



WOMEN'S PHILOSOPHY REVIEW

Issue No 14 November 1995

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Editorial

The Special Issue

We are provisionally calling it *New Writing by Women in Philosophy*. We are delighted by the standard of the articles sent in: it will be an exciting collection. Several of the referees have also commented that they will find the paper that they read useful for their students. It should contain 7-9 papers. We expect that it will come out in the early spring and cost about £5. We will send you a flyer when we are sure of the details.

Conferences

Can we urge you again to send us any flyers of conferences, or of calls for papers, that you receive that might be of interest to other readers. PLEASE! We all work in such a variety of Departments and some of us outside the University system altogether, that it helps if such information is shared.

Jobs for Women in Philosophy

At the last SWIP conference (see report in this issue) there was renewed interest in the question of jobs for women in philosophy. It was clear that there was, at the least, a need for information exchange about the processes operating in the selection procedures. As a result we are enclosing a questionnaire in order to get some more concrete information on why women are not getting posts in

Philosophy Departments, and whether things are any better (or even worse!) for women doing philosophy in other Departments.

We would like to report on the answers in such a way that it will be helpful to those who are either (1) trying to appoint more women in their departments, or (2) trying to get jobs themselves.

We will make quite sure that no individual person or department can be identified in the report. (We will get back to you to check wording, if there is any doubt.)

This is a small-scale and exploratory project at this stage. We (or you) may try to do something larger scale, later on, which could give 'hard data' about numbers and percentages.

We would be grateful if you could fill it in and return it to either of us by the end of December. Please return it, whether or not you think you have much of interest to say. If you are not involved at all in appointments, just say so. It would also be helpful if you could return it, even if you do not want to fill it in. This will help us compile a useful report.

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 775 3370
Fax 0171 975 5500

The deadline for receipt is 30 April 1996

- If you want some extra copies of
- Women's Philosophy Review to sell (at
- £2.50 each or free to new members) let
- Morwenna Griffiths know by the end
- of November.

SWIP Membership: Note from the Treasurer

Dear Members

Apparently some members have been a bit puzzled by the procedures for joining SWIP, so this is an effort at clarification. In fact the procedure is very simple:

1. If you don't have a membership form, write to K. Hutchings, Politics Dept., University of Edinburgh, 31 Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh EH8 9JT and she will send you one, which you return to her with your subscription (currently £5/2.50 pa).
2. When KH receives the form, she updates her own membership list and passes it on to Jacqui Clay (SWIP Secretary). KH usually waits until she has a few forms and cheques and processes them in a batch (cheaper - see my note in the June *Review*) which is why some of you look at your bank statements to see the cheque go through and find that it takes ages. However many forms I've got, they are always forwarded in time for new members to be on the list for the next issue of the *Review*.
3. For renewal of subscription, all existing members are separately mailed in the New Year, so you can expect a demand for cash early in 1996. Any subscriptions from new members after November this year will be treated as subscriptions for 1996.

You will always know if there is a problem with your membership if you do not receive the *Review*, which normally comes out in June and November. However, if you have any queries at all, please get in touch with KH and she will sort them out.

Just to update you on the current membership and money situation, we have around 140 members and £947 in the bank. As I said in the last *Review*, although the *Review* has first claim on SWIP funds, we can offer some support to other SWIP activities. Please contact me (KH) if you would like to put in a claim for financial support for a SWIP event.

Best Wishes

Kimberly Hutchings (SWIP Treasurer)

CALL FOR PAPERS

WSN Journal of Women's Studies

Please send all papers and enquiries in the first instance to the Editors, Anita Franklin School of Health and Comm. Studies, Sheffield Hallam University, Sheffield, S10 5BP. Tel 0114 253 2469 or Chris Corrin, Dept of Politics, University of Glasgow, Glasgow G12 8RT. Tel: 0141 339 8855; Fax 0141 330 5071. They are looking for manuscripts approximately 15 to 20 pages long.

Please send three copies for refereeing purposes.

'International Feminism(s)'

A special issue, June 1996, of the *Journal of International Communication*. This issue is devoted to an exploration of international feminism(s) as theoretical constructs, practical politics, cultural practices. Articles which provide such kinds of analysis and also provide comparative or "global" perspectives are particularly welcome. Contributions are invited from across and among (and outside) academic disciplines.

Deadline: 31 December 1995. Proposals may be sent, and notes to contributors requested from the guest editor: Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi, Director, Centre for Mass Communications Research, University of Leicester, 104 Regent Road, Leicester LE1 7LT. Fax 01533 523 874. Email: as19@leicester.ac.uk

CONFERENCE REPORT

Feminist Politics and the Philosophy Establishment

University of Sussex Conference

Saturday July 1 1995

This very well attended event provided a forum for four strong papers given by women in philosophy, to a largely female audience. A variety of approaches were in evidence. Jean Grimshaw and Jill Marsden gave papers which explicitly addressed the mutual challenge posed by the aims of philosophy, examining the claims of reason, and the aims of feminism, affirming women in a discipline traditionally and conceptually constructed around a series of distinctions rendering problematic the participation of women at the highest levels of creativity and direction. In her paper, "Philosophy, Feminism and Universalism", Jean Grimshaw discussed defences of universalism against post modernising critiques: Jill Marsden (Bolton Institute of Higher Education) mobilised a Deleuzian notion of nomad disruption to suggest that all the same a disaggregation of the aim of feminist critique can provide a point of vantage against hegemonising and territorialising forces. This prompted me to wonder if women make headway in those specialisms within philosophy where these forces operate less strongly; and in institutions where the agents of grey formalisation are less in evidence.

The two remaining papers by Stella Standford (University of Essex) and by Sara Beardsworth (University of Warwick) opened out another dimension, discussing the implications of thematisations of women and gender in the tradition. Sandford discussed Hegel; Beardsworth discussed Kristeva. This juxtaposition permitted a relation between Hegel's and Kristeva's ambivalence about sexual difference to emerge. Increasingly theories of sexual difference appear to be double edged for the purposes of thematising the relation between women and philosophy. Sandford, in her paper "Feminist Philosophy and the fate of Hegel's Antigone", discussed the deformation called "Antigone" in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, for which Antigone and womankind are set up as presenting an unmediated allegiance to a divine order. As Sara Beardsworth pointed out from the floor, this is understood by Hegel to be no more reductive as an approach to the

question, how to live, than the supposedly equally one-sided, if self-questioning, stance of Creon, who imposes the rule of human law. All the same it is women who end up designated "the enemy of the community", making it clear that the men for all their partiality, or because of this partiality, retain hegemony. Hegel thus proves continually provocative and engaging for those seeking to trace out the double move in which texts, by recognising that women may have a different angle of entry into philosophical discussion, ensnare women in that position of difference, preventing the freedom of manoeuvre which an unmarked practitioner can achieve.

In her own paper, "Kristeva and philosophy", Beardsworth raised issues about the encounter between psychoanalysis and philosophy, and between aesthetics and psychoanalysis, through which questions of gender and sexual difference have come to prominence. She indicated how a shift from an earlier more obviously politically engaged Kristeva to a later retreat into the analysis of melancholy, away from affirming the disruptive potential of the semiotic, nevertheless retains a responsiveness to political processes. Her discussion concluded with a powerful account of the impossibility, in the absence of a transcendent moment, of productive exchange between women and men, as set out by Kristeva in her reading of Margaret Duras in *Black Sun*. This analysis serves as a figure for the relation between women and men in philosophy. While in principle there seems to be no reason why women and men should not be in open exchange concerning the destiny of thought and the place of human beings within it, the fact remains that the men have the jobs and the predominant role in hiring the next generation of teachers of philosophy; that the men draw up the philosophical agenda in ninety nine point nine per cent of conferences and publish eighty per cent of the articles in journals. In current conditions free, productive exchange may not be possible. When one class is in power, the other classes may have no choice but the non-choice between deference and defiance. The implications of this predominance are not easily addressed.

There was a final session in which our brief was to attempt just that. Alison Assiter (University of North London), Helen Chapman (Staffordshire University), and myself (Manchester Metropolitan University) attempted from our partial post-polytechnic points of view to address ourselves to

the tensions within the practice of a discipline which, in its concern with the truth, all the truth and nothing but the truth, appears to deny that there could be either a discrimination against women or a specifically feminist claim to be made out. All three indicated that their postgraduate research had not been specifically on the question of women in philosophy; and the question was raised whether this was contingent, or a necessary condition for our relative success within the discipline. At this point the question of letting men attend was raised from the floor. My feelings about this are mixed. On one side it seems entirely inappropriate to exclude people on grounds of sex from hearing outstanding work on issues central to the development of philosophy today. The questions of gender in philosophy and the question of universalism versus the finitude of reason are not issues only for women. On the other hand it was to me entirely unsurprising that one of the best discussions, on specifically female anxieties attendant on presenting the philosophical tradition to classrooms of restive students, took place outside the formal sessions. If such issues are to be addressed in a more systematic way it may be necessary to reverse the decision to permit men in the locality to attend as observers. It would I think be definitely inappropriate to invite men to be speakers at such an event, and unfortunate if, as is the case at most other philosophy conferences, there should be more men than women attending. Perhaps the question of feminism and philosophy could be revitalised through a discussion of the advantages and drawbacks (pace Nietzsche) of separatism for women in philosophy.

It was slightly disconcerting to find myself as it were a representative of an "establishment". Certainly the position of continental philosophy in Britain today and the position of the ex-polies in the University system is not such as to lead me to feel central to any philosophical establishment. I have also on occasion felt that the male domination of the profession leads to a splitting along a gay/straight line between women who go into women's studies, cultural studies and queer theory on one side and women who stay in philosophy on the other. I raised the question of the visibility and invisibility of dykes in queer theory and in philosophy, and a request was made that the SWIP newsletter continue to indicate publications in the area of lesbian philosophy. I found it even more disconcerting to find myself cited approvingly in one of the papers. It occurs to me to wonder whether only women read women's work in philosophy; or, less contentiously, if women are more likely to cite women's work. It has certainly never happened to me before. Maybe I go to the

wrong conferences.

There are at least four dimensions to the question of feminist politics within the philosophical establishment. There is the question about the political ramifications of the debate concerning finitude and universalism; there are the politics of sexual difference; there is the problem of negotiating differences between women, when our interests are divergent; and there are the questions of institutional politics, with those further outside perceiving those further in as insiders. Believe me . . . A discussion of the various aspects of these issues is urgently needed and the columns of the SWIP newsletter seems a good place for it. In the meantime the organisers of this conference, Alison Stone and Stella Standford deserve every congratulation for a splendid, well organised and stimulating day.

*Joanna Hodge
Politics and Philosophy
Manchester Metropolitan University*

Research Details for Networking

Tina Beattie, (University of Bristol) 109 Cranbrook Road, Bristol BS6 7DA.

Currently doing a PhD on the Cult of the Virgin Mary in Engagement with the work of Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva.

Elizabeth Brake, 5 Auld Burn Park, St Andrews, Fife KY16 8JD, Scotland.

Beginning a PhD on the distinction between public and private ethics (relevant to the contention that 'the personal is 'the political' but also to Gilligan's 'ethic of care'). Plans to include a consideration of recent radical and socialist feminist theory. Would be very pleased to be in touch with anyone with similar research interests.

Penny Florence, Falmouth College of Arts, Woodlane, Falmouth, TR11 4RA, Cornwall.

Interests are Aesthetics of Difference. Word-Image Theory Semiotics, feminist art histories.

Annemie Halsema, Bestevaaerstraat 219 hs, 1055 Tm Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Currently researching a PhD at the University of Amsterdam on *The Philosophy of Luce Irigaray: A dialectics of sexual difference*. Interests are: Women's Studies in Philosophy, Relationship between thinking of difference and dialectics (Hegelian dialectics), Irigaray, Butler.

L Hunter, School of English, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT.

Interests are: feminism, epistemology, standpoint theory, theories of representation, artificial intelligence - and rhetoric - ie social context.

Alya Khan, 50C Ferme Park Road, Stroud Green, London, N4 4ED.

Current interests are: A feminist reinterpretation of the problem of political obligation (as it's commonly expressed). Exposing structural gender bias in liberal political theory (in particular in consent theories of obligation). Exploring feminist methodologies. The influence of postmodernism. The potentials and pitfalls in building new, emancipatory, theories and ways of theorising. Epistemology. Ethics.

Dee Reynolds, Dept of French, University of Bristol. Interests are Feminist aesthetics, with particular reference to dance theory and criticism.

Angela Wilson, Dept of Public Policy, University of Central Lancashire, Preston, PR1 2HF.

Interests are: political theory, contemporary liberalism. Queer theory - lesbian political theory. Social policy - inequalities in the welfare state.

Caroline Warman, 38a Albert Street, London, NW1 7NU.

Interests are: Sade, materialism, 18th century theories of currency, metaphor.

Members Publications

The discussions at the University of Sussex (reported by Joanna Hodge in this issue) showed that many women find difficulties in forming links with others working in similar philosophical areas. One of the problems here is that there is a real difficulty for all of us in tracking down writing by British women in philosophy, partly just because we do not all work in philosophy departments - or publish in mainstream philosophy Journals. We would like then, to include a section in the *Review* called 'Members Publications'. So we would be glad if you could fill in the form enclosed with this issue and send it to one of the editors by January, so we can put it together in time for the next *Review*

CONFERENCES

University of Strathclyde Department of Modern Languages

29 - 31 March 1996

25 Years Emancipation? Women in Switzerland 1971-1996

Sponsored by Pro Helvetia (Arts Council of Switzerland)

1996 marks the 15th anniversary of the introduction of women's suffrage at federal level in Switzerland and also the Bicentenary of the founding of the University of Strathclyde. One of the conferences associated with the Bicentenary "25 Years Emancipation?" will seek to assess the changes experienced by women over a quarter of a century.

Keynote speaker: Rosemarie Simmen (Senator, Swiss Upper House)

Other speakers include: Thanh-Huyen Ballmer-Cao (Zurich), Agnes Cardinal (Kent), Annelies Debrunner (Weinfelden), Yvette Jaggi (Mayor of Lausanne), Beatrice von Matt (Zurich), Brigitte Studer (Lausanne), Erika Swales (Cambridge), Regina Wecker (Basel)

The conference language will be English and the following themes will be addressed:

- The Women's Movement in Switzerland, the fight for the vote, developments since 1971.
- Women's writing today in Switzerland
- The Scottish writer Liz Lochhead will chair a round table discussion with three Swiss writers Maja Beutler, Anne Cuneo, Amelie Plume.
- Women in the political process in Switzerland: past, present and future.

Organisers: Joy Charnley, Malcolm Pender, Andrew Wilkin

For further details contact

*Malcolm Pender, University of Strathclyde,
Department of Modern Languages, 26 Richmond
Street, Glasgow, G11 1XH.*

Tel: 0141 552 4400 ext 3322 ; Fax 0141 552 4979.

Philosophy and Gender: The Great Divide

University of Brighton (Grand Parade)

Saturday 25 November

**Speakers include : Kate Soper,
Pat Fitzgerald, Carol Jones**

Price: £5 Waged;
£3 Unwaged/Concessions

*For further details contact:
Jackie Johnson, University of Brighton
Tel: Brighton (01273) 465174.*

Recent Developments in Feminist Ethical and Political Philosophy

SWIP Conference/Workshop

18 November 1995 10.00 am to 5.00 pm

Speakers

Rosalyn Diprose "Close Encounters of a Third Kind: Beyond Love and Desire"

Moya Lloyd "The Politics of Performativity: Problems and Possibilities"

Lilly Forrester "A Prolegomenon for a Woman's Politics: Politics as the Art of Differends"

Susanne Gibson "Feminist Bioethics: Is Anyone Listening to the Different Voices"

Patricia Scalsas "Feminism, Universalism and Moral Theory"

**For further details please contact the
Organiser:**

**Kimberly Hutchings
Politics Department,
University of Edinburgh, 31 Buccleuch
Place, Edinburgh,
EH8 9JT. Tel 0131 650 4239.**

Childcare facilities
will be available at this conference

**Engendering Change
Feminisms Past, Present and Future
July 5-7 1996
University of Glamorgan**

The Women's Studies Team at the University of Glamorgan is delighted to announce that the 9th Annual Women's Studies Network (UK) conference will be held here in South Wales. This will be a particularly significant moment in the history of Women's Studies at the University, as it will coincide with the graduation of our first students on the BA in Women's Studies.

Strands will include:

- Whose Heritage? Women, Tradition and Social Change
- Women and Communication
- Women, Performance and Popular Culture
- Backlash and Beyond: Women and Power
- Fictionalising Futures: Narrative and Literature
- The Future of the Divine: Feminism and Religion
- Feminisms' Lost Discourses (Disability, Ageing Bisexuality...)
- Open Stream

Alongside the customary academic debate we will be celebrating the growing development of women's art, performance and writing within the University. We hope to offer live performance, poetry readings, cabaret and art exhibitions, and of course the usual publishers' displays.

**Further details from
WSN Conference Organising Team 1996
School of Humanities and
Social Sciences,
University of Glamorgan, Pontypridd,
Mid-Glamorgan, CF37 1DL
(01442) 480480.**

**The Third European Feminist
Research Conference
1997
Coimbra, Portugal**

For more information contact:
Virginia Ferreira, Universidade de Coimbra, Faculdade de Economia Av. Dias de Silva, 165, P-3000 Coimbra, Portugal.
Fax +351 39 403511.

**Women, Work and Health
18-20 April 1996
Barcelona, Spain**

Differences in women's working conditions will be evaluated, as well as the differences in women's health and illness and the effects of stress on women. The conference targets medical and health professionals as well as sociologists, psychologists, jurists, economists, journalists, trade unionists and human resources managers.

For more information contact:
Secretaria Dona, Salut, Qualitat de Vida, Aribau, 209, 1, 08021 Barcelona, Spain.
Tel/Fax 34-3-201 47 69.

**Speaking Our Place:
Women's Perspectives on Higher
Education**

A one-day national conference being held by the Women in Higher Education Network on Saturday March 16, 1996 at the University of Central Lancashire, Preston

Papers are now invited, which could be published after the event. This year's themes include - *Working with Women/Working for Women?*, *(My) University; Whose University is it?*, *(My) Subject/Whose Knowledge is it?* and *Managing the Equation: Home/Work/Self*. Short formal papers (10/15 minutes) or workshop formats welcomed from all women working in HE, including administrative staff, academics, students and support staff. Abstracts should be no more than 500 words. To discuss ideas before submission, telephone 01772 892393.

Books Received

If you would like to review any of the following books, please contact Margaret Whitford promptly : French Department, Queen Mary and Westfield College, Mile End Road, London E1 4NS.

Joan Hoff and Maureen Coulter, *Irish Women's Voices Past and Present*, Journal of Women's History Vol 6, No 4/Vol 7, No 1, Indiana University Press 1995.

As co-editors of the *Journal of Women's History*, we are very pleased to be able to publish this collection of essays reflecting the minds and voices of Irish women from the medieval times to the present. While preparing this collection of essays for publication, the Irish Republican Army announced a ceasefire on August 31 1994, and the Ulster Unionists accepted the IRA ceasefire on October 13, 1994. It is too soon to celebrate the end of the violence and division of the Emerald Isle, but there is a glimmer of hope that perhaps the Irish in the South and the North can get down to the work of healing and that this time women will not be forgotten or ignored or silenced in the process. We are deeply indebted to the scholars and activists who contributed their minds and voices to this collection at a most hopeful and historic time in the lives of Irish women. [Blurb on back cover] [Contributions from Ireland and North America, two from N Ireland].

Eva Cherniavsky, *That Pale Mother Rising: Sentimental Discourses and the Imitation of Motherhood in 19th Century America*, Indiana University Press 1995, distributed by Open University Press.

That Pale Mother Rising concerns the persistence of essentialised motherhood in the midst of the postmodern linking nineteenth-century sentimentalism to the American founders' understanding of the democratic social body. Does the mother always remain partially beyond the domain of social and symbolic relations, a kind of permanent embarrassment to postmodern feminisms? Using slave narratives and texts of canonical male writers not conventionally aligned with sentimentalism, Eva Cherniavsky explores how essential motherhood paradoxically resolves

into oppositional imitation. In contrast to French feminist critics, who situate the maternal body always partially beyond history and culture, Cherniavsky explores the historical relation between the idea of an essential maternal and democratic political formation. [Blurb on back cover].

Laura Stempel Mumford, *Love and Ideology in the Afternoon: Soap Opera, Women and Television Genre*, Indian University Press 1995.

'Why do I like soap operas?' asks Mumford. The answer emerges from a feminist analysis engaged in current debates about popular culture, television and ideology. She argues that the daytime soap has an implicit and at times explicit political agenda that advocates male dominance, racism, classism, and heterosexism. Unlike other critics of the genre, Mumford situates her argument within her own history as a soap opera viewer and her struggle to reconcile her pleasure in the genre with a recognition of the form's repressive tendencies. Her analysis blends theory, criticism, and personal practice into a detailed examination of the genre and its viewers: the levels of viewer competence crucial to understanding soap opera narratives; how soaps blur the boundaries between public and private spheres, constructing a kind of community, the functions of closure and viewer expectations in the narratives; the paternity mystery, a restatement of the power of the father; and various elements surrounding soap operas, such as fan magazines and network programming strategies. [Blurb on back cover].

Nancy Tuana (ed.), *Feminist Interpretations of Plato*, Pennsylvania State University Press 1994.

These essays explore the full spectrum of Plato's philosophy and represent the variety of feminist perspectives. The first section focuses on Plato's social and political theory. Writing from a liberal feminist perspective, both Vlastos and Smith argue that aspects of Plato's social and political theory can be seen as compatible with contemporary feminist values, a thesis contested by Saxonhouse. Canto, relying on postmodern philosophical insights, supports the compatibility of feminism and the Platonic state while offering a vision unlike Vlastos's or Smith's. Bluestone examines the way Plato philosophers have written women philosophers out

of the *Republic*. The section concludes with an essay by Spelman who, by focusing on the intersection of race, class and gender, notes the irony in labeling Plato the first feminist.

The second section examines the role of the feminine within Plato's metaphysics and epistemology. DuBois contends that Plato's reinscription of the reproductive powers of women onto the male philosopher contributes to a radical change in the situation of the female in the Western world. In contrast, Brown notes that truth and virtues are referred to as female within the Platonic dialogues and argues that Plato's vision of philosophy undermines the agonistic masculine values of Greek society. Irigaray turns to the speech of Diotima in Plato's *Symposium* to demonstrate that the conception of love presented by Plato is deeply masculinist. Nye problematizes Irigaray's reading by illustrating that it contributes to the appropriation of Diotima's voice. Tuana and Cowling identify the ways in which Plato's construction of truth involves a subversion of the feminine and, through a series of inversions of Plato's own metaphors, advance an alternative conception of rationality. The volume closes with Hampton's thesis that any reading of Plato must include reconstruction as well as deconstruction, as demonstrated in her analysis of the *Philebus*. [Blurb on back cover].

'Life and Caring in the Light of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*' - Brita M Gulli: 'Surrogacy - an Integral Part of the Liberal Freedom of Contract?' - Tuija Parvikko: 'The Pariah as a Rebel of the Postmodern Political Condition' - Elin Svenneby: 'Reading Arendt like a Woman'.

The Nordic Women in Philosophy have just published their second volume entitled: *Gender: An Issue for Philosophy: Proceedings of the Second Nordic Symposium of Women in Philosophy*, edited by Inga Bostad and Elin Svenneby 1994. It's not clear where one obtains this from; the publisher is (I think) GCSOslo. You could contact: Nordic Institute for Women's Studies and Gender Research, University of Oslo, PO Box 1156 Blindern, N-0137 Oslo, for more information. [Tel +47 22 85 89 21; fax: +47 22 85 89 50; e-mail: nordisk@sfk.uio.no.] Contents include: Lectures May Thorseth Huitfeldt : 'Gender - an Issue for Philosophy Today?' - Elisabeth List: 'Reason, Gender and the Paradox of Rationalization' - Else Wiestad: 'Rousseau on the Power of the Oppressed' - Else M Barth : 'Fascist Philosophies of Masculinity in Europe and the Two World Wars' - Karen Glente: 'Geschlecht und Idealismus' - Vigdis Songe-Møller: 'Sexual Metaphors in Early Greek Philosophy'. Workshop Papers Elizabeth Stjernberg : 'Rationality and its Critics' - Brit Strandhagen: 'Some Problems with the Concept of Rationality' - Sidsel Aamodt: 'Gender and Nature in Hegel's Philosophy' - Ingunn Elstad:

Reviews

LUCE IRIGARAY: TWO REVIEWS OF A NEW STUDY

Tina Chanter, *Ethics of Eros: Irigaray's Re-Writing of the Philosophers*, Routledge, 1995, p/b £12.99.

Tina Chanter's book is an impressive and scholarly study of the philosophical background to Irigaray's work. It sets out to chart the connection between phenomenological and post-phenomenological thinkers and Irigaray's feminist philosophy, showing the historical context of the ideas which inform Irigaray's thinking, as well as discussing Irigaray's own contribution to the interpretation of 'past (and present) masters'.

Chanter begins by giving an account of the different strands of feminist thought which have wrestled with the 'essentialism/anti-essentialism' debate. This provides a useful context for the philosophical discussions which follow in the later chapters, and provides a navigational map to chart the diversity of different positions in recent feminist thinking. It also indicates how Irigaray's work has been received and interpreted differently by feminists in different contexts, and why it is apposite to re-visit those interpretations now. Beginning in this way ensures that the feminist angle of Irigaray's work (and of Chanter's book) does not get 'swamped' amongst the philosophy; indeed it is taken as the guiding thread through the labyrinth of reading and interpreting philosophical texts.

The main chapters of the book look at Hegel, Heidegger, Levinas and Derrida (as well as de Beauvoir and Lacan, briefly), and at Irigaray's readings of their work. Although the web of relations, influences and patterns of philosophical thinking connecting these thinkers is complex and difficult, Chanter offers a detailed and well-informed path through the debates. Her discussion is accompanied by plenty of textual references to support the points she makes, although these never become obtrusive.

It might be argued that to read Irigaray in this way is to make her 'safe' for philosophy by placing her within familiar debates and making her part of an ongoing historical progression in the discipline of philosophy. But I think to look at Irigaray in philosophical terms does not neutralise her feminist perspective or her political stance, but rather gives due attention to an aspect of her work which deserves recognition, and which is not necessarily

at odds with the psychoanalytic, literary and political dimensions of her writing.

One of the passages which intrigued me most in the early pages of this book was Chanter's autobiographical account of her own gradual discovery of a writing 'voice' or position. She writes:

I find myself writing less "textually", less as an explicator of texts, less in the tradition of hermeneutics, and more as a feminist philosopher who has thoughts of her own to articulate . . . I would characterise the direction of my thinking no longer in terms of a philosopher whose interest lies in examining feminist texts and questions . . . but more as a feminist who is interested in philosophical texts and questions.

It may be this approach which makes the book more accessible than it might otherwise have been. The issues are addressed in a serious way, but the tone of the book as a whole is quite striking; it is relaxed and reflective in an almost conversational way. It is free of jargon and is out to explain and clarify rather than to impress.

Although it's probably not an introductory book, it makes some (at times) opaque and dense bits of philosophy much clearer, while insisting on the philosophical credentials of Irigaray's work, and for this it certainly deserves to be read.

Alison Ainley
Anglia Polytechnic University

This is an important book, that sets out to locate Irigaray's writings in the philosophical tradition in which she is embedded. It also seeks, laudably, not just to dismiss the critique of Irigaray as 'essentialist' as obviously misguided and wrong, but to understand that critique and to locate it, in its turn, in its tradition. Tina Chanter's book is a must for feminists interested in the theoretical grounding of their political precepts.

Chanter locates the reason for the dismissal of Irigaray as 'essentialist' in the failure of the feminists responsible for the critique properly to think

through the sex/gender distinction. Feminists have, she argues, focused too much (though understandably so, because it is gender that appears to be malleable and amenable to change) on the gender side of this divide. We should not, she suggests, reject the 'sex' side of the distinction, because there is a danger, if we do so, of lapsing into liberal feminism, and of falsely imagining women to be 'really' like men. Instead, she argues, we should seek to understand the 'sex' side of the distinction: we should seek to locate it, in its turn, in its vast historical context, if we are effectively to bring about the liberation of women.

This is Chanter's route into encouraging us to take Irigaray, and Irigaray understood in the context of the philosophical tradition of which she is part, seriously. My only quibble with her thus far is that she tends to downplay the vast differences there have been, amongst "second wave" feminists, on the question of the sex/gender distinction (several feminists eg Butler and Gatens, have suggested that it needs abolishing altogether) and on the general question of whether women should become 'like' men or whether women should, on the contrary, emphasise their differences from men. There have been, amongst feminists, several alternative theoretical positions to these (for example socialist feminism or feminisms that emphasise irreducible differences amongst women).

That minor quibble aside, the scene is set for Chanter's interrogation of the philosophical tradition of which she is part. She begins her excellent series of chapters on the tradition with de Beauvoir on Hegel: she offers an original reading of de Beauvoir, as vacillating between her Sartrean existentialism - "we are all free and we can therefore change our situations" and her reading of the Hegelian master/slave dialectic. De Beauvoir, argues Chanter, appears not to think through fully her analysis of the relation between the male/female relation and Hegel's master/slave dialectic. For Hegel, there are advantages in the position of the slave. The slave has overcome death and chosen servitude over death. In his confrontation, with death, the slave learns that life is important; indeed, through his labour for his master, the slave is able to alter his situation. Hegel's account, moreover, is historically located, and dynamic. De Beauvoir, Chanter argues, through an effective bringing together of de Beauvoir's own life and her philosophy, does not 'own the problem of women's situation for herself.' She does not, Chanter argues, really think through the position of women as other, partly because she never fully recognised herself as other (as a writer she thought that she

escaped the situation most women faced) and partly because of her failure to think through the implications of her use of Hegel's master/slave dialectic. Irigaray, by contrast, Chanter argues, takes on the question of how women can be both "I" and "other". She indeed, 'owns' the problem of the role of women as "other".

Chanter's third chapter offers a reading of Irigaray on Hegel on Antigone, the woman who was neither master nor slave; she raises the question why, for Hegel, can Antigone's action not be ethical? Irigaray enables us to see, not so much, Chanter argues, through 'analysis' of Hegel's text, but rather through the way that she reads him, that Antigone's particularity is 'inscribed in her body'. Hegel, in a sense, is describing the situation of a woman in Antigone's position. Yet Irigaray also enables us to see the potential for an alternative ethicality to Hegel's 'universal' model that is inscribed in Antigone's actions.

Chanter moves on to look at Heidegger and then Levinas' influence on Irigaray. She argues that Heidegger's Dasein, and his critique of the 'epistemological' tradition, is vital for Irigaray. Just as Heidegger invited us to rethink our ontological tradition by taking for granted the notion of 'being there' - the idea of the lived body, so does Irigaray invite us to take for granted, and to understand the implications of, sex difference. This leads us, according to Chanter, to a questioning of Heidegger's prioritising of time over space. In the case of Levinas, Irigaray draws on the idea of the 'other' as 'absolute alterity' drawing on Levinas, she starts from the idea of women as 'radically other' to men. Unlike much of the tradition, neither assumes that the 'other' is just like oneself.

My disagreement with Chanter and with the reading of Irigaray she offers, is this: I think that the epistemological tradition is much more diverse than she makes out; there is a wealth of difference between Descartes, on the one hand, and Marx, to take one example, on the other. One need not assume, in order to take epistemology seriously, either that the self is purely a mind (as Descartes did) or that an epistemological stance cannot take 'the other' seriously. Indeed, I am led to wonder how, if women are 'radically other' from men, there can ever be communication between them. And there must be, surely, if we are to explain both the changes that have taken place partly as a result of feminism, and the alterations that Tina and I would both agree, as feminists, are still desirable.

That disagreement is the rambling of a die-hard epistemologist. This is a wonderful book. Read it and enjoy it.

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REREADING THE CANON

Bat-Ami Bar On (ed) *Modern Engenderings: Critical Feminist Readings in Modern Western Philosophy*, SUNY Press 1994, p/b.

Karen Green *The Woman of Reason: Feminism, Humanism and Political Thought*, Polity Press 1995, p/b £11.95.

Linda M G Zerilli *Signifying Woman: Culture and Chaos in Rousseau, Burke and Mill*, Cornell University Press 1994, p/b £11.50.

Karen Green comments that: 'It is only during the past couple of decades that feminism has become an accepted area of political philosophy. In order for this to happen, a change had to be effected in the accepted definition of "politics"' (1), while Linda Zerilli points out in her concluding remarks that the questions feminists are now raising require answers which 'demand the practice of a new political theory' (153). Zerilli's and Green's books indicate compellingly that rereading the canon may lead to a variety of new and competing definitions. 'There are many feminisms', Green goes on to say, 'and the central problem of feminist political thought is to ascertain which is most viable' (2). The use of the word 'ascertain' makes it sound like a neutral, academic question; I suspect that a version of the power/knowledge nexus as described by Foucault would be a more likely scenario.

Part of the interest of Zerilli's study of selected thinkers from the political theory canon is to show how 'the woman question' occludes the larger question of political theory itself: 'woman' is one of the commonest figures employed to stand for or represent all those aspects of self and society which refuse the order of identity, society, community or theory. Using Kristeva's work on the abject, Zerilli argues that there is an irreducible zone of exclusion in any order; what is crucial is how that zone is conceptualised or symbolised, and specifically, the effects of coding it as feminine. There is nothing 'natural' about the link between symbolic 'woman' and women; on the contrary, the link shores up whole systems of thought. As Zerilli puts it succinctly: 'no woman, no social contract in Rousseau; no constitutional monarchy in Burke; no representative government in Mill' (152). One cannot simply add women to the social contract if the latter is founded on their absence. Zerilli points to the 'demarcating imperative' which defends against the fear of chaos, indifference or 'abjection'. If abjection is coded 'feminine', the political woman becomes unthinkable, a monster

or demonic vision, Zerilli's account is theoretically underpinned by Saussurian linguistics and Derrida, and the notion of the contingency of the link between signifier and signified, sign and referent. Political theory becomes a 'signifying practice' (2), and politics a *realm of speech* (3) which constitutes meaning, and which is performative rather than descriptive. Femininity on this reading is not an essence but 'a form of political artifice...not unlike a Leviathan, a Prince, or a social contract' (5). As part of the semiotic system, it is also subject to social and historical changes, linked to signifiers of class as well as those of gender. Isn't it a question, Zerilli asks 'of how an interpretive code is produced, which then determines what counts as real, as extradiscursive?' (145). For Zerilli, political theory is not an empirical matter; it revolves around anxiety and its resolution: 'the dread goes under the name of the disorderly woman, the solace under proper femininity' (5).

Since anxiety is inherent in the human condition (and is even, according to some theories, the motor of all action, innovation and creativity), it is not a question of eliminating anxiety, but of conceptualising it otherwise. Hence, for Zerilli, the importance of Kristeva's work and the possibilities Kristeva offers for rethinking political theory. Zerilli's account is a persuasive one, which could suggest new directions for feminist political thought, and for the elaboration of theory which lives with anxiety. For the danger she signals is that, just as the classical theorists use 'woman' as a scapegoat, feminists too might appeal to alternative scapegoats: we are not exempt. Zerilli does not spell this out, but in this respect her book provides a cautionary tale.

In contrast, for Karen Green, political theory is an empirical matter: empirical research, she claims, will help to decide such questions as the nature of the society which best serves women's interests (128, 131). Her book mounts a defence of feminist humanism against 'the association of feminism with the critique of reason inspired by post-structuralism' (7). In her account, femininity is 'not a biological essence, but a historical creation' (150).

Foregrounding history, Green constructs an account of an alternative humanist tradition; Christine de Pisan is considered alongside Hobbes, Wollstonecraft alongside Rousseau, and a humanist reading of Simone de Beauvoir is elaborated (rather than Judith Butler's anti-humanist reading) to show that a feminist humanism developed contemporaneously with masculinist humanism. Wollstonecraft and de Beauvoir are defended against recent critiques of their thought as

'masculine'. Traditional humanist feminists, Green argues, have *implicitly* started from a model of human nature which takes female, rather than male, as norm: the female protagonist of these accounts is both rational and passionate, and concerned with love and care as well as justice. Thus the book provides 'a genealogy of feminist rationality' (23) which aims to understand 'how to help men develop their humanity' (159).

Green indicates her distaste for the more apocalyptic moments of contemporary feminism which can sometimes make it sound as though all women had lived in darkness until about 1968. This robs women of their history, she writes. She refuses to accept an account of history in which women have been eternal victims of male oppression. On the contrary, we have to take into account women's complicity in the construction of the patriarchal family (40), their subjectivity and consciousness of themselves within the constraints of their historical situation, and their contribution to our present.

She brings the strands of her argument together in the suggestion for a 'maternalist' contractualism which would link the masculine tradition of political equality with a long feminine tradition of ethical responsibility.

There is one point, however, at which her account overlaps with that of Zerilli, and that is the emphasis she places on writing. The historical account which she recommends building on is after all a written account: 'the actual historical writings of women' (129); 'the traces women have left in the history of ideas' (19). She also argues that 'women's identity is not something given but something to be created in writing' (19), and that 'for women to articulate their own subjectivity, they need to construct their own genealogies and their own understanding of their place in the world "through images of [themselves] already deposited in history" [Irigaray]'. (22). I feel that her appeal to writing complicates the reliance on the empirical which she stresses elsewhere, in ways that she does not confront or investigate. At the same time, the insistence on women's history and their participation in the construction of culture and society is a welcome antidote to accounts of universal oppression.

If Bat-Ami Bar On's collection had been published ten years ago, when we were still trying to lay our hands on original feminist philosophy to put on student reading lists or discuss in reading groups, it might have had more impact. Although some essays are stronger than others, and some contributors quite distinguished, there is a curious

datedness about the whole thing, as though the contributors have not quite kept up with what has been going on in feminist theory and philosophy over the last few years. (The bibliography provides virtually no references to anything after 1990.) Thus although the collection is worth acquiring for the library (individual essays discuss Cartesianism, Locke, Hume, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche and Dewey, and undergraduates may find them useful), it is not a philosophically exciting one.

Of the three books under review, Zerilli works within the theoretical framework provided by (post) structuralism, Green engages with this framework, although she is critical of it, but the contributors to *Modern Engenderings* have not really taken it on board yet. There are passing references, but no critical engagement. This would not necessarily be a drawback. However, Bar On presents the collection (fifteen essays by women on the male canon) as a kind of female bonding exercise, somewhat if not precisely analogous to the all-male-authored anthology. As one would expect, the majority of the critical references are to (predominantly US) feminist theorists, and in addition, all the contributors work in North America. The rest of the world hardly seems to exist. This self-presentation is unfortunate, as it inevitably suggests that female philosophical bonding is as self-enclosed as male philosophical bonding.

The editorial is marked by ambivalence: 'a feminist criticism of the canon probably reinscribes the canon while criticising it' (xii). However, as Zerilli and Green show in their different ways, rereading the canon can be energising and inspirational, while *Modern Engenderings* merely succeeds in being rather dull and unambitious.

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Timo Airaksinen, *The Philosophy of the Marquis de Sade*, Routledge 1995, p/b £12.99

Have you heard of Poe-perversion? Poe-perversion is the term bestowed by Airaksinen on the impulse to go against your best interests, a phenomenon described in Poe's story 'The Imp of Perversion' about the murderer who needlessly but compulsively confessed to his crime. Poe-perversion is about self-destruction and it is according to this definition that Airaksinen inspects the characteristics of the wicked will, with particular

reference to Sade. To discover what a wicked will is and whether Sade had one is a very compelling project, particularly relevant if, as a virgin reader of Sade, you feel the need to reassert normality and the supremacy of what Airaksinen calls 'the general consensus'. There can be no doubt that Sade, armed to the hilt with confidence and defiance, challenges the validity of the moral contract whereby you are nice to your neighbour because you particularly wish her to be nice to you. Imagine that to be nice was to fail utterly whereas to be wicked was to survive, flourish and reign in virtue and calm certitude.

I quite enjoy being obliged to consider Sade in this philosophically urgent way, where the imperative is above all to be able to refute him. However, is to approach him in this way really to consider the dilemmas of the Sadian text in their full complexity? Firstly, can you really elide him and his text as if there were no difference? If you're a Kantian like Airaksinen says Sade was, you can, because in that land consequences are irrelevant and motives are all, and therefore anything, a mind or a mouthpiece, can be actually wicked, and should be judged as such. But if, on the other hand, consequences count, then there must be a wide gap between a man writing in prison and the fictional contortions of his gallery of characters.

As Airaksinen's central thesis is, however, that the wicked will that both Sade and his hero characters display is self-destructive, and his conclusion that their essence is unhappiness, the Kantian considerations of motive and psychology are the only ones acceptable. As he says, 'the libertines do not receive love, because they are driven forward only by their own violence; but neither are they able to love themselves. They must be considered unhappy by any standards, at least outside their apathy and their orgiastic states' [187]. The immediate problem is that of course his heroes never are in any states other than apathy and orgy. I will admit that the strain this puts on the narrative to continue to proliferate is astounding, but it remains true that you can go no further than to speculate that they would be unhappy if unable to enact their desires, and also that the strain is on the narrative, not on them.

Furthermore, they are not only reacting against a moral consensus in the spirit of Poe-perversion, they are acting out a version of eighteenth-century materialism that spans the thought of some of the most distinguished scientific minds of the time. Buffon, Diderot, Robinet, La Mettrie, Holbach, Caze, Maillet all considered nature was made exclusively of matter. Buffon, Diderot and Holbach all

considered that destruction was essential to the recycling of matter, a process that had imperatively to continue. Buffon and Robinet thought that space was a problem and therefore so was a burgeoning population and both considered that violent death and war were the inevitable corollaries of these principles. Does one therefore say that these men were a prey to Poe-perversion too? Of course it is absolutely true that Sade is a purposely outrageous writer, as his coupling of philosophy and pornography demonstrate, but just as this factor is a part of a trend, so the philosophy elaborated was too. And surely the very existence of these other trends precludes the possibility of any moral consensus? In fact, I would argue that such a reassuring notion was not available to fin-de-siècle 18th century French citizens. Morality was being reargued while massacre was propagated by the new order in the name of the Revolution, a cheap point but nevertheless both true and relevant.

So where does this leave Airaksinen and the wicked Poe-perverse will? In the realm of interesting projects. The consequences don't, after all, matter.

Caroline Warman
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Kathryn Pyne Addelson, *Moral Passages: Toward a Collectivist Moral Theory*, Routledge, 1994 hb £37.50 pb £11.99.

I started reading this book on the tube on one of the tube strike days we had in London this summer. On those days it was very important to keep your wits about you when travelling, as a train bound for one destination might suddenly branch off to another with only a barely audible announcement beforehand. Thanks to Kathryn Pyne Addelson I was very nearly diverted from my destination and just managed to squeeze through closing doors, briefcase flapping open and *Moral Passages* in hand.

Addelson is interested in the ethical question 'How should we live?' She is not concerned to give a substantive answer to the question but to explore the kinds of ways in which it is answered. In particular she wants to contrast individualist with collectivist perspectives on the question. By individualist perspectives Addelson has the notion of the autonomously deciding individual of much ethical and political philosophy in mind but, understandably, devotes little space to this now familiar idea. Instead the early chapters of the book explore 'human creativity in collective action' through several detailed case studies linked by the common theme of procreation. Procreation is understood broadly and covers the ways in which

human communities are created and continue. This process is examined by considering a number of the moral passages which give the book its title. A moral passage is 'a process of remaking the past and generating the future... a collective action in lived time' (p 150). One fascinating study of a 'moral problem made public' is that of Margaret Sanger and the birth control movement. Here the early beginnings, rooted in syndicalist ethics, are contrasted with the later stress on autonomy and rational planning. But as well as this excursion into revisionist history, Addelson also considers personal moral passages, like that of Edna Pontellier in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* who develops as a person in the process of creating new relationships. This varied case study material is then used as a basis, intended to 'sensitize the reader' in Addelson's words, for the development of the theoretical account of a collectivist view in the last part of the book.

I am not sure that as yet I fully understand the 'collectivist' view and how it is to be contrasted with an 'individualist' one. At times Addelson seems to be underlining the familiar point that all enterprises - for instance, living the moral life in whatever way or researching it - are necessarily social practices. At other times (in her critique, for instance of Meyer's work on autonomy (pp 108-110) and her comments on the American individualist ethic) she seems to be challenging an 'individualist' perspective and wanting, despite her disclaimer about not offering a substantive view, to urge a 'collectivist' perspective in its place. At other times she seems to be allowing that there is a place for both (eg in her reference to the UN Declaration of Human Rights (p.152) but without making it clear to me at least exactly what the 'both' would be.

The book is fascinating on a number of different levels and Addelson's ability to draw on and relate a wide range of philosophical, sociological and literary material is impressive. I felt rather, though, as if I were walking through a museum with intriguing, brightly lit displays, intended to prepare the visitor for a lecture, except that when the lecture came the lecturer still left me behind.

But I shall certainly be returning to it even if it means running the risk of missing my underground station.

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Judith Grant *Fundamental Feminism: Contesting the Core Concepts of Feminist Theory*, New York and London: Routledge 1993
p/b £12.99.

The intention of the book is to look behind what Grant observes as feminists' own self-descriptions as members of camps called, for example, 'liberal', 'radical', and 'socialist', or which are labelled in terms of the exclusions of race, class and ethnicity. She argues that behind all these fragmentations are three 'core concepts' which were developed in the early history of feminism and have bedevilled it ever since. These core concepts are identified as: '(1) "Woman," (2) experience, and (3) personal politics.' (p.4) Her thesis is that all 'the various existing Anglo-American feminist theories have been spun out partly as strategies to deal with problems in the core concepts, which themselves originate in feminist politics and early discussions with the Marxist New Left.' (p.90) Her solution is to abandon attempts to ground feminist theory in epistemology but, drawing on Althusser (and an idiosyncratic, rather general, account of French theory), to focus on 'gender' as a 'relatively autonomous, hegemonic ideological structure that divides the world hierarchically into two mythical genders, and which reinforces itself through an elaborate system of rules and punishments enforced in all aspects of life.' (p.61) She says that we know of the existence of gender because of the long-standing existence of an active feminist movement - thus we are enabled to 'turn away from epistemology altogether (p.161) and, instead, revolt against gender itself by contesting the rules through a personal politics. We need to abandon the concepts of Woman and experience but can retain the concept of personal politics. The end result will be an end to gender in a 'new and improved post-enlightenment humanism.' (p.184)

This grand plan is spoilt early on by the narrowness of her focus, and the resultant shallowness of her analysis. To a UK reader her assumption that all of Anglo-American feminism - and feminist theory - sprang from USA-based New Left and civil rights movements is obviously ethnocentric. Further, she assumes that feminists are pre-disposed to consider theory as essential to politics just because feminism has its roots in the New Left of the USA of the sixties. It looks a bit different from the UK. Moreover, she ignores the possibility that theories come out of practices and activism from a multiplicity of women - certainly not just from academics - and that these theories are in a discursive relation to each other. In my view, the history of feminism (and feminist theory) cannot be

understood only through a history of ideas.

She is constrained further by her evident defensiveness against criticisms. She gives the impression that she is continually looking over her shoulder at who might be offended by her arguments and fending them off, rather than either engaging with them or ignoring them. This defensiveness is also evident in her writing, resulting in sentences like: 'referring to one own experiences... can be dangerous if the writer tends to be white.' Tends? Perhaps this is the reason that she reads Harding's arguments that we begin from women's lives as depending on a belief that there is something essential and unique about women. Why does it? To say that looking at women's lives will show that certain situations can be seen as rape or battering is to say nothing about all women, nor is it to assume Woman. It does say a lot about those people who are called 'women'. I fail to see how her 'rules of gender', which depend on the term 'women' make any advance on Harding. Moreover, she goes on to use her own experience (which tends to be white) to argue for the existence of those rules (p.165). This is disappointing. The concepts of 'experience' 'Woman/women' and 'personal politics' are all in need of the kind of overhaul that is promised. However this is not the place to find it.

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Edith Kurzweil, *Freudians and Feminists, New Perspectives in Sociology*, Westview Press, p/b £11.95.

Edith Kurzweil does two things in this book. Firstly, she provides a sociological account of the ambivalent relationship between psychoanalysis and feminism in the USA. Secondly, she constructs an argument to the effect that first-wave psychoanalytically-orientated feminism had a positive effect on the lives of American women in a way that second-wave psychoanalytical feminism, in its more theoretical, poststructuralist development, did not. Kurzweil prefers the Enlightenment Freud (or classical Freudianism, as she refers to it) to the postmodern or deconstructionist account of Freud. She argues that the strength of classical psychoanalysis is that it promotes liberation by locating the unconscious obstacles to freedom. In contrast, she believes that the Lacanian version of psychoanalysis, which has been embraced by many academics, has been a barrier to liberation. Specific critiques here target: the postmodern attack on objectivity in favour of 'interpretation'; the loss of any link with the empirical domain; the absence of any reference to clinical observations. From this perspective, she is

more sympathetic to contemporary German feminism (see the useful and informative chapter 7) where psychoanalysis and the social sciences appear to cooperate (143).

Although I do not entirely agree with her political division of psychoanalytic feminism into liberationist and academicist, I have a lot of sympathy with her account of American academic feminism and its theoretical scholasticism. The book has considerable strengths, in particular its stress on the contexts in which psychoanalysis and feminist theory develop; its inclusion of a valuable chapter on German feminism, about which we know far less than about French feminism (most of the German texts quoted by Kurzweil remain untranslated), and the clarity with which Kurzweil presents her arguments.

As a feminist working in a literature department, and influenced by French theory, I am of course one of the 'baddies' identified by Kurzweil's book. I do not feel able to write off poststructuralist theory as simply inimical to feminism. Philosophically, then, I found the book disappointing. Kurzweil hates poststructuralist theories and makes it obvious. At this level, there is little or nothing to engage with; I can only register my dissent. My main objection, however, is that Kurzweil does not take her *sociological* thesis far enough. Since she appears to believe (see e.g. 194) that second-wave feminist theory actually led to a decline in the American feminist movement, she needs to provide more evidence that the move towards poststructuralism was cause rather than effect of an increasing lack of influence. As a British reader, I was puzzled by the absence of any contextual account of the reception of French theory in the 1980s. Apart from slating their distressing preference for 'interpretation' over empirical data, Kurzweil does not help me to understand *why* American feminist academics in literature departments were an unfortunate anomaly relative to the more empirical mainstream of American life. If 'every culture creates the psychoanalysis it needs' (12) *why* did these feminists opt for a theory that was so depoliticising in its effects?

To end on a personal note. Edith Kurzweil, if you are reading this review, please note that I do not appreciate being (falsely) identified as American, and the social context in which I work is completely different from the one you are describing.

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Barbara L. Marshall, *Engendering Modernity: Feminism, Social Theory and Social Change*, Cambridge: Polity, 1994 p/b £11.95.

For students of Women's Studies requiring a graduate level introductory survey of modernism from a sociological point of view, this book could serve as a kind of scenic flight high above the terrain. The specialist student/reader of gendered philosophy need go no further. This text is not for you, though its interdisciplinary method, perhaps inevitably, raises questions, as does its idea of 'modernity'. Marshall's range of reference is in some ways admirable; she looks well beyond the borders of sociology and her list of citations runs to 24 pages and close on 400 items. She touches on feminist theories in literature/'culture' (poststructuralism, gender), psychoanalysis (subjectivity), biology (essentialism). It may not be a fair criticism to complain that the cultural theory used is predominantly literary, but it is one which ambitions of comprehensibility would tend to invite. None of the substantial work on gender and modernism in visual/moving-image semiotics or art-historical theory is referenced. What this does point up, however, is the general problem posed by the sheer breadth of the theoretical undertaking feminist theorists are currently engaged in, and the need for rigour when making what are often necessary cross-disciplinary connections.

But here, of course, is the main problem. It is risky to take a walking tour in a landscape seen only from such a distance and with such a particular perspective. Thus Marshall's 3-page section on postmodernism would inform the neophyte that the term has 'a remarkable trajectory from architecture through aesthetic and literary theory into social theory' (p.24), that Lyotard and Baudrillard are required reading, and that there is a debate concerning the difference between postmodernism and poststructuralism. Jane Flax and Linda Nicholson, whom she cites, are indeed sound feminist reference points. So the directions sketched out are not inaccurate. But the version of postmodernism offered, while not misleading (except in its simplistic chronological understanding of the 'post' prefix) is commonsensical and slightly defensive in the face of the challenges it makes to classical sociology. It would be very difficult to assess what kinds of question postmodernism is capable of elucidating and for what reasons my putative orienteer might need to strike off in that direction. Despite the basic accuracy of the map, the inquirer could all too easily miss her way.

This is not inconsequential when the book's declared strategic aim is to reassert the relevance of modernism as emancipatory project against the assault of those 'certain theorists' - need I repeat her list including Derrida, Foucault, Lyotard? - whose interrogations of the Enlightenment legacy would seem to deny women 'their turn' as Subjects. The concern that such theorists' theoretical positions are far from neutral politically is not one to dismiss lightly; but Marshall would surely not claim neutrality for herself. To set the debate up as a defence of the modernist project against a postmodernity which is somewhat homogenised by generalisation is to miss the point. Marshall wishes to 'engender' modernity in the sense of bringing it about as well as sexing it (p.2) Some of the thinkers who get a one-line mention (Irigaray, Butler) and their co-researchers have already exploded the terms of such an approach. While what Marshall is advocating in her call for what she names as a 'critical eclecticism' (p.161 and n.5) is unobjectionable, an alignment with the 'defenders' of modernism or indeed anything else is inherently weak. The project is, as Liz Grosz points out, to take risks with an unknown future in the recognition that modes of becoming and transformation do not readily lend themselves to handy models (Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, Indiana University Press, 1995, 210).

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Jane Roland Martin, *Changing the Educational Landscape: Philosophy, Women and Curriculum*, Routledge, 1994 p/b £13.99.

Jane Roland Martin is Professor Emerita of Philosophy at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. This book is a collection of her essays dating from 1981 to 1993 and represents what she herself calls her 'flowering'. The introduction to the essays conjures up the image of herself as a young teacher and mother who 'believed that no hard and fast lines should be drawn between school and the world.' But when she did a Master's degree in Philosophy of Education, at a time when Gilbert Ryle's Analytic Philosophy was new and hot, she fell into an 'ideology of disconnection'. She was, in effect, seduced by its methodology, which detached phenomena from their historical, cultural and socio-economic contexts. She became expert on writing 'third-order' papers, e.g. criticising a critique by A.N. Other of Ryle's analysis of the verb 'to know'. This kind of scholarly activity, as she indicates, threatens no-one, makes no assault on the institutions (neither the academy nor the far-distant, almost forgotten school-classroom) but instead gets

published and wins brownie-points.

However, in 1980, aged fifty-one, Jane Martin was offered a fellowship at the Bunting Institute of Radcliffe College, Harvard. It was this opportunity, she said, which changed her research and her life. Research is historically located and this is true both in terms of the questions it asks and the way it asks them. At the time when Jane Martin arrived at the Bunting, Carol Gilligan was Associate Professor of Education at the Graduate School of Education at Harvard, and in 1982 published her groundbreaking work *In a Different Voice* which acknowledged Jane Martin's 'extensive comments on earlier drafts', just as Jane Martin in this book comments that Carol Gilligan's 'unfailing support gave me the courage to proceed'. This is instructive. What was it that Jane Martin was about to do which required this support? In essence she asked the question 'What happens to educational thought when women are brought into it?' She started by taking Rousseau's *Emile* as a test case and decided that there was not much use in discussing Rousseau's educational philosophy without paying attention to the societal roles Rousseau assigned women. The liberal education which Rousseau prescribed for *Emile* in order to produce the ideal citizen, was only possible where Sophie was responsible for what Lorenne Clark calls 'reproductive processes' (which include such things as childrearing, homemaking, nursing, care for the elderly). The two are in fact a dyad: *Emile* can only exist successfully in the political realm, when Sophie, and Sophie alone, takes care of the domestic realm. Rousseau was not concerned with the dangers inherent in this model.

This insight, which may not seem new to us now in 1995, was nevertheless the starting-point of Jane Martin's new questions. Living in America where such issues as wife beating, child abuse, teenage violence, single mothers trying to raise their children, were the subjects of public enquiry in the 1980s, she wondered whether schools might be derelict in their duty 'to prepare young people to live in those private homes and families from which they exit each morning'. She started to imagine a curriculum which could include what she calls the 3 Cs of care, concern and connection, not for Sophie alone but for *Emile* too. This collection of essays gives us the benefit of these imaginings, the imaginings of a mature woman scholar, mature in the sense of one who has had a sophisticated training, but who is now empowered to write back into her philosophy, some of those things she knew when she was a young woman. She has learned to know once more what she had been taught not to know. This important feminist process, arguably,

is almost impossible for a lone woman scholar. A community of women scholars is the first and necessary condition of even the possibility of it happening (not to mention fellowships and an office of one's own). This book skilfully reveals the hidden curricula of the gender-distorted educational philosophy which still largely underpins school curricula. Once we call something 'education' we place our seal of approval on it; conversely, silence about home and family in the curriculum can only signify that it has no value. If we regard girls and boys as travellers to the public arena, and the school is therefore the train/training which takes them there, Jane Martin's central argument is that school curricula must include promoting an ethic of care, because it is vital to the well-being of the world - the 'domestic' being in and of the world, not separate. Highly recommended!

Pam Hirsch
Homerton College, Cambridge

Mary Midgley, *The Ethical Primate: Humans, freedom and morality*, Routledge, 1994, h/b £17.99.

This book is the latest in Midgley's ongoing exploration of human nature, morality and our relation to the natural world, a project which began with *Beast and Man* in 1978 and has continued to proliferate ever since. (Incidentally and presumably not coincidentally most of her books postdate her retirement from a teaching position...) As in her earlier writing, her aim is to achieve 'a more integrated notion of ourselves' than the established theoretical positions allow, this time focusing on the problem of human freedom (p.4).

The starting point for this project of intellectual reconciliation is an outline of the opposing camps in the debate, what Midgley calls the 'reductionist' and the 'obscurantist' positions. The first group, characterised by sociobiologists such as the popular writers Desmond Morris and Richard Dawkins, offer a mechanistic, deterministic account of ourselves which leaves no place for a genuine conception of agency or autonomy, while at the other extreme the rejection of such ideas leads to an assertion of our moral distinctness, with the emphasis on our spiritual qualities. While this latter position, Midgley claims, is a mystification which is unintelligible in terms of how we actually live, her main target is the reductive viewpoint espoused by traditional science. Her philosophical objection to such single, would-be universal and objective theories is that they serve only to occlude and distort the reality of the human condition. What is needed, she argues, is a pluralistic approach which admits of many explanations; to illustrate

continued to live despite a terminal illness. The force of this example is that the available explanations given for the survival of Evan Jones - those offered on the one hand by the physical sciences and on the other by historical and political analysis - exclude elements vital for a genuine understanding of the case: the man himself, his own particular situation and response. This systematic exclusion of the 'subjective viewpoint' by the monolithic theories of both science and philosophy results, Midgley argues, in a failure to approach the way people actually interpret events: in everyday life the pluralistic approach, which incorporates subjective elements, is the one most commonly used to reach an understanding.

With an adjustment in vocabulary, such observations about particularity and perspective could lead off in a continental direction and indeed Nietzsche does get some passing references, although more as a harbinger of the reductive tendencies of post-modern thought. But Midgley's critique has more mainstream targets. In the first place, she takes on the scientific establishment and its pretensions to objective, politically-neutral accounts of the human. What concerns her there is not so much the intellectual probity of the scientific academy but the point at which this starts to matter in the culture as a whole, where 'scientific' theories undergird widespread beliefs about ourselves. Far from being impartial, these 'propagandist theories', Midgley shows, have an ideological agenda as do social contract theories, the upshot of both being to overplay our animalistic, agonistic nature (p.99). Both kinds of theory dovetail into a misrepresentation of human nature by basing it on a partial and distorted model which ignores the co-operative, social nature of other species.

To some, these may seem obvious points, but Midgley's book distinguishes itself by its dexterity in taking to task both popular science and the philosophical tradition, moving easily between the common currency of ideas and the more elite end of our intellectual inheritance. She does so without the drama characteristic of more obviously polemical writing, in an eminently reasonable tone which belies the force of her critique. In seeking a more nuanced approach to the problem of freedom, her scope is broad; the argument progresses fluidly between different facets of the same problem, so much so that at times I wished she'd stopped to flesh out or critique in more depth. But perhaps that goes with the territory of having a big project, a common sense approach and a commitment to producing accessible books.

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Kelly Oliver, *Womanizing Nietzsche: Philosophy's Relation to the 'Feminine'*, Routledge 1995, p/b £11.99

The contemporary philosophical obsession with 'the feminine' has occasioned much comment in recent times. Fashionable though it now may be for philosophy to 'become woman', its invocations of femininity have tended not to be commensurate with feminist concerns and have generally failed to take cognisance of the 'female subject'. In the preface to her new book *Womanizing Nietzsche: Philosophy's Relation to the 'Feminine'* Kelly Oliver indicates her sympathies with this debate, arguing that 'while Nietzsche and Derrida, in particular, attempt to open up philosophy to its others - the body, the unconscious, nonmeaning, even the feminine - they close off philosophy to any specifically feminine other' [xi]. Oliver contends that the strategies employed by Nietzsche and Derrida for theorising self-other relations are often dependent upon the preclusion of any 'specifically feminine other', a position she proceeds to illustrate through close textual analysis. In claiming that they each simultaneously idealize and deny the feminine other she acknowledges a debt to the work of Irigaray whose *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche* identifies a covert 'matricide' at the core of those male-authored texts which flirt with a 'feminine operation'. Following Irigaray, Oliver attempts to cultivate a notion of the 'feminine' which cannot be so effortlessly usurped by a senescent phallogocentrism bored with its own clichés.

Given the beguiling subtlety of Nietzsche's writings and the tortuous logic of Derridean speculation one can only admire the boldness of Oliver's project. Unfortunately, such material does not lend itself to ease of argument or conceptual clarity and at times *Womanizing Nietzsche* becomes caught up in the repetition of the very problems which it diagnoses. Oliver claims that 'philosophy's survival depends on the feminine not only to make philosophy "honest" in the sense that it represents human experience and not just masculine experience, but also because the masculine defines itself only through its dialectical relation with some feminine' [xi]. If this is accepted one is entitled to ask how a call for recognition of a specifically feminine other functions as a 'corrective' to a system of thinking that manifestly organises sexed positions around a subject that is always already male. Despite a superficial similarity with Irigaray on this point, Oliver misses the importance of locating change at the level of materiality (what Irigaray might term a 'mechanics of fluids') and proposes instead an

'intersubjective ontology of the ethical relationship' [194]. By tacitly refusing to countenance the disengagement of the feminine from empirical subject positions she becomes entangled in the web of conflating the masculine with the male in her critique of Derrida's fetishizing of 'woman' whilst simultaneously blurring a pre-discursive notion of woman with empirical agents in her own critique ('.. where is the position of woman in Derrida's text? How does a woman read these texts?') [31]. In a similar vein she criticises Nietzsche for both distinguishing 'the feminine from 'woman'' and 'the maternal' and for equating them, seemingly unwilling to acknowledge that occasionally the text challenges rather than confirms her guiding thesis.

Perhaps for this reason the one philosopher who has explored the 'becoming woman of philosophy' - Gilles Deleuze - is mentioned only in passing and in an unrelated context. This startling omission reveals the stakes of a subject-other driven feminism that insists on making its incursions at the level of ontology and thus is unable to avoid recourse to transcendent terms. Indeed, it is the omnipresence of Derrida in *Womanizing Nietzsche* that allows Oliver to criticise Nietzsche without having to acknowledge the profundity of the gulf between an economic and a structural conception of power. When Oliver argues that Irigaray's foil in her Nietzsche critique is perhaps Derrida rather than Nietzsche she comes closest to admitting the limitations of her ethical ontology. Sadly this question is foreclosed and the final chapters on the ethics of maternity become increasingly strained as she battles to draw on all resources, however thin, to force the thesis that 'Nietzsche's texts abject all women and femininity because he cannot abject the maternal' [145]. The fact remains that Nietzsche's overt misogyny is complicit with an engagement with the feminine and the maternal that annihilates phallic mastery and thus is both more offensive and more innovative than any deconstructive work could ever dare risk. Whilst there is much that is stimulating in Oliver's attentive and ambitious study, the attempt to make Nietzsche politically correct can only be won at the expense of renouncing an exploration of maternity as libidinal power. Instead the maternal is reinscribed as an ethical responsibility that despite all intentions to the contrary naturalizes inequity and silences the very subjects Oliver had hoped to let speak.

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Hilary Rose *Love, Power and Knowledge*, Polity Cambridge, 1994. p/b £12.95.

The love in Hilary Rose's title refers to her version of feminist standpoint theory. One of the virtues of adopting a feminist approach to science is the development of a responsible, caring, rationality, accountable to our social ideals and respectful of the environment in which we live. She attempts to escape the essentialising overtones of such a 'feminising' of science, by anchoring such an approach, not in an account of femininity as naturally nurturing, but in concrete feminist struggles. She attends to the conflicts over knowledge which women have found urgent in their lives - health, childbirth, protection of forests - and the debates over male and female nature. What is opposed is a conception of science as domination and exploitation of a natural world, a concept constructed interdependently with strands of hegemonic masculinity. It is one of the great strengths of her approach that she explores the interdependence of such hegemonic conceptions of science not only with masculinity but with capitalist and militaristic concerns which still dominate the objectives and practices of most science today. In tracing the different strands of feminist critiques of, predominantly, the natural sciences, she traces out the connections with and differences from the radical science movements. This gives her account an anchoring in details of sources of funding and practices of inclusion and exclusion in the academy and professional organisations, whereby the interests of a limited group of middle class, primarily European, men control the direction of scientific research.

The socialism informing the feminism, which is evident in the interdependencies which she explores here, also informs her epistemological position - which she articulates as critical realism - even at one stage optimistically expressing it as having the goal of 'going behind the *appearances* of things'. In defending such critical realism she both acknowledges the inevitable historically and socially situated nature of knowledge and the way in which science itself can be treated as a text and subjected to deconstructive techniques originally at home in the arts and humanities. She refuses, however, to accept a dichotomy between feminist empiricists working to expose the empirical inadequacy of theories and writers who, viewing science as a text, are concerned to expose the ideological structuring of the narratives. Both strategies are indispensable. Moreover, in a struggle to create a better science she recognises that the necessarily mediated nature of our scientific narratives does nothing to dispel the need to create

reliable and accountable knowledge, answerable to a world which is not of our own making. The epistemological dilemmas which this creates - concerning the need to articulate conceptions of objectivity without implications of detachment and the elimination of the subject, and procedures of rational assessment without pretensions to universalism and neutrality - are not ones which she engages with in depth. She quotes with approval the articulation of 'strong objectivity' found in Sandra Harding's recent work.

The epistemological position of the book, is just one strand. Others consist of careful accounts of the current and past positions of women in the academy and scientific institutions, a study of the procedures of appointment to the Royal Academy, and the stories of women awarded and not awarded the Nobel Prize. There is also an important chapter on reproductive technologies and the Human Genome project, and, interestingly, one on feminist science fiction. I would have liked more to be made of this latter discussion. In a context in which science is both profoundly gendered and is itself central to the processes of gendering, rethinking the relation between femininity and masculinity, and science and technology without setting up dichotomous oppositions is one in which science fiction can play an important role.

This is a richly informed interdisciplinary work which anyone interested in science needs to read.

Kathleen Lennon
University of Hull

Nancy Tuana and Rosemary Tong, (eds) *Feminism and Philosophy; Essential Readings in Theory, Reinterpretation, and Application*, Westview Press, 1995 p/b £17.95.

Those desperately seeking a do-it-all anthology for teaching feminist philosophy will know that the current market doesn't offer an embarrassment of riches. The greater choice provided by the publication of this latest collection is therefore welcome, particularly since it deals exclusively with feminist philosophy, in contrast to the broader, interdisciplinary selections provided by the available women's studies readers. (For example: *Feminisms: A Reader*, ed. Humm, *The Polity Reader in Gender Studies*).

However, the selection of articles in *Feminism and Philosophy* is predominantly North American, and from this derives both its strength and weakness for a British reader. While many standard positions

are represented, including liberal, Marxist and psychoanalytic perspectives, areas such as feminist epistemology and ethics have been omitted, (as the editors acknowledge), topics which might well form part of a course on feminist philosophy. Each section takes a tripartite form, the first essay conveying a taste of the 'worldview' of each perspective, while the second is an example of a critique of traditional philosophy from that viewpoint and the third an attempt to relate the theory to women's everyday experiences. This makes for neatness but it's also rather limiting: only one side of the pornography debate is represented, (against), and Irigaray is the lone voice of French feminism, which is puzzling in the light of the second stated aim of the volume: to issue a challenge to the philosophical tradition, especially the oppositional nature of metaphysical thought.

Yet the volume's distinctiveness, both the selection and some of the individual articles, lies in the fulfilment of its first stated aim: to draw together feminist theory and practice. Perhaps surprisingly, this really does work in many cases: a phenomenology of feminist consciousness translates fairly smoothly into an exploration of pregnancy and a moving description of one woman's experience of mastectomy in a dominant breast culture. Also notable is the section entitled 'Anarcha Feminism', in which an anarchist framework is used to describe and prescribe direct feminist action. This is appealing, not only because it endorses concrete political activity, but because its grassroots-up approach allows it to respond to what diverse groups of women need in given, specific situations rather than impose a rigid model. Thus the difficulty of uniting different interests and identities under a common goal is partly circumvented, while the refusal of a 'grand strategy' avoids the paralysis inherent in anticipating feminist utopia. In the 'applied' essay of the 'Anarcha' section, this plays out into the hands-on analysis of how hierarchical and bureaucratic structures run counter to the aims of feminism, allocating women to the self-perpetuating role of subordinate.

The comparative ease with which theory and practice mesh in *Feminism and Philosophy* is perhaps its greatest strength, which I suspect is indicative of a higher degree of feminist activism in the US than we are accustomed to here. This is not to suggest that the battle over there is by any means won, but simply that a goodly number of skirmishes and the ability to be vocal about them bespeaks a certain confidence, an upbeat spirit which may facilitate a genuine attempt to negotiate a path between feminist theory and practice. Whence Catharine

MacKinnon's compelling work combining a radical feminist position with arguments for the banning of pornography. (Elsewhere, with Andrea Dworkin, she has written the legislation which would be necessary to bring this about). It is for contributions such as this that I would recommend this anthology: it may not save the teacher of feminist philosophy from a magpie, photocopier-bound approach to resources, but as a lesson in lived feminism from the other side of the pond, it's a valuable one.

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Lise Vogel, *Women Questions: Essays for a Materialist Feminism*, Pluto Press, 1995.

This thought-provoking and accessible collection brings together some of Lise Vogel's articles written between 1976 and 1994. The articles divide into two categories; those from the 1970s and early 1980s, debating the relation of Marxism to feminism; and articles from the 1990s considering questions of history, equality and diversity. At a 'manifest' level the book usefully shows how feminism has evolved - from socialist-feminism to issues of 'difference'. At a more polemical level, the book's implicit aim is to present Vogel's thought as fundamentally unified in its concern with theorising gender as internally related to class and race. The hope is that thereby the book will show that socialist-feminist perspectives are still relevant to current debates on difference.

In the earlier articles, Vogel challenges once-popular 'dual-systems' theories (combining a Marxist model of mode of production with a part-Marxist, part-feminist model of patriarchy or mode of reproduction). Vogel argues that if we were to understand Marxism better, we could simply use it on its own to theorise gender. Her own positive efforts in this direction (e.g. the theory presented in her *Marxism and the Oppression of Women* [1983]), however, are scarcely represented here. This is presumably because the book's organising intention is simply to show that socialist-feminists were always exercised by the task of relating class and gender. This intention emerges clearly in Vogel's later - very stimulating - article 'Telling Tales', where she repudiates the 'hegemonic' view that, before the discovery of difference in the 1980s, feminists were all valorising essential femininity. Some feminists, Vogel points out, were already exploring the relations of class, race and gender in the 1970s. Thus by implication, socialist-feminism (especially the plainly Marxist kind) is a useful

resource for understanding differences today also.

Despite my sympathy, I'm doubtful whether Vogel succeeds in demonstrating the currency of socialist-feminism. She fails to ask whether socialist-feminists concerned with gender/class relations, and post-structuralists concerned with difference, are really asking about the same thing. There is also a need for more *theoretical* evidence of how socialist-feminism contributes to understanding diversity. Moreover, Vogel needs to show that Marxism is not the implacable foe of diversity. To this end her own view of how Marxism understands class and gender should have been better represented. And it is surely also crucial to engage with the problem of the extent to which Marx's conceptual framework is in any sense 'masculine'. In short, my concern is that Vogel does not take the critiques of Marxism seriously enough to be able to mount any persuasive defence of Marxism.

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K J Warren & D L Cady (eds) *Hypatia*, Special Issue on Feminism and Peace, Bloomington, Indiana University Press (Distributed Open University Press, 1995). £10.99.

Warren and Cady's introductory essay to the collection of articles and reviews in this volume does a good job in setting the scene for what is to follow. It is clear from the beginning that the theme of 'feminism and peace' is to be understood in a wide-ranging sense and, in particular, the term 'peace' is being defined as involving more than the absence of violent inter-state conflict. Warren and Cady identify six different interconnections between women and peace which they claim are explored within the articles which follow: conceptual, empirical/experiential, historical, political, symbolic/linguistic and psychological connections.

As is frequently the case with edited collections, some of the essays which follow explore one or more of the interconnections between women and peace more powerfully than others. Overall, however, the essays do represent a useful overview of contemporary philosophical debates about feminism and peace within the US. The key weakness of the volume is the lack of attention paid to ongoing and recent armed conflicts, some of which are referred to, but few of which are examined in any detail. In particular the lack of any essay centring on the Gulf war and feminist responses to it in the US seems like an odd omission. Although many of the essays challenge the conventional

distinction between war and peace by pointing to the roots of 'warism' in the domestic context (systematic practices of violence against women, children, animals), their emphasis remains on the domestic context and tends to rely on implication rather than demonstration when it comes to the international context.

The essays vary in perspective as well as subject matter. Articles by Adams and Caputi argue for an essential link between male patriarchal power and war in essays on violence against women, children and animals and on parallels between incestuous fathers and those responsible for nuclear weaponry respectively. Neither argument is wholly convincing, but both are passionate and thought-provoking. In contrast to these, the essays by Andrew, Kaplan, May and Strikwerda, and Sterba operate on more familiar ground. Andrew compares Wollstonecraft and Woolf on war and gives a sympathetic and insightful reading of the latter. Kaplan provides a useful corrective to some readings of the relation between women and an ethic of care, by pointing out how the archetype of 'woman as nurturer' in fact helps to sustain patriarchal militarism. May and Strikwerda offer a brave attempt to think about male collective responsibility for rape, one which might have been more interesting if more closely linked to an examination of recent occurrences of mass rape in war. Sterba's essay, on the necessary link between feminist justice and peace is the weakest in the collection, since it does little more than catalogue ways in which women in the US are oppressed, and states rather than demonstrates that the end of this oppression must also mean the end of the war. A rather different kind of argument is offered by Peach, who in contrast to the 'pacificistic' orientation of most of the contributors argues for feminist refinements to traditional just war theory.

The most interesting essays in the volume are the ones most difficult to categorise: Ryan's 'The One Who Burns Herself For Peace' and Bar On's 'Meditations On National Identity and Friendship'. The former examines the practice of self-immolation as a protest against war through an engagement with the thought of the pacifist Dorothy Day. The essay raises the question of the appropriate means of political resistance for those who embrace non-violence and points to dilemmas of political practice which are largely ignored by other contributors but which are essentially important to feminism. Bar On's essay is a meditation on the significance of national identity and how it operates both to close off and open up consciousness of relation to 'others'. Bar On is specifically concerned with her identity as a Jewish-Israeli and her relation to a Palestinian

friend. What is particularly useful about this essay is that it acknowledges the significance of national identity for women as well as men, something that is either unacknowledged or forgotten in several of the other articles. This latter point is one picked up, in a different context, by Bailey in her review essay about Ruddick's *Maternal Thinking: Towards a Politics of Peace*. Bailey's main point against Ruddick is that she universalises from the experience of a specific practice of mothering to general claims about mothering and peace. This tendency towards generalisation recurs in several of the contributions to this collection both in regard to domestic and international contexts. Yet if feminism has learned anything in the last twenty years, it is surely that women do not identify themselves simply as women - a lesson that is particularly crucial when armed conflicts routinely rely on mobilising senses of identity with ethnic group, religion/culture or nation in relation to gender.

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REVIEW INDEX

The Index of all the books reviewed up to June 1995 was in the last Review. If you need another copy of this index, please let Morwenna Griffiths know. A new index will begin in the next issue.

Strangers in Paradise: The Unhappy Marriage of Feminism and Conservatism

'You wanted a woman's culture. Well, now there is one. It isn't what you meant, but it exists. Be thankful for small mercies.'¹

The quotation, taken from Margaret Atwood's novel, *The Handmaid's Tale*, expresses an anxiety about the way in which the demands of feminist radicalism may issue in moral and political conservatism. Atwood's novel is set in a future North American society, Gilead, where, as a result of nuclear accidents and AIDS, the population is seriously depleted, most survivors are sterile, and the future of the human race is threatened. In this society women, particularly women of child-bearing age, are rare and valuable commodities. They are protected from all forms of sexual assault, harassment and violence; pornography is banned, and the streets are safe for women to walk in. Many of the legal demands of 1970s feminists have been satisfied, but the resulting society is not a feminist utopia; it is a dystopia whose origin Atwood traces not simply to natural and scientific disaster, but also to the combined effects of earlier moral conservatism and feminist radicalism. The narrator, Offred, looks back on the earlier society (North America in the mid-eighties) and recalls her mother's 'pure' feminism, her involvement in antipornography book burnings and Reclaim the Night marches. She reflects on her mother's political aims and concludes; 'you wanted a woman's culture. Well, now there is one. It isn't what you meant, but it exists. Be thankful for small mercies'. In Gilead, radical feminism and conservative moralism have united to deliver a feminist dystopia in which the protection of women is a cloak for oppression and sexual safety is purchased at the price of personal liberty. Moreover, and like most dystopian writing, *The Handmaid's Tale* is not merely a description of what could happen at some time in the future; it is in part a commentary on what is already happening in the western world of the late twentieth century.

This paper takes its cue from Atwood's anxiety. There are a number of contemporary political issues on which feminists (particularly radical feminists) have combined forces with moral conservatives in an attempt to change legislation. The most obvious example is in the debate about pornography, but there are also alliances between feminism and conservatism in debates about reproductive technology, surrogacy, and speech codes. Nor are

these alliances entirely new. In the nineteenth century, feminists in both Britain and America joined forces with moral conservatives in an attempt to gain support for the suffrage campaign, and although such coalitions are often excused as strategic ploys, they are by now too familiar and too frequent to be dismissed quite so lightly. The claim that in political activism we must take whatever friends we can find is undermined if our friends too often turn out to be of a particular political complexion.

Moreover, there is a troubling irony in this particular friendship for, as Atwood's novel makes clear, moral conservatism has historically been associated with the oppression, not the liberation of women. It has a clear and distinct understanding of the good and is disposed to impose that understanding on others in a way which is inimical to toleration. This raises the possibility that feminism too is fundamentally intolerant: once the poachers have turned gamekeeper, they will promulgate their conception of the good in disregard of others and thus, as one writer has put it, the circle between left and right will finally be closed.²

My aims in this paper are firstly to substantiate the claim that the political alliances between feminism and conservatism are more than unhappy coincidence. Secondly, to identify some of the causes of those alliances, and finally to indicate ways in which feminism might avoid some of the graver dangers of association with moral conservatism. This last aim is particularly important not only for strategic reasons: Atwood's novel shows clearly how feminist aspirations may be subverted by the political ideals of moral conservatism. It is also important because there is, to my mind, something peculiarly unappetising about intolerance displayed by a group which itself claims to be (or have been) oppressed. This is not, of course, to suggest that absolutely everything can or should be tolerated, either now or in a future feminist utopia. It is merely to note that insofar as feminists are concerned about oppression, they should be particularly worried if their (our) own political proposals turn out to have potentially intolerant political implications.

The Closing Circle

Alliances, or suspected alliances, between feminists and moral conservatives are many in number.

Indeed, they go back to the origins of feminism itself, although it is frequently argued that they constitute no more than marriages of political convenience. The most obvious alliance is in the nineteenth century campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts which was partly responsible for the birth of the suffrage movement. The Contagious Diseases Acts, which were passed in Britain in 1864, 1866 and 1869, provided for the periodic genital examination of garrison town prostitutes, and their rationale was to protect soldiers from sexually transmitted diseases. Feminist objections to the Acts focussed on the double standard of sexual morality which was implicit in them, for while the spread of sexually transmitted disease was undoubtedly a matter of grave social concern, the solution to the problem was not thought to lie in the control of male sexuality. Rather, provision must be made for the safe satisfaction of male 'needs'. Thus, women suspected of being 'common prostitutes' could be arrested and registered as such. If found to be infected, they could be detained for up to nine months, and imprisoned should they fail to cooperate.

The history of the campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts is complex and confused, but one thing which is clear is that as it gathered momentum over a period of some twenty years, a rift developed between two kinds of feminist: those who were specifically concerned with the injustice and hypocrisy of the Acts themselves, and those who had a larger moral agenda. One historian has argued that this rift may be clearly discerned in the relationship between the leaders of the LNA (The Ladies National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts) and its grass roots members, for while the former stressed the importance of political agitation, the latter highlighted religious objections to regulation and were to 'prove susceptible to the more repressive purity crusades of the 1880s.'³ These crusades, carried on through organisations such as the National Vigilance Association, promulgated the belief that legislation could and should be used to 'force people to be moral' and even the LNA itself, under the leadership of Josephine Butler, developed into a broad social purity alliance, not easily distinguishable from 'moral repressionists' who called for the prohibition of indecent advertising, penalties for male homosexuality, and the committal of the children of prostitutes to industrial schools. As Christine Bolt concludes:

The overall benefits to the British women's movement of female participation in social purity campaigns were clearly mixed...

the emphasis of some of the campaigns was on women's duties, not their rights; on desexualising and restricting women, not freeing them to work out an independent vision of female sexuality. They associated feminists with puritanism while making them some very powerful male enemies.⁴

Moreover, the association between feminism and moralism survived the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts and was influential in the suffrage campaign in both Britain and America, where liberal insistence on the equality of men and women was often accompanied by arguments based on women's superior moral status. Thus, the American feminist, Carrie Chapman Catt, asked:

Do you know that extending the suffrage to women increases the moral vote; that in all states and countries that have adopted suffrage the vote of disreputable women is practically negligible, the slum wards of cities invariably having the lightest women vote and the respectable residence wards the heaviest; that only one out of every twenty criminals are women; that women constitute a minority of drunkards and petty misdemeanants; that for every prostitute there are at least two men responsible for her immorality; that in all the factors that tend to handicap the progress of society, women form a minority, whereas in churches, schools and all organizations working for the uplift of humanity, women are a majority?⁵

But if the deployment of these moral arguments is not in doubt, their status is certainly contentious, and many feminists now claim that the appearance of conservatism is deceptive: nineteenth century feminists urgently desired political and legal change. In order to attain this, they needed to mobilize as many people as possible in support of their cause, and the political realities in both Britain and America were such that arguments from moral purity were the ones most likely to gain widespread and popular support. Thus, Katzenstein and Laitin argue that 'it was the incorporation of "the morality of caring" into the suffrage claim that helped to turn the movement from its limited size at the turn of the century into a mass effort. Like temperance campaigns that had always drawn numbers far in excess of the suffrage movement in the latter half of the century, the social housekeeping phase of the suffragist movement was able to attract women into the campaign who otherwise might have found suffrage threatening their attachment to the

family.⁶ The assumption here is that appeal to women's superior moral status was pragmatic rather than principled. It was a necessary precondition of attaining the desired legal and political reforms and, as such, a permissible strategic device for nineteenth century feminists.

However, alliances between feminism and moral conservatism have survived the demise of the suffrage campaign and, in recent years, have surfaced again in a number of contexts. These include the debates about reproductive technology, about surrogacy, about speech codes on university campuses and, most notably, about pornography. In their attempts to change the anti-pornography laws of the United States, Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon have accepted assistance from moral conservatives, and it is reported that MacKinnon recently defended this strategy, arguing that 'if someone is willing to stand on your side you don't throw them out'.⁷ Here, history repeats itself and, as with nineteenth century feminism, so too in the late twentieth century, central political campaigns threaten to create a rift within the feminist movement. Katie Roiphe's controversial book, *The Morning After*, accuses MacKinnon of a new form of moralism, and Roiphe writes;

When the antipornographic imagination meets feminism, what comes out is a moral universe, although MacKinnon denies it. What comes out is a universe of victims and aggressors, of violation, subjugation, dominance, and oppression ... MacKinnon's well-articulated universe is divided into bold stripes of good and evil. The force is with her, but the force of what? The force is the conservative social atmosphere, and conservative political figures. The force is religious censors, and the force is social fear. In the midst of a confusing, conservative time, she is offering a straightforward conservative message.⁸

Here again, the charge against feminism is that, by allying itself with moral conservatism, it creates and sustains a picture of women as helpless, passive, and subjugated - the impotent victims of uncontrolled, and largely uncontrollable, male sexuality. The ghost of Carrie Chapman Catt stalks: 'for every prostitute there are at least two men responsible for her immorality'.

Additionally, both nineteenth and late twentieth century feminism of this kind confer on women a special, 'moral' voice: women are not merely passive, but morally superior to men. Nineteenth century repealers thought it women's function to

'form public opinion by their moral influence' and similarly the supporters of the Dworkin-MacKinnon ordinance have invoked the morality of care in defence of their position: 'the model antipornography ordinances, which are written in the language of rights, sound strained and unconvincing in their constitutional appeals. Without the counterpart moral message, these ordinances would ring hollow'.⁹

These considerations suggest that the periodic alliances between feminism and moral conservatism are more than merely coincidental, for beneath the common political project lies a common conception of woman's nature, and a common moral vision. Both nineteenth and twentieth century 'repealers' invoke images of women as sexually pure or sexually passive, and both go on to insist that that purity must be preserved by restricting the activities of men. In the case of the nineteenth century repealers, this took the form of a call for 'respectability' on the part of women, and sexual self restraint on the part of men. In the case of twentieth century antipornography campaigners, it again invokes the moral superiority of women (women's 'different voice'), and seeks legal redress in the restraint of male sexuality rather than an assertion of female sexuality. Thus, both arguments spring from a specific conception of the morally good, and result in a demand for the promulgation of that good via the use of law. Law becomes the primary tool whereby people (particularly men) may be 'forced to be moral'.

In recent years much attention has been paid to the 'worrisome' connections between feminist and conservative arguments against pornography, and many causes of the alliance have been mooted. Connectedly, there has been much feminist interest in the communitarianism of writers such as Alasdair MacIntyre and Michael Sandel, whose rejection of the atomism of liberal political theory has been highly praised by many feminists. This philosophical discussion also serves to reinforce the resonance between feminism and conservatism, though this time at the level of philosophical theory rather than of political practice. I shall return to this point later. For now, however, I wish to concentrate on a feature of the debate which has, I believe, gone unremarked. This is that feminist political activism of the kind exemplified by the two campaigns mentioned above, is a manifestation of a certain, rather traditional, kind of utopian thinking. In utopian writing, it is contrasted with critical utopian thinking, and in Michael Walzer's book, *Exodus and Revolution*, it is referred to as 'messianic' thinking. In what follows I shall attempt to explain what I mean by these terms, and to show how feminist

repealers have succumbed to this kind of thinking. Additionally, I shall suggest ways in which an appeal to critical rather than traditional utopian thinking, or to exodus rather than messianic politics, might serve to distance feminism from the kinds of moral conservatism with which it has been allied since the earliest days of feminist activism.

Exodus and Critique

In *Exodus and Revolution* Walzer writes:

Since late medieval or early modern times, there has existed in the West a characteristic way of thinking about political change, a pattern that we commonly impose upon events, a story that we repeat to one another. The story has roughly this form: oppression, liberation, social contract, political struggle, new society. We call the whole process *revolutionary*, though the events don't make a circle unless oppression is brought back at the end; intentionally, at least, they have a strong forward movement.¹⁰

He shows how this form of thinking has its roots in the biblical story of the exodus: the delivery of the children of Israel from Egypt into the promised land provides a model for stories of political struggle throughout the western world and has been invoked by figures as diverse as Cromwell, Robert Owen, Ernst Bloch, and Martin Luther King. Of course, and as Walzer notes, this model is not universal, nor is its meaning transparent: 'within the frame of the Exodus story one can plausibly emphasize the mighty arm of God or the slow march of the people, the land of milk and honey or the holy nation, the purging of the counter-revolutionaries or the schooling of the new generation. One can describe Egyptian bondage in terms of corruption or tyranny or exploitation. One can defend the authority of the Levites or of the tribal elders or of the rulers of tens and fifties. I would only suggest that these alternatives are themselves paradigmatic; they are *our* alternatives. In other cultures, men and women read other books, tell different stories, confront different choices.'¹¹

Crucially, however, the alternatives which the exodus story presents are between an emphasis on the journey (the long, slow march) and an emphasis on the end (the promised land). The story of the exodus is both a story about a promised future, a destination, and a story about the journey which a people must make in order to arrive at that destination. And the version of the story which emphasises the journey has different political implications from the version which emphasises

the destination. Walzer refers to the former as exodus politics and the latter as messianic politics, but a similar distinction is to be found in the contrast between traditional and critical utopian writing: traditional utopian writing emphasises the end point (the perfect society), whereas critical utopian writing emphasises the transition from original to utopian society. Thus, 'in critical utopian thinking, utopia is not simply a *place*, it is a *practice*, the utopian place does not passively stand as an alternative to the present, it becomes part of the overall movement to change that world'.¹²

Moreover, stories which emphasise the journey rather than the destination are more alert to the ways in which the character of the people themselves will change during the journey: exodus politics and critical utopian thinking, unlike messianic politics or traditional utopian thinking, tell how the people are transformed in their search for the promised land, and it follows that the promised land, when finally it is realised, is rather different from, and less perfect than, the land which was originally promised. This is in part because, as Walzer puts it, 'the land would never be all it could be until its new inhabitants were all that they should be'¹³: the promise is relational, and its fulfilment depends upon the consciousness and moral character of the people as much as on the character of the world.

Here, then, are three features of exodus or critical utopian thinking which distinguish it from messianic or traditional utopian thinking: it emphasises the journey, not the destination; it draws attention to the ways in which the people will change in the making of the journey; and it insists that there will be an interdependence between the promised land and the people who inhabit it. By contrast, traditional utopian thinking and messianic politics concentrate on the destination, the land flowing with milk and honey. They remain silent about the need for any change in the people who journey to the promised land, and do not see the utopian society as a function of the character of the people who inhabit it. The promised land is literally 'given' to a people who remain largely the same at the end of their journey as they were at the beginning.

The Gift Outright

What I want to suggest is that alliances between feminism and conservatism arise when the aspirations of feminist politics take a traditional rather than a critical utopian turn - when they are informed by messianic rather than exodus thinking. If this is so, then the way forward for feminist

politics may be to remain within the tradition of revolutionary thinking which Walzer characterises as 'our' way of thinking, but to be clear that the direction for that thinking should indeed be critical, not traditional; it should invoke exodus and not messianic politics. In brute practical terms, this will involve making a sharp distinction between forms of feminism which draw attention to the inadequacy of existing law, and forms of feminism which subscribe to a larger moral agenda, particularly an agenda which assumes the moral superiority of women. I shall argue that once feminism invokes this larger moral agenda, it is ineluctably drawn into practices of intolerance which simultaneously keep women in a state of oppression and condone the oppression of others. It results, not in a feminist utopia, but in Gilead.

The pattern of thinking which Walzer characterises as revolutionary - oppression, liberation, contract, political struggle, new society - is a pattern regularly appealed to by feminist activists and feminist theorists alike and I shall say no more about it here, but simply assume that this story is indeed the one most often told by feminists themselves. Indeed, it is often defined as any theory which sees the relationship between the sexes as one of inequality, subordination or oppression and which aims to identify and remedy the sources of that oppression. However, and as has been suggested above, within this pattern of revolutionary thinking, there may be either an emphasis on the journey or an emphasis on the destination, and that in turn affects the importance placed on the character of the people, and the relationship between them and the utopian society or promised land. Crucially, however, the distinction between exodus and messianic thinking turns on whether deliverance from oppression is believed to involve changes in the people themselves, or whether it involves simply a change in the circumstances in which they find themselves. Are the oppressed people deemed to be morally pure, or do they themselves stand in need of moral transformation?

This question returns us to the debate between communitarianism and liberalism which was referred to earlier in the paper, for it draws attention to a problem about the way in which we characterise the relationship between people and the world in which they find themselves. Of course, no-one will deny that there must be some connection between people and their social situation, but the quarrel between liberalism and communitarianism is often understood as precisely a quarrel about what that relationship is. For liberals, it is argued, the individual must strive to rise above his social situation and decide what he wants to be

independent of it. By contrast, and for communitarians, what one is is determined in large part by one's social setting. But if this is so, then there is a serious question about how we can attain any critical distance from our social setting and how we can criticise it effectively - or at all. The consequences of this for feminism are spelled out by Elizabeth Frazer and Nicola Lacey: 'if the basic communitarian claim is that moral and political argument is validated within particular cultural discourses and practices, whose role in constructing human identity must be recognised, it is difficult to see how one is to attain the critical capacity to judge the sexism, patriarchy or any other feature of the culture in question'¹⁴. The conservatism of communitarianism is thus traced to the emphasis it places on the close connection between our own identity and the world in which we live.

This is an interesting and, in this context, slightly puzzling turn of events. Communitarianism drives in the direction of conservatism because it places *too much* emphasis on the connection between individual identity and social situation. But messianic thinking also drives in the direction of conservatism because it pays *too little* attention to the relationship between individual identity and social situation. Put differently, the problem with communitarianism is that it threatens to condone practices such as sexual harassment, interpreting it as courtesy, flattery or chivalry. Insofar as these are features of a specific culture they are, for communitarians, largely beyond criticism. Communitarianism accepts as given, and as self-validating, the moral practices of existing societies. But in a perverse way, messianic thinking also accepts the moral practices of existing societies, since its conception of utopia is one which neglects the extent to which the characteristics and qualities of the liberated people are themselves a function of their previously oppressed state. To give a specific example, both the moral purity faction of the LNA and the radical feminists in the antipornography campaign, laud precisely those qualities in women which are held to be consequent upon their oppression in patriarchal society. If the complaint against patriarchal societies is that they legitimise a view of women as sexually passive by, for example, construing as chivalry what is really harassment, then feminists who engage in campaigns which appeal to the superior moral status of women are themselves endorsing the very qualities which have been nurtured by patriarchal societies.

This point is not new. It is invoked by Alison Jaggar in *Feminist Politics and Human Nature* when she remarks that radical feminists 'glorify women precisely for the same reasons that men have

scorned and sometimes feared them: in so doing they give special value to women's reproductive functions and to the psychological characteristics that have distinguished women and men. By grasping the nettle so firmly, radical feminists intend not only to crush the sting but even to produce some celebratory wine¹⁵. The revaluing of qualities nurtured in situations of inequality or oppression is common both to those who supported the moral purity campaigns of the nineteenth century and to those who now endorse the morality of care which underpins Dworkin and MacKinnon's antipornography campaign. In the former case, the suppression of sexuality was an explicit aim; and in the latter case it is a close concomitant of the demand for relationships which are non-hierarchical, since Dworkin and MacKinnon doubt whether heterosexual sex ever is non-hierarchical. MacKinnon reports 'The Diary of the Barnard conference on sexuality pervasively equates sexuality with "pleasure" ... As if pleasure, and how to get it, rather than dominance and how to end it, is the "overall" issue sexuality presents women'¹⁶. And other recent writings in feminist theory, notably Carole Pateman's important book, *The Sexual Contract*, concur with the belief that the root of women's oppression lies in men's sexual power over them. Pateman writes: 'the origin of political right must either be repressed or reinterpreted if the creation of civil society is to be represented as a victory over patriarchy, and the sexual contract is to remain hidden'¹⁷. And the origin of political right, on her account, is man's sexual conquest of woman, the 'primal act' of rape which both predates and legitimises political right and civil society.

In all these cases, therefore, the call for a revaluation is not simply a call for the recognition of different moral values; it is also, and crucially, a demand for the suppression of male sexuality. For the superior moral value of women is defined by reference to its mirror image - the sexual appetitiveness of men. And the intolerance associated with social purity movements is therefore not contingent, but necessary. It follows straightforwardly from the understanding of heterosexuality as the means whereby men keep women in a state of subjugation.

As I have said, the demand for a revaluation of women's moral qualities is not new. Nor is it something from which I entirely dissent: the atomism of contemporary liberal theory has been well documented in recent years, and there is indeed something tiresome about its insistent emphasis on the importance of justice to the exclusion of all other virtues. If feminist moral and political theory has raised the profile of virtues other than justice,

it has served philosophy well. What is troubling however is the precise form which the revaluation has taken: in its identification of existing problems, it acknowledges the extent to which people's qualities may be formed (for good or ill) by the society in which they find themselves. But it then accepts those qualities as the basis for a new and better society. Indeed, as the destination of the utopian urge. On this account, the promised land is a gift outright. But it is given to the oppressed. No reference is made to any possible changes in people as they journey towards the promised land, nor is it envisaged that there will be any relationship of interdependence between the character of the people and the fulfilment of the promise. Release from oppression consists entirely in the suppression or alteration of male sexuality.

Thus, from a feminist perspective, the difficulty with communitarianism is not simply that it has no account to give of how we may attain critical distance from the society in which we find ourselves, it is also that, when coupled with a messianic approach to politics, it delivers a society in which women retain those qualities which were originally generated by oppression. The paradox which ensues, and which Atwood exposes in *The Handmaid's Tale*, is that the resulting society is a utopia of the oppressed. Similarly, Dworkin and MacKinnon's analysis draws attention to the different moral voice in which women speak, but the superiority of that voice derives from the contrast drawn between it and a male voice which is construed as essentially a voice of sexual domination and conquest. Improvement must therefore depend almost entirely upon the restriction of male sexuality, since any proposal for changes in women's morality or sexuality would undermine the status of the 'moral voice' originally appealed to.

These considerations have consequences for the kind of alternative utopian society envisaged by feminists. It has been remarked that although feminist theory has done much to identify the shortcomings of traditional political theory, it has been rather less successful in setting out its own practical proposals for political change. What I am suggesting is that this fact has a dual theoretical explanation: in identifying the problems inherent in modern political theory, feminists emphasise the close association between the sort of people we are and the sort of society we live in. They make much of the interdependence between people and their world, and this is their reason for rejecting atomistic liberalism. However, in describing a feminist future, those same feminists frequently ignore considerations of interdependence and

revert to a static account of a feminist utopia - one which treats the future world as given and remains silent about the changes in women's character which might be consequent upon a change in their society. Yet more troubling, the assumption which underpins at least some feminist theory is that there is neither the need for nor the possibility of such change. Change is not needed because women's 'different' or 'moral' voice already expresses all that is best in human nature; and change is not possible because it would require an entirely different sexual order. Specifically, it would require the removal of hierarchical sexual relationships, and that can only be attained by the removal of men. Hence the assumption, common in feminist writing, that a genuine feminist utopia would be a female utopia. But if these are indeed the consequences of traditional utopian, and messianic thinking, how could the situation be improved by critical or exodus thinking? I turn now to this alternative.

Another Country

I have suggested that a crucial distinction between exodus and messianic thinking is that the former, but not the latter, implies a dynamic relationship between the world and the character of the people who inhabit that world. In the case of the original exodus story this means that the nature of the promised land, when finally it is reached, is rather different from the land which was promised. One important reason for this is that the moral and spiritual character of the promise (as distinct from its material character) depends crucially upon the people being a certain way. In material terms, the promised land will be a land 'flowing with milk and honey', but the material promise also has a moral and political dimension, for we are told that the people 'shall build houses and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat'¹⁸. And again; 'they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid'¹⁹.

In other words, the promised land is not simply a land of material plenty, but also a land which lacks exploitation and oppression. And again, there may be two facets to the removal of exploitation and oppression: one is the removal of exploitative and oppressive political institutions, the other is the transformation of the personality of the oppressed. The expression 'none shall make them afraid' implies both the removal of those social and political structures which engender fear, and the removal of fearfulness as a state of mind or quality of character. Moreover, it implies that the one is conditional upon

the other: improvement in the world is conditional upon improvement in the people. And so it turns out, for in the biblical exodus the Israelites crossed Jordan only to find themselves, metaphorically at least, back in Egypt. By using their own freedom in order to oppress others, they did not inhabit a promised land, but a land of oppression - a land just like Egypt. And, as is the way of stories, this oppression was not simply one which they visited on others, but also one which they suffered themselves.

However, it is not only in stories that those who seek escape from oppression may yet find themselves oppressed. This, I take it, is part of the warning which Ronald Dworkin sounds against Catherine MacKinnon's proposals for the reform of pornography laws:

[Many feminists deplore MacKinnon's alliances] with rightwing groups that have produced, for example, a Canadian censorship law that, as many had warned, has been used by conservative moralists to ban gay and lesbian literature by well-known authors, a book on racial injustice by the black feminist scholar, Bell Hooks, and, for a time, Andrea Dworkin's own feminist writing as well. Perhaps MacKinnon should reflect on these suggestions that the censorship issue is not so simple-minded, so transparently gender-against-gender as she insists²⁰.

The warning should not be read simply as a point about the difficulty of constructing pornography laws which cover only the 'right' material: *Hustler* but not *Ice and Fire*, *Stud* but not *Madame Bovary*. It is also a warning against messianic willingness to 'force the end', to attain a world without pornography by whatever means are necessary and with whatever allies are available. And that, in turn, is because the nature of the end will be partly determined by the character of the people who inhabit the end state. In order to clarify this point, I will make a few further remarks about the modern debate on pornography, and in the process, try to explain how exodus thinking might alter the terms of that debate.

The first point to be made is that feminist thinking about pornography, when it adopts the exodus pattern, will not be willing to 'force the end' in the sense of accepting assistance from any ally. This is because, for exodus thinking, the end is not a predetermined state of affairs, a gift outright, but is dependent upon the character of people. And that character will change over time. Legal changes

may of course be instrumental in the transformation, but they cannot be the end point, and to make them so is to assume in advance that one knows what moral perfection consists in. Like messianic thinking (of which I take MacKinnon's proposals to be an example), exodus thinking aspires to a world in which there is no pornography, but unlike messianic thinking, it sees that state of affairs as essentially a relational one, dependent not only on the non-existence of certain kinds of publication, but also, and more importantly, on a change in their social meaning. A world without pornography will not be one in which certain kinds of depictions are no longer published, but rather one where their significance is radically transformed. This should not be an unfamiliar point to writers like MacKinnon, whose argument depends crucially upon the contention that pornographic material has a social meaning and is objectionable precisely because of the social meaning it carries in societies such as our own. She writes:

Pornography sexualises rape, battery, sexual harassment, prostitution and child sexual abuse; it thereby celebrates, promotes, authorizes and legitimizes them ... pornography's world of equality is a harmonious and perfectly balanced place. Men and women are perfectly complementary and perfectly bipolar. Women's desire to be fucked by men is equal to men's desire to fuck women.²¹

For her, pornography is not simply a set of representations arousing prurient interest; it is the main institutional channel through which the subordination of women is legitimized, indeed eroticized. And it rests upon the false belief that 'women's desire to be fucked by men is equal to men's desire to fuck women'. But why is this belief false? It is surely one thing to object to pornography's eroticization of rape, battery, or sexual abuse, quite another to claim that in general sexual appetite divides neatly along gender lines. MacKinnon needs this second claim in order to make the moral case for antipornography legislation, but it is a considerable hostage to fortune, since it delivers her into the hands of the moral majority whose objection to pornography is not that it eroticizes sexual abuse, but that it eroticizes sex. In the end, this appears to be MacKinnon's objection too.

The claim that pornography has social meaning is central to feminist complaints against it. To this extent, MacKinnon is right to draw attention to what pornography says about women. And often what it does say is that they enjoy rape, abuse, violence and forced sex. But to deny this is not to

deny that women have sexual desires just as strong as those of men. MacKinnon's assumption is that they do not, and that it is pornography which is responsible for creating the impression that they do. But why should we not make the opposite assumption: that women's sexual desires are just as strong as men's, and that it is pornography which is responsible for creating the impression that they are not? What would then be desired is, still and all, a world without pornography, but that would be attained not simply by restrictive legislation. It would require also that women find new ways of acknowledging their sexuality.

I am not here suggesting that the appropriate antidote to pornography is 'female pornography': insofar as pornography has a social meaning, that meaning cannot be changed simply by presenting mirror images of the existing meaning. But equally, the antidote cannot simply be changes in legislation. Since these are not, on their own, sufficient to afford the transformation of character referred to above. On the contrary, and as proposed by MacKinnon, they imply that the character of women will remain essentially the same, only better protected. These two features of MacKinnon's proposals, a willingness to force the end and a denial of women's sexuality, display the essential elements of messianic thinking and lead inevitably to intolerance and oppression. Exodus thinking, by contrast, resists those conclusions because it is concerned to emphasise both the fact that a lengthy journey is necessary in order to arrive at the promised land, and the fact that, when we do arrive there, we will be significantly different people from the ones who originally set out. It will therefore see antipornography legislation as justified to the extent, and only to the extent, that it may be instrumental in increasing women's autonomy, and will not couple this with any assumption about the moral superiority of women's existing attitudes towards their own sexuality. This is not simply because such an assumption forges alliances between radical feminism and moral conservatism. It is also because existing attitudes are, by feminists' own lights, a product of exploitative and oppressive social arrangements. To give too much credence to them is to compound, not remove, the grounds for protecting rather than liberating women.

Because it recognises that liberation requires more than the reversal of existing structures of hierarchy, this form of thinking will be less oppressive and intolerant than that proposed by MacKinnon. Because it insists upon the need for a change in character on the part of the oppressed, it will be less communitarian in its understanding of the relationship between people and their world. And

because it acknowledges the way in which society shapes value, it will be better able than atomistic liberalism to both identify the sources of oppression and resist replicating them. The land in which 'none shall be afraid' cannot be built on intolerant legal practices, but neither can it rest on the promise (or threat) that the great day will come when sexual desire disappears. Toleration for feminists, as for everyone else, must live in the twilight zone between the ruthless repression of all that we have been since the Fall, and the vain hope that there is another Eden which we may yet rediscover.

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Communitarian Debate, Harvester Wheatsheaf, Hemel Hempstead, 1993, p.141.

15. Alison Jaggar, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*, Harvester, Brighton, 1983, p.97.

16. Catherine MacKinnon, *Towards a Feminist Theory of the State*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1989, p.135.

17. Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, Polity, Oxford and Cambridge, 1988, p.108.

18. Isaiah 65:21-22.

19. Micah 4:4.

20. Ronald Dworkin, 'Only Words', *New York Review of Books*, March 3, 1994, p.48.

21. Catherine MacKinnon 'Pornography, Civil Rights and Speech' in Catherine Itzin (ed.) *Pornography: Women, Violence and Civil Liberties*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1992, p.461.

FOOTNOTES

1. Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*, Fawcett Crest, New York, 1985, p.164.

2. Katie Roiphe, *The Morning After*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1993, p.156.

3. Christine Bolt, *The Women's Movements in the United States and Britain from the 1790s to the 1920s*, Harvester, Hemel Hempstead, 1993, p.130.

4. op.cit., p.132.

5. Carrie Chapman Catt 'Do You Know' as quoted in M. Katzenstein and D. Laitin, 'Politics, Feminism, and the Ethics of Caring' in Eva Feder Kittay and Diana T. Meyers (eds.) *Women and Moral Theory*, Rowman and Littlefield, U.S.A., 1987, p.266.

6. op.cit., p.268.

7. Roiphe, op.cit., p.156.

8. op.cit., p.160.

9. Katzenstein and Laitin, op.cit., p.271.

10. Michael Walzer, *Exodus and Revolution*, Basic Books, New York, 1985, p.133.

11. op.cit., p.135.

12. Tom Moylan, *Demand the Impossible: Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination*, Methuen, London and New York, 1986, p.89.

13. op.cit., p.101.

14. Elizabeth Frazer and Nicola Lacey, *The Politics of Community: A Feminist Critique of the Liberal-*