides the framework to move toward a fuller understanding of the world. Integrative feminist theorists presume that this is a possible and desirable goal of theory. Other feminists disagree.

Only the barest hints of this debate have yet appeared in print. But these questions about the role of theory and how much understanding it is healthy to desire and to claim will emerge more fully as feminist theory with some claim to universality gains more influence. The debate will probably be one of the most important in the next few years. It may well also make major contributions to the more abstract radical theoretical debates around similar questions, that are currently raging in non-feminist circles, outside any movement context and without the discipline and inspiration of practice.

A specifically feminist critique of liberalism has developed in recent years which goes well beyond the early radical and socialist feminist point that women's liberation will require change in social structures and not just in women's attitudes and legal rights. This has been an important aspect of feminism's articulation as a politics beyond liberal or socialist pressure for women. Mary O'Brien's analysis of paternity as the first property right and Nancy Hartsock's analysis of exchange relations as one patriarchal variant of society [68]

are two of many theoretical contributions to this critique which continues to develop as the women's movement wins liberal reforms and discovers their limitations in practice:

- the threat to introduce legislation enabling no fault divorce without recognizing the specific economic vulnerability of women and children in divorce;
- equal marriage and property rights in family assets which ignore men's business, educational and professional assets and women's long term unpaid and impoverishing economic contribution in the home;[69]
- judges' alacrity in awarding equal consideration to fathers' custody rights and denying women's rights to alimony;[70]
- a legal redifinition of rape as sexual assault which is intended to defuse punitive attitudes toward the victim but actually hides the fact that rape is not a gender neutral crime but a sexual crime of men against women.[71]
- law reform in the U.S. which recognizes women's individual rights to abortion on the ground of the right to privacy without acknowledging that women have no power in private life and that the private realm is precisely the institutionalization of men's domination of women.[72]

With the recent introduction of a Charter of Rights and Freedoms which guarantees sex equality in Canada, the limitations of liberal reform which ignores women's specificity and presumes sameness has become startlingly clear and the feminist critique has gained new urgency.[73]

This critique highlights women's specific oppression rather than the specific psychological development, consciousness and values that I focused on earlier in this paper. But both aspects of women's condition are crucial to the integrative feminist claim of women's central political role and feminism's historic importance in this period. It is a theory and a politics built from both women's oppression and women's potential strength. The two are held in critical tension as two truths of women's condition, both of which point to the necessity and possibility of major social change. Although they are not necessarily contradictory these two factors are a difficult dialectic to theorize and to live. It is especially difficult because integrative feminism is faced on every side by the pull of two simple and alternative reductionisms that either reduce women to victims or romanticize women's traditional activity.

There are feminists who make the latter reduction and analyze women's specificity in ways that tend to obscure the need for a mass collective struggle for major social change. The work of Jean Bethke Elshtain and Betty Friedan[74] for instance, mutes the fact of male domination and defends or fails to question structural and ideological dualism. In their theory the recognition of the value of women's work and women's admirable personal qualities definitely weakens the claim of subordination; the assertion of the value of womanhood tends to undermine the claim of equality and, of course, liberation. And the Right Wing, too, is militantly emphasizing women's specificity, defined (as self-sacrifice, dependence and privilege) in ways that disguise and reinforce oppression.

These reactionary uses of women's specificity increase feminist awareness of the risks involved in any acknowledgment of a difference that has been used to rationalize and institutionalize women's subordination. And they make for a sceptical reception by many, of integrative feminism's claims to reveal a deep liberatory potential in women's specificity.

Some critics, like Iris Young, recognize the synthetic and "'subversive intent" of integrative feminism but deny that its attempted synthesis of women's specificity and oppression has been realized. She goes on to suggest that, failing this, what she calls "gynocentric feminism" may be "reinforcing gender stereotypes, accommodating the existing structures" and giving aid and comfort to the "stance of moral motherhood."[75]

A much wider attack comes in both theory and practice from those who do not distinguish between integrative feminism and the "anti-feminist feminism"[76] that glorifies traditional womanhood at the expense of recognizing women's oppression. This criticism makes no distinction between the essentialist and idealist glorification of women's nature and the historical materialist analysis of women's specificity and oppression which can ground liberatory struggle. It is particularly evident in the criticism of the integrative feminist theory developing in the context of women's increasing involvement in the struggle for peace. Much of this criticism utterly repudiates any acknowledgement of women's difference as capitulation to patriarchal definitions and domination:

> To our way of thinking, the notion that 'women's qualities' are somehow better than 'men's qualities' is in basic opposition to the theory of feminism. Feminist theory states that the potential for all qualities — from aggressiveness to nurturing — exists within each person. But under a system of male supremacy, certain traits are deemed 'masculine' and others, 'feminine.' Since gender is not innate but is socially constructed the goal of feminism is to eradicate the categories of 'masculine' and 'feminine'. An appeal to women's distinctive characteristics only reinforces these categories . . . Focusing as it does on men's and women's character traits, the movement ignores the structural aspects of male supremacy . . . Historically, the notion of women's difference has been one source of our oppression and, in the current context, extolling it traps us once again in the male supremacist system.[77]

The absolute denial of any male/female differences, or at least the denial that they should feature in feminist theory, is a part of a more general resistance to the emergence of feminism as a universal politics as opposed to a politics of women's issues. In debates in a number of areas the denial of women's specificity is clearly related to a militantly narrow definition of feminism.

The "sexuality debate"[78] that appears today to be largely spent but has raged furiously in the women's movement in the last few years is one example of this.

Feminist sado-masochists and others have argued that the majority of feminists are wrong to see this form of sexuality and pornography as an undesirable and particularly extreme reflection of patriarchal sexuality and the relations of domination that we are committed to ending. They deny that women as a group have a shared interest in opposing this or any other kind of sexual practice and define this view as an attempt to define and deny women's sexuality and to enforce a particular sexual code that is every bit as oppressive as traditional "morality." In making this argument they presume that there can be no real basis for assessing or defining values as a community. Their notion of "liberty" is limited to the narrow and negative removal of all constraints on individual 'freedom'. Thus, for them, feminism has no value content and no vision of the new society. They refuse the idea that women's sexuality, although influenced by repressive patriarchal society, is nevertheless less violent and death associated than men's, and that feminists can use this potential to create and define new sexual relations that are life affirming.[79] And this refusal involves a narrowing of feminism's vision and project.

Feminist links to wider groups of women including those more disadvantaged and those in the Third World and rural areas has led to the growth of national and international networks around an impressive variety of concerns. Some are built around classic women's issues such as female sexual slavery and women's studies. Others, however, show the transforming influence of women from more intact traditional communities with acute concern for economic and survival issues. Both their material need and their experience of women's relatively uninterrupted culture and central (though subordinate) role in community life have strengthened feminist awareness of women's specificity and women's potential to play a central role in social change. This has been an important contribution to the growth of an international women's development network and a practice in this area which goes much further than women's incorporation in an existing process to challenge and redefine the process and development itself.[80]

Women's increasing involvement in the question of peace has also resulted in the growth of an international feminist network which is not simply joining the pre-existing anti-war struggle but is redefining that struggle in broader integrative feminist terms. This perspective recognizes the centrality of dualism and women's oppression to all violence including war, and women's necessarily central role in defining and making the struggle for peace.[81] Resistance to feminist claims to represent a new and specifically female voice against war and the hope of a more radical struggle against it, is resistance to the idea of feminism as a universal politics. Those who argue against the claim that peace politics must be a feminist politics presume that any activity beyond women's issues narrowly defined is necessarily dilution and co-optation. They read the integrative claims of feminist development politics or peace politics as abandonment of feminism. And they mistake the integrative feminist hope of developing a general liberatory struggle for a faint hearted denial of feminism in the name of humanism. It is important to insist that women's liberation and equality is a sufficient end in itself. We make this struggle unapologetically and

boldly for ourselves and require no further justification. But if feminism *is* the hope of the world we must say that too, not to justify ourselves or to apologize, but because it is *true* and important.

Current attacks on ecological feminism, integrative feminism, development politics and the anti-pornography campaign all deny that women's specific material experience can ground a new vision of liberation and a redefinition of progressive politics. They are all essentially arguments for a narrowly defined feminist politics. And they represent resistance to the early stages of the emergence in practice of a universal feminist politics. The resistance is testimony to the growing strength of this politics which in the last few years has emerged as a clear, though not fully self-defined, tendency of feminism.[82]

The debates outlined here have all been major challenges which appeared at times to threaten that development. They continue as divisions in the movement, but no longer appear to threaten the survival of integrative feminism whose rapid development continues partly under their salutary pressure. For they keep ever present the very real dangers of forgetting women in the struggle for humanity and of affirming women's value at the cost of recognizing our oppression. They keep integrative feminists aware of the still partial nature of our politics and force us to defend and develop it more fully and more consciously.

Conclusion

This paper has stressed the deeply radical nature of feminism, its success in sustaining and transforming that radicalism over the years, and the hope this brings for future progressive struggle. This is true, but it is only one aspect of the reality we face and we create. The debates and challenges described here are more painful and destructive, and our doubts more debilitating, that I have been able to convey. Our failures are more numerous and more deeply felt than I could describe here.

Another paper could have focused on the enormous struggle that lies ahead, the obstacles and unknowns we face: For instance, (1) The change in women's self-image in North America has been impressive and awareness of women's oppression continues to grow. We can claim enormous success in changing consciousness, but very little, if any, real improvement in women's material situation has resulted. (2) The radical spirit of some tendencies of our movement has deepened. But at the same time the impact of feminism on ever wider sectors of the population has diluted its message. Thus our very effectiveness may have disadvantages as well as advantages. (3) It is one thing for integrative feminism to open the way for a universal redefinition of progressive struggle. But that general liberatory struggle must be made eventually by men as well as women. To do this men must recognize a struggle defined partly in feminist terms as their own. Is this likely?

Ours is not an easy struggle in either personal or political terms and it has undoubted costs. It is not always an experience of triumph or certainty or joy,

nor even of hope. But it is occasionally all this and it is this strand of our reality that I have explored here — the shape of our vision and the basis of our hope. It is as real as the other and as important.

Sociology and Anthropology
St. Francis Xavier University

Notes

1. In this article the word "man" and the male pronoun are never used as generics. In cases where there may be some ambiguity an asterisk will be added to the word man* or men* to remind the reader that it refers to the male sex only.

2. Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution*, Morrow, 1970:5.

3. Nevertheless, even in her work the alternative values and potential for a more human future that women represented surfaced intermittently as a sub-theme: "The Nightmare (of 1984) is directly the product of attempting to imagine a society in which women have become like men, crippled in the identical way; However, we are suggesting the opposite: Rather than concentrating the female principle into a 'private' retreat, into which men periodically duck for relief, we want to rediffuse it — for the first time creating a society from the bottom up." Firestone *op. cit.*, 210.

4. It has been no easy thing for integrative feminists to maintain this commitment against all the powers that ruling groups in an alienated society can bring to disillusion activists, their liberatory vision and defeat liberatory practice. In this context well meaning liberal, radical, socialist and lesbian reductionist tendencies have flourished in the movement. It is very important that the account presented here of integrative feminism should not be read as an account of the whole movement. Other tendencies are large and represent entirely different but co-existing viewpoints than the one presented her.

5. The puzzle "why?" is so persistent an accompanist for these concerned to analyze domination in private life and personal relationships that psychological speculation and comment can be found in all but the most determinedly narrow economic and descriptive writing. In some work psychological factors are among the main supporting pillars of the argument. See, for instance, Barbara Deming, "Remembering Who We are," *A Feminist Quartely* IV, 1 (1977); Phyllis Chesler *About Men*, Simon and Schuster, 1978. In other work psychological speculation creeps into analyses focused elsewhere. See, for instance, the many references in early feminist work to H.R. Hays *The Dangerous Sex: The Myth of Feminine Evil*, Simon and Schuster 1966, and the psychological aspects of Adrienne Rich's argument *op. cit.*, 1976 and even Shulamith Firestone's *op. cit., 1970.*

6. My own Ph. D. thesis for the University of Toronto, "The Politics of Feminist Radicalism: A Study in Integrative Feminism," 1979 is one example of this type of theory. The variety of new work currently contributing to emerging feminist ecological and peace perspectives is another instance. Catherine MacKinnon's brilliant analysis of sexual oppression, developed in critical dialogue with liberal and marxist theory and practice, is yet another. See her *Sexual Harassment of Working Women*, Yale University Press, 1979, and "Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State: An agenda for Theory," *Signs* VII, 3(Spring 1982) and "Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State: Toward Feminist Jurisprudence," *Signs* VIII, 4(Summer 1983). Sandra Harding is developing a theoretical framework very similar to Nancy Hartsock's whose work will be used here, with Mary O'Brien's to provide a focus for the examination of the nature of this new

theory: Sandra Harding, "What is the Real Material Base of Patriarchy and Capital?" in *Women and Revolution: A Discussion of the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism*, South End, 1981. Sandra Harding also edited a collection of feminist writing with Merrill B. Hintikka entitled *Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science*, D. Reidel, 1983 which like the collection *Feminism in Canada*, Angela Miles and Geraldine Finn eds., Black Rose, 1982 is designed to highlight the originality and diversity of developing integrative theory.

7. Mary O'Brien, *The Politics of Reproduction*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981:91.

8. *Ibid.*:4.

9. Nancy Hartsock, *Money, Sex and Power: Toward a Feminist Historical Materialism*, Longman, 1983:151.

10. *Ibid.*:12.

11. As Mary O'Brien puts it: "The problems of alienation, of separation of man* from nature and from continuous time . . . are problems of *dualism* which is the persistent motif of male philosophy. Under this general category we find a whole series of oppositions which haunt the male philosophical imagination: mind and body, subject and object, past and present, spirit and matter, individual and social." *op. cit.*, 34.
And for Nancy Hartsock: "Dualism, along with the dominance of one side of the dichotomy over the other, marks phallocentric society and social theory. These dualisms appear in a variety of forms — in philosophy, sexuality, technology, political theory, and in the organization of class society itself." *op. cit.*, 241.

12. Hartsock:178. Catherine MacKinnon makes this point particularly eloquently. Her two articles "Feminism, Marxism, Method and the State Pt. I and II" cited above provide a detailed examination, focused on the legal system, of the process by which "men *create* the world from their own point of view which then *becomes* the truth to be described." *op. cit.*, 1982:537, emphasis in the original.

13. O'Brien, *op. cit.*, 169.

14. *Ibid.*, 169.

15. *Ibid.*, 13.

16. *Ibid.*, 62.

17. Hartsock, *op. cit.*, 259.

18. Shulamith Firestone, *op. cit.*, 8.

19. *Ibid.*, 7-8.

20. *Ibid.*, 9-10.

21. O'Brien, *op. cit.*, 188.

22. *Ibid.*, 175 emphasis in the original.

23. Therefore both theorists develop immanent critiques which at the same time articulate alternative values and a vision of the way forward. For Nancy Hartsock women's point of view forms "the basis of a specifically feminist materialism, a materialism that can provide a point from which to both critique and work against phallocratic ideology and institutions." *Op. cit.*, 247. For Mary O'Brien too the female standpoint makes possible a "constructive critique" out of which grows "not only some understanding of the origins and development of the fact and ideology of male supremacy, but also the rudiments of a feminist theory which will have descriptive and strategic value." *Op. cit.*, 12.

24. O'Brien, *op. cit.*, 59. emphasis in the original.
25. *Ibid.*, 53-54.
26. *Ibid.*, 56.
27. *Ibid.*, 64.
28. *Ibid.*, 126.
29. Hartsock, *op. cit.*, 240.
30. Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*, University of California, 1978; Dorothy Dinnerstein, *The Mermaid and the Minotaur: Sexual Arrangements and Human Malaise*, Harper and Row, 1977.
31. *Ibid.*, 238 bracketed words added.
32. *Ibid.*, 241 bracketed words added.
33. O'Brien, *op. cit.*, 63.
34. *Ibid.*, 16.
35. Hartsock, *op. cit.*, 262.
36. O'Brien, *op. cit.*, 57.
37. O'Brien, *Ibid.*, 92.
38. Hartsock, *op. cit.*, 159.
39. Zillah R. Eisentein, "Critique and Commentary," *Quest: A Feminist Quarterly* III, 3(1976/77): 63.
40. I have discussed the difference between marxist and feminist questions and its significance for theoretical developement in two articles: "Economism and Feminism: Hidden in the Household, a Comment on the Domestic Labour Debate," *Studies in Political Economy* II; "Dissolving the Hyphen: From Socialist-Feminism to Feminist Feminism," *Atlantis* IX, 2(Spring 1984).
41. Catherine MacKinnon, *op. cit.*, 1982:544.
42. Mary O'Brien, for instance, makes the same point as Catherine MacKinnon with specific reference to feminism as a historical force: "The establishment and growth of feminism as the progressive force in history constitutes a world turned upside down," *op. cit.*, 197.
43. Nancy Hartsock makes this distinction between the female standpoint and a politically conscious feminist standpoint clear: "Women's lives, like men's, are structured by social relations that manifest the experience of the dominant gender and class. The ability to go beneath the surface of appearances to reveal the real but concealed social relations requires both theoretical and political activity (p. 261). The liberatory possibilities present in women's experience must be, in a sense read out and developed . . . A feminist standpoint may be present on the basis of commonalities with women's experience, but it is neither self-evident nor obvious" (246).
44. O'Brien, *op. cit.*, 194.
45. *Ibid.*, 166.
46. Hartsock, *op. cit.*, 246-47.
47. O'Brien, *op. cit.*, 209.
48. *Ibid.*, 201.
49. *Ibid.*, 210.

50. *Ibid.*, 209.

51. Hartsock, 259.

52. O'Brien, *op. cit.*, 209.

53. *Ibid.*, 91.

54. *Ibid.*, 191.

55. *Ibid.*, 209.

56. *Ibid.*, 209.

57. *Ibid.*, 210.

58. Hartsock: 247. See also the ringing manifesto of Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English: "We refuse to remain on the margins of society, and we refuse to enter that society on its terms . . . The human values that women were assigned to preserve (must) expand out of the confines of private life and become the organizing principles of society . . . The Market, with its financial abstractions, deformed science, and obsession with dead things — must be pushed back to the margins. And the 'womanly' values of community and caring must rise to the center as the only *human* principles." *For Her Own Good: 150 Years of the Experts' Advice to Women*, Anchor/ Doubleday, 1979:324 emphasis in the original.

59. *The Furies*, a lesbian feminist group, initiated one of the first dialogues around class, race and other divisions among their members and feminists in general. And lesbian feminists have continued to play a central role in the exploration of difference. Their struggle to develop a shared lesbian identity and community has given them a courage and strength they are using to continue to deal with difference. And they bring to this process a knowledge, gained from experience, of the necessity and value of doing this.

    A survey of such newspapers as *Off Our Backs* and *Broadside* and feminist journals such as *Sinister Wisdom, Signs, Feminist Studies* and *Heresies* will show that awareness of diversity among women and commitment to the political process of exploring that diversity and its implications has become a major cultural and political theme in the women's liberation movement. For a very small sample of references from the growing literature which illustrates the variety of writing on this see: Adrienne Rich, "Disloyal to Civilization: Feminism, Racism and Gynephobia" in *On Lies, Secrets and Silences*, W. W. Norton, 1979; Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, The Crossing Press, 1981; Evelyn Toronto Beck, *Nice Jewish Girls: A Lesbian Anthology*, Persephone Press, 1982; *Yours in Struggle*, Ellie Bulkin, Minnie Bruce Pratt and Barbara Smith, Long Haul Press, 1984.

60. There is a well developed feminist literature on group process and the political meanings and use of emotions such an anger, rage, fear, shame and guilt. These are not individual, abstract, "how to" manuals, but are written from the depth of practice for use by thousands of others who are participating in the same struggles. One recent article which makes clear its context in movement political debates is: "Guilt and Shame in the Women's Movement: The Radical Ideal of Action and Its Meaning for Feminist Intellectuals." Berenice Fisher, *Feminist Studies* X, 2(Summer 1984).

61. The collection *Nice Jewish Girls: A Lesbian Anthology, op. cit.*, particularly illustrates how attention to additional specificities brings, not a narrowing of identity but a sense of wider connection through cross-cutting networks of specificity. These are Jewish lesbians, some of them black, some American, some Israeli, some mothers, some not, all of whom are exploring their connections to the wider Jewish and wider lesbian groups as well as others. This increases awareness of the diversity, and the importance of dealing with it, within the group "lesbian" and therefore among all women.

62. Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools will never Dismantle the Master's House" in *This Bridge Called My Back*, Cherrie Maraga and Gloria Anzaldua eds., Persephone press, 1981, p. 99, cited also by Nancy Hartsock, *op. cit.*, 262.

63. See Carol Anne Dougles' thoughtful review of Mary O'Brien's *Politics of Reproduction. Off Our Backs*, February 1982.

64. Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Experience," Antelope Publications, 1982:19-20. First published in *Signs* V, 4(1980).

65. The four "ovular" feminist works criticized are: Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering*, University of California Press, 1978; Dorothy Dinnerstein, *The Mermaid and the Minotaur: Sexual Arrangements and Human Malaise*, Harper & Row, 1976; Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, *For Her Own Good: 150 Years of the Experts' Advice to Women*, Anchor/Doubleday, 1978 and Jean Baker Miller, *Toward a New Psychology of Women*, Beacon Press, 1976.

66. Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience Institution*, W. W. Norton, 1976.

67. Iris Young in personal correspondence, 6 July 1984.

68. O'Brien, *op. cit.*, and Hartsock, *op. cit.*

69. On this and the previous point see *Love, Marriage and Money: An Analysis of Financial Relations Between the Spouses*, Louise Dulude, Advisory Council on the Status of Women, March 1984.

70. *Ibid.*, also Carol Brown, "Mothers, Fathers, and Children: From Private to Public Patriarchy," *Women and Revolution*, Lydia Sargent ed., South End, 1981.

71. See Leah Cohen and Constance Backhouse, "Putting Rape in its (Legal) Place," *MacLeans* 93, 26(June 3, 1980) for a discussion of this particular legislative proposal. For a general discussion of rape from women's point of view see: Catherine MacKinnon, "Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State: Toward Feminist Jurisprudence," *Signs* VIII, 4(Summer 1983). In this article and others including its sister piece, "Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State: An Agenda for Theory," *Signs* VII, 3(Spring 1982) the author develops one of the most fully argued and original radical feminist critiques of patriarchal liberalism.

72. See: Catherine MacKinnon, "The Male Ideology of Privacy: A Feminist Perspective on Abortion," *Radical America* XVII, 4(July/August 83).

73. Kathleen Lahey makes this point and argues it in explicitly integrative feminist terms in "Equality and Specificity in Feminist Thought," unpublished, Faculty of Law, University of Windsor, 1984.

74. Jean Bethke Elshtain's book *Public Man and Private Woman*, Princeton University Press, 1981 and her many articles in radical journals and the more popular media, and Betty Friedan, *The Second Stage*, Summit 1981 are only two of the best known examples of this type of approach.

75. Iris Young, see, "Humanism, Gynocentrism and Feminist Politics" forthcoming *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* in which she includes a discussion of Nancy Hartsock and Mary O'Brien's work as Gynocentric feminism. Quotations are from pages 31-32.

76. Judith Stacey used this phrase to refer to Jean Bethke Elshtain and Betty Friedan's work, in "The New Conservative Feminism," *Feminist Studies*, IX, 3(Fall 1983).

77. Terrie Mehlman, Debbie Swanner, Midge Quant "Obliteration as a Feminist Issue: a position paper by the Radical Feminist Organizing Committee," *Off Our Backs* XIV, 3(March 1984), originally published in the committee's newsletter *Feminism Lives*! Winter 1983 a version published also as "Pure but Powerless: A Women's Peace Movement" in the Toronto Feminist newspaper *Broadside*, July 1984. Letters following the piece in all three journals develop the debate fairly fully.

78. For feminist critiques of pornography and the sex industry and violence in sex see: Kathleen Barry, *Female Sexual Slavery*, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1979; Laura Lederer ed., *Take Back the Night; Women on Pornography*, N.Y.: Quill, 1980; Susan Griffin, *Pornography and Silence: Culture's*

Revolt Against Nature, N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1982; Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*, Penguin/Putnam, 1981; Susan Cole, "Gagged, Bound and Silenced: Confronting Pornography," *Broadside*, November 1981:10-11.

For "feminist" criticisms of this critique see: *Heresies*, Sex Issue, 12(111,4) especially the article by Pat Califia; Samois Collective, *Coming to Power: Writings and Graphics on Lesbian S/M.* published independently, no date; Deirdre English, Amber Hollibaugh, Gayle Reuben, "Talking Sex: A Conversation on Sexuality and Feminism," *Socialist Review* 58 (XI,4) July/Aug 1981:43-62; Anne Snitow et al., *The Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, N.Y. Monthly Review Press, 1983.

For powerful rebuttals of these critiques phrased in terms of an affirmation of feminist values and vision see: Dorchen Leidholt, "Lesbian S & M: Sexual Radicalism or Reaction," *New Women's Times* July/Aug 1982:17-21; Robin Linden, Darlene R. Pagano, Diana E. Russell, Susan Star eds., *Against Sadomasochism: A Radical Feminist Analysis*, Frog in Well Press, no date; Kathleen Barry "Sadomasochism: The New Backlash to Feminism," *Trivia* 1, (Fall 1982:77-92). One report of this controversy in practice which shows how widely feminists opted for the integrative value position is "Controversy Develops over Lesbian S&M Group," *Boston Gay Community News* November 13, 1982 — only one out of ten women's groups voted to allow a lesbian S & M group to use the Cambridge Women's Centre for meetings.

79. Mary O'Brien *op. cit.*, and Nancy Hartsock *op. cit.*, both develop analyses that show the association of aggression, control and death with sex is a specifically male association in patriarchal society. Although, as the dominant group they shape the sexual relations that women must participate in and be to a certain extent shaped by.

80. See, Peggy Antrobus, *Equality, Development and Peace: A Second Look at the U.N. Decade for Women*, Women and Development Unit, Extra Mural Department, University of the West Indies, Barbados, 1983.

81. See, Ynestra King, "Feminism and the Revolt of Nature," *Heresies* XIII (1981) and other articles; Barbara Roberts, "No Safe Place: The War Against Women," *Our Generation* XV; Berit Ås, "A Materialistic View of Men's and Women's Attitudes Towards War," *Woman's Studies International Forum* V, 3(1982); Pam McAllister ed. *Reweaving the Web of Life: Feminism and Non-Violence*, New Society, 1982.

For criticisms of this perspective as unfeminist see the literature cited in note 78 above, *Breaching the Peace*, Only Woman Press, 1983.

82. I have called this tendency of feminism "integrative feminism". Others have called it ecological feminism or global feminism, and still others have made the politics and the theory in one particular area without becoming aware of it as part of a tendency encompassing a wide variety of apparently unrelated practice and theory.

EMBRACING MOTHERHOOD: NEW FEMINIST THEORY

Heather Jon Maroney

Women give birth to children whom they then mother. Given the level of contemporary medical achievement, the former is an apparently inescapable biological fact, but nevertheless, from the moment of childbirth (and often before) women's role as mothers is historically malleable.[1] This complex of birthing and social action is not only the basis of a unique social relationship between the individual woman and her child/ren but of a social institution, motherhood. Because of the way it mediates between the biology of procreation and historical institutionalization, motherhood provides a prime site for exploring and constructing boundaries between nature and culture. Historically, the division in western thought has been dichotomous and drawn in such a way as to exclude women from the social and historical.

What to make of this apparently pre-social reality and its political and cultural institutionalization has always been a central question in the history of feminist theory and ideology. It also occupies a particularly vexed place in understanding the origins and basis of women's oppression. Much of the suffrage movement staked its claim on what was, after all, a demand that the domestic importance and private skills of women as mothers be officially recognized and given full reign in the public domain[2]. On the other hand, an ideological vanguard of the contemporary women's movement, confronting the possibilities of new contraceptive technology, rejected patriarchal prescriptions for compulsory motherhood to lead a struggle against both the socialization patterns and economic constraints that serve to restrict women's lives to ahistorical maternity. Despite differences in their global ideologies, both Betty Friedan and Juliet Mitchell found the family to be the lynch pin in an ideology which offered feminine fulfillment within the confines of the home and apart from a world of self-creative and paid work[3]. Extending the male option of

splitting public and reproductive life, Germaine Greer thought maternity possible — and even enjoyable — if it included an Italian hill farm where she could go to visit her child, carefully cared for by maternal peasants, once a month or so[4]. The most radically anti-maternalist position, that women's liberation requires extra-uterine reproduction, was argued by Shulamith Firestone in line with a generally biologistic analysis of the sources of male-female power differentials in patriarchal society[5].

More recently however, and linked to a larger concerns with biological and social reproduction, a quite different thematization has begun to emerge, one that reflects the evaluation of motherhood as an essentially positive activity and insists on its disalienating recuperation by and, in the first instance, for women themselves. A first step in this reconstruction has been untangling the social, historical, biological and psychological dimensions of maternity. Beyond formulating a critique of contemporary family, medical and state practices, the more radical proponents of this perspective have seen in sexual asymmetries with respect to birth and childcare a material key for understanding not only masculine and feminine character differences but also constituent features of dominant western cultural developments, including the coded relation between "man" and "nature" and the modality of formal knowledge systems. Understanding motherhood then is crucial for understanding the specificity of human self-constitution and has wideranging implications for theory whether feminist, political, psychological or philosophical. The critical appropriation of maternity also implies a transformation in human practice of truly redemptive proportions.

In this paper, I trace the way in which the new thematization of motherhood has emerged and has become manifest in three different areas of feminist discourse and then, against the background of some of the more global claims about the necessity of placing biological reproduction and social and psychological mothering at the centre of theory, consider some of the profound issues they raise for feminist and other dimensions of emancipatory theory.

The emergence of a feminist problematic of motherhood

In one sense, history not feminism has problematized motherhood. The relatively rapid development of medical technologies, collectively if somewhat inaccurately known as "the pill", dissolved the biological given which inextricably linked sexuality and reproduction for women. As a result of these developments, pregnancy and birth became a choice for women who to this extent were placed in a position of equality with men. What has made facing this decision awesome for individuals and impossible to absorb into the smooth operation of the child-centred nuclear family complex is that it arose in the context of a political, social, and demographic conjuncture which had already seen the patriarchal institutional model of motherhood come slowly to its full fruition and abort of its own contradictions.

Exclusive childcare by women, isolated in independant households is an

historically exceptional family form. The object of care, the child, and its location, the "non-producing" household, were fused over the flame of a naturalistic argument into a specialized role for women[6]. As mothers, women were defined as the moral guardians of western civilization with immediate responsibility for children's character development and ultimate responsibility for the moral texture of public life. With its origins in a rising European bourgeoisie, this family form owes its mass realization to the wealth generated by capitalist production and the requirement to shape a schooled and self-regulating labour force out of neonatal plasticity. The ideology of mother-child coupling pervaded the working classes at any rate only from the 1920s to the 1960s. However, even as the post-World War II boom, a reduction in fertility, and the development of housing and household technology combined to permit women to play out an intensified and extended "motherhood-per-child", its limitations began to become clear.[7] The cult of domesticity and the cult of the child proved too thin and too demanding to sustain its mystified feminine acolytes who were struck with "the disease that has no name" symptomatized in depression, over-medication, and loss of self.[8] These costs were noted by a deradicalized Freudianism but glossed as the problem *of* women.[9] At the same time, with changes in the structure of the labour market and attempts to maintain family-household incomes in the face of inflation, its material base began to be eroded as women with school age and then preschool children were recruited wholesale into retail, clerical and public sector employment.[10]

In the sixties, a growing women's movement defined the contradictory non-choice — housewives' syndrome or the double day — as a problem *for* women and attempted to intervene in the ideological and structural organization of marriage and family as central institutions organizing gender and generational relations. One of its central tactics was the contestative denial of sexist ideology, one of its central preocupations reclaiming free sexual activity for women. Whatever patriarchy had said "Women are . . ." feminists fought against. "Biology is destiny" was its cry; ours that biology could and more importantly *should* be transcended. Of course this abstract negation of patriarchal ideology was, in the first instance, reactive, a battle fought on the opponent's ground within given categories. In rejecting the hegemonic patriarchal construction of feminity whole hog, women were also led to deny the importance of motherhood as such and to devalue any specialized skills or values associated with this admittedly limited sphere of feminine practice. New conditions, not least the changes in the institutional framework and activity of mothering sketched above, have encouraged a positive revalorization of maternity that is at once radical and feminist. It has been the simultaneous coming into play of demographic, biographical and political changes that has permitted this kind of reformulation.

During the seventies, some potentially significant demographic patterns of delayed and reduced fertility became visible. Certainly, for at least a socially and ideologically important cohort of "middle-class" post-war boom babies now between twenty and thirty-nine, well into the "normal" range of fertility, a number of factors — the increase in post-secondary schooling for women, some

increase in the age at first marriage, the ideological impact of the women's and ecology movements and economic constraints — have contributed to an initial postponement of and a likely reduction in chilbearing.[11] The early indications of these changes have already been culturally significant; for example, a rapid increase in first births among American women over thirty received the cultural cachet of a *Time* cover story.[12] Altogether, these changes have brought the encouragement of population replacement to the attention of the state as well as cultural interpreters.

The psychological ramifications of aging of this population cohort are complex: they involve not merely aging, nor just a change in status and life style for those who have actually given birth, but also a major impact at the level of the unconscious on all women. Those of us who were and have remained daughters (by age and family relationship) are becoming mothers (again by age and even if only vicariously). If as Nancy Friday suggests from her "daughter's" perspective, sexuality is "a powerful force in the fight to separate from [the mother] and grow up" and our first jobs provide the opportunity "to prove to ourselves that we are agents in our own lives", then marriage provides a formal structure to repeat parental models and childbirth "speeds up" "the unconscious drive to become the mothers we dislike."[13] If we have acquired through work, economic independence and feminism a certain measure of the autonomy we sought as individuals and as a movement, then encapsulated conflictual relations with our mothers no longer need dominate practically or psychologically in any simple sense. This situational autonomy also makes possible greater empathy in reconsidering and reevaluating the mother-daughter relationship.

The release of powerful psychological processes of fantasy, displacement, regression and desublimation which invert and blur mother-daughter differentiation need not be triggered by a real decision to give birth, a real pregnancy, a real child. Being with the children of our friends, reading the articles on childbirth, late, voluntarily unpartnered or lesbian motherhood can be enough.[14] We begin to regard our mothers, our — real, fantasied, potential — daughters and ourselves from a new position fulcrumed on three generations. Signe Hammer describes this perspectival shift as a maturational imperative:

> Not all women become mothers, but all, obviously are daughters, and daughters become mothers. Even daughters who never become mothers must confront the issues of motherhood, because the possibility and even the probability of motherhood remains.[15]

Finally, the political and ideological maturation of the women's movement demands more rigorous and comprehensive theories of motherhood and family. In a situation where women's cultural, economic and political gains have been met with inertia, resistance and, in the extreme, right-wing opposition gilded in the glories of motherhood and apple pie, the further development of feminist theory of family and motherhood is both politically important and constrained. It must be both offensive and defensive. Susan Harding argues that the conflicts

between feminists and their opponents are rooted in the adoption of conflicting "family strategies" that are either egalitarian (emphasising the individual and a breakdown of roles) or hierarchical (stressing "the symbolic authority of the father" and "protecting and celebrating the role of the family in defining a woman's life and identity").[16] Exploiting the contradictions in a contested ideological terrain, the mass media tell large numbers of women who attempt to develop social strategies to juggle work, childcare, conflicts with men, and personal life and psychological strategies to resolve conflicts over sexuality, femininity, competition, accomplishment and children that this whirlpool which saps energy is the result of feminism. Indeed, the easy public acceptance of some aspects of the new motherhood discussion as witnessed by the *Time* cover story still rests on assumptions of the propriety and endurance of gender divisions of labour.

Here the women's movement walks a tightrope strung between offensive and defensive poles: it must assert feminist theory in our own terms, validating "what women do" (and have done historically) in mothering at the same time as it contests patriarchal glorification of the role at the expense of the occupant. It must also offer insightful support to those women and men caught in the toils of institutional transition who place a high value on having and caring for children as well as on their own individuality and gender equality — those who "believe in" day care, maternity and paternity leave, equal pay and reproductive freedom but do not yet identify themselves as feminists — if it is to gain their political allegiance and active support for both liberated family structures and the larger feminist programme.

In developing the theoretical underpinnings of the new problematic, feminism has woven together lesbian-feminism, psychoanalysis, and as yet untheorized female experience. The first of these, radical lesbian ideology, adopted matriarchy as an idyllic and strategically useful myth.[17] Since this focus is congruent with a more sociological interest on the part of marxist-feminism in pre-class social formations, it provides a rare point of agreement between these competing politico-theoretical tendencies, which has allowed it to be more easily popularized. Its adoption by a radical feminist current also served to undercut the anti-maternalism of Firestone's version of radical feminism. The second, psychoanalytic theory, shares an object with feminist theory — the role of the mother-child-father triangle in producing sexual difference. The form of investigation which grounds both these theories was also congruent; that is, uncovering socially illicit but sociologically normal experience in the interests of therapeutic catharsis.[18]

The third strand has been, however, perhaps the most provocative especially linguistically. Using motherhood as a metaphor/m, melding analysis and poetics, outside the rule of phallocentric linear logic, it has striven to delve down and back through body, sexuality and time to create new rationality capable of uniting nurturing and strategy, past and future, the conscious and unconscious:

> Somehow the questions raised here did not take on a problem-solving or strategy-laden dimension but rather concerned mothers, mothering, motherhood. As we found them inside of us. No feminist theory of motherhood? Well, we will start to invent one. We start with our hands on our pulses.[19]

Much of this writing has been formally experimental, in Hélène Cixous's term, "woman writing woman"[20] and so more easily ignored than assimilated by traditional disciplines with their fundamentally sexist foundations and territorial jealousies. While no systematic integration has been made of these theorical foundations increasingly the themes overlap in feminist discourse.

Obviously, given the uneven development and ideological differences of the women's movement as a whole, the refocusing has been uneven. But as well as tracing a general movement in feminist theory, a change of orientation appears in the work of individual writers. Robin Morgan is a case in point. In 1969, mother is "emptiness," the person who won't let you wear a bra, the abstraction who "spent her days with kids and housework." Her characterization is perhaps surprising only when we recall that Morgan, already a mother, who defended her right to raise a boy against separatist attacks, helped to organize collective childcare and faced conflicting demands of work, mothering and politics. Like that of the movement as a whole, her attitude to motherhood changed by confronting first lesbian, matriarchal theory and then the ecology movement — Mother Nature indeed. Ultimately she rejected "the notorious correct line which ... conceived of turning real babies into real soap" so that "throwing out the baby with the bath appeared to the correct liners as both sensible and sanitary." In her artistic endeavours, she began to play a maternal theme, lamented Mary Wollstonecroft's death in childbirth and celebrated her love for her son. She was moreover quite aware of this transformation:

> They said we were "anti-motherhood" — and in the growing pains of certain periods some of us were . . . Patriarchy commanded the women to be mothers (the thesis), we had to rebel with our own polarity and declare motherhood a reactionary cabal (the antithesis). Today a new synthesis has emerged; the concept of mother-right the affirmation of child-bearing and/or rearing when it is a woman's choice.[21]

Motherhood: a patriarchal institution

Conceptualizing motherhood as an institution has had three main effects. First, it was removed from the biological and invariant and placed in the social and historical. Second, on the basis of historical and anthropological comparisons, a categorization has been developed of two distinct orders of motherhood — matriarchal and patriarchal — which echoes in psychoanalytic and metatheoretical discourses. Third, it has helped to clarify programmatic demands for the women's movement. For it uncovers an apparent paradox: as

patriarchal ideology has relegated mothering to women, women have lost control and authority in childbirth and childraising.

In her influential book, Adrienne Rich denies that the "patriarchal institution" is a necessary part of the human condition:

> Motherhood . . . has a history, it has an ideology, it is more fundamental than tribalism or nationalism. My individual private pains as a mother, the individual and seemingly private pains of the mothers around me and before me, whatever our class or colour, the regulation of women's reproductive power by men in every totalitarian system and every socialist revolution, the legal and technical control by men of contraception, fertility, abortion, obstetrics and extrauterine experiments — are all essential to the patriarchal system, as is the negative or suspect status of women who are not mothers.[22]

Here she specifies themes central to feminist investigation: prescriptive ideologies of motherhood, the medicalization of chilbirth and the experience of women as mothers.

Breaking with academic convention, many feminists scholars contend that female-dominated mother-centred social formations existed historically. Obviously they recognize that their reconstructions of matriarchal societies through an interpretative synthesis of evolutionary biology, archeology, myth, law and comparative anthropology are necessarily speculative, but perhaps no more than received views. In any case, the images of "matriarchal" and "patriarchal" motherhood presented in the literature are in sharp contrast.

Rereading the evidence of archeology and evolutionary biology "to visualize how the hominid line could have arisen," Nancy Tanner and Adrienne Zihlman propose a theory of early hominid evolution centred on and dynamized by the exigencies of the mother child relationship.[23] As a result of complex interactions that followed the early development of bipedalism and neonatal dependence, infants needed to be carried, supervised, fed and protected. In response, mothers, as the most consistent food-gatherers, developed material and social techniques to make their tasks more efficient: storage containers, carrying slings, digging sticks and regular patterns of food sharing. As primary socializers, they also taught these patterns to both daughters and sons who replicated them in turn with siblings and in wider social groups. With increasing evolutionary complexity the intimacy of the mother-infant relationship and the necessity of communicating complex technical and environmental information facilitated language development. Given a flexible kin-based family structure most likely to be congruent with gathering as a mode of subsistence and the implications of loss of estrus, these evolutionary tendencies were reinforced through kin and sexual selection. Males who shared with, carried,protected and played with their siblings helped them to survive. In addition, "mothers chose to copulate most frequently with these comparatively sociable, less disruptive,

sharing males — with males more like themselves."[24] Zihlman later concludes that the success of the human species was made possible only through a reproductive strategy that combined independence and innovation for females with the cooperation of males and females in caring for their young through both sharing food and nurturing.[25]

The Mother-Goddess appears as a compelling image of female power and creativity, especially in radical-and-lesbian-feminist writing. Merlin Stone's interpretation of the significance of Mellarrt's excavation of the late neolithic site at Çatal Hüyük is representative:

> The definition and worship of the female divinity in so many parts of the ancient world were variations on a theme, slightly differing versions of the same basic theological beliefs . . . It is difficult to grasp the immensity and significance of the extreme reverence paid to the Goddess . . . But it is vital to do just that to fully comprehend the longevity as well as the widespread power and influence this religion once held.[26]

Representations of female figures, pregnant or in childbirth, with plants or weaving provide archeological evidence of the association of females with social power, technological innovation and birth that Zihlman and Tanner saw as central to human evolutionary progress. In a scholarly article, Anne Barstow warns against extrapolating social conclusions from archeological remains but concurs that a civilization whose religious and social life centred on female fertility and accomplishment flourished at Çatal Hüyük.[27]

The defeat of women and the imposition of newly elaborated forms of power may have come about in two ways. Stone suggests that women were deprived of the direction of religion, public welfare and commercial activity as a result of military defeat by northern invaders who imposed patrilineal clan systems and their patriarchal religious superstructures triumphed and increasingly repressive and mysogynist practices towards female sexuality.[28] In an examination of pristine state formation at Sumer, Ruby Rohrlich identifies a different dynamic of internal subordination by militarily organized males. Although "matriarchy seems to have left more than a trace in early Sumerian city states" where women once owned land and were trained in professional and religious occupations, warfare and military organization undermined their status and, incidently that of some males. "What seems to have happened is that as class society became increasingly competitive over the acquisition of commodities . . . warfare became endemic and eventually led to the centralization of political power in the hands of a male ruling class."[29]

Our concern in evaluating this problematic is not the "scientificity" of these reconstructions, for in one sense their accuracy is beside the point, but identifying the associational clusters connected with patriarchal and matriarchal motherhood. Matriarchal society and motherhood are thought to be cooperative, natural, sex positive and permissive, peaceful and able to integrate males on a basis of equal exchange. In contrast, patriarchy is hierarchical,

ultimately technologically rational, sexually repressive and violent for women, associated with militarism and the state and based on the oppressive exploitation of female productive and reproductive powers. Evidence of these configurations continue to be found in periods where the historical record is more detailed and comprehensive.

In these periods, when motherhood is appropriated by male theoretical authority, these correlations become conscious social norms. This theft did not of course include the work of childcare, which was left as before to women, but it did include control; thus the female activity of childcare was subordinated to male expertise operating within a reified, mechanized and sexist paradigm. While medieval theology had considered maternity as an aspect of the problem of Christology, feminist theorists suggest it was only in the early phases of capitalist development that political and medical theory deemed the issue worthy of theoretical attention.[30] Within a post-Renaissance patriarchal optic motherhood was construed as at once biological and transcendental — an instinct and so less than fully human yet infused with a redemptive morality of sacrifice and altruism as a counter to the competitive behaviour of political-economic man. These theories consistently sought legitimation in the welfare and social utility of the child, not the mother's happiness or autonomy; they posited a tension between mother and child, which was to be resolved in favour of the child.

Although couched in a rhetoric of natural necessity, these developments in nineteenth century patriarchal theory in fact broke the "naturalness" of the mother-child connection in order to permit the intervention of progressive "scientific" childraising practices.[31] The break between the natural and social and the consequent expansion of the realm in which the social takes precedence over the natural was disguised not just by language but by the prescriptions for intensive and exclusive mothering elaborated in these theories. Alarmed, on one hand, by high rates of infant mortality revealed by early population surveys and, on the other, enraptured by Rousseauian views of childhood educability, medical and social theorists expanded the role of the good mother from one who suckled her child to one who was all to her child — teacher, companion and devoted nurse. If comparisons of mothers to hens and plants were sometimes dehumanizing, nevertheless, this role offered certain rewards:

> Motherhood became a gratifying role because it was now a repository of the society's idealism . . . . The mother was frequently compared to a saint, and it was believed that the only good mother was a "saintly" woman. The natural patron saint of the mother was the Virgin Mary, whose whole life bespoke her devotion to her child.[32]

For the woman limited by middle-class social horizons and newly excluded from work in family-based production, the new role as the central axis of the family also offered improved personal status and power over her children.[33] But sainthood precluded sexuality and power in the family meant isolation, however

glorified, from social life outside it.

Barbara Ehrenreich and Deidre English trace the growing ascendency of similar patriarchal prescriptions in North America. For them, the transition is a response to the industrial revolution's disruption of an "Old Order" where women's centrality to household-based production modified formal patriarchal power. A shift to centralized production posed "the question of how women would survive and what would become of them in the modern world."[34] Two answers were offered. The first, a radical ideology of sexual assimilation and rationalism extended middle class liberal ideals of individual freedom and equality to women. The second, a romantic reaction that, linked to a strategy to contain class conflict, became dominant after the Civil War, promoted a sentimentalized vision of women as half outside the world of men which was derived also from liberal social philosophy.[35] In pragmatic America medical and technical "experts," not political philosophers, were the advance men for scientific domesticity and exclusive maternal child-raising:

> The idea that the child was the key to the future . . . had a definite political message . . . By concentrating on the child — rather than on, say, political agitation, union organizing, or other hasty alternatives — the just society would be achieved painlessly, but slowly.[36]

This solution was weakened by the internal contradiction between triumphant romantic ideology and the needs of industrial society. "In the sexually segregated society built by industrial capitalism . . . there is, in the end, no way for women to raise men", that is, according to proper patriarchal principles.[37] Thus, the connection between exclusive child care by women and its domination by male experts articulated in France was reinforced by North American social developments.[38] Although the scientific fashion in childcare changed in reponse to changing infrastructural needs, its various perceived failures were all blamed on mothers who were alternately castigated as too sentimental and overprotective or as too ruthless, the power-hungry Mom.[39] Overall, the modern patriarchal construction of parenting was, like its enlightened romantic predecessor, based on difference and inequality and the domination of private relations by public requirements for order in a sex and class stratified society.

In contemporary motherhood, the contradictions which have emerged from competing patriarchal, feminist and ecologist ideologies on the one hand and structural transformations which have bisexualized the labour market without similarly affecting childcare on the other have created a recurrent dilemma for women: "I hate motherhood, but I love my kids."[40] An enormous literature, ranging from practical self-help books, through the wryly recuperated accuracy of Lynn Phillips' cartoons to a professional literature seeks to explain this tensions and develop a programme for ideological and institutional reform. Insofar as this work seeks to reclaim women's experience, define women as individuals and expand the area of legitimate female activity, it operates within a

feminist paradigm. In the main, it views conflicts in mothering — between emotional nurturance and the work it entails or paid work in the labour force and unpaid childcare, for example — as rooted in social changes that it analyses at best only scantily.[41] These tensions are compounded for women in paid employment who are most often the primary or "psychological parent" responsible not only for the material functioning of the household but also "for the whereabouts and the feelings of each child."[42] Other problems, like the contradiction between adult, particularly sexual, identity and ideologies of motherhood are described if not analysed.[43] Unlike patriarchal prescriptions, however, it seeks to resolve them equitably to the benefit of both mother and child.

Despite the severity of the problems uncovered by listening to women, the popular and scholarly literatures generally remain reformist. For the most part they continue to accept the inevitability of motherhood-in-the family and offer apparently moderate solutions suggesting, for example, that women engage in a developmental process of identity synthesis because "the models of femininity... presented . . . do not fit [women's] current adult lives" which in fact seek to resolve these structural and historical contradictions at the psychological level.[44] The most consistent "feminist" influence is found in the treatment of the "working mother". Paid work, while still occasionally justified by an appeal to financial need, is increasingly construed as good in itself. The failure to analyse structural determinants fully and to explore possibilities for institutional reorganization leaves this literature vulnerable to suggesting new "permissive" norms which may turn out to be new performance criteria for women.[45] These will not alter an experience of motherhood which is at best ambivalent, at worst masochistic: "Motherhood simply confirms what we knew before — that pleasure and pain are rarely far apart."[46]

If some historians and sociologists bewail the effects of exclusive mothering, others decry the loss of female control over the ideological, mystical and practical dimensions of childbirth. Several studies trace the rise of obstetrics and gynecology as male dominated professions, which they contend "desexed" and denaturalized childbirth. In this process, women healers were forced from their last niche as midwives in the name of paridigmatically scientific and mechanical norms, as a result of interprofessional rivalry, in the interest of private profit and in an attempt to tame female creativity.[47] The specialization and professional self-defense of "male-midwives" began with the invention of obstetrical forceps — "hands of iron" — by the Chamberlen family in the late sixteenth century and their subsequent generalization after 1773. Although male midwifery based its claim on cleanliness and superior knowledge, its practices were often medically irrational and, indeed, dangerous. The supine position, which inhibits control in contractions, was introduced in order to afford Louis XIV a better view of his mistresses giving birth and later adopted for the convenience of the physicians. Under male control, birth was all too often a precarious experience in part as the result of technical innovations like destructive obstetrics and in part from the systemic blood poisoning called "puerperal" fever caught when surgeons imported germs from cadavers to the

birthing room.

Contemporary medical management of childbirth continues to claim scientific rationality as a cover for practices that from the point of view of women are irrational and costly. Shiela Kitzinger contends that pre-labour prep — shaving, enemas, obstetrical masks and gowns, the exclusion of the husband and episiotomy — are mainly of ritual significance. They serve to purify the woman, exclude her from her normal community, return her to a prepubertal and dependent state and, above all, confirm the obstetrician's control over birth. "The previously mysterious power of childbirth has been analysed and he bends it to a masculine purpose and according to a masculine design."[48] Based on her findings in a psychoanalytically influenced study, Dana Breen argues that the redesign of the birth process undermines a woman's confidence in herself and in her ability to care for her infant:

> When a woman can only have a child by her body being provoked into it, by substances being continually pumped into it and more substances injected to dull the pain which has been thus increased, finally giving in to having the baby pulled out by forceps because she is paralysed from the waist down, she feels she hasn't given birth to her baby.[49]

Stripped of this gift and separated from her child who is appropriated by the hospital staff, she loses all sense of the essential goodness of her body. In addition to psychological costs, the technological transformation of birth increases the risk of medical complications in many cases.[50]

The alternatives proposed to the over-medicalization of birth reveal the degree to which critical problematics are biological, social, or, indeed, feminist. "Natural childbirth" and call for the revival of lay or professional midwifery fits several strategies from reinforcing the hierarchical or nuclear family, to widening the family-community or the repossession of female power.[51] Despite the biological essentialism and the assumption of the exclusivity or dominance of mother-infant care that it imports, bonding or immediate skin to skin contact between the mother and child is promoted enthusiastically as a way of overcoming the alienation of hospitalized delivery.[52] A certain faith in the wider importance of unmediated biological influences is accorded more general significance as well. Although she does not elaborate her position theoretically, Rich thinks that birth can be a source of knowledge and discovery of "our physical and psychic resources, one experience of liberating ourselves from fear, passivity and bodily self-alienation.[53] At the extreme Alice Rossi's call for "A biosocial perspective on parenting" rejects cultural and historical explanations of the persistence of gender divisions of labour along with egalitarian family values and childcare arrangements in favour of a theory of biologically determined, sexually differentiated learning capacities, particulary with regard to childcare and a return to not merely female, but mother-care for children.[54]

Despite its limitations, this literature substantiates the claims made in campaigns for day care, midwifery and the reorganization of the relationship between paid labour and childcare among other issues. Addressing these concerns is one step in advancing feminist strategy so that in responding to the everyday issues of sexual and maternal politics in the eighties, it can bridge the ideological gap between politicized feminists and the women who are their constituency and transmit its larger transformative vision.

Minoan-Mycenean revivification

A feminist psychoanalytic archaeology has set out to uncover the preoedipal mother-daughter relationship and to consider its significance for contemporary gender arrangments. Freud thought that feminity was fundamentally shaped in this region, "so grey with age and shadowy and almost impossible to revivify", which was inaccessible to men.[55] The effect of this work is first, to move the analysis from historical, social relations to their representation in the unconscious and, once there, to displace the creation of heterosexual feminity from the anatomical difference between the sexes, the father and the feces-penis-baby connection of classical Freudian analysis, onto the mother and her relations with infants of either sex. Because they weigh cultural and biological realities differently, Nancy Chodorow and Dorothy Dinnerstein, the main initiators of this project, arrive at somewhat different conclusions. But their common view that asymmetries in parenting serve to reproduce gender differences, substructure mysogyny, and connect masculinity with productivism has been highly influential.

Rejecting all biological or libidinal determinations, Chodorow adopts object relations theory to relativize and historicize distortions in Freud's own work.[56] She argues that gender asymmetries in parenting shape differentiated female and male capacities and desires to mother. Because they are of the same gender and because of taboos against sexualizing the mother-son relationship, women tend to experience their daughters more intimately, more ambivalently and as less separate than their sons. The experience of maternal identification and ambivalence sends girls through preoedipal and oedipal development preoccupied with "those very relational issues that go into mothering — feelings of primary identification, lack of separateness or differentiation, ego and body-ego boundary issues under the sway of the reality principle."[57] In the oedipal resolution, female personality structure embeds relational capacities and a sense of self-in-relationship necessary to fulfill the psychological role of mothering and the desire for a triangular relational configuration which encompasses both the masculine object and patriarchal power of the father and the merging identification with the mother. Since the boy is unlikely to have been intimately "fathered" by a man his adult character structure is less shaped to be able to "mother" or, indeed, to want to.[58] He is also less able to provide a return to the mother in coitus that women offer men.[59] Adult women then feel a double sense of incompleteness in dyadic relationships with men that they seek

to mend by replicating the mother-infant-father triangle, this time in the position of mother.

Influenced both by Melanie Klein's more biologically oriented theory of the inevitable infantile discovery loss, powerlessness and rage and Norman O. Brown's historical pessimism, Dinnerstein's picture is altogether more bleak.[60] The infant's dependence is more frightening, its rage greater and adult heterosexual alienation starker. For Dinnerstein, the exclusive power that mothers have over biologically dependent infants of both sexes leaves a residue at the level of the unconscious of the infant's ambivalent attraction to women: a desire for their nurturing and a fear of their will. Thus, the source of mysogyny is identified with matriphobia arising from a dialectic of absolute power/powerlessness:

> Power of this kind, concentrated in one sex and exerted at the outset over both, is far too potent and dangerous a force to be allowed free sway in adult life. To contain it, to keep it under control and harness it to chosen purposes, is a vital need, a vital task, for every mother-raised human.[61]

Chodorow agrees that a wellspring of mysogyny lies in the contradictions of power and sensuality in gender arrangements that leave mothering exclusively to women but disagrees about its source. For Chodorow, the absence of fathers from child raising allows masculinity to be glamourized. Seeking autonomy, the girl turns to her father to open up the relationship with her mother.[62] Boys, forced to seek masculinity through a positional identification with its cultural symbols rather than a personal identification with a nurturing father, find continuing identification with the mother threatening yet attractive.[63] Their quandry is resolved by the creation of psychological and cultural mechanisms to cope with their fears without giving up women altogether.

> The structure of parenting creates ideological and psychological modes which reproduce orientations to and structures of male dominance in individual men, and builds an assertion of male superiority into the definition of masculinity itself.[64]

Both see bisexualizing parenting as a way to overcome mysogyny, mutual heterosexual erotic dissatisfactions and issues of autonomy endemic to "mother-raised" children, although neither offers a strategy for the restructuring of the psychic structures of "non-nurturant" males. In addition, such a reorganization of parenting would go some way to overcoming the ambivalence among mother-raised *women* that, as Jane Flax has persuasivly argued, constrain the political development of feminism.[65]

More theoretically intriguing, however, are the implications of the gender differentiated unconscious in shaping a relation to production and nature. Here, Dinnerstein makes explicit a thesis that is merely implicit in Chodorow

that gender differences in values and consciousness are not superficial but go so deep as to be of epistemological and anthropological significance. Chodorow's perception is limited to adaptation; female personality structure is adapted to the diffuse multi-phasic demands of childcare, male to class differentiated relation to economic participation. Dinnerstein argues that matriphobic mysogyny substructures a destructive relation with nature that cannot be explained by mere economic rationality. It is to this difference in consciousness that feminist metatheory turns.[66]

Motherhood and metatheory

The most provocative of all the initiatives at recentering feminist theory on the maternal are the metatheoretical revisions of O'Brien, Daly and Dinnerstein all of which are predicated upon a conviction that patriarchal theory has ignored and suppressed the importance of motherhood. They carry the themes of matriarchal motherhood, the historicization of mothering and gender differences in consciousness to a more general, indeed universal, level. For all three, the denigration of motherhood in political theory is symptomatic of a global deformation of consciousness which substructures a potentially catastrophic opposition between culture and nature which at its limit threatens life on this planet.

At the centre of O'Brien's analysis is a claim that "genderically differentiated processes of human reproduction itself" give rise to gender differences in consciousness and the theoretical and political projects they invoke.[66] Her brilliant relocation of Marx's production-centred alienation problematic in the fatalities and constraints of sexual reproduction should make it impossible to think of alienation in simply workerist terms any more. Distinguished from Rossi's biologism, she sees sexual differences in reproduction as material, mediated by consciousness and labour, further conditioned by historical development in productive and reproductive relations.[67] For both men and women, reproduction contains a moment of alienation to be overcome, but the modalities differ. After the discovery of the male role in reproduction, "negation [for men] rests squarely on the alienation of the male seed in the copulative act" with the result that male reproductive consciousness and the rationality to which it gives rise is fraught with dualism, separation and opposition from the race, from its continuity and from nature.[68] Overcoming this alienation and separation have been been male projects which can be traced in the attemps of political theory to create artificial forms of community and continuity and, in the face of uncertain paternity, to organize social systems designed to appropriate the child and to ensure control over female sexuality and reproductive powers in marriage and the family. The structures of patriarchy and male potency which accomplish this task have than a particular relation to nature; both rest on the capacity to transcend natural realities, whether benign or malign, with man-made realities.

In contrast with paternity, O'Brien sees maternity not as an abstract idea but a material relation. Although women also face a moment of alienation in birth it is

mediated by their own voluntary and involuntary labours. "Women, unlike men, do not have to take further action to overcome their alienation from the race, for their labour assures their integration" and structures a consciousness informed by suffering and labour that unites the actual with potential and confirms the integrations both of women with the generationally renewed species in both nature and history.[69] These synthetic dimensions of consciousness are, like the child, values created by labour in birth. Unlike men who are doomed by biology to a destiny of attempts to mediate reproductive alienation, women have lived their alienation in the private sphere of family and household.

These differentiated relations and consciousnesses have, however, been undermined by the development (from within the male sphere of alienated technology) of new contraceptive techniques incompatible with proprietary right to women and children. Because of their new ability to control reproduction by separating the "moment of copulation" from the "moment of conception" women are now placed in a situation of equality with men, thrust into a world of freedom. Women must begin to evolve their second nature and develop a feminist philosophy of freedom in the particularly difficult and urgent historical conditions inherited as a result of masculine hostility to nature; that is, a world "choked with technological sewage, a wasteland strewn with the garbage of the brotherhood's machines of war and electronic chatter."[70] For O'Brien, the growth of feminism as a revolutionary historical force permits and requires a theoretical elaboration of its synthetic consciousness in an integrated social science which comprehends birth not metaphorically but as a critique of power.[71] The women's movement must proceed from individual consciousness-raising to the political expression of transformed universal feminine consciousness, which demystifies the opposition of alienation and integration, the particular and the universal in the real world. In effect, she offers one version of the new form of rationality that Cixous sought and that feminist strategizing requires. Her project, although dependent upon women's practice is open to men who can be reintegrated into the genderal harmony of people and nature by cooperative decisions between reproducing adults.

For Dinnerstein, too, masculine subjectivity is bound up with the entrepreneurial control over nature and exclusive female mothering with its insane elaboration. Weaving together de Beauvoir's notion that women mediate men and unconscious uncontrollable nature and Brown's pessimistic reading of Western culture as obsessed with fear of the body, she argues that women appear as a Dirty Goddess, representing but repressing nature.[72] It is not simply the burden of childcare but also a greater sense of compunction for the mother, which grows out of a more intense identification with her on the part of girls that has served "to keep women outside the nature-assaulting parts of history — less avid than men as hunters and killers, as penetrator's of Mother Nature's secrets, plunderers of her treasure, outwitters of her constraints."[73] Although the male project appears to be freely chosen and equally valued for its technical results by both genders, it reveals a hollow core. Uncontrolled, the drive for transcendence that both sexes can assign to males because their power is less

contaminated with the sediment of infantile angst threatens to produce a world that is totally denatured and fit only for machines.[74]

Reflecting her training as a Catholic theologian, Mary Daly's problematic centres on a critique of religion and its underlying mythologies, a critique that subsumes Christianity under a notion of patriarchy as itself, "the prevailing religion of the entire planet."[75] Although her interpretation and solutions change radically in the course of her work from *Beyond God the Father* to *Gyn/Ecology: the metaethics of radical feminism*, their common core is a perception that male-dominated theologies have attempted to excise Goddess religions and their devotees and to substitute "the honour of the father" to take over her maternal powers.[76] Thus, Apollo, Dionysis and Athena who respectively control, madden and betray women and later Christ are moments in the evolution of legitimating patriarchal myths of "Monogender Male Motherhood".[77] In this process women are, like Mary, raped and emptied or, like Joan of Arc, a real Dianic heretic defeated by an alliance of French and English patriarchs whose common masculinist interests are stronger than those dividing their warring states.[78] The site of this struggle for control is typically medical knowledge acquired from childbirth and handed down through Goddess cults. Today the struggle is with role enforcing practices of gynecology and psychiatry.[79]

As her analytic position evolved, Daly's solutions changed. In her early work, she urged a transvaluation of "phallic morality" to give women existential courage to face ontological nothingness. Male-female/paternal-maternal differences were to be overcome through "a qualitative leap into psychic androgyny" which would integrate the repressed figure of the Goddess into new symbols of transcendence and provide the religious basis for an emancipatory politics that avoided the "idolatry of single issue limited goals."[80] Later, however, she rejected God as a pseudo-totality contaminated with necrophiliac patriarchy and androgyny as an abominable semantic suppression of totally woman-identified concepts.[81] Instead of mundane political action, she offers Hags and Crones, Spinners and Searchers a metapatriarchal journey into self-discovery and collective ecstasy.[82] In both cases, the building of female solidarity requires rejecting mother-daughter relations as at least ambivalent and at worst destructive, for "mothers in our culture are cajoled into killing off the self-actualization of their daughters" who learn, in turn, to hate them.[83] Her first metaphor for female solidarity is a cosmic convent where the realization of the mother-daughter relationship entails its destruction: "mother and daughter look with pride into each other's faces and know that they have both been victims and are now sisters and comrades."[84] Later she offers the vision of a celebratory coven united by Daughter-Right, since daughterhood is the universal social condition of women and the disalienated condition of mothers.[85] Either way, the dissolution of mother-daughter ties and the exclusion of men represents the positive sublation of motherhood, but at the cost of maternity.

In *Gyn/Ecolgy*, Daly's analysis of the effects of the biological division of labour in reproduction is extended from religion to science. Unable to incubate their own connections with immortality through pregnancy and birth and

preoccupied with the reproduction of their own male selves, men envy, not just the womb but women's creative energy in all its forms. Their envy gives rise to an identification with the foetus for, like the foetus, they draw on female energy to fuel projects of pseudocreative technology. Because Apollonian science feeds parasitically on women, loves only those victimized into a state of living death and ultimately deals deathly pollution to the heavens and the earth, it results in necrophilia:

> Since the passion of necrophilia is for the destruction of life and since their attraction is to all that is dead, dying and purely mechanical, the fathers fetishism with "fetuses" (reproductions/replicas of themselves) with which they passionately identify, are fatal to the planet. Nuclear reactors and the poisons they produce, stockpiles of atomic bombs, ozone destroying aerosol spray propellants, oil takers "designed" to self-destruct in the ocean.[86]

Even without the final solution of war, technology fosters the mechanization of life, a living death.

There is no doubt that these totalising visions have extended the power and range of feminist theory, but as metatheoretical elaborations of the motherhood problematic they each in different ways suffer from a one-sidedness at variance with the global complexity they aim to embrace. Thus, despite her ground-breaking rethinking of alienation theory, O'Brien's reassessment of classical political philosophy lacks historical concreteness (for all its appeal to History) particularly in its failure to specify the mechanisms which permit the patriarchal appropriation of motherhood to continue. In her work the move from the experience of reproductive biology to consciousness, whether formalized or spontaneous, is not mediated by a psychoanalytically understood unconscious. On the one hand, this analytic strategy avoids the necessity of imputing particular psychic motivational structures to political theorists whose texts can then be read for crucial absences (of reproduction) and demarcations (of nature/culture) which reveal political and ideological committments. On the other hand, it cannot elucidate the ways asymmetries in reproduction and childcare generate fears of empowered women which divide women not just from men but from one another.

The same ahistorical historicism flaws Dinnerstein's work, but in contrast there a disregard for the historical constitution of motherhood and production relations leads to an overinflation of psychical power, its confusion with social power and a reinforcement of the matriphobia she wants to contest. Despite their different emphases on the relative importance of biologically-based power and social powerlessness, both Chodorow and Dinnerstein can be read as reinforcing the mother-bashing of conventional psychology. Because it does not encompass actual biological reproduction and in fact rejects any male participation, Daly's theological transcendence of motherhood remains

congruent with Firestone's earlier radical feminist rejection of the mother. Furthermore, her assertion of instant recognition among women has been only partially substantiated by the actual political dynamics of feminist struggle. Prescriptively neutral with respect to other dimensions of political action, her retreat to a coven cannot stop ecological disaster. Concerned as they are with the dynamics of heterosexual reproduction, neither O'Brien nor Dinnerstein articulates the implications of lesbian sexual choice that Daly values. It seems, then, that both a focus on maternity and a concern with the practical organization of human reproduction are necessary if the full theoretical implications of the transformation implied by critically revalorised motherhood are to be fully and successfully drawn.

Conclusion

There is some irony in the fact that feminist theory is renewing itself by embracing motherhood. After all, did not nineteenth century feminism hold a similar perspective? And was this not a mark of its cooptation and containment? The thesis that there is a redemptive moment in feminine psychology which is connected with birth and nature is disturbing to the contemporary feminist emphasis on the similarity of women and men. Yet, as an authentic extension of radical, feminist critique the new motherhood problematic's assertion of the superiority of feminine modes of action and interaction holds a certain appeal. Rethinking motherhood begins a process in which feminist not androcentric theory defines what is good mothering and good in mothering.

While there are some obvious similarities in the maternal feminism of the first wave and the new motherhood problematic of the second there are also crucial differences that are more telling; they may theorize the same object but they do so with different values and strategies. In general, limited by a lack of effective contraceptive technology and a commitment to an anti-sexual moral propriety, nineteenth century feminists did not challenge contemporary hegemonic claims that gender differences and labour divisions were biologically determined facts of life. Instead, they made the ideology of difference their own. Women's moral, cultural and practical skills and values were meant to *extend* the boundaries of differentiated spheres, not break them down; men were not to diaper babies, although women were to read latin. The social conditions in which earlier feminist political ideologies arose also inflected their approach to maternity, particularly in relation to the woman/nature dialectic, and the tendency to identify these terms. While there were certainly problems arising from the relation of an industrial society to nature and from the dislocations of workers in the course of its development, these were, except for prolonged high rates of infant mortality, usually seen as local and specific.

The ideological character and historical situation of second wave feminism mitigates against an automatic equation of its new focus on motherhood with conservatism. Its commitment to a radical extension of egalitarian principle is supported by a sophisticated understanding of the oppressiveness of imposed gender divisions. Moreover, its radical transformative project is to create a

feminized world. Although there is now beginning to be some pressure to return women to the family, the liberatory character of the new motherhood theory is reinforced both by the historical and anthropological discourses examined above and by some aspects of practical life. Adopting the first wave metaphor of spheres, we can say that the second wave of the women's movement wants not merely to *overflow* boundaries but to *abolish them altogether* by extending the feminine sphere until it becomes coterminous with the human totality. In this optic, the liberation and integration of men lies in their reintegration into such a transformed world, not least, as full participants in the reproductive practices of childcare and birth, no longer as experts nor just as "fathers". Second wave motherhood theory goes beyond that of the nineteenth century not just to the extent that it envisions men as, among other things, also nurturers — mothers, if you like — but also insofar as it defines their assimiliation as necessary for human and planetary survival.

In narrower terms, a number of practical and political questions about the organization of birth and the social reproduction of human beings are posed. The critique of medicalized birth points to a need for the appropriation of knowledge and technology of the birth process by women and those with whom they wish to share it from its thrall in the hands of medical specialists. Existing contrasting outcomes of population policy in capitalist and self-identified socialist states also raise a democratic question of what social structures are necessary to empower individuals freely to make decisions about their reproductive lives and how to ensure a balance between population and resources.

Perhaps the most interesting contribution of the new motherhood problematic is its critical re-examination of the culture/nature distinction in relation to the prospects for a liberated technology and its location of this intersecting problematic at the point of birth. Here it shares the malestream philosophical perception of the unity of women and nature but interprets this as an evolutionary strength rather than a less-than-human weakness. It argues that birth, nature and female power and creativity are indeed linked and moreover that they each and all conflict with the outcomes of the male reproductive condition: exploitation, mechanistic rationalization and death. This strategic juncture has evidently become of immense political significance in a biosphere threatened with the exhaustion of resources, pollution and nuclear war, and in a situation where microtechnology is about to reduce drastically and globally the demand for productive labour. In these conditions, simply increasing production will neither end the gender division of labour nor ensure distributive justice on a world scale. The anti-malthusianism of early marxism and the technological faith of the soviets to which it gave rise absolutely need revision. The analysis offered by the new theories of motherhood underlines an intimate connection among women's liberation, global social emancipation and bio-spheric renewal. Whether elaborated in philosophical or psychoanalytic modes, these arguments, although they have visionary moments, are more than sentimental and must be examined by other currents of emancipatory philosophy.

Department of Sociology
Trent University

Notes

1. Although medical technology, for example in vitro fertilization, is increasingly capable of intervening in the process of conception in contemporary society the chief means is still adoption. Popular movements ocasionally gave women such as Mother Jones the title as an honorific. Non-western cultures have widespread and varying practices of prenatal social intervention including food tabus, beliefs about sexual intercourse, rituals, and musical or oral communication with the unborn child.

2. Aileen Kraditor, *The ideas of the women's suffrage movement.* Garden City 1971, pp. 52-55, 91; Wayne Roberts "'Rocking the cradle for the world': the new woman and maternal feminism" in L. Kealy ed., *A not unreasonable claim.* Toronto, 1979.

3. Betty Friedan, *The feminine mystique.* Harmondsworth 1972; Juliet Mitchell, *Women's estate.* Harmondsworth 1971, p. 36. Mitchell was the first to challenge the view that reproduction is "an atemporal constant — part of biology rather than history" p. 107.

4. Germaine Greer, *The female eunuch.* New York 1972, pp. 32, 232-3. She has since revised her views in part as a critique of the imposition of western technological rationality in the form of population control imposed on third world women and thus also become a political exponent of the transformed view of motherhood. *Sex and destiny.* New York, 1984.

5. Shulamith Firestone, *The dialectic of sex, the case for feminist revolution.* New York 1970. Marge Piercy, *Woman on the edge of time* translates this view into fiction; in contrast, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's nineteenth century feminist utopia, *Herland* relies on parthenogenic reproduction in a world of mothers and daughters.

6. Philippe Aries, *Centuries of childhood: a social history of family life.* New York, 1962; Lawrence Stone, *Family and childhood in England.* Harmondsworth, 1979. Zillah Eisenstein, *The radical future of liberal feminism.* New York, 1981 links this theory with bourgeois liberal political theory.

7. The phrase is Jessie Bernard's, *The future of motherhood.* New York 1975 p. 20; see also Dolores Hayden, *The grand domestic revolution.* Cambridge, 1982; Helen Z. Lopata, *Occupation: housewife,* Oxford, 1971 for its full flowering and Meg Luxton, *More than a labour of love.* Toronto, 1981 for its contradictions. She demonstrates that production — of labour power — takes place in the home and that new technology has increased standards for rather than reduced the time spent in housework. Fertility peaks in Canada in 1961 and in the U.S.A. in 1957; Monica Boyd et al., "Family: function, formation, and fertility" in G. Cook ed., *Opportunity for choice.* Ottawa, 1976 and Bernard.

8. The phrase is Friedan's; Pauline B. Bart, "Depression in middle aged women" in V. Gornick and B. Moran, eds., *Woman in sexist society.* New York, 1972.

9. Helene Deutsch, *The psychology of women.* New York, 1944, 1945; Phyllis Chesler, *Women and madness.* New York, 1972.

10. For Canada, Pat Connelly, *Last hired, first fired.* Toronto, 1978; for the USA, Bernard, 1975, p. 144 ff.

11. Educational achievement for women is typically linked with lower marriage rates, late marriage and fewer children. Similarly, later marriage reduces the time "at risk" for socially legitimated pregnancy and childbearing. Effective contraception permits more control over family numbers and helps to eliminate the "extra" child; see Margrit Eichler, *Families in Canada to-day.* Toronto, 1983.

12. *Time,* Feb. 22, 1982; the reception of Oriana Fallaci's *Letter to a child unborn.* Garden City 1978 was a similar instance.

13. Nancy Friday, *My mother/myself.* New York, 1978. pp. 342, 343, 450.

14. *Chatelaine,* the largest Canadian women's magazine and the *Globe and Mail* in its soft news sections have carried stories on late motherhood among the famous, unpartnered motherhood and, more recently, lesbians choosing pregnancy and motherhood. Even *Toronto Life* September, 1984 got in on the act with an article on "muppies" — mid-thirties yuppy mothers.

15. Signe Hammer, *Daughters and mothers.* New York, 1976 p. xi.

16. Susan Harding, "Family reform movements; recent feminism and its opponents" *Feminist Studies* 7:1, 1981.

17. "Female homosexuality is inseparable from the very qualities which were the perogative of women in early history. It is of no consequence to these conclusions whether the matriarchate existed as a definite period of history, which I believe, it did, or is mythology. Mythology is history, transcending concrete data and revealing their true meaning." Charlotte Wolf, *Love between women.* New York, 1971, p. 82; Jill Johnson sees mythology as a model for "theory, consciousness, and action", *Lesbian Nation.* New York. 1978 p. 249; Paula Webster, "Matriarchy: a vision of power" in R. Reiter *Toward an anthropology of women.* New York, 1975.

18. Juliet Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and feminism.* New York. 1974 helped focus this interest, although her committment to psychoanalysis predates its development.

19. Rachel Blau Duplessis, "Washing blood", *Feminist Studies* 4:2, (1978). p. 2.

20. Hélène Cixous, "The laugh of the Medusa", *Signs* 1:4 (1978) p. 877; the criterion of exploring the unconscious for a new rationality is also hers. Duplessis, 1978; Anita Barrows, "The chart"; Mary Oppen, "Breath of life"; and Alicia Ostriker, "From the mother/child papers" in the same special issue of *Feminist Studies*; and Jane Lazarre, *The mother knot.* New York, 1977 illustrates this approach.

21. Robin Morgan, *Going too far: the personal chronicle of a feminist.* New York, 1977, p. 8. et passim.

22. Adrienne Rich, *Of women born.* New York, 1977, p. 15.

23. Nancy Tanner and Adrienne Zihlman, "Women in evolution, part I; innovation and selection in human origins" *Signs* 1:3 (1981).

24. Ibid., p. 606.

25. Adrienne Zihlman, "Women and evolution, part II: subsistence and social organization among early hominids" *Signs* 4:1.

26. Merlin Stone, *When God was a woman.* New York 1976, p. 23; Sarah B. Pomeroy persents a counter view for a later period, *Goddesses, whores, wives and slaves: women in classical antiquity.* New York, 1975.

27. Ibid., Chapter 4.

28. Anne Barstow, "The uses of archeology for women's history: James Mellaart's work on neolithic goddesses at Çatal' Hüyük", *Feminist Studies* 4:3 (1978).

29. Ruby Rohrlich, "State formation in Sumer and the subjugation of women, *Feminist Studies* 6:1 (1980).

30. Charles T. Wood, "The doctors' dilemma: sin, salvation and the menstrual cycle in medieval thought" *Speculum* 56:4 (1981).

31. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *La nouvelle Heloise, Julie or the new Eloise.* trans. and abridged J. H. McDowell University Park, Pa. 1968; on Rousseau see Susan Moller Okin, *Women in western political thought.* Princeton, 1978; and Eisenstein, 1981, chapter 4.

32. Elizabeth Badinter argues that social practices among the aristocracy in eighteenth century France — wetnursing, governesses of tutors and boarding schools — indicate that mothers were relatively indifferent to the child's social welfare preferring to emerge from social seculsion into court circles of political power, intellectual enlightenment and sociability. These were later adopted by the Parisian bourgeoises: *The myth of motherhood.* London, 1981 p. 180.

33. The extent and character of maternal power is debated. Badenter, pp. 168ff, accepts it uncritically; Jacques Donzelot, *The Policing of Families*, N.Y., 1979 and Christopher Lasch, *Haven in a Heartless World.* N.Y., 1977, see it allied with state and expert agents; Michèle Barrett and Mary McIntavish, *The Anti-Social Family*, London, 1982, criticized their anti-feminism but failed to note their matriphobia.

34. Barbara Ehrenreich and Deidre English, *For her own good: 150 years of the experts' advice to women.* Garden City 1978, p. 15.

35. Ibid., pp. 63, 19-20. Both of these solutions remain androcentric, assuming that the real world lies outside the home in spheres of production, politics and science occupied by men.

36. Ibid., p. 172.

37. Ibid., p. 174.

38. Mary P. Ryan, "Femininity and capitalism in anti-bellum America" in Z Eisenstein ed., *Capitalist patriarchy and the case for socialist feminism.* New York, 1979.

39. See Phillip Wylie, *A generation of vipers.* New York, 1955.

40. Shirley Radl, *Mother's day is over.* New York, 1978 p. 207; a content analysis of 15 mass market books published between 1972-1980 revealed that all referred to the women's movement and that the most frequent citation was Ellen Peck *The baby trap.* New York, 1971, which argues an anti-natalist position in part on ecological grounds.

41. For example: Virginia Barber and Merril M Skaggs, *The mother person.* New York, 1977; Barbara Belford ed., *Redbook's The young mothers.* New York, 1977; Jean Curtis, *Working mothers.* New York, 1976; Elaine Hoffer, *Mothering: the emotional experience of motherhood after Freud and feminism.* Garden City, 1978; Lazarre, 1977; Angela Barron McBride, *The growth and development of mothers.* New York, 1973; Liz Smith, *The mother book.* Garden city, 1978; exceptions are Luxton, 1981; Harriet Rosenberg, "Motherhood and social reproduction" unpublished paper, Anne Oakley *Becoming a Mother.* New York, 1980.

42. Curtis, 1976 p. 42.

43. Barber and Skaggs, 1977, pp. 15, 98; Susan (Contrertto) Weisskopf, "Maternal sexuality and asexual motherhood," *Signs* 5:4 (Summer, 1984); "Maternalism, Sexuality and the New Feminism" in Zubin and J. Meney eds, *Contemporary Sexual Behavior: Critical Issues in the 1970's.* Baltimore, 1973.

44. Doris Bernstein, "Female identity synthesis" in Alan Roland and Barbara Harris eds., *Career and motherhood.* New York, 1979. This volume, which collects papers presented at the 1976 meetings of the National [USA] Psychological Association for Psychoanalysis, presents the newly hegemonic position validating the "working mother"; see also, Esther Menaker, Harriett Podhoretz and Barbara Harris in the same volume.

45. As well as the citations in footnote 44, see Jessie Bernard, *Women, wives and mothers.* Chicago, 1975; Sydney C. Callaghan, ed., *The working mothers.* New York, 1975.

46. Barber and Skaggs, p. 217.

47. Barbara Ehrenreich and Diedre English, "Witches, nurses and Midwives," New England Press, n.d.; Jean Donnisen, *Midwives and medical men: a history of interprofessional rivalries and women's rights.* London, 1977; Anne Oakley, "Wisewoman and medicine man: changes in the manage-

ment of childbirth" in J. Mitchell and A. Oakley, eds., *The rights and wrongs of women.* Harmondsworth 1976, pp.; Rich; Jane Lewis, *The politics of motherhood.* London and Montreal, 1980; for Canada, *Ontario History 75: 1 (1983), Anne Oakley, "A case of pregnancy: paradigms of women in maternity cases" Signs* 4:4 (Summer, 1979).

48. Sheila Kitzinger, *Women as mothers.* Glascow 1978, p. 50.

49. Dana Breen, "The mother and the hospital" in S. Lipschitz ed., *Tearing the veil: essays on femininity.* London: 1975, pp. 25-28.

50. Suzanne Arms, *Immaculate deception.* Oxford, 1975; Kitzinger, 1978; Rich, 1977; Selma Fraiberg, *Every child's birthright: in defense of mothering.* New York: 1977; T. Chand and M. Richards, eds., *Benefits and Hazards of the New Obstetrics.* Heinemann Medical, 1977.

51. See Arms, 1975, Bridgitte Jordan, "Birth in Four Cultures", and Ruth Watson Lubic, "The Politics of childbirth today", *Second Motherhood Symposium Proceedings.* Univ. of Wisconsin, Madison, 1981, pp. 151-166.

52. William Ray Arney, "Maternal-infant bonding: the politics of falling in love with your child," *Feminist Studies* 6:3 (1980).

53. Rich, p. 237.

54. Alice Rossi, "A biosocial perspective on parenting" *Daedelus* (1977).

55. Sigmund Freud, "Femininity" *New introductory lectures on psychoanalysis.* Harmondsworth, 1973 p. 153.

56. Nancy Chodorow, *The reproduction of mothering: psychoanalysis and the sociology of gender.* Berkley and Los Angeles, 1978, pp. 33, 40.

57. Ibid., p. 206.

58. Ibid., p. 175 ff.

59. Ibid., p. 194.

60. Dorothy Dinnerstein claims close kinship with Asch and gestalt theory, but she relies on Freud, Klein and Brown, *The mermaid and the minotaur: sexual arrangements and human malaise.* New York 1977, pp. xi, 43-44, 119.

61. Ibid., p. 161.

62. Chorodow, 1978, Chapter 7.

63. Ibid., pp. 173-177.

64. Ibid., p. 185.

65. Jane Flax, "The conflict between nurturance and autonomy in mother-daughter relationships and within feminism," *Feminist Studies* 4:2, 1978.

66. Mary O'Brien, *The politics of reproduction.* London, 1981, p. 21.

67. Ibid., p. 50.

68. Ibid., pp. 29, 34.

69. Ibid., p. 32.

70. Ibid., p. 194.

71. Ibid., pp. 169 ff; for O'Brien, women's struggles for daycare, abortion and rewards for domestic labour and against legal restrictions and violence help to consolidate rational control over the process of reproduction. The further strategy she recommends, socializing children to new modes, seems inadequate to her wider vision; it is not articulated with, for example, the need to control state agencies of socialization.

72. Dinnerstein, 1973, pp. 124 ff; Sherry Ortner follows de Beauvoir to a similar conclusion, "Is female to nature as male is to culture?" in M. Z. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere eds., *Woman, culture and society*. Stanford 1974.
73. Ibid., p. 103.
74. Ibid., p. 160 ff.
75. Mary Daly, *Gyn/ecology: the metaethics of radical feminism*. Boston, 1978 p. 39.
76. Mary Daly, *Beyond God the father: toward a philosophy of women's liberation*. Boston, 1973 p. 14-15.
77. Daly, 1978, p. 87.
78. Daly, 1973 p. 146.
79. Daly, 1979 pp. 215-216.
80. Ibid., pp. 27-28, 149.
81. Daly, 1978 pp. xi ff.
82. Ibid., chapter 10.
83. Daly, 1973 p. 129.
84. Ibid., chapter 6, p. 150.
85. Ibid., pp. 346-347.
86. Ibid., p. 63.

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association meetings (Halifax, Nova Scotia, June 1980). Thanks to Meg Luxton, Rhoda Howard, Andrew Wernick and the reviewers for the *CJPST* for their comments.

WE OBJECTS OBJECT: PORNOGRAPHY AND THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

Eileen Manion

"A woman has a product and she should use it."
Chuck Traynor to Linda Lovelace, quoted in *Ordeal*
"All struggle for dignity and self-determination is rooted in the struggle for actual control over one's own body, especially control over access to one's body."
Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*

Since the mid-seventies in the United States and the late seventies here in Canada, feminists have been discussing pornography as a problem for women, a danger to women, not just a symptom of misogyny, but also one of its causes. Large numbers of women report that they both fear assault triggered by pornography, and experience pornography itself as violent assault. As Susan Griffin put it: "Pornography is sadism."[2] Its very existence humiliates us.

More and more forcefully women have been demanding that something be done about pornography. Strategies differ. Feminists with civil libertarian backgrounds advocate open discussion, demonstrations, education, consumer boycotts. The more impatient prefer the consciousness raising of direct action, as in the bombing of Vancouver's Red Hot Video. Others look to the state to enforce existing obscenity laws or to frame new legislation which would suppress pornography, not because it is sexual, but because it is hate literature and incites violence. As Susan Brownmiller declared: "Pornography is the undiluted essence of anti-female propaganda."[3]

Though anti-pornography tactics vary, feminists generally agree that pornography is a bad thing, that it does harm to women, and that if we have trouble defining it,[4] we still recognize it when we see it. This is not unreasonable

since the pornography most feminists attack does not disguise itself. However, when we look critically at other cultural products — advertisements, mainstream movies and television programs — they often resemble pornography.

One problem with the feminist consciousness raising that has taken place around pornography is that it intends to generate fear and anxiety, or to bring to the surface fears women already experience.[5] In our society, every young girl's developing sexuality is hedged with awareness of frightening possibilities: violent assault and unplanned pregnancy. As adolescents, we learn both to fear men and to mistrust our own amorphous desires, which may betray us. Feminist discussions of pornography address these fears and emphasize pornography's danger to women, epitomized in Robin Morgan's slogan: "Pornography is the theory, and rape the practice."[6] Gloria Steinem makes the same point in her essay, "Erotica vs. Pornography." Following a brief discussion of the feminist movement's having raised issues such as rape, wife battering and enforced prostitution to public consciousness, she says: "Such instances of real antiwomen warfare led us directly to the propaganda that teaches and legitimizes them — pornography."[7]

Pornography makes us nervous for a number of other complex reasons. Beyond the fear that it incites violence, it represents an analogue of what alcohol symbolized for nineteeth century feminists at a time when most respectable women did not drink. Not only was alcohol for them a lower class social evil contributing to domestic violence and public corruption (associated as drinking was with party politics), but it was also, for more powerful men of their own class, a glue, a mucilage bonding males in exclusive enclaves off-limits to "good" women. Nineteenth century feminists imagined that if they could remove the alcohol, these male bastions would open up and admit them. Similarly for feminists today, pornography represents a unifying force in male power groupings. Pornography is quintessential macho culture: one thinks of businessmen enjoying an evening at a strip club — the "good" women who aspire to be partners in the firm might well feel uncomfortable.

We are also uneasy about pornography for it seems to promote isolation of men from women, the substitution of fantasy for relationship. If socialization into macho values denies tenderness and compassion, pornography promises sexual gratification without the necessity of those "effeminate" feelings.[8] "Real men," we sometimes suspect, don't need women at all,[9] or they want only the compliant, pre-packaged woman of the skin magazine. Pornography, like advertising, appeals to a whole range of insecurities, evokes envy by suggesting somehow, somewhere, more pleasure is available.

In addition, feminists fear that pornography not only distorts the portrayal of female sexuality by depicting women as no more than objects-for-men, but that it also blocks exploration of women's "true" sexuality. Just when women were beginning to discuss what a sexuality emancipated from double standards and procreative teleology might mean for them, pornography turned up its volume and drowned out with a quadrophonic blast women's tentative whispers.

Violence against women exists and women must defend themselves against

it. Our other concerns about pornography are equally serious. However, focussing analysis of pornography on potential violence or other sources of anxiety makes it difficult to think clearly in the ensuing tense, over-charged atmosphere. I'm not arguing that our anxiety is unjustified. However, I do think there's a real danger that the climate of fear we are helping to create will strengthen repressive social forces and that some of our demands with regard to pornograhy will backfire and result in unanticipated losses for women. Thus as a feminist I'd like to take one step back from the feminist discussion of pornography and look at why we began to perceive pornography as a problem, what some of the contemporary rhetoric about pornography is saying, and how the contemporary anti-pornography consensus[10] fits into the history of feminist causes and demands. Since I am primarily concerned about pornography in relation to the women's movement, I will not deal with the separate though related questions of child pornography or gay male pornography.

Once upon a time there were norms of correct masculine and feminine behaviour. A number of factors — economic and social changes beyond the control of any one group — have ensured that these norms remain unchallenged in very few milieus within North America today. Feminism, needless to say, has been directly involved in overthrowing received ideas about both male and female propriety.[11] Parallel with these changes, pornography, presumably to create and sustain new markets, has extended the bounds of what can, without incurring prosecution, be shown and described. Pornography allegedly breaks taboos of acceptable representation, often in a context which claims to be funny, ironic, self-referential. Pornography provokes the shocked response, the censor in our heads who tells us the image is bad or dirty, and therefore pleasurable. Pornography claims to push back barriers in order to continue to titillate. Perhaps pornography even needs censorship so that it will have norms to violate.

However, an important element in the feminist analysis of pornography has been the argument that pornography does not, in fact, violate norms of male dominance and female submissiveness, but operates to sustain them. In this view, pornography only seems to have a radical, liberatory appeal to the unconscious. In reality, pornography gives us the same old world view we see everywhere else: men are subjects, women are objects, not even objects to be "known," but discrete items to be scanned, viewed, taken in, or exchanged, like bits of information.

But then, so what? Why did feminists become concerned about pornography if its values are just the same as those we see everywhere else in the culture? Why isolate pornography for special attention?

If we're not afflicted with historical amnesia or guilty self-denial, we must remember that in the sixties most of us assumed sexual openness and explicitness had something to do with human liberation: we were creating a joyous emancipatory festival which would liberate us from our fears, timidities, hang-ups, double standards. In the present climate, when so many of us see ourselves as the walking wounded of the sexual revolution, that view at best seems naive, at worst a male-conspiratorial rip-off.

Feminists often suggest that the seventies' proliferation of pornography, as well as its increased explicitness and violence, is a male chauvinist backlash to the women's movement. In pornography men take revenge on uppity women. Male consumers buy into the fantasy and keep "their" women off balance by bringing home pornography or by going out openly to view it. Religious fundamentalists blame the women's movement more directly for augmenting the availability and popularity of pornography. Didn't we urge women to be "liberated," independent of men and marriage? Many North Americans can't distinguish the idea of liberation promoted by Gloria Steinem from the one marketed by Helen Gurley Brown. Didn't feminists raise "new" issues related to sexuality to public consciousness? Didn't we say that "the personal is political"?[12] For many that translates into "the private is public" — so there we get pornography taking us at our word and making women's privates publically visible just about everywhere we turn. How can we object to that? might the jeremiahs ask, and how shall we respond to such a nightmarish perversion of our message?

For feminists, there is nothing liberated, liberating, or libertarian in the current availability of explicit sexual images catering to all specialized tastes. At best this wide open market constitutes "repressive tolerance;" at worst, sexist propaganda as nefarious as *Mein Kampf.* On the evilness of pornography, feminists and fundamentalists are at one. They differ, of course, on why it's so bad.

Feminists have isolated pornography as a problem as a result of two parallel trends within the women's movement. One is the focus on male violence, which I mentioned earlier, and the other is the attempt to develop a women's perspective that calls into question male "universal" values. Whether or not connections between pornography and rape can be demonstrated "scientifically" in laboratory experiments with bizarre methodologies and dubious theoretical assumptions, women assert that the degradation of women immediately visible to them in pornography is reason enough to believe that boys and men who regularly consume it must be corrupted. Beyond that, women question the way pornography depicts sexuality, claiming that it's not about sex at all, but only about dominance, or that it represents only male sexuality.

This concern with pornography can be correlated with escalating frustration over the resistance of "the system" to grant our just and reasonable demands. During the late sixties and early seventies, enormous amounts of investigations were done, information was collected, analyses were made; we discovered and demonstrated how empty was the egalitarian rhetoric of our society when it came to men and women's real life privileges and opportunities. Then by the late seventies, many things seemed to be getting worse instead of better. Increased divorce rates and the jump in single parent female-headed households, we realized, were liberating many women into poverty.[13]

However, just as nineteenth century feminists overestimated the potency that would accrue to them with the vote, we also may at first have exaggerated the power of legal change. Historically feminists often conflated legal rights with political power and assumed one devolved directly from the other.[14] Perhaps we

also assumed, in the early days of the contemporary movement, that cogent argument, along with tidying up of the law, would be enough, or almost enough, to affect change. Our early optimism has since given way to rage, and we have been forced to examine aspects of our culture which maintain male dominance at the irrational level and undercut our rational demands.

This search has led some feminists like Nancy Chodorow and Dorothy Dinnerstein [15] to take a closer look at mothering and use psychoanalytic theory to explore misogyny and personal/cultural ambivalence toward women. It has led others to pornography, which, insofar as it blatently sneers at us, tediously insists we are nothing but cunts, bunnies, pussies, and chicks, seems like the grandiose revenge of the (male) infantile imagination. For, adopting the vision pornography presents of women, who would trust us with any authority if all we really want, no matter what our pretensions, is a good lay? But then who would trust the men we see in pornography either? Would we buy used cars from them or elect them to political office? No matter what their pretensions, all they want is a good lay. Suppose we as women really do look at pornography with our own eyes and not as we imagine men look at it. This may seem like a ridiculous, utopian wish, given the power relations of our culture. But then who can endow us with the legitimacy of our own perspective?

If we do look again at pornography, I think we'll see not only women's degradation, but also human pathos and pain. Paradoxically, feminist condemnation of pornography acccepts the brittle male fantasy — that the real-life, unreliable penis is magical, powerful, irresistible — and overlooks the fears and insecurities such fantasy is meant to dissolve.

I realize that I've strayed here from feminist orthodoxy and raised provocative questions which some may regard as frivolous. Nonetheless, in taking up pornography as a political issue, I think we have not taken account of historical parallels with various nineteenth century feminists' moral and political concerns. For a few moments, I would like to explore some of these and then return to contemporary feminism and pornography.

Nineteeth century feminism was not limited in scope to a unidimensional struggle for women's suffrage, as historians would have had us believe for many years. Women's demands for civil rights and expanded participation in the world outside the home were linked with a wide range of other issues, including concerns related to sexuality. Discussions of "voluntary motherhood" raised the possibility of women's sexual autonomy within marriage.[16] A few utopian communities and free love advocates went further, questioned the sanctity of marriage and championed women's right to a sexuality free of marriage's exclusivity. Nonetheless, most feminists foresaw a transformed institution of marriage, purged of both male supremacy and sexual ignorance.[17] However, on the darker side, women did recognize that sexuality could pose a threat, and their fears became organized around various campaigns dealing with prostitution, white slavery and "social purity."

Ellen Dubois and Linda Gordon have pointed out that for nineteenth century feminists the prostitute represented the "quintessential sexual terror,"[18] for she epitomized female victimization at the hands of lustful, exploitative men.

Reformers in both Britain and the United States focussed their energy both on rescuing prostitutes from their degraded life and on opposing state regulation of prostitution. Licensing prostitutes and coercing them into physical examinations, reformers argued, cynically attempted to protect men from venereal disease at the expense of the women's civil rights. Since the definition of prostitution even at the turn of the century was notoriously vague, [19] and could include non-commercial extramarital female sexual activity, the danger of infringement on any woman's civil rights was evident. However, many feminists also imaginatively identified with the actual prostitute and made her outrage their own.

In Britain, Josephine Butler led the feminist wing of the anti-Contagious Diseases Acts movement. The Contagious Diseases Acts, a series of laws passed between 1864 and 1869, provided for the "sanitary inspection" of alleged prostitutes near designated military depots in England and Ireland. Some doctors and politicians wanted to see the Acts extended to the civilian population. Similarly in nineteeth century America, feminists took part in struggles to oppose the passage of such regulatory legislation.[20] In Canada, a Purity Education Association existed in Toronto between 1906 and 1915, and a National Council for the Abolition of White Slavery was founded in 1912, but most of the activity around sexual concerns was connected with the Women's Christian Temperance Union.[21]

The prostitute, however, was not only a symbol for feminists of women's oppression; she was also a symbol for moralists of the social dislocation caused by industrialisation. When we look at the anti-Contagious Diseases Acts campaign in Britain or the anti-regulation campaigns in the United States, we see that moralists and feminists had concerns that both differed and overlapped. Feminists wanted to abolish prostitution by "saving" prostitutes and rechanneling men's sexual impulses into "acceptable" relationships. They rejected the view that the prostitute was a "fallen woman," a perpetual outcast, a potential polluter of men. Instead she was a victim of "male pollution . . . who had been invaded by men's bodies, men's laws, and by that 'steel penis,' the speculum."[22] Feminists deeply resented the sexual license men claimed for themselves and condemned in women. Both feminists and others in the purity movement advocated a "single standard of morality" for both men and women. In addition, feminists could use the assumed moral superiority and "passionlessness" of good women to argue that they should weild political power to clean up the corrupt public world.[23] However, this strategy undermined attempts to make positive claims for women's sexuality.

Enthusiasm for the temperance, social purity and other reform movements which aimed at moral improvement through legislative intervention was fueled partly by what we might see as feminist concerns, and partly by anxiety over urbanization, commercialization, industrialisation — all the "-izations" that threatened family and rural values with rampant, exploitative individualism.[24] Very often other anxieties were displaced onto sexual issues, which are guaranteed to provoke attention and indignation. However, as we'll see, women did not necessarily benefit from the resulting climate and/or reforms.

By emphasizing the Victorian notion of women's passionlessness and moral superiority women were able to challenge male sexual prerogatives within and outside the family and forge an argument in favor of their own political power. However, this led feminists to sacrifice for several decades an opportunity to define their sexuality on their own terms. (As we know, numerous "experts" rushed in to fill the vaccuum.) Even early birth control advocates ran up against the fear that contraception would leave women more vulnerable to male sexual exploitation. This restricted view of women's sexuality also made it impossible for many feminists to understand the complex reality of the prostitute herself. Consequently they could be shocked by prostitutes who refused to behave like proper victims and accept "rescue." They were also highly suspicious of working class culture and mores, and could take a repressive attitude toward sexual activity on the part of young working girls. One might even go so far as to argue that many ordinary women were put off by a view of female sexuality that did not correspond to their own experience.[25]

Consequently, although feminists succeeded in Britain in having the Contagious Diseases Acts repealed, and blocked in many instances the passage of regulationist legislation in America, they ultimately did not control the direction of the purity movements and their work ironically helped pave the way for legislation aimed at repressing prostitution, which, though it did not eliminate the "social evil," made the life of the prostitute herself lonelier, harder, and riskier.

As long as prostitution had been informally tolerated, prostitutes could live among or on the fringes of the casual laboring poor. They had a degree of autonomy, and were not usually exploited by pimps. However, in Britain the debate over prostitution was raised to a more impassioned level with the publication of W.T. Stead's infamous "Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon" series in 1885. Stead's documentation of the sale of "five pound virgins" to aristocratic rakes, along with other sensationalistic accounts of "white slave" traffic, led to the passage of the Criminal Law Amendment Act (1885) which raised the age of consent for girls from thirteen to sixteen. However, it also gave the police increased jurisdiction over working class girls and women and enabled them to carry out raids on lodging house brothels. The closing of brothels failed to eliminate prostitution, but it did render prostitutes subject to arbitrary exercises of police power and it forced them to seek protection from pimps and other underworld men. In 1912 Sylvia Pankhurst remarked of the White Slavery Act: "It is a strange thing that the latest criminal Amendment Act, which was passed ostensibly to protect women, is being used exclusively to punish women."[26] It is also worth noting that the earlier 1885 Act prohibited "indecent acts" between male consenting adults, allowing for the prosecution of homosexuals.

Paradoxically, the purity movement, in its efforts to establish "civilized morality," a pre-Freudian notion of the passions under the total control of will and reason, helped to launch an airing of topics formerly untouchable. Ironically in its very desire to suppress passion and disruptive sexuality it contributed to a climate in which such issues could be researched and investigated. Nonetheless, this "openness" also meant behaviour must be more

carefully scrutinized. As I have noted, for women, especially young working class women, extramarital sexual activity often became not only unacceptable and immoral, but also criminal, and more likely to result in arrest and imprisonment.[27]

Thus in the United States, nineteenth century evangelical movements to rescue prostitutes gave way to Progressive Era social welfare efforts to "reform" them. During the post-bellum era, former abolitionists turned their attention to prostitution and brought to the crusade against "white slavery" all the energy and moral enthusiasm they'd developed in the fight for black emancipation. However, as in England, legislation passed to eliminate prostitution led to arbitrary police raids, pressuring prostitutes into dependence on pimps. Ironically the new reformatories instituted after the turn of the century to punish deviant female sexual behaviour created conditions whereby girls like Maimie Pinzer, whose life has become known through publication of her letters to Fanny Quincy Howe,[28] might be pushed into prostitution by the very justice/social welfare system designed to redeem them.

The ultimate result of the alliance of feminists and other social purity advocates was that the feminist dimension of the attack on prostitution was lost and only the attack on the prostitute herself survived. This can be seen at its most virulent after American entrance into World War 1. The federal government was so concerned with maintaining a "pure" army that it arrested and detained more than 15,000 suspected prostitutes. In addition, it's worth noting that the social purity campaigns against obscenity in literature, art, and popular culture led by Josiah Leeds and Anthony Comstock created the legislation (1873) under which the Sangers were later prosecuted for sending women birth control information. This legislation also made it difficult for feminists to write openly about topics like rape and incest.

We can see that nineteenth and turn of the century campaigns around sexual themes coagulated anxieties provoked by increased commercialization, commodification, and other types of social change, and ultimately, in order to allay fears, legitimated more government intervention, manipulation and control. Although we must be careful about drawing historical parallels in a facile way, one thing we can note is that public discussions of sexual issues are extremely volatile, encourage displacement, and provoke repression as well as permit enlightenment.

Twentieth century feminists certainly do not claim, as did so many of our nineteenth century sisters, that women are "passionless" or "sexless" and for that reason deserving of more power and authority. However, in the feminist discussion of pornography we find the assumption that men's sexuality is essentially different from women's and more pathological. In Susan Griffin's analysis, sexuality itself is natural and good but men have corrupted it with bad cultural constructions.[29] In Andrea Dworkin's view, pornography lies about female sexuality, representing woman as "a lewd, dissolute brazen thing, a whore always soliciting," but it tells the truth about male sexuality: "That men believe what pornography says about women . . . From the worst to the best of them, they do."[30] To take this point one step further, pornography portrays

women and their sexuality as essentially controllable by men (bondage pornography is the logical result); feminist discourse on pornography portrays men and their sexuality as essentially controllable by pornography. This mirroring of what is a distorted idea of our own sexuality ought to give us pause.

Although feminist writers on pornography do not presume women are sexless, they do imply that, left to our own devices, free of male coercive interference, women are reasonable, self-determining beings with a sexuality that is unproblematic, unpathological, gentle and good.[31] In feminist discourse on pornography all dangerous, disruptive aspects of sexuality are projected onto men or "male culture." Interestingly, this projection mirrors what Susan Griffin tells us pornography does with men's "good" feelings; pornography projects men's vulnerabilities onto women so that these feelings can be controlled. We reverse the process and project our unfeminine nastiness and aggression onto men. Insofar as such human nastiness surfaces in pornography, we'd like to suppress it. Lorenne Clark provides a good example of this attitude when she says: "We are not in any way opposed to the manufacture, sale, or distribution of materials which stress the positive aspects of human sexuality."[32] As feminists, can we really set ourselves up as cultural commisars, deciding what is and what is not "positive" enough about sex to be represented?

We may not precisely be passionless anymore, but some of these hidden assumptions about our sexuality are equally distorting. They accompany a notion of the self as an entity distinct from the body; for Andrea Dworkin: "All struggle for dignity and self-determination is rooted in the struggle for actual control over one's own body, especially control over access to one's own body."[33] But, we might ask here, are women embodied beings or are we owners of bodies who make rational decisions about others' rights of way? This is not a frivolous, hair-splitting question, if, after all, we don't like pornography because it markets women as salable objects or male public property accessible to anyone. If we posssess our bodies, surely we can sell them in a commodity culture. Only if, as feminists, we develop a very different view of the self, and argue from that, can self-sale be unthinkable.

Another point of continuity between nineteenth and twentieth century feminists revolves around the word "protection." One of the most important emphases on which feminists and others in the social purity movement agreed was the protection of the family, which seemed threatened by any wayward and/or commercialized sexuality. Given that the nineteenth century family was already an abstraction from the larger community, it's a measure of just how atomized our society has become that we hear little from modern feminists about protection of the family, though we do hear a good deal about protecting women and children from harm resulting directly or indirectly from pornography.

The attempt to demonstrate such harm empirically has been creating the reputations of large numbers of behavioural psychologists these days.[34] Concern shifts from what pornography might encourage men to do to women to what pornography encourages men to think about women and sexuality. All

such experiments isolate pornographic images of women and then postulate an extremely simplistic relationship between representation and actions or attitudes. They presume, as do many feminists who base their analyses on similar assumptions, that seeing certain kinds of images "conditions" men to degrade and despise women. Lorenne Clark makes this point when she says: "Pornography is a method of socialization."[35] Such use of the word "socialization" reduces it to the thinnest, most psychologically superficial behaviourist model. In this view sexuality — or more specifically male sexuality — is lifted entirely out of the fabric of family or other deep emotional relationships and is viewed as infinitely malleable. Ironically, this thin, contigent view of human relationships is just the portrait we get in pornography itself.

In addition, experiments dealing with pornography assume that pornographic images and narratives affect viewers/readers in a way that is entirely different from other types of narratives and images so that audiences will treat pornography much more like "information" than they will other types of popular culture, that they will bracket it in an entirely different way from say, westerns or science fiction.[36] Pornography in this view becomes a kind of "how to" manual: "It is a vivid depiction of how to deploy male sexuality in just the way that will achieve maximum effect in maintaining the *status quo*."[37]

Perhaps the underlying concern here is the fear of a kind of epidemic degeneration of interpretive skills. We live in a world which demands an ability to scan material for facts and arguments, which encourages the diffusion of attention or concentration, which relegates "interpretation," formerly at the cultural centre, at least in religion, to the relative periphery of literary criticism and psychoanalysis. Have most people's interpretive skills degenerated to such a degree that they can no longer distinguish, at the most basic level, literal from symbolic meaning? Or is this a peculiarly male foible in the realm of pornography?

If we ask that question, however, we might also ask ourselves how sophisticated feminist critiques of pornography have been? Is there room for improving our own interpretations? Does this matter if what we are engaged in is a struggle for power?

One thing that disturbs me about the feminist discussion of pornography is the way all pornography is lumped together and flattened out. Would we make the blanket statements we make about pornography if we were discussing any other popular genre? Some feminists do distinguish between violent and non-violent pornography, arguing that only the latter is dangerous, but more commonly we see the contention that all pornography is objectifying, degrading, and therefore violent. If a young man begins by subscribing to *Playboy*, he will end with a craving for snuff movies, much the way we were warned about the danger of marijuana's leading us inevitably to heroin addiction.

Certainly the portrayal of women in pornography is, by and large, insulting, irritating and worthy of critique. However, when we invoke more "protection" from the state, we must be careful how we do it. I think that the very word

"protection," given what it implies for women, should make us hesitate, for the historical record of "protective" legislation — whether in the realm of morals or the labour market — is certainly an ambiguous one. When we demand government protection from pornography, given the arbitrary, paternalistic, authoritarian modes such legislation and its enforcement always take, aren't we asking for more of what we don't like in other areas? Insisting on our need to be protected, we hold onto the role of victim or potential victim, the very position from which our efforts as feminists are designed to extricate us.[38] Our status as victims of male violence may seem to give us a kind of moral authority. And the detachment we claim from male sexual pathology may give us an argument for appropriating more power. But historically in the gender battles we have seen how limiting and undermining these tactics were, as well as how they often backfired in their ultimate effects. I think today we should jettison them in our current struggles.

Of course women do suffer real life acts of violence everyday. This is a fact which being fastidious about words like "protection" will not make go away. Certainly a good deal of our anger about pornography results from our fear that we may be victimized either by the man whose free-floating psychotic misogyny has been set off by pornography, or by the more ordinary male who sees rape as a minor peccadillo, for if sex is a commodity, isn't rape just petty theft?

Since our culture constitutes itself to such an extreme degree from images and spectacle, it's inevitable that political struggle will revolve around just such issues. For the image of woman as moronic sex object, we would like to substitute the image of woman as complex person, active subject — someone to be reckoned with and regarded seriously. It's quite obvious that in this struggle over images we can't stop with pornography; we also have the whole domain of advertising to contend with, not to mention a staggering proportion of our television, movies and books. After all, one could argue that many mainstream movies are more dangerous than pornographic ones. Insofar as they are better made, with more talented direction and acting, more sophisticated narration and filming, they ought to be more powerful, more compelling than the low budget drivel regularly turned out by the skinflick trade.

This is not to say that just because humiliating images pervade our culture we ought to forget about pornography as an issue, but we should be careful not to legitimize other sexist images by focussing exclusively on pornography. I don't think we can solve our "image problem" with better definitions of obscenity, inclusion of an acceptable definition of pornography in the criminal code, or more censorship. Instead of demanding more restrictions from the state, we should demand more resources — for women artists, filmmakers, publishers. "Better" censorship will not benefit women, but it will certainly benefit police forces and prosecutors who will see their already fat budgets swell.

A new approach to legislation on pornography has been proposed in Minneapolis by Catherine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin. Their ordinance would permit civil litigation against pornographers by women who claimed that harm had occurred to them: that they had been coerced into making

pornography; that they had been forced to view it; or that they had been assaulted due to pornography. MacKinnon's purpose is to transfer the debate out of its current legislative *cul de sac* and raise in the courts the issue that pornography violates women's civil rights.

This approach has some attractive features, since it does shift emphasis from the idea that sexual explicitness *per se* is offensive to the notion that certain kinds of sexual representation are harmful because they promote inequality. Nonetheless, I still wonder whether we can or want to legislate only a certain kind of sexual representation — i.e., sex under conditions of mutuality, reciprocity, equality. Do we really want to say that our civil rights include the right to see only certain kinds of images?

Sexuality has shouldered an enormous weight of expectations in our culture,[39] expectations that sexual "fulfillment" will compensate for the sensual impoverishment of urban life, the emotional impoverishment of a culture that promotes thin sociability at the expense of long-term deep connection, the spiritual impoverishment resulting from the abstract quality of most work.[40] Pornography capitalizes on these expectations, inducing us to believe that sexual "fulfillment" is available but elusive, just like the gratification of a Salem, a Budweiser — it's there for sure, in the next, always the next act of consumption.

As women, we are more aware of the fraud here; we not only receive the illusory promise of fulfillment, we are the promise. The terrible irony of female sexuality is that women are expected to embody a oneness with the body, a physical self-confidence associated with ideal motherhood — this they are supposed to give to men. However, it's rare for women to develop a true confidence in their own desire and desirability since female sexual development is so permeated with fear, and everybody's identity is constantly undermined in this culture of envy.

Pornography confronts us not only with male power, but also with male resentment, resentment at what has seemingly been promised and then withheld. We, on the other hand, should know that this sensual pleasure does not belong to us, is not ours to give or deny for it is not a thing, not a product, but, where it exists, is activity, process, feeling, relationship. In sexuality we would like to preserve some privileged area, some space free from the commodification of so much of the rest of our lives. When sexuality seems like the last vestige of our romantic individuality, pornography insists that here too there's nothing but a kind of Eaton's catalogue of images — a restricted code reducing all "self-expression" to grotesque banality.

This paper is meant to be provocative. It may seem like a betrayal of the forces of good, an over-intellectualized sell-out to the pornocrats. However, I'm writing it because as a feminist I'm concerned about our directions, demands and alliances. We should keep in mind when forming political alliances on this issue that, no matter what we say, most people will become indignant about pornography, not because they see it as misogynistic, but because they see it as sexual, and for that reason it raises all kinds of anxieties about "proper" gender relations we call into question in other contexts.

As we saw with the first wave of feminism, sexual issues focussed all kinds of other fears. Today we have even more to be afraid of — acid rain, nuclear reactors, chemical wastes — to name but a few at random. To even the most optimistic, our world seems quite out of control. A re-ordering of gender relations, along with suppression of sexual explicitness, can take on powerful attraction. We see this in American right-wing anti-feminism.

A number of other things disturb me about feminist discourse on pornography. Often we catch an echo of the nineteenth century temperance movement's assumption that eliminating drink would abolish wife beating in modern feminists' notion that suppressing pornography would reduce rape and other forms of actual male violence. In addition, a contempt for "freedom of expression" creeps into many feminists' writings. "Civil libertarian" is becoming an insult, not yet quite equivalent to "fascist." Although we may be disillusioned with liberal political philosophy and agree that "freedom of expression" is at best an abstraction and at worst a cynical defense when we're talking about a multi-million dollar industry like pornography, it still seems to me dangerous to encourage government to get more involved in the business of defining what we are allowed to see or read. If we concern ourselves with pornography as an industry rather than as a purveyor of bad ideas, we might think in terms different from censorship: e.g., unionizing workers in the industry, preventing monopolies, investigating distribution networks, taxing profits more rigorously. We should never lose sight of the fact that the pornography industry could not exist without its women workers. Women who write about pornography must not identify with these women solely at an abstract level, as did many nineteenth century feminists with prostitutes. We know what kinds of pressures drive women into the sex trades; we know how exploited the women who work in the strip clubs, sex acts, and skin flicks are. In making demands on the state, we should be very wary of falling into the same trap as first wave feminists. Instead we need to find ways of supporting these women. Pushing pornography further into a shadow world where, like drugs, pornographic materials are illegal but clandestinely available will only make the lives of the women in the industry more risky, more endangered.[41]

In addition, I think we must be careful as women, who have never had the same "freedom of expression" as men, either because we were not allowed to speak in public forums, or because when we did speak our words carried no authority, were dismissed as hysterical ravings, we must be careful at this juncture, not to denigrate "freedom of expression," but to demand it, seize it, appropriate it, allow it to one another. Historically as women we have been silenced, and today we do not have the access or decision making power in relation to mainstream media we need. Pornography has become symbolic for us of the blatency of male supremacy, acted out, represented and enjoyed. It seems particularly insidious because it directs its appeal to the most vulnerable areas of the psyche. The proliferation of pornography is certainly part of a whole cultural order that undermines our sense of security and authority, but displacing too much anxiety onto it may not only waste some of our time and energy, but also may encourage the state to think it can throw us a censorship

sop and keep us happy, may even backfire in an unexpected wave of repression provoked by fears we've helped to generate.

Department of English
Dawson College

Notes

1. For American feminist discussions of pornography, see: Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975); Robin Morgan, "Theory and Practice: Pornography and Rape," in *Going Too Far: The Personal Chronicle of a Feminist* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), pp. 163-169; Kathleen Barry, *Female Sexual Slavery* (New York: Avon, 1979); Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* (New York: Perigree Books, 1979); Laura Lederer, ed., *Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1980); Susan Griffin, *Pornography and Silence: Culture's Revenge against Nature* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981); Gloria Steinem, "Erotica vs. Pornography," in *Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1983), pp. 219-230. For some feminist discussions of pornography published in Canada, see: Myrna Kostash, "Power and Control, a Feminist View of Pornography," *This Magazine* 12:3, pp.5-7; Thelma McCormack, "Passionate Protests: Feminists and Censorship," *Canadian Forum* 59: 697, pp. 6-8; Lorenne Clark, "Pornography's Challenge to Liberal Ideology," *Canadian Forum* 59:697, pp. 9-12; Maude Barlow, "Pornography and Free Speech," *Common Ground* 2:3, pp. 28-30; Jillian Riddington, "Pornography: What Does the New Research Say?" *Status of Women News* 8:3, pp. 9-13; Micheline Carrier, *La pornographie: base idéologique de l'oppression des femmes* (Sillery, Québec: Apostrophe, 1983); Sara Diamond, "Of Cabbages and Kinks: Reality and Representation in Pornography," *Pink Ink* 1:5, pp. 18-23; *Canadian Woman Studies* 4:4 (issue on violence).
2. Griffin, p. 83.
3. Brownmiller, p. 394.
4. David Copp has a useful discussion of the problem of defining pornography in his introduction to *Pornography and Censorship*, ed. David Copp and Susan Wendell (New York: Prometheus Books, 1983), pp. 15-41.
5. Ellen Dubois and Linda Gordon make a similar point in their article, "Seeking Ecstasy on the Battlefield: Danger and Pleasure in Nineteenth Century Feminist Sexual Thought," *Feminist Studies* 9:1, p. 8. According to Dubois and Gordon, "The feminist movement has played an important role in organizing and even creating women's sense of sexual danger in the last one hundred and fifty years." For a discussion of nineteenth century feminists' organizational responses to this sense of danger from male violence, see Elizabeth Pleck, "Feminist Responses to 'Crimes against Women,' 1868-1896," *Signs* 8:3, pp. 451-470.
6. Morgan, p. 169.
7. Steinem, p. 221.
8. Susan Griffin makes this point: pornography "would have sexuality and punish feeling." *Pornography and Silence*, p. 178.
9. According to Kathleen Barry: "One of the effects of widespread pornography has been to introduce movies, books, or pictures as the erotic stimulant between two people, thereby reducing the need for people to relate to each other." *Female Sexual Slavery*, p. 213.

10. Not all feminists have jumped on the anti-pornography bandwagon. In 1979 Ellen Willis wrote a critique of Women against Pornography entitled, "Feminism, Moralism and Pornography," originally published in *The Village Voice* and reprinted in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, ed. Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell and Sharon Thompson (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), pp. 460-467. Deirdre English also published a similar critique, "The Politics of Porn," in *Mother Jones* 5:3, pp. 20-23, 43-49. Betty Friedan dismissed the anti-pornography marches in New York as "irrelevant" in *The Second Stage* (New York: Summit Books, 1981), p. 20. Here in Canada Thelma McCormack has been critical of feminists who advocate censorship of pornography. She makes the point that such advocacy "manipulates women's anxieties about rape and the safety of children while strengthening a system which creates these fears." "Passionate Protests: Feminists and Censorship," *Canadian Forum* 59:697, p. 8.

11. Barbara Ehrenreich in *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1983) argues that male rebellion against the "breadwinner role" preceded the women's movement. In this context she has an interesting discussion of *Playboy* which, in promoting a "new" consumerism for men emancipated from families, needed the nudes to demonstrate that these men were not effeminate. *Playboy* popularized the notion that "real men" did not need to be heads of households.

12. In *Public Man, Private Woman: Woman and Social and Political Thought* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981) Jean Bethke Elshtain has an interesting and critical discussion of this slogan.

13. Deirdre English discusses this in "The Fear that Feminism Will Free Men First," in *Powers of Desire*, pp. 477-483.

14. Elshtain, p. 236.

15. Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978). Dorothy Dinnerstein, *The Mermaid and the Minotaur: Sexual Arrangements and Human Malaise* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976).

16. See Linda Gordon's discussion in *Woman's Body, Woman's Right: A Social History of Birth Control in America* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974).

17. See William Leach, *True and Perfect Union: The Feminist Reform of Sex and Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1980).

18. Dubois and Gordon, p. 9.

19. Mark Connelly discusses the problem of defining prostitution and measuring its extent in *The Response to Prostitution in the Progressive Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), p. 16.

20. See David Pivar, *Purity Crusade: Sexual Morality and Social Control, 1868-1900* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1973).

21. See James H. Gray, *Red Lights on the Prairies* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1971) and Carol Lee Bacchi, *Liberation Deferred? The Ideas of the English Canadian Suffragists, 1877-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983).

22. Judith R. Walkowitz, "Male Vice and Female Virtue: Feminism and the Politics of Prostitution in Nineteenth Century Britain," in *Powers of Desire*, p. 442.

23. This argument is made by Judith R. Walkowitz with regard to Britain in her book *Prostitution and Victorian Society* (Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 117, and in relation to the United States by Carl Degler in *At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 258.

24. Connelly, p. 30.

25. Peter Gay argues that many Victorian women acknowledged and expected sexual pleasure in *The Bourgeois Experience: Victoria to Freud, Volume One: Education of the Senses* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

26. Quoted in Walkowitz: "Male Vice and Female Virtue: Feminism and the Politics of Prostitution in Nineteenth Century Britain," p. 443.

27. See Ruth Rosen, *The Lost Sisterhood: Prostitution in America, 1900-1918* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982).

28. Ruth Rosen and Sue Davidson, eds., *The Maimie Papers* (Old Westbury, N.Y.: The Feminist Press, 1977).

29. Griffin, *passim.*

30. Dworkin, p. 167.

31. There has been some feminist exploration of the "darker" sides of female sexuality: see *Heresies* 12 (Sex Issue) and *Coming to Power: Writings and Graphics on Lesbian S/M*, published by Samois, a lesbian feminist S/M organization (Boston: Alyson Publications, Inc., 1981).

32. Lorenne Clark, "Pornography's Challenge to Liberal Ideology," *Canadian Forum* 59: 697, p. 10.

33. Dworkin, p. 203. Dworkin's view resurrects the "possessive individualism" to which many nineteenth century feminists saw themselves opposed in their attempt to fashion a more communitarian social vision. See Leach, p. 10.

34. See Michael J. Goldstein and Harold S. Kant, eds., *Pornography and Sexual Deviance: A Report of the Legal and Behavioral Institute, Beverly Hills California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973); Maurice Yaffé and Edward C. Nelson, eds., *The Influence of Pornography on Behaviour* (London: Academic Press, 1982); David Copp and Susan Wendell, eds., *Pornography and Censorship* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1983).

35. Lorenne Clark, "Liberalism and Pornography," in *Pornography and Censorship*, p. 53.

36. Susan Sontag makes this point in her essay, "The Pornographic Imagination," in *Perspectives on Pornography*, ed. Douglas A. Hughes (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1970), pp. 131-169.

37. Clark, "Liberalism and Pornography," p. 53.

38. Elshtain, p. 225.

39. See Jessica Benjamin's essay, "Master and Slave: The Fantasy of Erotic Domination," *Powers of Desire*, pp. 280-299.

40. Meg Luxton discusses the connection between the work lives and sexuality of her subjects in *More Than a Labour of Love: Three Generations of Women's Work in the Home* (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1980), pp. 55-65.

41. See Anne McLean, "Snuffing Out *Snuff*: Feminists React," *Canadian Dimensions* 12:8, pp. 20-23.

PATRIARCHY AND PLEASURE: THE PORNOGRAPHIC EYE/I

Geraldine Finn

Pornography is about sex. It is one of the ways men and women are sexualized in our culture. It is both an expression of that sexualization as well as a powerful instrument of its production and reproduction.

The kind of sexuality presumed and promoted in pornography is not significantly different in its essentials from that which is produced in us elsewhere by discourses and practices not normally thought of as pornographic; by those which are not even explicitly concerned with sex as much as by those which are: by and through the discourses of history, religion, law, medicine, philosophy, pedagogy, art and literature etc. etc., as well as by and through the discourses and practices of psychoanalysis, psychotherapy and sexology, the explicitly "erotic" arts and literature, and in modern advertising and the discourse of pleasure which a commodity economy requires. In fact, pornography is nourished by the sexual orthodoxy (and vice-versa) and reinforces its most fundamental "truths", or truth-effects as Foucault would say.[1] Pornography, in this sense, is neither deviant nor perverse nor subversive of an authoritarian repressive sexual régime articulated from elsewhere, as those who deplore or defend it would sometimes have us believe. It is rather just another instrument of that régime, which incites sexuality far more than it represses it,[2] and is a further propagation of its powerful effects.

This régime of sex which dominates our culture is one which both naturalizes sex, on the one hand, by constituting it in discourse (and therefore in practice) as if it were a universal, a spontaneous finality or a unified causal principle of action — an instinct, a drive, a need, Eros or desire; and sexualizes nature, on the other, by tying sexuality as difference, the difference between masculine and feminine, to the difference of the sexual organs.[4] This discourse

of sex actually constitutes the sexualities it purports to describe, exploit, explain or modify. And, of course, it constitutes male and female sexuality differently. In fact, I would maintain that this is the whole point of it: to mark that difference, "epitomizing a whole system of difference"[5] that is, in my opinion, *the* key political and ideological foundation of our social order.[6] The sexes are separated only "in order to establish the absolute privilege of one over the other".[7] Why insist that there be two sexes if not so that one may be subjected to the other? "Indeed, why differentiate if it is not to form a hierarchy?".[8]

Pornography expresses and reproduces the hierarchical difference between masculine and feminine which is produced (and produced as "natural") simultaneously everywhere else in our culture: in the family, in school, in the market-place, in church, in the universities, the libraries, museums, galleries and concert-halls, in science and medicine, industry and entertainment. Both the form and the content of pornography (the medium and the message inextricably and mutually determining), for example, constitute women as objects available for the use and/or contemplation of a subject which is essentially male. It thus objectifies the feminine and feminizes the object as Woman, while subjectifying the masculine and masculinizing the subject as Man; tying feminity to objectivity and immanence and masculinity to subjectivity and transcendence, just as the philosophers, the artists, the scholars, the scientists and the story-tellers have done for as far back in our history as we have been allowed to remember. What I want to emphasize in this paper, however, is not so much pornography's objectification and sexual passification of women, which has rightly received the critical attention of feminists in recent years, as its *subjectification* and sexual excitement of men. For although pornography is ostensibly about sex objectified in Woman and woman objectified in Sex, the principal protagonist in pornography is, after all, the male-spectator-owner for whom the whole performance has been arranged. "Everything is addressed to him, everything must appear to be the result of his being there".[9] It is men, after all who produce and consume pornography; it is, therefore, their subjectivity rather than ours which is most immediately effected by it. How then shall we characterize this masculine subject as constituted in and by pornography?

Pornography literally means: writing about prostitutes (from the Greek πόρνη , porne meaning harlot, and γράφειν , graphein meaning to write). If we consider those discourses and practices most readily identified as pornography today — magazines, movies, burlesques — we will see that this original etymological sense of the term (extended to include images and visual representations) captures much of what is distinctive about pornography and the way it constructs and "marks" the masculine-feminine distinction, as well as much of what pornography shares with other cultural representations of that distinction. In the first place pornography constructs Man (i.e. masculinity as subjectivity and subjectivity as masculinity) as an *observer* of women; and Woman, correspondingly, (i.e. femininity as objectivity and objectivity as femininity) as the observed of men. In this respect, pornography merely continues a practice immortalized, if not instituted, in the mythology of Ancient Greece — it was, after all the face of Helen that launched a thousand ships —

and replicated since then in our cultural processes, both sacred and profane.

Our current visual environment, for example, is saturated with images of women presented specifically as *sights* for the viewing pleasure of a spectator who is presumed to be male, and is thus constituted as male in the very production and reproduction of these images.[10] Publicity is obviously one of the biggest manufacturers and distributors of these sights. But publicity did not invent Man the observer-subject nor Woman the object-observed. It merely continues an older more respected tradition, that of post-Renaissance oil-painting which also presented sights for the viewing pleasure of the male spectator-owner: sights of what he might possess — commodities, merchandise, objects of exchange, property — including, of course, sights of women's naked bodies conventionalized as nudes.[11] And like the images of modern publicity (and the objects of which they are images) [12] these sights in oil-painting did not so much reveal themselves (i.e. the truth of the objects they represented) as designate and individuate the spectator-owner as a Man — of wealth, stature and power — in short as a man to be envied. The oil-painting presented images of objects but only in order to designate a social relationship: that of the spectator-owner to the real objects of which these images were but representations. Pornography does the same thing. It presents images of women, but only to designate men and the social relationship between them and the object-woman-viewed. Paradoxical as it may seem, pornography does not reveal Woman, though in it Woman reveals all, because Woman does not disclose herself as subject in pornography. On the contrary, it is Man who is revealed in her objectification. For the Woman he observes is the objectification of *his* idea. She is after all Man-made: not a real prostitute, but a product of the masculine imagination, the Word made Flesh and inevitably bearing the mark of her creator.

These same structures of male-subjectification and female-objectification also characterize regular movies. They too designate the spectator-subject as male and the male as spectator-subject and Woman as the object of his petrifying gaze. Feminist film-makers and film-critics have done valuable work exposing this structural relationship in recent years.[13] And Stanley Cavell has explored aspects of the same structure — in his case, the condition of the viewer — from a somewhat different perspective in his book about film *The World Viewed.*[14] He claims there, that the "ontological conditions of the motion picture reveal it as inherently pornographic",[15] in that it constructs a world from which the spectator-subject is necessarily "screened" and over which, therefore, he can feel he has mastery and control. Given that the "body of a woman is culture's time-honoured conventional victim" (see Griffin), we are not surprised to hear Cavell go on to describe the history of film as "a history of the firmament of individual women established there". "Remarkable directors" he suggests "have existed solely to examine the same woman over and over through film. A woman has become the whole excuse and sole justification for the making and preserving of countless films . . .".[16] He cites Garbo, Davis and Dietrich as examples; but I am sure you will have no trouble bringing his list up to date: Liv Ullman in Bergman's films, Diane Keaton in Woody Allen's and Hanna Schygulla in Fassbinder's come easily

to mind. As well as these words of Truffaut, uttered in 1958 and reiterated recently in the Manchester Guardian Weekly: "The cinema is the woman's — that is to say the actress's — art. The director's job is to *get pretty women to do pretty things*".[17]

It is certainly no secret that many movies are made today simply and solely as vehicles for displaying particular women to the world: those women with whom the director is "sleeping", as we so coyly put it. In this respect the social relationships immortalized on film — between men and women, spectator-owners and objects of possession respectively — are fundamentally the same as those designated in paintings of the classical nude (sacred) and in the photographs of modern pornography (profane). In each case particular men — a Polanski, a Manet, a Hugh Hefner — put "their" women on display so that other men will recognize their power, their wealth and their social stature — and envy and respect them for it.

So men are constructed in pornography (as elsewhere) as the spectator-owners of women. What kind of women do men enjoy looking at and possessing? First of all the women observed in pornography are *not real.* Real women appear in pornography, but never as themselves. In fact they are referred to as "models"; an ambiguous term which can mean "something to be copied, pattern; example; small scale reproduction; three dimensional plan", as well as "one who poses for an artist or photographer"; and, most apt of all I think, "one of a series of varying designs of the same type of object".[18] For the real women who appear in pornography are always disguised as objects; usually as exotic objects in improbable settings which emphasise their unreality: surrounded by furs and feathers and satin and lace, for example; or alternatively, whips and chains and knives and leather; hanging like pieces of meat from hooks in the ceiling, or strutting around like "undulating vamps with gigantic cigarette-holders".[19] What men see, therefore, when they look at pornography (or indeed any public image of women) are not women, but women made-over into *artifacts.* They gaze at a man-made object, not a woman; at a body "eviscerated of its substance and history"[20] and not at the living flesh:

> abstract, impeccable, clothed with marks * and thus invulnerable; "made-up" (*faict* and *fainct*) in the profound sense of the expression; cut off from external determinations and the internal reality of its desire, yet offered up in the same turn as an idol . . .[21]

*by "marks" Baudrillard means things like lip-stick, jewellery, boots, which mark women as cultural products and appropriate objects of desire.

For this pornographic woman (i.e. the artificial woman which is the product of pornography) is simultaneously produced as an object of male desire and is addressed to the male spectator precisely to solicit from him some sort of sexual response. She is in fact produced as both idol and idolizer.[22] For her desire is constituted as his desire for her. Indeed, the whole point of her construction is to call forth *his* sexuality and the experience of sexual superiority and control which his penis is supposed to confer upon him "naturally".

Hence the appropriateness of the etymological meaning of pornography: writing about whores. For, from the point of view of the male client, the prostitute, like the pornographic woman, has also only one way of being-in-the-world, and that is as a sexual object for-him, not for-herself. But, of course, it must be difficult for a man to maintain his illusory belief in the objectivity of Woman when he is actually engaged in some sort of sexual activity with a real one, especially if she insists on talking or if she is the one that takes the money and not some other man. This threat of encountering the Other as subject and in particular of encountering Woman as Other as subject (the threat of measuring their penis-power according to the reality principle) can be circumvented in pornography; which substitutes an image of an unreal prostitute for an interaction with a real one, and an exchange between men (money for access to female artifacts) for a relationship between an individual man and a real woman — that most dangerous of all encounters.

Thus pornography offers men a certain kind of security. In the first place, it protects them from "prostitutes" i.e. from Woman as subject of her own sexuality, by killing her off; by petrifying the prostitute in print as other-than-herself and reducing her there entirely and solely to a sight/site of men's sexuality not her own, and men's control. For she now belongs completely to those who buy and sell her. It also establishes the spectator-subject of pornography in the community of men, by allowing him to participate, if only symbolically, in the exchange of women, which, if Lévi-Strauss is to be believed, is at the very foundation of culture: "the fundamental step because of which, by which, but above all in which, the transition from nature to culture is accomplished".[23] Men it seems must exchange women to realize themselves as men i.e. establish their gender-identity as masculine, and earn the recognition and, more importantly, the alliance of other men.

Our modern Pygmalion, who can only desire that which he has made-over as a site/sight of male sexuality, is not so very different from his prototype, who also shunned the society of real women, disgusted as he was by the conduct of the Propoetides. These were "girls", according to F. Guirand who "rashly denied the divinity of Aphrodite. To punish them Aphrodite inspired in them such immodesty that losing all sense of shame, they would prostitute themselves to all comers. In the end, they were turned to stone".[24] It is important to understand who and what these "girls" were rejecting when they denied Aphrodite, in order to appreciate the moral of this tale. According to Homer, Aphrodite, the goddess of love, arose spontaneously out of the foam produced on the sea by the castrated genitals of Uranus. She was, that is, the product of Man, not Woman. The Gods

were apparently so struck by her beauty when they saw her that each "wished in his heart to take her as a wife and lead her to his abode". Guirand comments that it was "natural" that they should be thus moved "for Aphrodite was the essence of feminine beauty. From her gleaming fair hair to her silvery feet everything about her was pure charm and harmony . . . Aphrodite exuded an aura of seduction. To the perfection of her figure and the purity of her features she added the grace which attracted and conquered". And, finally, quoting Homer, he adds "On her sweet face she always wore an amiable smile".[25]

For her beauty, Aphrodite was rewarded with an apple in the famous Judgment of Paris (archetype of the modern Beauty Contest). She in turn rewarded him by offering him as "his own" the most beautiful of mortal women. He chose Helen, who unfortunately had already been claimed as "his own" by Menelaus. The theft of Helen from her original owner unleashed the famous Trojan Wars; an orgy of blood-shed and devastation more commonly blamed on mortal Helen's beautiful face (as Mankind's original sin is blamed on Eve), than on the men who quarrelled over possession of it or the goddess (of love, let us not forget) who gave Paris rights to it.

These Propoetides then, who were so despised by Pygmalion that he shunned the company of *all* women and so uncompromisingly punished by Aphrodite, that smiling goddess of love, were abjured precisely because they rejected the feminine ideal which Aphrodite represented and which continues to be prescribed for women in the mythology of our time — an ideal, I would remind you, which is entirely Man-made. For, Aphrodite, like that other much favoured goddess Athena, sprang full-grown from Man: she had no mother and owed all she was and could be to him. Since she was neither born nor nurtured by women (as real women are) she had been protected from their influence and could therefore be made completely to the specifications of her male creator: to be the sight/site of smiling beauty, flattering and obsequious, and the passive recipient of the desire such sights called forth in men; in this case, "to take her as a wife and lead her to his abode". (We have yet to determine the nature of the desire called forth by modern pornography — I suspect it may be a little racier than this, though not on that account any less distasteful).

The first Pygmalion was a sculptor "only happy in the silent world of statues which his chisel had created".[26] And although he was disgusted by real women, like the modern pornographer, this did not mean that he wasn't interested in Women, i.e. in turning his gaze upon them — as long as they were artifacts, of course. In fact, he fell in love with an ivory statue he had made; moved, of course, by the extraordinary beauty (he had created there). Aphrodite, goddess of this sort of love, eventually took pity on him and brought his beloved statue to life that she might return his kisses. (We are not so far away from Sexy Suzy with the "movable parts").

What can we learn from this about sex and the differential sexualizing of men and women in our culture? Well, it doesn't tell us much about women's sexuality, other than how it is regarded by men, but it does say rather a lot about men's. Most fundamentally it establishes male sexuality (and male subjectivity

therefore) as *voyeuristic, fetishistic* and *narcissistic.* For it is the *artifact* which is the object of men's desire; the body made-over into a perfect object and "marked" with signs of its cultural appropriation, its colonization:

> Tattoos, stretched lips, the bound feet of Chinese women, eyeshadow, rouge, hair removal, mascara, or bracelets, collars, jewellery, accessories: anything will serve to rewrite the cultural order on the body; and it is this that takes on the effect of beauty.[27]

And it is the *sight* of these artifacts (their beauty) that elicits the sexual response in men. And finally, that which is "adored", endowed with magical qualities, and fetishized in pornography, is not at all the object signified, "the body's wildness veiled by make-up", for example, but the *signifier* itself: i.e. the system, the code, the cultural order made manifest in the fetishized object. It is the power of patriarchy, *men's will inscribed on women's bodies,* which excites the pornographer and at the same time refers him to his penis, the biological alibi of his difference and of his membership in the sex class which rules, as well as the symbolic instrument of his domination. Which explains why power is "sexy" for men; for their power refers them directly to the sexual organ which is the only excuse for it. As well as why men's sexual pleasure is so often limited to the "phallic orgasm" since "potency *is* man's pleasure".[29]

Men take pleasure in looking at women, therefore, only to the extent that women designate them as men. These "marked" women (lip-stick, high-heels, tight clothes) they call "real women".[30] What they really enjoy and at the same time reproduce for themselves and for-others in this practice of looking is the system of differences which marks them as men i.e. as dominants in a sexually bifurcated and hierarchized social order. This explains why men whistle at women (suitably inscribed with the culturally determined indicators of sexual submission) to impress other men and not to impress women. The whistle establishes the whistler's membership in the male sex class while exercising and inscribing the power of that class in the continuing reproduction of the patriarchal cultural order.

> This fetish-beauty has nothing (any longer) to do with an effect of the soul (the spiritualist vision), a natural grace of movement or countenance; with the transparency of truth (the idealist vision); or with an "inspired genius" of the body, which can be communicated as effectively by expressive ugliness (the romantic vision). What we are talking about is a kind of anti-nature incarnate, bound up in a general stereotype of models of beauty, in a perfectionist vertigo and controlled narcissism . . .It is the final disqualification of the body, its subjection to a discipline, the total circulation of signs.[31]

It is in this sense that pornography is about power: the power of culture/men over nature/women. As long as men have this power, or feel they do, they don't need pornography. When they don't they do.

Pornography, however, only exacerbates the condition it attempts to remedy — absence of desire, of the pleasure in potency. For it perpetuates an ideal of masculinity which cannot be realized in practice — i.e. with real women in the real world. It thus increases the pornographer's isolation, frustration, deprivation and resentment. Hence the escalation in pornography — both quantitative and qualitative — and the desperation of those of us who would end it if we could. For there is no built-in limit to the pornographer's need, nor to the pornographic imagination it needs must call forth. For both the need and its imaginary satisfaction in pornography are the effects of the very same power structure they attempt to recreate and they are determined elsewhere: in all those apparently non-pornographic discourses and practices of our culture which cooperate in the social construction of an ideal of masculinity which is instrinsically contradictory and therefore necessarily unattainable.

For this masculine subject constituted as observer (of the feminized object and the objectified feminine) is not, of course, original to pornography. He is the traditional subject, Man, of our culture — of its rationalism, humanism and individualism. We can trace his ancestry back at least as far as Plato (and perhaps even further in some respects as my brief reflections on Greek mythology would suggest), who was one of the first to identify subjectivity with rationality, knowledge and thought and these with the abstraction of a (masculine) self from concrete involvement in the lived world. This splitting-off of Man from the material world (of nature) and of his intellect from his personal experience was reaffirmed during the Renaissance, in the philosophy of Descartes and the science of Francis Bacon, for example; and was a necessary condition of possibility of the scientific and industrial revolutions which followed.[32] The same divided subject remains with us still as the model of our education, our science, our government, our arts and our leisure etc.[33] It is perhaps *the* cornerstone of patriarchal power. For, from the very beginning of this tradition, the thinking, knowing, observing and emotionally detached subject was always constituted in discourse and *in practice* as male, and the object known, nature, matter, as female.[34] This "has enabled men, the knowers to falsely abstract themselves from nature, as if they were not themselves historical, material, organic and social beings. This abstraction of men from the rest of nature, and from women, is the root at one and the same time of both their *power*, for they can be ruthless with others with whom they feel no identification, and their alienation from the world, each other, and themselves."[35]

The desire to view, which is incited in the subject-Man from all directions in our "society of the spectacle"[36] not only by pornography and publicity, but also by science for which "objective observation" is absolutely constitutive — is really a desire for the *condition of viewing*[37] i.e. for the "ontological status of separation", of Sovereignty. For the viewer is essentially external to the world-viewed and therefore uneffected by it. The world is present to him and visible, but he, like God, is absent from the world and invisible. He cannot be objectified by the gaze

of an other subject for he is not part of the world his gaze objectifies. In pornography, he looks at her looking back at him; but she cannot see him. He is Sovereign. The world-viewed appears in response to his will and he has only to close his eyes or turn away and the world-viewed will cease to be. He is judge, spectator-speculator, owner and controller, with no responsibility for or to that which he observes. He conjures it both in and out of existence. He is the one who knows, while he himself is inscrutable and is not known.

Now this condition of viewing (voyeurism) may be a secure one. But it is certainly ideal i.e. false and therefore full of contradictions. For Man, after all, is in and of the same world which is the object of his gaze. The flesh and blood and guts he objectifies on the screen and takes so much pleasure in revealing and reviewing (in print, in the laboratory or on the battlefields of sport and war) always come back to haunt him. For they are his own blood and guts; denied, objectified and projected onto the Other, onto Nature, Woman, the Enemy, but never by that means exorcised.[38] They cannot be for they are the very conditions of his own possibility to be at all. Subjectified, sexualized Man has to work harder and harder to overcome this contradiction which is at the very heart of his project to maintain his illusion of Sovereignty and thus his "holy virility".[39] In fact, I would say that this is the hidden motor of our history, driving men ever onwards in an endless search for that final and unambiguous experience "of freedom" which will confirm their (transcendent) masculinity once and for all.

Since masculinity — the ontological condition of viewing — requires the objectification of the world which it imagines is "external" to its seeing eye/I, we should not be surprised, therefore, at the violence which is perpetrated in its name (in the name of God, Reason, Freedom, Progress, History, Humanity, Science, Art or, as in the case of pornography, in the name of Sex). For you can only objectify the living by taking away its life; by killing it either in fact or fantasy. And the latter is just as violent as the former. For fantasy "is precisely what reality can be confused with. It is through fantasy that our conviction of the worth of reality is established . . ."[40]; it teaches us how to see the world. We act according to our desires, and we desire according to what we see.[41] The hoardings on the street, the newspaper stands and corner stores, the movies, the television, our stories and our art show men sights of women against which they are encouraged to measure their subjectivity and their sexuality — since male gender-identity leans on sexuality; on the penis as the mark of their difference and their power. "The sight of it as an object stimulates the use of it as an object"[42]: fragmentation, separation, manipulation, abstraction, mutilation, possession, consumption, elimination and so forth. Little wonder Peter Sutcliffe, the "Yorkshire Ripper" who killed 13 women before he was apprehended in 1981, thought he had a divine mission to kill prostitutes. As pornography makes clear, sex and violence go hand-in-hand in our culture and the desire to kill women is virtually built-into men's sexuality.[43]

A subjectivity which is external to its world, as the observer-subject is, deprives itself of the nourishment which only the world can supply; and as a result becomes increasingly impoverished and isolated, and estranged from

itself, from others and from the reality of the world it aspires to know and control merely by looking. Sights, appearances pried away from their meanings (their contexts and their history) are silent. Dead objects are mute. In the world of the voyeur, therefore, there is no dialogue, no relationship, no speech and no response, and therefore no understanding, neither of self nor of the objects "known". For only that which narrates can make us understand and the voyeur's world is that of the eternal present.[44] "The world complete without me is the world of my immortality"[45] and, therefore, an unreal world. For we are all mortal, and so visible and present to each other and the world outside the defined space of the pornographic spectacle; beyond the covers of the magazine, the doors of the darkened booth, the exotica of the night-club, which screen the spectator-subject from that which is made visible to him. "As in Plato's cave" however, "reality is *behind* you. It will become visible when you have made yourself visible to it, presented yourself."[46]

We will not fight pornography by censoring it, therefore; nor by flooding the market with alternative sexual imagery as is often argued by those who oppose present pornography and the traditional discourse of sex in the name of "sexual freedom", desire and the right of individuals to "take their pleasure and make their own lives".[47] For it is precisely the politics of "taking one's pleasure" and "making one's own life" (of rational individualism) which is at issue here. Objectification and abstraction, emotional detachment, isolation and estrangement from the Other belong to the *voyeur-subject* of sexuality itself i.e. to the "ontological condition of viewing" and not to the world-viewed. Tinkering with the latter does nothing to challenge the sexual régime articulated through the former. Censorship merely suppresses the voyeur-subject in some of its ugliest manifestations; while the introduction of alternative sexual imagery actually generalizes and diversifies its incitement. Neither strategy challenges the sexual régime itself: its form, its logic, its code, its mode of production of truth, knowledge, pleasure, need, people, practices and sexuality, as a "complex political technology"[48] administering life (of both individuals and the species) through the subjugation of bodies (under the sign of sex) and the control of population.[49]

Patriarchy requires such a regime and thrives on sexual incitement: on the identification of self with sex, sex with pleasure and pleasure with potency (dominance and submission). For sex, the possession of a penis, is patriarchy's only excuse; the sign and symptom of men's domination of women. It must therefore be constantly called-forth as evidence of the régime and of the legitimacy, by right or by might, of its rule. The real penis, however, is hardly a symbol of power. It is fragile and vulnerable, and compared with the sex organs of women which bring forth new life and feed it, scarcely an indicator of strength or superiority. So the real penis (like real women) does not feature in the mythology of Man. It is not the penis which is objectified and fetishized in our culture, but the phallus, symbol of the power which possession of the penis confers on men. The real penis does not appear in the world-viewed lest its truth be revealed and the alibi of male-supremacy be disclosed for the fraud that it is.

The real penis is not present to the world which men rule in its name despite the fact that the whole world designates in its absence. Masculinity therefore is not constructed on the basis of men's *real* identity and difference as located in the real penis but on an *ideal* difference constituted most essentially in the cultural differentiation of Man from his Other; from that which lacks the (elusive) penis and is on that account declared to be "ontologically lacking". Masculinity, under patriarchy, needs an Other from which a Man can distinguish himself; for masculinity resides completely in what *she*, feminity, is not. Since real women do not designate Man and his genitals as their "natural" superior, Man is obliged to construct an Other that does. The sexual régime, what Gayle Rubin has called the sex-gender system,[50] by which male and female are differentiated by sex and *identified* with that sexual differentiation in both discourse and practice, is the mechanism by which patriarchy i.e. male-subjectivity creates its Other precisely to designate itself as its superior: its creator-spectator-owner-judge.

We must not think therefore that by saying yes to sex we say no to power. For it is just this "agency of sex we must break from":[51]

> If everyone is led, by this controlled structuration to confuse himself with his own sexual status, it is only to resign his sex the more easily (that is, the erogenous differentiation of his own body) to the sexual segregation that is one of the political and ideological foundations of the social order.[52]

The idea of sex, like the idea of Reason or Science, makes it possible for us to evade what gives power power i.e. the very hegemony of a discourse: "the way it passes for truth and . . . the way its premises and logic are taken for granted".[53] We should aim at *desexualization* of pleasure, bodies, persons, relations, needs and not at sexual specificity. "If female sexuality is now inhibited" as some have argued who oppose Woman Against Pornography because they seem to be also against "sex", "male sexuality is driven and cannot serve as a model".[54] Repression is surely a relative term which presumes some norm both of what constitutes sex and what constitutes a "healthy" frequency or quality of sexual activity. Repression must, therefore, be demonstrated, not assumed, and should certainly not be measured against the yard-stick of male-sexuality, past or present, which like male-rationality and male-science is more an indicator of Man's/compulsive drive for power than an expression of his freedom.

No man is immune to the sexualization depicted in pornography; for pornography only makes explicit the differential structure of masculine-feminine produced elsewhere in our culture. Every man embodies the power celebrated and reproduced in pornography by which masculinity subjugates women; even he who choses not to exercise it. For the woman walking behind you in the street does not know that; she fears and mistrusts you as much as she does the pornophile or the rapist you might well be. Sexual liberation, therefore, does not consist in the liberation *of* that sexuality which has been induced in us by the various mechanisms of patriarchal power, but our liberation *from* it. We must refuse the sexual codification of our identity, our pleasures, our

frustrations and our freedoms; stop looking and appraising each other like commodities, "objects" of "desire"; and start presenting ourselves to the world and others in all our ambivalence and ambiguity. Rebellion, freedom, consists in the rejection of the code, "the austere monarchy of sex",[55] not its appropriation; in the upsurge of particular, localized *speech* — truths and knowledges "incapable of unanimity" — and not more public discourse combining the "absolutely explicit with the completely unspecific".[56] "When it comes to abolishing patriarchy the problem for men is not for them to create 'a new man', but on the contrary, to destroy that 'man' from whom, as males, we have *all* been created, and who, in one way or another, we have *all* reproduced."[57] Real men do need pornography, unfortunately; just as patriarchy needs real men. Our rejection of one, therefore, necessarily entails a rejection of the other two; they stand or fall together.

C.E.G.E.P. de l'Outaouais

Notes

1. "Sexuality is a set of effects produced in bodies, behaviours and social relations by a certain deployment deriving from a complex political technology". Foucault 1980(a), p. 127. For a detailed discussion of discourse as an instrument of power, productive and constitutive of its objects, see the writings of Michel Foucault generally and Foucault 1980 (a) and (b) as this relates to sexuality.
2. Foucault 1980(a), p. 46.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 154.
4. Baudrillard 1980, p. 99.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 93
6. Here I strengthen Baudrillard's suggestion that sexual segregation is "*one* of the key political and ideological foundations of our social order". Baudrillard 1980, p. 99.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 99.
8. Reynaud, 1980, p. 10.
9. Berger speaking of the classical nude. Berger 1972, p. 54.
10. See Berger for a discussion of the criteria and conventions by which women have been judged as sights in the context of European oil painting. Berger 1971, p. 47.
11. See Berger 1971 for a discussion of oil-painting as the celebration of wealth and status.
12. See Baudrillard 1981 on the "object-become-a-sign".
13. See E. A. Kaplan 1983; as well as the work of Christian Metz, Laura Mulvey, Annette Michelson, Claire Johnston and Julia Kristeva in *Screen, Cahiers du Cinéma, Edinburgh Magazine* and other journals and collections.
14. Cavell 1979.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
17. *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, 11.09.83 (Le Monde section). My emphasis.
18. *The Penguin English Dictionary* 1965, p. 455.
19. Paraphrase of Barthes 1973, p. 84.
20. Baudrillard 1981, p. 93.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
22. "Professor Higgins is the Frankenstein of modelers, creating not an idol but an idolizer". Cavell 1979, p. 235.
23. Lévi-Strauss 1969. p. 24.
24. In Graves 1974, p. 131.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 130-131.
26. *Ibid.*
27. Baudrillard 1981. p. 94.
28. *Ibid.*
29. Reynaud 1981, p. 66.
30. "It is not very difficult to borrow the accessories of femininity; clothes, shoes, wigs, make-up, hair removers, and even padded bras, hormones, silicone, electrolysis or plastic surgery; man only has to use the same means as woman to become a 'real woman' . . . In fact the problem of the transvestite who does not want to be recognized as such, is not how to transform himself into a woman, but how to avoid overdoing it." Reynaud 1981, p. 27-28.
31. Baudrillard 1981, p. 94. See also Reynaud 1981, p. 21: " . . . when a woman takes off her pinafore she must be 'beautiful'; it is out of the question for her to be natural — she is supposed to be natural enough as it is. She must wear make-up, be deodorized, perfumed, shave her legs and armpits, put on stockings, high-heels, show her legs, emphasize her breasts, pull in her stomach, paint her nails, dye her hair, tame her hairstyle, pierce her ears, reduce her appetite and, without making a single clumsy gesture, or uttering one word too many, she must seem happy, dainty and original."
32. See Finn 1982(a), 1982(b).
33. See Small 1977 for an excellent discussion of how this objectifying attitude conditions our music as well as our pedagogy.
34. Finn 1982 (a), 1982(b).
35. Finn 1982(b), p. 165.
36. See Debord 1977.
37. Cavell 1979, p. 102.
38. See Griffin 1981.
39. See Reynaud 1981.
40. Cavell 1979, p. 85.
41. "I can only choose within the world I can *see* in the moral sense of 'see' which implies that clear vision is a result of moral imagination and moral effort." Murdoch 1970, p. 37. "As moral agents we have to try to see justly, to overcome prejudice, to avoid temptation and curb imagination, to direct reflection." (p. 40) Murdoch is the only ethical theorist I know in the philosophical pantheon to make *selfless attention to particular realities* central to the moral life and a necessary

condition of goodness, knowledge and truth: the indispensable antidote to the natural enemies of goodness, "the fat relentless ego" and "personal fantasy". Murdoch goes someway to providing us with that "ethics of seeing" which Susan Sontag calls for in her *On Photography*, Sontag 1973.

42. Berger 1971, p. 54.
43. See Hollway 1981, who analyses the newspaper reports of Peter Sutcliffe's trial to show "men's collaboration with other men in the oppression of women", in that the trial "refused to recognize the way in which Sutcliffe's acts were an expression . . . of the construction of an aggressive masculine sexuality and of women as its objects. This 'cover-up' exonerates men in general even when one man is found guilty". (p. 33).
44. See Sontag 1973 for a discussion of these structures as they relate to photography.
45. Cavell 1979, p. 160.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 155.
47. Snito 1983, p. 41.
48. Foucault 1980(a), p. 127.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 139 ff.
50. Rubin 1975.
51. Foucault 1980(a), p. 157.
52. Baudrillard 1981, p. 99.
53. Hollway 1981, p. 33.
54. Person 1980, p. 605.
55. Foucault 1980(a), p. 159.
56. Cavell's characterization of pornography. Cavell 1979, p. 55.
57. Reynaud 1981, p. 15.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Baudrillard, Jean (1981), *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, trans. Charles Levin, Telos Press, St. Louis Miss. 1981.

Barthes, Roland (1983), *Mythologies*. trans. Annette Lavers, Paladin Bks. England, 1973.

Berger, John (1971), *Ways of Seeing*. B.B.C. and Pelican Original. England 1971.

Cavell, Stanley (1979), *The World Viewed*. Reflections on the Ontology of Film. Enlarged edition. Harvard University Press, 1979.

Debord, Guy (1977), *Society of the Spectacle*. Black and Red. Detroit 1977.

Finn, Geraldine (1982(a)), "Women and the Ideology of Science", *Our Generation*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 1982.
Finn, Geraldine (1982(b)), "Reason and Violence: More than a False Antithesis. An Instrument of Patriarchal Power", *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory*, Vol. 6, No. 3, Fall 1982.

Foucault, Michel (1980(a)), *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1.* An Introduction. Trans. Robert Hurley. Vintage Books, N.Y. 1980.
Foucault, Michel (1980(b)), *Power/Knowledge*: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977. Ed. Colin Gordon. Pantheon Books. N.Y. 1980.

Graves, Robert (Ed.) (1974), *The New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology*. Prometheus Press 1974.

Griffin, Susan (1981), *Pornography and Silence. Culture's Revenge against Nature.* Harper Colophon. U.S. 1981.

Hollway, Wendy (1981), " 'I just wanted to kill a woman ! Why? The Ripper and Male Sexuality." *Feminist Review*, No. 9, Oct. 1981.

Kaplan, E. Ann (1983), *Women in Films: Both Sides of the Camera.* Methuen, London and New York, 1983.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude (1969), *The Elementary Structures of Kinship.* Beacon Press, Boston 1969.

Murdoch, Iris (1970), *The Sovereignty of Good.* Routledge and Kegan Paul, England 1970.

Person, Ethel S. (1980), "Sexuality as the Mainstay of Identity: Psychoanalytic Perspectives" *Signs*, Journal of Women in Culture and Society, Summer 1980, Vol. 5. No. 4.

Reynaud, Emmanuel (1981), *Holy Virility. The Social Construction of Masculinity*, Trans. Ros Schwartz, Pluto Press, England, 1981.

Rubin, Gayle (1975), "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex" in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna Reiter. Monthly Review Press, N.Y. 1975.

Small, Christopher (1977), *Music — Society — Education*, Schirmer Books (div. MacMillan), John Calder, England. 1977.

Snitow, Ann et al. eds. (1983), *Powers of Desire. The Politics of Sexuality.* Monthly Review Press. N.Y. 1983.

Sontag, Susan (1973), *On Photography*. Delta Books N.Y. 1973.

PORNOGRAPHY: ALTERNATIVES TO CENSORSHIP

Patricia Hughes

It must be understood that there a few "givens" which underly this analysis of pornography: that pornography is not "erotica"; that it is not titillating fun — a night out with the boys; that it is not "naughty" sex play, offensive only to "prudes"; it is not a manifestation of free expression or opinion. It *is* hate literature against women,[1] against the vulnerable, and, paradoxically, against the feared. It *is* a political tool in the long-raging war between patriarchy and gynocentric values.

I begin by setting out the feminist perspective within which I operate and which serves as the departure point for the analysis; I go on to define pornography in terms of violence and abuse, rather than sex; I then discuss the functions and briefly the effects of pornography — briefly because I take the position that specific effects are less significant than the general effects it has; and I respond to the problems by suggesting that censorship is an inappropriate response, that our attentions should be directed towards provincial and federal human rights legislation in conjunction with other legal methods of curtailing pornography.

I. Feminism: the departure point

It is not possible, nor necessary, within the confines of this analysis to consider feminist theory in detail. Certainly it has been done elsewhere.[2] It will have to be sufficient to set out the major elements of feminism, against which, it will be argued, pornography is directed.

Feminist analysis is founded in the central aspect of reproduction for all species, including our own: that is, reproduction in the sense of creativity.

Women and the life principle (that symbolic power to create and recreate) are central to feminism. Reproduction is the epitome of creativity, the ultimate creative act, belonging particularly to women; reproduction also means the growth and development of human beings: thus there is species reproduction, as well as individual reproduction.

The public and the private, the objective and the subjective, merge in feminist theory. As human beings, we are able to make rational, conscious decisions in addition to our ability to act intuitively, not only, but most notably, in the spheres of reproduction and production. In feminism, then, is synthesis.

It is *because* of our reproductive power that women have been oppressed, both because our more immediate ties with children have resulted in women's almost total responsibility for caring for children, and because our caring for children has defined us; it is also *through* our reproductive power that we women assert ourselves. But note the metaphysical self-definition which has its roots, but not necessarily its expression, in biological reality: it is not the physical *act* of childbirth but the *capacity* of creation that will make women free.

While reproduction has been a private activity — indeed, until relatively recently, pregnancy was meant to be kept "secret" among the upper and middle classes — it will become public by positing the reproduction synthesis as the core of public activity, by making it the central or organizing principle of society. The result is a drastic reformation of the principles which become important: nurture, creation, integration, recognition of other, rather than dismissal, destruction, separation, satisfaction of self which have been the dominant male principles.

Thus we can summarize the principles of feminist theory, for the purposes of this analysis, as follows:

1. the reason for women's oppression, our capacity to reproduce, is the means to the end of our oppression;
2. the significance of reproduction/creation is that it would constitute the core organizing principle of a feminist society;
3. a society based on feminist life principles is incompatible with a society based on malist death principles; and
4. feminism is defined by women who are thus initiators rather than reactors, activists rather than recipient vessels, self-defined rather than mirror-images or other-determined.

The feminism from which I move directs its attention to ideology and structure, for while there are individual men who may in fact be enemies of women's freedom (indeed, there are many of them), our concern is less with them that with male ideology, with *malism*. Feminism poses a challenge to malism of unprecedented proportions and thus poses a threat to those who benefit from malism. It is inevitable that as men perceive that feminism threatens the structures and institutions of a society of male structures and institutions and threatens the complex web of interlocking thought that has comprised their

definition of self and the basis of their expectations in this world, they will become afraid and strike women who personify the threat.

Pornography has a role in this struggle in the sense that it constitutes an assault upon women's self-assertion and separation from a male-defined and male-serving existence, for pornography represents the most basic service woman has provided man.

II. Pornography: what it is

In graphically representing women's sexual subservience to men, women in the service of men, Woman in the service of Man, pornography has two major characteristics:

1. it is the representation of the debasement of women through sex and violence or compulsion,[3] *and*
2. it is in itself an institution of patriarchal sexuality.

The characterization of pornography as violent sexuality (or as compelled sexuality), either explicitly or with force hovering in the background, and as a tool of domination is a significant development in the analysis of pornography. Until feminists appropriated the issue, pornography was defined almost entirely as sexual expression — and either condemned or lauded because of that.

Thus wrote one author twenty years ago: "It is generally agreed that the essential characteristic of pornography is its sexuality."[4] More recently, the Williams Committee in England also defined it in sexual terms: "it has a certain function or intention, to arouse its audience sexually, and also a certain content, explicit representations of sexual material (organs, postures, activity, etc.)".[5]

It is probably natural, then, that the debate around pornography (or obscenity) focussed on moral depravity, and that pornography would be described as an "attempt to crush the delicate qualities of shame, bashfulness and reserve which set *men* apart from the beast".[6] The political right has declared its opposition to porn in unequivocal terms. But not because of what it does to women; rather because it is part of a "humanist-secularist atheistic thrust". The right tosses porn into the same bag with "abortion on demand, divorce by consent, euthanasia, the abolition of the teaching of religion in schools".[7]

Those who have opposed porn have been vocal in their disgust at the homosexual and lesbian sex which appeared in porn magazines and films (although the former was more abhorrent since woman-centred sexuality has never been treated as seriously: it was difficult for men to understand that women might have a sexuality apart from men). The Longford Committee, established in Britain to explore the question of obscenity, asked:

> Does the community really desire the active encouragement of widespread promiscuity or homosexual pratices; or does it wish to take reasonable precautions to preserve the integrity of family life?[8]

The fear of homosexual sex continues as the treatment of *The Body Politic* and the bathhouse raids evidence.

The fear expressed by the right is less surprising when set against the encouragement given writers and publishers of obscenity by liberals. They praised the spread of obscene materials and defended them on the witness stand as a source of enlightenment in a repressive sexual era. In response to the Longford Committee's recommendations for restricting pornography, for example, Brigid Brophy explained that "[t]he Longford legislation is a prescription for replacing the permissive society by a stagnant society. A society that is not free to be outraged is not free to change"[9] One has to recognize that speaking out for explicit sexuality has been considered to be a "good cause"; yet that liberation has occured on the backs (and in the genitals and other orifices) of the most vulnerable members of our society.

The more blasé among us have taken a different tack, well represented by a much-praised piece by George Steiner in which he complains that pornography is boring. That verbal yawn is, however, merely a prelude to Mr. Steiner's major concern: pornography is a subversion of privacy — not the privacy of the victims, as one might foolishly think, but of the consumers. (Mr. Steiner, we might note in passing, had an interesting opinion of the relations between the sexes: sexual activities, he remarks with the appropriately worldly air of someone who has nothing to learn, "have remained fairly generally the same since man first met goat and woman".[10] We hope we are not being too sensitive when we wonder if the order is significant?) Unhappy man, whose own pornographic books "leave a man less free, less himself, than they found him;... they leave language poorer, less endowed with a capacity for fresh discrimination and excitement".[11] And how do they leave woman, then, she who has bared all physically and suppressed all emotionally just to have men bored and made poorer for her effort?

I mention this attitude because it is, in my view, a dangerous one, all the more so because it is so cavalier about what is involved in pornography and because it so clearly misses the reality of porn: the increasingly lurid scenes which are necessary to satisfy those who are regularly exposed to it. Steiner is likely right when he criticizes porn for being boring, but he fails to take the next step: a realization that that does not mean the end of porn but merely the development of even worse representations.

We have the nonchalance of the discriminating reader; the cry that pornography is in the vanguard of the great liberal advance — a freeing of inhibitions, a contribution to the free expression of natural *man*, a welcome escape from the stifling preoccupation with the evils of sex; and the lament that it will lead to the break up of the family and the death of god.

In none of these views does anyone express any concern for women as individuals. And that is the problem: women in pornography are anonymous, they are secondary, *they are not real.* To the men who look at them, they are as plastic dolls, the life size mannequin of the pathetic pervert. But of course they *are* real. And it is hard for us as women to believe that no association is made between the representation on the screen or on the magazine page and women in their

homes, on the street, standing in a bookshop next to a man who is perusing the naked woman bound in chains in his favourite magazine: is it possible for that man to treat me, that woman beside him, as a human being when he received gratification from seeing someone who looks like me bound, beaten, humiliated?

Defenders of porn would have us believe that he could, that there is no confusion in the consumer's mind between the performer and the "real" woman. Women who attend porn films "are ignored by the men in the audience" who are engaged in "private fantasy" and "[t]he real woman within touching distance has not the attraction of the images",[12] the men are there to see what they do not get of home, and they are hardly likely to rush home and order their wives to perform fellatio just because they saw a stud do so in the movies".[13]

In case we miss the point that the "real thing" cannot live up to the fantasy, Peter Michelson makes it succinctly: the process of commercializing sex in *Playboy* and elsewhere

> is rather subtle, and one is seldom conscious of himself as the Playboy. Nor does one think of *his woman* as a whore. So long as he has Playmates, Bunnies and their analogues, the movie sex stars . . ., he needn't think of her — if he thinks of her at all, his mind being filled with more enticing fantasies — as such, or as property. She may continue in her time-honored rhetorical role of the sometimes dull, sometimes bright but always slightly irrelevant companion.[14]

One feels compelled to ask what would make this "companion" relevant — a willingness to engage in one of the "enticing fantasies"?

What this is all meant to do is separate women from each other: reassure those who are not performers in pornography that they are not like those who *are* performers and therefore will not be treated like them; and flatter the performers that they have something the "real" women do not. The message to most women is: safer, indeed, to let the fantasy women take the brunt of pornographic need; the rest of us can keep our distance. It just ain't so. At the most basic level, there are women who have found themselves the unwilling participants in acted-out fantasies.[15] In these cases, husbands and male companions have "persuaded" or compelled women to engage in acts which the men have seen in movies or magazines. In other instances, men have re-enacted these portrayals with women who are strangers to them.

On another level, what these critics do not appreciate is that as feminists we cannot separate ourselves from the victims who are performers: we see the substance of ourselves reflected in those pages and on that screen. And we see ourselves, all of ourselves, as part of this campaign of woman-hatred.

The problem is the use of sex coupled with violence as a political tool in the perpetuation of patriarchy. A feminist definition of pornography takes cognizance of the coercive element in it: the portrayal, through pictorial or verbal form, of sexual activity which involves the encouragement or condonation of violence

towards or degradation of any of the participants.[16]

A feminist definition identifies a political phenomenon rather than a moral one.[17] It is vital to an understanding of pornography not to sink into the morass of debate about moral or spiritual decay, to condemn it because of explicit sexuality (or to praise it for the same); the harm of pornography is its betrayal of the human integrity of its victims, its insistence that the vacuous nature of the representations are the portrayals of ideals, and above all, its blatant and brutal display of power of men over women, sold as the depiction of male fantasies, basing its appeal on the bringing to "life" of men's dreams — and women's nightmares.

It is the emphasis on violence rather than on sex which differentiates the feminist naming of pornography from the blunt and reactionary attack by the Right on the liberalization of sexual values, from the uncritical extolling of that same liberalization by liberals, and from the intellectual concerns of the sated. From a feminist point of view, the major concern about pornography is its treatment of women; for the others, it is secondary or irrelevant: that is because for them women are not independent dignified human beings. Thus they view the matter from the "larger" perspective of "society"; but this is a society which does not include women, for if it did, surely women could not so easily be sloughed off, *despite their centrality to pornography*.

The peculiarly *feminist* nature of the power analysis constitutes a proper appropriation of pornography as an issue that graphically illustrates the underlying basis of patriarchal society. The very existence of porn is itself the problem, because it both reflects and allows a particular view of women, one which is apparently acceptable to many members of society who seem to accept its "milder" form in Vogue fashion layouts or in store window mannequins wearing chains around their necks, without connecting it to "hard-core" porn, including the thrusting of phallic objects up the anuses of women and women hanging, bound, from meat hooks. Hard-core or mild, these are all scenes of male control of women. It is this general atmosphere pervading patriarchal society which is wrong: pornography is simply an undeniable expression of that wrong, not a distinct phenomenon.

It is not an easy task to specify the kinds of materials I am referring to when I use the term "pornography"; there are always examples which appear to straddle the line, wherever it is drawn.

I do distinguish "sexually explicit materials" from pornography; these are representations which two people might well find add to their own sexual lives by bringing something new to a jaded relationship or which they have found arouses them. What does *not* appear in the representation of such materials is violence or compulsion. I am going to avoid the question of whether *clearly* playful bondage or spanking constitutes violence or compulsion, although if it always occurs in one direction, it raises the question of domination and is more problematic. No doubt some people would argue that such activities can *never* be playful. These playful scenes, if such are possible, are the realities of private lives; yet we do not know whether that is because the pervasive sexual culture has made them that way, that most people cannot conceive of a sexuality which

does not involve some element of dominance/subordinance.

Certainly there are difficulties with any kind of sexual material today. It has been found that "much of the pornography implicated in the battery of women has been . . . so-called non-violent materials."[18] Recent studies have shown that non-violent representations may have the effect of increasing aggressive reactions towards women.[19] And sexually explicit materials are made by the same industry which as the porn industry, is built on deceit, victimization, poor working conditions and so on.[20]

Despite these problems, I do separate sexually explicit materials from materials which involve women taking off their clothes at gunpoint; foreign objects (other than a penis) in the vagina; women spreadeagled, exposed to men; directions on how to rape children; women sucking guns; women in degrading poses, in subordinate positions, tied up with ropes or chains, gagged; women raped by one or several men; women treated as sexually available to other men by one man; women physically attacked, cut with knives, slapped, whipped, spanked, punished; women defecated on; initials carved on the inside of a woman's thigh; an earring pierced through the vaginal area of a woman attached to a chain held by a man; women engaging in sex with each other, solely for the edification of men;[21] and on and on and on — all with the intent of showing that this is an exciting, desirable activity to engage in, that it is legitimate to be aroused by such portrayals, and that the victims themselves might be enjoying it (although this last is often part of the representation, it is not a *necessary* component: some people get their kicks from attacks on terrified women who beg them not to do whatever it is they are going to do or who are seen to beg in the porn).

III. Pornography: its functions

The previous section touched briefly both on the effects and functions of pornography, but if we are to begin to understand how to respond to porn, we must have some understanding of its functions and its effects in greater detail. Its effects really relate to its place in the political system, that is, its function of helping to perpetuate patriarchy.

Pornography promises private, erotic thrills, portrays violence against and degradation of women, and encourages women-hatred and contempt. It revenges the ancient male fear of female sexuality; it justifies the domination of women through control of their sexuality by violence or the constant threat of violence at the hands of men.

One of its most insidious and humiliating characteristics is its co-optation of the smiling or coyly pouting victims themselves to express that hatred, a quality it shares in sad fact with other institutions of our patriarchal system: women's "participation" in pornography is merely a particularly graphic example of women's role as the primary agents of a socialization process which perpetuates their own subordination.

I use the word "institution" in the above paragraph deliberately: pornography is an element of the institution of patriarchal sexuality or, put another way, it is a

supporting pillar. As such, it represents the forces of compulsion in the private sphere: the constant and graphic reminder of what might occur in any woman's bedroom. Public sexuality in magazines, films and videos is imported into private sexuality. But this is a sexuality of a certain kind: as with all institutions commanded by the dominant class, it carries with it the authority of force, compulsion, violence.

Pornography is in part male revenge for female sexuality. The men who act in porn movies (or pose in photographs) are the instrument of the revenge while the women are the object. Put another way, the men represent the avengers: they stand in for all the men who cannot play that role — but they show how that role can be played outside the boundaries of page and screen. The taming of women's sexuality which occurs through the medium of porn, reflects the ambivalent feelings men have always held about women's sexuality.[22]

Desirous of enjoying women's sexuality, men also feared that through their (women's) sexuality, women are able to control them. For the women closest to them — wives, sisters, mothers — men have devised rules which have the effect of shaping their sexuality into manageable proportions, primarily by acting as if such women are asexual: mothers are above sex, sisters are not interested (nor are daughters), wives must be forced. Yet men also want the evil temptress, the source of their downfall, whether Eve or the prostitute with her little book of prominent customers. Of course, the prostitute (or the mistress) is another man's sister, daughter, wife and/or mother.

Women's sexuality is an Unknown; it is mysterious; it is connected with recreation; it is capable of multiple pleasures: it is something to be both feared and envied. It is therefore something to be controlled: hence the brutality of pornography, the reassurance that man does in fact have the upper hand and will not be overwhelmed by woman. Through pornography, men can displace their fears about women's sexuality onto the women; they define it and put it to the service of men. For example,

> Female sexual mutilation, often self-inflicted, indicates that she is, should be, can be castrated — even that she desires that castration (though he fears she desires and can accomplish *his* castration).[23]

Women's mouths are put to the service of men to prevent our assertion of our own integrity and self-definition of our own sexuality. It is telling that one common pornographic image is that of the woman on her knees, humbled before the man whose penis she has taken in her mouth — literally forced to swallow the sexual and power lie that is pornography. The man is so confident of his power he does not believe (and probably he is correct) that the woman at his feet will bite the penis that chokes her.

Yet while men are prepared to force women to have sex and while they resort to force to keep women in rein, they do not want to believe they have to force them: how insulting to admit that one is not desired by the object of one's own

desires. And so the comfort of the willing victim, the rationalization that women are getting only what they want but pretend they do not:

> Force is nature's victory over the constraints of civilization. Force is intrinsic to male sexuality and force used against her does not victimize her; it actualizes her.[24]

Thus force is a release for women and it is not surprising that men are able to believe that a woman who is forced to engage in sexual activity may come to enjoy it. Men need suffer few qualms at being aroused by violent or degrading treatment of women if they have convinced themselves that such treatment will benefit the women by bringing out their "true" desires.

Despite all that, the exercise of force is a source of pleasure and arousal in itself. Force is control is power; power ultimately depends on fear which ultimately depends on force. If the sexual experience *were* mutual, this element would be lacking and the reader or viewer left unsatisfied for that reason.

Pornography also enjoys the power to dismiss, to test us and find us wanting, hidden in the reassurance that we should not worry for we cannot match the ideal of the model. It is in fact irrelevant whether the women in the audience or on the street going to dinner or to a play or to the office, factory, hospital, or bar to work, look like the ideal; for the ideal is only a collection of eroticisms which are shared by all women who are treated not as people but as walking erotic figures.

The easy availability of pornography serves men very well; it should be expected that they try to diminish its importance by claiming it has no effect (it is simply fantasy, forgotten outside the theatre) or that it is all really just too boring to worry about, except that it does nasty things to the language. Men seek pornography to "overcome or deny outright any feelings of passivity, fear, disgust, or inadequacy . . . Rape fantasies — or sometimes real rape — reinforce men in the belief that they are superior to women and so can 'have' a women whenever they choose to".[25] As one playwright wrote to the Longford Committee,

> Sex as an instrument for the working out of fear, hatred, rape, guilt and personal inadequacy *at the expense* of women is quite appallingly powerful, prevalent and indeed pornographic . . .[26]

The prevalence of pornography and its use in seemingly innocuous contexts enhances the idea that any woman is available for men to use to work out their inadequacies. For these base purposes, there are sufficient numbers of women that no man need feel deprived: he can just pick one at random.[27] Just as employers who might otherwise compete with each other, are prepared to co-operate in the face of some perceived threat from workers or in order to fix prices, men who might otherwise engage in competitive seduction, find "the sharp and bitter edge of male rivalry is dulled, if not sweetened, by such shared

patriarchal illusions" as that "every man is at least sexually (and therefore in every other way) superior to all women" and that some woman is always available to every man.[28]

If there is indeed any one characteristic that enables pornography to exert its power, to exercise its role in the continuation of patriarchy, it is its ability to catch all women in its net. Even if we believe that only beautiful women appear as models and since we are not beautiful, we can escape, we know that the reality, of which porn is the image, is indiscriminate: we know the brutal violence that can be inflicted on a children's nanny, a lawyer, a mother, a prostitute, the teenager next door. Despite our searching for a pattern which will exclude us, our deepest sense knows there is not one to find: it is intended that we know there is not one to find, to know we can never feel excluded, never feel safe.

The images of pornography are a reminder that any woman can find herself in some terrifying real life re-enactment of those images. Pornography controls because its real-life counterpart's selection is random: its subject could be any woman and so its victim could be any woman.[29] The objectification of women — that is, the making of each of us into an object interchangeable with every other each of us, with every other woman-object — transforms us into commodities and "all commodity is available to him who has the power to take it".[30]

Pornography: its effects

People are much readier to curtail porn if it can be shown (without doubt) that after looking at pornography, men will carry out a vicious sexual assault. Such a view misses the point: porn is bad because it refects assumptions about women and implicitly suggests that it is perfectly alright to treat us as we are treated in pornography. It is bad because it has become part of everyday commerce, appearing on billboards, record album covers, rock videos and in fashion magazines. It is bad because it is widespread: *illicit* porn is a $63 million business in Canada.[31]

It is the contention here that the very existence of pornography is the problem and that while there is evidence to suggest a correlation between exposure to porn and the commission of brutal sexual acts against women,[32] the connection is not necessary to justify controlling pornography.

In addition to a host of studies, however, we have dramatic examples of men who commit heineous crimes and who have been porn aficionados: Clifford Olsen is one such example; Ferdinand Robinson had porn magazines with him when he murdered Barbara Schlifer. At the least, and in my view, it is enough, we must recognize that the factors which allow ever more brutal porn also encourage sex crimes against women and children; and we can go further: pornography invites imitation because, like the cigarette and beer ads, it promises pleasure and success.

Thus it is sufficient that such treatment as is meted out to women in porn is represented on a wide scale in Canada[33] to warrant condemnation of it. Even without further consequences (and these seem to occur), it is the portrayal of women in the sexual service of men that must be censured (but not necessarily censored). It has been understood for some time that societal disapproval of racism is necessary, regardless of the effects of racism on racial minorities, and that it is incumbent upon society to assert that there is "an important difference between the loathsome and the decent"; such a statement is crucial because it can have an impact in "shaping individual attitudes in . . . a desirable direction".[34] We need the same kind of assertion in relation to women.

Yet the manifestation of hatred is increasing in the case of women. The spread of pornography is evidence that its worst effect is a desensitization of many members of the community towards abuse of women. Aggressive pornography appears not only in soft-core magazines such as *Playboy*, but in fashion magazines, on record album covers, on billboards, in advertisements. The violent and/or degrading sexual treatment of women has moved out of the pages of the brown-wrapped or cellophane-covered "speciality" magazines into mainstream media where the pictures may be more "refined" and the photography more skillful but the image and the message are similar. Over a decade ago, the sub-committee on written pornography for the Longford Committee believed that "the trade was now largely engaged in raising the pornographic ante . . ."[35]

Dorothy Inglis traces the development from the "innocent titillation" of the first *Playboy* editions to the current Playboy programming on television which features *inter alia* "graphic scenes of gang rape . . .and . . .masochism"[36] In a recent article, a journalist who immersed himself in hours of video porn found that the porn available today is not the sort once seen at men's stags:

> The videos are infused with meanness. They smell of fear and sparkle with hate. It is as though a new hand and identity stepped in behind the camera and suddenly gave pornography a point of view.[37]

He saw in the porn images themselves "pathological cravings for power and control, a ruthlessness and a life fear that you would imagine goes along with being able to exploit the intimate life functions of other people to make money".[38] The viewers of such porn attain the same feelings of power vicariously, through their voyeuristic attention to the images on the screen; whether they then realize those feelings through action or are content to let them lie, their feelings of power derive from watching the abuse of women or, put another way, their own self-satisfaction is linked to the ill-treatment of women.

The slide into the hard-core porn occurs easily because it is merely an extension of its milder antecedent, different in degree, not in kind. Despite the acknowledged difference between a *Playboy* spread of a woman fingering her

genitals or thrusting her ass at the camera, inviting men to contemplate the thrills to be found there, and the notorious *Hustler* cover of a woman being put through a meat-grinder, both are "anonymous" women, even with the individualized textual accompaniment in *Playboy*; the display of women in the service of male readers is the purpose in both cases, the debasement is merely more subtle in the first.

One of the dangerous consequences of the fundamental similarity between soft and hard-core pornography is that the softcore porn no longer seems particularly offensive; what it portrays acquires an even more acceptable connotation. When the context of the soft-core variety is not a "men's magazine" but a billboard, for example, or some other site which is open and public, what is portrayed seems to be perfectly normal. The Longford Committee was advised of the serious ramification of allowing such an appearance of "normality":

> The image of women [in advertisements] is based on the same perversions as those embodied in much pornography, but its message is couched in language which the average person does not regard as outrageous; so he listens.[39]

Nor can we ignore that if advertisers include a woman bound in chains in an advertisement, it is because they believe that the subtle message conveyed by that image will help to sell their product: not just any old image will do; it must be an image that will invoke a positive response from the consumer, even if it is not ostensibly connected with the actual product.

As already suggested, the pervasiveness of pornography is central to its effect: it is ready at hand for men to read, hear and watch, to seize whenever they want to do so; at the same time, women are constantly reminded of what it says about us, of the instructions it gives us about the way to behave. The presence of pornography on newsstands and its "respectable" reflection in advertising and fashion photography, and similar contexts, is a reminder not to step out of line, not to give the slightest pretext for excuse — the power is that *any* behaviour serves as an excuse: she was a "bad" girl and deserved to be punished; but if she refused to be "bad", she was "uppity" and deserved to be put in her place.

Women do not have to experience the direct effect of pornography — they do not have to be in it or to be raped by a man whose bedroom walls are plastered with pornographic pictures — in order to be subject to the impact of porn. Rosemarie Tong draws a useful distinction between being *hurt* by pornography[40] and being *harmed* by it:

> The fact that some women are not *hurt* by thanatica does not mean that they are not *harmed* thereby. To be harmed is to have one's legitimate interests violated. To be hurt by such violations is to be painfully aware that one's legitimate interests have indeed been violated.[41]

It is not necessary that the majority of women are conscious of the way in which they are represented in pornography in order for the representation to be deplorable, to be morally, politically and personally unjust. An insult behind one's back is no less an insult, after all. From a strategic point of view, however, it is desirable that as many women as possible understand the dreadful extent of pornography and appreciate the impact it has on all of us, in order to develop effective countermeasures.

Porn also has an effect in regard to the women whom it buys directly: those who perform. Whatever element of deceit[42] and/or compulsion[43] there might be in that regard, the fact is that these women are portraying degraded, humiliated and physically abused sisters. They are real women who are playing women being abused, and perhaps being abused themselves, in an atmosphere of approval.

But how can we talk about the women who take part in pornography as victims or consider them exploited? Do they not perform in blue movies (presumably however dark a blue that may be) voluntarily? How can they be exploited asks Joseph Slade, when they are paid to be . . . To be what? . . .pseudo (or in fact?) beaten, to have guns pushed into mouths or buttocks, to be spread-eagled across the hood of a car and raped? After all, when we're talking commodity, we're talking market value: Slade wonders, "Are prostitutes (and that is what the sex film roles come down to) necessarily exploited if they receive their asking price?"[44] And, he asks (somewhat disingenuously, we must believe), "are the female models any more exploited than the males?". If slavery makes the master a slave, then it could be said in a philosophical moment, that men who degrade women are themselves degraded by that act. One supposes they are, but the point gets lost in the shuffle of rape, wife assault, and the other joys of womanhood.

Slade is not content with even musings such as these; he claims that women ("often humiliated and degraded by the sexual treatment they receive in the films") suffer "less than the males". The explanation for this inversion? The women are "pretty" while the men are "ciphers of no consequence". The women "reacquire their virginity from one picture to the next", somehow making them distinct and dominant individuals; they are even exalted and "stand on pedestals". Slade has obviously been around and he forsees the obvious retort: he admits that one *could* argue that "the males elevate her only to gloat over her abuse", but responds that in these films "male revenge does not come easily, and one wonders just who is being exploited".[45] It is hard not to see this as twisted logic, given the sex of the persons who make most of the porn,[46] the sex of the characters who wield the whip most of the time, the sex of the vast majority of readers and viewers.

In fact, Slade has missed the best point of all: if men in porn are the exploited ones, if they really are the ones who are insignificant, then the fact men relish porn so much must mean that old myth that women are masochists has been misapplied all along — what could be more masochistic than watching one's alter ego be diminished and exploited?

V. And so, what to do?

Mechanisms of controlling pornography — and I start, perhaps too pessimistically, with the premise that it cannot be eradicated, at least under the current system — need to take into account the nature of porn as set out earlier: porn as the ultimate in misogyny, communication of hatred, emotional assault on the reader and viewer, possibly resulting in physical assault, abuse and death for victims and compulsion for the performers. It is these qualities, along with the ridicule of women and the constant underlying threat which porn poses to women that must be addressed.

Porn is in great measure a weapon against feminism. Although pornography has been directed against other groups,[47] it has never been as widespread as today: furthermore, the majority of porn is based on heterosexuality. Consider the focus of pornography: to a great extent, on those parts of the female body which are associated with reproduction. This is not, of course, insignificant and, I suggest, not coincidental, since it is through our reproductive power that women assert ourselves: that is to say, not through the act of childbirth, but the capacity of creation of the female sex. The capacity of women to reproduce the human race (and the incapacity of men to do so in the same way), the initial dependence of all men on women, the alignment of women with nature, all combine to instil a fear and awe in the male sex which can be quieted only by the abuse of those very parts of the body which are most connected with reproduction: having come out of the vagina, the man now asserts the right to return; having suckled the breast, he now asserts the right of ownership through clamping of the nipples. The dependence of birth is reversed because women, to be free of pain, are dependent now on men's goodwill". Thus is pornography a weapon against feminism: for if women do not have control of these anatomical parts, how can we assert reproduction as the means by which we assert ourselves?

Several methods of dealing with pornography have been suggested and tried. I now consider a few of them, dealing first with a variety of partial solutions which could be applied in conjunction with others (these are called "adjunct solutions"), then with the "equal" porn view, with censorship and finally recommending that we direct our efforts to human rights legislation.

Adjunct Solutions

Self-help

There are several variants of this kind of approach, some of which are available to almost any woman (or man).

At one end of the continuum is the kind of action taken by women in British Columbia, the bombing of porn outlets. In British Columbia, obscenity includes "sado-masochistic material depicting violence combined with sex", but, reports Jillian Ridington, "it took almost a year of lobbying, organizing and demonstrating before charges were laid against Red Hot Video"[48] (Red Hot Video

is a chain of video stores stocking a high proportion of hard-core pornographic videos). Members of a group called Wimmin's Fire Brigade firebombed three of the stores on November 22nd, 1982, attempting to accomplish what the authorities had shown they were most reluctant to do: close down these outlets of anti-woman propaganda and hate pornography.

At the other end of the spectrum is the simple request to corner stores and other magazine outlets, not to stock porn; letter-writing to advertisers whose advertisements reflect porn themes; letters to the editor complaining about specific items; boycotting and picketing of films, as was done in relation to the "snuff" films.

Another form of self-help is suggested by the store clerk who refused to sell the *Penthouse* containing the Williams photographs who said, "No woman should have to sell pornography if they [sic] feel it is against their [sic] rights". The woman was dismissed from her job for taking that stand.[49]

Municipal By-laws

A municipal by-law may require that magazines containing pornographic material be placed at a height which would be above that of the eye-level of children or that covers be hidden except for the title.[50] Although pornography can be sold, such a by-law at least means that it cannot be flaunted. The City of Vancouver has a by-law which excludes as a permitted use of land, the "retail of sex-oriented products"; it refers only to sex, not violence. The by-law was upheld when challenged in the courts.[51]

Living off the Avails

In Sweden, feminists have tried, unsuccessfully, to bring their "indecency law" to bear on pornographic material. The law makes it illegal to "earn money from other people's bodies",[52] and appears to be similar to section 195 of the Criminal Code which makes it illegal to live off the avails of prostitution. By analogy, it should be illegal to live off the avails of pornography, as a producer, distributor or seller, since it also abuses human bodies.

Consecutive Penalty

The Report on Visible Minorities has recommended that judges be allowed to impose a consecutive penalty for racially motivated crimes.[53] Consideration could be given to a similar power in regard to an assault motivated by woman-hatred.

Libel and Slander Act

Defamation legislation could be amended "to permit civil action against hate propagandists by groups of persons victimized by such material".[54] Under the Manitoba Defamation Act, a member of an identifiable group which is the subject of hate propaganda may bring an action against the propagandist. Remedies include an injunction, damages and fines.

Section 281.2 of the Criminal Code

Section 281.2 prohibits hate literature or hate propaganda against minority groups:

> 281.2(2) Everyone who, by communicating statements, other than in private conversation, wilfully promotes hatred against any identifiable group

is guilty of an offence. "Identifiable group" means "any section of the public distinguished by colour, race, religion or ethnic origin". In practice this section remains almost completely unused,[55] with no final convictions under it, but it is a recognition that such statements — if they are against persons of distinguishing colour, race, religion or ethnic group, but not sex — are not acceptable, even if the result is a restriction of free speech (these provisions could be challenged under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms but it is likely they would be upheld as a reasonable limit on freedom of expression).

This section could be strengthened by removing the requirement that intention to promote hatred be required, by permitting private prosecutions under it instead of requiring the consent of the provincial attorney-general, as is now the case, and by adding "gender" to the list of "identifiable groups" (the leaders of three major political parties have agreed they would support such an amendment).[56]

In May 1984, Project H was established in Toronto to examine materials which could be considered hate literature under section 281.2 and pass along such literature to the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General for a decision on prosecution.[57]

Counter with "equal" pornography

Ann Garry suggests that it is possible to have pornography which is "nonsexist, nondegrading, morally acceptable".[58] She contends that "[t]he key to making the change is to break the connection between sex and harm" and she cites some examples: "a high-ranking female Army officer, treated with respect by men and woman alike, could be shown not only in various encounters with other people but also carrying out her job in a humane manner".[59] Garry does express concern that the typical porn audience might not appreciate the more uplifting aspects of such "pornography" and would see the Army officer as a plaything or "unusual" prostitute, with the result that "women are still degraded"; she therefore has reservations about whether one should give "wholehearted approval to any pornography seen today".

My concerns stem from a different direction and I have two in particular. My basic position is that there is no such animal as "equal" porn, since once the connection between harm and sex is broken, there is no longer pornography, at least by the definition I have been using: porn is the coupling of harm and sex. Thus there cannot be by definition, porn which is "nonsexist, nondegrading, morally acceptable"; rather, such representations in my scheme would be

sexually explicit materials, not pornography, far preferable, but unlikely to be accepted as a substitute for pornography by those who seek the latter.

My second concern arises from Garry's suggestion that her new porn might have an educational value. While it is unhappily true that porn does have an educational effect in the sense that it provides models for "acceptable" ways to treat women, I would be reluctant to propose self-consciously educational sexually explicit materials for normal use (although indeed one partner might take advantage of such materials to show the other partner something about the nature of the kind of sex he or she would like). Such "educational" intentions would be the ultimate turn-off in the average situation.[60]

The distinction between Garry's definition and mine is significant, for what is lacking in Garry's non-sexist "pornography" and is overwhelmingly present in pornography as I describe it, is *power*. The themes of dominance-subordinance appear not only in the pornographic pictures, films, videos, and descriptions, but also constitute the role it plays in systemic power, in supporting patriarchy. Thus there can be no non-sexist porn (because non-sexism does not involve power).

Nor can there be porn for women, as the concept of "equal" porn suggests, not because some individual women do not react to current porn by becoming aroused, but because it is the *systemic* dominance of the male class which pornography at the same time reflects and helps to sustain.

It is characteristic of pornography that it is the instrument of men, that it does not serve the same function for women as it does for men. It is not coincidence that it is primarily designed for men nor that the only "pornography" designed for women is generally free of violence; nor is it the result of some supposed lesser interest in sex on the part of women.[61] There can really be no "female" equivalent of pornography because pornography is based on power, systemic power, and women do not exert systemic power over men in a patriarchy. As Brownmiller explains,

> There can be no 'equality' in porn, no female equivalent, no turning of the tables in the name of bawdy fun. Pornography, like rape, is a male invention, designed to dehumanize women, to reduce the female to an object of sexual access, not to free sensuality from moralistic or parental inhibition.[62]

The pictures of naked men in *Playgirl might* arouse but they are just as likely to bring forth titters, not because women are embarrassed by looking at them, but because a picture of a man posed on skiis, legs bent, wearing nothing but ski boots is inherently ridiculous.

The difference is this: the pornography of which women are the objects lies atop a mountain of patriarchal enforcement of women's subordination; sexual abuse — and non-sexual abuse — have both been methods of enforcement and they are combined in pornography and presented as something which is acceptable fantasy, encouraged dreams, condoned ideal. But sometimes the fantasy escapes and takes control and when it does, the dream, the ideal, the

most graphic exercise of sexual dominance and ownership becomes the reality. The dream of Dorothy Stratten to become part of the fantasy world of *Playboy* ended in the real life pornography of her brutal murder and abuse at the hands of her pornography-manager husband.

We cannot *counter* porn with non-sexist porn or with "female" porn because they are a contradiction in terms; such sexually explicit materials might meet certain needs but not the needs of the porn aficionado.

Censorship

We already have several forms of the what the Americans call "prior restraint" in Canada, including preventing materials crossing the border, licensing through the censor boards and threat of criminal sanction; these are all means by which distribution is prevented: in free speech terms, silencing the speaker before the speech is made.

The issue here is whether we should expand remedies in that direction: I argue against such expansion and, indeed, would argue against the continuance of the censor board at all because of its confusion of sexually explicit materials and pornography; I do not do so here, simply because the alternatives are not well-developed. One of my objections to censorship is that we cannot control it (the same censorship which *might* rid us of *Hustler* and its ilk also allows *The Diviners* to be pulled off the shelves[63]); it is not specifically designed to respond to what I have suggested is the feminist definition of pornography; and it is a tool, the expansion of which would be welcomed with glee by the right, a development to which I, for one, would be most reluctant to contribute.

Possibly a more serious objection is that reference to censorship invariably raise claims about the denial of freedom of expression. This article, as well as many other feminist analyses of pornography, make it clear that pornography is not free expression, but is, rather, an assault upon women's dignity and physical well-being. Freedom of expression initially referred to political speech, arising out of the democratic belief that the benefits of open dialogue and the desirability of allowing new ideas to be heard and debated outweigh possible insult to certain groups or persons that such dialogue might involve and outweigh, too, the dangers accruing to the state from the expression of extremist political opinion. As far as individuals are concerned, the law of defamation has been developed to attend to harm to reputation. The aversion to cutting off new ideas before they had a chance to be heard or rebutted; the reluctance to encourage what has been called in the United States, "the chilling effect" on people who are intimidated into silence by fear of censorship or other sanctions; and similar concerns have made the protection of free speech an important element in democratic systems, at least theoretically. On might legitimately dispute whether that theory is always realized in practice, but that reality has not prevented the free speech argument from assuming a dominant role against control of pornography. It has been a particularly forceful debate in the United States, but we can expect it to acquire a higher profile in Canada with the constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression under section 2(b) of the

Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Let us assume, however, that pornography is in fact a form of speech and therefore *prima facie* entitled to claim the protection offered to speech. This seems to be accepted by the courts. It should be noted that the Charter uses the term "free expression" which is arguably broader than the American "free speech"; it may, therefore, be more difficult to claim that porn is not included under freedom of expression. Already the *Censor Board case*,[64], discussed below, has accepted that porn media are within the guaranteed freedoms of section 2(b), although it remains to be determined whether infringement of the section 2(b) rights may be justified in this instance.

One case which has at least raised the question of whether such materials should be offered section 2(b) protection is the *Koumoudouris case*[65]; it concerned a challenge to a by-law prohibiting nude dancing. The court considered whether burlesque falls within the guarantee of freedom of expression at all, an issue preliminary to whether, if it did, it deserved constitutional protection. In Eberle J.'s view, it is questionable whether the Charter is intended to protect "artistic expression" or whether the "thrust" of section 2(b) "is in the political and governmental domain"; freedom of expression refers to "the freedom of communication of ideas and opinions among the citizens of Canada..."[66] He did not need to decide the point since he classified nude dancing, not as artistic expression at all, but as the "exposure of performers' pubic areas for the purpose of stimulating liquor sales".

Eberle J.'s characterization is significant in relation to pornography; from the sellers' perspective, the purpose of porn is to make money, billions of dollars of it on this continent. The danger with Eberle J.'s approach, of course, is that one would not wish all artistic expression to be excluded from the Charter guarantee.

In any case, freedom of speech has never been held to be absolute. Exceptions have been made for defamatory statements, for example; nor can one falsely cry "fire" in a crowded theatre; similarly, one is not free to utter treasonous statements. In all these cases, the conflict between the right to say what one wishes and other values important in our society has been resolved in favour of the other values: the right not to have one's reputation unjustly tarnished, public safety and national security, respectively. Obscenity is another exception, not, I suggest, in order to protect public morality, but in order to protect the dignity and well-being of 52% of the population.

Customs Powers

Canadian customs officials have the right to bar entry of materials which they consider to be immoral or indecent.[67] The problem here, of course, is that customs officials are unlikely to be making their selections from a feminist perspective; they are more likely to be motivated by a desire to control "deviant" sex. Nevertheless, the power exists and as feminists we might want to consider whether we would like this power strengthened with guidelines to determine

what should not be imported, since importation of pornographic materials across the border is a serious problem. A challenge to a carefully defined power to control importation would likely fail under the reasonable limits justification made available by section 1 of the Charter.

Censor Boards

Another form of prior restraint consists of the powers of the eight provincial censor boards to request cuts in films, prohibit them, or classify them, depending upon their regulatory mandate. When the Nova Scotia *Theatres Act* was challenged as being *ultra vires* the province, the Supreme Court of Canada held that censor boards are within provincial jurisdiction as being concerned with the regulation of local trade, the film industry (an indication of how intent the Court was on finding that the censor boards are valid); it rejected the argument that censorship is within the federal criminal power. Accordingly, at least as far as division of powers is concerned, the provinces can determine standards of propriety they expect films to meet.[68]

The challenge to censor boards under the Charter of Rights is based on the denial of the freedom of expression guaranteed by section 2(b). Even though the province has jurisdiction to establish a censor board, it cannot do so if by doing so, it would infringe a constitutionally guaranteed right. The Divisional Court of Ontario, upheld by the Court of Appeal,[69] held that the Ontario Censor Board does infringe freedom of expression and, since its criteria were not prescribed by law (that is, were merely guidelines established by the board itself), could not be justified under section 1 of the Charter. The case is to be heard by the Supreme Court of Canada. The Court of Appeal did not decide whether, if the criteria *were* prescribed by law, and the Ontario governement has now set out in regulatory form such criteria, the censor board would then constitute a reasonable limit on freedom of expression in a free and democratic society. This major issue remains for further challenge.

Section 159 of the Criminal Code

Early legal attempts to deal with obscenity reflected the general emphasis on sexuality already discussed. The predominant test was

> whether the tendency of the matter charged as obscenity is to deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences, and into whose hands a publication of this sort may fall.[70]

The Canadian Supreme Court gradually rejected this text. In *R. v. Brodie*,[71] the Court held by a 5-4 majority that *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was not obscene. Three members of the Court held that the *Hicklin* test (quoted above) was obsolete, while two others were of the view that the Criminal Code expanded *Hicklin* so that it was not necessary for material to deprave or corrupt in order to be obscene.[71a] This is important since section 159 emphasised the *nature* of the material itself rather than its effect. By 1978, the Court appeared to have finally determined that

section 159 had superceded *Hicklin*.[72] Section 159 defines obscenity in terms of sex alone and of sex and one or more other characteristics, including violence:

> any publication a dominant characteristic of which is the undue exploitation of sex, or of sex and any one or more of the following subjects, namely, crime, horror, cruelty and violence, shall be deemed to be obscene.

In Ontario, Project P is responsible for tracking down porn; it is composed of four persons from the Metro police force and the Ontario Provincial Police and in 1983, laid 119 charges under section 159.

The guide for whether a publication is obscene is whether the community (of Canada, not the locale in which charges have been brought) will tolerate it: community standards prevail[73] and the test of whether exploitation is "undue" is "whether the accepted standards of tolerance in the contemporary Canadian community have been exceeded". In pre-Charter cases, it was held that doubt is to be resolved in favour of free expression.[74] Despite the so-called Canadian standards, each province permits different types of activity or portrayals and prohibits others; for example, "scenes of ejaculation, masturbation, oral sex, anallingus, explicit penetration, and sex with a foreign object are all taboo" in Ontario; all would be allowed in Quebec except ejaculation. Because of the wording of section 159, "[m]ovies and magazines depicting women bound and gagged and trussed are acceptable, provided, in the judgment of Project P, these depictions do not have sexual connotations".[75]

Section 159 not only in part defines obscenity solely in terms of sex, but it also suggests that some degree of exploitation is acceptable. Nor does it include reference to degradation, unless that can be encompassed by "cruelty". Despite the obvious difficulties and failings of section 159, it is *possible* to interpret it in a manner which responds to feminist concerns.

The feminist appropriation of pornography as an issue has received judicial recognition and quasi-acceptance in *R.* v. *Doug Rankine Company Ltd.*[76] which involved the question of whether twenty-five video-tapes were obscene. Fifteen of the tapes had been allowed into Canada by Customs and some had been approved by the Ontario Censor Board, but for mature audiences only. In his judgment, His Honour Judge Borins gave prominence to the expert testimony of Alderperson (for the City of Toronto) June Rowlands, rejecting the submission of defence counsel that her testimony reflected a "fashionable notion of militant feminism": His Honour cooly dismissed the attempt of the defence counsel to diminish Ms. Rowland's evidence by stating:

> I can think of very few women in this country who would tolerate the distribution of motion pictures portraying indignities to other human beings, particularly women, in the name of entertainment. A woman does not have to be a

> 'militant feminist' to be intolerant of what is portrayed in many of the films before the court. Nor does a woman have to be a 'militant feminist', or any other type of feminist, to believe that the distribution of such films would be unacceptable on the basis of current community standards. She need only be a person who respects the dignity of life and rejects those who seek to degrade it.[77]

(One wonders when the time will come that it will be possible to accept the label of "feminist" without such denial for fear of endangering the acceptability of the particular view expressed.)

June Rowlands distinguished between "elements of sex, violence and brutality" (which would not be tolerated) and "sexual acrobatics" (which would be) and Borins J. accepted this distinction, specifying that "group sex, Lesbianism, fellatio, cunnilingus, and anal sex" would be tolerated. Rowlands testified that "the great lie of these films before the court is that they depict women as enjoying sex and violence".[78] In his assessment of the films, Judge Borins identified the crucial connection between sex and violence which determines pornography from a feminist perspective:

> many of the films are exploitive of women, portraying them as passive victims who derive limitless pleasure from inflicted pain and from subjugation to acts of violence, humiliation and degredation [sic]. Women are depicted as sexual objects whose only redeeming features are their genital and erotic zones which are prominently displayed in clinical detail. Whether deliberately or otherwise, most of the films portray degredation [sic], humiliation, victimization and violence in human relationships as normal and acceptable behaviour.[79]

Of the films he found obscene, most were on the ground of violent, humiliating sexual treatment of the women in the videos. Unfortunately, however, His Honour reverted to the more traditional view in finding a few of the films obscene because of "the degree of explicitness of the sexual acts"; there is no indication in the judgment of what these acts are. Of course, His Honour was bound by section 159 to determine obscenity both in relation to sex alone and to sex coupled with cruelty or violence. Despite the reversion to the standard of sex alone, his analysis of the issue and his inclusion of degradation among those treatments he would consider obscene, stand as an important contribution to the legal developments in this area. This approach would be aided by replacing section 159 with the clause recommended by the Metropolitain Toronto Task Force on Violence in the Media Against Women and Children which uses the term "pornography" rather than "obscenity":

> Pornography is any printed, visual, audio or otherwise represented presentation, or part thereof, with a theme of violence for the sexual gratification of another or others, including the depiction of submission, coercion, lack of consent or denigration of any human being where such behaviour can be taken to be condoned.

A challenge to section 159 as contravening section 2 of the Charter by Red Hot Video has been rejected by the British Columbia courts.[80]

Human Rights Legislation

Censorship has been rejected as the primary solution to the pornography problem because it makes us vulnerable both to the right, who would expand it far beyond the boundaries we would set (a serious and likely danger) and to the left, who would argue on civil libertarian grounds that we are denying free speech (not likely to be a successful argument in the courts but still one progressive people have to confront).[81] An alternative approach now being considered by governements and by members of the women's movement[82] would base remedies on human rights legislation.

One line of approach would treat pornography as a form of sexual harrassment; alternatively, use could be made of a provision similar to one already existing in the Saskatchewan Code which prohibits representations having the effect of ridiculing or expressing hatred towards a particular group. Class actions are permitted. Subsection 14(1) of the Saskatchewan Code reads, in part:

> No person shall publish or display, or cause or permit to be published or displayed . . . any notice . . . or other representation . . . which exposes, or tends to expose, to hatred, ridicules, belittles, or otherwise affronts the dignity of, any person, any class of persons or a group of persons because of his or their race . . . [or] sex . . .

The section applies to newspapers, television, radio or any other broadcasting device or any printed matter or publication.

The Manitoba Act also contains a provision which could be employed in this way, but perhaps less effectively; section 2(1) prohibits any representation "exposing or tending to expose a person to hatred". Recently, the Manitoba Court of Queen's Bench decided that an editorial or journalistic comment was not a "representation" within the meaning of the section;[83] obviously, such an interpretation considerably reduces the value of the provision in relation to pornography. Although a proposed amendment to the Manitoba legislation would extend the scope of the provision, it does not respond to this particular limitation.

A human rights approach permits women to initiate a complaint but saves them the burden of carrying the case since the human rights commission will proceed once it believes the complaint is substantiated sufficiently to warrant an inquiry and the usual attempts to resolve the matter have failed. Not all provinces are committed to human rights sufficiently to deal with the problem in this way, since British Columbia eliminated its commission; however, it is still a relevant possibility elsewhere. It directs the inquiry to the persons affected, rather than to the effect on the state or on the persons having access to the materials; most importantly, a human rights proscription is not a moral stricture but one based on civil rights.

A recent Saskatchewan case pointed out that under the criminal law, "it appears that women must take a circuitous route and employ the blunt instrument of the law relating to pornography, namely, obscenity to enforce protections from some of the widespread manifestations of hatred focussed upon them".[84]

The case involved a complaint about cartoons and articles which had appeared in the student newspaper of the College of Engineering at the University of Saskatchewan, *The Red Eye*. One article "welcomed" first year female students by informing them how easy it would be to "get a man". The Board of Inquiry found the article "indicated a message which disparages and depreciates women by denying them individual motivation, identity or the capacity for self-determination. It affronts their dignity, their quality of being worthy". The material generally ridiculed women "by deriving humour from the violent sexual degradation and physical destruction of women". Of particular importance is the link drawn in the decision between this kind of treatment of women and their treatment in society generally:

> The effect of such representations is to reinforce and legitimate prejudice against women. It prolongs the existence of hangovers of prejudice against female participation in education, work, aspects of social life and the professions . . Material of the kind in these newspapers serves to perpetuate a social climate discriminatory to women who are already targets of manifold discrimination and horrible violence. No social interest is served by tolerating the free expression of such material.[85]

(It should be noted that the Saskatchewan provision contains a saving provision for free speech.)

The Board ordered "that there be no further dissemination of the 1979 and 1981 editions of *The Red Eye*", that copies of the order be distributed at the same time as the next edition, and that all members of the paper's staff and executive of the students' society attend workshops arranged by the Human Rights Commission.

In addition to giving the provincial commissions this kind of power, the Canadian Human Rights Commission could be given jurisdiction to hear complaints about the import of hate propaganda and its dissemination through the mail, radio, television and cable.[86] Provinces which attempt to maintain some control over the origin of porn have little control over the porn which is imported from other provinces where enforcement is more lax; for example, the Ontario authorities have to deal with porn couriered in from British Columbia.

Serious consideration will have to be given to the kinds of damages which would be awarded if this approach is implemented; the awards made by boards currently generally would not put much of a dent in the porn purveyor's wallet since it is not intended that awards be punitive in the usual case.

A significant advantage claimed by this approach over s.281.2 is that intent is not a necessary component of the case to be proved. Under the Saskatchewan provision, "It is the effect, not the intention, that is to be considered".[87] There is a danger, however, despite *The Red Eye case*, that the community standard test will be imported into the assessment under the human rights approach. As Susan Cole points out, those standards "in a sexist society, . . . are bound to be sexist".[88] That that is not inevitably so is evidenced by *The Red Eye case*.

The outstanding benefit of the human rights approach is that it links the nature of the problem and a possible solution together. While the treatment of pornography is fundamentally a political problem arising out of the relations between men and women in a patriarchy, reality demands that we deal with the problem here and now; we cannot wait until the end of patriarchy. On that level, pornography denies women basic civil rights: the right to dignity and bodily integrity, the right to be free from harrassment, ridicule, and debasement. It is such a denial that human rights legislation was designed to address and remedy; it is therefore appropriate that it be available to women who believe they have been denied such rights by pornography to allow them, as individuals and as a class, to lay complaints against the makers, publishers, distributors, sellers and promoters of porn.

Conclusion

In one sense pornography both reflects and encourages a certain kind of reality, that of a world in which women's subordination is supported and sustained by threats of violence and humiliation. Yet the reality of pornography is selective: it reflects that women are sexually abused but does not reflect that we are harmed by it, that we do not enjoy it. The horror of pornography lies not only in its mirroring of the actual bondage, the beating, the degradation, the naked power over naked bodies, the terror, the mutilation, the death; the ultimate degradation, the abuse that is done to all women, is that pornography purports to speak for us, its victims.

Women are placed on a pedestal, claims Slade, while in fact pornography has us grovelling at the feet of the man who tears us with his penis and with meat hooks, beats us with whips, violates us with his hands:

> The most enduring sexual truth in pornography — widely articulated by men to the utter bewilderment of women throughout the ages — is that sexual violence is desired by the normal female, needed by her, suggested or demanded by her. She — perpetually coy or repressed — denies the truth that pornography reveals. It is either/or. Either the truth is in the pornography or she tells the truth. But men are the tellers of truth and men are the creators of and believers in pornography. She is silenced altogether — she is not a voice in the cultural dialogue, except as an annoying or exceptional whisper — and when she speaks, she lies.[89]

Women are not allowed an independent sexual existence or sexuality: their sexuality is merely a tool for men's satisfaction. Whether it is denied and hidden in petticoats and artificialized in bustles or whether it is exalted and thrust before the nose of every milk store customer, women's sexuality does not belong to us — and yet it is Woman. Without it, men say, women are dull and usually irrelevant companions. The duty of women to permit their sexuality to be usurped is so whether it occurs under the covers in a darkened Victorian bedroom or vividly splashed across the pages of magazines or the silver screen or in shadowy images on grainy film.

Our obligation to ourselves and our sisters, and to the children who early fall into the sexual lie,[90] is to reappropriate our sexuality as we must reappropriate the other aspects of our lives which have been stolen from us by patriarchy. For pornography is an instrument of death: the death of the ideal of a free, independent and secure female population, of women who take joy in their womanness, for whom it is a source of strength. The choice is between the death of women and the death of pornography; the survival of our feminism depends much on our ability to destroy the pornographic instruments of patriarchy.

Toronto, Ontario

Notes

1. Pornography may also victimize gays and children. I discuss neither of these forms of pornography, but I do recognize that paedophilia in particular is considered by many people to be the worst form of pornography and that the only solution is to make it an offence under the criminal law to use children in pornography. Although this analysis concentrates on the exploitation of women, the principles surrounding dominance/subordination apply to all pornography.

2. For the development of the views expressed here, see an earlier analysis of mine in (1979) 5 Atlantis 16; also see several articles in *Feminism in Canada*, Angela Miles and Geraldine Finn, eds. (Black Rose, 1982).

3. The sex component may not appear in the representation itself but rather be the intended effect of sexual arousal; similarly, no violence may appear in the representation but may be lurking in the wings or in the actual filming or photography sessions.

4. H. Montgomery Hyde, *A History of Pornography* (Heinemann, 1964),1.

5. Excerpts of the Williams Report on Obscenity and Film Censorship are found in David Copp and Susan Wendell, eds., *Pornography and Censorship* (Prometheus Books, 1983), 185, at 196.

6. Ed. Dearn, *Pornography Degrades* (Renda Publications, c.1975),2 (emphasis added).

7. *Ibid.*, 13.

8. "The Effects and Control of Pornography", *Pornography: The Longford Report* (Coronet Books, 1972) (hereinafter *The Longford Report*), 312.

9. Brigid Brophy, *The Longford Threat to Freedom* (National Secular Society, 1972), 11.

10. George Steiner, "Night Words: High Pornography and Human Privacy", in Ray C. Rist, ed., *The Pornography Controversy* (Transaction Books, 1975), Of twelve individual contributors to this book on pornography, not one is a woman.

11. *Ibid*, 213.

12. Joseph P. Slade, "Pornography Theaters", in Rist, *op. cit.*, 126.

13. *Ibid.*, 127.

14. Peter Michelson, "The Pleasures of Commodity, or How to Make the World Safe for Pornography", in Rist, *op. cit.*, 150 (emphasis added).

15. Diana E.H. Russell, "Pornography and Violence: What does the New Research Say?" in Laura Lederer, ed., *Take Back The Night: Women on Pornography* (Bantam, 1982), 223-24.

16. Cf. the definition postulated by Helen E. Longino in "Pornography, Oppression, and Freedom: A Closer Look" in Lederer, *ibid.*, 28:

> verbal or pictorial explicit representations of sexual behaviour that . . . have as a distinguishing characteristic 'the degrading and demeaning portrayal of the role and status of the human female . . . as a mere sexual object, to be exploited and manipulated sexually'.

The words in quotation marks are taken from the Report of the Commission on Obscenity and Pornography. A more extensive definition is offered by Jillian Ridington in "Pornography: What does the New Research Say?" in *Status of Women News* (Summer, 1983), 9:

Pornography is a presentation, whether live, simulated, verbal, pictorial, filmed or videotaped, or otherwise represented, of sexual behaviour in which one or more participants are coerced overtly or implicitly into participation; or are injured or abused physically or psychologically; or in which an imbalance of power is obvious, or implied by virtue of the immature age of any participant or by contextual aspects of the presentation, and in which such behaviour can be taken to be advocated or endorsed.

17. There is a moral component in the sense that pornography concerns the treatment of one portion of humanity by another.

18. Susan G. Cole, "Combatting the Practice of Pornography", (August/September, 1984) 5 Broadside 6.

19. See, for example, studies referred to in note 32 below.

20. See, for example, "An interview with a Former Pornography Model", in Lederer, *op. cit.*, 45-59.

21. For examples, see references in Andrea Dworkin, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* (G.P. Putnam, 1981), *passim*; Leo Groarke, "Pornography: From Liberalism to Censorship", (1983) 90 Queen's Quartely 1108, at 1110; David Lees, "Nasty Business", *Toronto Life* (September 1984), 56, at 89; *Not a Love Story*; the 500 pornographic magazines available in Canada, compared to 30 fifteen years ago (figures provided by Maude Barlow during televised debate on pornography).

22. See Esther R. Greenglass, *A World of Difference: Gender Roles in Perspective* (John Wiley, 1982), 108ff. for a brief general discussion of this ambivalence.

23. Susan Lurie, "Pornography and the Dread of Women: The Male Sexual Dilemma", in Lederer, *op. cit.*, 165. Lurie neatly reverses several other shibboleths about women's sexuality.

24. Dworkin, *op. cit.*, 198.

25. Phyllis Chesler, "Men and Pornography: Why they Use It" in Lederer, *op. cit.*, 150.

26. *The Longford Report, op. cit.*, 61 (emphasis in original).

27. For a glance into the mind of someone who did exactly this, see "Portrait of a Sex Killer", *Chatelaine* (November 1983), 69.

28. Chesler, *op. cit.*, 151.

29. See Michele Landsberg, "Not taking No for an Answer", in *Women and Children First* (Penguin, 1983); also see Longino, *op. cit.*, 26ff., esp. 31.

30. Michelson, *op. cit.*, 150.

31. Lees, *op. cit.*, 87.

32. The Longford Committee cited one study that showed 80% of rapists studied were trying to imitate an act seen by them in pornographic materials when they raped their victims: "The Effects and Control of Pornography", *The Longford Report, op. cit.*, 197; on imitative abuse, see Russell, *op. cit.*; on the complexity of the findings, including the increase in aggressive reactions to women after exposure to aggressive-erotic stimuli and the role of previous anger, see Edward Donnerstein, "Pornography and Violence Against Women: Experimental Studies", in Copp and Wendell, *op. cit.*, 219; on the effect of the victim's response on the viewer, see Donnerstein and Leonard Berkowitz, "Victim Reactions in Aggressive Erotic Films as a Factor in Violence Against Women", in Copp and Wendell, *op. cit.*,233; generally, see Copp and Wendell, *op. cit.*, Part Two; and for criticisms of studies, see Pauline B. Bart and Margaret Jozsa, "Dirty Books, Dirty Films, and Dirty Data", in Lederer, *op. cit.*, 201 and Irene Diamond, "Pornography and Repression: A Reconsideration of 'Who' and 'What'", in Lederer, *op. cit.*, 183.

33. In the sense that a great deal of money is involved (over $60m. in illicit porn only); that much is available (hundreds of magazines, videos, films); and that it is echoed in mainstream media (see Landsberg, *op. cit.*)

34. James Q. Wilson, "Violence, Pornography and Social Science", in Rist, *op. cit.*, 242. Wilson's concern is in part traditional: a desire to protect his children from "easily available materials that portray what should be tender and private as base and brutal".

35. "Books, Magazines and Newspapers", in *The Longford Report, op. cit.*, 318.

36. Dorothy Inglis, "Pornography: Newfoundland Women Fight Back", *Status of Women News* (Summer 1983), 15.

37. Lees, *op. cit.*, 89.

38. *Ibid.*, 91.

39. The Longford Report, *op. cit.*, 89.

40. Tong uses the term "thanatica" by which she means hard-core pornography, that is, that pornography which degrades the participants and which endorse the degradation: Rosemarie Tong, "Feminism, Pornography and Censorship", (1982) 8 *Social Theory and Practice*, 2.

41. *Ibid.*, 14 (emphasis in original).

42. There is a serious possibility of deceit in the Vanessa Williams case. The former Miss America returned her "crown" because *Penthouse* published pictures taken prior to her becoming Miss America. The spread showed her engaged in sex with another woman. Apparently, she had been told the pictures would be in silhouette but in fact she was clearly identifiable. In addition, she had been paid a small fee for posing and nothing when the pictures were published, although *Penthouse* had increased its price for that sold-out edition (an anniversary issue). She had signed a standard form contract which all models sign and in regard to which they have little if any negotiating power or legal advice. Ironically, despite the furore resulting from the whole episode, and the "holier than thou" attitude taken by the pageant organizers, the Miss America pageant is simply a milder form of female exploitation than is *Penthouse* which, in turn, is milder than some other magazines, videos and films.

43. Linda Lovelace Marchiano is the foremost example of compulsion, by her husband who forced her to perform in porn movies and beat her when she cried; also see, "An interview with a Former Pornography Model", *op. cit.*

44. Slade, *op. cit.*, 126.

45. *Ibid.*, 131-32.

46. Men are not the only purveyors of porn. Apart from female photographers, there are women responsible for producing porn. A mother of four children was recently convicted in the United States for distributing child pornography: "prosecutors said she supplied 80 per cent of the child pornography in the United States before her arrest in May, 1982": *Toronto Star*, June 30th, 1984. Since we have not heard that there has been a significant lack of such pornography since then, we must assume that she was very quickly and easily replaced.

47. For example, in "socialist" countries, there is pornography "in which bureaucrats get buggered" and in "church-oppressed countries", pornography "in which nuns are sexually defiled or priests pictured as satyrs": Slade, *op. cit.*, 135. Anti-semitic pornography in Germany in the early 1930's, vivid portrayals and descriptions of Jewish men sexually attacking aryan women and children, helped to establish, by reinforcing an already existing climate of prejudice, a climate in which the "final solution" was not difficult to implement: *The Longford Report*, *op. cit.*, 47.

48. Ridington, *op. cit.*, 9; also see "The Pornography Debate", Chatelaine (September 1983), 193 for a history of the Red Hot Video case, and note 80 below for citations of the decisions by British Columbia courts.

49. Report in *Toronto Star*, c. July 1984.

50. See, for example, Hamilton Municipal By-law 79-144 based on section 368b of the *Municipal Act* of Ontario which was tested in court: *Re Hamilton Independent Variety & Confectionery Stores Inc. and City of Hamilton* (1983), 4 C.C.R. 230 (Ont. C.A.). The by-law was declared invalid because the definition of erotic goods was too vague (goods "appealing to or designed to appeal to erotic or sexual appetites or inclinations"). Curiously, neither *Playboy* nor *Penthouse* was intended to be subject to the by-law.

51. *Re Red Hot Video Ltd. and the City of Vancouver* (1983) 5 D.L.R. (4th) 61 (B.C.S.C.).

52. "Pornography in Sweden: A Feminist's Perspective", in Lederer, *op. cit.*, 76.

53. *Equality Now!* Report of the Special Committee on Visible Minorities in Canadian Society (March 1984), 74.

54. Roy McMurtry, quoted in *Toronto Star*, January 30th, 1984 A3. In the United States, the Minneapolis Ordinance gives a woman the right to sue a pornographer if, for example, the pornography has influenced her attacker: see Cole, *op. cit.*, for elaboration and other examples of when it would apply.

55. In February 1984, charges were laid against a Toronto man for unlawfully publishing false statements about the Holocaust: *Toronto Star*, February 7th, 1984, E5. Charges were also laid against James Keegstra for teaching anti-semitism in his history classes; he has now been committed for trial after a preliminary inquiry.

56. See *Equality Now!*, *op. cit.* 72; Attorney-General of Ontario, Roy McMurtry supports these proposals: *Toronto Star*, August 28th, 1984, A11.

57. *Toronto Star*, September 1st, 1984, B7.

58. Ann Garry, "Pornography and Respect for Women", in Copp and Wendell, *op. cit.*, 61, at 76.

59. The Army officer position was chosen because it is one "usually held in respect by pornography audiences": *ibid.*, 77.

60. Garry does wonder whether the non-sexist educational "porn" she describes would be pornography at all — because presumably it would not arouse people, a component of her own definition — but brushes off the possibility as "too remote to worry" her: *ibid.*, 81, n.35.2. Garry's definition of pornography does not require violence but refers to "those explicit sexual materials intended to arouse the reader or viewer sexually": *ibid.*, 62. I find this definition too broad since it makes it more difficult to establish what is "bad" about pornography.

61. Some of the studies set out in note 32 above indicate women are aroused by erotic stimuli: see the Donnerstein studies in particular.

62. Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (Bantam, 1976), 443.

63. Margaret Laurence, author of *The Diviners*, explains her opposition to censorship in "The Greater Evil," *Toronto Life* (September 1984), 58. Like many of us, she admits her feelings are ambivalent; she is opposed to censorship but abhors pornography and knows no solution is entirely adequate.

64. *Re Ontario Film and Video Appreciation Society and Ontario Board of Censors* (1984), 45 O.R. (2d) 80, affirming decision of the Divisional Court (1983), 41 O.R. (2d) 583.

65. *Re Koumoudouros and Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto* (1984), 45 O.R. (2d) 426 (Div. Ct.).

66. Eberle J. was jointed by Sirois J. The third judge, Osler J., took the position that freedom of expression includes expression "by means of the written or spoken word, the painted canvas, the etched stone, or a print thereof, a musical composition, or an idea conveyed through the medium of dance": *ibid.*, 428.

67. *Customs Tariff Act*, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-41, tariff item 99201-1.

68. *Nova Scotia Board of Censors* v. *McNeil*, [1978] 2 S.C.R. 662;McNeil had challenged the validity of the Board after it had prohibited the showing of "Last Tango in Paris".

69. See above, note 64.

70. This test was pronouced in the *Hicklin* case: (1868) L.R. 3 Q.B. 360 at 379. For a summary of criticisms of the test, see Anne M.K. Curtis, "Note on *Dechow* v. *The Queen*", (1979) 11 Ottawa L. Rev. 501.

71. (1962), 132 C.C.C. 161 (S.C.C.).

71a. *Ibid.*, at 174 per Fauteux J.

72. *Dechow* v. *The Queen*, 1978 1 S.C.R. 951: this case dealt with the sale and description of sexual aids, not films or books.

73. See *Brodie*, *op. cit.*, 161, per Judson J.

74. See a recent statement on this point in *R. v. Doug Rankine Company Ltd.* (unreported; Ont. Co. Ct., October 24th, 1983), at 10, citing R. v. Sudbury News Service Ltd. (1978), 39 C.C.C. (2d) 1 (Ont. C.A.), at 6-7, per Howland C.J.O.

75. Lees, *op. cit.*, 57.

76. See note 74.

77. *Ibid.*, 8.

78. *Ibid.*, 7.

79. *Ibid.*, 24.

80. *Red Hot Video Limited* v. *The Queen* (unreported; B.C. Co. Ct., March 4, 1984); *Regina* v. *Red Hot Video Ltd.* (1983), 6 C.C.R. 169 (B.C. Prov. Ct.).

81. For example, Alan Borovoy, general counsel of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association was quoted in the *Toronto Star* as opposing strengthening the hate literature provisions: "All of these risks to nail what? . . . A group of pathetic, peripheral creeps whose constituency could not fill a telephone booth": August 28th, 1984, A11.

82. See, for example, Cole, *op. cit.*

83. *Warren* v. *Chapman, Board of Adjudication* (1984), 5 C.H.R.R. D/2226.

84. *Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission* v. *Waldo, et al* (1984), 5 C.H.R.R. D/2074.

85. *Ibid.*, D/2089.

86. *See Equality Now!, op. cit.*, 73.

87. *McKinley* v. *Cranfield and Dial Agencies* (1980), 1 C.H.R.R. D/246, at D/247. McKinley laid a complaint about a letter posted in the window of a business premises which she believed to be an affront to her because of its references to the handicapped; she had epilepsy.

88. Cole, *op. cit.*

89. Dworkin, *op. cit.*, 166.

90. In a relatively mild example, the December 1983 *Harper's Bazaar* contained a perfume feature showcasing little girls whose faces are made up to look like "little women", sophisticated and alluring, while their upper bodies, including glimpes of their chests, are left naked.

NEW FEMINIST READINGS: WOMAN AS *ECRITURE* OR WOMAN AS OTHER ?

Pamela McCallum

In the 1970's and 1980's the second wave of feminist theory in France has reproblematized the presuppositions tacitly underlying Simone de Beauvoir's influential *The Second Sex*. De Beauvoir's initial construct of an autonomous subject or ego has been overtaken by the decentered subject of Barthesian *jouissance*, Derridian deconstruction, Lacanian psychoanalysis, Foucault's genealogies of institutions and the 'philosophers of desire' (Lyotard, Deleuze and Guattari).[1] True enough, the decentering, the dispersal of personal identity has had a liberating effect on a feminist writing hampered by the false symmetries of instrumental reason. And not only that: the interpretation of *feminité* in terms of an endless flux of sensations has facilitated a new energetic kind of feminist text-production. But in all this woman's subjectivity would seem to lose the self-conscious reflection that de Beauvoir and the existential/ phenomenological tradition granted it. If an erotics of the text is privileged over a critical consciousness, it is hardly surprising that the female 'subject' is rewritten or recoded as a conductor of unexpected sexual or libidinal energy. In this framework, a corporeally based textual aesthetic rather than a historically situated self-consciousness is employed to grasp the oppression of women. We can see this feminist strategy at work in the writings of Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva. To such a list might be added the recent texts of Michele Montrelay and Sarah Kofman.

What these various critical idioms suggest is something like this: problematizing the subject, or more accurately, undermining the logical unity of male identity, raises the question of a uniquely new feminine discourse. For to the degree that the illusion of patriarchal man as a reflective rational consciousness dissolves woman as the repressed corporeal body can escape the

metaphysical closure of phallogocentric (Irigaray's word) identity. Just as the sovereignty of the substantial ego is taken as the source of a thoroughly rationalistic male discourse, its subversion is also the source of an authentic female utterance which stems from the untamed desire of woman's libido. Fundamental in this context is the claim that the indefinite and heterogeneous quality of such feminist texts underscores their emancipation from the false transparency of male enunciation. Considerations of this sort elicit a punning and *précosité* with words such as *'jouissance'* and *'jouir'* to impart indeterminacy and mutability (Monique Wittig's *Les guérillères* to cite an obvious example). Here the interminable play of signifiers refuses to be arrested and transmuted into a premature fixity of meaning. Deploying the post-structuralist motifs of indeterminacy, ellipses, the dissolution of the ego, feminist discourse theorists laud the heterogeneity and dispersal inscribed in the peculiarities of feminine texts.

The post-structuralist critique of binary oppositions, for instance, is taken up in Irigaray's attack on the static antitheses of Western philosophy. If you believe, argues Irigaray, that woman is circumscribed by the sterile logic of phallogocentric ideology, then she is caught up in a binary opposition which serves to confirm the privileged position of a dominant term — man — by excluding a subordinate one — woman. In the binary mythology of logocentric discourse the crucial function of conscious signifying belongs to the male and the corporeal female can never be anything other than a signified. Only the strictly rational male has at his disposal the capacity to enunciate proper meaning. Unable to signify itself, libidinal feminity is reduced to the appendage — the spare rib — of the hypertrophied masculine signifier. It has no legitimacy apart from the privileged place of the rational male subject in the phallocentric hierarchy, or, to use for the moment the terms of Cixous, "in philosophy, woman is always on the side of passivity."[2]

The point is not simply that in phallogocentrism the male gains greater and greater predominance over the female. The point is rather that the male/female binary axis generates a whole series of global antitheses: mind/body, head/heart, logos/pathos, activity/passivity, culture/nature. This is the context in which Irigaray and Cixous' enterprise coincides with Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis. Freud's mapping of the unconscious and Lacan's decentering of the subject allow renewed access to the repressed libidinal intensities which subvert the conventionally received binary code. The strong emphasis on instinctual turbulence leads to a reversal of meanings, unsettling the comfortable binary simplifications of phallogocentrism. Exactly the same inversion of priorities is the case with Irigaray and Cixous whose psychoanalytic orientations finds its ultimate ground in the feminine libido. Such celebrations of the female unconscious rearticulate the question of what woman is as a question of what female sexuality, or woman's *jouissance*, is. The new feminine components of multiplicity and flux which characterize *text-jouissance* now overshadow the logic of unity synonymous with the sovereign male subject. Cixous, for instance, describes her innovative feminine discourse as follows: "To write. An act which will not only 'realize' the decensored relation of woman

to her sexuality, to her womanly being, giving her access to her native strength; it will give her back her goods, her pleasure, her organs, her immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal."[3] Carried through consistently, *féminité* in this formula means woman's body as *écriture*. To valorize the mutable female unconscious over the rationalized ego is to project a new bodily code for the writing and interpretation of *feminité*. This fantasy of untrammeled sexuality strives to undermine the closed masculine signifying conventions in the deterritorialized flux of its erotic energy.

We may therefore say, as Rachel Bowlby has acutely observed, that "an equation of WOMAN=BODY=UNCONSCIOUSNESS=TEXT is more or less explicit"[4] in new French feminist theory. The exceptional importance of this equation is obvious when the following quotations are considered: "Women's desire most likely does not speak the same language as man's desire, and it probably has been covered over by the logic that has dominated the West since the Greeks" (Irigaray); "Women must write through their bodies, they must invent the impregnable language that will wreck partitions, classes and rhetorics, regulations and codes, they must submerge, cut through, get beyond the ultimate reserve — discourse" (Cixous); "In women's writing, language seems to be seen from a foreign land; . . . from an asymbolic, spastic body." (Kristeva). Thus it is not insignificant that French feminist theory's use of biologically-based terms such as 'body' or 'desire' underpins their quest for a distinctively feminine discourse. Unlike the male who is estranged from himself in overly intellectualized thought forms, the woman's body is a text, "shot through with streams of songs."[5]

Much of this *text-jouissance* foregrounds a highly accentuated erotics of language. In describing woman's rapturous textual impulse all the French feminist discourse theorists lay particular stress on multiple and discontinuous metaphors of sexual desire. Irigaray writes of the capricious sensory intensities and elementary life forces in woman's diction: "For when 'she' says something, it is already no longer identical to what she means. Moreover, her statements are never identical to anything. Their distinguishing feature is one of continguity. They touch (upon). And when they wander too far from this nearness, she stops and begins again from 'zero': her body-sex organ."[6] The same observation holds for Cixous who relies on the vibrant sensuality of sexual metaphors to put into question the false fixity of male conceptual symbols. In a similar way, Kristeva's pulsating, uprooted and extended erotic metaphors could be said to play a prominent role in the dismantling of the solidified male Symbolic Order. Indeed, just like the impetuous decoded desire of her counterparts, her textual pleasure becomes co-terminus with orgasm: "This signification renewed, 'infinitized' by the rhythm in a text, this precisely is (sexual) pleasure (*la jouissance*)."[7]

Must we assume, then, that women's emancipation is to be conceived primarily in terms of the rediscovery of her body? What about woman's relationship to the male Other inherent in the existential/historical situation which she inhabits? To claim that the Freudian unconscious opens up a different corporeal space for the autonomy of woman's *écriture* is wholly valid. But it is both invalid and a theoretical *cul de sac* to make women's oppression equivalent with

'male' and 'phallic'. Indeed, it would not be difficult to show that an uncritical enthusiasm for *feminité* passes imperceptibly into essentialism and biological determinism — a paean to the vitalistic exaltation of the eternalized physical body. Such an inquiry would seek to establish that the historical and social subtext (otherness, alterity of woman, her dependent status in the family, her subordinate economic/political condition, her cultural marginality) contributes not a little to women's oppression. As Simone de Beauvoir reminds us, "Woman is determined not by her hormones or by mysterious instincts, but by the manner in which her body and her relation to the world are modified through the action of others than herself."[8]

That de Beauvoir's insights into women's alienation through others remain open to debate I believe to be true; but it seems to me that the post-structuralist polemic against her notion of the independant, autonomous self is a perfunctory dismissal (Irigaray's 'comedy of the Other') which too hastily eliminates the complexities of *The Second Sex*. A critical reconsideration of her theoretical formulation of 'woman as Other' is impossible here: it is enough to say that she refers to the way in which for the man woman becomes "the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute — she is the Other."[9] Vis-à-vis the sovereign male she discovers herself to be alienated Other (or, in post-structuralist terms, the decentered self) who has no capacities and who simultaneously has been reduced to a position of inferiority. In envisaging the 'constitution' of woman as subject or conscious being de Beauvoir argues that it derives from the female's project to supersede the boundaries of her restricted situation as defined by the male Other. Briefly expressed, woman's subjectivity or self-consciousness (in the original, now seemingly *passé* sense) takes shape in active gestures to transcend a specific 'given' that is to be understood as passivity, immanence and alienation. Often, to be sure, such a theoretical starting point has been misread to imply the implausible fiction of the free and autonomous individual ego that informs the dominant ideological sign-system. But for de Beauvoir woman's intentional acts are responses which she invents within her determinate situation (psychic-family or socio-economic).

This conception of the irreducibility of the Other lays the groundwork for de Beauvoir's interpretive model of male-female relationships. In keeping with Hegel's master-slave dialectic, she argues that the existence of the male Other reorients woman's activities in the direction of a struggle with the sovereign male ego. As she notes, "we find in consciousness itself a fundamental hostility toward every other consciousness; the subject can be posed only in being opposed — he sets himself up as the essential, as opposed to the Other, the inessential, the object."[10] Obviously, this should not be taken to imply (even acknowledging the importance which de Beauvoir assigns to the woman's body) that such relations are to be analysed in physical-biological, or for that matter, transhistorical, terms. On the contrary, the disclosure of a woman's consciousness in her relationship with the world emerges from frighteningly real situational determinations. For the experience of the irreducibility of the Other sets up two basic responses which characterize male-female relations: first, the

sovereign male consciousness opposes the freedom of the female Other, relegating her to the margins of patriarchal society; second, the subjugated or objectified female discovers her own autonomy and begins the process of converting her subservient status into the raised consciousness of an independant woman. She affirms herself as an autonomous being via the mediation of the male Other, both in his objectifying attitude and in her tenacious struggle against it. Yet in a sexist and misogynist society women's advances are blocked by the pressures of an intractable social context. It is on this level that Otherness is "not simply an idealist relationship . . . it is a power relationship, based also on scarcity."[11] Here, instead of a textually fervent biologistic mysticism, de Beauvoir provides some heuristically valuable formal elements for rendering the concrete difficulties of women. Thus the extraordinary stress on a 'coefficient of adversity' retrieves the significance of objective historical and social forces. It is striking, too, that she never appeals to a structurally identical and transtemporal cover-concept of male domination. In spite of the often repeated criticisms that a hypostatized dialectic of self and Other is posited to account for male-female relations, her temporal and differentiating categories consider women's oppression (and its future supersession) to be intimately connected with the specifity of lived socio-historical situations.

One further point deserves consideration. Superficially, of course, it might seem that alterity has strong affinities with the notion of difference used by French feminist discourse theorists. In fact, however, the theory of difference suffers from intrinsic weaknesses which threaten to neutralize its critical content. Elsewhere de Beauvoir remarks that women's oppression "is not only difference; it implies at the same time an inferiority."[12] To postulate, as the new French feminisms do, that difference describes real sexual difference has a definite moment of truth. But to say that male-female relations are primarily constituted by anatomical difference is not to perceive the temporal and existential coordinates of *feminité* as *otherness*. This is no simple question of physical biology, but instead a fundamental existential and historical problem. To quote de Beauvoir again:

> It would be an error to make of it [the body] a value and to think that the feminine body gives you a new vision of the world . . . The women who share this belief fall again into the irrational, into mysticism, into a sense of the cosmic. They play into the hands of men who will be better able to oppress them, to remove them from knowledge and power. The eternal feminine is a lie, because nature plays an infinitesimal role in the development of a human being. We are social beings. Because I do not think that woman is naturally inferior to man, I do not think either that she is naturally superior to him.[13]

In their special emphasis on woman as *écriture* French feminist discourse theorists would seem to lapse into a modified version of biological essentialism and inadvertently foster a mystical rebirth of the "eternal feminine." Notwithstanding the provocative Dionysian spontaneity that imbues the prose-poems of *text-jouissance*, the new textual aesthetic has a tendency towards an uncritical and non-problematic gynomorphic naturalism. This gets very near to what Habermas has referred to as an archaic neo-conservatism in French post-structuralist writing.[14]

The question for feminist theory, then, is how to retrieve and develop what is valuable in the new French feminisms without falling back into an essentialist biologism. The articles which follow are intended to begin this revaluation, to assess previous work and to suggest new strategies for approaching feminist discourse theory.

Department of English
University of Calgary

Notes

1. See for important recent critical discussions of post-structuralism Peter Dews, "The *Nouvelle Philosophie* and Foucault", *Economy and Society* 8, no. 2 (1979), 125-76 and "Power and Subjectivity in Foucault" *New Left Review* 144 (March-April 1984), 72-95; Manfred Frank, "The World as Will and Representation: Deleuze and Guattari's Critique of Capitalism as Schizo-Analysis and Schizo-Discourse," *Telos* 57 (Fall 1983), 166-76.
2. Hélène Cixous, "Sorties" in *New French Feminisms*, ed. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), p. 91.
3. Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa" in *New French Feminisms*, p. 250.
4. Rachel Bowlby, "The Feminine Female," *Social Text* 7 (spring-summer 1983), 63.
5. *New French Feminisms*, pp. 101, 256, 166 and 252, respectively.
6. Luce Irigaray, "Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un", *New French Feminisms*, p. 103.
7. Julia Kristeva, "Oscillation du 'pouvoir' au 'refus' "*New French Feminisms*, p. 165.
8. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H.M. Parshley (New York: Vintage, 1974), p. 806.
9. *The Second Sex*, xix.
10. *The Second Sex*, xx. See for further commentary on the master/slave relation in Hegelian dialectic, Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 153-7 and George Armstrong Kelly, *Idealism, Politics and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 333-341.
11. Margaret Simons and Jessica Benjamin, "Simone de Beauvoir: An Interview," *Feminist Studies*, 5 (1979), p. 345.
12. de Beauvoir, *New French Feminisms*, p. 152.
13. *New French Feminisms*, 153.
14. See his "Modernity versus Postmodernity" *New German Critique* 22 (winter 1981), 3-14.

WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF ? FEMINIST READINGS OF WOOLF*

Toril Moi

On a brief survey, the answer to the question posed in the title of this paper would seem to be: quite a few feminist critics. It is not of course surprising that many male critics have found Woolf a frivolous bohemian and negligible Bloomsbury aesthete, but the rejection of the great feminist writer by so many of her Anglo-American feminist daughters requires further explanation. A distinguished feminist critic like Elaine Showalter for example, signals her subtle swerve away from Woolf by taking over yet changing Woolf's title. Under Showalter's pen *A Room of One's Own* becomes *A Literature of Their Own*, as if she wished to indicate her problematic distance to the tradition of women writers she lovingly uncovers in her book.

In this paper I will first examine some negative feminist responses to Woolf, particularly as exemplified in Elaine Showalter's long, closely argued chapter on Woolf in *A Literature of Their Own*. Then I will indicate some points towards a different, more positive feminist reading of Woolf, before finally summing up the salient features of the feminist response to Woolf's writings.

The Rejection of Woolf

Elaine Showalter devotes most of her chapter on Woolf to a survey of Woolf's biography and a discussion of *A Room of One's Own*. The title of her chapter, "Virginia Woolf and the flight into androgyny", is indicative of her treatment of Woolf's texts. She sets out to prove that for Woolf the concept of androgyny was a "myth that helped her evade confrontation with her own painful femaleness

* Part I from *Sexual/Textual/Politics. Feminist Literary Theory* Methuen (Forthcoming).

and enabled her to choke and repress her anger and ambition" (264). For Showalter, Woolf's greatest sin against feminism is that "even in the moment of expressing feminist conflict, Woolf wanted to transcend it. Her wish for experience was really a wish to forget experience" (282). Showalter sees Woolf's insistence on the androgynous nature of the great writer as a flight away from a "troubled feminism" (282) and locates the moment of this flight in *Room*.

Showalter starts her discussion of this essay by stating that:

> What is most striking about the book textually and structurally is its strenuous charm, its playfulness, its conversational surface . . . The techniques of *Room* are like those of Woolf's fiction, particularly *Orlando*, which she was writing at the same time: repetition, exaggeration, parody, whimsy, and multiple viewpoint. On the other hand, despite its illusions of spontaneity and intimacy, *A Room of One's Own* is an extremely impersonal and defensive book.
>
> (282)

Showalter here gives the impression that Woolf's use of "repetition, exaggeration, parody, whimsy and multiple viewpoint" in *Room* only contributes to creating an impression of "strenuous charm", and therefore somehow distracts attention from the message Woolf wants to put forward in the essay. She then goes on to object to the "impersonality" of *Room*, an impersonality which springs from the fact that Woolf's use of many different personae to voice the narrative "I" results in frequently recurring shifts and changes of subject position, leaving the critic no single unified position but a multiplicity of perspectives to grapple with. Furthermore, Woolf refuses to reveal her own experience fully and clearly, but insists on disguising or parodying it in the text, obliging Showalter to point out for us that "Fernham" really *is* Newnham College, that "Oxbridge" really *is* Cambridge and so on.

The steadily shifting and multiple perspectives built up through these techniques evidently exasperate Showalter, who ends up declaring that: "The entire book is teasing, sly, elusive in this way; Woolf plays with her audience, refusing to be entirely serious, denying any earnest or subversive intention" (284). For Showalter, the only way a feminist can read *Room* properly is by remaining "detached from its narrative strategies" (285); and if she manages to do so, she will see that *Room* is in no way a particularly liberating text:

> If one can see *A Room of One's Own* as a document in the literary history of female aestheticism, and remain detached from its narrative strategies, the concepts of androgyny and the private room are neither as liberating nor as obvious as they first appear. They have a darker side that is the sphere of the exile and the eunuch.
>
> (285)

For Showalter, Woolf's writing continually escapes the critic's perspective, always refusing to be pinned down to one unifying angle of vision. This elusiveness is then interpreted as a denial of authentic feminist states of mind, namely the "angry and alienated ones" (287), and as a commitment to the Bloomsbury ideal of the "separation of politics and art" (288). This separation is evident, Showalter thinks, in the fact that Woolf "avoided describing her own experience" (294). Since this avoidance makes it impossible for Woolf to produce really committed feminist work, Showalter naturally concludes that *Three Guineas* as well as *Room* fail abysmally as feminist essays.

My own view is that "remaining detached from the narrative strategies" of *Room* is equivalent to not reading it at all, and that Showalter's impatient reactions to the essay are motivated much more by its formal and stylistic features than by the ideas she extrapolates as its content. But in order to argue this point more thoroughly, it is necessary first to take a closer look at the theoretical assumptions about the relationship between aesthetics and politics which can be detected in Showalter's chapter.

Showalter's theoretical framework is never made explicit in *A Literature of Their Own*. From what we have seen so far, however, it would be reasonable to assume that she believes that texts should reflect the writer's experience, and that the more authentic the experience is felt to be by the reader, the better the text. Woolf's essays fail to transmit any direct experience to the reader, according to Showalter largely because Woolf did not as an upper-class woman have the necessary negative experience to qualify as a good feminist writer.[1] Showalter implicitly defines effective feminist writing as work which offers a powerful expression of personal experience in a social framework. According to this definition, Woolf's essays can't be very political either. Showalter's position on this point in fact strongly favours the form of writing commonly known as critical or bourgeois realism, precluding any real recognition of the value of Virginia Woolf's modernism. It is not a coincidence that the only major literary theoretician Showalter alludes to in her chapter on Woolf is the Marxist critic Georg Lukács (296). Given that Showalter herself can hardly be accused of Marxist leanings, this alliance might strike some readers as curious. But Lukács was the great champion of the realist novel, which he saw as the supreme culmination of the narrative form. For Lukács, the great realists, like Balzac or Tolstoy, succeeded in representing the totality of human life in its social context, thus representing the fundamental truth of history: the "unbroken upward evolution of mankind" (Lukács 3). Proclaiming himself a "proletarian humanist", he states that "the object of proletarian humanism is to reconstruct the complete human personality and free it from the distortion and dismemberment to which it has been subjected in class society" (5). Lukács reads the great classical tradition in art as the attempt to uphold this ideal of the total human being even under historical conditions which prevent its realization outside art.

In art the necessary degree of objectivity in the representation of the human subject, both as a private individual and as a public citizen, can only be attained through the representation of *types*. Lukács states that the type is "a peculiar

synthesis which organically binds together the general and the particular both in characters and situations" (6). He then goes on to make the point that "true great realism" is superior to all other art forms:

> True great realism thus depicts man and society as complete entities, instead of showing merely one or the other of their aspects. Measured by this criterion, artistic trends determined by either exclusive introspection or exclusive extraversion equally impoverish and distort reality. Thus realism means a three-dimensionality, an all-roundness, that endows with independent life characters and human relationships.
>
> (6)

Given this view of art, it follows that for Lukács any art which exclusively represents "the division of the complete human personality into a public and a private sector" contribute to the "mutilation of the essence of man" (9). It is easy to see that precisely this point of Lukács aesthetics would have great appeal to many feminists. The lack of a totalizing representation of both the private and the working life of women is, for instance, Patricia Stubbs's main complaint against all novels written both by men and women in the period between 1880 and 1920, and Stubbs echoes Showalter's objection to Woolf's fiction when she states that in Woolf "there is no coherent attempt to create new models, new images of women" and that "this failure to carry her feminism through into her novels seems to stem, at least in part, from her aesthetic theories" (231). But the demand for new, realistic images of women takes it for granted that feminist writers should want to use the form of the realist novel in the first place. Thus both Stubbs and Showalter object to what they see as Woolf's tendency to wrap everything in a "haze of subjective perceptions" (Stubbs 231), thus perilously echoing Lukács' Stalinist views of the "reactionary" nature of modernist writing.

Modernism, Lukács held, signified an extreme form of the fragmented, subjectivist, individualist psychologism typical of the oppressed and exploited human being living under capitalism.[2] For him, futurism as well as surrealism, Joyce as well as Proust, were decadent and reactionary descendants of the great anti-humanist, Nietzsche, and their art therefore lent itself to exploitation by fascism. Only through a strong and committed belief in the values of humanism could art become an efficient weapon in the struggle against fascism. It was this emphasis on a humanist, totalizing aesthetics which led Lukács to proclaim as late as 1938 that the great writers of the first part of the 20th century would undoubtedly turn out to be Anatole France, Romain Rolland and Thomas and Heinrich Mann.

Showalter is not of course, like Lukács, a *proletarian* humanist. Even so, there is detectable within her literary criticism a strong, unquestioned belief in the values, not of proletarian humanism, but of traditional bourgeois humanism of the liberal-individualist kind. Where Lukács sees the harmonious development of the "whole person" as stunted and frustrated by the inhuman

social conditions imposed by capitalism, Showalter examines the oppression of women's potential by the relentless sexism of patriarchal society. It is certainly true that Lukács nowhere seems to show any interest in the *specific* problems of women's difficulties in developing as whole and harmonious human beings under patriarchy — no doubt he assumed that once communism had been constructed, everybody, including women, would become free beings. But it is equally true that Showalter in her criticism takes no interest in the necessities of combatting capitalism and fascism. Her insistence on the need for political art is limited to the struggle against sexism. Thus she gives Virginia woolf no credit whatsoever for having elaborated a highly original theory of the relations between sexism and fascism in *Three Guineas;* nor does she seem to approve of Woolf's attempts to link feminism to pacifism in the same essay, of which she merely comments that:

> *Three Guineas* rings false. Its language, all too frequently, is empty sloganeering and cliché; the stylistic tricks of repetition, exaggeration, and rhetorical question, so amusing in *A Room of One's Own,* become irritating and hysterical.
>
> (295)

Showalter's humanist individualism surfaces clearly enough when she first rejects Woolf for being too subjective, too passive and for wanting to flee her female gender identity by embracing the idea of androgyny, and then goes on to reproach Doris Lessing for merging the "feminine ego" into a greater collective consciousness in her later books (311). Both writers are similarly flawed: both have in different ways rejected the fundamental need for the individual to adopt a unified, whole and integrated self-identity. Both Woolf and Lessing radically undermine the notion of the unitary self, the central concept of individualist humanism and one thus crucial to Showalter's feminism.

The Lukácsian line implicitely defended by Stubbs and Showalter holds that politics is a matter of the right content being represented in the correct realist form. Virginia Woolf is unsuccessful in Stubbs's eyes because she fails to give a "truthful picture of women", a picture which would include equal emphasis on the private and the public. Showalter for her part deplores Woolf's lack of sensitivity to "the ways in which [female experience] had made [women] strong" (285). Implicit in such critical comments is the assumption that good feminist fiction would present truthful images of strong women with which the reader may identify. Indeed it is this which Marcia Holly recommends in an article entitled "Consciousness and Authenticity: Towards a Feminist Aesthetic". According to Holly, the new feminist aesthetic must move "away from formalist criticism and insist that we judge by standards of authenticity" (40). Holly, again quoting Lukács, also argues that as feminists:

> We are searching for a truly revolutionary art. The content of a given piece need not be feminist, of course, for that piece to be

> humanist, and therefore revolutionary. Revolutionary art is that which roots out the essentials about the human condition rather than perpetuating false ideologies.
>
> (42)

For Holly, this kind of universalising humanist aesthetic leads straight to a search for the representation of strong, powerful women in literature, a search reminiscent of The Soviet Writers' Congress' demand for socialist realism in 1934. Instead of strong, happy tractor drivers and factory workers, we are presumably to demand strong, happy *women* tractor drivers from now on. More seriously, Holly makes explicit one of the fundamental requirements of the kind of realism both she, Stubbs and Showalter seem to favour. She states that "Realism first of all demands a consistent (noncontradictory) perception of those issues (emotions, motivations, conflicts) to which the work has been limited" (42). We are in other words again confronted with Showalter's demand for a unitary vision, with her exasperation at Woolf's use of multiple and shifting viewpoints, with her text; the argument has come full circle.

Rescuing Woolf for Feminist Politics: Some Points Towards an Alternative Reading

So far we have been discussing various aspects of the crypto-Lukácsian perspective implicit in much contemporary feminist criticism. The major disadvantage of this approach is surely the fact that it proves itself incapable of appropriating for feminism the work of the greatest British woman writer of this century, despite the fact that Woolf not only was a novelist of considerable genius but a declared feminist and dedicated reader of other women's writings. It is surely arguable that if feminist critics can't come up with a positive political and critical appreciation of Woolf's writing, the fault may lie with their critical and theoretical perspectives, rather than with Woolf's texts. But do feminists have an alternative to this negative way of reading Woolf? Here I must embarrassedly admit that I have found no critical text at all which takes up this challenge.[3] There are however some partial, minor attempts at a more positive appraisal of her work, and I will refer to these in this section of my paper. But my main concern here is to indicate some elements of a theoretical approach which will allow us to accomplish the urgent task at hand: the task of rescuing Virginia Woolf for feminist politics.

Showalter wants the literary text to yield the reader a certain security, a firm perspective from which to judge the world. Woolf, on the other hand, seems to practise what we might now call a "deconstructive" form of writing, one which engages and exposes the duplicitous nature of discourse. In her own textual practice, Woolf exposes the way in which language refuses to be pinned down to an underlying essential meaning. If the French philosopher Jacques Derrida is right, language is structured as an endless deferral of meaning, and any search for or belief in essential and absolutely stable meaning, must therefore be considered metaphysical. There is no final element, no fundamental unit, no

transcendental signifier, which is meaningful *in itself* and thus escapes the ceaseless interplay of deferral and difference. The free play of signifiers will never yield a final, unified meaning which in turn might explain all the others.[4] It is in the light of such textual and linguistic theory that we can read Woolf's playful shifts and changes of perspective in both her fiction and in *Room* as something rather more than a wilful desire to irritate the serious-minded feminist critic. Through her conscious exploitation of the sportive, sensual nature of language, Woolf rejects the metaphysical essentialism which forms the basis of patriarchal ideology, which hails God, the Father or the phallus as its transcendental signifyer.

But Woolf does more than practise a non-essentialist form of writing. She also reveals a deeply sceptical attitude to the classical concept of an essential human identity. For what can this self-identical identity be if all meaning is a ceaseless play of difference, if *absence* and not presence is the foundation of meaning? The concept of identity is also challenged by psychoanalytic theory, which Woolf undoubtedly knew. The Hogarth Press published the first English translations of Freud's central works, and when Freud arrived in London in 1939 Virginia Woolf went to see him. Freud, we are intriguingly informed, gave her a narcissus. For Woolf as for Freud, the unconscious drives and desires constantly exert pressure on our conscious thoughts and actions. For the psychoanalyst the human subject is a complex entity, of which the conscious mind is only a small part. Once one has accepted this view of the subject, however, it becomes impossible to argue that even our conscious wishes and feelings originate within a unified self, since we can have no knowledge of the possibly unlimited unconscious processes which shape our conscious throught. Conscious thought, then, must be seen as the overdetermined manifestation of a multiplicity of structures which intersect to *produce* that unstable constellation the liberal humanists call the "self". These structures encompass not only unconscious sexual desires, and unconscious fears and phobias, but also conflicting material, social, political and ideological factors of which we are equally unaware. It is this highly complex network of conflicting structures, the anti-humanist would argue, which produce the subject and its experiences, rather than the other way round. This does not of course render individuals' experiences in any sense illusory or insignificant, but it does mean that such experiences cannot be understood other than through the study of their multiple determinants — determinants of which conscious thought is only one, and a potentially treacherous one at that. If the same approach is taken to the literary text, if follows that the search for a unified individual identity (or gender identity) or indeed "textual identity" in the literary work must be seen as a highly reductive and selective approach to literature.

This, then, is what I meant when I said that to follow Showalter and "remain detached from the narrative strategies" of the text is equivalent to not reading it at all. For it is only through a careful examination of the detailed strategies of the text on all its levels that we will be able to uncover some of the conflicting and contradictory elements which contribute to make it precisely *this* text, with precisely these words and this configuration. The humanist desire for unity of

vision or thought (or as Holly puts it, for a "noncontradictory perception of the world") is, in other words, a demand for a sharply reductive reading of the literary text, a reading which, not least in the case of an experimental writer like Woolf, can have little hope of grasping the central problems posed by her kind of textual production. A "noncontradictory perception of the world", for Lukács' great Marxist opponent Bertolt Brecht, is precisely a reactionary one.

The French feminist philosopher Julia Kristeva has argued that the modernist poetry of Lautréamont, Mallarmé and others constitute a "revolutionary" form of writing. The modernist poem, with it's abrupt shifts, ellipses, breaks and apparent lack of logical construction is a kind of writing in which the rhythms of the body and the unconscious have managed to break through the strict rational defences of conventional social meaning. Since Kristeva sees such meaning as the structure which sustains the whole of the symbolic order — that is, all human social and cultural institutions — the breakdown of symbolic language in modernist poetry comes to prefigure for her a total *social* revolution. For Kristeva, that is to say, there is a *specific practice of writing* which in itself is revolutionary, analogous to sexual and political transformation, and which by its very existence testifies to the possibilityof breaking down the symbolic order from the inside.[5] One might argue in this light that Woolf's refusal to commit herself in her essays to a so-called rational or logical form of writing, free from fictional techniques, indicates a simiar break with symbolic language, as of course do many of the techniques she deploys in her novels.

Kristeva also argues that many women will be able to let what she calls the "spasmodic force" of the unconscious disrupt their language because of their stronger links with the pre-oedipal mother-figure. But if these unconscious pulsations should take over the subject entirely, the subject will fall back into pre-oedipal or imaginary chaos and develop some form of mental illness. The subject whose language lets such forces disrupt the symbolic order is in other words also the subject who runs the greater risk of lapsing into madness. Seen in this context, Woolf's own periodic attacks of mental illness can be linked both to her textual strategies and to her feminism. For the symbolic order is a patriarchal order, ruled by the Law of the Father, and any subject who tries to disrupt it, who lets unconscious forces slip through the symbolic repression, puts him- or herself in a position of revolt against this regime. Woolf herself suffered patriarchal oppression particularly acutely at the hands of the psychiatric establishment, and *Mrs. Dalloway* contains not only a splendidly satirical attack on that profession (as represented by Sir William Bradshaw), but also a brilliantly perspicacious representation of a mind which succumbs to "imaginary" chaos in the character of Septimus Smith. Indeed Septimus can be seen as the negative parallel to Clarissa Dalloway, who herself steers clear of the threatening gulf of madness only at the price of repressing her passions and desires, becoming a cold but brilliant woman highly admired in patriarchal society. In this way Woolf discloses the dangers of the invasion of the unconscious pulsions as well as the price paid by the subject who successfully preserves her sanity, thus maintaining a precarious balance between an overestimation of so-called "feminine" madness, and a too precipitate rejection of the values of the symbolic order.[6].

It is evident that for Kristeva it is not the biological sex of a person, but the subject position he or she takes up, which determines their place within the patriarchal order. Her views on feminist politics reflect this refusal of biologism and essentialism. The feminist struggle, she argues, must be seen historically and politically as a three-tiered one, which can be schematically summarized as follows:

1. Women demand equal access to the symbolic order. Liberal feminism. Equality.
2. Women reject the male symbolic order in the name of difference. Radical feminism. Femininity extolled.
3. (And this is Kristeva's own position.) Women reject the dichotomy between masculine and feminine as metaphysical.

The third position is one which has deconstructed the opposition between masculinity and femininity, and therefore necessarily challenge the very notion of identity. Kristeva writes:

> In the third attitude, which I strongly advocate — which I imagine? — the very dichotomy man/woman as an opposition between two rival entities may be understood as belonging to *metaphysics*. What can "identity", even "Sexual identity", mean in a new theoretical and scientific space where the very notion of identity is challenged?
>
> ("Women's Time", 33-34)

The relationship between the second and the third positions here requires some comment. If the defence of the third position implies a total rejection of stage two (which I do not think it does), this would be a grievous political error. For it still remains *politically* essential for feminists to defend women *as* women in order to counteract the patriarchal oppression which precisely despises women *as* women. But an "undeconstructed" form of "stage two" feminism, unaware of the metaphysical nature of gender-identities, runs the risk of becoming an inverted form of sexism by uncritically taking over the very metaphysical categories set up by patriarchy in order to keep women in their place, despite attempts to attach new feminist values to these old categories. An adoption of Kristeva's "deconstructed" form of feminism therefore in one sense leaves everything as it was — our positions in the political struggle have not changed — but in another sense it radically transforms our awareness of the nature of that struggle.

Here, I feel, Kristeva's feminism echoes the position taken up by Virginia Woolf some sixty years earlier. Read from this perspective, *To the Lighthouse* illustrates the destructive nature of a metaphysical belief in strong, immutably fixed gender identities — as represented by Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay — whereas Lily Briscoe (an artist) represents the subject who deconstructs this opposition, perceives its pernicious influence in society, and tries as far as possible in a still

rigidly patriarchal order to live as her own woman, without regard for the crippling definitions of sexual identity to which society would have her conform. It is in this context that we must situate Woolf's crucial concept of androgyny. This is not, as Showalter argues, a flight from fixed gender identities, but a recognition of their falsifying metaphysical nature. Far from fleeing fixed gender identities because she fears them, Woolf rejects them because she has seen them for what they are. She has understood that the goal of the feminist struggle must precisely be to deconstruct the death-dealing binary oppositions of masculinity and femininity. For Woolf to have thought her feminism in these terms, intuitively rather than theoretically to be sure, is nothing less than astonishing.

In her fascinating book *Towards Androgyny*, published in 1973, Carolyn Heilbrun sets out her own definition of androgyny in very similar terms when she describes it as a concept of an "unbounded and hence fundamentally indefinable nature" (xi). When she later finds it necessary to distinguish androgyny from feminism, and therefore implicitly defines Woolf as a non-feminist, I believe this distinction to be based on the belief that only the first two stages of Kristeva's three-tiered struggle could "count" as being feminist. She does for example admit that in present-day society it might be difficult to separate the defenders of androgyny from feminists, "because of the power men now hold, and because of the political weakness of women" (xvi-xvii), but refuses to draw the conclusion that feminists can in fact desire androgyny. As opposed to Heilbrun here, I would stress with Kristeva that a theory which demands the deconstruction of sexual identity as we can find it in Woolf's essays and novels, must obviously be seen as feminist. In Woolf's case the question is rather whether or not her astonishingly advanced understanding of the objectives of feminism in practice prevented her from taking up a progressive political position in the feminist struggles of her day. In the light of *Three Guineas* (and of *A Room of One's own*) I would answer no to this question. it seems to me that the Woolf of *Three Guineas* shows an acute awareness of the dangers of both liberal and radical feminism (Kristeva's positions 1 and 2), and argues instead for a "stage three" position, but despite her objections, she comes down in the end quite firmly in favour of women's right to financial independence, education and to entry into the professions — all central issues for feminists of the 1920s and '30s.

Nancy Topping Bazin sees Woolf's concept of androgyny as the *union* of masculinity and femininity — precisely the opposite, in fact, of seeing it as the deconstruction of the duality. For Bazin, masculinity and femininity are concepts which in Woolf retain their full, essentialist charge of meaning. She therefore argues that Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse* must be read as just as feminine as Mrs. Ramsay, and that the androgynous solution of the novel consists in a *balance* of the masculine and the feminine "approach to truth" (138). Herbert Marder, on the other hand, presses in his *Feminism and Art* the trite and traditional case that Mrs. Ramsay must be seen as an androgynous ideal in herself: "Mrs. Ramsay as wife, mother, hostess, is the androgynous artist in life, creating with the whole of her being" (128). Heilbrun rightly rejects such a reading when she claims that:

> It is only in groping our way through the clouds of sentiment and misplaced biographical information that we are able to discover Mrs. Ramsay, far from androgynous and complete, to be as one-sided and life-denying as her husband.
>
> (155)

The many critics who with Marder read Mrs. Ramsay and Mrs. Dalloway as Woolf's ideal of femininity are thus either betraying their vestigial sexism — the sexes are fundamentally different and should stay that way — or their adherence to what Kristeva would call a "stage two" feminism: women are different from men and it is time they began praising the superiority of their sex. These are both, I believe, misreadings of Woolf's texts, as when Kate Millett writes that:

> Virginia Woolf glorified two housewives, Mrs. Dalloway and Mrs. Ramsay, recorded the suicidal misery of Rhoda in *The Waves* without ever explaining its causes, and was argumentative yet somehow unsuccessful, perhaps because unconvinced, in conveying the frustrations of the woman artist in Lily Briscoe.
>
> (139-40)

So far, then, the combination of Derridean and Kristevan theory seems to hold considerable promise for future feminist readings of Woolf. But it is important to be aware of the political limitations of Kristeva's arguments. Marxist critics of Kristeva have pointed out that though her views on the politics of the subject constitute an important contribution to revolutionary theory, her belief that the revolution within the subject somehow prefigures a later social revolution is in materialist terms quite untenable. The strength of Kristevan theory lies in its emphasis on the politics of language as a material and social structure, but it takes little or no account of other conflicting ideological and material structures which must be part of any total social transformation. Her revolutionary politics therefore tend to lapse into a subjectivist anarchism on the social level. Even so, her theories of the "revolutionary" nature of certain writing practices cannot be rejected without loss. She has given an account of the possibilities as well as the risks run by the revolutionary subject, insights of crucial importance to Marxist and feminist political theory. The "solution" to Kristeva's problem lies not in a speedy return to Lukács, but in an integration and transvaluation of her ideas within a larger feminist theory of ideology.

Since Woolf's writings come so close to Kristeva's position in many respects, it is not surprising that they also bear traces of the same political weaknesses, notably the tendency to individualist anarchism. The proposal for the "Outsider's Society" in *Three Guineas* is a notable example. But Woolf does in fact devote a great deal of attention to the material and ideological structures of oppression in, for example, her essays on women writers, and only a closer examination of all of her texts would enable us to draw any conclusions as to how far she can be accused of subjectivist politics.

A Marxist-feminist critic like Michèle Barrett has stressed the materialist aspect of Woolf's politics. In her introduction to her edition of *Virginia Woolf Women & Writing*, she argues that:

> Virginia Woolf's critical essays offer us an unparalleled account of the development of women's writing, perceptive discussion of her predecessors and contemporaries, and a pertinent insistence on the material conditions which have structured women's consciousness.
>
> (36)

However, Barrett considers Woolf only as an essayist and critic, and seems to take the view that when it comes to her fiction, Woolf's aesthetic theory, particularly the concept of an androgynous art, "continually resists the implications of the materialist position she advances in *A Room of One's Own*" (22). A Kristevan approach to Woolf, as I have argued, would refuse to accept this binary opposition of aesthetics on the one hand and politics on the other, locating the politics of Woolf's writing *precisely in her textual practice*. That practice is of course much more marked in the novels than in most of the essays.

There is another group of feminist critics, centred around Jane Marcus, who consistently argue for a radical reading of Woolf's work without recourse to either Marxist or post-structuralist theory. Jane Marcus claims Woolf as a "guerrilla fighter in a Victorian skirt" (1), and sees in her a champion of both socialism and feminism. However, if we read Marcus' article "Thinking Back Through our Mothers", it soon becomes clear that it is exceptionally difficult to argue this case convincingly without any kind of explicit theoretical framework. Her article opens with the following paragraph:

> Writing, for Virginia Woolf, was a revolutionary act. Her alienation from British patriarchal culture and its capitalist and imperialist forms and values, was so intense that she was filled with terror and determination as she wrote. A guerrilla fighter in a Victorian skirt, she trembled with fear as she prepared her attacks, her raids on the enemy.
>
> (1)

Are we to believe that there is a causal link between the first and the following sentences — that writing was a revolutionary act for Woolf *because* she could be seen to tremble as she wrote? Or should the passage be read as an extended metaphor, as an image of the fears of *any* woman writing under patriarchy? In this case, it no longer tells us anything in particular about Woolf's specific writing practices. Or again, perhaps the first sentence is the claim which the following sentences are to corroborate? If this is the case, the argument also fails. For Marcus is here unproblematically involving biographical evidence to sustain her thesis about the nature of Woolf's writing. The reader is to be convinced by appeals to historical and biographical circumstances rather than

to the texts. But does it really matter whether or not Woolf was in the habit of trembling at her desk? Surely what matters is what she wrote? This kind of argument is common in Marcus' article, as witness her extensive discussion of the alleged parallels between Woolf and the German Marxist critic Walter Benjamin ("Both Woolf and Benjamin chose suicide rather than exile before the tyranny of fascism." (7)). But surely Benjamin's suicide at the Spanish frontier, where as an exiled German Jew fleeing the Nazi occupation of France he feared being handed over to the Gestapo, must be considered in a rather different light from Woolf's suicide in her own back garden in unoccupied England, however political we wish her private life to be? Marcus' biographical analogies strive to establish Woolf as a remarkable individual, and in doing so fall back into a historical-biographical criticism of the kind much in vogue before the American New Critics entered the scene in the 1930s. Her combination of radical feminism with this traditionalist critical method is perhaps indicative of a certain theoretical and methodological confusion in the field of feminist criticism.

Conclusion

We have seen that current Anglo-American feminist criticism tends to read Woolf through traditional aesthetic categories, relying largely on a liberal humanist version of the Lukácsian aesthetics against which Brecht so effectively polemicised. The anti-humanist reading I have advocated as yielding a better understanding of the political nature of Woolf's aesthetics has yet to be written. The only study of Woolf to have integrated some of the theoretical advances of poststructuralist thought is written by a man, Perry Meisel, and though it is by no means an antifeminist or even an unfeminist work, it is nevertheless primarily concerned with the influence on Woolf of Walter Pater. Meisel is the only critic of my acquaintance to have grasped the radically deconstructed character of Woolf's texts:

> With "difference" the reigning principle in Woolf as well as Pater, there can be no natural or inherent characteristics of any kind, even between the sexes, because all character, all language, even the language of sexuality, emerges by means of a difference from itself.
>
> (234)

Meisel also shrewdly points out that this principle of difference makes it impossible to select any one of Woolf's works as more representative, as more essentially "Woolfian" than any other, since the notable divergence among her texts "forbids us to believe any moment in Woolf's career to be more conclusive than another" (242). It is a mistake Meisel concludes, to "insist on the coherence of self and author in the face of a discourse that dislocates or decentres them both, that skews the very categories to which our remarks properly refer" (242).

The paradoxical conclusion of our investigations into the feminist reception of Woolf is therefore that she has yet to be properly welcomed and acclaimed by her feminist daughters in England and America. To date she has either been rejected by them as insufficiently feminist, or praised on grounds which seem to exclude the fiction. By their more or less unwitting subscription to the humanist aesthetic categories which have traditionally belonged to the male academic hierarchy, feminist critics have seriously undermined the impact of their challenge to that very institution. The only difference between a feminist and a non-feminist critic in this tradition then becomes the formal political perspective of the critic. The feminist critic thus unwittingly puts herself in a position from which it becomes impossible to read Virginia Woolf as the progressive, feminist writer of genius she undoubtedly was. A feminist criticism which will do both justice and homage to its great mother and sister: this, surely should be our goal.

Oxford University

Notes

1. At this point Showalter quotes Q.D. Leavis' "cruelly accurate *Scrutiny* review" (295) with approbation.

2. Anna Coombes's reading of *The Waves* shows a true Lukácsian distaste for the fragmented and subjective web of modernism, as when she writes that "My problem in writing this paper has been to attempt to politicize a discourse which obstinate [sic] seeks to exclude the political and the historical, and, where this is no longer possible, then tries to aestheticize glibly what it cannot "realistically" incorporate" (238).

3. The term "Anglo-American" as used in this paper must be taken as an indication of a specific approach to literature, not as an empirical description of the individual critic's birthplace. The British critic Gillian Beer, in her essay "Beyond Determinism: George Eliot and Virginia Woolf" raises the same kind of objections to Showalter's reading of Woolf as I have done in this paper. In a forthcoming essay: Subject and Object and the Nature of Reality: Hume and Elegy in *To the Lighthouse*", Beer develops this approach in a more philosophical context.

4. For an introduction to Derrida's thought and to other forms of deconstruction, see Norris.

5. My presentation of Kristeva's position here is based on her *Révolution*.

6. One feminist critic, Barbara Hill Rigney, has tried to show that in *Mrs. Dalloway* "madness becomes a kind of refuge for the self rather than its loss" (52). This argument finds little support in the text and seems to depend more on the critic's desire to preserve her Laingian categories than on a responsive reading of Woolf's text.

WORKS CITED

Barrett, Michèle. Introduction. *Virginia Woolf: Women & Writing*. London: The Women's Press. 1979.

Bazin, Nancy Topping. *Virginia Woolf and the Androgynous Vision*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press. 1973.

Beer, Gillian. "Beyond Determinism: George Eliot and Virginia Woolf" in Mary Jacobus (ed.). *Women Writing and Writing About Women*. London: Croom Helm. 1979, 80-99.

Coombes, Anna. "Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*: A Materialist Reading of an Almost Disembodied Voice". *Proceedings of the Essex Conference of the Sociology of Literature, July 1978. Vol. I: 1936: The Politics of Modernism*. Ed. Francis Barker et al. Colchester: University of Essex. 1979, 228-251.

Heilbrun, Carolyn G. *Toward Androgyny. Aspects of Male and Female in Literature*. London: Victor Gollancz. 1973.

Holly, Marcia. "Consciousness and Authenticity: Toward a Feminist Aesthetic". In *Feminist Literary Criticism. Explorations in Theory*. Ed. Josephine Donovan. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky. 1975, 38-47.

Kristeva, Julia. *La révolution du langage poétique*. Paris: Seuil, 1974.

..... . "Women's Time", tr. by Alice Jardine and Harry Blake, *Signs*, vol. 7, no. 1 (1981), 13-35.

Lukács, Georg. Preface. *Studies in European Realism. A Sociological Survey of the Writings of Balzac, Stendhal, Zola, Tolstoy, Gorki and others*. London: The Merlin Press. 1972, 1-19.

Marcus, Jane. "Thinking Back Through Our Mothers". In *New Feminist Essays on Virginia Woolf*. Ed. Jane Marcus. London: Macmillan, 1981, 1-30.

Marder, Herbert. *Feminism and Art. A Study of Virginia Woolf*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 1968.

Meisel, Perry. *The Absent Father. Virginia Woolf & Walter Pater*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1980.

Millett, Kate. *Sexual Politics*. 1969; London: Virago. 1977.

Norris, Christopher. *Deconstruction. Theory & Practice*. New Accents. London: Methuen. 1982.

Rigney, Barbara Hill. *Madness and Sexual Politics in the Feminist Novel. Studies in Brontë, Woolf, Lessing and Atwood*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press. 1978.

Showalter, Elaine. *A Literature of Their Own. British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. 1977.

Stubbs, Patricia. *Women & Fiction. Feminism & the Novel 1880-1920*. 1979; London: Methuen. 1981.

Woolf, Virginia. *Mrs. Dalloway*. 1925; Harmondsworth: Penguin. 1964.

..... . *To the Lighthouse*. 1927; Everyman's Library. London: Dent. 1977.

..... . *A Room of One's Own*. 1929; London: Granada. 1977.

..... . *Three Guineas*. 1938; Harmondsworth: Penguin. 1977.

"WHAT ARE WE DOING, REALLY ? — FEMINIST CRITICISM AND THE PROBLEM OF THEORY"

Patrocinio Schweickart

I

In "Free Women", the novel within a novel in Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*, Tommy, a young man suffering from an identity crisis, accuses Anna, a writer suffering from a writer's block, of dishonesty for keeping four notebooks instead of one.

> 'After all, you take your stand on something, don't you? Yes you do — you despise people like my father, who limit themselves. But you limit yourself too. For the same reason. You're afraid. You're being irresponsible.' He made this final judgement the pouting, deliberate mouth smiling with satisfaction. Anna realized that this was what he had come to say. This was the point they had been working towards all evening.[1]

Shortly afterwards, Tommy shoots himself. He does not die — he is blinded, and this produces a surprising change in him. His mother observes:

> He's happy for the first time in his life . . . he's all in one piece for the first time in his life.' Molly gasped in horror at her own words, hearing what she had said: *all in one piece*, and matching them against the truth of that mutilation.[2]

Lessing underscores the irony further. In Tommy's story, blindness and mutilation do not, as one might expect, signify castration. Instead they become

the preconditions for attaining phallic power. By blinding himself, Tommy escapes the influence of the women who nurtured him, and qualifies himself to succeed his father as "husband" to his father's alcoholic wife and as head of his corporate empire.

The moral of this story has not been lost on feminist critics. Definition — *being all in one piece* — equals phallogocentric delusion. The female text like the female body is irreducibly plural. And so should feminist criticism be. As Annette Kolodny put it: "Our task is to initiate nothing less than a playful pluralism responsive to the possibilities of multiple critical schools and methods, but captive of none." This playful pluralism is appropriate "not simply as a description of what already exists but, more importantly, as the only critical stance consistent with the current status [segmented and variously focused] of the larger women's movement."[3]

Although Kolodny's argument for pluralism has been highly influential, there are dissenting voices. In her review of feminist literary criticism, Cheri Register writes:

> If we are to retain control over the migratory pattern of the monster we have created, we need to capture her and put a tracking device on her. We should take frequent readings on the basic issues: With what questions is feminist literary criticism concerned? What do we really want to know? What use will we make of this knowledge? What makes it literary criticism?[4]

More recently, Elaine Showalter explicitly disputes Kolodny's argument for pluralism:

> In spite of her brilliant arguments, Kolodny nonetheless fails to convince me that feminist criticism must altogether abandon the hope of 'establishing some basic conceptual model.' If we see our critical job as interpretation and reinterpretation, we must be content with pluralism as our critical stance. But if we wish to ask questions about the process and the contexts of writing, if we genuinely wish to define ourselves to the uninintiated, we cannot rule out the prospect of theoretical consensus at this early stage.[5]

Register could not have chosen a more distressing metaphor, nor one which is more revealing. Her portrayal of feminist criticism as a wild creature in danger of growing to monstrous proportions and of straying out of control, and of theory as a "tracking device" verifies our worst suspicions about the desire for a comprehensive theory — namely, its complicity with the logic of domination. If

this is what a comprehensive theory entails, I would rather endorse Kolodny's playful pluralism.

In the above-cited article, Showalter proposes what at first glance seems to be a sensible compromise between Kolodny's and Register's positions. While granting that the activity of feminist readers ("feminist critique") is necessarily pluralistic, she argues that it is possible to develop a basic conceptual model for the study of the work of women writers ("gynocritics"). Her argument, however, is not really convincing. I think it makes sense to distinguish between feminist criticism of female texts (call this gynocritics), and feminist criticism of male texts (feminist critique). But I do not see why the former should be more or less pluralistic than the latter. Besides, if a basic conceptual framework could be developed for the study of women writers, surely a corresponding framework could be developed that would make sense of the activity of women readers. The same *difference* — linguistic, biological, psychological or cultural — should operate in both.

Before we go further, let us clarify the problem. When we speak of theory, we could be thinking of one of three kinds.

1. A feminist theory about a specific subject matter — e.g. Amercican literature, 19th and 20th century British fiction, images of women in literature, the female imagination, the feminine consciousness, the female or feminist aesthetic, the implication of literary conventions, the relationship between literature and life, and so on.

2. A basic conceptual model or methodology, a "grammar" that would descriptively and/or prescriptively codify feminist critical practice.

3. A comprehensive framework that will represent criticism as a coherent critical enterprise.

Theory 1 is hardly problematical. A cursory survey of feminist criticism will reveal many such theories. Feminist discussions of theory are blocked by the confusion of Theory 2 and Theory 3. What we really want is Theory 3, but we are led by the prevailing "commonsense" to conflate this with Theory 2; hence, the talk of tracking devices, manifestos, solid systems, dogmas, party lines, and uniform, rigid methodologies.

As much as I disagree with Register and Showalter, I share their discontent with pluralism. It is worth noting that even Kolodny's advocacy of pluralism is far from unequivocal. She supplements her model with a "shared ideology" that "manifests its power by ordering the *sum* of our actions."[6] The desire for a comprehensive theory of feminist criticism persists in spite of the obstacles that block its realization. It would be rash to write this off as a manifestation of phallologocentric nostalgia.

The Golden Notebook offers another, more difficult, moral than the one noted above. Although the aftermath of the scene cited earlier reveals Tommy's bad faith, his charge — that by adopting a pluralistic strategy Anna is actually limiting herself — is eventually vindicated. Anna abandons the four notebooks to "put all of herself" in the golden notebook. This marks "the end fragmentation — the triumph of a second theme, which is that of unity."[7] Although it is tempting to think that this statement carries the central "message" of Lessing's

novel, in fact it only puts us on the track of a moral which is not immediately accessible, for it is found not in any statement in the text (or even in Lessing's introduction), but in the "wordless statement" provided by the *shape* of the novel. The odd arrangement of the text affirms neither the sufficiency of a pluralistic model of reality nor the feasibility of a seamless unity. Instead, it suggests a third alternative: a model that represents a coherence, as interrelatedness, one that does not cancel diversity, but on the contrary is articulated through the play of different moments.

The structure of *The Golden Notebook* suggests that we need not be bound by the customary association of coherence with systematic consistency and uniformity. While it would be worse than useless to codify feminist criticism, it is not beyond us to strive for what we really need, namely, Theory 3 — specifically, a conceptual model that will allow us to make sense of feminist criticism as a whole, to see it not as an *ad hoc* collection of concerns and strategies, but as a segmented, variously focused, *yet* coherent and genuinely collective enterprise.

II

Of course we are not starting with a clean slate. Anyone proposing a definition of feminist criticism is obliged to refer to the work done in the last decade and a half. To keep this project manageable, I will focus my remarks on three representative works, works by Showalter, by Fetterly and by Gilbert and Gubar, which I will assume to be familiar to most feminist critics. I will use these works to illustrate both the diversity and the interrelatedness of the strategies and concerns of feminist criticism, and to develop a model that will adequately represent the structure of the whole enterprise.

A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing, by Elaine Showalter, is feminist scholarship at its best.[8] It provides a wealth of information, and it corrects the misimpressions created by androcentric scholarship. Above all, Showalter provides a much needed antidote to the image of the woman writer as a "singular anomaly." She restores the "links in the chain that bound one generation to the next,"[9] and she tells the story, not so much of writing as an individual achievement, but as a production process — a collective engagement with the culture industry. What emerges is a picture of a multitude of women (a threatening mob, some thought) — diligent, energetic, resourceful, undaunted by tremendous disadvantages — struggling to overcome their historical circumstances, seizing and making opportunities to educate themselves, to achieve economic independance, and to write their own stories — in short, to claim their right to be authors rather than merely objects of literature. While it is difficult to claim that the four or five or ten "great" women novelists of the last two centuries deserve to be taken as a separate literary tradition, the multitude uncovered by Showalter's research suggests at least a *prima facie* case for the existence of such a tradition.

Showalter's book is theoretically significant, however, because she does not rest on this *prima facie* case. She recognizes that to make good the claim that the

works of women constitute a separate tradition, she must articulate the cultural and literary consequences of sex. Showalter advances the thesis that women "have constituted a subculture within the framework of a larger society, and been unified by values, conventions, experiences and behaviour impinging on each individual." Furthermore, she stresses the ambiguous character of this female subculture. Certainly it is dominated, and therefore "custodial," constituted by "a set of opinions, prejudices, tastes and values prescribed for a subordinate group to perpetuate its subordinate status." But not wholly so. The female subculture is an authentic culture to the extent that it is also a "thriving and positive entity," the expression not only of accommodations to domination, but also, of "enduring values" — of authentic human needs and aspirations, of the drive for self-realization and community in spite of inimical historical circumstances.

To say that the literature written by women is an "ideational" manifestation of a subculture is to indicate its affinity with other "minority" literature (e.g. Black literature vis-à-vis American literature, or the fledgling American literature vis-à-vis English literature). A sub-literature is defined by three characteristics. First, it derives from a shared experiental base or "habit of living." For women in Victorian England, this centered around the events of the female sexual life cycle which had to be increasingly secretive and ritualized. Second, it signifies a more or less covert solidarity among the individuals forming the subculture. According to Showalter, women novelists in the nineteenth-century had an awareness of each other that often amounted to a "genteel conspiracy." Finally, a sub-literature is defined by its problematic relationship to the hegemonic culture, and its history is the history of strategic approaches to this relationship. Showalter distinguishes three phases in the female literary tradition: a prolonged *feminine*, imitative phase (1840-1880), characterized by the internalization of prevailing social and aesthetic norms; then a *feminist* phase (1880-1920) of explicit protest against these norms and of advocacy of minority rights; and finally a *female* phase (1920-present) of self-discovery, characterized by a relatively autonomous "search for identity."[10]

The theoretical import of Showalter's thesis that literature written by women is the manifestation of a subculture transcends its usefulness in interpreting and organizing the data produced by her research on British novelists. It gives theoretical expression to our intuition that "a special female self-awareness" distinguishes the literature written by women from that written by men. It represents a crucial step towards "establishing a more reliable critical vocabulary and a more accurate and systematic literary history for women writers."[11]

The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach To American Fiction, by Judith Fetterley, is concerned with literature, in this case American literature, written by men. She explicitly states her basic premises: "literature is political," and "American literature is male."[12] In other words, the dominant American literature functions as an instrument of masculine sexual politics. Fetterley's book is reminiscent of the criticism of works by men — notably in Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* and in numerous studies of sexist stereotypes and images of women — that dominated the first years of feminist criticism.[13] However,

Fetterley adopts a novel approach to the masculine text. She is concerned not with isolated components of the text (e.g., male and female images), but with its overall narrative strategy and with the way this structures the response of the reader. Fetterley argues that "as readers, teachers and scholars, women are taught to think as men, to identify with a male point of view, and to accept as normal and legitimate a male system of values, one of whose central principles is misogyny."[14] This process of "emasculation" does not impart virile power to women, but on the contrary, it doubles the experience of powerlessness.

> To be excluded from literature that claims to define one's identity is to experience a peculiar form of powerlessness — not simply the powerlessness which derives from not seeing one's experience articulated, clarified, and legitimized in art, but more significantly, the powerlessness which results from the endless division of self against self, the consequences of the invocation to identify as male while being reminded that to be male — to be universal, to be American — is to be *not female*.[15]

Thus, American literature — and androcentric literature in general — induces a differential experience in male and female readers. For the male reader the text mediates the reciprocal realization of the individual and the universal; it confirms his status as the essential subject — his (generic) manhood. Female readers are not barred from this process. Literature is all the more efficient as an instrument of sexual politics because it does not leave women alone. It does not allow them to seek refuge in their difference, but entices them into complicity with a process that turns that difference into *otherness without reciprocity*.[16]

If literature is political, then, Fetterley concludes, feminist criticism must be counterpolitical: "the first act of the feminist critic must be to become a resisting rather than an assenting reader," whose goal is to disrupt the process of emasculation in order "to make available to consciousness that which has been largely left unconscious, and thus to change our understanding of these fictions, our relation to them, and their effect on us."[17] The theory of reading which is barely sketched in Fetterley's book indicates a necessary supplement to the sort of feminist criticism exemplified by *A Literature of Their Own*. It extends the idea of a female literary subculture to include not only women writers, but also women readers. At the same time, it reminds us of the power of the dominant tradition, and of the need to undermine its authority.

The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar returns our attention to the literature written by women. At one level, this work seems to conform to the conventions of normal practical criticism. It applies the method of "close reading" to certain exemplary texts in order to demonstrate the recurrent patterns that characterize the work of women:

> Images of enclosure and escape, fantasies in which maddened doubles functioned as asocial surrogates for docile selves, metaphors of physical discomfort manifested in frozen landscapes and fiery interiors — along with obsessive diseases like anorexia, agoraphobia, and claustrophobia.[18]

However, Gilbert and Gubar depart from conventional criticism in that their analysis is directed toward the elaboration of a "feminist poetics." They regard the texts they examine as "touchstones" for understanding the dynamics of female literary response to male assertion and coercion."[19] In Part I of their book, Gilbert and Gubar elaborate a theory of female literary response which has been inspired in part by Harold Bloom's theory of the "anxiety of influence." They begin with a provocative demonstration that the "patriarchal poetics" governing the dominant tradition is rooted in the conception of the pen as a metaphorical penis.

> In patriarchal Western culture . . . the text's author is a father, a progenitor, a procreator, an aesthetic patriarch whose pen is an instrument of generative power like his penis. More, his pen's power, like his penis's power, is not just the ability to generate life but the power to create a posterity to which he lays claim, as . . . 'an increaser and thus a founder.'

Hence, the author/father is the owner/possessor not only of his text and his reader's attention, but also of "those figures, scenes, and events — those brainchildren — he has both incarnated in black and white and 'bound' in cloth and leather."[20]

Then follows the obvious question. "What does it mean to be a woman writer in a culture whose fundamental definitions of literary authority are . . . overtly and covertly patriarchal?" What would be her relationship to her predecessors? Gilbert and Gubar argue that Bloom's theory of Oedipal combat between an emerging "strong" writer and the reigning patriarch does not apply to women writers. Although the authority of the reigning patriarch inhibits and forestalls the "coming of age" of a new male writer, it nevertheless *affirms* his potential authorship. A woman's situation is more difficult because she has to contend not only with the authority of the reigning patriarch, but with an entire literary tradition that decrees (or insinuates) that to be a writer is to be *not female*. Instead of the "anxiety of influence" found by Bloom in male authors, the woman writer experiences the "anxiety of authorship" — "a radical fear that she cannot create, that because she can never become a precursor,' the act of writing will isolate and destroy her."[21]

This literature written by women is marked (and marred) by this anxiety of authorship and by strategies they employ to overcome it. Gilbert and Gubar brilliantly document the most significant of these strategies. They show that the works of great women writers are palimpsestic: "the surface designs conceal or obscure deep, less accessible (and less socially acceptable) levels of meaning.

Thus these writers manage the difficult task of achieving true female literary authority by simultaneously conforming to and subverting patriarchal authority."[22]

The relationship of women writers to their female predecessors is no less complicated. Overlaid upon the "anxiety of authorship" is a longing for a *female* precursor, "who far from representing a threatening force to be denied or killed, proves by her example that revolt against patriarchal literary authority is possible."[23] The problem is that the literature written by women is marked by "disease", by the anxiety of authorship that afflicts their authors. Disappointed with the ambiguous accomplishments of actual women, women writers often displace the longed-for female precursor onto a mythical woman (Mary Shelley's Cumaen Sybil or Virginia Woolf's Judith Shakespeare) or onto a lost "mother country" where women could "live aloud." This mythic origin, whether imagined as motherland or mother, allows the legitimation of female authorship to the extent that it allows the conception of writing as a project of reconstruction and recovery.

Let us take stock. At first sight the three works just discussed appear to validate the pluralistic conception of feminist criticism. Each represents a different point of entry into feminist discourse. Showalter and Gilbert and Gubar examine literature by women; Fetterley, literature by men. The first two works privilege the activity of writing, the third, the activity of reading. Showalter adopts a sociological approach emphasizing the collective (or "mass") character of the female tradition, and the social relations underlying literary production. Fetterley and Gilbert and Gubar, on the other hand, adopt a psychological orientation that emphasizes the individual character of reading and writing and employs the technique of close reading of individual masterpieces.

Furthermore, these three works display different — indeed contradictory — attitudes toward literature. Fetterley adopts an antagonistic posture, which is in marked contrast to the friendly attitude assumed by Showalter and Gilbert and Gubar. Fetterley's approach emphasizes the *objective* aspect (the thingness, the otherness) of the text. Subjectivity belongs to the reader. The text is a structure — a "practico-inert" — designed to trap the subjectivity of the female reader and to turn it against itself. Accordingly, the task of the feminist critic is to disrupt this process, to de-sediment, dis-man-tle, what has become "second nature." By contrast, for Showalter and Gilbert and Gubar, literature is the expression of the self-consciousness, the subjectivity of women. The text is the residue of human *praxis*, and feminist criticism is a recuperative activity.

Needless to say, differences multiply rapidly as soon as we extend our attention to all the critical works and positions associated with feminist criticism. For example, the "empiricist" approach of Anglo-American feminism clashes with the deconstructive approach inspired by French post-structuralism. The privileged position given by Elaine Showalter to the study of women's writing conflicts with the reader-oriented perspective of Jane Tompkins, Jean Kennard and Elizabeth Flynn.[24] Some of us think that we should stress the common humanity (or androgyny) of women and men, while others think that we should focus on sexual difference. The singular focus on sexual

difference is opposed by socialist-feminists like Jane Marcus.[25] Even among those who have no problem with privileging sexual difference, there is disagreement about how this is to be situated — within the framework of biology, psychology, linguistics, history or cultural anthropology? The archetypal approach of Annis Pratt is at odds with feminist approaches that emphasize the historicity of literature.[26] The recent work of Nina Auerbach contradicts the early studies of images of women in literature.[27] And certainly it could be pointed out — and often is — that "woman" is an abstraction that obscures crucial differences among women — specifically race, class, national origin and sexual preference.

This is only a partial list of current points of contention. Surely, there is no shortage of controversy within feminist criticism. And yet, for all this, the impression remains that these diverse and contradictory works and positions belong together. And so we are thrown back to our initial question: can we specify the principle of coherence of feminist criticism without compromising its irreducible plurality? I claim that the answer is yes — provided we adopt the appropriate model of coherence. I suggest we think of feminist criticism as a *conversation* — as having the coherence of a conversation.

The model of conversation has considerable intuitive appeal. A conversation does not have the objectionable rigidity of an "ideology" or a "solid system". Its coherence does not depend on logical consistency. We know that people can differ wildly and still go on talking. At the same time, conversation has an advantage over the pluralistic models that picture feminist criticism as an umbrella covering a variety of interests and concerns, or an interpretive community made up of several sub-communities. The problem with pluralistic models is their tendency towards progressive atomization. They have no way of representing the interrelatedness of the parts. The model of conversation retains the plurality, and adds interrelatedness.[28]

On the other hand, the model of conversation may not seem promising, precisely because it is so commonsensical. It sounds as if I am proposing that we regard feminist criticism as nothing more than "clever chat about our favorite things." Surely this can't count as a definition. If the model of conversation is to be useful, we must develop it further. We need to specify the structure and characteristics of the feminist critical conversation. However, for now let me emphasize that invoking the model of conversation signifies a crucial transition. We have shifted our focus from finding a definition of feminist criticism that reflects its diversity to developing a model that allows us to understand how feminist criticism hangs together in spite of internal conflicts and contradictions.

III

To gain some perspective on the model of conversation,it is helpful to consider the work of the German philosopher Jurgen Habermas, a Frankfurt School critical theorist. He is especially illuminating to feminists, because he gives discourse a central role in revolutionary *praxis*.[29] According to Habermas,

political movements have three functions: theory formation, the organization of the process of enlightenment, and the organization of the conduct of political action. On the first level, the aim is true statements; on the second, authentic insights; on the third, prudent decisions.[30]

Each of these functions requires a different model of communicative interaction. At the level of theory formation, the model is scientific discourse, the formation and argumentative testing of hypotheses. Here, ideally, the participants in the discussion have a symmetrical relationship. Each is as able as the other to know what she wants and to speak her mind cogently, and each has an equal chance to participate in the discussion. In this way the process of theory formation is cleared of all internal and external constraints, and is made subject only to the "unforced force of the better argument."

At the level of the process of enlightenment, the appropriate model is the therapeutic discourse of psychoanalysis. This model presupposes an asymmetrical relationship. It assumes that the "patient" or member of the "target group" (e.g., an unenlightened worker) is unable to meet the conditions for genuine dialogue. The aim of the interaction is to remove the barriers (ignorance, "false consciousness", self-deception), and to make symmetrical interaction possible. In spite of the asymmetrical relationship between the "bearers" and the "objects" of enlightenment, Habermas carefully explains that the process cannot succeed through force, deception or manipulation. The analyst can only serve as a guide. Authentic insight can only come when the truth of the analysis is confirmed by the self-reflection of the analysand. The "patient" must be the agent of her own enlightenment.

At the level of the conduct of political action, risky decisions concerning strategic action in concrete circumstances can only be justified by a consensus attained in *practical discourse* among the participants. Like theoretical discourse, practical discourse requires a symmetrical relationship. Each participant is the best judge of what risks she is willing to take and with what expectations. "There can be no theory which assures from the outset a world-historical mission in return for potential sacrifice . . . a political struggle can be legitimately conducted only under the condition that all decisions of consequence depend on the practical discussion of the participants. Here too, and especially here, there is no privileged access to truth."[31]

Habermas' analysis of political movements is based on a Marxist paradigm. Nevertheless, it has obvious applications to feminism. The feminist movement exhibits the three functions he describes: theory formation, the process of enlightenment (consciousness-raising), and the selection of strategies for political action. For the sake of convenience, let us set aside the third function, so that we may concentrate on the two that are most germane to feminist criticism: theory formation and consciousness-raising.

Ideally, feminist theoritical discourse satisfies the symmetry requirement. However, a crucial departure from Habermas's model occurs at the level of the process of enlightenment. The analytic dialogue adopted by Habermas assumes a confused and troubled patient who is guided into self-knowledge by a trained and knowledgeable analyst. At first glance, this resembles feminist pedagogical

and outreach work, since of necessity these involve asymmetrical relationships. But feminists have a more basic model for the process of enlightenment, namely, the collaborative and reciprocal consciousness-raising to which many of us trace our understanding of our situation as women in patriarchal society. In the feminist consciousness-raising groups that abounded in the 1970s, much attention was devoted to the structure of the process, and in particular, to the elimination of hierarchical relationships. No one was allowed to dominate the conversation; positions of leadership were rotated; everyone became analyst and analysand in turn. Although the consciousness-raising discourse may be said to be therapeutic, it is more comparable to the symmetrical discourse of peer-counseling than to the asymmetrical discourse of psychoanalysis.

It is also significant that although enlightenment was certainly one of the goals of a consciousness-raising group, it was not the only one. Women examined their experiences in order to understand their situation in patriarchy, and to overcome the ideological and psychological structures that bind them to oppressive institutions. However, consciousness-raising was also a process that combined individual self-recovery with the creation of group solidarity. With the support of others, each participant learned to find her own voice, to validate her own experience, and at the same time, to recognize herself in the experiences and aspirations of other women. Ideally, a feminist consciousness-raising group not only promoted the attainment of authentic insights into one's life and into the situation of women in general; it also provided its members with the concrete experience of political and affective bonding with other women.

The collaborative, symmetrical and affective relationships characteristic of feminist consciousness-raising groups strongly influence the structure of pedagogical and outreach activities, so that in spite of residual asymmetry, even these activities do not fit the psychoanalytic model. In women's studies courses, for example, much thought is given to organizing the course so as the counteract the traditional teacher-student hierarchy, and to approximate, as much as possible, the collaborative and egalitarian spirit of feminist consciousness-raising. Thus, the preferred pedagogical strategy is often small group discussions to encourage the participation of even the shyest student. Moreover, the teacher's experience is frequently as much the object of analysis as that of her students. By her openness and willingness to offer up her experience for analysis (within prudential limits, of course), she provides her students with a "role-model" that can inspire and guide their own consciousness-raising.

The difference in the organization of the process of enlightenment is rooted in a fundamental difference between the Marxist and the feminist projects. According to Marxist theory, the working class is the proper agent of revolutionary change. Marxist theory — presumed to be the expression of the class consciousness of workers — has been produced in general by people who have been spared the lot of the proletariat. To complicate the situation further, the actual consciousness of workers often contradicts the class consciousness imputed to them by Marxist theory from an analysis of their role in the production process. Hence, the split between the "bearers" and the "objects" of enlight-

enment. Happily, the women's movement is not burdened by such a split. Feminist critics and theorists, like almost all feminists, are women struggling to liberate themselves from their oppression. Theory formation occurs from within the oppressed group (albeit within one of its more privileged segments). Thus, feminist theory is objectively *and* subjectively grounded in the experience of living as a woman in patriarchal society.

One consequence of the identity of subject-object in feminism is the symmetrical structure of consciousness-raising. Another consequence is that the processes of theory formation and enlightenment are more intimately related in feminism than they are in Habermas' model. In feminism, theory formation is a vehicle for consciousness-raising *and* vice versa.[32] This close association is especially true in feminist criticism, and this shapes the modes of interaction — the pragmatic infrastructure — underlying the conversation. First of all, my model assumes the "universal symmetry requirement" of Habermas' model for theoretical discourse. Feminist criticism is a discourse among equals. Secondly, the conversation is oriented toward individual and collective enlightenment, toward the attainment of authentic insight into the experience and interests of women. Finally, feminist criticism possesses a characteristic that is slighted by Habermas' description of the functions of discourse within political movements. It is a medium for the realization of sisterhood — the political and affective bonding among women.

IV

We are now in a position to elaborate the definition of feminist criticism as a conversation. We have already noted that feminist criticism is rife with controversy. However, this should not blind us to the existence of something that might be called a "shared perspective" — a background consensus, more or less, concerning certain general theses. For example, feminist critics agree that, whatever else it might be, the dominant literary and critical tradition is androcentric, and as such it has functioned as an instrument of sexual politics. Similarly, that the literature written by women is, in some way related to — "reflects," "expresses," "bears the traces of" — their situation within patriarchy. We can list other such theses. In addition, feminist criticism is marked by certain characteristic themes. For example, the theme of woman as other in patriarchal culture, the theme of female bonding, the theme of the quest for an autonomous self, the theme of madness as the figure for the psychic condition of women in patriarchy, and at the same time as the figure for the moment of enlightenment. It is important to stress that in formulating the shared perspective of feminist criticism, the point is not to advance precise statements that rigorously determine the domain and the rules of feminist critical discourse. The coherence of a conversation does not depend on precise or uniform agreement, only on the possibility of reciprocal comprehension.

It should also be noted that conversation is a dynamic process. Each speaker refers to her predecessors. She takes up an idea, a problem, or an argument suggested by previous speakers, and in turn sets the stage for her successors. *A Literature of Their Own* and *The Resisting Reader* supplement each other. The first represents the strand of feminist criticism that Showalter calls gynocritics, the other the strand she calls feminist critique. One assumes the other, and together they span the relatively autonomous subculture of women writers and readers. *The Madwoman in the Attic* builds on preceding studies of women writers, specifically the work of Elaine Showalter and Ellen Moers: Gilbert and Gubar's psycho-history elaborates Showalter's contention that the female tradition is marked by its problematic relationship to the dominant culture. The anxiety of authorship is "in many ways the germ of a dis-ease, at any rate, a disaffection, a disturbance, a distrust that spreads like a stain throughout the style and structure of most literature written by women, especially . . . throughout literature by women writers before the twentieth century."[33]

The Madwoman in the Attic also follows up Fetterley's ideas about the politics of reading. To be a writer, one must first be a reader, and in the work of women writers we can discern the strategies they employ to resist the debilitating effect of reading texts that decree (or insinuate) that to be a writer is to be not female. There is no reason for the conversation to stop here. We can go on to explore the possibilities of studying literature by women from the point of view of the relationship they form with their readers, and the way in which they differentially inscribe prospective male and female readers. In turn, such studies will open up further topics of conversation.

Now we come to a very important point. The model of conversation has the advantage of representing a conception of coherence that does not preclude diversity and disagreement. The participants in a conversation may introduce different concerns, and they may contradict each other without destroying its continuity. Instead, the opposition can be played out — one approach can shed light on the other, and the conflict can provide topics for further conversation. The dynamic of the conversation, in other words, is constituted by two modes of interaction: contradiction as well as recuperation. One mode conditions — constrains *and* promotes — the other. This observation in turn suggests a revision of the initial conception of the unifying principle of the conversation. The background consensus described earlier must be supplemented by an ensemble of contradictions. I would even argue that *subjectively* the ensemble of contradictions is more basic than the background consensus, that we speak of a "shared perspective" or "ideology" not so much because we hold the same beliefs but because we feel the pressure of the same problems.

Let us briefly illustrate one of the contradictions in the ensemble. In *A Literature of Their Own* Showalter calls the object of her study, "the female tradition." On the face of it, this seems to be a perfectly reasonable label, consistent with her decision to be exhaustive rather than selective. Moreover, "the female tradition" contrasts well with the "feminine phase" of imitation and accomodation, and the "feminist phase" of politically conscious opposition. Difficulties arise, however, when we see that the third phase of the "female

tradition" is the "female phase" of relatively autonomous self-discovery. Here, the positive connotation of "female" is inconsistent with the neutrality of the earlier usage. The problem is further complicated by the contradiction between the positive connotation indicated by the association of "female phase" with self-discovery and the negative evaluation suggested by Showalter's actual discussion of this phase. The conclusion of her discussion of Virginia Woolf, for example, is that "the ultimate room of one's own is the grave."[34]

The name of the third phase is both predictable (what else could follow "feminine" and "feminist"?) and disconcerting. The difficulties it entails throws into question the appropriateness of the entire system of nomenclature. It is easy to point out other difficulties. The sequence "feminine", "feminist", "female" implies closure. What names, consistent with this sequence, can we give to the phases preceding the "feminine" and following the "female"?

Readers are likely to be disturbed by the awkwardness of this nomenclature. But *feminist* readers will recognize in it a problem that all of us have encountered — our own indecision as to what to name the cultural productions of women, as well as our sensitivity to the significance of the choice. Although Showalter's nomenclature leads her into difficulties, there is a sense in which it is appropriate: the literature (and for that matter the criticism) written by women is marked by the working out of the contradictory significations of "feminine," "feminist" and "female." In other words, feminist discourse is the working out of our ambivalence toward womanhood, our need to *overcome* and at the same time to *affirm* experiences and values bound up in the "feminine" and the "female."

It is beyond the scope of this essay to elaborate fully the ensemble of contradictions that unify feminist criticism.[35] However, we are in a position to make some formal observations. If feminist criticism is informed by an ensemble of contradictions, then it follows that any consensus is necessarily equivocal, and contingent on the present state of the conversation. The ensemble of contradictions serves as a critical ground for the undoing of any prevailing agreement and of the reconstruction of another. This does not mean, however, that the ensemble itself is fixed. For example, the contradictory significance of "feminist," "feminine," and "female" did not become problematical until we began (implicitly or explicitly) to conceive of women as constituting a relatively autonomous subculture, and of our experience as something *more* than the experience of victimization. Feminist criticism is shaped by the dialectical interaction of a background consensus and an ensemble of contradictions. Neither of these is fixed. One serves as the ground for the elaboration and revision of the other.

V

To round off this essay, let me briefly address two issues brought to the fore by my definition of feminist criticism as a conversation. The first has to do with the relevance of this definition to the entire feminist project. Clearly, the model

of conversation can be extended into a definition of feminism. Let me stress again the advantage of using the model of conversation. It allows us to break the customary association of coherence with consistency, uniformity and fixity — with a "solid system" or a "rigid ideology" — and from the prescriptive spirit and the impulse toward mastery implicit in these. The model of conversation has the advantage of representing both *the unity in diversity* and the *dynamism* of feminism. It allows us to see our work not as an *ad hoc* collection of concerns and strategies, but as a coherent and genuinely collective project. Moreover, it does so *without* glossing over or forcibly resolving intramural conflicts.

The second issue refers to the relationship of feminist criticism to literary criticism, and by implication, of feminism to the non-feminist establishment. It appears that the model of conversation applies as well to the entire discipline of literary criticism. Indeed, of all disciplines, literary criticism best approximates Richard Rorty's idea of a hermeneutic project consisting of various discourses conversing with each other.[36] Nevertheless, it is crucial to note that conversations feminists have with non-feminists are different from those they have with each other. For example, it is clear to feminists that the literary and critical canon is androcentric and founded on the exclusion of the female perspective. Most non-feminist critics, on the other hand, believe that the canon represents universal values that have withstood "the test of time", and are frequently annoyed with feminist criticism's persistent and, in their view, wrong-headed "gendrification" of literature. At the same time, they are likely to miss the point of problems that feminists consider crucial. Non-feminists are likely, for example, to regard Elaine Showalter's awkward juggling of "feminine", "female", and "feminist" as a simple mistake.

It is also important to emphasize that the conversation between feminists and the non-feminist mainstream conform neither to Habermas' model for theory formation nor to his model for the process of enlightenment. "While this is good enough on its own turf," writes the editor of a prestigious journal to a feminist critic, "it fails to address key issues in the current critical debate." In other words, in order to be admitted into the conversation, feminist must fit their discourse into the categories set by non-feminist discourse, and they must do so *without* reciprocity. Most non-feminist critics do not feel obliged to inform themselves of the work of feminist critics, much less to respond cogently to the issues they raise. The pressure of non-feminist categories on feminist discourse follows from the asymmetrical distribution of power which generally exists between its practitioners. This asymmetry violates the key condition, which according to Habermas, assures that theory formation will be governed only by the "unforced force of the better argument." At the same time, although an important goal of feminism is to enlighten others, its discourse with the mainstream does not fit the psychoanalytic model proposed by Habermas because the unenlightened party (from the feminist point of view) is also in possession of the instruments of power, and specifically, of the means for producing and regulating knowledge. The full elaboration of the structure of the conversation between feminists and the establishment is a very complicated project. For now, let me say simply that the interactions consituting this

relationship involves a substansial "strategic" component — i.e. the sort of non-discursive political struggle suggested by two alternative metaphors for feminist criticism: "dancing through the minefield" and "storming the toolshed."[37]

Department of English
University of New Hampshire

Notes

I would like to thank Nelly Furman who read and commented on an earlier version of this essay, and David Schweickart, who saw it through all the stages of its development.

1. (New York: Bantam, 1973), p. 274.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 378.
3. "Dancing Through the Minefield: Some Observations on the Theory, Practice and Politics of Feminist Literary Criticism," *Feminist Studies*, 6 (Spring 1980), 19-20.
4. Review of Literary Criticism, *Signs*, 6 (Winter 1980), 268-69.
5. "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness, "*Critical Inquiry*, 8 (Winter 1981), 183.
6. Kolodny, pp. 20-21.
7. Lessing, Introduction to *The Golden Notebook*, p. vii.
8. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977).
9. *Ibid.*, p.7.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 11-15.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
12. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), pp. xi-xii.
13. Today much of feminist criticism of male texts employs the methods of semiotic analysis and deconstruction. See, for example, Nancy K. Miller, *The Heroine's Text: Readings in the French and English Novel, 1722-1782* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980); and Elizabeth Earmath, "Fictional Consensus and Female Casualties," in *The Representative of Women*, eds. Carolyn G. Heilbrun and Margaret R. Higonnet (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1981), pp. 1-18.
14. Fetterley, p. xx.
15. *Ibid.*, p. xiii.
16. This, of course, is Simone de Beauvoir's famous definition of the condition of woman in patriarchal society *(The Second Sex.*, trans. H.M. Parshley [New York: Modern Library, 1958]).
17. Fetterley, p. xxii, and pp. xi-xii.
18. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), p. xi.
19. *Ibid.*, p. xii.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

24. Jane Tompkins, "The Reader in History: The Changing Shape of Literary Response," in *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*, ed. Jane Tompkins (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1980), pp. 201-32, and "Sentimental Power: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the Politics of Literary History," in *Glyph 8* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), pp. 79-102; Jean Kennard, "Convention Coverage or How to Read Your Own Life," *New Literary History*, 13 (Automn, 1981), 69-88, Elizabeth Flynn, "Gender and Reading." College English, 45 (Mar. 1983) 236-53.

25. Jane Marcus, "Storming the Toolshed," *Signs*, 7 (Spring, 1982), pp. 622-40.

26. Annis Pratt, *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981). For a contrasting view see Lilian Robinson, "Dwelling in Decencies: Radical Criticism and the Feminist Perspective," in *Sex, Class and Race* (Bloomington: Indiana Press, 1978). See also Judith Lowder Newton, *Women, Power, and Subversion: Social Strategies in British Fiction, 1778-1860* (Athens, GA: Georgia University Press, 1981).

27. Nina Auerbach, *Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

28. The model of conversation is perhaps more plausible at the moment, given the current interest in *The Dialogic Imagination* by Mikhail Bakhtin (ed. Michael Holquist and trans. Holquist and Caryl Emerson (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press [Slavic Series, No. 1], 1981), and in Richard Rorty's suggestion that we abandon the epistemological project of commensuration in favor of regarding the "relations between various discourses as strands in a possible conversation, a conversation which presupposes no disciplinary matrix which unites speakers, but where hope of agreement is never lost so long as the conversation lasts" (*Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979], p. 318). It is important to stress that the project of "edification" which defines Rorty's conversation lacks the critical edge that is crucial to feminist discourse by virtue of its grounding in the project of liberation.

29. For an excellent and readable account of Habermas's work, see Thomas McCarthy, *The Critical Theory of Jurgen Habermas* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1979).

30. Jurgen Habermas, *Theory and Practice*, trans. John Viertel (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974), p. 32.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

32. Habermas insists that failure to preserve the autonomy of the three functions of political groups (theory formation, the organization of the process of enlightenment, and organization of the conduct of political struggle) would compromise the emancipatory intention. Habermas is concerned about the fact that in the tradition of the European working-class movement, all three functions have been assigned to the party organization. The specific target of his remarks is Georg Lukacs' theory of the party, which in Habermas's view subordinates both theory formation and the process of enlightenement to the exigencies of party organization. Of course, the women's movement does not have a party structure. Its radically decentralized character undermines the force of Habermas's reservations.

33. Gilbert and Gubar, p. 511.

34. Showalter, p. 297.

35. I could add other contradictions: the disciplinary requirements of literary criticism versus the demands of feminist *praxis*; aesthetic versus political concerns; the political versus the personal; integration versus separation; and so on. The point, however, is not to formulate as complete and as precise a list as possible, but to understand the structure of the enterprise and to see in what way feminist criticism constitutes a coherent critical community.

36. See note 28.

37. The first, of course, is Annette Kolodny's metaphor. The second is from Jane Marcus, "Storming the Toolshed," *Signs*, 7 (1982), pp. 622-40.

REDRAWING THE CIRCLE
POWER, POETICS, LANGUAGE.[1]

Barbara Godard

My subject is ideology and language which I shall approach through women's writing and feminist literary criticism.

There are many who challenge the conjunction of the label of a political movement — feminism[2] — and an aesthetic artifact — literature. They would insist on the autonomy of the work of art, of its freedom from the "shackles" of ideology that would reduce it to mere rhetoric and undermine its aesthetic qualities. Others — and I would include myself among them — concur with Roland Barthes when he writes that "It is virtually impossible to deal with literary creation without postulating the existence of a relation between the work and something besides the work."[3] Feminist criticism makes this "something else" explicit and reveals its substructure of theories, assumptions and values — implicit in any critical theory. By exposing them deliberately, we can face the methodological implications of the assumptions underpinning this feminist discourse. After all, every theory of language implies a whole philosophy of history: every form of practice implies and presupposes a form of theory whose denial is a mask. The silence of this mask, and not ideology, continues Barthes, is "the capital sin in criticism." Feminist criticism would argue that silence has also been the capital sin of patriarchal ideology which has consistently denied the fact of sexual difference in the name of a centre, of a principle of identity. Homogeneity, objectivity are the values used to support aesthetic judgments of "good" or "beautiful." Feminist criticism aims to unmask this objectivity by insisting that all judgments are context-bound, and that sex and gender are important factors in establishing this context. This is because of the systematic repression and appropriation of women over the centuries in our western society.

In *Power Politics*, Margaret Atwood offers a cynical view of the relationship between power and language, symptomatic of her position as woman.

We hear nothing these days
from the ones in power

Why talk when you are a shoulder
or a vault

Why talk when you are
helmeted with numbers

Firsts have many forms;
a fist knows what it can do
without the nuisance of speaking:
it grabs and smashes.

From those inside or under
words gush like toothpaste.

Language, the fist
proclaims by squeezing
is for the weak only.[4]

For her, language is not performative. The gender markers it encodes assign to woman "negative semantic space.[5]" This lack of faith in the signifying potentials of language is a problem for a poet. Atwood's position contrasts markedly with Shelley's belief in the power of the word when he proclaimed that "poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world,"[6] male poets, at least. Here Shelley was following Plato's recognition of the force of language, though inverting the aim of the argument. For Plato banished poets from his republic because their power threatened to subvert its established order. Plato also excluded women from full participation in politics and intellectual activity because their private household speech lacked form and could not be considered truth. Like poetry, mere opinion did not appeal to the mind, site of all he thought best in human activity.[7] With Plato originates the segregation of women's speech in the private sphere away from the seat of government and formal utterances, a separation that has led to power over the former, as Atwood's poem reminds us.

The power of language is reiterated in another strand of the Western tradition. Words become worlds when God speaks. Creation is linked to the oral utterance which becomes fiat in its written form, the books of the law. A "new testament" is necessary when a revolution in belief occurs, when the word is recreated, is "made flesh" and translated into action. Here the word is mediated through the passive female body which reproduces a male divinity rather than producing words. Mary, like Plato's women is silent, "pondering all these things

in her heart." Forgotten are the days when god was a woman, when Inanna, queen of heaven, by power of her decrees, enters and becomes queen of the netherworld, bringing forth from there the tablets and styluses to record the written word.[8] Language has become problematic for Atwood,[9] because of the activity of the word in the extreme mode of God's invasion of the other. Backed by greater physical force — the fist "grabs and smashes" — power has been excercized *over* women. Atwood's poem invites us to see the individual feminine text in terms of the dialogue of conflicting social classes, that is as the opposed, marginalized voice confronting the hegemonic class. By clearly exploring this confrontation, Atwood becomes conscious of the problem of authority. It is an issue which she must face, if she herself is to become an author, an "authority."

Although a pressing issue for women writers, it is essential for all women to raise questions about the nature of language and power. Sheila Rowbotham summarizes the issue:

> (Language) is one of the instruments of domination . . . It speaks only for (the) world (of the oppressors), from their point of view. Ultimately a revolutionary movement has to break the hold of the dominant group over theory, it has to structure its own connections. Language is part of the political and ideological power of rulers . . . We can't just occupy existing words. We have to change the meanings of words even before we take them over."[10]

Women's long silence, or ineffectual speech, may be an advantage here in constituting a challenge to present economic and political systems in feminists' denunciation of the appropriating subject and of rigid subject/object boundaries. But there is still an inherent paradox in this. How can one be an object, be constructed by that ruling discourse and still constitute an opposition to it, be outside enough to mark an alternative? If outside, how can one be heard at all? But the creation of new worlds in words is the essence of writing, which seeks always to question the cliché or convention, to deconstruct figures of rhetoric or reading. By following the paths of women writers, I would suggest, we shall discover how they are claiming the prerogative of naming so that we can begin to see and live afresh. We shall find some of the "fiction which (would) make us real".[11] These selves-in-becoming-in-words redraw the circle for us, shift the relationships of centre and periphery, of authoritative word and marginal silence.

How to write as a women? This is a question women writers have been asking for some time, indeed it is the only question they *must* ask, the precondition of their finding a voice at all in which to speak, or they remain spoken in the words of men. Phrased variously as: how to write at all if one is a woman confronted with a literary institution which would silence her, and how to write the difference explicit in her sexuality into the text when her very femaleness signals her status as object not subject[12] — these questions are now being raised by

feminist critics who are reflecting aloud on what it means to *read* as a woman.[13] What is the implication of this difference in terms of our talking or writing about the work of women (or, for that matter, men) writers? If one engages in a different and differential reading of women's writing, what impact does this have on the practice of literary criticism, an activity carried out within the circles of academic and literary institutions?

As has been argued by Dorothy Smith, these institutions have been controlled by men and consequently women have been "excluded from the production of thought, images and symbols" in which their experience has been ordered. Perpetuating its forms, symbols and words in a circle of male experience that excludes females,[14] knowledge is not objective and neutral, contrary to what we have been told in the scientific spirit of our age and the myth of the academy. In an initial dislocation of this myth, feminists show knowledge to be subjectively and ideologically biased, not objective, for it reflects male experience primarily. Literary criticism is clearly within the perimeter of the circle, an activity of academics extending the circle of patriarchal power — the circle of members "who count for one another" governed, as Smith says, by the "stag effect". But the focus of literary criticism on language and symbols, its work in elucidating meaning and its practice of producing new metaphors offer the means through which such a break could be made in the circle. Feminist criticism takes advantage of such an opening by basing a reading practice and a critical theory on a theory of sexual difference. Such an attempt has far reaching implications, for it addresses itself not only to the position of mastery held by scientific discourse (that is language which is culturally encoded, through which meaning and sense is conferred on reality), but to philosophy, the discourse of discourse, and to the logic of discourse itself.[15] Rejecting scientism with its valorization of objectivity, the project of feminist criticism is epistemological. While feminist practice of criticism is an exercise in the unmasking and displacing of alienating structures produced by criticism, as thinking, feminism "rethinks thinking itself."[16] Re-visionist, it questions the adequacy of existing conceptual structures.

In advocating sexual difference which is Otherness itself,[17] feminism challenges the foundations of discourse, namely its centre, the concept of a single or absolute subject, returning to itself as subject, serving as guarantor of its own meaningfulness — the concept of God in Christian theology, the Logos in philosophy, the phallus in psychoanalysis, etc. This absolute subject acts in a totalitarian manner as the focal point of identification whereby individuals are organized into subsidiary subjects, socially formed subjects of consciousness who identify themselves with a process whose meaning is conferred by the absolute subject.[18] Individuals are reconciled to their social positions in these processes through myths of representation, that is, through ideology. The characteristic of ideology is its absoluteness: discourse becomes synonymous with power over. Ideologies are, however, "fictions" and "figures" and may be challenged by other "fictions" or by exposing their figurative nature.[19] With their present male God, and Phallus as Prime Signifier, these systems of representation exclude the female. She cannot be constituted as subject and conse-

quently, as de Beauvoir points out in *The Second Sex*, remains an object, the Other for a male subject, paired in a situation in which there is no reciprocity, no possibility of inversion. The hierarchical conception of difference that de Beauvoir works with leaves woman stranded on the periphery of the male circle returning unto itself as centre. To enable the emergence of the female, feminism must break out of this circle by exploring other concepts of difference. For what is becoming clear is that difference may be conceived of in several separate logical constructs which effectively change our perceptions of power relationships. What has been most common is the hierarchical concept in which, one side of a binary pair is privileged: difference is represented as present/absent as in competitive/non-competitive. As de Beauvoir points out, it is this model that has subsumed a second logical set of differences, at least when it is a question of male/female. This second set could well be thought of in terms of one extreme/another extreme as in competitive/cooperative. Irigaray is advocating such a shift when she argues for difference as a positive value, and not as absence or lack. A third position could also be adopted, and it is the one I shall advocate. Here difference is represented as an indefinite series of items, as in competitive/cooperative/solitary.[20]

In confronting its father discipline, feminist criticism discloses the most basic assumptions of its thinking. On this question of difference, feminists challenge the power relationships inherent in the prevalent formulation of difference as presence/absence even as they argue for the other two models of difference which valorize all the variables. Consequently, they often seem to be speaking in paradoxes, negating even while they are advancing new values, in the very same word and breath. For feminist critics are engaged in a vigorous border traffic between this world defined for them and the world they aim to bring into being, a world defined by them. Their project is to be cartographers of new realms. Like cultural nationalists, they reject the map made for them by denying their difference is marginal or peripheral. Placing the point of the compass on the circumference where they are, they redraw the circle. They suggest that alternate forms of strength and relationship have existed all along on women's terms or among women. They seek in women's consciousness an autonomous origin of knowledge. Their aim coincides with the efforts of women writers to open new dimensions of space to allow women free access without hindrance or hesitancy through geographical and political spaces, disrupting the imaginary forms through which ideology is represented to individuals. As Louise Forsyth writes: "the feminist critic has necessarily had to participate in the struggle of beginning to clear these dimensions of space in order to create appropriate conditions for the writing of her own text. The role she has to play in the collective project is of considerable urgency in assuring poets and novelists have a public, someone with whom they share images and in whose direction they can write."[21] As well as this primary function of explicating women's texts and identifying the "different" or marginal forms, symbols and words, to form an interpretive community of readers who will be able to understand women's writing, women critics are remapping the terrain of critical theory. This new criticism deconstructs patriarchal monotheism by introducing variety and

multiplicity in thought and expression, by being resolutely eclectic and interdisciplinary in nature, thus attacking the very monocentrism on which power (presence) is founded. Moreover, the realignment of boundaries through expansion and blurring continues in a fusion of style and content. This new feminist literary criticism would not be a meta-language like patriarchal discourse, but would remain open, a practice characterized by its empathy and respect for the text, asking of it only those questions which it asks of itself. Consequently, this criticism would be an assimilated reading, an intertextuality in which through shared characters, quotations or languages, the reader is intimately touched by the other's text. The critical act is re-creation, extending life to the original text, breaking down the boundaries between creative writing and criticism.[22] "Texts circulate and remain open, like a friend's voice,"[23] fluid, in a spirit of extension and translation. Transformed from passive to active, encircl*ed* no longer, women circu*late*.

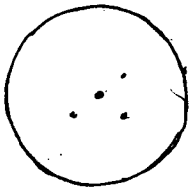
That this making it new is simultaneously subversion and celebration is demonstrated in the ways women writers and critics rethink the literary space in order to allow their work to circulate and thus to escape the exclusion of discourse. This has taken three basic forms, roughly analogous to the three logical models of difference: 1) dislodging the centre, through the subversion of fixed hierarchies by defamiliarization or distancing; 2) new circles, the creation of a world upside down, through inversion or an active decentering within a double circle; 3) spiralling out, as when the circle is completely broken as a new concept of the subject comes into being. As Mary Daly describes this, the fixed perimeter of the circle becomes mobile as "Radical feminist consciousness *spirals* in all directions, dis-covering the past, creating/*dis-closing* the present future."[24] This punning and spinning of metaphors, as we shall see, is not just "icing on the cake" but cognitive activity central to the forging of new (conceptual) worlds. It is also word *play*, and free wheeling play, as Jacques Erhmann reminds us, is "articulation, *opening*" through language, its ludic function holding out the goals of true culture and civilization.[25]

Dislodging the centre

The circle itself is duality, containing the contradiction of a still, fixed centre and a moving, infinite circumference. Moreover, its inner and outer areas effectively present us with an image of negative and positive space, of absence and presence. This dualism is forgotten when all focus is on the centre. Through a process of defamiliarization, feminists draw attention to the fact that women have been excluded from the circle. They do this by foregrounding the fact of male *domination*. Naming the oppressor has not been an easy task, for one of the semantic rules of language is that of male-as-norm.[26] Indeed, in women's writing the awareness of the constrictions concomitant with the feminine condition has often been limited to just that — a general sense of alienation and malaise whose cause is not directly identifiable. A study of the language of Virginia Woolf reveals this feature of her writing. Her favoured syntactic patterning is the passive, a structure ideally suited to expressing the causative agent in women's

oppression, an agent Woolf chooses not to name. Instead, she uses the truncated passive in sentences like the following from *A Room of One's Own*: "...a woman *was not encouraged* to be an artist. On the contrary, she *was snubbed, slapped, lectured and exhorted.*"[27] Women readers may well complete her phrase with the missing words "by the male critics", and thus weave even more densely the web of hidden assumptions shared with her implied female readers, but Woolf has not challenged these critics' dominancy directly and leaves them with a general impression of feminine passivity. Nonetheless, her statements cast a haze over the centre of the circle for readers who share her hidden agenda, for no longer can they apply the definition of artist equitably to males and females. There now appear to be differences in accession to this activity, for Woolf has shown women must overcome greater obstacles. Her work has effected a shift in the meaning of the word artist, at least for females. It has acquired a certain strangeness.

The "images of women" criticism that has dominated North American feminist literary criticism, at least until very recently, has been responsible for such a displacement of meaning and defamiliarization. Aiming to show the warped, distorted and objectified status of women in fiction, their fictionalized selves being the representations of the dominating patriarchal ideology, this criticism provides us with a list of passive victims, failed women heroes, so many stories of the divided self which Lorraine McNullen has told us.[28] In its other face, when such feminist criticism ceases to be expressive and becomes aggressive, it denounces the oppressor, following in the mode of Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1971) which conclusively demonstrated the misogyny at the heart of the modern literary pantheon. The Great Tradition is not great because of its universality, but because of the hegemony its ideology extends. In fact, it is less than whole, excluding as it does the female presence. Working still within the dominant literary institutions, critics like Mary Ellman (*Thinking About Women*, 1968) and Margaret Atwood ("Paradoxes and Dilemmas: the Woman as Writer", 1975) outline the double standard at work in literature as in life, denouncing the "phallic" criticism and writing which has led to the marginalization of women on the literary scene, doing so in such a way as to introduce the possibility of mobility and multiplicity of the centre. But their focus remains the male tradition: the great tradition is implicitly honoured by yet other critical studies of its activities. We have yet to discover the meaning of women's writing and it remains veiled and muffled.



New circles

We might conceive of another area of female writing and feminist criticism as a double circle, the circle expanded to a double foci as in the ellipse or in the

helix. The figure of the ellipse is an excellent one for our purposes because it respects the concept of two separate centres combining to form one object. It obliges us to talk and think in terms of unequal relationships instead of matching qualities or quantities, forcing everything into a homogeneous mould. Our definition begins with there being more than one term. Variously the two foci may move closer, reactions to any point on the circumference then becoming equal or they may separate as the centres of two independent though intersecting circles, each obeying its own laws, no point on the circumference of the one having any necessary relation to the other circle. Still, they remain within a single figure, and thus express an intentionality of unity which the term sexual *difference* would call into question.[29]

A more appropriate figure might be the double helix, with its two centres spiralling around each other, intersecting and diverging in turn. As described by Jim Watson, the geneticist who discovered DNA, this figure came to him when he abandoned the concept of like-to-like bonding within the molecule. Consequently, he discovered the secret of life in the *double* form. With its duality of generating centres, this figure has been suggested as an appropriate one for comparative studies of Canadian literatures,[30] for it can account for similarities and describe the absence of such convergences. And for feminists interested in the question of sexual differences (as opposed to *women's* studies) it provides an appropriate model for breaking free from the circle in a thorough decentring.

James D. Watson. *The Double Helix: a Personal Account of the Discovery of DNA.* (New York: Atheneum, 1968), p. 210.

Such an approach would invite us to explore the differences between men's and women's use of language, for instance. In this way, Dian McGuiness has suggested that men use language in an object-oriented way for naming, while women use language contextually to explore the emotions and meanings of other human beings in a given situation. She traces these differing functions back historically and biologically to the primate phase. In the present, she observes men and women functioning at cross purposes, in the conference setting where males define and women perform in dramatic interaction with the audience.[31]

These figures are helpful in exploring the literary use of language, especially the use of metaphor in men's and women's writing, an approach that illuminates the degree to which men's and women's perceptions of reality differ. Metaphorical systems encapsulate a group's heritage and trace its psychological and historical development. New metaphors are new phenomena, calling forth, containing and stylizing our experience. New metaphors imply cognitive developments and provide ways of disrupting the symbolic systems through which ideology is represented to the individual. A brief look at the differential use made by men and women of a fundamental metaphor of Canadian society and literature will illustrate how in men's and women's lives there are two stories, two differing perceptions of the same reality.

The land-as-woman metaphor is central to North American society. It opposes male possession and aggressive reduction of the Other to female discovery of an integrated, inviolate self, power *over* versus *emp*owerment. Among the metaphor's most common forms, as Annette Kolodny has pointed out in *The Lay of the Land*,[32] is the topos of the violation of the land, its virginity taken in acts of aggression and control by plough or railway. This exploitation of the land is something North American women novelists denounce. In an inversion of the metaphor that decentres it, they offer a counter view of the male drive for possession which they believe ends tragically in dispossession through abstraction or self-anihilation. In the work of the American writer Willa Cather, this possession is contrasted with the view of the land as sentient but impersonal being whose otherness is to be respected, not violated, in ecological harmony, as I have shown elsewhere.[33] Translated into Canadian terms in *Wild Geese* by Martha Ostenso, this counterview is reinforced by a direct denunciation of the patriarchal drive for possession when Judith throws the hatchet to behead Caleb-Holfernes on behalf of all violated women. Judith then inverts the metaphor by wrestling her lover Sven to the ground, overturning the struggle to possess women and the land. In French Canada, women writers' refusal to use this key metaphor of expansion led to an opposing metaphor. Gabrielle Roy's pioneer women dislike the "naked prairie" and assert their own presence as creative centre in a pioneering activity which would make of the wilderness a home. For her ability to create people, feed and clothe them in the wilderness, for the "homemaking capacities", the Grandmother in *La route d'Altamont* is called a god. "My Almighty Grandmother", is the title of Christine's story, a title that underlines the alternate theory of origins in loving concern rather than in the violent rape of the plough.

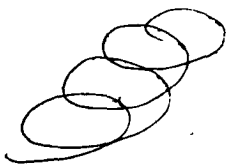
Illustrating variously the closeness and the distance of the foci or double centres, these two metaphorical complexes foreground the activity of many women writers as border traffic. It could also be termed double talk, for while seeming to use the symbols of the dominant society, these writers do so only to question them by putting forth alternate models of perception and speaking. My approach in discussing them is illustrative of much feminist criticism in adopting a comparative position as initial starting point but focussing attention on the lesser known of the centres, that of the female perspective. Most of us, like the writers, are straddling two worlds, the world of the academy and a world

of our own and if we would be heard in both, if we would remain within the academy to decentre it, we must communicate with it, sending our messages in forms it can interpret even as we try to find a vocabulary adequate for our experience, becoming bilingual translators in the process.

There are dangers, however, in defining against, in expressing our difference always in ambivalent language. We risk remaining locked in the embrace of a binary world where dualism is only an illusion of difference, because it is conceived of always as a hierarchical construct. In defining ourselves within the frames of reference chosen by men we risk losing any sense of ourselves as subjects. In order to find ourselves, we must move outside of the critical space altogether to find meaning in what has previously been empty space.

Spiralling out

Feminist strategies to produce plurality have found support in phenomenological practices of dynamic empathetic reading which are also open in the interrogation of their own processes. Central to the feminist critic's endeavour is an attempt to reflect and clarify "lived experience" as a meaningful activity, meaning being created in the dialectical movement of bringing to explicit foreground what is only potentially and latently present. The word is rediscovered in the self in an act of *creative* intentionality. The critical act involves both a decentring of the text and a recentring through an appropriation of it into one's own consciousness. It is here that "the voices of friends in dialogue" circulate, for the critic is close to the woman writer who has preceded her outside the circle.



This world defined by and for females with reference only to themselves is an Utopian one for, as yet, it has only a shadowy existence. However, it is increasingly being asserted by feminist scholars that women's culture has a specificity. "Women form a speech community", we read," with language skills and attitudes of our own as well as those shared by the wider speech community." Gossip is a specific type of women's language or genderlect, "a language of intimacy"[34] arising from the solidarity and identity of women as members of a social group with a pool of common experience, a language that circulates orally, outside the circle of male experience, uncoded and savage, in a cultural wilderness. Frequently this hidden world is unhidden in works of fabulation such as Gilman's *Herland*[35] where we enter a futuristic world of women. Russ' *The Female Man*[36] reveals the same distancing function at work, recentring occuring through the creation of alternate worlds, new fictions to disrupt those that have defined us.

In language itself we find another Utopia. It is in and through language that we define and categorize areas of difference and similarity that in turn allow us to comprehend the world around us.[37] But what a challenge it is to invent language! Writers ransack the dictionary to find adequate definitions as Audrey Thomas does, only to rewrite the dictionary from the perspective of her own experience when its inadequacy is demonstrated, as happens in *Real Mothers* where, in answer to a question from her father as to who strangers are, the girl replies "mostly men". This answer takes into account the realities of power politics in female sexuality, experience which makes itself clear here in a new, contextual definition of a word. Similarly, Alice Munro seeks an adequate vehicle to express her character's experience in *Lives of Girls and Women.* Like Thomas, she questions clichés and conventions, her writing calling itself into question in a perpetual process of becoming. She too offers new definitions for words based on female physiological realities.

> That very word *pleasure* had changed for me; I used to think it a mild sort of word, indicating a rather low-key self-indulgence; now it seemed explosive, the two vowels in the first syllable spurting up like fireworks, ending on the plateau of the last syllable, its dreamy purr.[38]

Reflection on the material meaning of the word, on its concrete sounds, is stimulated by an effort to articulate the sensations of female orgasm.

Munro's is just one attempt to invent a language that is not oppressive but expresses women's realities. The women writers of Quebec are attempting to write the sexual body in the text in an enterprise aimed at the establishment of a new symbolism. "My body is words," writes Madeleine Gagnon[39] in a return to an origin of sensations and gesture that precedes codification in language. Like Atwood in *Surfacing*,[40] she locates this new language in the hieroglyphs of the native people, as she does in *Lueur.*[41] But language itself can constitute the origin, as Nicole Brossard is showing, writing towards "l'Alphabet l'origine" in deconstructive plays on words. She also creates new words in an effort to shape a new language for women.[42] Here her practice joins the punning neologisms of Mary Daly in *Gyn/Ecology*, the title of which is, in her words, "a way of wrenching back some wordpower."[43] It is very much an Otherworld journey, occuring in the "Unfield/Ourfield/Outfield", "confronting old molds/models of question-asking."[44]

This spinning, like those orgasms described by Munro, wells up from a savage world in a volcanic eruption, languages of origins rather than coded discourse. In this lies their potential for breaking the texts in the puzzles they pose for a reader, as they break conventions. Contradictions are introduced, thus threatening the continuity of ego, the position of coherence, into which ideology fixes the subject. Continued deferral of meaning in such processes assures that this is a radical decentering. The new focus on all-female world moves us into a new space.

Critics following writers into this ever-mobile spiral have taken several routes in their effort to define the world from a female centre. They have redefined the literary canon to include genres in which women have made an important contribution — private forms of writing such as diaries, letters and oral ones too. In the Canadian context, this leads to the discussion of the oral life history of Pitseolak, an Eskimo artist, or to the consideration of an Indian woman's creation myth. The native woman has often served as metaphor for women's marginalization in Canadian literature, a figure who must be embraced before creation can begin. Criticism inclusive of these minority figures might aptly be said to have taken to the woods, to have listened to the call of the wild.

Yet other critics have set off into this women's wilderness to recapture a lost all-female world in a reexamination of the relationship of mother and daughter, devalued in present society where the fact that God was once a woman is a carefully maintained secret.[45] Others again, like Suzanne Lamy,[46] have adopted a subjective, fluid, circulating friend's voice in works which, embodying personal appreciations of women's books, quotations from them, reflections on one's personal life, blur the boundaries between manifesto, fiction, poetry, criticism. Attempting to become the author and creating a commonwealth of literary participants, these women move toward shared spaces between reader and writer. Here feminist engagement is framed in emotional as well as intellectual terms as an act of love between women. The spiral moves from a new centre as the work on language creates polysemanticity, opening the language as well as the forms and genres, to multiplicity, to movement.

Here is the cutting edge of our vision, a recognition of difference as several equal variables, positively valued. For without such an attempt to create third or fourth terms, to bring into being a more radical difference, the decentring of the patriarchal world is in jeopardy. For the subject at the centre of a binary pair tends to reobjectify all that comes within its embrace, fixed as it is by ideology to this position in relation to discourse. Moreover, it may prove an easier task to dislodge the ruling centre and to push it into the double helix from the mobile position of the spiral, whose movement will force a corresponding movement at the centre, than it would be from the fixed position of object on the periphery of the circle. Nonetheless, both attempts are necessary, and all three concepts of difference have a place in feminist criticism. To focus on the fact of domination, to shift that centre through the naming and denunciation of the nature of oppression, is as central a part of the work of the feminist critic as is the pursuit of radical difference. Together these activities offer some of the most serious creative play presently available. The power of such play to set new worlds in motion is by now, I hope, clear. Let us join our voices with those of the poets.

Epilogue

This essay is grounded in paradoxes, not the least of which is the tension between its rhetorical and expressive functions, as it both denounces the logical

principles which have lead to women's supposed literary silence and through the poetic appeal of its metaphors invites you to respond to identifying with this muffled voice. This in turn rests on the foundation of a paradox at the heart of contemporary feminism, in the very understanding of ideology. In a case of the left hand not knowing what the right hand is doing, feminists denounce the ideology of patriarchy, ideology here being understood to have a negative meaning, being a form of false consciousness that disturbs the understanding of social reality, and call into question the cognitive value of ideas affected by ideology. Simultaneously, however, they are advancing an ideology with a positive meaning, being the expression of the world-view of a class. The opinions, theories and attitudes formed to defend and promote its interests are more frequently called ideologies,[47] the introduction of the plural here underlining the possibility of choice and a clearer apprehension of reality. This paradox may be further explored through a distinction between ideological thought and Utopian thought. Both are distortions, but whereas ideological thought fails to take account of new realities in a situation by concealing them, thinking of them in categories which are inappropriate, Utopian thought transcends the present and is oriented towards the future and, should it pass into conduct, shatters the prevailing order of things. The feminism I have described is of this Utopian mode. A quest for reality would avoid either pole of these distortions. But our knowledge of reality is enriched when it assimilates divergent perspectives of groups experiencing social reality differently.[48] Of the two types of distortion, the Utopian is potentially the more flexible in its accomodation of divergences.

For a critical theory that calls itself "revisionary", questioning conceptual structures and "rethinking thinking," by advancing the personal, the emotional as a conterpoint, my essay is paradoxically conventional. It offers few rough edges or breaks for the reader to latch onto, is in no way disjointed or autobiographical. The lyric potential of its central metaphor is subverted by the order and control the circle exercizes in rhetorically structuring the paper. Consequently, its ringing tones work to convince you rather than inviting you to question established procedures. In other words, it sounds like a party line, the tendentiousness of the feminist argument working to restrict the range of meanings potentially available in the text. It is thus characterized by some degree of closure, at the very time it argues against this feature of dominant language to the extent that such a language embodies a hierarchy of meanings and implies a subjection to meaning. Posing the issue of feminist cultural practice in this way opens once more the question of a feminine as opposed to a feminist text. This feminine text or "open text" is the dialogic text, or the text in spiral, which according to Nicole Brossard,[49] subverts the linear logic of patriarchal ideology. By way of moving us towards that heterogeneous text, I am openly addressing you, the reader, and explicating this paradox for you in order to subvert its appropriating power over you. Also, I am opening other frames, shifting the perspectives, enfolding that statement within a vaster ensemble wherein its assumptions, the nature of this particular "critical wager" are more clearly revealed, its contradictions articulated. This consciousness of self-

consciousness is a way of ensuring that we do not become fixed into a representation by ideology. In such perpetual undercutting of positions, our focus is on the process of production of meaning. An illusion of opening is created by this recursive paradigm.

Department of English
York University

Notes

1. In critical texts, the usual mode of intertextuality is quotation. In this text, I have made use of allusion. The texts I am working with range from French feminist theory, Quebec literary practice and theory and general anglo-american feminist criticism. For a more detailed working out of the relationships between these differing groups, see my forthcoming "Mapmaking: A survey of Feminist Criticism," in *Critical Difference: Feminist Approaches to the Writing of Canadian and Quebec Women* (Downsview: ECW, 1984). Here I am weaving them all together. Thanks to Daphne Read for her dialogue.

2. Before turning to the question of critical theory we might well pause a moment to consider the issue of feminism. What we mean by the term undoubtebly varies. Generally, feminism is a movement and in so far as some of its followers have engaged in philosophical analysis it also gives rise to theory. In that it articulates the opinions and attitudes formed within a group in order to defend and promote its interests, feminism is the expression of the world-view of that social group, that is an ideology. Intrinsic to feminism is women's sense of grievance, an awareness of oppression, an awareness that women suffer systematic social injustice because of their sex. This awareness depends on a belief in and commitment to the ideal of equality. Under this broad umbrella are to be found a variety of feminisms, differing in their analysis of the grounds for female oppression, of what constitutes the locus of reality for the female. Does oppression originate in social conventions and legal systems which can be changed by reforming the laws and educating the young to overcome gender bias? Or is the oppression biological in origin, rooted in sex differences and eternally immutable? Is the oppression privatized, psychological, its genesis in the basic impulses and instincts of the Oedipal phase important for the separation, the difference, that forms the subject, developmental process from which females — undifferentiated from their mothers, from nature — are excluded? Does this exclusion then perpetuate itself in the symbolic systems and language of our culture, or do these systems and this language "speak" us out of them, because they have been formed and perpetuated in male institutions? Or is this oppression grounded in the material conditions of our economic system where capitalism has appropriated woman's labour whether inside or outside the home, reified her, made her a commodity?

   The replies to this question about the Real have given rise to the various current streams of feminism which have taken divergent courses. One has confronted the issue of dominance, seeking for women the rights and privileges normally held by men in society. This has been the tactic of both liberal reformers with their call for Equal Rights and Marxists with their subordination of women's struggle to the broader class struggle against capitalism. An opposing stream of radical feminism, socialist feminists and lesbian feminists, has sought for women a special status which would be equally valued. Attempting to define the specificity of women, they emphasize the fact of difference. For a Canadian version of this latter see Angela Miles and Geraldine Finn's *Feminism in Canada: From Pressure to Politics* (Montreal: Black Rose, 1983).

3. Roland Barthes, "History of Literature ?" in *On Racine*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill & Wang, 1964), p. 163

4. Margaret Atwood, *Power Politics* (Toronto: Anansi, 1972), p. 31.

5. Dale Spender, *Man Made Language* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), p. 19.

6. Percy B. Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry* (1821).

7. Plato, *The Republic.*

8. Samuel N. Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology* (Rev. ed. New York: Harper, 1961), pp. 93 and 95, also Merlin Stone, *When God Was a Woman* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Janovich, 1976).

9. While it is a heavy burden to place on a single Atwood poem, to develop my thesis on her view of power politics, this doesn't distort her view of language. Generally, she is suspicious of the word and locates truth or meaning in gesture not word. I have been working at greater length on this subject in "Dream of a Common Language: Atwood and Brossard."

10. Sheila Rowbotham, *Woman's Consciousness, Man's World* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973), pp. 32-33.

11. Margaret Laurence in Kroetsch, et. al., *Creation* (Toronto: New press, 1979), p. 63. It is also a phrase of Nicole Brossard's found in *These Our Mothers* (Toronto; Coach House, 1983), *L'Amèr* (Montreal: Quinze, 1975).

12. I am picking up here on the controversial issue of the female subject which follows from Jacques Lacan's suggestion that discourse is a grammar of the self. The self or subject is split into a "je" or "ça" both participating in the production of discourse. While "je" produces discourse, "ça" speaking makes a latent signified perceptible through metaphor and results in the discovery of signification. Lacan's insistence on the primacy of the Oedipal complex in the split of the subject, in the development of the possibility of differential analysis, has seemingly excluded women from the production of discourse. (*Écrits*, Paris: Seuil, 1970) French feminists such as Luce Irigaray have attacked this primacy of the phallus as signifier, "phallogo-centrism", and suggested other modes of female differentiation on which to found a grammar of the self. Irigaray images a female doubling in the two lips speaking, lips of the mouth or of the vagina in *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un* (Paris: Minuit, 1977), p. 26. She advocates a serial concept of difference rather than a binary one that results in hierarchies. Julia Kristeva offers another model in the female body doubling and splitting in pregnancy. ("Women's Time," trans. by Alice Jardine, *Signs*, 7, 1 (Autumn 1981), pp. 13-35). Nicole Brossard offers another version in *These Our Mothers* (Toronto, 1983) in the separation of the child from the mother's breast.

13. See for example Judith Fetterley, *The Resisting Reader* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978). Also Lorraine Weir, "Towards a Feminist Hermeneutic," forthcoming in *Critical Difference: Feminist Approaches to the Writing of Canadian and Quebec Women.* (Downsview: ECW, 1984).

14. Dorothy Smith, "An Analysis of Ideological Structures: How Women Are Excluded: Considerations for Academic Women," *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 12 (November 1975), p. 353. The circle metaphor is from Smith as well as from an unpublished talk by Nicole Brossard. The applications of it, however, are my own. Smith goes on to say: "the universe of ideas, images and themes — the symbolic modes which are the general currency of thought — have been either produced by men or controlled by them. In so far as women's work and experience has entered into it, it has been on terms decided by men and because it has been approved by men." Women have access and participate in the educational and literary institutions as marginals. "Their training and education ensure that at every level of competence and leadership there will be a place for them which is inferior and subordinate to the positions of men."

15. Luce Irigaray, "Pouvoir du discours: subordination du féminin," in *Ce Sexe qui n'en est pas un* (Paris: Minuit, 1977), p. 65-82.

16. Myra Jehlen, "Archimedes and the Paradox of Feminist Criticism," (Signs, 1981) quoted by Louise Forsyth, "The Fusion of Reflexive Writing and Theoretical Reflection: Nicole Brossard and Feminist Criticism in Quebec." Unpublished paper, 1981, p. 2.

17. This is again a summary of Irigaray's position on difference. For a more extended discussion of the divergence between Irigaray and de Beauvoir, see my article "My (M)Other, My Self: Strategies for Subversion in Atwood and Hébert," *ECW*, 26 (1983), pp. 13-44, and below.

18. These ideas have been developed by Althusser as described by Tony Bennett in *Formalism and Marxism* (London: Methuen, 1979), p. 116.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 122-123.

20. This paper was originally read to the Literary Theory Group of ACUTE at the Learned Societies, Vancouver, 1983. In revising it for publication I discovered an article which effectively categorized the differing concepts of difference I was working and I have borrowed this formulation from it. Judith K. Gardiner, "Power, Desire and Difference: Comment on Essays from *Signs*' Special Issues on Feminist Theory," *Signs*. 8, 4(Summer 1983), p. 736.

21. Forsyth, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 1-2.

22. This text is an attempt to do so, alluding as it does to many works of art. The succeeding lines are a paraphrase of Nicole Brossard.

23. Louise Forsyth, "La critique au féminin: vers de nouveau lieux communs." *Parlons-en/Speaking Together* (Montreal: Simone de Beauvoir Institute, June 2, 1980), My translation.

24. Mary Daly, Gyn/ecology: the Meta Ethics of Radical Feminism (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), p. 56.

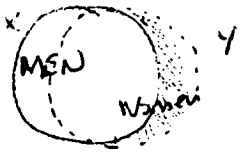
25. Jacques Ehrmann, "Homo Ludens Revisited," in *Game, Play, Literature* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), pp. 38 and 53.

26. Dale Spender, *Op. Cit.*, p. 3.

27. Christine Salem, "On Naming the Oppressor: What Woolf Avoids Saying in *A Room of One's Own*". *Women's Studies International Quarterly*. 3, 2/3 (1980), pp. 209-218.

28. Lorraine McMullen, "The Divided Self," *Atlantis*. 5, 2 (Spring 1980), pp. 52-67.

29. Although I had not seen it when I first wrote this, this description of a model for conceptualizing sex differences is similar to that developed by Elaine Showalter in her essay "Criticism in the Wilderness," *Critical Inquiry*, 8, 2(Winter 1981), p. 200.



30. Philip Stratford, "Canada's Two Literatures: A Search for Emblems," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*. 6, 2 (Spring 1979), pp. 131-138.

31. Course on the Semiotics of Sex Differences given by Dian McGuiness of Stanford University at the International Semiotics Summer Institute. University of Toronto, June 1982.

32. Annette Kolodny, *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975.

33. Barbara Godard, "The View from Below: the Female Novel of the Land." Paper read at Intersections. Lincoln Nebraska, March 1982. (forthcoming in a book I am writing on language and Canadian women's writing.)

34. Deborah Jones, "Gossip: Notes on Women's Oral Culture." *Women's Studies International Quarterly, 3, 2/3 (1980), p. 194.*

35. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland* (1915, rpt. new York: Pantheon, 1979).

36. Joanna Russ, *The Female Man* (New York: Bantam, 1975).

37. With respect to this question, Elaine Showalter has articulated another position in her article "Criticism in the Wilderness." Working both with American socio-linguistic descriptive material and French semiotic theory with respect to woman as sign, as well as philosophical theories on the relationship between language and action, I have stressed the primacy of *language* in sexual difference. This is especially relevant for the question of literary theory which is focused on difference expressed in the word. Showalter briefly describes four different groundings for female difference, biology, language, psyche and culture, in ascending order of comprehensiveness, arguing that "a theory of culture incorporates ideas about woman's body, language, and psyche but interprets them in relation to the social contexts in which they occur." (p. 197) However, this analysis is based on a superficial understanding of French psycholanalystic structuralism and especially a mis-reading of the primacy of language in the framing of symbolic systems. Hence I would underline this sentence of mine, "it is through language that we define and categorize areas of difference and similarity."

38. Alice Munro, *Lives of Girls and Women* (New York; New American Library, 1971), p. 181. See also my discussion of this in "Heirs of the Living Body: Alice Munro and the Question of a Female Aesthetic," Read at Munro conference, Waterloo, March 1982. Forthcoming with proceedings.

39. Madeleine Gagnon, "Mon corps dans l'écriture," in Gagnon, Cixous, Clément, *La venue à l'écriture* (Paris: 10/18, 1977), p. 63.

40. Margaret Atwood, *Surfacing* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972). See also my "Dream of a Common Language: Theories of Language in Atwood and Brossard."

41. Madeleine Gagnon. *Lueur* (Montreal: VLB, 1979).

42. Nicole Brossard, "La tête qu'elle fait," *La Barre du jour*, 56-7 (1977), p. 91. On this question see my chapter "Vers une poétique féministe: *La nouvelle barre du jour*," in *Subversion Féminité, Écriture* (Montreal: Éditions Remue Ménage, 1983) and "The Exploding Chapter: Nicole Brossard at the Site of Feminist Deconstruction, *Atlantis*. forthcoming fall 1983).

43. Mary Daly, *Op. Cit.*, p. 9.

44. *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

45. For example, Cathy N. Davidson and E.M. Broner, eds. *The Lost Tradition: Mothers and Daughters in Literature* (New York: Ungar, 1980) and Lois Gotlieb and Wendy Keitner, "Daughters and Mothers in Four Recent Canadian Novels," *Sphinx*, 1, 4 (Summer 1975).

46. Suzanne Lamy, *d'elles* (Montreal: L'Hexagone, 1979)

47. This analysis is based on the work of Jorge Larrain, *The Concept of Ideology* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1979), Chapter 1.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 114.

49. Nicole Brossard, *Amantes* (Montreal: Quinze, 1980) This is a feminist elaboration on Kristeva's discussion of the ideologem and the bounded text in *Le texte du roman* (Paris, La Hague: Mouton, 1970). Kristeva's definition of the feminine text as a radically signifying practice is also echoed here. A text may embody or produce the poetic to the degree that it brings to the fore the processes by which it constructs its own meanings. A text is constituted as poetic in relation to its reading. Any text may qualify as poetic, as radical signifying practice, or as feminine only in the relationships it poses between itself and its readers.

REVIEWS

PORNOGRAPHY: THE POETRY OF OPPRESSION

Susan Griffin, *Pornography and Silence: Culture's Revenge Against Nature,* New York: Harper & Row, 1981.

In the recently published anthology of her writings, *Made from this Earth,* Susan Griffin writes:

> It took me years to understand that a poem is not simply a description of a state of feeling, or an idea. The poem does not happen after the fact. The poem is an event which is at the same time a record of an event .... The words one writes find feelings in oneself, and these feelings find words of their own, which in turn locate other feelings. In this way, slowly, step by step, a knowledge buried in the body comes to consciousness.
> This is a healing process.[1]

Like a poem, pornography is, for Griffin, "an event which is at the same time a record of an event." Pornography and poetry: these are the text and the subtext of Susan Griffin's book, *Pornography and Silence,* which is itself an experiment in poetry: an event that is the record of an event. Reading this book is, if the reader consents to the demands of the text, to the author's intention (and not all readers will want to), both a penetration and a transcendence of what Griffin calls the pornographic mind. For Griffin, poetry is an invitation to feeling, to eros, to life; pornography is the dead-ening of feeling, and its violence is perpetrated against the self, the body, and against all "Others" in western culture who have come to represent feeling, vulnerability, the body: women, children, Jews, blacks.

> All death in pornography is really only the death of the heart. Over and over again, that part of our beings which can feel both in body and mind is ritually murdered. We make a mistake, therefore, when we believe that pornography is simply fantasy, simply a record of sadistic events. For pornography exceeds the boundaries of both fantasy and record and becomes itself an act. Pornography *is* sadism.[2]

Griffin argues that "pornography is an expression not of human erotic feeling and desire, and not of a love of the life of the body, but of a fear of bodily knowledge, and a desire to silence eros."[3]

Pornography is the subject of the book (ostensibly), but poetry is the mode of analysis, and Griffin's treatment of this highly volatile political issue is at best problematic for anyone concerned with doing something about the proliferation and effects of pornography. In choosing a poetic method of analysis, Griffin opts for poetic interpretations of pornography which circle around but ultimately avoid fundamental problems of analysis: what is pornography? what are the structures of pornography? where does it fit into capitalism, patriarchy? what is its history? what can be done? For those of us excited by the intellectual rigour and depth of developing socialist feminist theory, it is disappointing that Griffin situates her discussion within the nature/culture dualism: pornography is "culture's revenge against nature."

Understanding the processes of writing and reading *Pornography and Silence* is central, in my view, to a sympathetic response to the book. Griffin never clearly articulates a critical tension concerning her approach to pornography, a tension revealed in a retrospective comment on the process of *Pornography and Silence*: "as I wrote about the pornographer's mind I discovered that pornography itself was not so much an art form as it was an ideology."[4] This statement is as startling — even shocking — to the feminist reader as it is revealing. Shocking because the stories we have heard from women who have lived through the various experiences of pornography are so devastating, appalling, painful, that it is difficult to see how a feminist could *begin* with the idea that pornography is an art form. And yet, in the Prologue to *Pornography and Silence,* Griffin borrows a phrase from another feminist poet, Judy Grahn, to describe — define? — pornography as "the poetry of oppression."[5] For *whom* is it poetry?

It is one thing to approach pornography as a poet, as Griffin does; it is quite another to say pornography is poetry. The approach and the subject become conflated through Griffin's interest in the intersection of feeling, idea, and act, in image and symbol, pornographic and otherwise. The book is, at one level, a poetic meditation on images in general. It is an inquiry into the psychological impact of images on the human psyche. More specifically it asks, what is the emotional effect — the feeling-effect — of pornographic images? And how does the process of seeing, absorbing, interpreting, and remembering these images lead from contemplation to concrete (sadistic) act? In writing about the destructiveness of the symbolic system of our "pornographic culture," Griffin counters that destructiveness with a vision of eros — an experiment in poetic images — which leads the *engaged* reader (the consenting reader) through a healing labyrinth of myths, symbols, quotations, and representative lives. Against a pornography of poetry she is creating a poetry of eros.

Although *Pornography and Silence* is not really about pornography in its social science dimensions and does not address the problems of strategy within the women's movement, I would argue that Griffin perceives the poetic process in which she engages the reader as political. In an untitled essay in *Made from this Earth* on poetry as a way of knowledge, she comments extensively on her poetic

principles and (unintentionally) illuminates her method in *Pornography and Silence*. Whereas many artists claim exemption from considerations of ideology and politics, Griffin states unequivocally that: "A poem cannot be apolitical. All human utterance can be understood as political theory."[6]

> When I say that no poem is apolitical, I am not implying that poetry *ought* to be political, but that it *is* political. Political theory cannot possibly teach a poet to be political, because poetry precedes formal political theory in the imagination, and because poetry is closer to the original form of all thinking. For this reason, poetry teaches political theory imagination.[7]

For Griffin, poetry, feeling, and the political are inextricably linked, and she cites Audre Lorde, a black feminist poet, who has written: "The white fathers told us 'I think therefore I am' and the black mothers in each of [us] — the poets — whisper in our ears 'I feel therefore I can be free.' "[8]

The belief that the word — speech, poetry, political theory — is political is, I think, the poetic corollary of the radical feminist tenet that the personal is political. If Griffin's intention in *Pornography and Silence* were to be fully realized, then the interaction between the reader and her text should be, I would argue, a private experience of consciousness raising. "Like human intimacy," writes Griffin, "poetry can overturn our ideas of who we are, so that when we begin to speak the language of poetry, we feel the same risk one feels in closeness. But with poetry one risks closeness to oneself."[9] The importance of poetry in the process of discovering and naming the world from the perspective of women has been affirmed repeatedly by feminist poets. Audre Lorde writes:

> For women, then, poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence. It forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action. Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought. The farthest external horizons of our hopes and fears are cobbled by our poems, carved from the rock experiences of our daily lives.[10]

The kind of knowledge that Griffin invites the reader to discover and share with her is rooted in an understanding of the relationship between images and feelings. She takes the reader on a journey through the pornographic mind, and as we explore the psychological states of denial of feeling, repression, projection, and the tragic split between body and mind, we begin to comprehend the illness and madness of the sadist who is unable to distinguish between delusion/illusion and reality.

But Griffin risks channelling our (justified) rage towards these "pornographers" — a pantheon which includes Hitler, Hugh Hefner, the Marquis de Sade — into a paralysis of compassion and forgiveness. This is a consequence of

her theoretical framework. Pornography is synonymous with western culture, is a correlative of the philosophical split between mind and body and the philosophical valorization of intellect at the expense of feeling. Within our culture, everyone is a victim: both the (male) pornographer/sadist, who suffers, whether he knows it or not, from the denial of his feelings/nature and from his punishment of self, which is ritually realized in pornography; and all women, including those who appear to consent to pornographic practices, in their own lives or in the pornography industry.

This emphasis on victimization, with its disregard for structures of power and lack of an analysis that distinguishes between forms of power and levels of victimization, is established in the Prologue to *Pornography and Silence*. Here Griffin introduces six victims of the pornographic culture who represent different positions within the culture, and to whom she returns meditatively throughout the book: Franz Marc, a German painter, who came to reject his sensual paintings, and in a search for pure spirit, enlisted in the German army and was killed in World War 1; Kate Chopin, an American writer who died in 1904, silenced by a storm of protest against *The Awakening*, a novel exploring a woman's coming to erotic consciousness; the Marquis de Sade, pornographer; Marilyn Monroe, sex symbol and actress; Lawrence Singleton, an American who raped a young woman and cut off her arms; and Anne Frank, who believed in the essential goodness of people and died in a concentration camp. These women and men represent in varying ways the denial of the body and nature, the death of feeling, and the destructive power of our pornographic culture. Yet however much we condemn the culture which "allowed" the Marquis de Sade and Lawrence Singleton, however much we recognize that they were sick, we cannot lose sight of the fact that they were responsible for injuring real women. Similarly, Griffin's discussion of Hitler's pornographic mind is disconcerting in view of the horrifying consequences of his power. Although Griffin is aware of the differences between, say, Anne Frank and Hitler, one possible implication of her approach is that none of us is individually responsible since we are all victims of the pornographic culture.

This impasse reflects the inadequacy of Griffin's theoretical framework. "Nature" is the victim of "culture". "Culture" seems to refer to all (male) creations/distortions of intellect-without-feeling. "Pornographic culture" seems to have grown to include anti-semitism, racism and homophobia. Although Griffin correctly points out that the iconography of pornography has anti-semitic and racist dimensions and that the iconography of anti-semitism and racism has pornographic dimensions, yet to assimilate anti-semitism and racism to pornography, as she verges on suggesting, is to give the concept of pornography an analytic and political force that it simply does not sustain. And not to distinguish in a theoretically precise and careful way between women and men in her analysis of pornography is to retreat to a humanist position where all men and women are equally damaged.

It is both a strength and a misfortune that members of dominated groups understand the psychology of the dominating groups better than the latter themselves. But understanding the psychological origins of acts of violence and

sadism that injure real women and children and "Others" is not sufficient; that understanding must also translate into political activity which challenges and refuses the collective tolerance of pornographic acts. To return to Audre Lorde: "experience has taught us that the action in the now is also always necessary."

> The white fathers told us, I think therefore I am; and the black mother in each of us — the poet — whispers in our dreams, I feel therefore I can be free. Poetry coins the language to express and charter this revolutionary awareness and demand, the implementation of that freedom. However, experience has taught us that the action in the now is also always necessary. Our children cannot dream unless they live, they cannot live unless they are nourished, and who else will feed them the real food without which their dreams will be no different from ours?[11]

The problem with Griffin's book is that pornography is not a poem. Going beyond the pornographic imagination to a culture of wholeness —to eros — must be a poetic concern, but dealing with issues of power and violence concerning the being and the sexuality of women, children — and men — is a matter of analysis, strategy, and action. *Pornography and Silence* might be seen as an experiment in political poetry, or in poetic consciousness raising, but it is an experiment in which I hear echoes of the idealist Romantic belief in the power of inner contemplation to change the external world. It does not point the way to change through collective action.

Daphne Read
Department of English
York University

Notes

With thanks to Jeannie Coulthard, Pat Elliot, Ruth Frager, Franca Iacovetta, Cid Paiva and Jan Patterson for their comments on a draft.

1. Susan Griffin, *Made from this Earth: An Anthology of Writings* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), p. 248.
2. Griffin, *Pornography and Silence: Culture's Revenge Against Nature* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), p.83.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
4. Griffin, "The Way of All Ideology," in *Made from this Earth*, p. 163. Originally published in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 7, no. 3 (spring 1982), 641-60.
5. *Pornography and Silence*, p. 2.
6. *Made from this Earth*, p. 241.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 242.
8. *Ibid.*, p.244. Quoted from Audre Lorde, "Poems are Not Luxuries," *Chrysalis*, No. 3.

9. *Ibid.*, pp.242-43.
10. Audre Lorde, "Poetry Is Not a Luxury," in *The Future of Difference*, ed. Hester Eisenstein and Alice Jardine (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1980), p. 126.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 126-27.

THE ANTI-SOCIAL FAMILY

Michèle Barrett and Mary McIntosh, *The Anti-Social Family*, London: Verso Editions/NLB, 1982.

The authors of *The Anti-Social Family* have already made significant contributions to feminist theorisations of sexual relations, the social construction of gender and gender hierarchies, and women's oppression (McIntosh, 1968; 1978; 1981; Barrett and McIntosh, 1980; Barrett, 1980;1982). This new book throws down a challenging gauntlet to social theorists, feminists and socialists. It is an important and exciting work which promises to provoke rigorous debate.

In *Women's Oppression Today* (1980), Barrett synthesized existing debates about the oppression of women in capitalist society. Based on an analysis of two central concepts — ideology of gender and the sexual division of labour — that book summarizes and critiques current knowledge and theories about the two and their power to construct the situation of women. In this new co-authored piece, Barrett and McIntosh continue a theme begun in *Women's Oppression Today* by focusing directly on "the family". Like the former book, one strength of this work is that it recapitulates existing debates on "the family". For this contribution alone the book is very important. But its value goes far beyond its synthesis.

The motivation for the book is the political battle currently raging over the social institution called "the family". The authors note that powerful right-wing conservative "pro-family" forces in Europe and North America are rallying around a position which calls for the compulsory institutionalization of the heterosexual couple in which the power of the breadwinner husband/father is assurred and the economically dependent wife/mother is responsible for performing, unpaid, a whole range of necessary social services. To date, they point out, socialists and feminists have not been systematic in their opposition to these right wing mobilizations. Indeed, at present, not only is there no socialist and feminist consensus on issues related to family, sexuality, and child

bearing and rearing, but some elements within both socialist and feminist currents are also claiming to be "pro family".

Barrett and McIntosh are adamantly opposed to such a position. They argue that "socialists and feminists must develop a political consensus on the family" (7) and then organize to combat the right wing attacks. Arguing that the precondition for such a developement "is more open debate" (7) their book is intending to promote such discussion.

Their first assumption is that "the family" must be understood at two levels; as "a social and economic institution" (7) and as "an ideology" (8). Within this framework, they examine disparate topics and proceed on different levels of analysis. As a result, the book is somewhat disjointed and uneven. They are, for example, able to present an excellent and profound analysis of "the ideology of familialism" (129); their discussion of the material social and economic institution is much weaker.

Their central argument is that "just as the family has been socially constructed, so society has been familialized" (31). In contrast to dominant sociological notions of "the family" as a private institution, separate from the rest of society, and currently in crisis and decline, they argue that "the family remains a vigorous agency of class placement and an efficient mechanism for the creation and transmission of gender inequality". It is also "the focal point of a set of ideologies that resonate throughout society".(29). They then demonstrate the way familial ideology permeates all levels of society from scientific ideas about human nature (34-40), the sexual division of paid work (29;70) and domestic labour (61-65), and the media (31-34).

In developing this analysis, the authors present scathing critiques of the majority of contemporary family theorists, particularly Donzelot (1980) and Lasch (1977). To give, briefly, one example, Barrett and McIntosh show how both Donzelot and Lasch defend what they consider to be the positive aspects of the privatization of "the family". Both men mourn the loss of independent authority of families and warn of increasing psychic devastation as a result. They both attribute this crisis in "the family" to the threat of loss of privacy posed by the state, market forces and feminism. As Barrett and McIntosh demonstrate, such arguments are implicitly anti-feminist: "The authoritarian patriarchal family is mourned, and women are blamed for the passing of this organic basis of social order." (104). Such an analysis they argue, ignores the fact that women are the victims of the privatized patriarchal family. As a result, despite Donzelot's and Lasch's claims to the contrary, both books are linked to the right-wing "pro family" arguments.

Barrett and McIntosh are most brilliant when they argue that "the family", touted ideologically as the bedrock or foundation of society, is in fact fundamentally anti-social. In contrast to social ideologues who accuse all those who live outside "the family" of being deviant and anti-social —single mothers, lesbians, homosexuals, for example — Barrett and McIntosh demonstrate how the most basic structures of "the family" divide people from each other and prevent the development of more collective, social forms of human interactions and institutions.

First and foremost "the family reproduces class relations both covertly as children's class position is largely determined by their parents' position, and overtly through patterns of upper class marriage and inheritance which "serve to reproduce the concentration of wealth in a small class of people" (47).

Secondly, conservative ideology conflates the concepts of family and individual. Arguing that individuals must be self-supporting, conservatives would tie through "the family", those who cannot be self-supporting in a capitalist economy to those who can. Thus women and children should be supported by a wage-earning husband/father. Ironically, of course, while fighting to reduce state intervention into the private life of families when this means providing support to those unable to care for themselves, conservatives insist on bolstering state intervention in the process of enforcing and privileging particular family forms.

Because it is identified as the only place wherein altruism, cooperation, emotional and sexual intimacy, sharing and nurturing child rearing may be experienced, "the family" retains mass appeal. The authors point out, for example, that the fact that people are unable to choose their kin provides them with a kinship network which is both familiar and relatively secure. No other relationships in capitalist society are guaranteed structurally to continue for life, no matter what the individual does.

Precisely because "the family" is reputed to be the locus of personal life, two dynamics are set in motion. All other social institutions are based on the assumption that they cannot (and must not) provide better alternatives. As a result, "the family sucks the juice out of everything around it, leaving other institutions stunted and distorted" (78). The authors insist, "caring, sharing and loving would be more widespread if the family did not claim them for its own" (80). For example, because sexual activity is ideally contained within the family, any sexual encounters outside the family (such as pre-marital sex, adultery, lesbian and homosexual sex, group sex and so on), are cast in a distorted and negative light.

Simultaneously, the legitimacy and privacy of "the family" mask the oppressive relations engendered by the economic dependency of women and children on the breadwinner male. The authors present a very good analysis of the implications of breadwinner power and women's dependency and the distortions of female/male relations which result. As the women's movement has documented, "the family" is no haven for the all too many women and children who are emotionally, sexually and physically abused by other family members.

Barrett and McIntosh are correct in their analysis of "the family" as a social entity whose social privilege makes it powerfully all pervasive, but which isolates small clusters of people and sets them against each other. However, there is a conceptual confusion in their argument which they occasionally acknowledge but do not confront. While they recognize that what they refer to throughout as "the family" is an ideological construct and an ideal type, they fail to separate the ideological concept from the social and economic institution. Too often they conflate family and household, confusing the social and

geographic locus of co-habitation with ideas about how people should live. Despite a caveat at the beginning that they are not dealing with "the several family forms of the different ethnic groups" (8), they never confront the fact that the majority of households do not conform to the ideological norm. As a result, this remains untheorized.

Also untheorized is the fact that the private household is the locus for the reproduction of labour power, and consequently, the social relations of the household and the labour which goes on within it are part of the cycle of capital accumulation. In this regard, the household (often, though not necessarily a family-based household), is indeed an essential institution of capitalist society. Despite their assertion that social history is essential to any analysis of this sort, they do not examine the core relations of social reproduction — child bearing and rearing and the reproduction of family and household forms from generation to generation.

It is their failure to deal directly with the social and economic institution of "the family" which results in what I consider to be the greatest weakness of the book. In the introduction they note the absence in their work of an analysis of sexual preference and its relation to the family. They explain that this absence occurs because: "we believe the present ideology of the family to be so steeped in heterosexism that any realistic engagement with familialism must locate the discussion within that framework" (9). However, household formation and the relations of child bearing and child rearing are, in this society, determined by the constraints of compulsory heterosexuality. By developing their analysis entirely within that framework they are unable to theorize the relation of sexuality to social reproduction. Thus sexuality is presented as something separate from, rather than central to the reproduction of social relations.

Barrett and McIntosh conclude their book with a section on strategies for change. Their long term goals are "a major social transformation that will displace the family as the sole and privileged provider of moral and material support and spread these good things more widely through the community" (133). Their strategy for working towards this is two-pronged: "(1) we should work for immediate changes that will increase the possibilities for choice so that alternatives to the existing favoured patterns of family life became realistically available and desirable; (2) we should work towards collectivism and away from individualism" (134). Central to such efforts "must be to change all the state policies that currently privilege 'the family' at the expense of other ways of living" (148).

At the tactical level, their argument is weaker. They call for more variety and experimentation in living arrangement, for public campaigns against the state, and for the boycotting of friends' marriages. They do not, however, address the political struggle their book begins with; that is, the increasing mobilization of right wing political and religious groups.

The ability of the right-wing to mobilize particularly working class women in defense of a family form that is so oppressive is evidence of Barrett and McIntosh's point that the family has mass appeal because people have no other vision of how they could have what the family now (supposedly) provides.

Barrett and McIntosh have provided us with a clear and thorough analysis of why this is the case. The task now is to go beyond their excellent summary and critique to develop new insights into the politics of sexuality, male domination and the oppression of women.

Meg Luxton
Atkinson College
York University

References Cited

Barrett, Michele, *Women's Oppression Today* London: Verso, 1980.

Barrett, Michele, "Feminism and the definition of cultural politics" Rosalind Brunt and Carolone Rowan (eds) *Feminism, Culture and Politics* London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1982.

Barrett, Michele and McIntosh, Mary "The 'Family Wage'; some problems for socialists and feminists" *Capital and Class* no. 11, 1980.

Donzelot, Jacques,*The Policing of Families*, New York: 1979.

Lasch, Christopher, *Haven in a Heartless World*, New York: 1977.

McIntosh, Mary, "The homosexual role" *Social Problems* vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 182-192.

McIntosh, Mary, "The state and the oppression of women" in Annette Kuhn and Ann Marie Wolpe (eds) *Feminism and Materialism* London: Routledge, Kegan Paul, 1978.

McIntosh, Mary, "Postscript' 'The homosexual role' revisited" in Kenneth Plummer (ed) *The Making of the Modern Homosexual*, London: Hutcheson, 1981.

CONTRADICTIONS IN MATERIAL FEMINISM

Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981.

This ground-breaking book begins with descriptions of utopian socialist communities in the 1820s and 1830s, and ends with a map showing all the locations of Kentucky Fried Chicken outlets in the Los Angeles area. An unlikely plot line? Not really, when one considers that the topic of this history is the rise and fall of collective solutions to the housework problem. Remedies for the isolation and overwork suffered by housewives have come to be largely monopolized by fast food empires and other profit-making industries; these

services only 'free' the housewife to a limited extent, and in any case they pit the women who work in them (generally immigrant or poor women) against the better-off women who use them. Thus, the promise of the 'kitchenless house' of the utopian feminists has turned into a bitter joke. It is this process that Dolores Hayden has set out to outline.

To carry out this ambitious project, Hayden describes some of the developments in architecture, home economics, sociology of housework, and economic history, which combined to shape the experience of American women —and indirectly of men and children — in respect to housework and family life. The "grand domestic revolution" which she describes began by affecting middle-class white American women; however, to the extent that the final result of this process, the suburban American family, has become a world-wide ideal through American TV and through Hollywood movies, Hayden's analysis is relevant to women the world over in various degrees.

Much of the book is taken up by descriptions of the innovative feminist ideas developed in the 19th century to lighten housework, make it more scientific, and break down the isolation of the single-family home. Wisely, however, Hayden does not merely give us nostalgic pictures of utopian feminist ideas, but goes on to outline the way in which a backlash developed (in the 1914-1930 period) and successfully eliminated all pockets of feminist and socialist resistance to the housewife-consumer model of women's work in the home. The subsequent counter-revolution is not described in as much detail as the earlier grand domestic revolution; however, as will be argued below, the analytical link between these two dialectical opposites is the weakest element of the book.

The first chapters trace the co-operative projects of utopians such as Frances Wright and Robert Dale Owen, as well as the religious utopian communities such as the Shakers, the Perfectionists, and so on. These early utopian experiments have been studied before, but Hayden adds to our knowledge about them by paying close attention to the actual ways in which they reorganized housework. What she finds, not surprisingly, is that the practice often fell short of the ideal. Here, as throughout the book, Hayden makes good use of surviving drawings, engravings, and floor-plans, to see if the spatial arrangement of the communities actually facilitated collective and egalitarian forms of housework.

Hayden also points out the great impact of the French socialist Charles Fourier on American utopian socialism. Fourier, an eccentric advocate of communitarian living and sexual liberation, had many followers in the United States; the importance of this influence, often neglected by Yankee-centric historians, is borne out by Hayden's study. The early experiments in co-operative living and moral reform became more or less extinct in the 1850s. American capitalism boomed, and the West offered potential rebels land for individual homesteads; the Romantic and religious visions of America as the land of collective, natural living gave way to the individualistic and consumeristic ideology with which we are familiar today. Cleanliness and privacy were elevated to the rank of holy virtues, thus creating more work for housewives; at the same time, American men began to unionize and win wage packets that were high

enough to support dependent wives. The non-productive "lady" became the hegemonic form of womanhood among the middle classes, and the ideal among the working classes.

Hayden is not at her best in describing this period of retrenchment, which was roughly from 1845 until 1880. She gets rather carried away describing technological innovations without emphasizing that a crucial social transformation was quietly taking place beneath the surface of technical progress: capitalist industry was taking up and *co-opting the technical innovations* of the utopians, while subtly *suppressing the social innovations* which the utopians had seen as the raison d'être of their communities. Radical collectives were watered down into ordinary apartment hotels with shared services, or even into fancy resorts where the bourgeois women were 'freed' from housework because maids did it all. Hayden does describe these pilot projects as they were and mentions some of the problems, but she fails to provide an analysis as well as a description. The class bias of the bourgeois projects to rationalize housework is seen — as radical feminists usually see class — as an unfortunate barrier between women, and not as one of the two key contradictions in American society as a whole. The development of trade unions, the increasing gap between Yankees and immigrants, and the growth of the middle classes, are all crucial class-related contradictions that marked this period of American history. Any history of women's work, in the home or outside the home, must integrate these factors in order to have any analytical power.

After reading about the naive attitudes towards social change exemplified in so many turn-of-the-century feminists, even brilliant women like Charlotte Perkins Gilman, one can't help but conclude that the class interest of the majority of "material feminists" were the main reason for the failure of so many housework reform projects to meet the needs of working-class, immigrant, and black women. Hayden deplores the way in which some material feminists were either co-opted or silenced by the promoters of consumerism, but she does not see that it was precisely the lack of a wider political strategy that led the material feminists to do this.

This brings us to Hayden's key theoretical category: "material feminism". She distinguishes this both from socialist feminism and from the feminism of those who fought for political rights or social reform (suffragettes, temperance activists, etc.) Material feminists, she states, "expounded one powerful idea: that women must create feminist homes with socialized housework and child care"; "while other feminists campaigned for political or social change . . . the material feminists concentrated on economic and spatial issues as the basis of material life." (P. 1).

The feminists discussed by Hayden did indeed draw attention to certain problems, such as the isolation and overwork of housewives, which political activists usually ignored. However, Hayden glosses over the material feminists' crucial error, namely that material changes in household organization could not be generalized to society as a whole without some major social upheavals. The material feminists did not foresee (and they're certainly not alone in this) that capitalism might be able to co-opt and integrate many of their ideas and

inventions, as ways of *rationalizing* housework without challenging the gender and class relations that created the housewife and her problems in the first place. The difference between domestic co-optation and domestic revolution is illustrated in the chasm that separates the Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet from the community food co-op.

The point is that the pilot-projects that Hayden lovingly describes remained 'utopian' not just because of individual failures of nerve, but because American capitalism could only survive and grow by creating fifty million single-family dwellings, each with its own set of appliances. And for those who scoff at conspiracy theories, the last couple of chapters of Hayden's book are full of evidence that the crushing of the radicalism of 1880-1914, and the subsequent promotion of consumerism as the *summum bonum* were indeed consciously planned by industry and governement. Judging by the evidence provided by Hayden, the counter-revolution in domestic relations was nothing if not a conspiracy.

In the 1890s, when socialism and feminism were spreading throughout the U.S., many radicals thought that the private kitchen was about to disappear, and that women would all soon have well-paid jobs. This optimism, however, was short-lived. The Socialist Party of America, weakened by internal dissension, was effectively eliminated in the Red Scare of 1914-20 (see the movie "Reds" for some details of this); while suffragists, having already alienated themselves from both workers and blacks through a series of strategic blunders, were finally depoliticized by winning their one and only goal, the vote. Thus, when the war ended in 1918, the government's aim of sending women back into the home to create jobs for veterans dovetailed neatly with industry's aim of expanding the consumer sector. These economic goals were linked to a very explicit political motivation: in a book entitled *Good Homes Make Contented Workers*, published by an industrial planning firm in 1919, it was stated that "the man owns his home but in a sense his home owns him, checking his rash impulses . . . Then they won't leave and they won't strike. It ties them down so they have a stake in our prosperity." (Quoted on p. 284).

During the red scare, the community housing projects that had mushroomed in American —and Canadian — cities were attacked as hotbeds of anti-Americanism, communism, and lice. Henry Ford's famous spider-web chart of 'pinko' organizations, which was widely reproduced, included the YWCA and the WCTU. Co-operativism, feminism, and all other forms of non-macho behaviour were tarred with the brush of Bolshevism.

A few years later, as the Depression was settling in, the idea of promoting single-family, owner-occupied dwellings for the working class was taken up by none other than Herbert Hoover. The idea was to keep down strikes, eliminate collectivism, and promote sales of consumer goods. The homeowner, assumed to be male, was seen as by nature conservative; and so the ideology of the suburb was born, Hoover's own "Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership" (1931) explicitly linked the building of suburbs for the white working class to these political goals. And, as Hayden points out, the male workers who scrimped and saved to buy a home had an edge over their wives which their fathers had not

had; this problem was compounded by the effect of the Depression on women's employment opportunities.

These right-wing strategies were successful partly because the co-operative movement had by then become disrespectable, being associated with the break-up of the family, the yellow peril, and other horrors. Many noted feminists made the tragic error of attempting to gain respectability for their own little projects (in the 1920s and 1930s), at the expense of all other progressive movements. They concentrated on such things as home economics classes and new kitchen gadgets. The irony of it all was that when their own organizations, such as the YWCA and the WCTU, themselves came under attack, there was no one left to defend them. A further irony, not mentioned by Hayden, was that as the Communist Party flourished in the thirties and revived the radical tradition, feminism had lost its radical roots, and was thus not integrated into the new wave of left-wing activity. Socialism became rather impoverished and class reductionist for the first time in American history; though the communist leadership certainly bears some of the blame for this, the evidence presented by Hayden shows that feminists themselves contributed to this tragic split.

To conclude: the success of the domestic *counter*-revolution demonstrates that the Achilles' heel of the whole material feminist project had been the glossing over of political and class contradictions. While the early utopians were clear that their buildings and gadgets were only means to an end — the end being the total renewal and transfiguration of the body politic — the later material feminists became rather fetishistic about their commodities. They forgot that it was not the automatic washing machine that would by itself deliver women from slavery; they forgot, or never knew, that without a broader political context such material changes can easily be incorporated into more sophisticated forms of oppression. The housewife of the 1980s does not have to wash by hand; but her family expects clean clothes every day, not just every week, and her television expects inhuman whiteness to shine from every collar. It seems to me that the real domestic revolution has yet to take place.

Hayden has given us an important and readable book which deserves a wide readership. Nevertheless, her book is marred by many of the problems that characterize much of American feminist research: a naive understanding of the class structure in the U.S., and a failure to underline sufficiently that many of the gains made by well-to-do ladies from Boston and New York were made on the backs of their Irish maids, their black cooks, and their Russian Jewish seamstresses. In this sense, the contradictions plaguing the material feminists are still very much with us.

Mariana Valverde
Department of Women's Studies
University of Toronto

CANADIAN FEMINISM

Angela Miles and Geraldine Finn, eds., *Feminism in Canada: From Pressure to Politics*. Black Rose Books, 1983.

To describe this book is a difficult task, perhaps more difficult than evaluating it. To begin with, the title is misleading, suggesting a survey of present feminist activity in Canada rather than the important collection of essays on feminist theory which we in fact find. Following a useful introduction by Angela Miles, Part one is about "Scholarship: Theory and Practice", and contains stimulating chapters questioning the underlying assumptions of the scientific method, of psychology, economics, history, anthropology, philosophy, and the helping professions. The part is introduced by an outstanding paper by Jill McCalla-Vickers, which opens up many of the basic questions regarding the relationship between the subject matter, political orientation, methodology, and the curious coincidence that traditional research methods will produce results that support patriarchal ends, constraining feminists to develop new methodology to deal with new material and to explore new concepts. In quite another context, a scientist recently remarked,". . . when you enter a new domain of research with new ideas . . . you will need new measuring sticks . . . And so the imaginative scientist is somebody who enters a new domain, who realizes that in this domain new methods will have to be applied, and who applies them". (Dr. Paul Feyerabend, interviewed by Dr. Beth Savan, *Science and Deception*, CBC Ideas, 1982).

The second part of the book deals with "Politics: Theory and Practice" and is again challenging, revolutionary, well-reasoned and moderate. As in all anthologies, the quality of the pieces is variable, both in expression and content, though generally very high; I shall focus on the important themes, which I perceive to be the emergence of integrative feminism, the revolutionary nature of feminism, the rationale for and rejection of separatism, and the concept of specificity together with equality. Appropriately, a number of points of view are represented, but not the whole spectrum of feminist theory; the main thrust of the book favours integrative feminism. Integrative feminist theory challenges the dichotomies which mark traditional theory and methodology and which define our lives. The list of these dichotomies is long: included are private/public, personal/political, reproduction/production, means/end, leisure/work, practice/theory, commitment/objectivity, activist/academic, mental/manual, emotion/logic, intuition/reason and ultimately female/male. In the context of scholarship, integrative feminism offers a complex alternative methodology and content to the over-simplification and fragmentation of traditional scholarship, which has, for example, tended to determine the acceptability of subject matter not by its intrinsic interest and value but by its susceptibility to examination by so-called scientific methods. There is here no total dismissal of the "male" side of the equation; there is, however, an affirmation of long-suppressed "female" characteristics, and consequently of a more holistic society: "Long subordinated reproduction-related values and activities are affirmed as the organizing principle of an integrated non-alienated society in which the current deep

dualities of life in our fragmented society are overcome". (Miles, p. 13).

It is not only in the academic world that feminist theory is revolutionary. This book is all about change, about the taking of power, about how to change the dynamics of power, about what to aim for in a revised power structure. Revolutionary ideas do not come into the world full-grown. Feminists are insisting on taking time and space, away from men, to allow their ideas to grow and clarify. In this climate questions themselves are changed: we no longer ask, "Who should dominate?" but "How can we obviate domination?"; instead of asking, "How can we gain admission to the men's world?", we ask "How can we build a feminist world?". In spite of this emphasis on the need for time and space, and indeed for feminist autonomy, the authors reject feminist separatism as the long-term way forward. This is not the position of all feminists; it is not only utopian writers (beginning with Charlotte Perkins-Gilman in *Herland*) who have hypothesized the convenient disappearance of men and the equally convenient emergence of parthogenesis. The authors prefer to deal with the real world in which men are almost half the population, and the goal is clearly integration. Unfortunately, Patricia Hughes' discussion of "Separation or Integration" has serious weaknesses. Although she explains both the need for women to work out their ideas away from men, and the need and ethical imperative for working with men in political organizations, I find unacceptable and depressing the grudging and apologetic nature of the acceptance to be accorded to men. Much of this paper sounds horribly like the things men have written about women. Integrative feminism, as I understand it, has to be based on an experiential belief in the power of human beings to change (haven't most of us who are feminists changed quite radically in our lifetimes?). This experiential belief gains support from recent feminist anthropology which suggests that patriarchal domination may be less deeply engrained than we have been led to suppose.

Another controversial area confronted with insight is the very nature of women. The new feminism - and indeed first - wave feminism as well - has been bedeviled by the tension between the idea of "equal but unalike" and the idea of "equal because alike." The political pitfall in the former has been the separation of spheres, with women's sphere always coming out on the underside; the political pitfall in the latter has been the rejection of the feminine as a product of socialization, and hence the adoption of the masculine as the norm; to show we are as good as men we have had to do what men do. "Feminine" and "masculine" have been culturally defined, and are rightly suspect terms. The best resolution I have seen of this dilemma is contained in Angela Miles' essay on "Women's Specificity and Equality." Such an essay can only be understood in the context of revolutionary feminist theory, and it is revolutionary feminist theory which should save it from all fear of misunderstanding. What is being said by Miles and others in this anthology is no longer that women, by their nurturing natures, have a role to play in the perpetuation of the status quo, but that women must assert the importance of nurturance as a first principle, that life rather than death must inform politics. This has a direct bearing, as the authors perceive, on the process of the revolution, and on the contribution of women to the peace movement, and this is only a beginning. Women are not saying only that they

will no longer meekly produce both cannons and cannon fodder, they are claiming that they have insights and values which could take away the need for cannons and cannon fodder, and they are demanding a primary place for these principles.

I hope to live to see the day when men ask for instruction in feminist theory and for training in feminist practice. Like most of the authors of this book, I do not want them excluded when that happens; for me, indeed, that will be the time to think about using the word humanism. Meanwhile, here is a book which makes a good starting point, flawed and incomplete as it may be. Male theorists are challenged to read it.

Jo Vellacott
Simone de Beauvoir Institute
Concordia University

FROM MARX TO MOTHERS

Issac D. Balbus, *Marxism and Domination: A Neo-Hegelian, Feminist, Psychoanalytic Theory of Sexual, Political and Technological Liberation.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982.

Feminist debates on the nature of female identity have recently turned to psychoanalytic theory in an effort to understand the psychological roots of oppression. In a recent article in *Signs*, Marianne Hirsch outlines current debates between feminist theorists working out of Neo-Freudian, Lacanian and Jungian traditions.[1] While theorists of each group share different assumptions, all are committed to developing a psychological understanding of male domination and to discovering possibilities for the eradication of patriarchal relationships. In North America, French feminists (of the Lacanian school) have been criticized for their reliance on what is considered a phallocentric psychology and for their insistence on the structural definition of woman as "other", as "absence".[2] Feminists of the Neo-Freudian persuasion are less concerned with philosophical descriptions of female identity (or lack of identity) and more intent on explaining how it is that we assume this negative status in the first place.

Two theories which have initiated an important debate with traditional Freudian accounts of female psychology are those of Dorothy Dinnerstein and Nancy Chodorow.[3] The central question addressed by both authors is, how can we account for women's collusion in their own oppression? While rejecting Juliet Mitchell's analysis (in *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*) of the female's repressive submission to the power of the father, Dinnerstein and Chodorow contend the

turn to the father is a necessary retreat from the (threatening) power of the mother. This shift in emphasis is a major one: from father to mother, from Oedipus complex to pre-Oedipal relations, and from gender-blind to gender-conscious psychoanalytic theory.

Curiously, there remains a reluctance on the part of many feminists to consider explorations of psychological issues relevant to questions of domination and oppression. However, it is my contention that, regardless of the particular merits of any given theory, the very realization that our social, economic, and political organization depends on and reflects certain psychological predispositions is a step in the right direction. In the book under review, Issac D. Balbus demonstrates how the psychoanalytic theory developed by Dinnerstein and Chodorow can furnish the basis for a critique of sexual, political and technological domination.

Armed with a new understanding of the roots of domination, Balbus' strategy is to undermine the explanatory power of Marxist and Neo-Marxist theories of oppression. His extensive analysis of various theorists proceeds from what he takes to be Marxist insufficiencies to the assertion that Marxist theory partakes of the very structures of domination from which it promises liberation.[4] While reminiscent of the typical Freudo-Marxist dilemma of whether the individual or the mode of production is the determining factor of human consciousness, Balbus' theory denies causal primacy to either one. Instead, what he calls "the Instrumental mode of symbolization" (an all-pervasive instrumental rationality) is seen to originate not in the capitalist mode of production, but in a specific, mother-dominated "mode of child rearing." While this theoretical perspective may appear to valorize individual psychology, the emphasis actually rests on the formal aspects of child rearing practices. Dinnerstein's psychological theory, once placed in historical perspective, is meant to account for the roots of domination as well as to provide the means of liberation.

Balbus attempts to create an anti-capitalist theory which distinguishes itself from Marxism by providing an explicit critique of bureaucracy, patriarchy and repressive technology. In his view these three structures are the product of an Instrumental mode of symbolization and so is capitalism, yet one could substitute a socialist mode of production for a capitalist one without disturbing the Instrumental mode of symbolization: ". . . patriarchy, the state, and repressive technology are not functions of, but rather relatively autonomous from the capitalist mode of production."[5] If the capitalist mode of production and structures of domination are determined by the instrumental logic ingrained in *unconscious* character structures, a transformation of the mode of production alone will not guarantee the abolition of repressive structures. Furthermore, Balbus argues that Marxist and Neo-Marxist theories of the state, patriarchy and technology fail to provide a genuine theory of liberation precisely because they insist that the mode of production is the determining factor.

Balbus' major objections are to Marx's dialectical theory of freedom and necessity, and to his concept of production. While Marx believed capitalism would furnish the preconditions for the establishment of socialist society, Balbus argued these very conditions militate against any such transformation.

In allying itself with repressive technology, in substituting the administration of things for political decision-making, and in neglecting the problem of patriarchy, Marxist theory may reinforce technological, political and patriarchal domination. The familiar dilemma of how the political consciousness necessary for a truly social society can originate in capitalist society is raised in this context. Yet Balbus mistakenly interprets Marx's description of reification in capitalist production as objectification which is inevitable to all "productive" activity. By failing to appreciate Marx's *critique* of commodification and alienation Balbus can only read his analysis as a confirmation of oppressive structures.

Despite his "Neo-Hegelian" pretensions, Balbus fails to entertain a dialectical theory of history where individual consciousness and material production might be seen as mutually determining forces. Given this perspective, both Marxist-Feminist and Freudo-Marxist theorists are assumed to privilege one term to the detriment of the other. Thus Marxist-Feminist theories are inadequate because they fail to acknowledge the independence of male domination from any particular mode of production. For Balbus, patriarchy is a "male dominated sexual division of labour"[6] which may assume different forms (according to the mode of production) while remaining male dominated. One of the problems with Freudo-Marxists then, is the tendency to subsume the question of male domination under the question of the sexual division of labour. Since, in Balbus' view, capitalism is not responsible for the identification of sexual difference and sexual oppression, feminist critics ought to focus their attack on the origin and reproduction of this equation rather than on the capitalist mode of production. The feminist movement, in combination with ecology and participatory-democratic movements, would be anathema to both capitalism and patriarchy.

We now reach the heart of the argument. If patriarchal, political and technological dominaion depend on an instrumental mode of symbolization originating in the mode of child rearing, then feminist, participatory-democratic and ecology movements depend on the existence of a non-instrumental mode of symbolization originating in a different mode of child rearing. Since these kinds of movements already exist, Balbus has to argue that the existing mode of child rearing allows for the possibility of a non-instrumental mode of symbolization: "Our task is to develop a non-Marxist but nevertheless materialist theory of the origins, persistence, and limits of the Instrumental mode of symbolization..."[7].

Relying heavily on Dinnerstein's theory, Balbus contends that patriarchy is a reaction to the overwhelming and unbearable power of the mother. Patriarchy, plus the ideological and economic forms it assumes, are to be explained as the result of one's inability to deal with the painful fact of separation from the mother. Having posited a universal human inability to accept death (mother-separation), Balbus describes how the "perverted death instinct [of] modern, Instrumental cultures"[8] results in a *denial* of dependence on the mother. Although it is unclear why this perverted formation occurs, it is certain that Balbus' theory depends (as do Dinnerstein's and Chodorow's) on a theory of the

mother as the repressive and resented other: "the modern child resolves its ambivalent feeling [toward the mother] in favor of hate." [9] The subsequent idealization of an identification with paternal authority as an escape from maternal power maintains the gender-directed division of ambivalence:

> The child's self-recognition can be achieved only at the price of unconscious recognition of the mother as an object of domination, an unconscious structure of recognition that sets the stage for the adult's recognition of all subsequent others as objects of domination as well.[10]

Given this unconscious character structure, adult relationships become either those of domination or those of submission. Since mothers are unconsciously feared and hated, both men and women collude in the oppression of women. One's unconscious need to deny one's connection to the mother is also projected onto nature as the all-powerful other which is a constant reminder of one's mortality. Both sexes support political domination as "an externalization of paternal identification"[11] because it fulfills the need for dependency denied with respect to the mother.

In my view, Balbus' account of mother-monopolized child-rearing entails not only a structural relationship but also one which presupposes culturally defined, gender-specific expectations. How is it possible for females to identify with the mother to the extent of wanting to become mothers themselves, if she is the dreaded and hated object? Moreover, if females at the Oedipal stage are supposed to identify with the father as refuge from the mother, how does one account for the female's heterosexual desire? It would appear that Balbus has overemphasized the pre-Oedipal relationship in an attempt to make the primacy of the mother accountable for a misogyny which is culturally based and learned by both sexes at the Oedipal stage. Yet Balbus is not entirely unaware of these requirements: "normal masculine development demands that he [the male child] define himself in active opposition to his mother" [12] while normal feminine development requires females who "are impelled . . . to fulfill their richer relational needs through mothering their children and nurturing their men." [13]

Whether child rearing is shared by both parents (Balbus' solution) or not, it does not follow that the requirements of masculine development (self-definition in opposition to mother) or those of feminine development (self-definition in relation to mother) will be affected. The need to overcome one's primary identification with either parent remains a precondition for the development of self-consciousness. Furthermore, the painful experience of separation and the ambivalence it entails would remain a part of human development. However, it is possible that if the father did not appear in the abstract, non-relational, wordly-wise role, and if the mother did not appear as the emotionally dependent, threatening caretaker, that identification with the one would not entail the repression and denial of the attributes of the other.

One final and puzzling feature of Balbus' argument is his conviction that

women's participation with men in destroying the Instrumental mode of symbolization is crucial precisely because women were never really a part of it:

> . . . men of contemporary patriarchal society are typically oriented to the manipulation of objects — to an instrumental relationship with the world — and lack the expressive or relational orientation that women possess. [14]

It is my contention that neither men's unconscious need to dominate others, nor women's tendency to submit to such a relationship, can be explained by a theory of mother-monopolized child rearing. Yet, if women do acquire a non-instrumental, nurturant orientation to others, why should they combine their efforts with men at all? Balbus' pessimistic conclusions concerning his own proposal of male consciousness raising justify one's scepticism. Speaking for men, he claims "we will never be able entirely to undo the misogynist effects of our mother-monopolized child rearing." [15] Speaking for women, I think we are well aware of such "effects" and of the necessity to struggle against misogyny in all its various forms.

Patricia Elliot
Social and Political Thought
York University

Notes

1. Marianne Hirsch, "Mothers and Daughters," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 7(1): 200-222, Autumn 1981. Hirsch's notes provide a good list of sources for further reading.
2. Critical articles appear in recent issues of *Signs*. Also see Jane Gallop, *The Daughter's Seduction: Feminism and Psychoanalysis*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982). Important French feminist theorists are Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous, Julia Kristeva, Eugénie Luccioni and Michèle Montrelay. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron have collected essays in their book *New French Feminisms: An Anthology*. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980).
3. Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1978). And Dorothy Dinnerstein, *The Mermaid and the Minotaur*. (New York: Harper and Row, 1977). Contributions to the mother-daughter debate may be found in *Feminist Studies* No. 4, February 1978, *Frontiers* No. 3(2), 1978, and in H. Eisenstein and A. Jardine (eds.) *The Future of Difference*. (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1980).
4. Marxist theorists discussed by Balbus include Marx and Engels, L. Althusser, N. Poulantzas; Neo-Marxists and Marxist-Feminists include N.O. Brown, J. Habermas, H. Marcuse, J. Mitchell, G. Rubin, W. Reich, A. Wilden and E. Zaretsky.
5. Issac D. Balbus, *Marxism and Domination*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 165.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 66.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 291.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 297.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 297.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 345
11. *Ibid.*, p. 323.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 342.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 338. Much of the criticism here applies to Dinnerstein and Chodorow as well who also fail to account for culturally defined, gender characteristics.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 373.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 397.

WOOLF'S REFUSAL

Stephen Trombley, *ALL THAT SUMMER SHE WAS MAD: VIRGINIA WOOLF: FEMALE VICTIM OF MALE MEDICINE.* New York: Continum Press, 1982.

In 1909, when Sigmund Freud spoke about the new science of the mind at Clark University, in Worcester, Massachusetts, U.S.A., he brought with him several disciples. One of them was Carl Gustav Jung. Much has been made of the encounter: a variant of The Son Slays The Father — and lives to outdo him.[1] Freud had the qualities of self-annihilation a Jew would have in a German culture, especially one incubating The Final Solution. Though Swiss, Jung was equally Germanic. One proselytizing Atheist who claimed to be German; one God-worshipping Christian who is suspected of Nazism ! Each has a similar, seamy sexual past that will not bear scrutiny. [2] They are so clearly halves of one whole — we need them both, and we have them both, and now our job, the task of those who live in their wake, is to marry together their ideas.

The areas of major disagreement between Freud and his former student Jung are not about female illnesses, but about human will, power, God, and, thus, the methodology of cure. For Sigmund Freud, God was a lesser Freud with whom he contended. Freud's relation to God is, simply stated, that which he attributed to Moses in *Moses and Monotheism*: an atheist to the last, he inherited the failures of male body-denial and anthropomorphic delusion from Descartes. Because he felt he knew all, Freud was offended and fearful of his unconscious content. For Jung, God was the cornerstone of an integrated sense of one's real size in the cosmos. If one is willing to let be, to accept, to know that one is ultimately but a cipher for a larger figuration, one is less tyrannical in one's treatment of clients — especially female clients. Rightly related to his own size, ability and place on the planet, Jung did not deride or trivialize his unconscious content. Thus Jung is

able to undo male rationalism's plundering of the planet because Jung, not thinking he is God, sees the unconscious as part of a larger balance.

Their disagreements, however different their therapeutic results, end when women are considered. Jung and Freud both defined female as "for our use", and the lives of each reveal lies, dissimulation, sexual advantage taken over female patients and co-analysands. Freud is by no means as trivial about women as unsympathetic readings make him: he himself posited the cornerstone of feminist therapeutic techniques enabling women to accept our self-hate, competitive and sexual feelings for our mothers, and, thus, the major idea of female recovery, and said that in pre-oedipal sexuality for the mother lay the daughter's basic physicality. Conversely, Jung is unhelpful theoretically about women for he blithely assumes as immutably "female" what is culturally engendered — nurturance, humane love, moony-dream states, cooperation and decency.[3] Since this reading of "female" underlies his whole system of archetypal typology and patterns, to see it as false destroys much of his interpretation of the human psyche. Neither Freud's nor Jung's flawed hypotheses give the whole picture. Jung particularly was so great a healer in therapeutic practice that the system's inadequacy pales in comparison to the good granted by their agreements — and disagreements.

Whatever Jung may have thought he rarely said, and thus, was of especial use with those who could not respond with self-respect to Freudian rationalism as a methodology of explanation or cure. It is Jung's tolerance, humane heart, and belief in his small place in a benevolent, God-created cosmos which is at the back of "the new therapies": Laingian, Reichian, and ultimately, of Trombley's book.

Generally dismissed as a trivilization of biography as applied to novels, [4] *All that Summer She Was Mad: Virginia Woolf: Female Victim of Male Medicine* is one of the finest cultural assessments of female insanity since Phyllis Chesler's *Women and Madness* reopened the debate. Trombley does not acknowledge that his argument is based on Jung's influence on R.D. Laing's methodology combined with feminist "embodiment" theory. Virginia Woolf was not disembodied, Trombley argues, and thus, he does not conclude that her active heterosexuality made her healthy.

For feminists, the use of sexuality as the cure-all for so-called female madness is not useful. If one is female, one is told that "sexuality" will bring the self back to the body, and the soul back to the writer. But "sexuality" in psychiatry usually means "Cultural Heterosexism"[5]. Trombley rises to the height of his considerable powers (no pun intended, though one is available), when he waxes witty on Woolf's male doctors' theories of the healthy pursuit of the missionary position for women. He wastes no time proving by narrative technique alone that a method of treatment which doubles disembodiment because it doubles self-alienation is of no use in salvationary autonomy.

Embodiment for Woolf, Trombley argues, came not from heterosexual intercourse, nor child bearing, but from her own relation to what he defines as Woolf's eating disorder. Speculation that Woolf inherited anorexia nervosa and possibly bulimia is made by Elaine Showalter, Jane Marcus, and Quentin Bell.

Like his daughter, Leslie Stephen feared fat, and desperately exercised in a punishing way to keep his weight well below a normal level for a man of his height. Susie Orbach has suggested that punishing exercise is a key indicator of an eating disorder, and a primary method of its denial.

Today's feminist theorists explain in veiled language a stark fact: women cannot stomach any more the culture's assessment of our relation to our bodies. Is starvation and stuffing a culture-wide admission that we have had enough of the absence of the true food of Franz Kafka's "The Hunger Artist"? How many women can say, as Dickinson did, that "I found that hunger was a way of persons outside windows the entering takes away"?[6] Trombley's intelligent speculation that Virginia Woolf's so-called eating disorder shaped her self-relation, her relation to lesbian and to heterosexual sex, and, ultimately, to others, makes his book central to a deeper sense of who Virginia Woolf really was, though she was so various, and grew so deeply, that no assumption is completely accurate.

Trombley thus proposes Woolf's solution to Woolf's use of her body to embody her own health: thinking physically. He proves that Woolf not only had a body, wrote from her body, used her body as a perceptual barometer, she was obsessed with her body, one of the few ways in which she really was an ordinary white Western middle class 20th-century woman. My only quibble is that Trombley did not cite *To the Lighthouse* as proof. By feeling deep physical needs for silence, space, rest, and the crucial absence of needy observers, male or female, Mrs. Ramsay feels her way by bodily indications into her intellectual thoughts.

Trombley has thus written one of the most important studies of Woolf. Lacking personal malice toward them, he has remorselessly examined the unconscious assumptions behind the labelling of Woolf by her husband, by her gay male friends, and by her male readers and doctors. Taking Jung's tactic, Trombley, by the use of their own language, has proved it is her observers, not she, who have a problem. Virginia Woolf knew what her problem was — it was not disembodiment; her "problem" was solved by her refusal to be seized as prey by a male rationalizing imagination which could further separate her from the only sources of her salvation, and that of anyone — her creative urge to anarchic pleasure in speech and eating and lesbianism interspersed with celibacy, and in political poaching with delightful dexterity on "the professor's" preserve. Woolf's refusal to be so sacrificed resulted in a lucid and malicious prose, a devilish delight in mischief — and that even at her own expense — and a level-headed look at the worst of male culture, and the usual feminist mystical witchcraft methods in healing it. Stephen Trombley is the first male Woolf scholar not in her family to understand and to commend her revolutionary fictional embodiment in the larger context of the culture where she herself first named herself to be.

Jane Lilienfeld
Department of English
Assumption College

Notes

1. George Hogenson, *Jung's Struggle with Freud* (Pennsylvania: The University of Notre Dame Press, 1983).
2. See Aldo Carotenuto, *A Secret Symmetry: Sabine Spietrein Between Jung & Freud*, trans., Arno Pomerans, John Shepley, Krishna Winston (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982).
3. A feminist dismantling of Jung is achieved by Naomi R. Goldenberg, "A Feminist Critique of Jung," *Signs*, 2 (Winter, 1976), pp. 443-9.
4. Mitchell Leaska, "Review of All That Summer She was Mad," *The Virginia Woolf Miscellany*, Spring, 1983.
5. Adrienne Rich defines cultural heterosexism in "compulsory heterosexuality and lesbian existence" *Women, Sex and Sexuality* ed. C.R. Stimpson & S. Person (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), pp. 62-91.
6. Franz Kafka's short story is found in all collections of his work; Emily Dickinson, Poem No. 579, *The Collected Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. T. H. Johnson (Boston: Little Brown, 1960), p. 283.

10 YEARS LATER

Maureen Fitzgerald, Margie Wolfe and Connie Guberman eds., *Still Ain't Satisfied!* Toronto: The Women's Press, 1982.

The Women's Press published its first book, *Women Unite!*, in 1972. Today, that original publication, an anthology of writings on the Canadian women's movement, is something of a classic. In celebration of their tenth anniversary the Women's Press has published another anthology of essays, *Still Ain't Satisfied* !, a sequel to *Women Unite!* edited by Maureen FitzGerald, Margie Wolfe and Connie Guberman that traces the development of the women's movement during the last decade. Thus far, the Press has given us a wide variety of works such as *Last Hired, First Fired*, by Patricia Connelly; *Rape: The Price of Coercive Sexuality*, by Lorenne Clark and Debra Lewis; *More Than a Labour of Love*, by Meg Luxton; the novel *Quilt*, by Donna Smyth; books for children — most recently *One Proud Summer* by Marsha Hewitt and Claire Mackay — and the popular Everywoman's Almanac. With publications like these, it has made a name for itself that is synonymous with professionalism and high quality.

Still Ain't Satisfied! is an impressive anniversary offering. It leans toward the evaluative rather than the historical, but it is nonetheless packed with information; articles are minimally but adequately footnoted and are accompanied by a list of further readings. All except three of the articles were written specifically for this anthology. Authors were asked to focus on "major areas of women's activity and

participation, to pinpoint the current priorities and characteristics of the movement and also to provide a background for determining aims and strategies for the future" (p.14). Happily, this rather demanding request produced quite credible results. Readers will find a high degree of organization and guidance throughout and this has made for an integral and balanced whole. This effect is managed, it should be added, without losing any of the distinctive strains of its many individual voices. (I counted forty-two contributors not including a generous number in the acknowledgments.) For some readers the ideological diversity presented may be a weakness of the text rather than a strength, but most will likely agree that the differences accurately reflect the state of the women's movement.

Introductory and concluding pieces frame the remainder of the essays. The opening essay by Naomi Wall ("The Last Ten Years: A Personal/Political View") provides a familiar personal history that will ring true to women who began thinking about women's issues in the late Sixties during the anti-war movement and shortly after started involving themselves in the issues of reproduction and sexuality. Wall rightly sees the movement originating with middle-class, university women and outlines the eventual emergence of three groups: socialist feminists, radical feminists, and reformists, this last group being seriously divided from the other two, who were themselves often in conflict. Although both the socialist feminists and the radical feminists felt the need for structural changes in society, the former advanced a class position and the latter insisted that the oppressive force of patriarchy cut accross class lines. (Although Wall roots women's oppression in class oppression, she believes that "feminism cannot be subsumed within the class struggle" p. 26). The developing feminist movement, Wall reminds us, gradually widened its perspective and started to move into the work force, political parties, pre-party groups, or —by the mid-Seventies — various feminist collectives. The need which Wall finally articulates for a more broadly-based movement that includes immigrant women, trade union women, poor women, native women, and lesbians is reiterated by others in the anthology.

The final essay, "What Are Our Options?," completes the frame. The essay is a thoughtful discussion among five women who are members of the International Women's Day Committee in Toronto coordinated by Nancy Adamson. The discussion format is intended to reflect the non-hierarchical character of the women's movement and, in fact, the form of the piece does succeed in embodying in a dramatic way the state of a significant movement in progress. (It is unfortunate but perhaps inevitable that the anthology ends with yet one more Toronto-based article.)

Within the frame of the Wall and Adamson articles the anthology is divided into three sections. Section I, "Out of the Bedroom," focuses on "women's politicization of the personal" (p. 30), and, accordingly, deals with the issues of reproductive rights, violence against women (rape, pornography, and wife battering), heterosexuality and lesbianism, and feminist public services. Part II, "Into the Work Force," includes articles on unionization, sexual harassment, health and safety, and women in non-traditional jobs. Part III, "Into the Streets,"

deals with the practical issues of organization. It is in this somewhat "catch-all" section that the problems of reaching out to native and immigrant women are examined, along with the changing role of lesbians in the women's movement, feminist writing and publishing, and feminist art.

Some readers may be particularly struck by the absence of any mention of the peace movement. The editors themselves list among the many issues not dealt with in the anthology "articles on Québécoises, the family, the right, microtechnology, the anti-nuclear and peace movements and the specific problems of welfare, older, adolescent and disabled women" (13). The book will not be all things to all women, then, but to my mind the omissions do not cut as wide a swath in the women's movement as do the issues included, and their absence indicates more than anything else some judicious editing.

Part I includes articles by Myrna Kostash on pornography, Susan G. Cole on wife battering, Barbara James on rape laws, Eve Zaremba on lesbian sex and sexuality, and Jillian Ridington on the problems of funding and organizational structure in the social services, this last focussing specifically on The Women's Health Collective, the Vancouver Transition House, and Rape Relief. But the two outstanding pieces are Joanne Kates' "Once More With Feeling: Heterosexuality" and Kathleen McDonnell's "Claim no Easy Victories: The Fight For Reproductive Rights." Kates, writing in the first person, confronts the contradictory experiences of a heterosexual feminist whose relationship with one man proves a painful mixture of anger, love, and hate. The confessional style, far from being self-indulgent, gives a raw edge to the writing that makes it very genuine indeed.

Considerably less personal but equally absorbing is the work of McDonnell on the issue of reproductive rights. McDonnell explains that the major issue of the early Seventies, abortion, declined in importance in part because the women in the movement, having aged, became interested in child - and/or work-related issues such as midwifery, homebirthing, and equal pay for work of equal value. But the more subtle reasons for the decline of interest in abortion, she suggests, have to do with perplexing and never-resolved problems surrounding the moral dimensions of the issue. What do we think about the woman who wants to abort — or is pressured to abort — because she is carrying a child of the "wrong sex"? Is *this* abortion merely an issue of health? McDonnell argues perceptively and unblinkingly that this moral dimension must be faced and that abortion must be treated not as a single issue but along with all "other factors that affect our ability to control our reproductive capacity" (p. 40).

The most topical issues —those related to work — come under scrutiny in Part II. The importance of domestic labour and the need to eliminate the sexual division of labour in the home forms the basis of Meg Luxton's "The Home: A Contested Terrain." "Minding the Children," by Pat Schulz, deals with the growing support for day care among trade unionists and New Democrats among others as the means by which women will gain equality in the work place. Two articles on women in non-traditional jobs, "Rosie the Riveter Meets the Sexual Division of Labour" by Debbie Field and "Women in Trades in British Columbia" by Kate Braid, look at our shifting notions of non-traditional work from the

professions to the trades and the consequent problems for women in the areas of seniority and training programs. Saskatchewan Working Women, an independent women's organization that functions as an educational and support group for unionized and non-unionized women, is discussed by Denise Kourin in "Getting Organized . . . in Saskatchewan Working Women." Marlene Kadar examines trade union resistance to the issue of sexual harassment in "Sexual Harassment as a Form of Social Control."

There are so many noteworthy essays in this section that it is difficult to single out only one or two. The most interesting articles grapple with the problem of whether or not women ought to support feminist unions, presumably militant and unified, or join already established unions that have access to big strike funds and professional staff. "Getting Organized . . . in the Feminist Unions," by Jackie Ainsworth, Ann Hutcheson, Susan Margaret, Michele Pujol, Sheila Perret, Mary Jean Rands, and Star Rosenthal (originally published in *Kinesis* in 1980) is an important assessment of the organizing struggles of the Association of University and College Employees (AUCE) and the Service, Office and Retail Workers Union of Canada (SORWUC), two independant feminist unions. Sue Vohanka's highly informative "Getting Organized . . . in the Confederation of Canadian Unions" (CCU) reviews the Puretex Knitting Company Strike (1978), the York University Staff Association "coffee grievance" (1979), and the Canadian Association of Industrial, Mechanical and Allied Workers (CAIMAW) strike in B.C. (1980) and argues that the CCU has fought actively for women workers because it is controlled by the rank and file.

"Getting Organized . . . in the Canadian Labour Congress," by Deirdre Gallagher, complements the other articles on trade unions by suggesting the need for greater support for women's caucuses within the large unions. One is left believing that working women should in fact fight on many fronts, battling from within and without. Patricia J. Davitt's "When All the Secretaries Demand What They Are Worth" offers an evaluation of the civic workers strike in Vancouver in 1981 and its handling of the equal pay for work of equal value issue. (In this and other articles CUPE comes in for a good deal of criticism as a powerful and, when it comes to women's issues, not always friendly giant.) Finally, "Is Your Job Hazardous to Your Health," by Marianne Langton, examines the troublesome and complex issue of differential health and safety regulations for men and women.

Part III concentrates on organization. Two essays on immigrant women and native women, by Winnie Ng and Caroline Lachappelle respectively, touch on questions of class and race as well as sex and indicate how far the movement has to go to support these groups. "A message of Solidarity," written by Women Working With Immigrant Women and originally delivered as a speech, is the only piece in the anthology relating the women's movement in Canada to that in the Third World. Unfortunately its overly general rhetoric is probably better heard than read. Margie Wolfe's essay on feminist publishing is full of information and insights and comes complete with a list of English-language feminist book publishers, periodicals and newspapers. Sari Tudiver's "More Radical With Age" has some moderately interesting points to make about

women's studies, but little of it is new and not enough is specific. In fact, this third section of the anthology is unquestionably the weakest. The writing simply doesn't measure up to the rest. "But Is It Feminist Art?" by Daphne Read makes some quite good points about the artist's economic and social situation but is disppointing in its attempt to define the relation between politics and art. (Perhaps any such definition is doomed to cause discontent.) Finally, Amy Gottlieb's "Mothers, Sisters, Lovers, Listen," a lesbian-feminist critique of the women's movement, is the least impressive article of the lot. Many will not trouble to read past Gottlieb's patronizing remark that "Heterosexual women do not have to justify or legitimize their existence, which is given by virtue of their connection to a man" (p. 238).

Let me reiterate, despite these minor reservations about section three, that *Still Ain't Satisfied* is a superbly edited and useful book that should have a place in any feminist's library. Ten years of the women's movement in Canada has resulted in countless changes, and the most significant of these are dealt with in this book. In an important way it prepares us for the work ahead.

Wendy R. Katz
Department of English
Saint Mary's University

FEMINIST LITERARY CRITICISM

Elizabeth Abel ed., *Writing and Sexual Difference.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

Writing and "What's the difference?"[1]

Sexual difference is too directly political
a problem now to admit of an imaginary abstraction.[2]

This collection of thirteen essays and four critical responses, originally published in *Critical Inquiry*, is more about literature than writing, feminism in academia, than sexual difference. The title, a play on Jacques Derrida's *Writing and Difference* doesn't deliver what it promises, that is, an extended critique of his deconstructive writings. The question remains whether the universalist presuppositions of a masculinist critical tradition are unexamined in Derrida's category "woman". Although the title may be misleading, a volume of feminist

literary criticism is especially significant at this moment in literary history. Critics have developed a fondness for feminism that has emerged in some of the latest post-structuralist writing in the form of a no-fame feminist critic cited in a footnote or paragraph. Or, as in a lecture by Geoffrey Hartman, feminism is reduced to a single strategy where the feminist critic's attempt to "reverse patriarchy (and) search for the mother tongue, a true vernacular"[3] is seen simply as part of a a broader critical move to decanonize literary studies. In the case of Jonathan Culler's recent discussion of "reading as a woman",[4] politics disappear when feminism is reduced to simply mean female. His feminist critic offers a "critique of male chauvinism" bereft of any transformative strategy.

Elizabeth Abel introduces *Writing and Sexual Difference* with a thumbnail sketch of feminist literary criticism, which initially adopted the oppositional "women are just as good" strategy in examining images of women in male texts. The second wave of feminist critics recuperated the lost and underrated women writers of the past, maximizing the difference between male and female writing. Finally, the contemporary American feminist literary critic, as represented in this collection, develops a more complex perspective where gendered literature is marked by

> interrelationship as well as opposition, difference *between* as well as difference *from* . . . Aware that women writers inevitably engage a literary history and system of conventions shaped primarily by men, feminist critics now often strive to elucidate the acts of revision, appropriation and subversion that constitute a female text (pp. 1-2).

This new critical perspective corresponds to the deconstructive project itself. Psychoanalytic critic, Barbara Johnson, whose work provides the epigraph to this collection, has written of deconstruction's challenge to the simple binary oppositions, including the male/female oppositions of structuralism:

> Far from eliminating binary oppositions from the critical vocabulary, one can only show that binary difference does not function as one thinks it does and that certain subversions that seem to befall it in the critical narrative are logically prior to it.[5]

The relationship between the feminist critic and her writing is paradoxical. Jane Gallop's "critical response " describes how the feminist critic" in her inheritance from both feminism and criticism lives the at once enabling and disabling tension of a difference within" (p. 290). Abel addresses this tension between the traditions of feminist politics and mainstream academia in her discussion of the new "sophisticated readings" she includes in her collection. She anticipates accusations "that the concern with textuality augurs a return to formalism: that feminist critics have betrayed political commitments in pursuit of academic credibility" (p. 2). However, sophisticated theoretical writing is nothing for

feminist to become defensive about. During the past ten years, a necessarily complex and fruitful feminist theory has been developing in all disciplines to help us understand and act on a whole series of political issues. But, when Abel insists that her volume is not unified by a "single ideology" other accusations can be made. Abel notes "the celebrated pluralism of feminist criticism" (p. 2), and the reader should take note of the politics embodied in this apparent heterogeneity. While the textual methodologies in this collection may be multiple and include "psychoanalytic, deconstructive, historical, formalist, generic and biographical studies", the text is finally dominated by a liberal feminist academic discourse, which substitutes a canonical structure of female writings for the old masculine one. This new canon is "just as authoritarian and hierarchical".[6] While several essays discuss the importance of non-traditional female forms of writing such as journals and letters, none of these is treated in detail. Nor is there an attempt to investigate more popular forms of writing by and/or for women. Aside from four essays on male writers, the majority treat the now familiar favorite feminist English and American women writers. (Margaret Atwood appears on this list.)

Annette Kolodny, who here and in earlier essays has championed the notion of pluralism, outlines the liberal feminist position. By "asking additional questions", feminist criticism is supplementary, not radically transformational; reformist, not revolutionary. In reading the eighteenth-century American narrative *The Panther Captivity*, she proposes a two-fold feminist strategy which examines woman as person and analyzes the symbolic significance of gender. She reads the representation of gender in *The Panther Captivity* as an allegory of oppositions "not so much between the civilized European association and the Indianized wilderness as between different ways of being in and relating to the vast American landscape." (p. 173). What she uncovers in her reading is the repression of a female narrative where the female cultivator is juxtaposed to the male hunter. Kolodny describes her critical method in modest finishing school terms where she seeks to "sharpen", "refine", and "correct" sex blind critical readings. However, her practical criticism *is* radically engaging precisely because she points to a startling blindness in the leading male Americanist interpretation of this literature — a blindness that develops from their understanding of their perspective as not so much "male", as "non-gendered". There is, as Maria Black and Rosalind Coward have pointed out, an imperative revelation for the male critic to experience. They write:

> Men are sustained at the centre of the stage precisely because they can be "people" and do not have to represent their masculinity to themselves. They need never see themselves or their maleness as a problem. Our understanding of the effects of discursive practices leads us to suggest that men can never be displaced from the centre until they can be forced to recognize themselves as men and to take responsibility for this.[7]

Less apologetic to the male literary tradition than Kolodny, Susan Gubar is more unabashedly essentialist in her analysis of women's writing. Tracing the "pen penis writing on the virgin page" (p. 77) model of creativity from Ovid through Derrida, she proposes an alternative female creativity "which substitutes for the artistic object an act or a process." (p. 93). Unfortunately, by her own admission, she "persistently and perversely ignores history" (p. 92) and valorizes a reductive reproductive female creativity where "no woman is a blank page: every woman is author of the page and author of the page's author" (p. 90). What is welcome in Gubar's writing is a transition from a theory of woman as victim to a theory of woman's resistance and subversion.

Judith Kegan Gardiner's feminism is once again a "collaborative" enterprise. Basing her work on the American sociological theories of Nancy Chodorow, Gardiner turns difference into a universal female identity which she describes as "process" rather than lack. Her undifferentiated identity theory defeats itself in Gardiner's depoliticized reading of *The Wide Sargasso Sea* by Creole novelist Jean Rhys. Gardiner imagines the reader "enraged at the patriarchy" in the novel. Ignored is how Rhys' writing is overdetermined by another sphere of difference and domination. It is not only "patriarchy" but colonialism that accounts for the particularity of women's oppression in Rhys.

Mary Jacobus, in one of two essays included on George Eliot, suggests that since gender in writing, as in other means of representation, marginalizes as well as differentiates, critical attention to women's writing is by definition engaged. The questions remain: Engaged? How? In her symptomatic reading of a chapter of *The Mill on the Floss*, Jacobus uncovers a multi-dimensional focus of feminist criticism, moving in the direction of a "necessary utopianism" she finds in both Eliot and French feminist Luce Irigaray's gesture towards what cannot be said. A countermove, in feminist criticism, writes Jacobus, returns to the materiality of women's writing where the conditions of its "reproduction are the economic and educational disadvantages, the sexual and material organizations of society which, rather than biology,. form the crucial determinants" (p. 39).

A number of the following essays discuss another series of differences in women's writing. Susan Gilbert considers female "identity", not as an autonomous whole, but in its differential relation to male writers. Two essays on lesbian writers foreground the difference between gender and sexuality. And Gayatri Spivak provides a lesson for the first world feminist critic who would universalize what is particular.

The literary representation of gender becomes ideology (my term) "dressed up" in Sandra M. Gilbert's "Costumes of the Mind: Transvestism as Metaphor in Modern Literature". She studies male and female modernist writers' attitudes to transvestism, observing that male writers, "nostalgic for the old days of uniforms", tend to view false costumes as "unsexed or wrongly sexed" (p. 195). Women like Virginia Woolf, however, with a more ironic view of costume, link female dress to women's oppression. Gilbert traces the transvestite scenario in three male writers. In Joyce's *Ulysses* she reads Bloom's behaviour in the Nightown episode as his response to "the terrifying ascendency of women". (p. 200). In *The Fox*, Lawrence replaces the transvestite "disorder" of the lesbian

couple with the "hierarchical principle of order based upon male dominance/ female submission" (p. 201). And Eliot's *The Waste Land* becomes "the fever dream of the hermaphrodite, the nightmare of gender disorder" (p. 205). Juxtaposed to this "ritual transvestism of the male modernists", Gilbert points out the "utopian ceremonial androgyny of the woman writer" (p. 214) where characters like Woolf's Orlando cross-dress as a sign of resistance.

If sexual difference is hierarchical in a male dominated society, the difference of lesbian sexuality in a heterosexist culture demands careful study. Two essays in this collection look not simply at gender difference, but at the lesbian in literature. Carolyn Burke writes a biographical study of Gertrude Stein's friendships with the Cone sisters and her love affair with Alice B. Toklas "in order to better understand how [Stein's] portraits participate in the reflexive interplay between self-discovery and writing" (p. 223). Burke suggests that these writings provided Stein with a therapeutic solution to "the painful puzzle of female relationships" (p. 223).Burke is less reductive in her use of biography, which becomes a counter text to Stein's writing. She advises the feminist critic to rethink the place of biography, often dismissed by critics as causally related to writing.

"The Lesbian Novel" by Catherine R. Stimpson is an overview of lesbian writers whom she defines with none of the breadth of Lillian Faderman's "female friendship", or Adrienne Rich's "lesbian continuum." To Stimpson "the lesbian — as writer, as character, as reader . . . represents a commitment of skin, blood, breast and bone" (p. 244). Her thematic approach identifies two narrative patterns in lesbian writing. "The dying fall, a narrative of damnation" and the more positive "enabling escape, a narration of the . . . lesbian's rebellion against social stigma and self-contempt" (p. 244). The essay contrasts Radcliffe Hall's "homosexuality is sickness" (p.248), to "the lesbian romanticism" of Woolf's *Orlando* "the lesbian realism" of Stein's *Autobiography* and the "fusion of romanticism and realism" in McCarthy's *The Group* (p. 253). She concludes with a call for more and more sophisticated lesbian feminist criticism, quoting lesbian author Bertha Harris, who writes that the "feminist and lesbian press still lacks an informed criticism to mediate between texts and a large audience" (p.258). Stimpson betrays a curiously patronizing concern for the lesbian reader who finds both community "and comfort in the ease of reading"(p.251) and may be alienated from the more experimental formal innovations of contemporary lesbian writers. The major task for the lesbian feminist critic, writes Stimpson, is in listening for "why people wish to stigmatize, to dominate, to outlaw and to erase a particular longing for passion and love"(p.259).

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, a feminist, Marxist deconstructivist, raises important issues about the international context of writing and sexual difference unmasking a totality where a multiplicity was intended. However, the only piece of work devoted to a non-white author is in the form, not of criticism, but in Spivak's introduction and translation to "Draupadi", a short story by Bengali writer Mahasveta Devi.

Spivak has defined textuality as "the inter-determination of differential representation", where "the economic, political and ideological can be

practically related".[8] These three factors are primary in her deconstruction of the final moment in the story when, having endured a night of torture and rape, the defiant Draupadi refuses to clothe herself. She confronts the uncomprehending chief of police Senanayak, her body, a gaping wound, "and for the first time Senanayak is afraid to stand before an unarmed *target*, terribly afraid" (p. 282). Spivak identifies the complicity of Senanayak as "pluralist aesthete", and finds in him "the closest approximation to the first world scholar in search of the Third World." She continues, "In theory, Senanayak can identify with the enemy, but pluralist aesthetes of the First World are, willy nilly, participants in the production of an exploitative society" (p. 261).

Spivak's writing and translation uncovers the scarcity in this collection of a combined treatment of "the economic, political and ideological" factors at work in women's writing. Much feminist writing emerges from a feminist tradition which, while limited by claims of universality, has had both the privilege and the opportunity to problematize sexuality. Ellen Willis describes these contradictions:

> That the mainstream of both reformist and radical feminist movements has been relatively privileged cuts two ways. White middle-class feminists have too often defined the movement's priorities in ways that ignore or reinforce class and racial divisions. Yet precisely because we do not have to cope with three forms of oppression at once, we are freer to confront the sexual questions and explore their most radical implications. In that sense, the bourgeois impulse at the core of feminism is revolutionary.[9]

While Willis's comments may explain a tendency in feminism, what she characterizes as "the bourgeois impulse" is too often assumed to represent feminism". What then would an alternative volume of "writing and sexual difference" include? The first term of the title might be read with more attention to Derrida's own category "writing", which Spivak reminds us

> is not simply identical with the production of prose and verse. It is the name of a "structure" which operates and fractures knowing (epistemology), being (ontology), doing (practice) history, politics, economics, institutions as such.[10]

The suggestive discussion in June Howard's exploratory essay, "Toward a 'Marxist-Feminist Cultural Analysis' "[11] charts the movement from women's literary studies to a broader category "writing".

And the issue of sexual difference becomes complex and fruitful in "Freud and H.D. — bisexuality and a feminine discourse" where Claire Buck critiques the American feminist urge to establish a female identity and poetic that results in a female subject "outside the historical or symbolic dimension in which

sexuality can be analysed as constructed."[12] For the moment, the feminist reader can take pleasure in the controversies and contradictions in this *Writing and Sexual Difference.*

Janice Williamson
Department of English
York University

Notes

1. My thanks to Darien Taylor, Jane Springer and Daphne Read for critical support and discussion.
2. Stephen Heath, "Barthes on Love," *Substance*, No. 37/38 (1983).
3. Geoffrey Hartman, "The Culture of Criticism," "University of Toronto, 6 October, 1983.
4. Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*, Ithaca: Cornell U.P., 1982.
5. Barbara Johnson, *The Critical Difference: Essays in the Contemporary Rhetoric of Reading*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U.P., 1980, p. xi.
6. Toril Moi, "Sexual/Textual Politics," "Essex Conference on the Sociology of Literature, 1982.
7. Maria Black and Rosalind Coward, "Linguistic, Social and Sexual Relations: A Review of Dale Spender's Man-Made Language," *Screen Education*, No. 39, Summer 1981, p. 85.
8. Gayatri Chakravorti Spivak, "Desire, Power & Interest: Affirmative Deconstruction," Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture Conference, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, July 9, 1983.
9. Ellen Willis, *Beginning to See the Light: Pieces of a Decade*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981.
10. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "French Feminism in an International Frame," *Yale French Studies*, No. 62, 1981, p. 175.
11. June Howard, "Toward a 'Marxist-Feminist Cultural Analysis', "*The Minnesota Review*, No. 20, Spring 1983.
12. Claire Buck, "Freud and H.D. — bisexuality and a feminine discourse," *m/f, a feminist journal*, no. 8, 1983, p. 59.

RECENSIONS

LE FÉMINISME: SIMPLE SURSAUT OU UN TRAIN EN MARCHE?

Mair Verthuy

Au moment même où la *Revue canadienne de théorie politique et sociale* accepte de consacrer un numéro au féminisme, Gisèle Halimi publie à Paris les actes du colloque organisé par l'Unesco en 1983 et intitulé: *Fini Le Féminisme?*, les Nations-unies préparent pour l'été 1985 le congrès de clôture de la Décennie des femmes, et les grands médias dans les pays occidentaux nous annoncent l'avènement de l'ère post-féministe. *Ave atque vale*, en somme. Il ne nous resterait qu'à prononcer un solennel *"Morituae te salutamus"*, avant de nous éclipser!

Et la revue aurait pu se contenter d'inviter ici quelque prêtresse, quelque sorcière échappée au bûcher, pour prononcer l'oraison funèbre de cette enfant morte en bas âge, à peine sortie de ses langes. Si mort il y a, il convient certes de dire: "en bas âge", car, à bien regarder autour de nous, il faut, hélas, constater que le monde est loin de correspondre à la vision d'avenir que nous en avions, que le féminisme n'a pas à cette date donné lieu aux transformations souhaitées, qu'il aurait donc été étouffé dès le berceau.

Faut-il conclure pour autant, comme souhaiteraient le faire croire à nous et à la relève éventuelle, nos adversaires de caste, que nous nous trouvons bel et bien devant un cadavre? Nenni. Pas d'autopsie à l'horizon. Pas d'auto-satisfaction non plus, c'est vrai. Tout au plus une auto-critique optimiste.

Les dangers qui nous guettent dans les prochaines années sont nombreux. Il est évident que, dans notre société de consommation, le féminisme "se démode". C'est à dire qu'après y avoir timidement et souvent à contrecoeur ouvert leurs pages ou leurs postes pendant plusieurs années, les médias en sont lassés et cherchent du neuf. Le grand mouvement qui semble devoir aujourd'hui et demain occuper les gros titres et les écrans est celui de la paix, mouvement porté surtout par des femmes pendant de longues années et que quelques hommes, certains hommes, cherchent maintenant à récupérer. Comme si pacifisme et patriarcat ne s'excluaient pas mutuellement *et nécessairement*.

Il est vrai aussi que la relève se fait parfois attendre, que les jeunes, comme toujours, prennent pour acquis les gains (rares) de celles (ou ceux) qui ont précédé, doivent de toute manière faire leur propre expérience du sexisme ordinaire. On ne dira jamais assez que nous sommes les seules serves à être fille, amie, épouse ou mère de ceux-là même qui nous "oppriment". Et les jeunes aussi connaissent le phénomène de la lassitude. Si les vedettes — de la chanson ou du cinéma — durent, leurs "tubes" ou leurs films doivent néanmoins se succéder à un rythme rapide ou c'est l'oubli.

Et puis il faut bien des boucs-émissaires dans une société en crise, mais cette fois encore il s'agira en réalité de "chèvres", les femmes étant en général les premières à payer, et cela à l'intérieur de tout groupe social.

Avec tant de forces — et d'autres encore — liguées contre nous, c'est éventuellement une petite "traversée du désert" qui nous guette. Il faudra en profiter pour mieux préparer notre retour.

Il n'y a pas que des désavantages dans la situation actuelle. Nous devrons, c'est sûr, décupler notre vigilance, refuser le découragement, lutter pour maintenir, voire améliorer, nos réseaux. Mais, loin de l'Oeil de notre maître, peut-être serons-nous plus libres de nous concentrer sur le vrai travail à faire, de grignoter les fondements même de l'édifice du patriarcat, d'élaborer nos projets d'avenir.

Il ne faudra pas nous illusionner. Si la recherche sur notre passé doit se poursuivre, si l'analyse de notre oppression spécifique s'avère toujours nécessaire, si la nécessité des luttes ponctuelles (*pour* l'emploi, les garderies, la retraite, etc.; *contre* la pornographie, l'inceste banalisée et ainsi de suite) continuera de s'imposer, il n'en reste pas moins que nous devons dès maintenant songer à mieux asseoir notre vision du futur. Quel sera-t-il, le monde que nous envisageons? Voulons-nous simplement partager le gâteau cuisiné par les hommes ou avons-nous en tête une révolution plus profonde, la transformation des mentalités et des rapports entre hommes et hommes, femmes et femmes, femmes et hommes, la création d'un environnement enfin plus humain? Quelles sont les théories sur lesquelles nous pourrons étayer nos efforts et autour desquelles il sera possible de mobiliser la génération/les générations à venir? Elles s'élaborent, certes, mais la construction en est encore fragile et requiert de grands efforts de notre part.

Les comptes-rendus de livres québécois présentés ici illustrent bien ce problème. Les deux premiers (recensés par Lucie Lequin) réunissent des inédits et des textes déjà publiés sur l'histoire des Québécoises et respectent la tendance actuelle qui préfère la revalorisation des efforts de nos aïeules au tableau sombre brossé par les premières chercheures. Le troisième (Bettinotti et Gagnon) offre une analyse partielle et empirique d'un épiphénomène récent au Québec. Le suivant (Brisson) connaît certes une portée plus large puisqu'il s'agit pour l'auteure, à travers cette version apocryphe des relations entre Héloïse et Abélard, de mettre en question pour les femmes la notion même d'Histoire. L'anthologie intitulée *Féminité, subversion, écriture* poursuit le même travail d'interrogation. Les articles sont de valeur inégale mais dans certains il est déjà question des stratégies de subversion adoptées par plusieurs écrivaines féministes, voire de leur influence générale. Le dernier volume dit vouloir poser les questions de déontologie propres à une société en gestation mais, comme nous le fait remarquer Gaétane Payeur, le travail fourni ne dépasse pas toujours le stade du décodage.

Bien que les livres recensés ne constituent pas la totalité des livres féministes publiés au Québec dans les dernières années, ils demeurent tout à fait représentatifs, et le schéma qui s'en dégage n'est peut-être pas trop différent de celui qui se dégagerait de la production canadienne-anglaise, américaine ou

française. L'on constate les méfaits du pouvoir patriarcal, l'on procède à des analyses de nos rapports à ce pouvoir, y compris (et ceci est extrêmement important) de nos révoltes et de nos façons de passer par les interstices de ce même pouvoir. Des stratégies pour le déjouer sont mises de l'avant. Mais il est toujours difficile d'imaginer un monde post-patriarcal ou plus exactement d'en imaginer les structures sociales ou ontologiques. Notre imagination, notre imaginaire, connaissent encore les contraintes imposées par un conditionnement millénaire au masculin. La saut est encore à faire.

Nous pouvons néanmoins constater que, dans cet échantillon au moins, c'est justement par le biais des oeuvres d'imagination et du langage à partir duquel celles-ci se construisent, que nous avons pu approcher au moins un peu d'un possible à venir.

Département d'études françaises et
Institut Simone de Beauvoir
Université Concordia

LES FEMMES ONT TOUJOURS TRAVAILLÉ

Lucie Lequin

Marie Lavigne et Yolande Pinard. *Travailleuses et féministes. Les femmes dans la société québécoise.* Montréal: Boréal express, 1983. 430p.

Cet ouvrage rend compte essentiellement de la vie extra-domestique des Québécoises en l'abordant sous l'angle du travail rémunéré et du mouvement des femmes depuis le 19e siècle. Il reprend les huit articles du recueil *Les Femmes dans la société québécoise: aspects historiques*. Ces articles ont, selon le cas, été remaniés ou mis à jour, ou encore accompagnés d'une note d'avertissement, comme c'est le cas pour l'article "La Libération des femmes" par Nicole Laurin-Frenette. Neuf nouveaux textes s'y sont ajoutés dont cinq inédits. Les collaboratrices, sous la direction de Marie Lavigne et Yolande Pinard, sont au nombre de douze.

Même si l'ensemble de ces textes retrace les activités publiques des femmes depuis plus d'un siècle, l'imbrication du privé et du public est sous-jacente. En effet, ces historiennes tentent également d'appréhender cet ailleurs privé puisqu'il explique souvent le rôle public. Elles reconnaissent l'apport social, économique et historique des mères de famille, des travailleuses clandestines, des fermières, des femmes de commerçants qui, comme les travailleurs salariés, ont participé à la dynamique du changement et ont été jusqu'à récemment peu étudiées.

Le premier chapitre constitue un bilan historiographique sur le travail ménager et salarié, ainsi que sur le mouvement des femmes au Québec. Les auteures font état des réorientations actuelles de la recherche dans ces domaines; elles commentent les instruments de travail et les études disponibles, les remises en question et suggèrent quelques hypothèses de recherche.

L'ordre de la présentation des textes est thématique. Trois textes s'articulent autour des profondes modifications qu'a subies l'organisation du travail des femmes au début de l'industrialisation. L'article de D. Suzanne Cross décrit la population féminine au 19e siècle et ses caractéristiques dans le monde du travail. Susan Mann Trofimenkoff révèle surtout les conditions de travail des femmes et les perceptions moralisatrices qu'en ont les ouvriers, les patrons. Ces idées trop souvent erronées acculent les femmes au silence face à leurs conditions de travail. L'article de Marie Lavigne et Jennifer Stoddart s'inscrit dans les mêmes préoccupations, mais se rapporte aux premières décennies du 20e siècle. Ces trois articles contribuent à effriter l'image figée de reine du foyer que la société accolait à toutes les femmes canadiennes-françaises. Ils suggèrent aussi la nécessité d'explorer d'autres sources, comme l'histoire vécue, afin de vraiment connaître le travail rémunéré des femmes au début de l'industrialisation car entre le discours des hommes employeurs/employés et la pratique du travail par les femmes, le non-dit est encore à découvrir.

Les trois textes suivants reflètent l'accès des femmes à la syndicalisation. Johanne Daigle, dans un article inédit retrace l'éveil syndical des infirmières dites "religieuses laïques" et de l'évolution de l'Alliance des infirmières de Montréal de 1946-1966. De nouveau, l'auteure montre comment la réalité s'écarte du mythe, en l'occurrence la vision de l'infirmière en tant que femme désincarnée qui remplit une mission, une activité charitable. Deux articles de Mona-Josée Gagnon discutent des femmes dans le mouvement syndical. Le premier étudie la syndicalisation des femmes de 1940 à 1970. Le deuxième, inédit, rend compte de la réalité des années 80. Gagnon y pose un regard critique sur le développement des comités de condition féminine dans les syndicats et témoigne du hiatus entre le discours et la pratique.

Plusieurs articles traitent du mouvement des femmes qui, selon les auteures, est loin d'être homogène et reflète de multiples tendances. Ainsi, Francine Fournier fait état de l'entrelacement des luttes féministes et des luttes menées par les ouvrières, luttes différentes, mais qui s'inscrivent dans une même continuité. Deux articles connus discutent de la genèse des luttes féministes au tournant du siècle, soit l'action du *Montreal Local Council of Women* et de la Fédération Saint-Jean-Baptiste. Quant à Ghislaine Desjardins, dans un texte inédit, elle montre que la naissance du Cercle des fermières s'insère dans le mouvement des femmes et correspond au désir des femmes rurales de préserver leur rôle de productrice. Desjardins avance que, contrairement aux préjugés répandus, les femmes rurales n'étaient pas manipulées par l'Église et l'État et qu'elles adhéraient au Cercle parce que ce geste servait leurs intérêts. De plus, elle suggère des pistes à explorer, surtout l'étude de l'écart entre le modèle et les valeurs proposées par les revues officielles du Cercle et la pratique des membres.

Enfin, Micheline Dumont et Marta Danylewycz tentent d'appréhender le mouvement des femmes par l'étude de la composante religieuse. Contrairement à plusieurs autres historien/ne/s qui dénoncent l'oppression exercée par les communautés religieuses, ces deux historiennes, dans des articles différents, inscrivent les religieuses dans la dynamique interne du féminisme. Pour Dumont, les religieuses auraient représenté une "forme déviée" du féminisme. Pour sa part, Danylewycz voit l'émergence d'une connivence nouvelle entre les religieuses et les bourgeoises laïques vers la fin du 19e siècle. Ce front uni de femmes, dit-elle, résulterait de la pratique commune d'un même féminisme.

L'étude du rôle de l'idéologie dominante traverse l'ensemble de l'ouvrage, mais deux articles en traitent d'une façon particulière. Dans son analyse des discours de Bourassa, Susan Mann Trofimenkoff note non seulement les envolées sexistes de l'homme-politique, mais aussi la peur à partir de laquelle jaillissait son sexisme, peur de se remettre en question, peur de devoir transformer la société. Pour sa part, Jennifer Stoddart amorce l'étude de la condition juridique de la femme vers 1930, époque de la commission Dorion. Dans une perspective féministe, elle montre que cette commission voulait avant tout apaiser les revendications féministes, mais que son but insidieux était de réaffirmer l'idéologie traditionnelle.

Au terme de la lecture de *Travailleuses et féministes* se dégage l'urgence de refaire l'histoire où femmes et hommes interagissent et tissent ensemble le passé. Redécouvrir uniquement le passé des femmes ne suffit plus. Les ouvrières, féministes, syndiquées, fermières ou religieuses dont il est question dans ce livre ont occupé un espace historique, ont posé des gestes et mené des luttes qui ont façonné notre passé collectif féminin et masculin. Les auteures ont surtout exploré le passé féminin, mais elle nous convient à plusieurs reprises à décanter un lieu, une signification, un événement faisant ressortir chaque fois qu'il est possible la division sexuelle des rôles. Ces historiennes n'ont pas tenté d'apporter une interprétation définitive aux questions qu'elles ont posées. C'est plutôt l'ébauche d'une histoire nouvelle; surtout elles veulent inviter les historien/ne/s à réfléchir et à poursuivre cette réécriture de l'histoire dans son entier. C'est un défi!

Cet ouvrage constitue un dossier sérieux sur le travail des femmes et le féminisme. Cependant, les spécialistes et les étudiant/e/s qui ont déjà la première édition et qui veulent être à jour devront se résigner à avoir les huit premiers textes en double.

Institut Simone de Beauvoir
Université Concordia

UN APPRENTISSAGE DÉMYTHIFIÉ

Lucie Lequin

Nadia Fahmy-Eid, Micheline Dumont, *Maîtresses de maison, maîtresses d'école, Femmes, famille et éducation dans l'histoire du Québec.*
Montréal: Boréal Express, 1983. 413 p.

Livre-dossier, cet ouvrage situe l'apprentissage de la féminité dans son contexte historique et éclaire en particulier l'éducation des filles. Il permet de révéler aux femmes un peu plus de la mémoire collective de leur passé. Loin de l'étude des femmes éminentes, il décante le passé des femmes ordinaires et illustre la genèse de notre présent. Il participe de la pratique actuelle de l'histoire des femmes qui s'inscrit dans l'histoire sociale et se garde d'enfermer toutes les femmes dans un vécu univoque et globale. Dans la même foulée que *l'Histoire des femmes au Québec*, ouvrage de synthèse de notre histoire, *Maîtresses de maison, maîtresse d'école* poursuit les retrouvailles avec notre passé.

Il s'agit d'un ouvrage spécialisé qui réunit six textes inédits et huit textes significatifs déjà publiés sur le sujet. Douze historiennes animées par Nadia Fahmy-Eid et Micheline Dumont ont collaboré à son élaboration. Elles y retracent l'histoire du rapport des femmes québécoises à la famille et à l'école. Associer femmes, famille et école n'est pas fortuit car c'est dans la famille d'abord et dans l'école ensuite que s'assimilent très tôt les représentations, les valeurs, les normes et les modèles véhiculés par la société. Les références sont précises et abondantes. Le premier chapitre, "Bilan de recherche", fait état des nombreuses études relatives soit à la famille, soit à l'école. Il s'agit d'une mise au point rigoureuse et importante; la richesse bibliographique nous en fait oublier quelque peu l'aridité.

Dans la première partie, les auteures étudient l'axe femmes/éducation de la Nouvelle-France jusqu'en 1970. Des constantes traversent les textes, les époques. Du couvent des Ursulines au collège Marie-Anne, l'éducation diffère selon les classes sociales, les races, les sexes. De plus, la mainmise sur l'éducation des filles par les religieuses favorise le clivage entre l'éducation privée et publique. Toutefois, il appert que sans les écoles privées qui, au dix-neuvième siècle, jouissaient d'une stabilité financière certaine, le secteur public pour filles de milieux modestes aurait été encore plus défavorisé, comme en témoigne l'étude de Marie-Paule Malouin sur l'académie Marie-Rose. Enfin, ce rôle prépondérant des religieuses a contribué à l'infériorisation des enseignantes laïques, qui, elles, ne bénéficiaient pas de la protection immédiate de l'Église. Les articles de Marta Danylewycz et de Marise Thivierge examinent le statut précaire des enseignantes laïques et nous rappellent que l'infériorisation des enseignantes actuelles — accès difficile aux postes-cadres de l'éducation — s'enracine dans plusieurs décennies de préjugés.

Les auteures témoignent aussi du fossé entre la philosophie officielle de l'enseignement et la pratique. D'une part, les programmes pour jeunes filles sont fondés sur une conception globale de la femme, ainsi que de sa place et de son rôle au sein de la structure sociale. D'autre part, il ressort de ces études une certaine incohérence entre l'idéal des communautés religieuses et la réalisation de cet idéal. Les causes de cet écart sont multiples et varient selon les époques. Ainsi, l'éducation des filles chez les Ursulines de Québec sous le régime français était "perturbée" par les contingences socio-géographiques, comme le souligne Nadia Fahmy-Eid. Il semble que les jeunes filles de la Nouvelle-France jouissaient d'une plus grande liberté de pensée et de comportement que la jeunesse féminine française de la même époque et étaient beaucoup moins malléables. Pour sa part, Marie-Paule Malouin constate que le conformisme des objectifs visés dans l'éducation des filles au dix-neuvième siècle n'est qu'apparent car les religieuses enseignantes, par la formation intellectuelle des élèves, déclenchent sans le vouloir un mécanisme évolutif inévitable. Ce clivage idéologie/pratique explique aussi le succès mitigé de l'enseignement ménager et familial qui, sans l'appui soutenu du pouvoir, aurait disparu beaucoup plus tôt. Complètement déphasé, ce type d'enseignement ne répondait plus à la réalité et dans la pratique, les religieuses s'éloignaient souvent des normes. Sous une autre forme, on retrouve cette dichotomie dans l'ambiguité des objectifs de l'enseignement supérieur. Michèle Jean montre que d'une part, les religieuses assuraient à leurs étudiantes un enseignement identique à celui des garçons; d'autre part, elles devaient rassurer la société que ces études maintenaient la femme à l'intérieur de son "rôle naturel".

Les textes de la deuxième partie font état du rapport femmes/famille et des variantes que l'urbanisation et l'industrialisation ont instaurées. De nouveau, il ressort de l'ensemble de ces textes, un écart entre le rôle de reine du foyer accolé aux femmes par l'idéologie officielle et le vécu des femmes. Que ce soit l'analyse de Francine Barry sur la domesticité féminine, celle de Micheline Dumont sur les salles d'asile des soeurs Grises, ou celle de Bettina Bradbury sur l'économie familiale, l'image de la femme est polymorphe et, contrairement au mythe de la femme au foyer, beaucoup de femmes doivent avoir un travail rémunérateur. Quant à l'article de Marie Lavigne sur la fertilité des Québécoises, il s'attaque à un autre mythe véhiculé par notre mémoire collective, celui de la grande fertilité des Québécoises que les méthodes de statistiques ont en grande partie créé.

Afin d'étudier cette rupture d'avec l'image unifiée, Denise Lemieux, dans "La socialisation des filles dans la famille", suggère des pistes à explorer afin de mieux cerner le devenir des filles: contes enfantins, jeux, manuels d'éducation, vêtements, journaux, écrits intimes. Enfin, "Découvrir la mémoire des femmes" par Micheline Dumont appréhende les nouvelles orientations en histoire des femmes et présente l'histoire comme un projet militant.

Cet ouvrage réfléchi, documenté constitue un ensemble de données importantes sur l'éducation des femmes au Québec. Dans cette époque où l'on parle tellement de l'oppression des femmes, de leur victimisation séculaire, les auteures parlent aussi des actes indépendants, audacieux et autonomes de plusieurs femmes laïques ou religieuses et tentent de sonder le fossé entre

l'éducation réelle et l'éducation prônée. Cette optique demande un examen plus approfondi et c'est là, sans doute, que devrait se poursuivre l'étude de l'axe femmes/éducation. L'on aurait souhaité que le thème récurrent de la dichotomie théorie/pratique fasse l'objet d'un article de synthèse ou encore qu'il soit placé au centre même de ces études, car il semble en être le coeur. De toutes façons, les auteures ont posé plusieurs jalons qui pourront alimenter des recherches fructueuses.

Institut Simone de Beauvoir
Université Concordia

POT-POURRI

Mair Verthuy

Julia Bettinotti et Jocelyn Gagnon eds. *Que C'est Bête, Ma Belle!* Soudens-Donzé, Montréal 1983, 143 pp.

C'est par un article d'Anne Richer dans *La Presse* que ce petit livre fut attiré à mon attention. Anne Richer est féministe et loyale; elle exprimait dans sa rubrique l'indignation suscitée en elle par ce qui lui semblait être des attaques contre sa consoeur du *Journal de Montréal*, Claire Harting, et reprochait aux intellectuelles leur manque de solidarité féminine.

La curiosité me gagna, je l'achetai et je le lus.

La plaquette porte en sous-titre les mots: études sur la presse féminine au Québec, mais une lecture, même rapide, nous apprend qu'il s'agit d'une *certaine* presse féminine et d'autre part d'une page pour femmes tirée d'un quotidien montréalais tout ce qu'il a de plus masculin. L'éventail n'est donc ni exhaustif, ni objectif (ce qui n'est pas un mal en soi), ni homogène, quoi qu'en disent les auteurs. Il s'agit — et je cite — de la "roture" de la presse destinée particulièrement aux femmes. Cette "roture", sur une période de neuf mois — septembre '79 en mai '80 —, a été soumise à l'analyse de Bettinotti et de Gagnon. C'est dans l'ensemble de bonne guerre.

Lecteurs et lectrices auraient quand-même souhaité une explication des méthodes utilisées, voire des buts visés. A la page 14, on nous signale que: "A l'origine, nous voulions simplement décrire ces productions reconnues sous le nom de "presse féminine"...", mais il n'y a pas de véritable suite à cette phrase et nous ne savons donc pas par quoi ce désir originel a été remplacé.

On nous parle de "champs sémantiques" (p.14), on fait un peu appel à la sémiotique, on fait allusion ailleurs à une tentative de cerner un *mood* (?), mais

d'exposition claire des outils analytiques adoptés par les auteurs, point, et encore moins d'élaboration d'une position théorique qui aurait été à la racine de leur démarche et qui aurait pu servir donc à nous éclairer. Il en résulte que les analyses semblent tourner court. Mais si, dans l'ensemble, les résultats ne nous apprennent rien que nous ne subodorions déjà, ils auront au moins le mérite de nous fournir des noms et des citations avec lesquels émailler notre conversation. Il n'y a rien là.

Dans l'ensemble, avons nous dit plus haut et il faut bien le souligner. Car, ce qui tranche et qui choque dans le livre, c'est bien le chapitre signalé par Anne Richer et qui s'en prend à Claire Harting.

Les quelques autres chapitres passent en revue, c'est le cas de le dire, des magazines entiers *(Madame, Marie-Eve, Salut Chérie, Femme, Elle et Lui)* qui, en plus d'être défunts, appartenaient pour la plupart, sinon tous, à des entreprises d'hommes, et offraient à l'oeil critique de nos auteurs une cible collective et quasi anonyme (les citations et les articles sont loin d'être toujours attribués à des individu/e/s). Ainsi c'est le magazine qui est rendu responsable du contenu plutôt que ses employé/e/s.

Soudain, dans le chapitre deux, et seulement là, nous sommes confronté/e/s à un nom, à une personne, à Claire Harting. De collective et anonyme, la responsabilité devient individuelle et personnelle, elle passe de l'employeur à l'employée. C'est dire que nous avons ici l'impression d'assister à un règlement de comptes. Le ton de ce chapitre est tout de suite plus mesquin.

Ne citons comme exemple que la façon qu'ont les auteurs de signaler une petite faute d'orthographe qui pourrait aussi bien être celle de l'imprimeur que de Claire Harting. Toujours est-il que dans l'un des textes analysés le mot "chaînon" figure sans accent circonflexe. Plutôt que de rectifier tout simplement, nos auteurs citent l'erreur *cinq fois*, en prenant la peine d'ajouter chaque fois le mot *sic* entre parenthèses. Histoire de nous faire bien comprendre qu'ils sont incapables de lapsus de ce genre?

Mais encore. Eh bien, l'architecture de la page ne varierait pas (en comparaison à quoi?); les conseils domestiques et les recettes de cuisine y joueraient un très grand rôle (plus grand ou moins grand depuis que Claire Harting tient la page?); les champs sémantiques des titres souligneraient la conception traditionnelle de la femme (le travail? la politique? les problèmes?); à l'instar de M. Jourdain, Claire Harting pratiquerait de l'enthymène sans le savoir (!); elle citerait beaucoup de noms illustres pour à la fois "légitimer sa position d'énonciatrice" et "conserver ses distances vis-à-vis d'elle" (et son rôle d'informatrice alors?). Quoi qu'elle fasse, Claire Harting serait fautive.

Enfin, nous pouvons tous et toutes nous livrer à ce jeu-là. Voyons. Si je regarde le livre de Bettinotti et de Gagnon, je constate:

1. que le titre affiche déjà par l'association des mots "belle" et "bête", un grand mépris pour les femmes;
2. que Madame Bettinotti s'est adjoint *un* co-auteur;
3. que la maquette de la couverture a été confiée à un homme;

4. qu'avant de publier, on a donné le texte à lire à *un* professeur du département d'études littéraires de l'UQAM;
5. qu'en exergue on cite Augustin;
6. que les noms cités *abondamment* dans le texte et dans les nombreuses et pédantes notes en bas de page sont des noms d'autorités masculines: Barthes, Benveniste, Ducrot, Ribettes, Compagnon, Marcellesi, Cressot, Guirand, Searle.

Comme disent les auteurs dans l'un des reproches qu'ils adressent à Claire Harting, (p. 48), ce doit être le "principe parternant" (sic), le principe d'autorité.

Mais à quoi — *et à qui (cui bono*, comme diraient nos auteurs, qui ne boudent pas les mots savants) — sert ce genre de jeu? J'aurais tort de m'y livrer sérieusement, comme Bettinotti et Gagnon ont eu tort non seulement de s'y livrer mais surtout d'en publier les résultats. Ce livre n'a pas tardé à creuser davantage l'abîme qui sépare déjà, hélas, les "intellectuelles" des femmes "actives" qui oeuvrent sur le tas, contre vents et marées patriarcaux, pour changer la condition de la majorité des femmes; il ne faudrait pas en plus qu'il sème la zizanie chez les "intellectuelles".

Non pas que la presse dite féminine soit sacro-sainte, ni Claire Harting, ni Anne Richer, ni Renée Rowan. Pas plus que ce livre ne soit animé de mauvaises intentions. Mais, d'une part, on compare à ses périls les oranges et les poires et, d'autre part, on ne s'avance sur le terrain glissant de l'analyse "feministe" que bien préparé et muni des outils adéquats. Il faut savoir ce que l'on vise et pourquoi. Ce n'est pas le cas ici, du moins en apparence.

Faute de théorie, faute de perspective historique, faute d'étude contextuelle, faute d'un corpus homogène, les auteurs ont réussi à saboter leur propre travail. Loin de concentrer notre attention sur les dangers réels de la récupération pratiquée par la grande presse, ils ont polarisé les femmes autour d'une journaliste féministe qui est parmi celles qui ont le plus fait pour conscientiser la grande masse des Québécoises, ils ont fourni là des armes à nos vrais adversaires. C'est dangereux, C'est dommage.

A une époque que les média caractérisent déjà de "post-féministe", il nous faut être non seulement plus solidaires que jamais mais aussi plus vigilantes encore, tant il y a et aura d'écueils qui nous attendent.

Espérons que la prochaine analyse livrée par ces auteurs, mieux fondée et mieux exécutée, servira davantage leur cause, la cause des femmes et, partant, celle de la société entière.

C'est maintenant d'ailleurs, rassurons tout de suite Anne Richer*, que les "intellectuelles" rendront les meilleurs services aux mouvements de femmes, en élaborant en conjonction avec ceux-ci les outils théoriques et les connaissances nécessaires au maintien de nos positions, voire à leur amélioration, devant la montée revendicatrice du patriarcat dont les canons depuis quelque temps grondent à l'horizon.

Institut Simone de Beauvoir
Université Concordia

* qu'il faut aussi féliciter de la prompte générosité avec laquelle elle a défendu une "rivale".

PENIS/PHALLUS

Jennifer Waelti-Walters

Marcelle Brisson, *Plus jamais l'amour éternel: Héloïse sans Abélard.* Montréal: Les Editions Nouvelle Optique, 1981.

Marcelle Brisson a écrit un livre extraordinairement riche, passionnant à lire, fertile en idées, provocateur, qui vise trois niveaux d'exploration:

(1) L'histoire d'Héloïse elle-même:

> J'aime ta marginalité même si Abélard ne l'accepte pas et tente de la réduire.
>
> J'aime ta résistance à jouer un rôle qu'on a voulu t'attribuer.
>
> J'aime ton intelligence, ton savoir, et avant tout ce souci chez toi de raisonner toujours à partir du désir . . .
>
> Ce que je perçois de toi m'incite à en connaître davantage.
>
> (p. 13)

(2) L'attitude d'esprit qui a pu créer et maintenir le patriarcat — attitude qui se trouve chez Abélard:

> Mon propos, celui que m'inspire ton histoire, Héloïse, c'est de dénoncer la castration mentale chez l'homme. Mais en même temps c'est d'essayer de saisir à partir de toi l'asservissement millénaire de la femme, même très intelligente et très instruite. (p. 84-5)

et (3) une mise en question de l'histoire, de la philosophie et de la théologie:

"Transformer une histoire d'hommes en mémoires de femmes" (p. 97).

Le livre est séparé en deux parties: "Autrefois" où Brisson cite des lettres apocryphes d'Héloïse et un soliloque apocryphe d'Abélard et "Aujourd'hui" où c'est Brisson elle-même qui écrit à Héloïse. Ainsi conçue, la structure permet à Héloïse d'établir les éléments que Brisson développera plus tard. "Abélard: il m'a regardée . . . Regard de l'homme, regard de Dieu qui terrasse et donne vie?" (p. 21-22). Et ce regard domine le texte car nous ne voyons Héloïse que grâce au regard d'Abélard; mais aussi Héloïse se constitue, se sent exister, face au regard d'Abélard. Egale à égal, elle le regarde à son tour. Son malheur vient du fait qu'un regard de femme n'a de l'importance pour l'homme que dans des conditions bien précises. Héloïse étudiante, sans famille, libre de corps et d'esprit, philosophe elle-même, dialogue avec Abélard et il l'écoute, l'accepte comme *alter ego*, comme l'autre qui est le double et non pas l'antithèse de lui-même. Héloïse

enceinte devient femme générique et mythologique pour Abélard. Perdue l'amante intelligente, passionnée et égale. Le regard d'Héloïse n'a plus de poids.

Abélard cherche de nouveau sa réflexion chez les hommes, et châtré, n'étant plus "homme", il se cherche une image dans le regard de Dieu. Non seulement vit-il la séparation entre corps et esprit enseignée par les pères de l'église, mais par sa mésaventure et par la réaction qui s'ensuit, il devient la métaphore même de cette "castration mentale" qui sépare l'homme de son corps; des émotions qui transforme le pénis de l'amant en phallus du dominateur; qui est l'état d'esprit qui refuse la présence historique, l'espace aux femmes. Ainsi par Abélard, et à partir d'Héloïse, Brisson fait la critique du régime patriarcal.

> La femme pour avoir un lieu
> un abri tout simplement
> doit-elle être emmurée?
> . . .
> Pas de place pour elle
> parce qu'elle est: elle
> . . .
> La femme, les bras de l'homme-dieu
> qui l'enferment tout en l'étreignant. (p. 45)

écrit Héloïse. Encore: "N'eût-il pas été possible de savourer la chair tout en accomplissant l'Esprit? . . . Faut-il donc le mépriser ou le détester ce corps? On nous a souvent dit que c'est un corps de mort. Mais c'est un corps de vie et qui porte la vie de l'Esprit." (p. 56). Ensuite, à propos des moniales emmurées, chastes, "ces chairs tristes", Héloïse écrit:

> A quoi servons-nous Abélard? . . . sont-ce là les témoins que Dieu réclame? N'a-t-il créé ses créatures que pour les inviter à se décréer? Quand il a dit: croissez et multipliez-vous, a-t-il recommandé cette contrefaction stérile de la vie? (p. 58)

Pour Héloïse, le corps et l'esprit, le désir, la pensée, la maternité ne font qu'un tout. Aucune division, aucune lutte; la femme ne pouvant vivre le châtrage, ne vit donc pas la castration non plus. A partir de la vie d'Héloïse: de son état de victime physique, femme et nonne, enfermée contre son gré, et de sa liberté mentale; l'acceptation de son amour, le refus d'aucune culpabilité, la revendication de son désir, Brisson expose le statut de la femme dans l'histoire, avance vers un féminisme futur.

Ce qui est fascinant dans ce livre c'est la façon dont Marcelle Brisson tisse les thèmes: thèmes qui lient Abélard à Héloïse tout en les opposant l'un à l'autre, thèmes qui permettent le passage du Moyen Age chrétien aux époques de régimes matrilinéaires, au présent, à l'avenir, 2 l'utopie. Pour le montrer clairement, il faudrait un schéma sous les yeux. Regardez celui qui suit.

Commençons avec Abélard comme c'est par lui que nous découvrons Héloïse. Abélard est au centre, entouré de ce qui l'intéresse, ce qui forme son esprit et dirige sa vie. Directement au-dessus de lui mettons "la théologie" qui a deux branches: à droite "Eve" qui signifie l'attitude d'abélard envers les femmes, à gauche "esprit/corps". Tournons de façon sinistre et mettons "logos", ensuite "enseignement" et en bas "domination", puis montons à "l'amour" pour arriver finalement à "châtrage/castration". (Dans votre schéma vous êtes arrivé à la position de 3 heures et il n'y a rien pour le moment entre 3 heures et midi.)

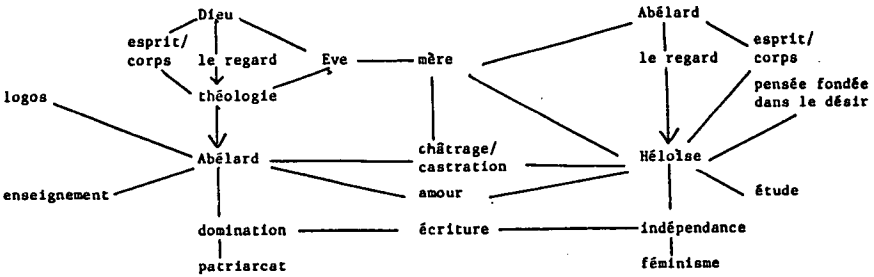
C'est par le "châtrage/castration" et par "l'amour" que le lien entre Héloïse et Abélard est connu. Mettons donc au centre de son propre cercle à droite de celui d'Abélard, liée à lui par ces termes indiqués ci-dessus. En dessous du nom d'Héloïse, dans la position où se trouve la "domination" pour Abélard, ajoutons "l'indépendance" et, plus bas, comme pendentif, "le féminisme" pour Héloïse et le "patriarcat" pour Abélard, car c'est à partir de ces attitudes-là que Brisson part vers la société. Après "l'indépendance" vient "l'étude", puis face au "logos" abélardien " la pensée fondée dans le désir" suivi par "esprit + corps (à 1 heure) et "mère" (à 11 heures d'une montre). Ainsi il est possible de suggérer l'ambivalence dans la pensée d'Abélard en liant d'un trait la "mère" du côté d'Héloïse à "Eve" et à "châtrage/castration" chez Abélard.

Tout ce qui reste à faire est d'indiquer le lieu du regard qui aide chacun à se définir. Pour Abélard il faut ajouter au-dessus de "théologie" le nom de Dieu; ce qui le situe, d'une façon appropriée, entre "Eve" et "esprit/corps" et permet au regard de Dieu de tomber directement sur Abélard et de mettre en perspective tout le reste car du haut en bas en droite ligne sont placés Dieu, la théologie, Abélard, la domination et le patriarcat. Pour Héloïse il faut ajouter au zénith le nom d'Abélard dont le regard formateur tombe sur Héloïse d'une position entre "mère" et "esprit + corps" et le résultat de cette trinité ironique est Héloïse, son indépendance et le féminisme qui en est le résultat.

Il ne reste qu'à placer "l'écriture" comme moyen terme entre "la domination" chez Abélard et "l'indépendance" chez Héloïse et nous retrouvons, générés et nés de la même friction, les lettres d'Héloïse, *L'Historia Calamitatum d'Abélard* et *Plus jamais l'amour éternel* de Marcelle Brisson. Le sujet des trois textes est le pouvoir: pouvoir privé et pouvoir public; les rapports entre la femme, l'homme et l'histoire.

Département d'études françaises
Université de Victoria

Plus jamais l'amour éternel: Marcelle Brisson



LA SUBVERSION PAR L'ÉCRITURE

Jennifer Waelti-Walters

éd. Irène Pagès et Susanne Lamy, Féminité, subversion, écriture
Montréal: Les Éditions du Remue-Ménage, 1983.

Cette anthologie rassemble un bon nombre des communications présentées dans les ateliers de critique littéraire féministe de l'Association des professeurs de français des universités et des collèges canadiens qui ont eu lieu à Ottawa en mai 1982 et à Vancouver en 1983. Ces réunions ont déjà influencé le développement de la critique féministe au Canada; la publication du volume sert donc à la fois comme aide-mémoire à certaines et à certains et comme livre important pour tous ceux qui s'intéressent aux rapports qui existent entre les femmes et l'écriture, l'écriture et le pouvoir, le pouvoir et les femmes au Québec et en France aujourd'hui. Tous les articles parlent des femmes; toutes les critiques sont des femmes.

A mon avis c'est l'excellent article de Marguerite Andersen, "La critique féministe: minoritaire et trouble-fête" qui aurait dû paraître en tête pour situer le travail des autres collaboratrices face à la critique traditionnelle, mâle; car tel qu'il est organisé, le livre ne met pas en valeur, pour moi, les lignes de force entre les différents essais. Ces liens créent un réseau de thèmes clairement indiqué par les titres choisis et qui dépasse les frontières des différentes sections présentées ici. Les thèmes majeurs sont: les idéologies, la subversion du langage et par le langage, la psychanalyse et la folie, le langage politique et la presse féministe.

Idéologies. Jeanne Lapointe, dans "Le Meurtre des femmes chez le théologien et chez le pornographe" fait une comparaison aussi passionnante qu'inattendue entre les stratégies de domination, l'attitude envers les femmes, le langage dont ils se servent eux-mêmes et les résultats de leur travail chez certains théologiens de l'Inquisition, chez des philosophes du 20e siècle et chez des pornographes de nos jours. Lapointe fait la critique de la pensée occidentale qui a comme tradition centrale la persécution des femmes. Marguerite le Clézio, par contre, étudie la comparaison entre les sociétés orientale et occidentale, faite par Julia Kristeva dans *Les Chinoises* et analyse la façon dont les femmes sont intégrées ou exclues, la manière dont les rôles de la femme se transforment. Ces mêmes thèmes reviennent dans la discussion qu'offre Marie-Blanche Tahon des oeuvres au sujet de la guerre des écrivaines algériennes, Assia Djebar, Aïcha Lemsine et Yamina Mechakra. Elle constate que ces femmes se trouvaient prises entre leur propre expérience et l'idéologie du gouvernement car leur choix était de rester silencieuses ou d'écrire des livres où les femmes n'avaient pas le droit de parole — être les complices des hommes dans l'anéantissement historique de la voix des femmes en somme.

Subversion. Les idéologies sont des stratégies employées par un certain groupe pour obtenir ou maintenir le pouvoir. Dans les trois exemples donnés ici les femmes en sont les victimes. Dans sept autres articles, ceux de Mair Verthuy sur l'oeuvre de Christiane Rochefort, de Martine Léonard sur Nathalie Sarraute, de Christiane Makward et de Christine Klein-Lataud sur Chantal Chawaf et d'autres écrivaines, de Suzanne Lamy sur Yolande Villemaire et France Théoret et d'Evelyne Voldeng sur *L'Euguélionne* de Louky Bersianik, il est question des techniques romanesques dont se servent les écrivaines pour subvertir le système du groupe dominant. L'article de Verthuy: "De La Conscience de classe à la conscience de caste", sert admirablement comme pont intellectuel entre la discussion des idéologies et celle de la langue même; il est donc dommage qu'on ait choisi de l'éloigner des autres études littéraires, le privant ainsi d'une fonction-clé dans l'unité du livre.

Il doit être presque aussi difficile d'assembler et d'organiser une anthologie que d'en écrire un compte-rendu! Il est certain que ce sont mes propres intérêts et mes propres lectures qui me font polariser le texte entier autour des articles de Jeanne Lapointe, d'Evelyne Voldeng, de Mair Verthuy, de Martine Léonard et de Marguerite Andersen, car j'y trouve dans chaque cas l'exploration d'une perception structurante qui me passionne. D'autres lecteurs ou lectrices chemineront autrement dans ce volume d'intérêts divers. Continuons à identifier les éléments qui s'y trouvent.

Oppression. La folie, la maternité, la psychanalyse, ce sont trois moyens efficaces de la répression des femmes. Ici Irène Pagès nous démontre l'importance de la folie et du thème de la naissance dans la poésie d'Emma Santos; Chantal Saint-Jarre crée un texte sur la maternité comme prison pour la femme, et, dans un dialogue amusant, Barbara Bucknall psychanalyse Phèdre.

Politique. Dans "L'Énoncé/dénoncé au féminin: Yaguello, Herrmann, Ouellette-Michalska", Maroussia Hajdukowki-Ahmed s'adresse au "double standard" qui opère à tous les niveaux du discours et aux rapports linguistique,

philosophique et psychanalytique qui lient les femmes au langage. Dans ce même contexte, Barbara Godard analyse les transformations du langage des écrivaines dont les textes ont été publiés dans *La Barre du Jour*, analyse donc la révolution linguistique qui accompagne le développement de perspectives féministes. Louise Forsyth poursuit cette même révolution dans son article où elle postule que les numéros spéciaux féminins de *La Barre du Jour* ont changé le langage, les conventions littéraires et les codes sociaux au Québec. Que ces numéros ont la résonance de manifestos politiques. Et Caroline Bayard examine également *La Barre du Jour* mais pour révéler les rapports entre les textes publiés, les théories féministes existantes et la création de nouvelles théories.

Les autres articles qui restent dans cette catégorie d'écrits politiques de femmes sont plus sociologiques que littéraires. Chantal Bertrand-Jennings offre un survol de "la presse des mouvements de libération des femmes en France de 1971 à 1981", Julia Bettinotti de la presse féminine au Québec, et Jeanne Demers et Line McMurray étudient les rapports qu'ont les femmes au langage, d'abord dans un article sur les graffiti: les conditions nécessaires avant que les femmes ne se décident à les créer, les thèmes choisis et les réponses ajoutées aux graffiti existants, et ensuite dans une discussion du discours féministe, quitte à conclure que dans les deux cas ces écrits politiques et polémiques sont pour les femmes et par les femmes.

Le volume déploie un éventail des rapports possibles entre la femme et le mot, et ainsi entre la femme et le pouvoir. De la dénonciation de la pensée dominante où les femmes sont maintenues en état de victime aux expressions publiques d'un nouveau langage politique, cette anthologie révèle une multitude de voix féminines et féministes. On y constate des abus, analyse des stratégies, examine des subversions actuelles du pouvoir et démontre clairement l'importance du langage dans les rapports philosophiques, littéraires, politiques et privés de chaque société.

Féminité, subversion, écriture est un livre varié et intéressant qui apporte une contribution importante à l'étude de la littérature francophone, de la critique littéraire, de la mise en pratique des méthodes féministes et de l'analyse du pouvoir.

Département d'études françaises
Université de Victoria

UN DEVENIR QUI SE FAIT ATTENDRE

Gaétane Payeur

En collaboration, *Devenirs de femmes*. Montréal: Fides Collection Cahiers de recherche éthique, 1981.

Introduction

Le huitième numéro de "recherche éthique" est un livre écrit par des femmes pour qui l'oppression des femmes et leur émergence propre dans une société nouvelle sont une question d'éthique. L'infériorité socio-économique, la violence physique et l'exploitation sexuelle qui s'y rattachent y sont en effet considérées comme injustifiables et signes d'un développement social et moral bloqué. Et l'Église même refuse l'égalité des femmes.

Les analyses diverses de l'ensemble des dimensions fondamentales de "la condition féminine" — telles la pauvreté, une sexualité réprimée, la médicalisation, des rapports stéréotypés, une école et une justice sexistes — , empruntent aux divers courants du féminisme. Les collaboratrices expliquent et revendiquent en termes tantôt d'égalité, tantôt de réappropriation, tantôt de mutation. Toutes s'accordent sur la nécessité des changements profonds dans la vie individuelle et collective des femmes, et sur l'idée que ces changements sont la condition même non seulement du "développement" mais de la "survie" même de la société industrielle avancée.

Comme l'affirme Monique Dumais dans l'introduction, "il s'agit d'un changement radical et beaucoup plus que quelques réformes accordées ici et là" (p. 11). Le Mouvement des femmes est le plus important de notre époque, celui, selon Danielle Lafontaine, "qui est le plus intimement lié à l'avenir de nos sociétés" (p. 27) et il ne disparaîtra pas (p. 38). Les pages les plus politiques du livre interrogent les stratégies et les voies du militantisme, leur institutionnalisation et leur récupération. Le livre se veut une entreprise de décodage et de questionnement du vécu des femmes et des structures qui compromettent leur devenir et leur créativité, il se veut aussi l'expression des malaises et des recherches des féministes.

Monique Dumais nous introduit dans ce cheminement collectif:

> Nous en sommes à cerner les ambiguïtés de nos revendications présentes, les récupérations toujours possibles, les compromissions qui sont plus ou moins stratégiques (p. 14)

Réflexion faite, il y a pour les femmes d'aujourd'hui, de demain, telles des sages-femmes, "une existence à créer". Cette tâche s'avère hardie. En effet, "comment

se fait-on entendre quand on n'a pas le pouvoir?" (p. 15). Selon l'esprit de D'Eaubonne, les divers chapitres situent le Mouvement des femmes dans l'avènement d'une mutation de l'humanité. Selon Dumais, il faut:

> ... laisser surgir un *ethos* circonscrit, tenu caché, presque tu, (. . .) lui donner la possibilité d'émerger dans sa concrétude, avec sa vitalité, des perspectives d'avenir social selon son propre souffle inspirateur et actif (p. 17)

1. Pour une action réfléchie . . .

Les devenirs de femmes, tel un mouvement profond, revêtent la forme d'une révolte contre l'ordre établi, contre un ordre soi-disant légitime. Ils se fondent dans la contestation globale d'un développement social "fondé sur la domination, l'exploitation, le pillage et la destruction" (p. 27). Le mouvement des femmes est le refus, selon l'expression de Danielle Lafontaine, d'une croissance des uns aux dépens des autres, le refus de:

> ... l'anéantissement de la créativité de la plus grande partie des ressources humaines dont on préféra longtemps n'extraire que la simple force de travail (p. 23)

et cela, au profit des hommes. Il ne s'agit plus d'une simple crise à gérer; il s'agit de sortir d'un monde fondé sur l'état de guerre et l'impérialisme destructeur pour arriver à "une économie de paix" où les rapports de domination seront inexistants. Il semble que la seule alternative à la guerre, mieux, à l'extermination, ce soit le mouvement des femmes vers une révolution sociale (p. 28).

Le mouvement selon l'analyse de Lafontaine, est celui du groupe femme qui se pose comme tel face à l'État, et qui se situe dans la crise des normes et structures de notre société. Il a émergé au cours des années soixante et soixante-dix dans le contexte de transformation du système économique et du développement de la technologie. Progressivement, la séparation de la sphère privée de la reproduction et de la sphère publique est devenue de moins en moins justifiable et rationnelle (p. 27). Le malaise des femmes est là, il est issu des tensions entre le monde mâle de la production et celui, au "féminin", de la reproduction. Tension d'autant plus aiguë qu'il ne s'agit déjà plus aujourd'hui de s'assurer qu'on peut produire mais de savoir *ce* qu'on va produire et pour qui (p. 26).

Ainsi;

> Que les femmes en aient conscience ou non, le devenir même de nos sociétés les implique comme groupe. Les femmes occupent structurellement, historiquement, tout un champ dont le développement pèsera lourd sur l'organisation des sociétés de demain. (p. 27)

Des conditions historiques nouvelles ont engendré une combativité nouvelle des femmes. Cependant, la misère ressentie des femmes et le désir de libération n'entraînent pas de soi la transformation sociale. Si le mouvement des femmes implique à l'origine une "conscience même floue" des rapports dominants-dominées, les devenirs de femmes s'alimentent à la "réflexivité" sur l'oppression, au refus des contraintes et à l'organisation militante (p. 31).

Les tâches d'analyse, d'explication et d'orientation de l'action politique des femmes importent d'autant plus que, face à l'État, l'autonomie de cette action est vue comme déviante, donc à coopter, à récupérer. Les groupes de femmes se trouvent dans une situation contradictoire face à l'État: subversifs, démunis, ils en viennent à recourir à une reconnaissance officielle. Celle-ci implique alors une négociation où le "désirable" se réduit au "possible", c'est-à-dire au "légitime" (p. 35). Surtout sous "le spectre de la crise", ou celui des "ennemis extérieurs". Dans le contexte de l'État vu par l'opinion comme "en difficulté lui-même", comme le souligne Lafontaine, les luttes des femmes deviennent facilement impopulaires, et, dans la réalité, plus sporadiques. "Le processus d'institutionnalisation des revendications des femmes . . . porte un dur coup aux organisations du Mouvement" (p. 37). Selon Danielle Lafontaine, des gains subsistent et, surtout, la résistance continue d'émerger. Elle s'exprime dans une alliance avec les plus démunis, dans une politisation de la vie quotidienne dans la sphère du privé. Les devenirs de femmes exigeront toutefois une orientation de ces niveaux de lutte que rien n'annonce.

Est-il encore trop tôt? L'analyse de Jocelyne Saint-Arnaud Beauchamp sur l'idée et l'impact d'une prétendue "nature féminine" montre qu'encore et toujours, les stéréotypes sexuels sont pris comme guides de la personnalité idéale. En effet:

> . . . pour beaucoup de gens, le décodage des rôles codés selon le sexe, même s'ils n'ont aucun rapport avec l'érotisme et la reproduction, est insoutenable. Ils croient leur identité menacé. (p. 46)

Comme si les femmes en étaient encore à se remettre du passé, à le réinterpréter, à chercher le moyen de se retrouver. C'est la position de Micheline Dumont-Johnson. Les femmes ont à découvrir leur mémoire, à poser *leurs* questions à leur propre passé, comme pour découvrir "une solidarité jusqu'ici ignorée" (p. 53). En ce sens, refaire l'histoire des femmes, c'est s'engager dans un "projet militant" (p. 63), c'est s'opposer concrètement à toute forme de récupération du discours des femmes. Et là encore, il reste à trouver une nouvelle base où les femmes partagent une existence historique (p. 58).

Occuper l'espace, l'idéologie et le temps, les reformuler pour s'y retrouver, s'y défendre et s'imposer, telles sont les *conditions générales* des devenirs de femme. Ces devenirs font figure d'invention. Celle-ci, on peut le penser, jaillit de l'analyse des *données particulières*, et de leur neutralisation. C'est l'objet de la deuxième partie de l'ouvrage.

2. . . . dans des interventions spécifiques

L'éducation sexiste fait l'objet de deux chapitres. Dans son analyse de l'éducation morale que l'on donne actuellement aux jeunes, Anita Caron retient que non seulement on y renforce les stéréotypes sexuels mais que les dimensions sociales et politiques sont absentes des programmes. Aucune référence n'est faite à la société patriarcale et capitaliste (p. 72). Il est pourtant nécessaire et urgent que l'école et les programmes de formation morale en particulier, apportent "leur contribution spécifique à la production de modèles différents et à l'avènement de nouvelles valeurs" (p. 74).

Dans son étude sur les représentations des rapports hommes-femmes chez les adolescents québécois, Huguette Dagenais nous confirme que les jeunes ne contestent guère le modèle traditionnel. Ils répètent ce qu'ils ont vu dans la famille, ce qui a été répété *ad nauseam* à l'école, dans les médias et par la publicité. Selon Dagenais, il est encore trop tôt pour voir les effets des luttes feministes, il faudra "attendre" une autre génération (p. 165). Cela dit, il est urgent de changer le système d'éducation depuis la maternelle jusqu'à l'Université et de réorienter la formation des maîtres (sic). Les conséquences de l'éducation scolaire actuelle montrent à quel point il est essentiel d'agir là ou s'effectue "la transmission de l'idéologie dominante" (p. 166).

Face à la morale catholique et au sein de l'Église romaine, la discrimination des femmes a de vieilles et fortes racines et elle se perpétue. La réflexion éthico-théologique de Louise Melançon sur l'avortement montre avec assurance comment, contrairement à ce que persistent à prétendre les moralistes traditionnels, une interruption volontaire de grossesse dans une situation de conflit entre des vies humaines et de souci de qualité de la vie, est le lieu d'un cheminement d'autonomie et de responsabilité morales. Cette question s'inscrit au coeur du Mouvement de libération des femmes, de la transformation des rapports sociaux et de sexes.

En effet, il faut apprendre de la problématique des femmes face à une grossesse non désirée, face à leur refus du corps comme destin, face à leur refus que les institutions patriarcales décident à leur place, face à leur refus de toute exploitation sexuelle (p. 92) que les femmes veulent exercer leur autonomie, actualiser leur valeur face à la vie, défendre le droit aussi de ne pas procréer, affirmer toute leur dignité. Comme co-créatrices de la vie, les femmes aiment la vie. Toutefois "l'amour de la vie", cela se vit dans la vie quotidienne et celle-ci est inévitablement faite de conflits et de contradictions (p. 99). Ainsi, les femmes entendent faire leur choix et non le laisser à la médecine, la psychologie ou la religion.

Dans le même esprit, Jocelyne Talbot invite les lectrices à réapproprier leur corps face au pouvoir médical qui s'est arrogé le droit de définir la santé physique et mentale des femmes, leur sexualité, qui possède le droit de définir aussi ce qui est prescriptible et qui garde le pouvoir de prescrire (p. 108). Il y a une médecine à guérir, un pouvoir médical à démystifier . . . et des femmes à éduquer à l'auto-santé (p. 109).

Quant aux droits des femmes dans l'Église, les réflexions de Marie Gratton-

Boucher laissent voir l'inconsistance, dans cette institution, entre une égalité toute théorique et la pratique d'une inégalité où règne "la bonne conscience des défenseurs de droits et des détenteurs du pouvoir" (p. 132). Certainement l'Église a écopé de la civilisation. Il n'est pas sûr qu'elle la sauve! Au Québec, des évêques n'étaient guère favorables au droit de vote des femmes. Si Jésus était révolutionnaire, cela a tourné court; il suffit de mentionner Saint Paul et les Pères de l'Église dans l'ensemble. L'Église contemporaine refuse les femmes dans son gouvernement et ses fonctions sacrées par pure discrimination sexuelle (p. 139). Or, cette "mise à l'écart des femmes" est impossible à justifier de nos jours (p. 140). Célibataires, mariées ou religieuses, les femmes dans l'Église sont "toutes égales dans leur inégalité" (p. 144)! affirme Gratton-Boucher. Il y aura des mentalités à y changer, puis les lois et les structures .

La présence et l'intervention des femmes dans la vie économique constituent un autre des chapitres difficiles de la situation des femmes. Elles ont toujours travaillé, nous dit Francine Fournier, elles ont toujours un statut inférieur comme travailleuses, salariées ou non. Ghettoïsées de toute manière, il convient de promouvoir des programmes d'action positive afin de s'attaquer à la discrimination systématique et obtenir l'égalité non seulement des chances mais des résultats (p. 119). Dans un même souffle, le témoignage de Monique Vésina-Parent rappelle la vie occcultée des Québécoises actives d'hier et invite les femmes à l'engagement à la cause d'une société différente (p. 123-130).

Dans le contexte du devenir des femmes que déplie ce cahier de recherche éthique, il y avait lieu de questionner le discours des femmes sur leur sexualité. Micheline Carrier y voit un "balbutiement" (p. 77). Les hommes, pour leur part, parlent "fesses", et du pape au pornocrate, on prône une "mise en tutelle du corps féminin sexué", on affiche le même mépris de la sexualité féminine (p. 79). Les femmes, elle, "se découvrent toujours en quête de la même plénitude dans leur vie amoureuse" (p. 80), et plusieurs préfèrent se taire. Il y a là une sorte de boîte de Pandore, la crainte de devoir réviser l'ensemble des relations humaines vécues avec ses partenaires (p. 80). Les femmes qui vivent une sexualité en dehors des schémas imposés hésitent à parler, elles restent sensibles aux "jugements". Beaucoup de femmes achètent la paix par le silence, y fuient, y cachent leur hostilité, leur déception et, même, leur culpabilité apprise. Il reste "tragique" que la plupart des femmes "hésitent à dénoncer une sexualité bafouée, déformée, niée, parfois même par leurs partenaires" (p. 82).

Que faire? Que faire contre un discours masculin qui occupe toutes "les ondes" sur ce terrain et qui "souvent", "se confond avec le discours pornographique" (p. 84)? Les femmes devront "tenir leur propre discours, refuser qu'on le filtre ou qu'on le récupère."

Il fallait le rappeler, la condition des femmes est celle d'êtres enfermées dans un triangle dont les côtés sont solidement articulés: la dépendance économique, la violence physique et l'exploitation sexuelle. Comme l'affirme Carrier:

> . . . c'est le corps sexué des femmes qui constitue le véritable problème dans les rapports humains, un corps qu'on veut contrôler parce qu'on le craint, parce qu'on a peur de sa puissance, de son pouvoir de donner la vie (p. 85).

Carrier reprend l'idée majeure de cet ouvrage collectif: la société ne se transformera que parallèlement à la sortie des femmes de cette cage triangulaire.

Conclusion

"Réfléchir éthiquement sur la condition actuelle des femmes" (p. 9), tel était le projet de *Devenirs de femmes*. On ne peut que reconnaître l'à propos d'une telle démarche et souhaiter une suite à un projet si bien amorcé. La qualité de la réflexion théorique s'allie dans l'ensemble à un langage facile d'accès et qui sait demeurer proche des données de la vie concrète des femmes d'aujourd'hui. Cet ouvrage est un outil stimulant pour la réflexion. L'articulation des thèmes particuliers de la condition des femmes aurait, dans la deuxième partie, gagné à être plus rigoureuse et explicite. Certains aspects, celui de l'éducation, de la pauvreté, auraient dû être traités de façon plus drue. On peut aussi regretter que, dans une démarche de réflexion éthique, la violence physique et l'exploitation sexuelle n'aient pas été davantage analysées.

Enfin, devant cet ouvrage comme devant bon nombre d'études féministes actuelles, on risque de devenir impatiente face à l'insuffisance des stratégies concrètes, voire à leur absence, visant à actualiser la transformation des mentalités, des règles et des structures de l'arrangement phallocratique. Les phases du décodage, de l'explication, de la réaction et de l'orientation en appellent une autre, parallèle, celle de la créativité, de l'invention, du savoir-faire qui précisément garantissent la mise en action du projet éthico-politique des femmes, celui d'une humanité où la non-violence et, par suite, la gratuité permettront l'épanouissement de toutes les collectivités.

L'Université du Québec à Hull

CONTRIBUTORS:

SUSAN SONTAG
ANGELA MILES
HEATHER JON MARONEY
EILEEN MANION
PATRICIA HUGHES
MAIR VERTHUY
LUCIE LEQUIN
JENNIFER WAELTI-WALTERS
GAÉTANE PAYEUR
GERALDINE FINN
PAMELA McCALLUM
TORIL MOI
PATROCINIO SCHWEICKART
BARBARA GODARD
DAPHNE READ
MEG LUXTON
MARIANA VALVERDE
JO VELLACOTT
PATRICIA ELLIOTT
JANE LILIENFELD
WENDY KATZ
JANICE WILLIAMSON

CultureTexts series
New World Perspectives
Montréal

(Paper) ISBN 0-920393-01-2

Printed in Canada