

# **WOMEN'S PHILOSOPHY REVIEW**

**(previously the NEWSLETTER)**

**Issue No 12 November 1994**

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
<b>Editorial</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>SWIP Business and News</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Reports on Conferences</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Membership</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Research Interests for Networking</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Conferences</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Resources</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Books Received</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Book Reviews</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Review Index</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Paper by Christine Battersby</b>	<b>36</b>
<i>"I am not a philosopher": Simone de Beauvoir and the Delirium of Genus</i>	

## Editorial

The most recent edition of *Hypatia* (vol 9 no 3 summer 1994) includes a section on 'Feminist Philosophy after Twenty Years' which readers might find interesting to consult. Of particular relevance to our situation is the relatively small impact which SWIP in the USA has had. Carol Gould in her paper notes that, although the percentage of women earning PhDs in philosophy has increased (to 28% in 1991) and the total number of women employed full-time as philosophers has increased (to 14.5%), women are not adequately represented among tenured or full professors, and their representation is not proportionate to the number of women in philosophy. In this country too, although women are now putting pressure on philosophy departments to offer courses in the areas that interest them, all the evidence seems to suggest that appointments of women/feminists are made overwhelmingly at the lowest possible level, if at all, so that there is little possibility of influencing the development of the field at a national level. Anecdotally, one might cite the recent dismal failure of Essex University to appoint a woman, despite advertising for someone with interests in feminist philosophy, and the appointment of another conventional male philosopher to the Chair at Hull, ensuring the perpetuation of "philosophy as usual". It will be instructive to watch the outcome at Warwick University, which is also currently advertising for a Chair in Philosophy, but don't hold your breath. Perhaps the time is nearing when more concerted pressure from women in philosophy is needed. Responses from readers on this would be welcomed.

Just before the newsletter went to press, we learnt of the untimely death of the distinguished French philosopher Sarah Kofman, at the age of 60. The news came too late to insert a commemorative paragraph in the newsletter; we hope to have something on her life and work in the next issue.

*Morwenna Griffiths  
Margaret Whitford*

Items for inclusion in the next *Review* should be sent to

Morwenna Griffiths  
School of Education  
University of Nottingham  
Nottingham, NG7 2RD.  
Phone 0115 951 4484; Fax 0115 979 1506.

Margaret Whitford  
Dept of French  
Queen Mary and Westfield College  
Mile End Road  
London E1 4NS.  
Phone 0171 975 5555 Ext 3370;  
Fax 0171 975 5500.

The deadline for receipt is 30 April 1995.

We are happy to publish a special edition of the *Review* in honour of Philosophy which would consist entirely of papers sent to:

We would particularly welcome papers from women philosophers and those at the start of their academic careers. We would also like some very established writers.

Deadline: 30 May 1995.

If you would like to ring up and chat about your paper or if you have questions about the need of encouragement to send in two papers, contact the editors.

### CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Kimberly Hitchings, the SWIP Treasurer, is now at the following address:

Department of Politics  
University of Edinburgh  
31 Buccleugh Place  
Edinburgh EH8 9JT

Phone 0131 650 4239

# SWIP BUSINESS AND NEWS

## Contributions to the Women's Review of Philosophy

We rely much more than we would like on asking people personally to send in papers and reviews. Please send in your contributions!

We welcome:

### Papers

Please send in papers for the Review. At present we publish one in each edition - but we could expand. We want to provide a space for people to publish papers to widen their audience and take advantage of the *Review* to get some feedback on their ideas.

All papers are refereed. We are looking for papers that meet the following criteria:

Less than 6,000 words - but shorter is preferable.

Exploratory, rather than decisive, and provocative if you wish.

No particular philosophical or feminist line is required.

And of course, interesting, readable, lively, earth-shaking, original, rigorous, illuminating...

### Reviews and offers to review

Reviews of books that you have read; write in for the books in the 'Books Received' section; contact the editors and say you are interested in reviewing generally.

### News items

Reports of conferences and meetings, international contacts, news of women and philosophy in other countries.

### Articles about women in philosophy

Reports of teaching; descriptions of new courses; discussions of issues related to teaching and other work as a woman in philosophy; articles about jobs for women philosophers.

### Contact the Editors

Morwenna Griffiths, School of Education, University of Nottingham, Nottingham, NG7 2RD. Phone 0115 951 4484; Fax 0115 979 1506.

Margaret Whitford, Dept of French, Queen Mary and Westfield College, Mile End Road, London E1 4NS. Phone 0171 975 5555 Ext 3370; Fax 0171 975 5500.

## VISITING FEMINIST PHILOSOPHER

Moira Gatens, author of *Feminism and Philosophy* (Polity Press) will be in the UK at the beginning of January. She will be giving a paper on 'Spinoza's Aporia: Women and the Body Politic' at the Political Thought conference at New College, Oxford on 7 January (for details and conference registration, contact Ivan Hannaford, Faculty of Human Sciences, Kingston University). If you want to write to her prior to her visit (to suggest a paper, make arrangements to meet or whatever), she can be contacted at the Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, Canberra, ACT 2601, Australia.

## REPORT OF THE SWIP MEETING AT HULL

SWIP members present felt that forming an executive for SWIP would be useful and help ensure that meetings and conferences got organised. It was thought that the executive should meet at least once and preferably twice per year. It should consist of regional representatives, a coordinator and membership secretary/treasurer. Dates of executive meetings would be notified to all members and such meetings would be open to any members who wished to attend. A provisional date for the first meeting was set at March 11 1995. To fund such an executive it was anticipated that the SWIP subscription would need to be increased, so that SWIP had some funds in addition to those required to produce the newsletter.

NOMINATIONS, INCLUDING SELF NOMINATIONS ARE THEREFORE REQUESTED FOR REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES AND FOR A COORDINATOR FOR THIS EXECUTIVE. SEND TO KATHLEEN LENNON, DEPT OF PHILOSOPHY, UNIVERSITY OF HULL, COTTINGHAM ROAD, HULL, Fax 01482 466122 BY 12 DECEMBER IF POSSIBLE.

(The meeting noted gratefully that Morwenna Griffiths and Margaret Whitford were happy to go on producing the newsletter at present and that Kimberly Hutchings is willing to continue as membership secretary/treasurer).

Kathleen Lennon  
University of Hull

## REPORTS OF CONFERENCES

### "FEMINISM AND THE SUBJECT"

SWIP DAY SCHOOL 5 NOVEMBER AT HULL

The presentations were as follows: *Christine Battersby, Kant and the Gender of the Self; Alison Ainley "The Invisibility of the Flesh" Phenomenology and Feminist Subjectivity; and workshops on: Philosophy and the Lesbian Subject Amanda Kidd; Corporeal Specificity Gill Jagger; Literature and pornography: Readings from George Bataille Rebecca Smalley and Julie Crofts*

The day school went well. There were 55 participants and a nicely interconnected set of papers and workshops.

*Christine Battersby*, in a dense and fascinating paper, interrogated the Kantian subject, constituted *in opposition* to an 'other' conceived of as inert and unchanging matter; and having as one of its consequences an inability to think the insides of bodies or a fluid and porous identity.

*Alison Ainley* drew parallels and differences in the treatment of the body found in the work of Merleau Ponty and Irigaray, challenging dualisms of inside/outside; subject/object.

*Gill Jagger* articulated and problematised the account of the materiality of the body found in the recent work of Judith Butler, provoking thought about just how we are to think that materiality.

*Amanda Kidd* while criticising the position given to lesbian subjectivity in writers such as Adrienne Rich and contemporary Queer Theory, (for in both the specificity of the lesbian perspective is rendered invisible) defended a privileged position for lesbian standpoints with regard to constructions of gender.

*Julie Crofts and Rebecca Smalley* in a difficult and controversial workshop, examined the transgressive strategies in the work of Georges Bataille.

### AGENDA FOR GENDER

A collection of papers with this title was launched at a brief conference on 28 September in London. You may have seen some of the press attention, which typically used one misquotation "George, the wolf in the woolly cardigan", and ignored most of the issues raised about the organisation of women in higher education.

The papers themselves were the outcome of a previous conference, organised to discuss the extremely poor performance of Universities and Colleges in promoting equal opportunities. Helen Linders, of the Equal Opportunities Commission, spoke at the launch, pointing out that the EOC is keen to promote the issue of women, but can only work within the law, collecting evidence of discrimination and bringing cases. If you have any "horror stories", you should send them to her at EOC, Manchester. Everyone agreed that these should be logged, regardless of action or inaction.

As Helen pointed out, legal structures rely on us to extend the debate. A common theme of the papers is the pervasiveness of a masculine culture within our institutions, which at the same time operates a gender blindness making complaint difficult and women invisible. The papers explore the variety of ways in which this culture continues to marginalize, dominate and/or co-opt us, from the curriculum to new managerial styles. We need a protracted campaign to make that culture gender sensitive on all fronts.

Pointers from the launch for this included:

- thinking about EO as a culture of containment
- finding the pressure points in HE that we can press
- logging horror stories (see above)

A planning group has been set up, and would welcome further volunteers. They plan to hold a meeting at the WHEN (Women in Higher Education Network) Conference to be held at the University of Central Lancashire on Saturday 26 November. They are planning an event for next February. For further information, suggestions etc. please fax Val Walsh, 051 928 6116.

Copies of the papers can be obtained from Prof M Evans, Darwin College, University of Kent, CT2 7NP, price £3.00. Please make cheques payable to UNIKENT.

## THINKING FEMINISMS

A conference entitled *Thinking Feminisms: Looking Forward* was held on Thursday September 8 at Manchester Deaf Centre. Intended as a forum in which both academic and non-academic strands of feminist thought and activism could meet and interact, the conference attracted a wide range of delegates. Speakers were asked to situate their ideas as far as possible within a feminist discourse, rather than take male philosophical texts as their primary reference point. It was hoped that this would make the conference accessible to those who did not have a formal education in philosophy, as well as encouraging a forward-thinking agenda for feminist theory.

Speakers included *Jill Marsden* (lecturer in philosophy, Bolton Institute of Higher Education): **Reinventing Nature**; *Soran Reader* (lecturer in philosophy, University of Durham): **Unreasonable Women**; *Selma James* (co-founder of the Wages for Housework Campaign): *Women, Reproduction and Unwaged Work*; *Sadie Plant* (lecturer in cultural studies, University of Birmingham): **Feminisation**; and *Margrit Shildrick* (lecturer in the centre for women's studies at the University of Lancaster): **Relative Values, Relative Bodies**. *Rose Yates* (a student in modern studies at Manchester Metropolitan University and member of *Rebels Without a Clause*, the North-West lesbian and gay writers and performers group) ended the day with her hilarious characterisation of *Cynthia Moore-Dross*, elitist academic par excellence. A paper by *Xiao Wei* (department of social science at Tsinghua University, Beijing, China) entitled **Do Chinese Women Need Feminism?** was also available for delegates to read; Xiao Wei is eager for comments on her paper and anyone who wishes to obtain a copy of it should write to the conference organisers at the address below.

It is intended that the conference papers form the core of a book, also to be titled *Thinking Feminisms: Looking Forward*. If anyone would like to contribute a paper they should contact us.

We would like to thank all the participants at the conference, particularly the speakers: everyone who helped with organisation on the day; Hulme Women's Art Group for providing artwork to decorate the venue; the University of Manchester Small Grants Fund for assistance with costs; and the staff and volunteers at the Manchester Deaf Centre.

*Emma Martin and Amanda Trevor-Roberts*  
Department of Philosophy, University of Manchester,  
Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL.

## MEMBERSHIP

An application form is included with this edition of the *Review*. It is for the use of NEW members. Please pass it on or display it, if you are already a subscriber.

Existing subscribers will receive a separate request for payment, soon (if they have not already paid for 1994/5).

Note that Kimberly Hutchings the treasurer/secretary has moved to a new job in Edinburgh. Her address is now:

Department of Politics  
University of Edinburgh  
31 Buccleugh Place  
Edinburgh EH8 9JT:  
Phone 0131 650 4239  
(or leave messages at 031 650 4253).

An up to date list of members is always available from Morwenna Griffiths, School of Education, University of Nottingham, Nottingham, NG7 2RD. Phone 0115 951 4484; Fax 0115 979 1506. It can be supplied in the form of sticky address labels, if you want.

## RESEARCH DETAILS FOR NETWORKING

Angela Grooten, Wilhelminasingel 20, 6524 AM NIJMEGEN, The Netherlands. Current interests are:

Critiques of Woman as Representation of Alterity in the philosophy of Freud and Lacan, and in existential phenomenology; Critiques of Woman as Negativity in Theories of subjectivity; Critiques of Woman as Different in Postmodernism and in Feminism.

If you would like your current interests printed in the *Review*, please send them to Morwenna Griffiths, School of Education, University of Nottingham, Nottingham, NG7 2RD.

# CONFERENCES

## UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER STUDYING GIRLS' POPULAR FICTION

A Conference to be held at  
UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER  
309 Regent Street, LONDON W1R 8AL

on

Saturday 3 December  
9.30 - 5.00 pm

- Plenary Speakers include Mary Cadogan, Helen McClelland and Sheila Ray
- Interview with Anne Digby
- Workshops

Send your name and address with a cheque for £10 made payable to 'BETTANY PRESS'  
To: Rosemary Auchmuty, School of Law, University of Westminster, 4 Red Lion, London  
WC1R 4SR.

## PIETY, POETRY, PASSION

### CONTEXTS FOR CHRISTINA ROSSETTI (1830-1894)

December 9 - 11 1994

Anglia Polytechnic Univesity  
Danbury Park Conference Centre, nr Chelmsford, Essex

Speakers Include: Isobel Armstrong, Jan Marsh, Antony H Harrison

Sessions include: Contexts of 19th Century Pity; Devotional Poetry; Christina Rosetti and the  
Tradition of Women's Poetry; Christina Rosetti and Science

For further information please contact

Sally Bienias, Anglia Polytechnic University, Cambridge, CB1 1PT  
Tel: (0223) 63271 ext 2374.

## Centre for Philosophy with Children

### Conference

#### Growing up with Philosophy 13-16 January 1995

"Sophie's World" by Jostein Gaarder - a major European best-seller - will be published in Britain on January 13 1995. To mark the launch of this important novel about the history of philosophy, the Centre for Philosophy with Children is helping to organise a two-day conference 'Growing up with Philosophy' in conjunction with the School of Continuing Education at the University of Kent at Canterbury.

**SOPHIE'S WORLD NORWEGIAN AUTHOR, JOSTEIN GAARDER,  
WILL OPEN THE CONFERENCE ON FRIDAY 13 JANUARY AT 3.00 PM**

**This will be followed by a *diner pensant* - candlelight dinner with philosophical enquiry between courses.**

**Guest Speakers** on the Saturday will be Dr Catherine McCall, director of the European Philosophical Inquiry Centre (EPIC), and Judith Hughes, co-founder of the Applied Philosophical Trust in Newcastle.

To demonstrate the wide appeal of philosophy in everyday situations, the conference will be followed by a separate two-day workshop in SOCRATIC DIALOGUE.

#### **Who should attend?**

The conference will be of interest and benefit to: philosophers and non-philosophers who want to learn more about philosophical enquiry with children; anyone taking A-level philosophy, or philosophy at university, parents, teachers, governors, or others professionally and/or personally involved in nursery, primary or secondary education; lecturers at teaching training colleges.

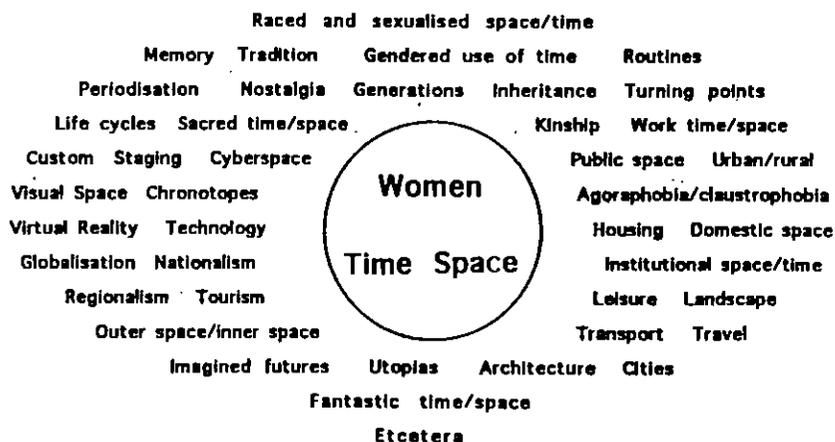
**Further details, costs, full programme and booking form please contact  
Sue Longley, Wret Programme,  
School of Continuing Education,  
University of Kent at Canterbury, Kent CT2 7NX.  
Tel: 01227 827663.**

CENTRE FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES, LANCASTER UNIVERSITY  
**LANCASTER WOMEN'S STUDIES ANNUAL  
 ONE DAY INTERDISCIPLINARY CONFERENCE**

Saturday March 25th 1995

**WOMEN/TIME/SPACE**

**CALL FOR PAPERS**



Proposals for 20 minute papers (with one page abstracts) should be sent to the Conference Organisers, Women/Time/Space, Centre for Women's Studies, Cartmel College, Lancaster University, Lancaster, LA1 4YL by December 15th, 1994.

# BODY MATTERS

A CONFERENCE AT

**THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL**

**APRIL 4 - 5 1995**

## CALL FOR PAPERS

The Cartesian legacy has furnished contemporary thinking with a paradigm of the body as an inert, closed, and anonymous object. The viability of this paradigm has been increasingly questioned; by philosophers, cultural theorists, literary theorists, sociologists, etc., and particularly by feminist writers in all these areas. This conference aims to draw together people from a variety of disciplines in an attempt to rethink this anonymous body.

We are seeking proposals for papers in any related area and from any discipline (approximately 25 minutes). Titles and abstracts (c 250 words) by December 21 to:

Steve Burwood and Gill Jagger  
 'Body Matters' Conference  
 Department of Philosophy, • The University of Hull  
 North Humberside • HU6 7RX.

THE  
 UNIVERSITY  
 OF HULL

## Women's Studies Network (UK)

CALL FOR PAPERS

# DESPERATELY SEEKING SISTERHOOD

Still Challenging and Building

23 - 25 June 1995, University of Stirling, Scotland

The eighth Women's Studies Network (UK) Conference will focus upon questions such as *Who are the sisters? Who is seeking whom? Where are the meanings in contemporary sisterhood? Are we really desperate?* The overall Conference theme is to have a triple but equal emphasis on Theory, Practice and Campaigning and special effort will be placed on linking feminist knowledge production with strategies for change. Workshops and seminars will be divided into 6 strands, which will run throughout the two-day conference. These strands are:

### Women's Identities

*Religious, Ethnic, Regional, 'feminist', National, Sexual  
Images of ourselves and each other*

*Body / Dress Codes / Representations / Colonised Stereotypes / Wellbeing and Abilities*

### The Politics of Thinking / Doing Research

*Methodologies / Ethics / Responsibilities / Ownership of Knowledge*

### Relationships

*Family / Friends / Allies / Lovers*

### Women and Technologies

*Communication / Visual / Reproductive*

### Open Stream

We are interested in proposals for a variety of forms of presentation - workshops, poster displays, round tables. Contributions by women from diverse ethnic backgrounds, of diverse ability and sexual orientation are welcomed. The content of any one paper might ideally, be related to the tensions between Theory, Practice and Campaigning within Women's Studies or any of the other particular fields outlined above. Please send 300 word summary of your potential contribution by **January 27, 1995** to: **Millsom Henry, Department of Applied Social Science, University of Stirling, Stirling, FK9 4LA. Tel: 0786 467703. E-mail: CTIsoc@uk.ac.stirling.forth** Creche and disabled facilities available upon request. Contact Millsom Henry for further information about the conference venue and accommodation.

*Membership of the WSN(UK) Association is open to all women interested in promoting feminist research. For membership application details, contact Penny Hoult, School of Cultural Studies, Nene College, Park Campus, Northampton NN2 7AL. Telephone 0604 733500. Fax 0604 720636.*

## GENDER PERSPECTIVES ON HOUSEHOLD ISSUES

8-9 April 1995

University of Reading

In recent years there has been a growing recognition of the importance of gender in studies addressing the household. Subjects covered might include gender inequalities in household work, the gendering of household roles, the changing nature of the household, intergenerational households, food preparation, food and femininity, low income households, the organisation of consumption and housing. A gender perspective must be taken in papers. Where possible, studies with a trans European dimension would be welcomed. Both theoretical and empirical papers are welcome.

Please send an outline of potential papers to either of the addresses noted below by the 31 August 1994. The number of participants will be restricted to 60 to encourage participation. Abstracts will be refereed and it is anticipated that the proceedings will be published. We would also encourage poster presentations.

A 200 word outlined of papers should be sent by the 31 August 1994 to either:

**Sue Gregory**  
Department of Agricultural Economics  
University of Reading  
PO Box 237  
Reading RG6 2AR  
England  
Tel: 0734 875123  
Fax: 0734 756467

**Linda McKie**  
Department of General Practice  
University of Aberdeen  
Forsterhill Health Centre  
Aberdeen AB9 2AY  
Scotland  
Tel: 0224 663131  
Fax: 0224 840683

Expressions of interest in presenting a poster or attending the workshop-conference should also be sent to either of the above addresses by 30 September 1994.

# RESOURCES



PHOENIX HOUSE

## SOPHIE'S WORLD

by

Jostein Gaarder

Published by Phoenix House on 12th January 1995 at £15.99

**SOPHIE'S WORLD**, a novel about the history of philosophy has been the surprise international bestseller of 1994. The UK edition, translated by Paulette Moller, is published by Phoenix House on January 12th 1995 at £15.99.

**SOPHIE'S WORLD** is being likened to **THE NAME OF THE ROSE** and **A SUITABLE BOY**, two books which are intellectually challenging and yet have become worldwide bestsellers. Daniel Johnson has written in *The Times* that "In its appeal to the young in spirit...Sophie's World looks certain to tap a bottomless reservoir of curiosity". Writing in *The Daily Telegraph*, Niall Ferguson has described the book as a mixture between *Alice in Wonderland* and Bertrand Russell's *History of Western Philosophy*. In June 1994, a *Newsweek* article subtitled "Europe's hottest novel is about philosophy", *Sophie's World* was described as "an extraordinary piece of popularisation: a comprehensive tour through Western Philosophy from the pre-Socratics to Jean-Paul Sartre and the Logical Positivists. The thinking of Aristotle and Descartes, Locke and Hegel, is crisply characterised and related to their historical context. Democritus's theory of atoms makes sudden sense when it is explained in terms of Lego building blocks".

**SOPHIE'S WORLD** was conceived as a book for teenagers. In Germany, where it has sold in excess of 500,000 copies in hardcover, the book has been bought by teenagers and adults in equal measure. As the success of the book sweeps through Europe, **SOPHIE'S WORLD** is being regarded as a modern classic for readers of all ages. Editions are either published or in preparation in twenty countries, including Israel, Latvia, Finland, South Korea, Poland, Spain and Thailand.

**JOSTEIN GAARDER** is a Norwegian high school philosophy teacher. He wrote **SOPHIE'S WORLD** because he knew of no primer in philosophy which treated the subject seriously and yet made it accessible to everyone, young and old alike. "Afterall, to wonder about existence is innate," says the author. "But, as adults, we sometimes forget to wonder."

- \* BBC TV's *The Late Show* will screen a television adaptation of **SOPHIE'S WORLD** on January 10th 1995.
- \* **JOSTEIN GAARDER** will be in the UK in January and available for interview. He will speak at a conference devoted to the teaching of philosophy to children - "Growing up with Philosophy" - at the University of Kent on January 13th 1995.

For further information please contact Nick McDowell at the Orion Publishing Group on 071 240 3444 or 071 240 5943.

ORION HOUSE, 5 UPPER ST MARTIN'S LANE

LONDON WC2H 9EA Tel: 071 240 3444 Fax: 071 240 4822

## Table of Contents

### Volume 11, Number 3 & 4

#### Publisher

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#### Editorial Staff

##### Editor

Matthew Lipman, Professor of Philosophy,  
 Montclair State University, Director, IAPC.

##### Associate Editor

Ann Margaret Sharp, Professor of Education,  
 Montclair State University, and  
 Associate Director, IAPC.

##### Editorial Advisor

Adrian DuPuis, School of Education  
 Marquette University

##### Contributing Editors

Gareth B. Matthews  
 Department of Philosophy  
 University of Massachusetts at Amherst

##### Staff Photographer

Joseph D. Isaacson

##### Typography and Production

Rocco J. Caponigro, Sr.  
 Universal Typesetting Services  
 West Caldwell, NJ 07006

##### Circulation and Promotion

Joanne Matkowski

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 should be addressed to the Editor, *Thinking*,  
 IAPC, Montclair State University  
 Upper Montclair, NJ 07043

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 should also be addressed to IAPC, Montclair  
 State University, Upper Montclair, NJ 07043.

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#### DEDICATION

*This Special Issue of Thinking is dedicated  
 to the memory of  
 Catherine Young Silva*

### Introduction

*Ann Margaret Sharp (U.S.A.)* ..... 1

### Part I: Philosophy for Children and Feminist Philosophy

*San MacColl (Australia)*, Opening Philosophy ..... 5

*Sarah Redshaw (Australia)*, Body Knowledge ..... 9

*Jen Glaser (Australia)*, Reasoning as Dialogical Inquiry ..... 14

*Felicity Haynes (Australia)*, Male Dominance and the Mastery of Reason ..... 18

*Ann M. Sharp (U.S.A.)*, Feminism and Philosophy for Children:  
 The Ethical Dimension ..... 24

*Christina Slade (Australia)*, Harryspeak and the Conversation of Girls ... 29

### Part II: Philosophy for Children in Formerly Authoritarian Societies

*Zaza Carneira de Moura (Portugal)*, Seeds of Change, Seeds of Chance ... 33

*Gloria Arbones (Argentina)*, Feminism and Philosophy for  
 Children in Argentina ..... 39

*Nina Yulina (Russia)*, Prospects for Feminist and Philosophy  
 for Children in Russia ..... 43

*Margarita Dudina (Russia)*, Some Reflections on Our System of Education 44

*Teresa de la Garza (Mexico)*, Women's Education in Mexico and  
 Philosophy for Children ..... 47

*Roumiana Tulkova (Bulgaria)*, Bulgarian Women Facing Changes  
 in the Educational System ..... 51

*Mihaela Miroiu (Rumania)*, A Vicious Circle of Anonymity ..... 54

### Part III: Philosophy for Children and the Education of Women

*Marie-France Daniel (Quebec)*, Liberating The Self in the  
 Philosophical Community of Inquiry ..... 63

*Eulalia Bosch (Catalonia)*, Primary School: Love versus Knowledge ..... 71

*Megan Laverty (Australia)*, Putting Education at the Center ..... 73

*Sally Hagaman (U.S.A.)*, Education in Philosophy and Art ..... 77

*Wendy Turgeon (U.S.A.)*, Choosing Not to Play the Game ..... 80

*Patricia Smyke (Switzerland)*, Treading My Way Towards Philosophy  
 for Children ..... 83

*Helena van den Aardweg (The Netherlands)*, Transforming  
 the Community ..... 86

### Part IV: Philosophy for Children Comes to Brazil

*Catherine Young Silva*, On Women, Feminism and Philosophy  
 for Children ..... 90

*Catherine Young Silva*, Catherine's Story: The Echo of the  
 Voices of Children ..... 92

### Part V: About the Authors ..... Inside Back Cover

#### Credits

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 artist. Page 11: "Young Dancers" by Lisa Labbe. Page 53: Etching by Bonnard, "Dingo".  
 Page 62: Drawings by Henri Kerels. Page 76: Pen & ink, "Lips" by Norman McLaren.  
 Page 85: Pencil sketch by Valeska Gert. Page 91: Pencil by Jose de Almada Negreiros.*

☞ MAPPING WOMAN ☞

A collection of papers in feminist philosophy by postgraduate students at Warwick University, with an introduction by Margaret Whitford. Four papers explore the ways woman has been and might be mapped in different philosophical discourses.

The areas discussed include: Irigaray and the optical boundaries of Cartesian identity, the nature of passage in Kant's critical philosophy, the use of psycho-analysis and structuralism in film theory, and woman and the virtual.

☞  
**Order Form for Mapping Woman**

I would like to order \_\_\_ copies of Mapping Woman at £4.95.  
(Price includes domestic/surface postage. For airmail, please add £1 per item)

Total amount enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name and Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please return to the Centre for Research in Philosophy and Literature,  
Department of Philosophy, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL.  
Please make all cheques payable to "University of Warwick". Cheques must  
be made out in sterling.

## BOOKS RECEIVED

If you would be interested in reviewing any of the following books, please write promptly to Margaret Whitford, French Dept., Queen Mary and Westfield College, Mile End Rd., London E1 4NS.

**Nancy Tuana, *The Less Noble Sex : Scientific, Religious and Philosophical Conceptions of Woman's Nature*, Indiana University Press.**

Ranging over literature from philosophy, cosmology, theology, and science, Nancy Tuana examines theories of woman's nature to illustrate the way scientific literature, from Classical times through the late nineteenth century, has been influenced by - and has in turn affected - religious and philosophical tenets. Tuana provides a framework for understanding the persistence of the Western view of woman as inferior. Equally important, she juxtaposes scientific, philosophical and religious reasoning on this topic in order to illustrate how disciplines affect and reinforce one another. Only recently have some philosophers and social scientists come to accept the view that science is a social institution influenced by culture and society. Tuana shows that science has also been "gendered": sexist biases have permeated the entire structure of science, from its very conception. [Blurb on back cover]

**Dorothy Mermin, *Godiva's Ride : Women of Letters in England 1830-1880*, Indiana University Press.**

Victorian England saw the first great flowering of women's writing in English. During this era, the works of many women first entered the mainstream of English literature. In *Godiva's Ride*, Dorothy Mermin describes how women were encouraged to become writers, how they were discouraged and hindered and what they wrote. Familiar figures, such as Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, Christina Rossetti and Elizabeth Gaskell, are set in their appropriate context, while unduly neglected writers, such as Margaret Oliphant, Augusta Webster, Charlotte Tonna and Frances Power Cobbe, are given their critical place among women of letters. [Blurb on back cover]

**Nickie Charles, *Gender Divisions and Social Change*, Harvester Wheatsheaf/Barnes and Noble, h/b 1993.**

Gender divisions of labour which subordinate women are a seemingly universal feature of contemporary societies. But does this mean that women's subordination is inevitable? Does an explanation have to be rooted in another universal, namely biology? Is the evidence pointing to women's universal subordination convincing? Or is it the product of ethnocentric and male-dominated research and explanation? These are some of the questions addressed by Nickie Charles's comparative analysis of gender divisions of labour across different types of society. The types of societies analysed range from egalitarian hunter-gatherer to highly stratified industrial societies. The book also covers a wide range of differing explanations for gender divisions of labour, from socio-biological to marxist-feminist theories. Particular attention is paid to the way in which social change may transform gender divisions and the social position of women. Throughout, theoretical explanation is linked to relevant empirical data to illustrate the book's main theme. [Publisher's blurb] NB The book is part of a series providing essential surveys of key concepts in sociology. The author works in this country.. so there isn't a strong US bias. It looks like the sort of book one could use with students. MW

**Alison M. Jaggar (ed.), *Living with Contradictions: Controversies in Feminist Social Ethics*, Westview Press 1994.**

Another enormous collection (almost 700 pages) but clearly an invaluable source book, which would be useful for teaching. All the papers are reprints, as far as I can see. Sections include: Equality, Women Working, Marketing Women, Women's Fertility: Individual Choices and Social Constraints; Family Values; The Personal as Political; Feminists Changing the World. On first glance, it looks as though most of the papers are US in origin - this might affect their relevance for the UK reader. If you teach a women's studies course, and would be willing to evaluate this book for other readers of the newsletter, this would be very helpful. MW

Shannon Bell, *Reading, Writing and Rewriting the Prostitute Body*, Indiana University Press 1994.

Shannon Bell recovers the *hetaira* [courtesan] of ancient Greece as both sophistic philosopher and erotic teacher. Tracing the "constructed" prostitute body through discourse in ancient Greece, modern Europe, contemporary North American and French feminism, and North American post-modern prostitute performance art, Bell shows how the flesh-and-blood female body engaged in sexual interaction for payment has no inherent meaning and is signified differently in different cultures or discourses. The author contends that modernity has produced "the prostitute" as the other within the categorical other: woman. Modern discourse dichotomises the female into "good" and "bad", a split that modernist feminism reproduces; even prostitute discourse, which attempts to resolve these dichotomies, sometimes slips into them. Only in prostitute performance art, argues Bell, are the roles of "whore" and "madonna" ultimately dissolved and unified. [Blurb on back cover.]

Susan M. Easton, *The Problem of Pornography; Regulation and the Right to Free Speech*, Routledge 1994.

Can a commitment to free speech be reconciled with the regulation of pornography? In *The Problem of Pornography*, Susan Easton argues that it can. Using John Stuart Mill's harm principle as a starting point, Easton explores and evaluates the feminist and liberal arguments in the debate on pornography, moral independence, censorship and the right to free speech. Given the problems of proving harm in the case of pornography, she argues that the concept of autonomy may provide a more suitable foundation for regulation, and shows how the offence of incitement to racial hatred might serve as a model for legal constraints on pornography. The book includes a review of the English and American laws on obscene materials and will prove invaluable reading for anyone interested in one of the thorniest issues in feminist, legal and social theory: is the regulation of pornography justifiable? [Blurb on back cover]

Kathleen Lennon and Margaret Whitford (eds), *Knowing the Difference: Feminist Perspectives in Epistemology*, Routledge 1994.

The question of difference has always been a controversial issue for feminists. This is certainly true in the case of epistemological questions. What difference does the adoption of a feminist perspective make in relation to traditional knowledge? How are feminist perspectives themselves affected by the differences between women? Both questions require a re-evaluation of issues of objectivity and the justification of knowledge claims in a way that focuses on the subjects who constitute the knowledge producers. Using approaches and methods from both analytic and continental thinking, this important collection addresses traditional epistemology and issues raised by postmodern critiques. [Blurb on back cover] [Ideally this book should be reviewed by someone who doesn't know either the editors or the contributors, but that might be a bit difficult! MW]

Lynda Birke, *Feminism, Animals and Science: The Naming of the Shrew*, Open University Press.

What we think other animals are matters to how we see ourselves: how similar are they, or how different? Do humans belong to culture, and animals (or women?) to nature? For feminists, that matters particularly, for it has so often been animal names that have been used to derogate women. This book explores these boundaries focusing particularly on feminist analyses of science; science not only uses animals, but also names and defines them. Beginning with some ways in which 'animals' are defined, and with feminist concerns about non-humans as fellow-sufferers, the book goes on to look at how ideas about animals are constructed in different areas of biological science and how these intersect with feminist critiques of modern science. The book then addresses the human/animal opposition implicit in much feminist theorizing, arguing that the opposition helps to maintain the essentialism that feminists have so often criticised. The final chapter brings us back from ideas of what the 'animal' is, to ask how these questions might relate to environmental politics, including ecofeminism and animal rights. [Blurb on back cover]

Susan Sellers (ed.), *The Hélène Cixous Reader*, Routledge.

This is the first truly representative selection of texts by Hélène Cixous. The substantial pieces range broadly across her entire oeuvre, and include essays, works of fiction, lectures and drama. Arranged helpfully in chronological order, the extracts span twenty years of intellectual thought and demonstrate clearly the development of one of the most creative and brilliant minds of the twentieth century. With a foreword by Jacques Derrida, a preface by Cixous herself, and first-class editorial material by Susan Sellers, *The Hélène Cixous Reader* is destined to become a key text of feminist writing. [Blurb on back cover]

Jane Flax, *Disputed Subjects : Essays on Psychoanalysis, Politics and Philosophy*, Routledge 1994.

I have two spare copies of this book, if anyone would like one. It was reviewed in the last newsletter, so you do not need to review it again, unless overcome with enthusiasm. MW

## REVIEWS

### ON THE ETHICS OF CARE

#### The Ethic of Care and Feminist Morality

*An Ethic of Care*, ed. Mary Jeanne Larrabee, Routledge 1993, p/b £12.99.

*Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care*, Joan Tronto, Routledge 1993 p/b £12.99.

*Feminist Morality: Transforming Culture, Society, and Politics*, Virginia Held, University of Chicago Press 1993. £14.95.

The ethic of care, both as a collective research project focusing on the development and discussion of a new type of ethic and as a wider area of research, continues to enjoy the attention of feminist and other academics across a variety of disciplines, especially within Anglo-American academia. It is now at the relatively mature stage of generating book-length publications and collections of papers focusing on it. There are complex links between the ethic of care and the related area of feminist morality or ethics, but it is probably safe to say that no feminist moral or political theorist can avoid addressing the idea of an ethic of care.

The Larrabee collection, *An Ethic of Care*, consists of 'classic' papers written by psychologists and philosophers, not all feminists, with the addition of 'Some Short [and rather silly, DB] Cautionary

Words' by a feminist historian. This interdisciplinarity is a strength in one respect, since it makes accessible the concerns, criticisms and further developments within one discipline to the other discipline (it's probably seen as a marketing bonus, too). It does render more than half of the collection rather useless to philosophers, though, unless they have a particular interest in the methodological and interpretative debates around Gilligan's original research by psychologists which are conceptually often rather confused as well as tedious. The point of Gilligan's *In a Different Voice* for philosophers, it seems to me, was to voice an interesting idea whose further philosophical development does not in any way depend on whether and how many women *actually* embrace an ethic of care, nor on the outcome of any of these psychological disputes.

The philosophers/political theorists represented in the collection are Annette Baier, with an exploration of the possibility of women's different perspective, style and method in moral philosophy; Larry Blum with a detailed discussion of the relationship between impartialism and Gilligan-inspired particularism; Linda Nicholson with an early discussion of the historical specificity of women's association with the private sphere of emotion; Joan Tronto with a defence and programmatic sketch of the ethic of care as a new type of moral theory; and Marilyn Friedman, arguing for the

de-moralisation of gender and the de-gendering of morality. These papers are on the whole fine, but mostly chosen from the early stages of the by now much more sophisticated discussion. Not really a collection to recommend. (Apparently, Virginia Held is editing a collection entitled *Justice and Care: Essential Papers*, to be published by Westview Press: this might be a more interesting proposition for philosophers.)

Certainly, Joan Tronto's work has evolved much since her 1987 paper represented in Larrabee's collection. In *Moral Boundaries*, she provides a sustained argument for a theory of care as a much needed part of political as well as moral theory. She is not entirely sanguine about the possibility of the ethic of care as a comprehensive alternative theory, however, taking instead the pluralist position that care 'as a political ideal . . . needs to be made more central in our constellation of political concerns' (172). Care is a necessary part of political morality, then, but justice and democratic values are needed to counterbalance the parochial and paternalist/maternalist tendencies she sees as inherent in the practice of care.

Tronto argues in the first part of the book that the ethic of care needs to be freed from the gendered and privatised context - established and maintained by 'moral boundaries' - to which it has been relegated through social-cum-theoretical developments in the eighteenth century. These developments are traced in a chapter on the Scottish enlightenment philosophers. In a rather weak subsequent chapter, Kohlberg's and Gilligan's theories of moral development are criticised as partial and elitist.

In the second part of the book, Tronto develops her own theory of care, defining it very broadly as a practice 'aimed at maintaining, continuing, or repairing the world' (104). Her interest in this part is two-pronged: firstly, she focuses on the social and political context of care, such as the coincidence of patterns of power with patterns of care, the social devaluation of care and the political conclusions to be drawn from this; secondly, she argues that an ethic of care allows us genuinely to appreciate and do justice to those marginalised as 'others' in our own societies and the rest of the world and therefore needs to be included in political morality.

Overall, I found Tronto's argument original and interesting if not always convincing. However, it is also weak and confused at points, and its

lack of rigour unfortunately mirrors most of the ethic of care debate as a whole.

Held's *Feminist Morality* presents a survey and synthesis of the ethic of care literature, but also her own, unique perspective. Apart from a relatively independent argument on culture-for 'cultural transformation' free from domination by either market or state - the book falls roughly into two parts: first, the development of a general feminist approach in moral theory; second, a discussion of substantive areas in feminist moral, political and social theory.

The first part draws together feminist interventions in the ethic of care debate: the critique of principles, overreliance on reason and the autonomous self in male-stream moral theory and the attempt to spell out an alternative approach. Among Held's specific contributions to this part are her stress on the validity of moral experience and emotions and her pluralist interpretation of feminist morality.

The second part contains a discussion of birth and death, violence, liberty and equality, democracy, the 'postpatriarchal family' and the feminist future. The red thread running through all these chapters is what Held identifies as the main and distinctive perspective for feminist moral theory: 'the creation and nurturing of the next generation as the most central task of society and the world' (159). This basic aim is derived from Held's conceptualisation of mothering and is used as a litmus test throughout.

Held's most controversial argument is her discussion of normative considerations arising from the experience of giving birth, since it touches on the feminist taboo of biological essentialism. Unfortunately, her arguments are not very well worked out, but her courage and caution in making them are to be applauded: there are very few discussions of birth (and pregnancy) in feminist philosophy, and most of those are either relatively dated or focus on the social construction of these experiences. But is social construction all there is to them?

On a more critical note, Held fails to distinguish between her specific perspective in the ethic of care debate and a more general survey of it - the main difference being that her account is based on mothering whilst most others are based on care (as an experience or a practice). This leads to tensions in her presentation between the specific and the general, such as the priority of the flourishing of children as compared to a

concern with the needs and well-being of all. Also, some of Held's claims about mothering and giving birth are likely to be rejected by most ethic of care theorists as too specific and not intrinsic to the ethic of care perspective.

Of the three books, Held's is the most substantial, but Tronto's is equally interesting and covering more genuinely new ground. Also, Tronto presents a coherent flow of argument, whilst Held's opus is mostly based on previously published papers and suffers from bad editing. It would probably have fared better as a collection of papers with a solid introduction.

Diemut Bubeck

London School of Economics

[A longer version of the Held review is to be published in *Anthropos* 1995].

Mary Jean Larrabee (ed), *An Ethic of Care: Feminist and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*: London: Routledge, Thinking Gender Series, 1993 p/b £12.99.

It is over ten years since Carol Gilligan's *In a Different Voice* appeared. The sixteen articles (besides Larrabee's introduction and Gilligan's reply to her critics) collected in *An Ethic of Care* represent a tiny proportion of the writings that have appeared since then, across a dozen or more subject areas, and possibly as many countries, in response to Gilligan's thesis. A third of the contributions are reprinted from *Signs* (Kerber, Stack, Greeno and Maccoby, Luria, Tronto & Gilligan herself); with a couple each from *Ethics* (Blum, Flanagan and Jackson); *Social Research* (Nicholson, Broughton); *Child Development* (Walker, Baumrind); and one each from *Nous* (Baier); *Development Review* (Brabeck); and *Hypatia* (Puka). The remaining articles by Friedman and Nunner-Winckler are from previously published books: on science, morality and feminism, and moral behaviour and moral development respectively.

Gilligan has, of course, been acclaimed for her forceful re-valuing of women's experiences, knowledge and values. She has also been strongly criticised: for courting essentialism and dualism, for methodological shortcomings in her research, for failing to consider moral damage as well as moral gain in the accounts women give, and for universalising for women out of a predominantly white, middle class, North American, twentieth century context. Although *An Ethic of Care* is necessarily limited, the range of criticisms,

modifications and extensions of Gilligan's ethic of care, across several disciplines, is well covered.

The book is divided into four roughly equal length parts. Theoretically it begins by outlining some of the issues that form the background to the debate which Gilligan entered, expands the question to broader historical and cultural perspectives, moves to methodological and hermeneutical questions about the research, and finally looks to ways in which the ethic of care may be developed. In fact, as one might expect, there is much repetition of these and other themes throughout the book. Still, it is useful to have these articles collected in one volume.

The debate about 'difference' and the ethic of care shows little sign of abating so there is still room for further collections drawn from the same and other disciplines, and other countries.

There is a twenty-five page bibliography and a ten page index.

Kathie Walsh,

London School of Economics.

## HOW TO READ HANNAH?

Margaret Canovan. *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought*: Cambridge University Press 1992. h/b £37.50, p/b £12.95.

Maurizio Passerin d'Entrèves. *The Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt*: Routledge 1994, p/b £10.99.

Phillip Hansen. *Hannah Arendt: Politics, History and Citizenship*: Polity Press 1993, p/b £12.95.

Andrea Nye *Philosophia: the thought of Rosa Luxembour, Simone Weil, and Hannah Arendt*: Routledge 1994, p/b £12.99.

The number of books being published about Arendt at the moment indicate a renewed interest in a thinker who, until recently, has been unjustly regarded as marginal to mainstream interests in philosophy and political theory. This marginalization has much to do with the difficulty of classifying her, and something to do with the difficulty of understanding her. She is neither historian, philosopher, political theorist nor journalist, and yet all of these; neither liberal, conservative nor socialist, and dismissive of the

feminist movement as focusing on the wrong problems. No camp can claim her, she cannot be used to illustrate any current ideology, yet her life as a German Jew reflects such major traumas of the twentieth century as totalitarian persecution, statelessness and emigration, and her work was an attempt to think these through and to understand them. It is perhaps this more than anything else that explains both past neglect and present interest, for Arendt's concern with being able to *think* what we are doing, and hence understand it, was initially developed as a student of Heidegger and Jaspers. From them she learnt that there could be meaningful thinking without results, thinking as a ceaseless activity of reflection upon experience, which describes it as thinking without a bannister, and one of the problems of reading her is precisely that there is no bannister to hold on to. In her effort to understand the catastrophes of mid-century Europe, she takes such familiar concepts as freedom, politics, sovereignty, and critically reinterprets them in the light of the original (often Greek or Roman) experiences that they were a response to. Thus familiar terms lose familiar meanings, and reading her is rather like skating; you have to maintain the trust that if you don't think too hard about the unlikeliness of such blades supporting you, you will begin to move. Once you do, the experience is exhilarating, for she is one of this century's most original thinkers, reflecting on its deepest dilemmas.

Almost thirty years after her death, as academic communities begin to absorb both the anti-foundationalism and literary manner of many continental philosophers, she is receiving new attention as a rich resource for understanding our current situation, both philosophical and political. (Indeed, her analysis of power could have been written in response to the Eastern European revolutions in the late eighties, just as her critique of the eclipse of politics by the demands of an ever-expanding capitalism reads as if it were a response to the last fifteen years here.) Thus, by an irony of history, a thinker who resisted co-option by any camp, and was critical of system building, is now being used to develop a variety of agendas, and three of these four books illustrate that process: Nye uses her in an attempt to "recover thought not constrained by dualistic categories", Hanson to argue for the reintroduction of "Political ontology" (i.e. a theory of human nature) into political theory, and d'Entrèves to argue for a participatory model of action, politics and citizenship. Each of them casts light on Arendt, and at times misinterprets

her. Each of them runs an interesting thesis of their own, which is enriched by their readings of Arendt. And each of them, at the end, leaves you with a sense that Arendt was more of a happy coincidence to their thought, or a rich resource for its development, than someone with whom they engaged in a deep conversation for its own sake.

Canovan's book stands in radical contrast to these, for her aim is simply to address a situation in which she thinks most of Arendt's critics have attacked her for positions that she never held. She does this by following through Arendt's trains of thought in the contexts in which she had them, and the result is a magnificent intellectual narrative, which makes better sense of Arendt and of her relevance to our contemporary situation than anything else I have read. Canovan achieves this by placing *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, (a work now commonly neglected as factually inaccurate and sociologically naive), at the heart of Arendt's intellectual quest, rather than the more philosophical and more commonly studied *On the Human Condition*. She shows how Arendt's account of totalitarianism emphasises the destruction of stable human structures and of freedom and spontaneity, as all parts of life are subsumed into processes of movement and expansion. This is easily turned into a critique of modernity, and indeed an interesting feature of *The Origins* is that only a third of it is actually about totalitarianism. The rest is an account of the eclipse of politics, of public space, and of citizenship by the development of imperialism, racism, and the alliance of capital and mob (not the working class, but 'superfluous' human beings who are outside all structures). Canovan demonstrates that Arendt sees two alternatives: either to maximise our power and minimise our responsibility by pretending not to be human, by siding with inhuman forces (the market, history, progress etc) and submerging our capacity for thought and novelty in the relentless formalism of single-track logic and fact-denying ideology, or to face up to and accept our plurality, our freedom to act, think and initiate, and to take joint responsibility for creating a human world which sets limits to the forces of nature. Arendt's later writings are mainly reflections upon the meanings and implications of those alternatives. Canovan is able to use this central concern to illuminate Arendt's developing conception of politics as the creation of a public space where plural individuals are able to appear to each other, to generate something new and give their lives together a narrative form. It is through political action that we can fit into history, be

responsible for it, without either delusions of control, or simply seeing ourselves as victims. Politics is a way of living together, not a way of ruling, and is radically contrasted with the lethal totalitarian mix of determinism and hubris. It is thus rather like describing who we are and what is real in a conversation where how we present ourselves to others is as important as our understanding of them. Without it, we are a mere species without identity, history or meaning, united in a biological fate. This celebration of the political by Arendt seems like the tragic hero's fling in the face of fortune, the reassertion of the human in the face of "the unnatural growth of the natural", and the loss of our human home to the forces of change which our activities have unleashed. But Arendt is not offering us a prescriptive system, (although we may be fooled into thinking so by her systematic mind). Her work is a meditation, or reflection upon our proximity to self-destruction, and Canovan's book takes us deeply into it.

As I have already indicated, this contrasts sharply with the other three books, each of which has their own use for Arendt. D'Entrèves's book, for example, follows a standard pattern, each chapter elucidating one of Arendt's central ideas, considering some critics, and drawing his own conclusions, which is ever-tending towards a critique of Arendt as confusing expressive and participatory models of politics, and arguing for the dialogical model of Habermas. His book is admirably clear, and a useful map for students, but leaves you with a sense of closure: he knew what he wanted from Arendt.

In contrast, Nye allows Arendt to lead her more, perhaps because in many ways she shares Arendt's commitments. Her book is a study of three major twentieth century female thinkers, Luxembourg, Weil and Arendt, from the perspective that although none of them was a feminist thinker, they represent a woman's tradition which might show us how to move forward given the collapse of social theory. She thinks that they have something to offer because they grounded their questions in the needs of their time, addressing our deepest human concerns "off-stage from the drama of Western Philosophy". Thus they are able to ask directly, how did we get here and what should we do next?, and to answer from the assumption of a shared material world and thinking which begins in that shared condition. Arendt is the culmination of her enquiry, not only chronologically, but because she can be shown to systematically overcome such dualisms as

liberal rights vs socialist regulation, reason vs emotion, individualistic autonomy vs socially structured victimhood etc. by using her ideas of public space and politics. At times the argument looks as mechanical and predictable as d'Entrèves, but underlying it is Nye's shared commitment with Arendt to understanding rather than winning arguments, to a picture of knowledge as thought achieved by commitment rather than a privileged representation of reality, to the perception that social theory is not working, and so must be re-subjected to experience, and finally to a human context of value and relationship which seems to be in the process of being destroyed. It's a stimulating read, almost lovingly ransacking Arendt for contributions to the development of a feminist politics. In doing so, Nye tends toward paradox, for she is giving us a "privileged" view by giving Arendt the benefit of a woman's tradition that Arendt herself would have denied, albeit a tradition that reasserts many of Arendt's commitments.

Hanson's approach is similar to Nye's, reading Arendt in order to develop an "appropriate" political theory, in his case for responsible citizenship. His is the most difficult to read of these books, partly because he is trying to create a space for this theory between political science on the one hand and post-modernism on the other, and so is very much in discussion with contemporary, including feminist, theorists. (His book is worth reading to see how much influence we now have, for it is pervaded by feminist ideas and ideals, although not putatively about these). He gives rich insights into Arendt, but given his own agenda of developing a theory of human need which facilitates the distinction between "real" and "false" politics, these are necessarily partial, and I found his imputation to Arendt of a theory of human nature downright misleading. Although he explicitly desires to engage in a conversation about what kind of a political life we can create within the bureaucratic structures we now inhabit, as with d'Entrèves, I was left with the impression that he knows what he wants the other party to say, and thinks that he knows better than Arendt what she really means.

Reading these books clearly raises the problem of how to approach political theory. Arendt suggests to us a process of thinking through what we are doing, making sense of our experiences in ways which may lead us to continue to preserve the conditions of our humanity, and in particular, this means recognising the plurality of our views. In her language, we should not seek for truth in politics,

because truth destroys that plurality, making us one. Rather, we should aim at creating public spaces where we can express opinions, share judgements and jointly create our human reality out of our plurality. With the exception of Canovan, who does not really reveal her politics, each of these thinkers in one way or another argues for that vision, but with different degrees of openness about what it means and where it can lead. It is ironic that Canovan, using skills of scholarship rather than political commitment is the one who most successfully takes us into Arendt's dialogue with herself, so that we can understand her, and actually have an experience of engaging in that plural world. In the past, I have tended to argue for ransacking the past in order to meet present needs. The experience of reading these books gives me pause to doubt that policy. Meanwhile, if you only have time to read one of them, let it be Canovan's which is happily now out in paperback.

Anne Seller,  
University of Kent

#### NEW FEMINIST ACCOUNTS OF THE BODY

Teresa De Lauretis, *The Practice of Love: Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire*, Indiana University Press 1994, distributed Open University Press, p/b £11.99.

Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*, Indiana University Press 1994, distributed Open University Press, p/b £12.99.

These new books from Teresa de Lauretis and Elizabeth Grosz - published within a couple of months of each other - constitute a real theoretical event. The fact that one of them (de Lauretis) makes her reinterpretation of Freud central to her argument about lesbian sexuality, while the other (Grosz) sees psychoanalysis, for all its insights, as irredeemably masculine, indicates that psychoanalysis continues to hold its position at the centre of controversy.

De Lauretis's book has several intertwined arguments going. One of them, which seems to be in the best Irigarayan tradition - de Lauretis might accept that reading, I'm not sure - is about the relation between the symbolic and the imaginary and how symbolic change can be effected. This is connected to her search for a model of perverse desire that would account for the representation of lesbianism in texts of fiction, film, poetry and drama. To find her model, de Lauretis turns to Freud's *Three Essays on Sexuality*

which, read in a certain way, offer a less normative account of sexuality than that usually associated with psychoanalysis. 'Freud's real theory of sexuality' de Lauretis claims, 'is not the "normative" one but the theory of the perversions' (23). 'Normal' sexuality is more of a projection than an actual state of being while the actual forms and content of sexuality are likely to be pervasion or neurosis (ch. 1).

This reading of Freud leads her to take issue with the majority of feminist accounts of relationships between women which are based, she argues, not on desire, but on *identification*, thus blurring what distinguishes homosexual from heterosexual women. What de Lauretis wants to produce is a theory of *desire*. (In passing she takes issue with Judith Butler, Sarah Kofman, Kaja Silverman, and feminist object-relations theorists, among others - i.e. all the major strands of engagement with psychoanalytic theory. She is particularly concerned to challenge some of the various *feminist* imaginaries that have emerged in feminist theory.) The hinge of her argument is fantasy and the ways in which this shapes, meshes with or clashes with individual fantasies. Public forms of representation have a function here; not only do they structure, they *authorise* (or not) forms of sexuality, desire and self-representation. (There is an obvious link here with the theme of the cinematic apparatus, in its widest sense, which was the subject of de Lauretis's earlier work.) The argument is that fantasy is not alternative to, an escape from, reality, but structures reality itself; e.g. the cinema is a major apparatus for the production of popular scenarios or public forms of fantasy and thus for the structuring of spectatorial desire through representation (126).

One of the problems of psychoanalytic theory has to do with the representation of the drives and the way in which images and words become attached to what are in origin somatic impulses. Since no correspondence can ever be established between the drive and its representation (there is no possible position from which the drive can be observed, one can only observe the representation), it is argued that the representation has a structuring effect on the drives. (This is argued by Irigaray in *Speculum* for example.) De Lauretis employs a similar type of argument, to wit: Given the assumption that fantasy is the psychic mechanism that governs the translation of social representations into subjectivity and self-representation, practices may affect instinctual activity, and 'the specifically sexual and representational practices

of lesbianism, in providing a new somatic and representational ground for the work of fantasy, can effectively (re)orient the drives' (286).

The thrust of de Lauretis's argument about films - that one's response to a film depends partly on whether it actualises one's (unconscious) fantasy or not - could be extended to theory ('passionate fiction'). Why some people prefer one theory to another is not just a matter of intellectual rigour, cogency or the internal persuasiveness of the arguments, but whether the private fantasies of reader and theorist mesh sufficiently. This might also explain why it is difficult to contest certain theories - one becomes deeply, unconsciously 'hooked'. Apply this to feminist theory - as de Lauretis does - and you can see why she is one of the most provocative and challenging theorists currently writing.

In a completely different style - less flamboyant, more sober and self-effacing - Elizabeth Grosz's book issues an equally large challenge: 'The wager is that all the effects of subjectivity, all the significant facets and complexities of subjects, can be as adequately explained using the subject's corporeality as a framework as it would be using consciousness or the unconscious . . . Bodies have all the explanatory power of minds.' (vii). After all the arguments in the eighties about the dangers of essentialism, it is a startling turnaround to see the body at the centre of feminist theory again. But the body of the nineties is not the body of *écriture féminine*; it is body as inscriptive surface (Foucault and Lingis), a body of discontinuous processes, organs, flows, energies, events, intensities, speeds and durations (Deleuze and Guattari).

More explicitly than de Lauretis, Grosz's book is written under the sign of Irigaray and the notion of sexual difference. The first half, 'The Inside Out' examines theories of interiority: Freud and Lacan, Schilder and the notion of the body image, Merleau-Ponty and phenomenology. The second half, 'The Outside In', looks at theories of surface (see the authors mentioned above: Lingis et al). In each case, Grosz adopts the perspective of sexual difference to ask critical questions about the value of all these theories for representing women. She argues for 'rewriting the female body as a positivity rather than as a lack' (61), for 'the inclusion of women's accounts and representations of the various histories of their bodies that could be written' (159), for 'explanatory frameworks and models which

enable femininity, female subjectivity and corporeality, to be understood as a positivity' (182), for 'representing women as intellectual, social, moral and sexual agents' (188).

She presents her work as an exploration of texts which feminists might find useful in their conceptualisation of the body and subjectivity, and she explicitly hesitates to suggest the terms in which we could move on from there. The final chapter however addresses itself to the ontological status of the sexed body, trying to steer between the untenable assumption that bodies are *infinitely* pliable, absolutely uncoded, and the equally untenable view that bodies are simply biologically programmed irrespective of the social. Using Irigaray's suggestion that 'the fluid' has been made culturally unrepresentable within prevailing philosophical models of ontology (which privilege the solid), she looks to the work of women for theories of the fluid, of its rather 'borderline' status, belonging to the frontiers where the body is permeable and allows entrance and exit: concepts of dirt and pollution (Mary Douglas), the abject (Kristeva), sperm (Linda Williams), metaphysics of fluids (Iris Young). She might have, but doesn't, discuss Irigaray's privileging of the mucous in her work on the ethics of sexual difference, partly because she wants to suggest that, if women are an enigma for men, men are equally an enigma for women: 'Perhaps the great mystery, the great unknown, of the body comes not from the peculiarities and enigmas of female sexuality, from the cyclically regulated flows that emanate from women's bodies, but from the unspoken and generally unrepresented particularities of the male body' (198). (Writers like Sade and Genet are suggested as possible exceptions.) In other words, shifting the burden of fantasies about the abject etc. from women's bodies to men's might be necessary to effect some symbolic change.

For Grosz, as for de Lauretis, the future hinges on representation, and which (unconscious) fantasies representation validates and legitimates. The direction forward seems to be once more towards expanding the possibilities of representation (particularly critical in view of technological innovation) so that the various inflections of subjectivity are given a social and public existence. In both books there is an argument for the materiality of subjectivity, in this way tackling dualism head on. In this perspective, the power of theory lies in its ability to restructure our fantasies as well as our intellect, to be not just thought-provoking but also phantasy-provoking.

Margaret Whitford  
Queen Mary and Westfield College  
University of London

Judith Butler *Bodies that Matter: on the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'*. Routledge 1993 p/b £10.99

As Butler herself explains in her preface, *Bodies That Matter* is partly a rethinking of ideas set out in her earlier and enormously successful *Gender Trouble* (1990), and partly a move forward into explorations of the materiality of the body and what Butler calls the 'heterosexual matrix' of sex and gender. The rethinking of *Gender Trouble* is a refinement and development of the concept of performativity, which she (re-)articulates here in terms of 'citationality' and 'iterability', emphasising the constraints within which performativity operates as much as the liberatory potential it offers. The new explorations of the body involve sustained and complex interrogations of sexual morphologies and the laws which rule some morphologies in, and others out, as intelligible sexual bodies. The main thrust of Butler's argument, bringing these two strands together, is that although such laws constrain and coerce the repetition of hegemonic norms, the logic of citationality and iterability itself provides the means by which those laws can be disrupted.

The intellectual sweep of the text is enormously impressive: as with *Gender Trouble*, Foucault is a very strong presence, but Butler also investigates a whole range of thinkers including Freud, Lacan, Derrida, Irigaray and Žižek, often using them in exhilarating and thoroughly unexpected ways: in particular I found her application of 'citationality' to Lacan's Law of the Father a fresh and sometimes astonishing new take on the relationship between feminism and psychoanalysis. There are also excursions into film and literary criticism (*Paris is Burning*, Willa Cather, Nella Larsen) and some attempts to focus on race rather more explicitly than previously.

Readers of *Gender Trouble* won't need to be told that Butler's prose style is extremely difficult: don't come to this book expecting a quick read - it's hard work, but certainly worth it. I'm also not sure how accessible it will be to readers who aren't familiar with *Gender Trouble*, or at least with the 'performativity' debates that *Gender Trouble* prompted: although this is a new text and not simply a re-working of old ground, many of the questions it pursues are questions arising from *Gender Trouble*, and complete newcomers to Butler may find it difficult to see where she's coming from without that background. Nevertheless, this is surely essential reading for anyone working in this field, and

already looks set to become a key text in contemporary feminist thought.

Merl Storr  
University of North London.

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Drucilla Cornell *Transformations: Recollective Imagination and Sexual Difference* (1993) Routledge p/b £12.99.

Drucilla Cornell is nothing if not prolific, and this, her third full-length new book in as many years, picks up yet again the challenge thrown down to feminism by the work of Jacques Derrida. The collection as before is of a rigorous feminist/poststructural philosophy filtered through not just issues of concern to women's studies, but Cornell's own specialist field of the law.

The inevitable difficulty for British readers is that the privileged interests of American feminist jurisprudence - particularly that of equal rights legislation, and the right to free speech - are not always familiar topics. Nonetheless Cornell's continued advocacy of equivalent, rather than equal, rights makes good philosophical sense. Similarly, her thoughtful attempt to reconceive the hot topic of pornography outside the legal framework of sex inequality, as proposed by Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin, reflects a determination not to slip into rhetoric. MacKinnon's work in particular comes in for a very heavy critique from Cornell over the former's putative refusal to recognise the feminine as anything more than a gender role constructed by the male gaze. The charge is that MacKinnon is stuck in the either/or of masculine logic and can thus see only empowerment as a plausible feminist goal. In contrast, Cornell is fully committed to the Derridean/Irigarayan move beyond *binary* sexual difference to an affirmation of the feminine.

In the central essay of the collection, 'The Doubly-Prized World', Cornell takes up her theme that the social transformation toward which feminism must be directed requires the elaboration of new subjects who will disrupt rigid gender stereotypes. The key is an inherently ethical insistence on difference that appeals not to essentialism but to the performative possibilities of a new choreography of sexual difference. As her references indicate, Cornell takes a highly positive view of Derrida's interventions into feminism, but without prior acquaintance it may

be difficult to assess the justification for her enthusiasm. What most puzzled me was her relative indifference to Irigaray around instances where the path followed traces Irigaray's own clear divergence from Derrida. Even Cornell's neat characterisation of ethical feminism as the remembrance of the 'not yet', and again her appeal to the mythic via what she calls 'recollective imagination' decline to make the anticipated links.

I suspect that non-specialist readers will find *Transformations* rather dry, and that those familiar with Cornell's work will wonder how much of it is new thinking. There is, it's true, an ongoing engagement with a variety of influential thinkers, but the central focus on Derrida, Lacan and indeed MacKinnon seems reiterated rather than innovative. But perhaps that's the whole point: according to Cornell's introduction, it is precisely in the iterability of systems that transformation occurs.

Margrit Shildrick  
Centre for Women's Studies  
University of Lancaster

Sandra Harding *The "Racial" Economy of Science: Toward a Democratic Future* Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1993 p/b £17.99.

Sandra Harding's work in the feminist philosophy of science is well-known. Her *The Science Question in Feminism* (1986), advocated the adoption of standpoint epistemology within the natural sciences, and has rightly become an important reference work within feminist theory. In *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?* (1991), Harding extended her work on standpoint epistemology to other marginal groups, and developed the potentially powerful notion of 'strong objectivity'. In turning her attentions to race, ethnicity, and the third world within that book, Harding was not alone. These are newly developing focuses of analysis within feminist epistemology and the philosophy of science, and have been used productively by, among others, Donna Haraway, Una Narayam, and Vandana Shiva. It was, thus, with a good deal of eager anticipation that I began to dip into this book - Harding's newest offering.

Unfortunately, I was to be disappointed. *The "Racial" Economy of Science* does not significantly advance any of the debates now enlivening the feminist philosophy of science. As a matter of fact, it is fairly clear that Harding does not intend

that it should; this book seems to have been produced for students, rather than for serious researchers within the field. It consists of over thirty reprinted articles, most of which are at least five years old. They are preceded by a short introduction, in which Harding briefly summarises some of the influences which have contributed to recent work on Eurocentrism, the social studies of science, and feminist epistemology. Although she does briefly outline her ideas on standpoint epistemology and 'strong' objectivity in this introduction, Harding keeps to generalities; her introduction seems to be deliberately uncontroversial.

The collected essays are extremely diverse; they include several classic pieces, a few institutional contributions (including an important statement by the American National Academy of Sciences), and many, widely varying, pieces of newer research. Six sections, on early non-western scientific traditions, science constructing 'race', the exclusion of minorities from participation in science, scientific technologies and applications, the philosophy of science, and strategies for increasing scientific democracy in the future, make up the book. The theme that science is a socially constructed form of knowledge, and is, thus, inherently political, runs through both the specific contributions and Harding's introductions. As a textbook for undergraduate courses on gender, race, and/or the social studies of science, this collection will find a ready applicability. Its inclusion of several classic essays may also make it a useful reference source for researchers.

This collection contains some entertaining and informative essays, which should interest anyone with a broad interest in science, feminism, development studies, or racial issues. For example, I was deeply engaged by Evelyn Hammond's account of her struggle to train as a scientist, in spite of the obstacles placed in her path as a black woman, and thoroughly enjoyed Darlene Hine's discussion of black, female physicians in nineteenth-century America. The pieces by Donna Haraway and Sharon Trawick, which compare Japanese and Western approaches to primatology and high-energy physics, respectively, are fascinating. Several essays discuss political and/or neocolonial applications of science, focusing on such widely varying topics as contraception, forestry, medical research and the environment. The section on early non-western traditions is, unfortunately, a short one. It contains some gems, however - such as Jack Weatherford's article on early

Andean experimental agriculture, and Joseph Needham's piece on Chinese science.

*The "Racial" Economy of Science* does not break any new ground in epistemology, the philosophy of science, or the social studies of science. It is a useful resource for teaching, however, and is worth dipping into by anyone interested in the general subject matter.

Anne Scott  
University of Bradford

**Hilde Hein & Carolyn Korsmeyer, *Aesthetics in Feminist Perspective*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana UP, 1993, p/b £12.99**

Do we have in aesthetics a model for truly plural feminist theory? We do indeed, according to Hilde Hein's stimulating rapprochement between feminist theory and aesthetics. She goes on to raise fundamentals about art and non-art while keeping in view the institutional frameworks which inflect such inquiries however disinterested they try to be - but what I found particularly exciting was the bold proposition that aesthetic theory may be useful 'especially at those junctures where the imperative to reassess theory is compelled by discontinuities in creative imagination' (14). The book as a whole acquires broader relevance when read in this light. Generally speaking, it stands up well to such scrutiny.

The reasons why philosophical aesthetics has received comparatively little scrutiny from feminists are in themselves fascinating and important. They are clearly and briefly outlined by Carolyn Korsmeyer in her introduction. Others of the 18 substantial essays in this considerably expanded version of the *Hypatia* special issue on feminist perspectives in aesthetics (*Hypatia*, 5:2 Spring 1990) range widely in content and approach. From the definitional ('Is There a Feminist Aesthetic?' by Marilyn French) to the contextualising pieces from the editors ('Refining Feminist Theory: Lessons from Aesthetics' by Hilde Hein and 'Philosophy, Aesthetics and Feminist Scholarship' by Carolyn Korsmeyer), from Kant to fashion ('Discipline and Silence: Women and Imagination in Kant's Theory of Taste' by Jane Kneller and 'Dressing Down Dressing Up: The Philosophic Fear of Fashion' by Karen Hanson), this is far from the dry purism I perhaps unfairly recall from my early studies in aesthetics. I felt some regret that none of the contributors was European - they are from Australia, New Zealand and the USA -

particularly because I suspect, with some honourable exceptions, it may be a fair reflection of the work being done, in the UK, at least. (But see *Small Changes* in the last issue of the Review). Or is it that British feminists have been less ready to define our work as concerned with either philosophy or aesthetics?

I have doubts about specific contributions; Renee Lorraine's 'A Gynecentric Aesthetic', for example, works from a surprisingly dated and unproblematised definition of women which fails to do justice to some of the questions she touches on, such as rethinking the erotic as a vital and positive force, and considering a shift of the aesthetic from objects to 'dynamic process'. Why does so much work which references 'goddess' allow itself theoretical slackness over the kinds of issue theorists of corporeality and performativity have addressed so illuminatingly? I mean the question very seriously. But in a collection of essays, some such reservation from any individual reader is almost inevitable, and perhaps even healthy. I am sure this one will prove useful and provocative to anyone interested in cultural production as well as to philosophers and aestheticians, whatever their persuasion.

Penny Florence  
Falmouth College of Arts

**Secrets of Life, Secrets of Death *Essays on Language, Gender and Science* by Evelyn Fox Keller, NY/London: Routledge 1993 p/b £12.99**

This book of nine papers by Evelyn Fox Keller, dating from the late eighties and early nineties, makes for a pleasingly well-integrated collection, partly because the papers are arranged thematically rather than chronologically, and partly because they are genuinely connected by a shared underlying concern: how to reconcile the enormous technical success of science with the philosophical awareness that scientific theory is profoundly influenced by the language and the culture in which it is embedded.

The book is divided into three Parts, where Part 1 comprises one paper only; appropriately so, as it is an overview. This paper would make a good introduction to the issues around gender and science for those who are not yet familiar with them, just as it makes a refreshing read for those who are, as it traces the development of Keller's own attitude to this topic, from initial scepticism to full-fledged intellectual engagement.

The papers making up Part II are grouped together under the theme of 'secrets' and science's attempts to reveal them. The first of these is described in Keller's Introduction as having a more 'psychoanalytic' bent than the others, yet, apart from the use of the notion of fantasy, it is curiously untheoretical. It argues that the 'secret of life' has been regarded as *women's* secret, and recounts how this association undergoes a bizarre inversion in the common use of metaphors of babies and birth to describe instruments of death and their manufacture. This subject is potentially fascinating, though - perhaps due to its relative lack of theorization - the paper does remain rather anecdotal, with the result that the status of the discussion is unclear.

The third essay in the collection is straightforwardly historical, tracing the development of the notion of 'secrets' through sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English scientific discourses, and in particular the shift in the conception of science as uncovering God's secrets, to uncovering Nature's secrets, and the association of the latter with women.

The fourth paper seems to set itself an extremely important philosophical task: to explore the influence that scientists' practical expectations and ambitions for their discoveries may have on the very "structure and form of the biological and physical theories that realise them" (77). So, for example, Keller writes "I want to ask... how might the very framing of the questions of genetics already commit us to the possibility of eugenics?" (77). In the Introduction Keller says that she only raises the question in this paper, and attempts to pursue it in the following one. However, she does not ever really address *this* question head-on, as it gets conflated with another, less radical question. Her comment in the Introduction reveals the conflation, for she re-states the question as "that of how particular social and material ambitions have helped to guide the choice of scientific theory..." (10). *That* is a different question, which runs through the entire book, and although it is no less important, it is much more familiar. It concerns theory *choice* rather than the ways that the very structure of the theoretical stances available to scientists in the first place may be shaped by their expectations and ambitions - as if, given the character of modern western society, it is literally inevitable that western scientists should think up the kind of molecular genetic theories which facilitate eugenics. I think this second question cuts a little deeper than the first, and it would have been interesting to know what Keller had to say about it.

The essays in Part III all concern the influence of specific vocabularies on scientific theorizing, and in particular, Keller provides historical case studies which illustrate the ways in which language mediates cultural influences on science. The first two papers discuss ambiguities in conceptions of 'competition' and 'reproduction' in evolutionary theory. But the main thrust of the arguments concerning the influence of language brings home the influence of the ideology of individualism on scientific thought. Only the last essay in the collection, concerning molecular genetics, is rather inaccessible to the non-scientist, though the general point it shares with the previous three papers is clear.

The broad philosophical stance informing the whole book is one which would steer clear of 'the Scylla of "social relativism" and the Charybdis of "scientific realism"' (9). It is fortunate that this is not a more controversial position, since Keller does not always steer clear of those places where substantial philosophical argument - far more than she offers - is required to establish the point. In the Introduction, for example, she writes: "Since 'nature' is only accessible to us through representations, and since representations are necessarily structured by language (and hence, by culture), no representation can ever 'correspond' to reality" (.5). This, strictly speaking, does not follow, and certainly not as straightforwardly as she seems to make out. (On a Davidsonian view, for instance, it is precisely the inescapably linguistic structure of thought which *guarantees* that most of our beliefs 'correspond' to reality.) It would have been better just to state the philosophical position she wishes to presuppose, or argue for elsewhere - perhaps in a further paper which might have been included - rather than to inhabit this awkward half-way house of neither presenting the full philosophical arguments, nor successfully avoiding the need to supply them. It is a small point, for the real interest of the book lies elsewhere, as I hope to have indicated. But the criticism is worth making just because it *would* have been a better book had Keller paid more careful attention to the philosophical detail, if only by explicitly leaving it to one side. It would also have done more justice to what seemed, at least to this non-scientist, to be a series of carefully and for the most part vividly argued historical case studies which provide compelling illustrations of the book's broader philosophical position.

Miranda Fricker  
Balliol College, Oxford

Janet A Kourany, James P Sterba and Rosemarie Tong (eds), *Feminist Philosophies: Problems, Theories and Applications*, London: Harvester Wheatsheaf p/b £13.95.

This book joins a number of recent readers tapping in a single, relatively inexpensive volume the wealth of material in the field of women's/gender studies (Humm, 1992; Jackson, 1993; *Polity Reader in Gender Studies*, 1994). *Feminist Philosophies* makes an excellent teaching resource at undergraduate level, managing to be both comprehensive and accessible, and also provides an invaluable reference for postgraduate and research use. With no less than 32 readings old and new, from Mill to Irigaray, Chodorow to hooks, there is something here for everybody interested in feminist issues and theories, to be read from cover to cover and/or to be dipped in and out of.

Prefaced by the editors' introduction, giving a flavour of the issues and debates to follow and encouraging a reflexive readership mode, the main body of the collection is divided into two. The first part comprises over 20 readings posing major issues confronting women. Including topics by now familiar, such as gender socialization, gendered language, sexual violence, the social construction of (hetero)sexuality, women's self-images, and the gender division of labour, there are also welcome perspectives on contemporary 'headline' issues, such as surrogate motherhood, reproductive technology and 'no-fault' divorce. A cluster of readings focuses on the cultural invisibility of women in 'male-stream' knowledge, while one on disability and reproductive rights highlights the contradictions and tensions in feminism(s).

The second part of *Feminist Philosophies* provides 20 readings designed to shed theoretical light on the issues raised and offer solutions to gender inequality. (A general division between issues and theories is an increasingly common mode of organisation in this field (see Anderson, 1992); Jaggar and Rothenberg, 1993). While offering clarity, closer synthesis of issue and theory, 'data' and analysis might allow a deeper exploration of the dialectical relationship between the two). A now widely accepted theoretical chronology is followed, beginning with liberal feminist thought and moving through radical feminist, psychoanalytic feminist, and Marxist/socialist feminism to reach the finale of postmodern feminism, heralding 'the end of theory' and even the 'end of women'. A methodological postscript then returns us to the contradictions and tensions

in feminism(s), assessing the problem of cultural imperialism and the possibilities for a global sisterhood.

Theoretical material can be rather indigestible consumed as the only dish, but is here made more palatable by the grounded context. Generous space for the contributions, most allowed at least six pages and some being reproduced in full, leaves the reader more engaged, more satisfied, but also more stimulated than the all-too-brief extracts found elsewhere. A lasting impression of the simultaneous commonalities and diversities of women's experience is created, great care being taken to disaggregate by race/ethnicity, class, age, disability, and sexuality.

Bibliographic detail on the authors would have been welcome, and the editors might have stated explicitly that the issues are raised in the context of women in the US, although many are equally pertinent to women in Europe, and that the theories examined have these same 'northern' origins. Work unpacking women's role in the new international division of labour or assessing the impact of development policies and practices on women in the 'south' could have been included, but it is easy to bemoan the lack of attention to one's own agendas! In the end, coverage careful editing and (generally) accessible content ensure this book goes beyond its editorial objectives, to "provide a basic text for a first course in feminist philosophy or a first course in women's studies" (ix).

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Caroline Wright  
University of Hull

**Genevieve Lloyd, *Being in Time* London and New York: Routledge, 1993 p/b £10.99.**

This book is a lucid and accessible account of the way in which ideas of time, consciousness and narrative have been used in philosophy and literature. Philosophy is represented by both historical and contemporary writers; Descartes, Hume, Kant, Bergson, Nietzsche, Ricoeur and Derrida, while Woolf and Proust are present as paradigms of narrators whose mode of expression permits them to deal with problems which, so Ricoeur claims, are out of the scope of a philosophical approach. He says that theoretical understanding of time ends with two conceptions which are incommensurable. These are the 'time of the cosmos' and the 'time of the soul'. Narrative offers "a kind of poetic resolution" of these two approaches and thus, "can be seen as a point of connection between the metaphysical and the human dimensions of the problem of time." (13). It does so by virtue of its form. "Narrative brings together fragments of temporal experience, allowing them to be grasped in a unity." (12).

It is this question of "unity" which is one of the central themes of the book. The unity of that which is grasped is supposed to require a unity in that which does the grasping. That is to say, the self is to be thought of as a stable and unified thing which is confronting a stable and unified 'Other'. Lloyd demonstrates that the Western philosophical tradition has not been premised "on an unquestioned assumption of an untroubled translucent presence of mind to object" (162). At least as far back as Augustine, there has been an awareness of the fragility of the unification which is possible in both subject and that which it experiences 'in time'.

Her suggestion is that reflection on the unity of consciousness will not benefit from a model of frozen and stable things in relation, but rather from a model of action and in particular, from the activity of storytelling. "To think of myself as unified is to enact a unity - to tell a story . . . The truth of consciousness may be fragmentation. But out of these fragments a writer can construct a story" (164). Unity of both subject and its experience in time is made, not assumed or discovered. This suggestion is not completely novel. To some extent it is to be found in Kant, who thought that consciousness was only unified to the extent that it was able to make connections. However, his idea of what was involved in this connecting activity offers at most, a necessary condition for the sort of unification which was considered desirable. An exemplification of a

minimal level of unification which can be achieved by writing is provided by Virginia Woolf's 'Monday or Tuesday' which Lloyd mentions. In this 'short piece' various experiences are recorded from shifting perspectives; of children, of a heron, of a moving and disembodied observer. These are unified only in so far as they are related as parts of an activity of writing which is driven by the recurring question '- and truth?'.

To me, the most interesting aspect of this book was the way in which it brought philosophical and literary approaches together and set them to work. Lloyd offers a route into the problematic and troubling experience of 'Being in Time' which is unusual in the way in which it manages to achieve both breadth and depth without becoming ponderous.

*Ismay Barwell*  
*University of Wellington*

**Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: 'Male and Female' in Western Philosophy*, 2nd ed., London: Routledge, 1993 p/b £9.99.**

This is a welcome second edition of Genevieve Lloyd's now classic survey of the maleness of philosophical Reason; from Ancient Greece, through Plato, Descartes, Hume, Kant and Hegel to Simone de Beauvoir to name but some. Although the bulk of the text remains unchanged there is a new preface and a new bibliographical essay.

In the new preface Lloyd reviews the central concerns of *The Man of Reason*, first published in 1984, in light of recent developments and discusses some of the criticisms of the original work and some of her own perceptions, in retrospect, of its limitations.

Acknowledging the work of Derrida and Ricoeur on philosophic metaphor she points out that she is now able to specify the central concern of the book as *symbolic* maleness and femaleness, a concern that would have seemed inappropriate, frivolous even, ten years ago, before contemporary French philosophy and feminist theory (she mentions in particular Derrida, Irigaray and Foucault) made their impact on the English speaking world. Moreover had she been able to formulate it, this concern would have led her to address some issues differently, for example her discussion of Descartes. Lloyd now advocates a re-reading of Descartes through Spinoza whose notion of the mind as idea of the

body transforms Cartesian dualism. Her point is that what for Descartes is a relation of opposition between mind and body becomes rather for Spinoza a relation of *rapprochement*, in which case the application of oppositional male-female symbolism to the nature of reason becomes rather less useful. Moreover it paves the way to challenge the ideal of the sexless soul and also helps to reveal the part played by this ideal in the association of maleness and reason.

Lloyd also presses home the point that despite her feminist critique of the maleness of Reason and *pace* many contemporary feminist theorists, she wants to propose neither a new feminized Reason nor a feminine alternative to Reason. For either position causes more problems than it solves and in any case, she argues, would this not be but a reification of the symbolic content of the metaphor? That is, should what has been deemed to be, and excluded as, feminine, now be affirmed as though it were feminine? Significantly, moreover, Lloyd insists that the connections between the male-female distinction and the philosophical understanding of reason are a *contingent* feature of western philosophy, which is where she parts company with Derrida, Irigaray etc. for whom it is intrinsic; phallogocentricism is characteristic. Thus although appreciative of some of the insights gleaned through deconstructive strategies, Lloyd herself is not prepared to accept the more radical implications of the process of deconstruction. Her concentration on the symbolic seems to involve a separation of the symbolic/cultural that is inimical to Derrida's notion of writing in the extended sense, as all - pervasive. Thus although she admits that her earlier work was hampered by an inadequate understanding of the significance of the role of metaphor in philosophical writing, this is not to say that she subscribes to Derrida's notion of that significance.

In sum, then, Lloyd offers an update of her historical treatment of the maleness of the ideas and ideals of Reason that continues to be an invaluable introduction to feminist critiques of the philosophical tradition for both students and scholars alike. Though one might question its brevity, given its breadth, it is succinct and accessible to the former while presenting challenging arguments to the latter.

Gill Jagger  
Department of Philosophy  
University of Hull

Anne Maclean, *The Elimination of Morality: Reflections on Utilitarianism and Bioethics*, Routledge 1993, p/b £10.99

In *The Elimination of Morality: Reflections on Utilitarianism and Bioethics*, Anne Maclean sets out to uncover the hidden assumptions on which the dominant approach to medical ethics - namely the utilitarian, or in Maclean's terms, the "bioethical" approach - is based.

At the heart of Maclean's argument is her objection to the bioethicists' conception of the 'value of life'. For John Harris, for example, a life is valuable only if it is rational or self-conscious; if it is the life of a 'person'. Maclean questions not only the truth and but also the intelligibility of this claim: although it makes sense for people to 'speak of what aspects of their lives they find most worthwhile, fulfilling, meaningful, satisfying or enjoyable' (27), once the question 'what makes life valuable?' is taken out of any particular context, it loses its meaning.

Having rejected the bioethicists' account of 'the value of life', Maclean is also able to reject the concomitant policy of the maximization of valuable lives. Since value or worth is something that attaches to individual human beings, and is therefore not the value of an item, it is not something that can be counted. Thus the bioethicists' rejection of the rationality of the claim that some cases of killing are prohibited simply because they are cases of murder is said to misfire. It is not so much a question of rationality or irrationality, but of different interpretations of what is meant by 'a valuable life.'

Although Maclean's arguments are not strikingly original, she provides a powerful antidote for anyone whose understanding of moral theory and its applications has been filtered through the narrow viewpoints of those who dominate the field. Maclean argues convincingly that John Harris and friends do not have a monopoly on rationality or on the 'right answers'. At the same time, however, she fails to draw on the resources available to her to strengthen her position and perhaps point to a way forward. Although 'virtue' is mentioned in passing, there is no reference to the increasing use of virtue theory in contemporary moral philosophy or to those who have attempted to apply it to the very issues Maclean is concerned with. Further, the emphasis on content and relationship, on the significance of the way in which a situation is described, and indeed, on what is meant by 'the use of reason' in

moral decision-making, clearly points in the direction of the now substantial literature on the ethics of care. To consider the possibilities contained in this approach may have been outside of the scope of Maclean's endeavour. To fail to so much as mention it, however, is a serious flaw in an otherwise valuable contribution to medical ethics and moral theory.

Susanne Gibson  
University of Wales, College of Cardiff

**Elspeth Probyn, *Sexing the Self: Gendered Positions in Cultural Studies*, Routledge, London, 1993 p/b £10.99**

Elspeth Probyn is concerned to rework conceptions of experience in order to create new discursive positions for feminism. Her project involves moving beyond the deadlock of culturalism versus structuralism in which experience is positioned as an unproblematic given or the byproduct of an underlying framework. Instead, Probyn proposes an appreciation of the *productivity* of experience, a generative capacity that is the result of its double positioning as both 'ontological' and 'epistemological'. The articulation of experience in autobiography is said to be ontological insofar as it refers to the construction of the self in relation to particular discourses such as authorship. The epistemological level is that of localised social practices in which the discourses of the self can be problematised and challenged.

Probyn's conception of the two levels makes use of Michèle Le Doeuff's analysis of the double positioning of images. These are said to be located in relation to specific discourses as well as having a wider functional capacity which can extend or disrupt that original location. Importantly, Probyn argues that the self is constructed in the same way as images. She maps the functional aspect of the image onto a Foucauldian analysis of social practices in order to focus on the ways in which conceptions of the self are both articulated and challenged within specific socio-historical locations. The autobiographical articulation of localised social practices is said to create the possibility of new discursive positions for feminism. These enunciative positions are *not* seen as the products of irreducible particularities and differences. Probyn argues that imagination (by which she means empathy) can form the basis of cooperation between feminists/feminisms. However, the reading of the racist implications of the film *Without You I'm Nothing* exhibits a

profound unease which seems to uphold a conception of unbridgeable divisions.

While I am sympathetic to Probyn's feminist project of reenvisioning the theoretical potential of everyday experience, her overall framework is problematic. She connects lived experience with a materiality that is outside language, yet simultaneously presents the self and the social as discursive constructs. This confusion is generated by her casual dismissal of theories which centralise language as merely 'elegant'. I would have found a critique of such theories far more productive. Further, their absence is strange given that a number of Probyn's strategies, notably the attempt to rethink differences rather than binary difference, are rooted in the work of Derridean feminists such as Gayatri Spivak. However, this book will be useful to postgraduate students in a variety of disciplines, particularly Women's Studies and English Literature.

Catherine Constable  
Warwick University

**Naomi Scheman *Engenderings: Constructions of Knowledge, Authority and Privilege* New York and London: Routledge, 1993, p/b £11.99.**

This is a collection of Naomi Scheman's essays from 1979-1992, which serve as a reminder of the mutual engagement of feminism and philosophy over that time, especially in the American context. The selection opens with feminist contribution to particular topics, in this case in philosophy of mind; proceeds through psycho-analytic interrogations of the normative masculinity of the foundations of modern philosophy, to pieces which anchor alternative accounts of knowledge in the lives and experiences of women. This is closely followed by a recognition of issues of diversity which problematise an easy use of notions such as 'women's experiences'. The final pieces are reflections on epistemology, marginality and privilege, with a plea for interconnectedness as an epistemological goal, in contrast to the modernist assumption of sameness and the non-critical pluralism which Scheman sees as replacing it.

Throughout the collection are recurring themes and pre-occupations, and a philosophical style which draws richly on literature/film/art in her exposition of distinctively philosophical positions. "What Iago offers Othello is meant to be access to Desdemona's world as it is in itself, but what Othello gets is the view of a spy, of someone who by his own efforts is hidden from

the world he views, seeing not Desdemona-in-herself but Desdemona-as-spied upon" (149). A recurring theme in these essays is the interrogation of the Cartesian framework which founds modern philosophy, with an isolated knowing subject separated both from the world which is the object of its knowledge and from other subjects in a social setting. Naomi Scheman parallels such an epistemology with paranoia, for it: requires a radical splitting and excluding of aspects of the self "experienced as dangerously seductive, in favour of a detached and controlling objectivity" (57). Those excluded aspects of the self, based on the sensuous and sensible embodiment of persons, are those associated with the dis-enfranchised, particularly women. The resulting epistemology was a specific cultural achievement of those whose practical engagement with the world was minimal. "Modern epistemic authority has attached to those who did minimal physical labour, who neither bore nor reared their own children, grew or cooked or cleaned up after their own food, built or maintained their own homes, produced or cleaned their own clothing, nursed the illness or eased the deaths of those close to them . . . What we are not supposed to notice is that it is actual physical labour and actual embodiment that connects the knowing subject with what he knows, that hold body and soul together" (196-197).

In the place of such modernist epistemology Scheman offers us a dialogical and mutually constitutive relation between knowing subjects and reality, echoing the constructionist route of Kant mediated by the specificity of historical moment and social position. This she sees as compatible with a realism that recognises the world as "not dead or mechanistic", but as "trickster, as protean, . . . always slipping out from under our best attempts to pin it down. The real world is not the world of our best physics but the world that defeats any physics that would be final, that would desire to be the last word" (100).

Once the material and social embodiment of the subject of knowledge is recognised it carries with it the recognition of diversity, and the question of "whose voice" becomes an urgent one within epistemology. Many of the later essays in this volume are concerned with appropriate epistemological strategies in the face of diversity, with the author reflecting on her own position as both marginal (a Jewish woman), and privileged (her father's daughter). In the face of diversity she challenges the adequacies of both deconstruction and non-critical pluralism.

Deconstruction though necessary it an "undiscriminating tool. Its appeal is that it *can* dismantle the master's house. But it dismantles our house just as effectively" (223). What we need is an epistemology based on connection, not similarity, a recognition of how our different ways of being a woman have implicated each other, an account complex enough to do justice to different points of view.

In her last essays and her introduction Scheman emphasises the social and political pre-conditions of any such adequate epistemology. She highlights the danger of appealing to the "experiences of people of color to provide the raw material for a more adequate theory, which it would remain the prerogative of people like me to create and authorise" (230). To avoid this we need to be actively engaged in opening up those places where theory is made, via "concrete programs of affirmative action and other forms of increasing access . . . We need, that is, not just to understand the world, but to change it, and until and insofar as we have done that, no theoretical fancy dancing, no addition of more voices filtered through our word processors, will be an adequate response to those who charge us with abusing in fact the very privilege we deconstruct in theory" (xiv - Introduction).

This is a rich and rewarding collection. Read it!

*Kathleen Lennon*  
*University of Hull*

## REVIEW INDEX

### NEWSLETTER 1 (MAY 1989)

- Lorraine Code, Sheila Mullett and Christine Overall (eds) (1988) *Feminist Perspectives Philosophical Essays on Method and Morals* University of Toronto Press.
- Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby (eds) (1988) *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance* Northeastern University Press
- Feminist Review (1989) no.31 Spring Special Issue: *The Past Before Us: Twenty Years of Feminism*
- Linda Nicholson (1986), *Gender and History: The Limits of Social Theory in the Age of the Family* Columbia University Press
- Denise Riley (1988) 'Am I That Name?': *Feminism and the Category of "Women" in History* Macmillan
- Caroline Ramazanoglu (1989) *Feminism and the Contradictions of Oppression* Routledge
- Dorothy Smith (1987) *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology* Open University Press.

### NEWSLETTER 2 (JAN 1990)

- Jeffner Allen and Iris Marion Young (eds) *The Thinking Muse: Feminism and Modern French Philosophy* Indiana University Press
- Ann Ferguson *Blood at the Root* Pandora
- Ann Garry and Marilyn Pearsall (eds) *Women, Knowledge and Reality* Unwin Hyman
- Elizabeth Grosz *Sexual Subversions* Allen and Unwin
- Dalia Judovitz *Subjectivity and Representation in Descartes* Cambridge University Press
- Michèle Le Doeuff *The Philosophical Imaginary* Athlone
- Michèle Le Doeuff *L'Etude et le rouet* Seuil

### NEWSLETTER 3 (JUNE 1990)

- Alison Assiter *Pornography, Feminism and the Intellectual* Pluto Press
- Judith Butler *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* Routledge
- Jane Flax *Thinking Fragments* California University Press
- Penny Forster and Imogen Sutton (eds) *Daughters of De Beauvoir* The Women's Press
- Diana Fuss *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature and Difference* Routledge
- Donna Haraway *Primate Visions: Gender, Race and Nature in the World of Modern Science* Routledge

- Jane Heath *Simone de Beauvoir* Harvester Wheatsheaf
- Marianne Hirsch *The Mother/Daughter Plot* Indiana University Press
- Kathleen Lennon *Explaining Human Action* Duckworth
- Toril Moi *Feminist Theory and Simone de Beauvoir* Blackwell
- Linda Nicholson (ed.) *Feminism/Postmodernism* Routledge
- Andrea Nye *Feminist Theory and the Philosophies of Man* Routledge
- Mary O'Brien *Reproducing the World* Westview Press (Boulder, Colorado)
- Sara Ruddick *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace* The Women's Press
- Elizabeth Spelman *Inessential Woman* The Women's Press
- Sylvia Walby *Theorising Patriarchy* Blackwell
- Elisabeth Young-Bruehl *Mind and the Body Politic* Routledge

### NEWSLETTER 4 (JANUARY 1991)

- Alison Assiter *Althusser and Feminism* Pluto Press
- Gemma Corradi Fiumara *The Other Side of Language: A Philosophy of Listening* Routledge
- Jean Graybeal *Language and 'The Feminine' in Nietzsche and Heidegger* Indiana University Press
- Lynn Hankinson Nelson *Who Knows: From Quine to a Feminist Empiricism* Temple University Press
- Andrea Nye *Words of Power: A Feminist Reading of the History of Logic* Routledge
- Dorothy Smith *The Conceptual Practices of Power: A Feminist Sociology of Knowledge* University of Toronto Press
- Gail Tulloch *Mill and Sexual Equality* Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc.

### NEWSLETTER 5 (JUNE 1991)

- Kathryn Pyne Addelson *Impure Thoughts: Essays on Philosophy, Feminism and Ethics* Temple University Press
- Sandra Lee Bartky *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression* Routledge
- Joan Cocks *The Oppositional Imagination* Routledge
- Susan J. Hekman *Gender and Knowledge: Elements of a Postmodern Feminism* Polity Press
- Nancy Holland *Is Women's Philosophy Possible?* Rowman and Littlefield
- Mary Lyndon Shanley and Carole Pateman (eds) *Feminist Interpretations and Political Theory* Polity Press

Elizabeth Kamarck Minnich *Transforming Knowledge* Temple University Press  
Kate Soper *Troubled Pleasures* Verso  
Iris Marion Young *Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays in Feminist Philosophy and Social Theory* Indiana University Press

#### NEWSLETTER 6 (NOVEMBER 1991)

Brenda Almond *The Philosophical Quest* Penguin  
Brenda Almond and Donald Hill (eds) *Applied Philosophy: Morals and Metaphysics in Contemporary Debate* Routledge  
Brenda Almond (ed.) *AIDS - A Moral Issue: The Ethical, Legal and Social Aspects* Macmillan  
Rosi Braidotti *Patterns of Dissonance* Polity Press  
Lorraine Code *What Can She Know? Feminist Theory and the Construction of Knowledge* Cornell University Press  
Arleen B. Dallery and Charles E. Scott *The Question of the Other: Essays in Contemporary Continental Philosophy* SUNY Press  
Christine DiStefano *Configurations of Masculinity: A Feminist Perspective on Modern Political Theory* Cornell University Press  
Michèle Le Doeuff *Hipparchia's Choice: An Essay Concerning Women, Philosophy, Etc.* Blackwell  
Luce Irigaray *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche* trans. Gillian C. Gill, Columbia University Press  
The Milan Women's Bookstore Collective *Sexual Difference: A Theory of Social-Symbolic Practice* Indiana University Press  
Paola Bono and Sandra Kemp (eds) *Italian Feminist Thought: A Reader* Blackwell  
Sean Sayers and Peter Osborne (eds) *Socialism, Feminism and Philosophy: A Radical Philosophy Reader* Routledge  
Margaret Whitford *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine* Routledge

#### NEWSLETTER 7 (JUNE 1992)

Jennifer Birkett and Elizabeth Harvey (eds) *Determined Women: Studies in the Construction of the Female Subject 1900-1990* Barnes and Noble  
Drucilla Cornell *Beyond Accommodation: Ethical Feminism, Deconstruction and the Law* Routledge  
Donna Dickenson *George Sand: A Brave Man, The Most Womanly Woman* Berg Women's Series  
Moira Gatens *Feminism and Philosophy* Polity Press  
Hypatia vol. 6 no. 3 Fall 1991, Special Issue: *Feminism and the Body* ed. Elizabeth Grosz  
Sandra Harding *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?* Open University Press

Louise Levesque-Lopman *Claiming Reality: Phenomenology and Women's Experience* Rowman and Littlefield  
Jennifer Lorch *Mary Wollstonecraft: The Making of a Radical Feminist* Berg Women's Series  
Eva Mark and Annika Persson (eds) *Proceedings of Nordic Symposium for Women in Philosophy* Nordic Network for Women in Philosophy no. 1  
Biddy Martin *Woman and Modernity: The (Life)-Styles of Lou Andreas-Salomé* Cornell University Press  
Susan Moller Okin *Justice, Gender and the Family* Basic Books  
Jennifer Ring *Modern Political Theory and Contemporary Feminism: A Dialectical Analysis* SUNY Press  
Jana Sawicki *Disciplining Foucault: Feminism, Power and the Body* Routledge  
Nancy Tuana *Woman and the History of Philosophy* Paragon House  
Renee Winegarten *Simone de Beauvoir: A Critical View* Berg Women's Series  
Iris Marion Young *Justice and the Politics of Difference* Princeton University Press

#### NEWSLETTER 8 (NOVEMBER 1992)

Else M. Barth *Women Philosophers: A Bibliography of Books Through 1990* Philosophy Documentation Center, Bowling Green State University  
Claudia Card (ed.) *Feminist Ethics* University Press of Kansas  
Eve Browning Cole and Susan Coultrap Brown (eds) *Explorations in Feminist Ethics* Indiana University Press  
Gemma Corradi Fiumara *The Symbolic Function: Psychoanalysis and the Philosophy of Language* Blackwell  
Elizabeth Frazer, Jennifer Hornsby and Sabina Lovibond (eds) *Ethics: A Feminist Reader* Blackwell  
Elizabeth F. Kingdom *What's Wrong with Rights? Problems for Feminist Politics of Law* Edinburgh University Press  
Tamsin E. Lorraine *Gender, Identity and the Production of Meaning* Westview Press (Boulder Colorado)  
Rita C. Manning *Speaking From the Heart: A Feminist Perspective on Ethics* Rowman and Littlefield  
Diana T. Meyers *Self, Society and Personal Choice* Columbia University Press

## NEWSLETTER 9 (MAY/JUNE 1993)

- Michèle Barrett, *The Politics of Truth: From Marx to Foucault*, Polity Press.
- Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics*, Polity Press.
- Gisela Bock and Susan James (eds), *Beyond Equality and Difference: Citizenship, Feminist Politics and Female Subjectivity*, Routledge.
- Teresa Brennan, *The Interpretation of the Flesh: Freud and Femininity*, Routledge.
- Elisabeth Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic*, Manchester University Press.
- Nancy Fraser and Sandra Lee Bartky (eds), *Revaluing French Feminism: Critical Essays on Difference, Agency and Culture*, Indiana University Press.
- Helen Bequaert Holmes and Laura M. Purdy (eds), *Feminist Perspectives in Medical Ethics*, Indiana University Press.
- Anne Phillips, *Engendering Democracy*, Polity Press.
- Susan Sherwin, *No Longer Patient: Feminist Ethics and Health Care*, Temple University Press.
- Janna Thompson, *Justice and World Order*, Routledge.
- Else Viestad, *Kjønn og ideologi - En studie av kvinnesynet hos Locke, Hume, Rousseau og Kant [Gender and Ideology - An Investigation of the Image of Women in Locke, Hume, Rousseau and Kant]*, Oslo: Solum Verlag.

## WPR 10 (NOVEMBER 1993)

- Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter (eds), *Feminist Epistemologies*, Routledge.
- Louise M Antony and Charlotte Witt (eds), *A Mind of One's Own: Feminist Essays on Reason and Objectivity*, ed. Westview Press. Available from Westview Press Oxford.
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- Geneviève Fraisse, *Muse de la raison: La Démocratie exclusive et la différence des sexes*, Alinéa.
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- Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Power Trips and Other Journeys: Essays in Feminism as Civic Discourse*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Daniela Gobetti *Private and Public: Individuals,*

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- Nancy Hirschmann *Rethinking Obligation: A Feminist Method for Political Theory*, Cornell University Press.
- Voula Lambropoulou, *Women in Papadiamandis' Works: Gender and Sex - A Feminist Approach and Interpretation*, University of Athens Press, Athens.
- Iris Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*, Chatto and Windus.
- Martha C Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature.*, Oxford University Press.
- Paul Patton (ed.) *Nietzsche, Feminism and Political Theory*, Routledge.
- Linda Singer, *Erotic Welfare, Sexual Theory and Politics in the Age of the Epidemic*, Routledge.

## WPR 11 (JUNE 1994)

- Teresa Brennan *History After Lacan* Routledge.
- Mary Caputi, *Voluptuous Yearnings: A Feminist Theory of the Obscene*, Rowman and Littlefield
- Donna Dickenson, *Margaret Fuller: Writing a Woman's Life* Macmillan.
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# PAPER

## 'I AM NOT A PHILOSOPHER': SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR AND THE DELIRIUM OF GENIUS AUTHOR: CHRISTINE BATTERSBY, UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

In this paper I will examine Beauvoir's own refusal of the discipline of philosophy, and her claim that women in general are unlikely to possess the kind of mind necessary to excel at philosophy. I am not, of course, the first feminist philosopher to focus on this issue. As Margaret Simons has remarked:

When we first met in 1972, Beauvoir seemed angered by my questions about her philosophy in *The Second Sex*. . . . 'I am not a philosopher,' she insisted, 'but a literary writer; Sartre is the philosopher. How could I have influenced him?' When I asked about the importance of Hegel's *Phenomenology* on *The Second Sex*, she angrily replied that, the only important influence on *The Second Sex* was *Being and Nothingness* by Jean-Paul Sartre. This was certainly an odd response, given that she tells us in her memoirs that immediately prior to writing *The Second Sex* she had made a careful and extensive study of Hegel. Understanding her response became a continuing topic in my research and interviews with Beauvoir.<sup>1</sup>

Beauvoir's claim about the incompatibility of women and philosophy is particularly startling given her own vigorous refusal of the notion of a specifically 'feminine' psychology. What I will be arguing in this paper is that Beauvoir has an ambivalent attitude to the role of the *philosophe*—a term that cannot simply be equated with that of the 'philosopher' as understood in the Anglo-Saxon tradition. Instead, both she and Sartre link the *philosophe* with 'genius' and the supra-rational mind in ways that make philosophy particularly problematic for women. Thus, Beauvoir's conception of philosophy is by no means that of a 'rational' discipline. Her own situating of herself outside the borders of philosophy needs to be explicated in terms of Franco-German myths that bind the *philosophe* to the universal by means of a kind of delirium of thought.

As both Beauvoir and Sartre acknowledge elsewhere, Simone de Beauvoir helped determine both the style and content of all of Sartre's philosophical (and major literary) works. She was the audience whom he addressed: a censor whose approval was requisite before publication

could go ahead—and one who was also expected to argue and revise.<sup>2</sup> If her severe editorial skills were most necessary for the *Critique of Dialectical Reason* [1960]—where Sartre's amphetamine-induced flow required the imposition of the greatest form (and punctuation!)—during the early period she exercised a more gradual control. Thus although in a 1982 interview with Alice Schwarzer, Beauvoir once again eagerly positions herself as merely the philosophical disciple of Sartre (glossing this with the claim that she was a follower of existentialism), she also goes on to admit that she and Sartre talked *Being and Nothingness* through together:

In an early draft of *Being and Nothingness*, he spoke of freedom as if it were quasi-total for the entire world. Or, at least, as if it were open to all to exercise their freedom. I, on the contrary, insisted that there are situations in which freedom cannot be exercised, or in which it is mystifying to talk about freedom. He agreed with that. And, in the end, placed much more weight on the situation in which the human being finds himself.<sup>3</sup>

Even this formulation of her philosophical status (disciple, modifying the master's views) does, however, distort the historical record in a number of quite subtle ways. In the above passage Beauvoir credits Sartre with including in *Being and Nothingness* [1943] what seems to me one of the most original theses of her own in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* [1947]: the claim that there are certain situations within which freedom cannot be exercised. In *Being and Nothingness* Sartre stressed that it is the universal condition of consciousness that it is 'condemned to be free'. Although it is true that in the closing chapters Sartre does go out of his way to emphasise that human freedom is only ever exercised in situation and against the background of contingent circumstances over which man has no control, he nowhere differentiates between those situations within which that freedom can be exercised and those in which it cannot. By contrast, Beauvoir's *Ethics* attempts a classification of the historical difference between a slave's consciousness, a rebel's consciousness and a revolutionary's consciousness in ways that introduce difference into ontological sameness—and prefigure

Camus' *L'Homme Révolté* [1951] (that work which signalled the break in relations between Sartre and Camus).

Despite Beauvoir's claim that Sartre had modified the final draft of *Being and Nothingness* to take account of her objection that in certain situations it is 'mystifying' simply to assert freedom, there is little sign of this in Sartre's own (short) excursus into ethics two years later. *Existentialism is a Humanism* [1945] is marred precisely by its failure to register this point. I am inclined to accept Beauvoir's claim that her objections did indeed alter the shape of *Being and Nothingness* (since there are tensions within Sartre's discussion of freedom, and elements in Part IV that were not prefigured in the opening chapters). But Beauvoir (and most of the philosophical commentators) would have us believe that her *Ethics of Ambiguity* is simply the applied ontology of *Being and Nothingness*, and it is not. Rather, it incorporates philosophical moves that Sartre would only go on to develop later in his career.

Beauvoir promotes the relationship between Sartre and herself as a form of 'osmosis': one individual, with the Jean-Paul-side of the androgyne determining philosophical orientation, and the Simone-side determining lifestyle.<sup>4</sup> But, as she well knows, Sartre did not invent 'existentialism'. It is, therefore, misleading for her to verbally equate being an existentialist with Sartrean 'discipleship', particularly since her own 'philosophical' writings are centrally concerned with ethics and with locating a theory of action within a philosophy of history. By contrast, Sartre's own ethics is so much tacked on to the ontology and the epistemology as to seem almost denuded of a moral dimension. This is an aspect of Sartre's Heideggerianism: Beauvoir herself is in many ways closer to Hegel and Kierkegaard than to Sartre's own philosophical 'master'.

What should we make of this? How should we respond to Beauvoir's insistence that she is philosophically ineffectual—merely a novelist—and it is Sartre (and Sartre alone) who is the philosopher? As somebody who is also a female philosopher (and who also has great difficulty in thinking of herself as a philosopher), I have a personal stake in this inquiry. Although I believe that philosophy is indeed a gendered discipline, I find many of the arguments adduced by feminists to buttress such a claim far from convincing. Thus, it is often asserted that philosophy involves the development of the rational, analytical and logical side of the personality, and that in our culture all these are

considered male attributes. But, as I argued in *Gender and Genius*, the supposed links between 'maleness' and 'rationality' were broken towards the end of the eighteenth century, when the pre-Romantic philosophers and their heirs (Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche etc) re-valued the emotions, unconscious instincts and other previously-despised 'feminine' characteristics of mind and developed a conception of the ideal philosopher as both male and supra-rational.<sup>5</sup>

These questions are given an added poignancy by Francis and Gontier's biography *Simone de Beauvoir* [1985] in which they register that Sartre was so impressed by Beauvoir's philosophical abilities that in 1936 he tried to persuade her to give up literature and devote herself to philosophy.<sup>6</sup> They also record that the Professors who placed Jean-Paul Sartre first and Simone de Beauvoir second in the final examinations at the *École Normale* in 1929, are reported to have debated long and hard about the result:

'For although Sartre demonstrated obvious qualities, great intelligence, a strong culture be it in some ways sketchy, everyone agreed that she was the true philosopher.'<sup>7</sup>

In her *Hypatia* interviews Margaret Simons seems to proceed from the assumption that for Beauvoir it is a good thing to be a philosopher. To explicate Beauvoir's negation of her years in the profession of philosophy, Simons probes both Beauvoir's relationship with Sartre and her educational upbringing. Simons is seeking to uncover what makes Beauvoir see herself as an intellectual inferior. However, *en route*, Simons produces evidence that casts doubt on the assumption that Beauvoir herself would have linked intellectual prowess with philosophical expertise. As Simone de Beauvoir reveals in *The Prime of Life* [1960]:

Sartre says that I understand philosophical doctrines, Husserl's among others, more quickly and more exactly than he. . . . I have solid powers of assimilation, a developed critical sense, and philosophy is for me a living reality. I'll never tire of its satisfactions.

However, I don't consider myself a philosopher. I know very well that my ease of entering into a text comes precisely from my lack of inventiveness. In this domain, the truly creative spirits are so rare that it is idle of me to ask why I cannot try join their ranks. It's necessary rather to explain how certain individuals are

capable of pulling off this concerted delirium which is a system, and whence comes the stubbornness which gives to their insights the value of universal keys.

I have already said that the feminine condition does not dispose one to this kind of obstinacy.<sup>8</sup>

Simone de Beauvoir writes this as she looks back on her life from the perspective of maturity. For Sartre is reserved the 'inventiveness', the status of a 'truly creative spirit', but also the 'delirium' of being a true philosopher. This is admiration; but admiration for an individual whose achievements are so exceptional that they should not serve as a model for the lives of others (particularly women). Nor is this an isolated claim. In general Beauvoir's claims about philosophy express not only an ambivalence in Beauvoir's feelings about herself as a philosopher; but also a deep reservation about the value of philosophy itself—reservations that are perhaps not surprising given the notion of philosophy that is brought into play.

Indeed, Beauvoir's own carelessness about what was (and what was not) philosophically original or important about *The Ethics of Ambiguity* has to be understood as the opinions of one who believes that she has moved beyond the delusions of philosophy which ensnared her in her youth. Thus in *Force of Circumstance* [1963] Beauvoir comments on *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, that most straightforwardly philosophical of her works:

Of all my books, it is the one that irritates me the most today. . . . I went to a great deal of trouble to present inaccurately a problem to which I then offered a solution quite as hollow as the Kantian maxims. My descriptions of the nihilist, the adventurer, the aesthete, obviously influenced by those of Hegel, are even more arbitrary and abstract than his, since they are not even linked together by a historical development. . . . I was in error when I thought I could define a morality independent of a social context. I could write a historical novel without having a philosophy of history, but not construct a theory of action.<sup>9</sup>

Kant's theories are 'hollow'; Hegel's 'arbitrary'; her own concern to develop an ethics and not to provide a materialist account of philosophical change utterly erroneous. Here it is not simply her own past philosophical dreams that are being contemptuously dismissed, but philosophy itself. And yet . . . and yet . . . Beauvoir will carry on admiring Sartre in his role as 'philosopher'. But even that admiration is tinged by ambivalence:

something which must be explored if we are to understand Beauvoir's own refusal of the category of 'philosophy' in which to pigeon-hole her own works.

From the Alice Schwarzer interviews we can see that just as Sartre tried to persuade Beauvoir to become a full-time philosopher, so Beauvoir tried to dissuade Sartre from philosophy and tried to direct his energies more towards literature. But Sartre himself wouldn't (or couldn't) be deflected. 'Hereusement!', as Beauvoir says from the perspective of 1973.<sup>10</sup> Thus, although Simone de Beauvoir relishes her own escape from philosophical delusions, she also welcomes the fact that Sartre's own life became identified with his philosophical project. In order to understand this bifurcated attitude, it will be helpful at this point to look at the philosophy/literature divide as it operates in Beauvoir's memoirs, and also in Sartre's own retrospective view of his life. For, in contrast with Beauvoir's simplistic line-up of 'He/Jean-Paul/philosopher', 'me/Simone/novelist', in the interviews with Beauvoir assembled in *Adieux* [1981] it emerges that Sartre himself would prefer to be celebrated for his 'literary', rather than for his 'philosophical' achievements.

It is Beauvoir who insistently takes up the philosophy/literature divide in her first interview with Sartre in 1974, and it is a subject that will recur in a number of their summer and autumn conversations of that year. Unlike Beauvoir herself, Sartre does not repudiate the label *philosophe*, but nevertheless insists that after his death he would rather be valued as a writer of literature than one of philosophy. Sartre explains that he had initially conceived the study of philosophy as a prelude to his more creative writing:

Sartre: . . . I thought that if I specialized in philosophy I would learn the entirety of the world that I was to talk about in books. It gave me the raw material, you might say. . . .

Beauvoir: But didn't you think that literature ought to consist in talking about yourself?

S: Oh not at all. . . .

B: . . . So you did philosophy because it was the discipline that allowed you to know everything, to believe that everything was known and that all sciences had been mastered.

S: Yes. A writer had to be a philosopher. As soon as I knew what philosophy was it seemed to me natural to insist upon that in a writer.<sup>11</sup>

The young Sartre conceived of philosophy as revealing general truths about the world: positioning himself, in effect, in the tradition of the French eighteenth-century *philosophes* who saw their project as an *Encyclopédie*... of revealing the 'full circle of knowledge', (the literal meaning of the word *Encyclopédie*). Although Beauvoir pushes Sartre insistently to line himself up as *either* a philosopher or as a literary writer, and although Sartre will value literature over philosophy, for him the two disciplines will be in no fundamental conflict. Literature reflects the universal; philosophy explores it. And this, I think, remains true for all his novels and plays. However much Sartre might delve into apparently peculiar and subjective psyches in *Nausea*, in *Roads to Freedom*, in *Words*, in *Saint Genet* or in plays like *Huis Clos*, his individuals are still positioned as expressions of an existential and ontological dilemma that *all* humans share. And that is precisely Sartre's strength—and his weakness.

Thus, as feminist philosophers have shown, the ontological assumptions lying behind *Nausea*, or behind *Being and Nothingness*, are very heavily gendered; but gendered via a rhetoric of the universal that makes identification with the hero of the existentialist drama all-too-easy, and that makes it very difficult for a female reader to analyse what has gone wrong—or even notice that *anything* has gone wrong. Recent feminist analyses of Sartre's existentialism shock because it is so easy to overlook the fact that Sartre's strongest metaphors for contingency, facticity, obscenity and the in-itself ally that which is to be transcended to the female body and the act of transcendence to the male consciousness.<sup>12</sup> I think it no accident that a disproportionate number of the best early English-language commentaries on Sartrean philosophy have been written by women philosophers and literary critics. Although there is not a whiff of feminism in (say) Iris Murdoch, Mary Warnock or Hazel Barnes, there is an insistent worrying away at the philosophical vocabulary and framework that underpins existentialism. Attraction, but also a level of scepticism which, I would suggest, is allied to an uneasy instinct about the way that *this* universal—so apparently promising to women in its rootedness in the body—also itself manages to exclude women by taking the male psyche as the norm.

Beauvoir's novels, by contrast, never succeed in linking the particular with the universal. For her philosophy and literature constituted an either/or: a choice that had to be made, and which could

not be bridged by a philosophical novel or by developing a metaphysics that would provide a propaedeutic to the novel. Thus she writes of her life in 1940:

When I read Spinoza and Dostoyevsky alternately, at one moment I was convinced that literature was mere meaningless fury, at the next that metaphysics was nothing but speculation and logic-chopping. . . . From an intellectual point of view this confrontation of the individual and the universal was the merest cliché; but for me it was as original and actual an experience as my revelation concerning the existence of rational awareness in others.<sup>13</sup>

Of course, there are plenty of male writers for whom the universal of philosophy cannot be mapped on to the singularity of the novel; but it is nevertheless symptomatic that a *woman philosopher* has difficulty in allying the uniqueness of her own experience with the universals of metaphysics. For in this supposedly 'universal' discipline which concentrates on 'essentials', the paradigmatic individuals and consciousness-types (those that represent both the norm and ideal) are either explicitly or implicitly gendered as male.

The energy in Beauvoir's novels is focused on the experience of a collection of individuals, not in exploring universal ontological dilemmas in the manner of Sartre. Her characters are rooted in the intricacies of particular social situations, and the shaping force on their emotional relationships is historical contingency. Everything is particular; nothing is (quite) general. Beauvoir has frequently insisted that she despises the *genres* of fictionalised autobiography and *romans à clef*. But since even her 'types' are located within an excessively tight spatio-temporal frame (that of a mid-twentieth century French intellectual *élite*), critics have experienced considerable difficulty in taking Beauvoir's protestations at face value. For some this specificity is, no doubt, part of the appeal of Beauvoir as a novelist. For me, I must confess, it is alienating. This dimension of uniqueness only really works for me in her various volumes of *Memoirs*; but there it conflicts with an underlying philosophical project which is that of providing a narrative and structure to her life that could give it a kind of aesthetic (and political) necessity.

Thus, although I understand (and even empathise with) Beauvoir's alienation from 'the universal', I like her best—in her *Ethics*, *The Second Sex*, and

the essays on Bardot and on de Sade—when she tries to bring the universal in line with her own experience in a more honest fashion, via quite ‘systematic’ descriptions of deviant psychologies that modify and radicalise the very notion of a universal truth. I like Beauvoir, in other words, best as a philosopher: a judgement that she herself would find very problematic, and which requires further exploration in terms of the notion of philosophy that is here at stake.

It is from the conversations between Sartre and Beauvoir recorded in *Adieux* that we get most information about Sartre’s own opinions about the relationship between philosophy and genius. Beauvoir tells us twice that when Sartre first introduced himself to her, it was with the remark, ‘“I want to be Spinoza and Stendhal”’<sup>14</sup>. Remarking (not unreasonably!) on the arrogance of that desire, the discussion moves easily from the contrast between ‘philosophy’ and ‘literature’ to that of ‘genius’: the one who can unite the two disciplines. Beauvoir asks Sartre to explore his early conviction that he himself was a ‘genius’. Thus, together they explore the background to the young Sartre’s appropriation of little Hippias’s maxim: ‘“I have never met any man who was my equal.”’<sup>15</sup>

Spinoza might be thought to have represented simply the deductive method and rationality to the young Sartre. But Sartre denies this. Spinoza might be famous as a systematiser, but he is described as being amongst the ‘sensitive men, accessible to a twentieth-century mind’ and as being ‘more a man than a philosopher’.<sup>16</sup> Spinoza was representative of an ideal type—unique yet universal—the genius as philosopher. For what is central to the early Sartrean notion of genius is that of a personality-type: a kind of *élite* being who is a genius no matter what he does. As Sartre remarks recalling the faith he had in his own genius at the age of nineteen: ‘I believed in it as a Christian believes in the Virgin, but I had not the slightest proof.’<sup>17</sup>

I felt my genius only in flashes of intuition; the rest of the time it was merely form without content. By an odd contradiction I never looked upon my works as works of genius. Although they were written according to the rules that in my opinion implied genius.<sup>18</sup>

Sartre is obviously speaking here with a kind of ironical detachment from his youthful self-confidence. But the contradiction that Sartre cites here between his notion of himself as a genius and his actual output is symptomatic of an

ideology of the genius as an *élite* consciousness-type that reaches back at least as far as Diderot and the late eighteenth-century writers of the Enlightenment period. Indeed, in this context, it is perhaps worth noting that the eighteenth-century *philosophes* were major influences on the young Sartre who was educated at home (via his grandfather’s library) until the age of ten.<sup>19</sup> Because Sartre was immersed in a pre-existentialist framework of assumption about genius (in which essence precedes existence, and being precedes doing), very little work had to be produced for him to be sure of his ‘genius’.

In 1944, when the Allies left Paris, I possessed genius and I set off for America as a writer of genius who was going for a tour in another country. At that point I was immortal and I was assured of my immortality. And that meant I no longer had to think about it.<sup>20</sup>

Sartre mentions that his early works were written ‘according to the rules that implied genius’. But what were the rules that he had in mind? Sartre is nowhere explicit, but an intriguing passage on the relationship between philosophy and creative writing provides a clue:

You remember, there were men who thought in universal terms, and they were the learned, and there were others who had general ideas, that is to say the philosophers and the bourgeois. And then there were the thoughts of the man alone, a man such as I wished to be, a man who thought only by his own powers and who gave light to the city thanks to what he thought and what he felt.<sup>21</sup>

No, Sartre is not very far from the Enlightenment—the *siècle de lumières*. He, the aspiring ‘genius’ will ‘give light to the city’: he is outside the universal, the general and the ‘bourgeois’, but he is not really a ‘man alone’ since his genius will enable him to regain contact with the *citoyen*.

Although it is only later, in *The Family Idiot* [1971], that Sartre would coin the phrase ‘universal singular’ to describe the individual whose life is ‘oracular’ in the way it reflects the life of his epoch, such a notion is implicit in Sartre’s philosophical writings from the start.<sup>22</sup> Sartre will eventually replace his ‘genius’/‘bourgeois’ divide with the terminology of ‘real men’/‘swine (salauds)’.<sup>23</sup> But, nevertheless, many of the earlier assumptions about genius remain in play in the later writings via this notion of an exceptional, very individual psyche that mediates between

the particular and the universal. This point is missed if Sartre's early concerns with the universal and with systematisation are equated with a 'profoundly held assumption that reason was adequate to the comprehension of reality'.<sup>24</sup> Against such a reading of Sartre I would emphasise, on the one hand, that for Sartre, philosophical ideas grow of their own accord, like a cancer or hernia—through excessive psychic growth or via rupture within the boundaries of the ego.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, it is also necessary to stress that for Sartre it was not via reason, but via mood and desire that a consciousness constructed its own reality.

Furthermore, in privileging the particular mood or consciousness-type of 'melancholy', the young Sartre once again reveals himself as deeply immersed in the Romantic ideology of genius. For the Romantics also 'melancholy' was the state of mind in which the genius was supposed to access the universal, and Sartre's original title for *Nausea* was *Melancholia*. He was therefore utterly flummoxed when asked to dream up an alternative by his publishers, and assented easily to Gaston Gallimard's eventual suggestion of *Nausea*.<sup>26</sup> This privileging of melancholy had also a gender-dimension. As I argued in *Gender and Genius*, the beneficial forms of 'melancholy' which provided access to universal truths have (historically) been linked to the male body. Women could suffer melancholy; but not benefit from melancholy—and, in any case, their psychic disturbances were generally described (and viewed) as 'hysterical' and thus as emanating from their wombs.

Although such beliefs about melancholy had their origins in Aristotelianism and the theory of the humours (and were hence utterly discredited by the start of the twentieth century), it is only necessary to look at art-theoretical statements such as those of the Italian 'Metaphysical' painters de Chirico and Carrà to see that such ideas did, indeed, survive into our century as part of the ideology of creativity and of genius.<sup>27</sup> I am not arguing that Jean-Paul Sartre explicitly gendered 'genius'; and I would certainly not want to claim that he gendered the discipline of philosophy. I am arguing, however, that both Sartre and Beauvoir were working with a notion of a creative *élite*, and that they described these privileged beings via a range of vocabulary and concepts which made it very difficult for women to conceive themselves as being amongst its members. The conception of 'genius' at stake is not that of a rational being, but is that of a being who transcends rationality. As such, it is problematic in a culture in which women are expected to lack rationality. It might be easy for

an *élite* of males to see themselves as supra-rational; women aspiring to a position in this *élite* will have to resist viewing themselves (and being viewed as) infra-rational.

When Beauvoir refuses women philosophy, she is also refusing them the form of psychic derangement that counts as genius. Understanding her remarks on philosophy in this way also fits them together with those comments on genius in *The Second Sex* and in her 1966 Japanese lecture on creativity where she carries on a Romantic tradition in philosophical thought that reserves for the male the accolade of 'genius': of being the exceptional, unique individual who is in touch with the universal. Thus, in *The Second Sex* Beauvoir explicitly claimed that 'There are women who are mad and there are women of talent: none has that madness in her talent that we call genius'.<sup>28</sup> And in 1966, it is Stendhal whom she quotes approvingly, claiming that it is still true to say that 'Every genius born a woman is lost to humanity'.<sup>29</sup>

Sartre had introduced himself to Beauvoir via the dream of resembling both Stendhal and Spinoza. By contrast, Beauvoir claims women are incapable of being philosophers or geniuses. A woman is only 'other', incapable of mediating between the universal and the individual. This is not the place to argue against Beauvoir's thesis of otherness. Although I think that women do not all the time see themselves as lacking in respect to the male, I would not wish to quarrel with Beauvoir's claim that women in our society are conditioned into seeing themselves as others. And that is nowhere more true still today than in the discipline of philosophy.

Any emphasis on mediating between the general truths of philosophy and the uniqueness of the individual's experience will pose inevitable problems for a woman philosopher. But since it is precisely 'universality' and a concern with 'essence' which are represented as the distinguishing features of this discipline, those feminist philosophers who work towards specifying generalities about a specifically female psyche are likely to be seen (and even to see themselves) as not really philosophers at all. Thus, Beauvoir comments in the Simons interviews:

while I say I'm not a philosopher in the sense that I'm not a creator of a system, I'm still a philosopher in the sense that I've studied a lot of philosophy, I have a degree in philosophy, I've taught philosophy, I'm infused with philosophy, and when I put philosophy into my books it's because that's a way for me to view the world . . .<sup>30</sup>

To see herself as the standard against which all others must be judged, a woman must think of herself as providing a new paradigm for others. She must hold on to the idea that she is transcending the norm, and not simply deviating from the norm. Beauvoir holds onto her sense of her own normalcy by refusing to think of herself in terms of the problematic categories: 'genius' and 'philosopher'. Thus, her own attitude to the relationship between woman and this 'universal singular' fits in with the argument of *The Second Sex* where she insists that woman is always other—even to herself. Simone de Beauvoir's denial of her own status as a philosopher is itself a form of bad faith that comes from taking the male as norm and ideal for not only the rational, but the supra-rational individual.

'Le Castor' Sartre called Simone throughout his life, perpetuating a student joke (not his own) that moved between 'Beauvoir' and the English word 'beaver' and then back to the French translation 'castor'.<sup>31</sup> But in this inter-linguistic free-associational space 'Castor' is the name of one half of the twin star sign—'Gemini'—which, in the middle ages, was associated with those who would attain immortality through their inventions. Castor and Pollux were fathered by Zeus/Jupiter/Genius when he turned into a swan and raped Leda. When they emerged from the cosmic egg, Pollux was divine and Castor mortal. But the divine brother so loved the mortal one that when the latter died he made a gift of half his immortality to his twin brother. They became twin stars, who spent half their time in the heavens, and half visiting earth or the underworld.

Did Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir know this of these myths of the 'Dioscuri' (sons of Jove) who on one of their visits back to earth entered into battle and saved civilisation and the city of Rome?<sup>32</sup> Did their emotional relationship feed off the links between the two inseparable twins, the immortality of stars and 'genius'? The nickname 'Castor' positions Beauvoir as the privileged recipient of half Sartre's immortality; but we might well think that it was Beauvoir's own inability to count herself as a 'genius' in her own right that elevated Sartre to the status of sole philosophical star.

<sup>1</sup> Margaret A. Simons, 'Two interviews with Simone de Beauvoir', trans. J.M. Todd, *Hypatia* 3 no 3 (Special Issue), Winter 1989, p.13.  
<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Simone de Beauvoir, *Adieux: A Farewell to Sartre* [1981] (with appended interviews), trans. Patrick O'Brian, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985, p.168.  
<sup>3</sup> Alice Schwarzer (ed.), *Simone de Beauvoir Aujourd'hui: Six Entretiens*, Mayenne: Mercure de France, 1984, own trans. p.114.  
<sup>4</sup> 1973 interview, Schwarzer, p. 62.

<sup>5</sup> *Gender and Genius: Towards a Feminist Aesthetics*, London: The Women's Press, 1989.  
<sup>6</sup> Claude Francis and Fernande Gontier, *Simone de Beauvoir* [1985], trans. Lisa Nesselson, London: Octopus, Mandarin pb, 1987, pp.150-51  
<sup>7</sup> *ibid.* p. 92.  
<sup>8</sup> Simons trans., *Hypatia* pp.13-14; *La Force de l'Age*, Paris: Gallimard, pp.228-9.  
<sup>9</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *Force of Circumstance* [1963], trans. Richard Howard, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968, p.75-6.  
<sup>10</sup> 1973 interview, Schwarzer, p.63.  
<sup>11</sup> *Adieux* interviews, pp.138-9.  
<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Margery L. Collins and Christine Pierce, 'Holes and Slime: Sexism in Sartre's Psychoanalysis' in *Women and Philosophy: Toward a Theory of Liberation*, eds. Carol C. Gould and Marx W. Wartofsky, New York: G.P. Putnam, 1976, pp. 112-127.  
<sup>13</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *Prime of Life*, trans. Peter Green, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984, p.469.  
<sup>14</sup> *Adieux* interviews pp. 142, 156.  
<sup>15</sup> *ibid.* p.158.  
<sup>16</sup> *ibid.* p.156.  
<sup>17</sup> *ibid.* p.143.  
<sup>18</sup> *ibid.* p.151.  
<sup>19</sup> Annie Cohen-Solal, *Sartre: A Life*, London: Heinemann, p.33.  
<sup>20</sup> *ibid.* p. 153.  
<sup>21</sup> *ibid.* p. 152.  
<sup>22</sup> See Judith P. Butler, *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France*, Columbia University Press, 1987, pp. 157, 248 fn 31; and Peter Caws, 'Sartre's Last Philosophical Manifesto' in *Philosophy and Non-Philosophy Since Merleau-Ponty*, ed. Hugh J. Silverman, New York; London: Routledge, 1988, p. 113.  
<sup>23</sup> *Adieux* interviews, p. 246.  
<sup>24</sup> Mark Poster claims this in 'Sartre's Concept of the Intellectual' in *Critical Theory and Poststructuralism: In Search of a Context*, Cornell University Press, 1989, p. 36.  
<sup>25</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Between Existentialism and Marxism*, New York: Pantheon, p.10; , p. 106 and Caws, p. 106.  
<sup>26</sup> See Cohen-Solal, p.116.  
<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Massimo Carrà, *Metaphysical Art*, trans. Caroline Tisdall, London: Thames and Hudson, 1971.  
<sup>28</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième Sexe* [1949], Paris: Editions Gallimard, pb. ed., 1968, ii, p. 472. Own translation. For the comments on genius in the English translation see Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. and ed. H.M. Parshley, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1949, pp.713-23.  
<sup>29</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, 'Women and Creativity' [1966] in *French Feminist Thought*, ed. Toril Moi, Oxford: Blackwell, 1987, p. 18.  
<sup>30</sup> Simons, 1985 interview, *Hypatia* p.20.  
<sup>31</sup> See Francis and Gontier, *Simone de Beauvoir*, p. 81. It was René Maheu who christened her 'the beaver'.  
<sup>32</sup> The medieval connection between genius and Gemini is discussed briefly in my *Gender and Genius*, pp. 66, 164. As evidence of the survival of the symbolic meaning of the Dioscuri, it is interesting to note that de Chirico painted this subject in 1934, as well as obsessively reworking and theorising 'melancholy'.