

# WOMEN'S PHILOSOPHY REVIEW

no 26 2000

<b>Editorial by Helen Chapman</b>	2
<b>Theorising with a Practical Intent</b>	6
<b>Meena Dhanda interviews Iris Marion Young</b>	
<b>Beyond Theory in Crisis: Feminist Futures for Film Theory</b>	28
<b>A Review Essay by Catherine Constable</b>	
<b>Book Reviews</b>	
Ingrid Wassenaar on <i>Passion and Action</i> by Susan James	57
Aislinn O'Donnell on <i>Collective Imaginings</i>	
by Moira Gatens & Genevieve Lloyd	61
Caroline Warman on <i>Writing the Orgy</i> by Lucienne Frappier-Mazur	65
Hanneke Canters on <i>The Forgetting of Air</i> by Luce Irigaray	67
Ursula Tidd on <i>Writing the Self</i> by Jo-Ann Pilardi	69
Pam Hirsch on <i>The Women's Suffrage Movement: New Feminist Perspectives</i>	
by Maroula Joannou & June Purvis (eds) & <i>The Women's Suffrage</i>	
<i>Movement: A Reference Guide</i> by Elizabeth Crawford	71
Jean Grimshaw on <i>Mother Time</i> by Margaret Urban Walker (ed.)	74
Margrit Shildrick on <i>Diagnosis: Difference</i> by Abby L. Wilkerson	79
Gill Rye on <i>Julia Kristeva</i> by Anne-Marie Smith & <i>After the Revolution</i>	
by John Lechte & Mary Zournazi (eds)	82
Diana Coole on <i>Adorno, Culture &amp; Feminism</i> by Maggie O'Neill (ed.)	86
Lisa Michelle Downing on <i>The Body's Perilous Pleasures</i>	
by Michele Aaron (ed.)	89
Alex Klaushofer on <i>The Play of Reason</i> by Linda Nicholson	91
Lily Forrester on <i>Rational Woman</i> by Raia Prokhovnik	93
<b>Afterward: A Brief History by Margaret Whitford</b>	96
<b>Concluding Editorial Postscript by Christine Battersby</b>	99
<b>Calls for Papers &amp; Conference Announcements</b>	104

## EDITORIAL

**Helen Chapman**

This is the final volume of the *Women's Philosophy Review* for the year 2000. And perhaps appropriately as we now move forward properly into the 21st century it marks a transitional point in the history and development of the *WPR*. This change is clearly evidenced by the fact that this volume is jointly edited by the outgoing editor, Christine Battersby, and one of the two incoming General Editors, Helen Chapman. From January 2001, the other General Editor will be Rachel Jones who is now based at the University of Dundee. While personnel may change, I hope readers will consider that the journal itself remains the same, containing, as it always does, the usual mixture of stimulating and informative interviews and reviews.

The first piece in this volume is an interview with the American feminist philosopher Iris Marion Young conducted by Meena Dhanda. Iris Marion Young is Professor of Political Science in the Law School at the University of Chicago. She has published widely in many areas of feminist philosophy and contemporary political theory and public policy. During the course of the interview the interrelationships between the apparently disparate aspects of her work becomes clear. In this interview what also comes across is a sense of two individuals who clearly are engaged and committed to understanding and exploring each others' positions and work. In fact a meeting of minds ensues which is informative and enjoyable for both the participants and the reader alike. What is particularly refreshing is the commitment which both philosophers demonstrate to exploring the 'effects' that philosophising can have. As Iris Marion Young explains, behind her own particular engagement with philosophy lies a belief that it must have 'practical intent'.

Meena Dhanda explores this notion by encouraging Iris Marion Young to discuss two main strands of her work: the 'politico-ethical'

writings and the texts concerning the phenomenology of lived experience. This involves discussions of themes such as the asymmetric relation between self and other and the need to consider the 'affective' aspect of political communication. Throughout, the focus is on demonstrating the practical consequences which these theoretical concepts can engender. For example, the section on 'The Family' contains a discussion of current debates around the nature of the family unit, while in 'House and Home' the issue of women's relation to domestic work is reconsidered.

In reading this interview what struck me most forcibly was the commitment which both participants demonstrate to understanding philosophy as a practice which is relevant to all aspects of life. Increasingly the 'professionalisation' of academic philosophy and philosophers means that we have a tendency to become divorced from one of the central underlying tenets of feminist philosophy—namely the idea that it is a practice which should have effects! Activities such as the RAE and Teaching Quality Audit demand a certain conformity from the academic community which tends to both institutionalise its practices and insulate it from engaging with the 'practical' consequences which it could and should have. Iris Marion Young's work reminds us that to philosophise effectively is to think and act in ways which ought to have a practical effect.

This theme is considered from a different perspective in Catherine Constable's review article on recent developments within Film Theory. As the article argues, Film Studies is a discipline which from its outset contained a specific political agenda. Furthermore this agenda was often established from a specifically feminist perspective. However, as Catherine Constable clearly demonstrates, much recent work within Film Studies precisely tries to retreat from an engagement with the political, and instead advocates the development of 'neutral' and 'pure' forms of theory. This move denies the validity of 'political' theory, thereby negating the value of the feminist approaches which were so influential at the outset of the discipline. Also, paradoxically, the

move towards 'pure theory' occurs at the time when philosophy itself—through disciplines such as feminist philosophy—is starting to question the veracity and efficacy of such an approach.

Catherine Constable argues that in order to challenge some of the new, conservative orthodoxies which are currently being promoted in Film Theory it is necessary to bring the insights of feminist philosophy to bear on the meta-critical questions concerning the status of 'theory' within Film Studies. Drawing on the work of Michèle le Dœuff she argues that it is necessary to demonstrate that theory does not occur in a vacuum, but rather emerges from the complex interaction and relation between the material, which is being theorised, and the theory through which the material is approached and conceptualised. Thus neither film nor theory can be understood independently of each other, there is instead a need to understand the reciprocal relation between the two.

This idea of the need for feminist philosophy to critically engage with both practical and theoretical questions is also amply demonstrated in the variety and scope of the books reviewed. These range from the latest feminist interventions into the history of philosophy—including Genevieve Lloyd and Moira Gatens' work on Spinoza, and Susan James' analysis of the emotions in the work of 17th-century philosophers—through to Jean Grimshaw's analysis of the collection of essays on ageing edited by Margaret Urban Walker. In between, readers can find discussion of works on topics as diverse as the women's suffrage movement and a psychoanalytical reading of the Marquis de Sade! This variety demonstrates that despite the institutional constraints mentioned earlier feminist philosophy is a discipline that remains both innovative and flourishing.

It is, therefore, with a mixture of great excitement and not a little trepidation that I look forward to helping to continue the editorship of this journal as it now passes from the hands of one generation to the next. The legacy which we inherit, and the task we have now to live up to, is indicated in the final two pieces in the journal, the 'Afterword' by the outgoing Book Reviews Editor, Margaret Whitford, and the

'Concluding Editorial Postscript' by the outgoing General Editor, Christine Battersby. It is, of course, entirely appropriate and fitting that this issue of the journal concludes with their voices. Without their commitment, enthusiasm and dedication—and that of the many others past and present members of the Society for Women in Philosophy who are mentioned in Margaret Whitford's piece—the journal would not be being passed on in such a healthy and flourishing state.

A special vote of thanks is also due to Kimberly Hutchings who acted, with great efficiency, as Secretary and Treasurer of SWIP for several years. She stepped down from this role earlier this year, and Meena Dhanda has now taken over these functions. Alessandra Tanesini remains as Administrative Editor of *WPR*, but from January 2001 Stella Sandford will step into Margaret Whitford's role as Book Reviews Editor. As Christine Battersby noted in Issue 24, Stella Sandford is already commissioning book reviews, so all review offers and queries should now be sent to her at the address printed on the inside front cover.

In conclusion I and the other new Editors want to say a heartfelt 'thank-you' for the work that outgoing team unselfishly undertook both for the journal and for feminist philosophy in general. In wishing them all every success for the future, my deeply held hope is that the new line-up can sustain, and further develop, the work which they have undertaken so successfully. For as Iris Marion Young vehemently and persuasively argues in this volume, what is vital for philosophy to succeed is for it to show that it must be committed and of 'practical intent'.

It is with this idea in mind that Rachel Jones, Stella Sandford and I invite anyone who wishes to join us in continuing this work to contact us with ideas and suggestions for ways in which the journal can both continue to flourish and develop. Together we can demonstrate precisely why it is that feminist philosophy is, and should be, a force for progressive change and innovation.

*Helen Chapman*  
*Staffordshire University*

**THEORISING WITH A PRACTICAL INTENT:  
GENDER, POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY  
AND COMMUNICATION**

**An Interview with Iris Marion Young**

**Meena Dhanda**

**Background**

**MD** Tell us about yourself and your background. What led you to philosophy?

**IMY** I grew up in New York City. I'm a product of corporate education at the higher level. I graduated from Queen's College in the City University of New York. At the time I went to college it cost me \$100 a semester. That scenario is long past in the City University system. I am a believer in public education that way. I had a wonderful education in Queen's College from 1966–70. And I also went to public school in the New York City public schools. I think they did well by me.

What led me to do philosophy? I'm not sure I have an account of that. I went to college as an English major, I guess, maybe, because my mother was an English major, and that's what I knew best. And at certain high schools you don't know about philosophy. But I guess, oddly enough, the Presbyterian Church had something to do with leading me to philosophy. We had youth groups where we discussed deep issues like 'freedom and determinism' (*laugh*) and I really liked these discussions. So the two things came together. I became disenchanted with the scholarship that an English major required—you didn't get to think for yourself—and got led into philosophy by my high school background in 'debating about metaphysics'. That's what I learned to find in philosophy as an undergraduate.

**MD** I myself got drawn into philosophy because I read this article by someone I now know to be an ultra right-wing Hindu nationalist (*laugh*) about the essence of being. I did my graduation in Economics and Mathematics and then changed to do my Masters in Philosophy.

**IMY** Well there's something very tempting about any discourse that seems to be telling you the meaning of life! Right! (*laugh*) I think I don't believe in the meaning of life any more but once I did, you know. When I was at college from 1966–70, Existentialism was very important among youngsters. For me it was very important. I was a great fan of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche and Sartre. But also, this was related to my life—Camus's 'the meaninglessness of existence' spoke to me and 'self-creation' spoke to me.

### **On Philosophy and Local Theory**

**MD** I want to ask you about the importance you attach to the conception of philosophy as 'theorising with a practical intent'. At times you say you find yourself dissatisfied with some feminist writings that are overly theoretical because you find them 'paralysing'. I wondered if that is your general conception of philosophy, or is it something that you think is particularly relevant for feminist philosophers?

**IMY** I think I wouldn't even restrict it to philosophy. Philosophy is a specific kind of theorising, which I think has its important disciplines. It is a specific kind of training that I undertook and I think I provide sometimes to students. But I think this issue of having a practical intent is something that I would endorse for all intellectual life—leaving aside empirical work, which, I also think, should have practical intent. I think of it as a normative principle that theory, that is self-enclosed and is not supposed to be revealing in a way that could inform action, is only a game! It is not as valuable, humanly speaking.

**MD** With regards to the possibility of hoping for a single feminist historical materialist theory, you have said that it is 'ambitious and naïve' and you have advocated local theories instead. But don't you think that conceptual innovation allows a variety of 'local experiences' to be captured? Take, for example, two conceptual terms that you have introduced: 'gender as seriality' (Young 1994) and 'asymmetric reciprocity' (Young 1997). They seem to me to capture something, which is, in a sense wider than is suggested by a 'local' theory. They are concepts, which have political application in a wider context. So is it not undermining the role that theory has in your own work to think of it as more valuable if it helps to make sense of 'local' experience?

**IMY** When I distinguish, in the passage that you refer to, between a kind of general, globalised, totalised theory and local theory, I think I'm using local in the same sense that Foucault uses local. That doesn't mean local in the sense of a particular neighbourhood, or a community. Instead, it means, bound to specific contexts. These could be disciplinary contexts, or historical context, or even neighbourhood contexts. But what's important is that once generated, the question is a problem, which has a location, and there may be other problems in other locations that have a similar structure.

Take the essay 'Gender as Seriality' (Young 1994). It highlights a particular problem, which is, I think more than a local one. Say the problem is: particular feminists in particular communities are having trouble thinking about 'What is this category of woman?' At a particular *time* in the history of feminist theory it becomes a problem. That's what I mean by local. So it doesn't become a problem only in New York, but it becomes a problem at a particular time and we generate a theory that might then be helpful to another locality. But the intent of the theory is not to have covering laws.

### **Gender as Seriality**

**MD** In 'Gender as Seriality' (Young 1994) you were looking for a way out of a dilemma. Either we risk essentialism in naming women as a group or we lose the motivational force of the idea of women as a group. You suggest that, from a pragmatic political point of view, we need to have a notion of the identity of women, which can solve this dilemma. Are you happy with your solution?

**IMY** I would disagree with your formulation in this sense: that precisely what I aimed to do there was to say that it's not about the identity of women. I would suggest that worrying about it in those terms—where identity is about attributes, feelings or senses of identification—was exactly the source of the problem.

**MD** I'm calling that 'essentialism'.

**IMY** The source of the problem lies in worrying about 'what attributes the entity, this person, had?' or 'what feelings of affinity these persons have with each other?' I shifted away from this perspective and instead began thinking in terms of positionings.

**MD** I thought it was also about the movement from the kind of collectivities to which we find ourselves ascribed, to groups that we actually form. In that sense, identification does come in, even though it is not a permanent identification, but instead it is an identification around projects that we might take up.

**IMY** But there I distinguish between series and groups as Sartre does. (Young 1994, 723–8) And I think it is helpful and important to notice that women, when they are self-consciously identified with one another, never identify with one another only as women. There's always some other organising principle to their mutual identification

### **The Ideal of Gift and Asymmetric Reciprocity**

**MD** Let us look at another of your conceptual innovations—the term 'asymmetric reciprocity' (in Young 1997). You argue that

the supposed symmetry in moral relations obscures difference and in fact assumes a reversibility of perspectives that is not possible. You are also saying that symmetrical reciprocity has undesirable political consequences.

You've suggested an alternative, which is based on the notion of 'gift'—you say that 'opening unto another person is always a gift' (Young 1997, 50). The other notion you use is that of 'being with' another rather than being in the place of, or imagining oneself in the place of, another. You use Derrida in this context—'For there to be a gift there must be no reciprocity, return, exchange, counter-gift or debt' (Young 1997, 54). I like the notion of asymmetric reciprocity very much. I myself have written about the difficulty of knowing the other person *from* their standpoint (Dhanda 1994). Acknowledgement, as I see it, fills the gap that is there of not being able to know the other. However I do have a problem with part of your analysis of the notion of 'gift'. Gifts, too, are part of social practices. Gift—understood as that openness in the presence of the other person—seems to me to be a vision. When you examine real gifts, as they are exchanged, and as parts of social practices, they generate expectations. These are themselves commensurate with the socially structured locations of gift-givers and receivers.

When you apply the same to relations between people, I feel that opening unto another person also becomes habituated. I wonder whether we can retain that sense of wonder, which you are advocating and which seems to be at the back of this notion of gift? It seems more like an ideal rather than something that happens in relationships between people.

*IMY* But this is true of all normative ideals. 'Gender as Seriality' is about ideals. I'm taking gift-giving as a certain ideal, and I try to invoke what is the concept in the ideal. An ideal is always something invoked in real life, usually for the purpose of a criticism. In this sense I am Habermasian, our ideals arise from the

realities of interaction. But what we do with ideals is we formulate them out of the possibilities of our interaction, and our sense of lack in those interactions. So, I think, I am trying to appeal to what is the normative ideal of gift-giving, which is that it is asymmetrical.

In his book on Marcel Mauss, Derrida is claiming that Mauss got it wrong, because he understands gift-giving in terms of an equal exchange (Derrida 1992). And Derrida in his analysis of Mauss's *The Gift* is saying, well, if that's so, then its not gift-giving. And I'm accepting that. The ideal of gift-giving (even though it is always imperfectly realised and sometimes more perfectly realised than others) is one where there has to be a first move, which is a moment of courage, graciousness and generosity. Here there is not an expectation of return in the sense that one feels one has a right to be disappointed if there is not a return. And I'm trying to generalise that and see what it means to be open, in the sense that you've talked about, and acknowledge that there is the first move.

I'm interested in Levinas in this respect, too—in the response to vulnerability. Someone has to make the first move, and that first move, is a gift. But it's also a reception at the same time. A gift itself is an acknowledgement in your sense, it is a recognition of the other that is asking for nothing in return, as an ideal. But of course, the exchange of things may or may not be gift-giving and gift-giving may or may not involve an exchange of things. There are ways of being gracious or generous which don't involve any exchange of things, and those might be the best gifts.

*MD* There's another question I had about the same essay. In the course of elaborating the notion of 'asymmetric reciprocity' you've raised a doubt about why we need to be able to imagine ourselves in the situation of the other person. My comment would be that one needs to be able to imagine oneself in the

situation of other people because there are times when one cannot actually listen to others. For example, when they are dead, or very far back in an inaccessible past, or yet to be born, or, likewise when they are out of reach because they are spatially inaccessible. So it seems that there still is some use for a notion of reciprocity, which calls for those sorts of imaginings, which are required in situations of temporal or spatial asymmetry. It is a monological imagining, in a way.

*IMY* I really don't think that we can do much with those not yet born. I'm in agreement with those philosophers who talk about what the basic needs are of those not yet born and do something to ensure that the resources in the future will also be available for those basic needs. I don't think that we can put ourselves in the cultural position of those not yet born, of future generations.

Now, the people of the past are quite different, but they speak to us through texts that we retain. Thus, I would rather think of it as an act of listening, rather than a repositioning of myself. When I read those texts of the ancient Greek philosophers or about the medieval Beguines women I'm still here in the present. It's better for me to acknowledge that I have not left my position in the late 20th century when I listen to those historical texts, and that I listen across time.

*MD* I think it is very helpful to make the distinction between the supposed identification with future generations and the one with the people of the past. I agree with you that they are not the same. I also agree that there is still that need to really listen to people from the past with care rather than just arbitrarily thinking those people were like oneself, which would be wrong. There are ways of not listening ...

*IMY* It is a kind of fantasising. What I say in the piece is that, frequently, the claim that I'm putting myself in the position of others is a projection of my own fantasies about what the others

are. And I think frequently when we relate to historical times, that is what most of us are doing as well. Popular history books are big sellers! Why is that? Because they are escapist fantasies for many people! I don't think that's necessarily a bad thing. However, I'm not sure we're treating the other, in this case, the historical other, really as different. We're projecting ourselves: 'this is what I would have been like in the 13th century'. And that's fine for play, but when you're thinking of understanding the other by doing that, I think that's not right.

**MD** The only purpose of this type of history is to reinforce your own image of who you are. It doesn't make you willing to change yourself in the light of what you might learn from the past.

**IMY** And I think through serious listening to the historical others, in this case, or even contemporary others, we can gain recognition of the difference, the strangeness.

### **Communicative and Deliberative Democracy**

**MD** I'm going to move on now to the distinction between the concepts of communicative and deliberative democracy. In 'Communication and the Other' (in Young 1997) you've reminded us of the neglected aspects of communication, including aspects like rhetoric and story-telling, especially in political communication. You say that the 'erotic dimension in communication' has an important role to play. I find that a very interesting way of putting it particularly when you say 'Humor, word-play, images and figures of speech embody and color the arguments, making the discussion pull on thought through desire' (Young 1997, 71).

My question here is that there are different kinds of desires. Desire for love would be good, but if it is the desire for admiration which is fuelling the person who engages in rhetoric, isn't that suspect? Isn't there a danger of rhetoric displacing

argument altogether? A valid critique might be to suggest that it would be more productive to expand the notion of 'simply argument' to 'argument plus ...', so as to include all the bodily aspects of communication.

**IMY** In 'Communication and the Other' my concern is with democracy. What makes deep democracy? And the work I'm doing now expands on this interest in what are the conditions of a deeper democracy. And one of the things you want in a good democracy is citizens who are able to criticise and hold one another, and those who have official powerful positions, accountable.

Now, in the approach to deliberative democracy that I'm criticising there is a notion that what makes a critical thinker, indeed what makes a good deliberative speaker is one who brackets the rhetorical to get to the purity of the argument. I think what I'm advocating in the specific category of rhetoric is that first of all, there is no unrhetorical speech or expression; all expression has an aspect that is affective and meant to move. That's the rhetorical ...

**MD** Even argument is meant to persuade.

**IMY** Only the coldest numerical, mathematical forms of deductive reasoning may have the affective purged from it. But in *real politics* reason and affectivity function together. The problem that you are identifying is: 'What if moving people can have different effects and different motivations?' One approach you can take to that danger—let's call it 'the danger of demagoguery'—is to say: 'Let's make sure that people are arguing' and 'Let's make sure that people know how to identify whether people are arguing'. While I don't deny that's a good thing to do, I think something else needs to be done as well. This is to develop critical skills in evaluating rhetoric, in its own terms. That is a far better way of ensuring democratic accountability. So that if it is possible to manipulate desires

(which of course it is), then isn't it better for those who might be manipulated to identify the affective element of that possibility instead of concentrating only on the discursive element?

*MD* And thereby also be able to deal with it.

*IMY* That is the point. And sometimes you might not deal with it only in argumentative terms! There might be forms of playful response that have a more deflationary effect on the powerful than all the arguments you could produce.

*MD* That's very helpful as well.

### **The Family**

*MD* You've often written about the limitations of the distributive paradigm of justice, for example in 'Reflections on the Family in the Age of Murphy Brown' (in Young 1997). In particular you highlight how this paradigm fails to adequately address issues such as sexual liberation and the sexual division of labour. Among other things, you blame the failure on the way in which this approach deals with the institution of The Family. In particular you criticise the assumption that as an institution it is there to stay. You're suggesting that The Family itself should be deconstructed into a series of rights and obligations. How do you think that can be accomplished?

*IMY* Let me say first that there are many who have said better than I that theories of justice have not attended to the issues of the family ...

*MD* For example Susan Okin has (Okin 1989) ...

*IMY* Yes ... So I don't think that I have made a particular contribution in respect of that point. In the essay you are referring to, I'm interested in The Family in capitals, as a trope. And here again, I think, I haven't been terribly original. Where I think I might have made a contribution is in saying that there's a positive move to make. The critical move is in noticing how The

Family functions as a trope in ideological terms, without then denying different forms of intimate relations. I suppose there are some people who don't have ties of that sort, but I think they are very few, at least if you look at their entire life's course. Some people at certain points in their lives will say they don't particularly want to have intimate ties. But most people, at some points in their lives, do.

This raises political and legal issues for all of us. Part of what I wanted to deconstruct was those legal relationships. My argument is to say we don't have to automatically accept what's still 'the Law' in United States and almost anywhere else in Europe. In other words we've got a whole series of relationships that may not be linked, and they should not be linked except by the choices of the individuals.

*MD* One thing you say is that 'Sex is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition of families' (Young 1997, 109). I thought that's a very revolutionary thing to say! The idea that you should not link the idea of sex with the idea of a family contains a lot of potential.

*IMY* I've just started reading a book by Valerie Lehr called *Queer Family Values* (Lehr 1999). There are lots of people writing about these things far better than I do.

*MD* I thought that your arguments de-linking sex from 'The Family' contained implications that were wider than simply a gay or lesbian perspective.

*IMY* Valerie Lehr is interested in the evolution of the demands for the right to marriage, by gay and lesbian movements. She's criticising this on normative grounds. The criticism, which is quite well put, is that the demand continues to assume that the privileged relationship is the sexual relationship. And I quite agree with her. And she says that to the degree that there's still the assumption of the privileged sexual coupling, that is still within the heterosexual paradigm.

**MD** Exactly, I think that was your point. You want to declare marriage as unjust, but you want to retain the value of the family. And that's why this de-linking...

**IMY** of *families*. I want to pluralise it! (*laugh*).

**MD** Not 'The Family' ... I'm sorry...yes, but 'families', yes, because you say that *families* provide a rooted sense of self.

**IMY** Well, you know, for lots of people I wouldn't say that it has to be normative. You do have to worry about the way in which access to respect and respectability arises from the privileging of having families. I think that's still a problem in the society I live in.

**MD** Many people would associate you with postmodernism. I am wondering whether, because of your saying that a family provides a sense of self and of a concrete, mutual caring, they may have been surprised to find you talking about a rooted sense of self. Likewise, in another article that I'll talk about later—'House and Home'—you are talking about identity in a different way.

**IMY** I've never found labels like 'postmodernist' very helpful for almost anybody. Jean-François Lyotard uses the term 'condition of postmodernity' (Lyotard 1979). Nearly all the other thinkers that are called 'postmodern' have never used the label themselves. This is true of most labels—those called 'communitarians' usually don't call themselves communitarians!

I have found the critiques of 'Enlightenment universalism' that I associate with postmodernism useful. I find Foucault's work very useful for thinking about normativity and disciplinarity and governmentality and so on. But it is more these particular ideas that I find useful rather than some school. In fact I think that it's against the whole spirit of these thinkers to say that they're a school called 'Postmodernism' (*laugh*).

But one thing I have never endorsed is a notion that there is no subject. I think there are good reasons to be critical of

substantive subjects. We don't need postmodernism for that critique; Hume did it, and then Existentialism does it.

**MD** It's the same kind of attitude you have towards 'experience' as well. On the one hand, you reject experience as grounding our knowledge claims of, or as taking you to, an 'authentic' self. On the other hand, you want to retain experience as giving you access to subjectivity.

**IMY** Your first question was about philosophy with practical intent. I think in both these cases—of experience, the subject/the self or personal life—I want to cling to the practical. By this I mean what is important to me and to most other people when they are not doing philosophy. And to connect conceptual issues and problems to those things that are important to me and to most other people, when we're not in the theoretical mode.

### **'House and Home'**

**MD** From that perspective I find your essay 'House and Home' (Young 1997) really very inspiring. One grows up with so many conflicting views about the meaning of home and housework. After reading this essay I felt glad that I actually never rejected my own liking for doing certain things in the house like sewing, cooking and gardening ... I like making things with my hands. In particular I found the story about your mother extremely moving. She was just rejecting certain aspects of housework, like cleaning, removing cobwebs, or whatever. But there are other aspects, such as caring for and being with your children, and doing things, which they like to do and you like to do, which are also home-making.

In that short story about your home, a clear distinction came out. We could see that while you reject housework, you don't have to reject home-making. I would like you to say something about why home-making is important and do you invest your time and energy in it?

*IMY* All right. The first thing is, I think, that everyone makes home if they can. Some people can't, either because of their temporary situation or, more drastically, because they are in war, they're refugees or they're in prison. This is a deprivation. I've recently written something about my step-father who is in a nursing home and can't make a home for himself, even though he lived alone for a long time and made a home in the sense of arranging his things around him as he chose and living amongst them. In the end I think his case is a tiny existential category.

That essay I think of as continuous with the essays that I have done earlier on the phenomenology of female body experience. There's something phenomenological about the concept of home and indeed I refer to the work of Edward Casey, the phenomenologist, among others, in trying to develop that concept (Young 1997, 183). As in those earlier essays, the project that I take up is twofold. I want to notice the reasons that feminists have found homemaking and housework problematic and at the same time do the kind of recovery, which I've always taken to be part of Irigaray's project, of thinking about 'the feminine' in Western discourse.

In this case the problem with housework and homemaking is the fact that women are expected to both do housework and often make home for other people at their own expense. The fact of the matter is that working or caring, homemaking or caring, are in themselves human values. I'm trying to disentangle what is humanly valuable in this mode of living, this mode of being, and at the same time, notice and criticise what is socially exploitative or dominative. I'm not sure I succeed, but that's the nature of the project.

*MD* I think there are two aspects there. Your example of preparing a sauce according to 'mother's recipe' was very good, I think, because it captures the role of memory in everyday work. What you do in preserving your house is very often preserving the

memory of your parents. That resonated very much with the experience that I, and others like me, have who are living thousands of miles away from their families. It is not the recipe, but her memory that is important in the process of engagement in housework.

The other aspect, which is a more political matter, was the idea that instead of rejecting home, we have to think of democratising it. It is a privilege that some people have and others ought to have. There are four values of a home that you have written about: that people should have safety; they should have a place where they can individuate themselves; they should have privacy, and they should be able to preserve themselves. What comes to mind is that this work actually narrows the gap between you and the 'humanist' positions that you have criticised in the past.

*IMY* I think at the end of that essay, in that particular articulation of those values, I am talking about human rights, without qualification. (*laugh*)

### **Resistance and Empowerment**

*MD* There's one final question I have which is a very difficult one. It is linked to you describing your mother's not doing housework as 'passive resistance'. I want to link this description to your essay on policy for pregnant addicts, 'Punishment, Treatment, Empowerment' (in Young 1997). In this essay you argue that the empowerment approach is better than the treatment or punishment approach. I agree with your analysis. I wondered though, if at another level—and I might be completely wrong here—you were painting a picture of one who takes drugs, or one who is a drug addict, as a passive resistor too. Are they somebody who is refusing to succumb to normalisation in their psychic life? Am I wrong? Am I reading too much in it?

You employ the Foucauldian notion that treatment uses confession as a way of changing the self to support your arguments about why you think the treatment approach is bad. So it could be suggested, if there is something wrong with changing the self of the addict, then there must be something, which is there to have, which you want to preserve. That something could be the element of resistance; that the addict is refusing to become a part of society.

*IMY* You are suggesting that one possible interpretation of the criticisms I make of treatment approaches as individualising is that perhaps addicts are resisting normalisation. And I think I want to respond that I don't know. I don't think I could speak for addicts or their resistance and furthermore it's probably ungeneralisable. I think I want to say that drug addiction should not be something despised. But it's not a happy state and only rarely would I suspect that it's a form of resistance. From my reading, there's far too little support offered to people whose lives are very wound up with drugs. While they may resist the despising—they can and do resist that—they are not necessarily happy with their lives and would like them to change.

But also embedded in your question was the notion that underneath the confessional mode, there should be a core self that is resisting the confession. And I guess I'm Foucauldian enough to think that in this kind of discourse, the self does construct itself. So the confession is not the revelation of the true self, it *is* the construction. And any who participate in these modes are quite, I think, aware of this.

When I recommend what I call 'the empowerment approach' the idea is that the experience is going to be more politicised and not coercive. Recently, the political theorist, Barbara Cruikshank—she's very Foucauldian and very interested in processes of governmentality in everyday life—has criticised the notion of empowerment as really an extension of

the normalising discourse (Cruikshank 1999). I'm not sure she's wrong, so I might have to reject the essay.

**MD** Really!

**IMY** Well probably! (*laugh*) I think that in the light of that particular analysis, I still want to make a distinction between an approach that is individualising—that isolates the individual and puts the sense of responsibility on her alone—and what I call the empowerment approach. This latter approach, as I think of it, is a more collective, outward oriented, and consciousness raising process. I try to offer in the article a couple of examples that I found in social work journals of how this practice is done. But I think that Cruikshank's critique leads me to think that one has to look at it more carefully.

**MD** In one very obvious sense, this process of involving people who are addicts in forming groups between themselves, exchanging stories and looking through their own analysis, *is* empowerment, because it is giving them the power, instead of telling them what to do, instead of making them confess and ...

**IMY** No. I think then there one might say, 'what in this is giving them any power?' First of all, the issue is that power has to be given within a structure of governmentality where they are at the receiving end. And power also remains in the institutionalised settings that are really quite controlled. Now, 'what is the alternative kind of practice?' is the question I always have with this kind of critique. I guess the message is that one must always be suspicious when we're talking about vulnerable or stigmatised people.

**MD** Yes, for this practice itself would deliver some of the answers....You will find it empowers or it won't ...

**IMY** I guess one of the issues is: Can it? As long as the practice is taking place within certain institutionalised discursive contexts, can it really escape the stigmatisation and asymmetries of power? That's what I mean by 'suspicious'.

### Future Projects

**MD** I think that many readers of *WPR* will be more familiar with your writings on bodily experiences in *Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays* where you are extending Merleau-Ponty's notion of the lived body to include sexual difference which he seems not to talk about. Your later essays—in particular 'House and Home'—seem to have extended that notion of lived body. Are you planning any future works in the same style of writing as 'Breasted Experience' and the absolutely wonderful 'Pregnant Embodiment' (Young 1989)?

**IMY** At the moment I haven't done anything at all in this vein. I've been working for some time on a book called *Inclusion and Democracy* (Young 2000), which should come out next year. It's an extension of that article you referred to earlier on communicative democracy. It plays out my critique of deliberative democracy and many other issues such as group-representation that I have dealt with and includes some of my other work.

For the last several years, my work has been more concerned with policy and politics and political theory. I hope not in a disembodied way, but it is not the phenomenology of the orientation of the female bodily experience, which I've always thought of as a kind of different track of my work. I've always thought I had kind of two tracks: a political theory track or a political philosophy track, on the one hand, and this female embodiment track, on the other hand. They really have little to do with each other except that both books are in my study! So, I haven't done anything along those lines recently.

I would like to return to some of those questions. There are two connected things I think I would like to write: two separate pieces about menstruation and ageing in females. They are connected in so far as I think menstruation, as an experience, is about time, so both these pieces are more about time than spatiality. Menopause needs to be thought more

seriously as an experience, although there's been a lot of writing about menopause. I would do one of the things I always do before writing an essay—if I finally do it—which is to read much of what's been written about experiencing menopause, I don't care about the medical stuff (*laugh*). So that's what I had in mind.

**MD** Increasingly you have written more about questions of political philosophy. In your earlier essays, you have quite explicitly expressed your commitment to the vision expressed in socialist feminism, even though you rejected a totalising theory. While you continue to write in the manner of a socialist critique about radical transformation of patriarchal institutions, the term 'socialism' itself seems to have completely dropped out. I wondered if the suspicion of using the term 'socialism' has something to do with your being located in the USA? Or is it a general giving up of labels?

**IMY** When I think about all my writings, I don't think I've used the word 'socialism' very much in any of them. Even in *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Young 1990), I don't think there's much discussion of socialism. I did talk about exploitation, I talk about the division of labour. I think it should be obvious that there is no question but that things that have always mattered to socialists, matter to me. But I find it much more appropriate to talk about issues such as: exploitation, inequality, division of labour, distribution of resources, work relationships.

Right now, for example, I am thinking about 'work'—the category or the concept and an ideal of meaningful work. I'm about to go to Frankfurt and give a paper at the Institute of Social Research which is the birth place of Critical Theory. This conference is supposed to be celebrating the birth of Critical Theory 75 years ago in the Frankfurt School. I am going to claim that the ideal of meaningful work is something that leftists in general are no longer talking about.

To answer the question about socialism: this is a socialist interest or it's an interest that's derived from the socialist tradition. But, it's much more specific than saying: 'Well where are we with the socialist principles today'. And I think a notion of meaningful work is something that can make sense to almost anybody, even if they laugh at it. And, today, most people would laugh at the idea of meaningful work; that's how completely the employers have been able to regain control over work and what counts as work. So that's how I would answer that.

I've always been, and never stopped being, concerned I think with the issues that the socialist tradition in particular is concerned with. However I'm concerned with them in their particularity, one thing at a time. I guess I am in the post-socialist age, in the sense that, the label 'socialist' seems like an empty label today and I think we need to rethink what radicalism means. Many of the aspirations of socialism I'm still committed to, but in practical terms—in the world that I live in with my fellows—to quote a famous phrase, 'What is to be done is not at all obvious.' To say that the first thing to do is to separate the socialist from the rest of us seems to me a non-starter.

**MD** I agree. I have a couple of other questions before we close. You have contributed to a number of different areas. But are there subjects that you would like to see researched, questions that you wish somebody would work on? I'm sure there are going to be a number of younger researchers who would find those to be interesting leads to pursue.

**IMY** The first thing I thought of—it's a kind of association game—in response to your question, may not be a subject for philosophers! But it might be, I don't know! We have to see. For reasons that are obvious, in the last several months—this is September 1999—I've recently found myself needing to think

an awful lot more about war and violence. It has been forced upon my consciousness by, first, the NATO war, which I found the most ghastly event, pretty much of my lifetime! And actually, it carries for me greater shame, personally, than the war in Vietnam. I won't go into details.

But it has made me think about the feminist views of the late '70s that linked masculinity and violence. Some of those accounts by different wings of the feminist peace movement were crass and oversimplified, but when one looks at the events of the world, one finds that they seem to have a core of truth. My concerns lies not so much in the victimisation of women in war—this isn't news and that in itself is terrible, but it doesn't carry for me all that much theoretical questioning. However, it could be very important to take up again the question of the glorification of violence, the connection of violence with power and the connection of violence and power with men. It seems to me that feminists really should have a lot to do, to make that insight plausible, empirically supported and theoretically sophisticated. And I'd like to see someone do that.

*MD* That's helpful. I'm sure there will be philosophers as well who will be interested in that area. Finally, is there anything that you would have liked to be asked, which my questions have not covered?

*IMY* Oh, I should say it's a pleasure and honour to be talked to in this way and also to learn about your work a little bit and the work of the journal I've been introduced to through you. I find encounters like this will help international feminism keep going and also the connections of women philosophers—that's pretty important—across oceans. I'm grateful for the opportunity.

*MD* Thank you Iris.

*Iris Marion Young, Law School, University of Chicago*

*Meena Dhanda, University of Wolverhampton, UK*

Bath, September 1999

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Texts by Iris Marion Young

- Young, I. M. (1989) *Throwing Like a Girl and Other Essays in Feminist Philosophy and Social Theory*, Indiana University Press.
- (1990) *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Princeton University Press.
- (1994) 'Gender as Seriality: Thinking about Woman as a Social Collective' in *Signs* 19 (3), 713–38.
- (1997) *Intersecting Voices: Dilemmas of Gender, Political Philosophy and Policy*, Princeton University Press.
- (2000) *Inclusion and Democracy*, Oxford University Press.

### Other texts referenced during the interview

- Cruikshank, B. (1999) *The Will to Empower: Democratic Citizens and Other Subjects*, Cornell University Press.
- Dhanda, M. (1994) 'Identity and Acknowledgement of Persons' in *Knowing the Difference*, eds K. Lennon & M. Whitford, Routledge.
- Derrida, J. (1992) *Given Time: Counterfeit Money*, University of Chicago Press.
- Lehr, V. (1999) *Queer Family Values: Debunking the Myth of the Nuclear Family*, Temple University Press.
- Lyotard, J. (1979) *The Postmodern Condition*, Manchester University Press.
- Okin, S. (1989) *Justice, Gender and the Family*, New York, Basic Books.
- Sartre, J. (1976) *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, London, New Left Books.

## **Beyond Theory in Crisis:**

### **Feminist Futures for Film Theory**

#### **A Review Article by Catherine Constable**

It has now become commonplace to suggest that film theory is in crisis. Indeed, the current crisis can be seen to take many forms, ranging from the apocalyptic vision of the end of all theory to the precipitation of new ways of thinking about theory. Importantly, within Film Studies, the debates about the future of theory and theorising have often been explicitly political. Film Studies can be differentiated from Philosophy in that its theoretical tradition has been shaped by the work of key feminist theorists such as Laura Mulvey, Mary-Ann Doane, Kaja Silverman and many others. Unlike Philosophy, where feminist debates had to be 'added in' to a long tradition that defined itself as 'objective' and 'disinterested', feminist film theory has been central to Film Studies from the beginning. While the status of feminist thought is different in both subjects, institutional and social pressures are currently combining in ways that force both subject areas to ask similar questions; namely what is the future of theory? What should theory become? What ought theory to be?<sup>1</sup>

The contexts in which these questions are raised are different. In Film Studies, the future of theory *per se* is threatened by increasing government pressures towards vocationalism (Perkins 2000, 79–81).<sup>2</sup> Within Philosophy, the future of feminist theory has been radically affected by the Research Assessment Exercise whose definitions of what is to constitute 'true' philosophical thought are deeply conservative. Both subjects share a wider social context in which feminist thought is increasingly belittled and dismissed as mere 'political correctness'.<sup>3</sup> It is clear that these social pressures have had an impact on current definitions of the forms that future theorising should take. Thus, some factions currently argue that all theory ought to be apolitical and

'purely' logical. This article arises out of my conviction that it is absolutely vital that feminist theorists contribute to the debates that are re/forming and shaping their subject areas. Otherwise, we will have no space left from which to speak.

This article will address the very different versions of theory that are at stake in Film Studies today. I will bring out the ways in which the diverse definitions both incorporate and parallel debates within philosophy. The first section will define the key terms that have structured the crisis in Film Studies, namely, the designation of the work of Mulvey *et al* as 'Grand Theory'. I will go on to focus on David Bordwell's and Noel Carroll's questionable deployment of these terms in order to usher in their apolitical models of 'pure' scientific theorising. This will involve a close analysis of their book, *Post-Theory* (1996), in section two. The third section will take issue with the very concept of 'Grand Theory' by using psychoanalytic feminist film theory as a case study. The final section will demonstrate that future forms of political, socio-historical theorising within Film Studies can be seen to offer new contexts for feminist philosophy, focusing on the work of Luce Irigaray and Michèle le Dœuff. I will demonstrate the ways in which their frameworks provide a conception of theory as both metaphorical and social in order to delineate a positive alternative to Bordwell's and Carroll's scientism.

### **Defining Grand Theory**

The publication of *Post-Theory* in 1996 both crystallised and precipitated heated debates about the future of film theory. The book's title became more notorious than its content. The term 'post-theory' was co-opted to indicate the death of all theory and theorising, sustaining the position that Tessa Perkins characterises as 'theorycide' (2000, 83). The trajectory of *Post-Theory* is much more specific and might be better described as post-Grand Theory. Both Bordwell and Carroll attack the theory that has formed a dominant tradition in Anglo-American Film Studies, specifically 'that aggregate of doctrines derived from Lacanian

psychoanalysis, structuralist semiotics, post-structuralist literary theory and variants of Althusserian Marxism' (1996, xiii). Grand Theory is said to be encapsulated in key works from the 1970s and 1980s such as Laura Mulvey's influential article from 1975, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' (reprinted in Mulvey 1989), Christian Metz's *Psychoanalysis and Cinema: An Imaginary Signifier* (1982) and Kaja Silverman's *The Subject of Semiotics* (1983).<sup>4</sup>

Bordwell and Carroll capitalise the terms Grand Theory in order to convey the monolithic and totalising nature of these theoretical works. While the recent publication *Reinventing Film Studies* indicates the provisional nature of the terms by using small case and inverted commas, the classification 'grand theory' is still used to designate an 'abstract theoreticism' which is devoid of socio-historical detail (Perkins 2000, 83). The critique of Grand Theory can be paralleled with Lyotard's famous attack on master narratives.<sup>5</sup> Gill Branston's characterisation of theory as that which aspires to the status of objective thought fuses the Grand Theory promulgated by Mulvey *et al* with the master narratives of traditional psychoanalysis (2000, 28–9). Branston links the grand and the grandiose in that the latter is defined as the fantasy of creating a single totalising system (*ibid.* 29).

It is clear that within the populist disciplines of Film Studies and Cultural Studies the designation 'grand' carries a host of pejorative connotations. Within this context overt abstraction can be synonymous with a lack of practical knowledge and/or academic elitism. Moreover, the title Grand Theory is typically used to designate modes of theorising that are currently being superseded (Gledhill 2000, 3). Thus the introduction to the section entitled 'Really Useful Theory' in *Reinventing Film Studies* begins 'Most of the contributors to this section on theory agree that whatever film theory is today it can no longer be the kind of overarching, 'grand' theory that flourished in the 1970s.' Henceforth, new theories of cinema will be 'concretely located' and 'historicised' (*ibid.* 5). The introduction to the millennium edition of *Screen*, the journal in which a number of these Grand Theories were debated, contains a brief

comment charting the demise of 'film theory *per se*' in favour of empirical work such as cinema history (Kuhn 2000, 2).

The numerous articles which address Grand Theory all offer different historical accounts of its rise and fall. In this way, the advent of new modes of theorising or the advocacy of different types of historical and cultural projects are all justified in terms of logical succession. Bordwell's account of the history of theory differs from many others in that he does not trace the specific strand of feminist psychoanalysis and semiotics. Thus he argues that feminism constitutes an 'inflection' which informs both the old models of 'subject position theory' and 'culturalism', as well as the new mode of middle-level research (1996, 4). However, Bordwell offers a history of theory which critiques examples taken from feminist semiotic and psychoanalytic work (*ibid.* 15, 23) while denying their status as a specific tradition. This manoeuvre is important because it covers over the central issue at stake in the rejection of Grand Theory, namely the future of political theorising.

Tessa Perkins argues that the rejection of Grand Theory in Film Studies can be seen to combine a questioning of both the status of theory and the place of politics in the subject. She comments 'some wish ... to abandon both and others are determined that the former should cleanse itself of all contamination by the latter, fantasising, perhaps, that a pseudo-scientific objectivity will emerge from the funeral pyre' (2000, 76). It is this fantasy of 'pure theory' that encapsulates current conservative trends within both Film and Philosophy. While the superseding of Grand Theory in Film appears to offer the possibility of pluralistic modes of theorising, I will demonstrate that Bordwell's and Carroll's options of 'middle-level' and 'piece-meal' enquiry rest on a fantasy of a pseudo-scientific 'pure' theory.

### **'Physics Envy' in Post-Theory**<sup>6</sup>

The introduction to *Post-Theory* presents Bordwell's and Carroll's arguments for future forms of theorising as fundamentally similar (1996,

viii, 2). This view has been reflected in later references to their approach as a united appeal for the recognition of the historical situatedness of theoretical projects (Branston 2000, 28–9). I want to disentangle the two theorists in order to examine the ways in which each approaches the possibility of political theorising. Bordwell argues that middle-level research has already been conducted by a number of political theorists (1996, 34, fn. 64), and provides a list that includes Vito Russo's *Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies* (1987) and Richard Dyer's *Now You See It* (1990). However, I will demonstrate that this pro-political stance is jeopardised by the scientific paradigm that underpins Bordwell's critique of Grand Theory. In contrast, Carroll is utterly consistent in his deployment of scientism to rid theory of political 'bias'. My reading of Bordwell and Carroll will also make use of Bordwell's earlier work *Making Meaning* (1989) which underpins a number of their central arguments. This will bring out the issue of the relation between theory and interpretation that I will go on to address in the last section of this article.

Bordwell's article 'Contemporary Film Studies and the Vicissitudes of Grand Theory' is an attack on both subject position theory and culturalism. Bordwell argues that subject position theory, which deploys Barthes and Lacan as well as Derrida and Foucault, is organised around the key question: 'What are the social and psychic functions of cinema?' (1996, 6). Thus Film Theory can be seen to have drawn on Continental Philosophy to provide its basic frameworks for conceptualising both society and subjectivity. Furthermore, these two areas of concern mark the continuity between subject position theory and Cultural Studies. Bordwell contends that the diversity of projects within Cultural Studies disguises a common premise in which social institutions and practices are defined as cultural constructs (*ibid.* 13). Both schools are also said to focus on subject formation in that accounts of Lacanian misrecognition can be paralleled with those of Althusserian interpellation (*ibid.* 14). Finally, both schools are said to privilege linguistic paradigms and to have a common theoretical basis in structuralism (*ibid.* 18).

These 'doctrinal' continuities are used to contend that both schools borrow from Continental Philosophy in order to construct top-down, totalising theoretical systems. While this characterisation of Grand Theory has become standard, I want to focus on Bordwell's critique of the methodological practices deployed by these schools of theorists because it is here that the scientific paradigm he is using becomes most obvious. It also means that Bordwell's critique of Grand Theory diverges from many other versions. In effect, I will demonstrate that Bordwell criticises Grand Theory for not being grand enough.

Bordwell's critique of the methodological practices of Grand Theory is four-fold. He argues that the deployment of Continental Philosophy results in 'doctrine-driven' models of theory, criticism and historical research in which film functions as examples (1996, 18–9). Furthermore, he suggests that the appeal to French theorists is symptomatic of a desire for academic respectability in Film Studies (ibid. 19–21).<sup>7</sup> This leads to the second objection, namely the eclectic accumulation of diverse aspects of incompatible theories which results in an incoherent bricolage that passes for argument (ibid. 21–2). The means of argument are the third feature of the critique. Bordwell contends that Grand Theory relies on a loose model of 'associational reasoning' which deploys analogies and 'interpretative leaps' (ibid. 24). Finally the over-emphasis on interpretation is said to result in a proliferation of film readings which do not actually entail the Theory they purport to instantiate. This point clearly draws on the main argument from *Making Meaning* in that textual interpretation is defined as 'a set of craft-like reasoning routines which do not depend on any abstract theory' (ibid. 26).<sup>8</sup>

Bordwell's critique characterises French philosophy as 'celebrity- and fashion-driven' (1996, 20). These connotations of superficiality gain resonance when contrasted with the description of the new mode of middle-level theorising as 'in-depth research' (ibid. 27). The take-up of French philosophy is thus encoded as a mistake. Film theorists have simply been star struck by French *boulevardiers*. The assessment of French philosophy as glamorous, frivolous and, above all, unphiloso-

phical is a familiar caricature deriving from a particular strand of the analytic philosophical tradition. These theorists, such as Jean Curthoys (1997) and Alain Sokal (1999), are vehemently anti-Continental Philosophy and Bordwell replicates the tactics and tonality of this faction in his comments on the vagaries of associational reasoning displayed in the work of Guy Rosolato and Raymond Bellour. His criticism of an exchange between them goes as follows: 'the discussion is unintelligible because the connections among ideas meet no canons of reasonable inference' (ibid. 22-3). These canons are set up by analytic models of 'inductive, deductive and abductive reasoning' (ibid. 23). Importantly, the device of using selective and truncated quotation in order to ridicule the targeted theorist is a common tactic of the anti-Continental faction.<sup>9</sup> The depiction of Rosolato's and Bellour's work as unintelligible and unreasonable borrows from a series of disputes in which Continental Philosophy has been defined as jargon-ridden and incoherent.

Bordwell's reliance on analytic criteria explains the prevalence of the scientific paradigm in his critique. It underpins his analysis of the 'top-down' nature of 'doctrine-driven' theorising. As a result, Bordwell's argument against theory-driven textual interpretation should not be mistaken for the very common argument that theory simply imposes on the text and that the text should be allowed to 'speak for itself'. Bordwell's argument is that the application of theory to a mere handful of films cannot serve to establish the said theory:

[w]hen theory projects downwards to the datum, the latter becomes an illustrative example. The result may have rhetorical force, as vivid examples often do, but because of the underdetermination of theories by data, a single instance is not particularly strong evidence (1996, 19).

The language of data clearly indicates the scientific paradigm at stake here. Grand Theory fails to establish itself, because its use of limited numbers of examples lacks sufficient scope. Importantly, the objection is *not* that Grand Theory is inherently top-down and totalising, but

rather that it fails to establish itself in a sufficiently scientific and top-down way. The introduction to *Post-Theory* endorses the contributors' use of films as data 'to substantiate or illuminate theoretical claims' (1996, xvii).

Bordwell's critique of bricolage is also reliant on the concept of 'pure' theory. He argues that the deployment of parts of a theorist's work constitutes an illegitimate fragmentation of the system. Thus the take-up of Lacan in psychoanalytic feminist film theory is seen to be suspect in that it focuses on the 'Imaginary'/'Symbolic' dyad and leaves out other aspects such as the 'Real' (1996, 22). Bordwell's previous use of the same example in *Making Meaning* clarifies the issue in that it is clear that he regards the trio Imaginary/Symbolic/Real as the 'true' Lacanian system (1989, 122, 302 fn. 93). In addition to promulgating incorrect models of philosophical systems, film theorists are accused of being insufficiently theoretical. This is because they do not attempt to prove the value of their chosen theory over others: 'no film theorist has mounted an argument for *why* the comparatively informal theories of Saussure, Emile Benveniste, or Bakhtin are superior to the Chomskyan paradigm' (Bordwell, 1996, 22). Nor do they attempt logical exposition of their chosen systems. This failure to conform to the scientific method of proceeding via refutation and exposition means that Grand Theory cannot be regarded as 'pure theory' (ibid. 25).

In the final part of his critique, Bordwell argues that the attempt to 'prove' a theory through the construction of textual interpretations is not valid because interpretations do not constitute a proper test (ibid. 26).<sup>10</sup> This is because Bordwell defines interpretation as a 'craft-like' skill. The absolute division between the practical and the theoretical is set up in his *Making Meaning* (1989):

Like an artisan using strategies derived from experience, the critic draws upon a repertory of options and adjusts them to the particular task. And this skill no more constitutes a theory of cinema than a good bicyclist's know-how amounts to a physics of moving bodies or a sociology of recreation (7).

The critic's skills are said to be constituted through tacit obedience to institutional conventions which, in turn, are largely derived from the techniques and practices of New Criticism (ibid. 6–7, 23). Given that interpretation also fails to conform to the scientific model of rule-governed reasoning, there is an implicit parallel between the atheoretical status of interpretation and the untheoretical status of Grand Theory in *Post-Theory*.

This parallelism can be better understood by looking at Bordwell's arguments in *Making Meaning* concerning the status of theorists such as Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen. In this earlier book, he argues that they are better positioned as critics who create templates for interpretation. Thus Mulvey's 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' is said to constitute an 'interpreter's exemplar' insofar as her work is seen to crystallise a way of approaching film texts (1989, 24–5). Bordwell argues that Mulvey utilises a tradition of 'symptomatic reading' in which the text is viewed as fundamentally fissured (ibid. 9). Her article is also said to list 'a host of interpretive cues—the look as bearing power and sexual difference, the equating of the camera with the viewer, the notion of woman as fetishised spectacle, plot patterns such as surveillance and punishment.' (ibid. 92–3). Importantly, these cues are not said to form a totally original interpretive template.<sup>11</sup> Instead, Bordwell argues that a number of them conform to a traditional critical schema for interpretation.

It is part of the critic's mapping process to ascribe ... folk psychological traits to aspects of the film, and this can be done by following particular routines. The critic uses the schema to build up more or less 'personified' agents in, around, underneath, or behind the text (ibid. 152).

Mulvey's analysis of the camera and the series of 'looks' across a text are thus read as instantiations of the 'personification schema' (ibid. 152, 164–5).

I have traced David Bordwell's analysis of Laura Mulvey's article in some detail in order to demonstrate the way in which her creation of

an interpretive exemplar is ultimately shown to conform to a pre-existing critical schema. This conformity means that the theoretical elements of her work are judged to be subordinated to critical practice, thus undermining their validity as theory (1989, 26–7). Bordwell argues that most critics simply use theory as a rhetorical device to persuade others of the value of their interpretations. He therefore sets up an absolute distinction between interpretive writing in which theory is simply rhetoric and 'theoretical writing, which proposes, analyses, and criticises theoretical claims' (ibid. 250). Importantly, this distinction informs a number of the other essays in Bordwell and Carroll's *Post-Theory*.<sup>12</sup>

What is striking about this is the utter incongruity of positioning the major film theorists of the 1970s and 1980s as mere critics who do not do theory at all and simultaneously labelling their work Grand Theory. According to Bordwell, only Christian Metz actually qualifies as a theoretician (1989, 250). It would seem that the term Grand Theory is simply applied to any work that refers to a particular tradition in Continental Philosophy. Yet it is worth noting that the criteria for dismissing Grand Theory utilise an analytic model of 'pure theory' that is even more abstract, top-down and totalising. Moreover, the vision of 'pure theory' serves to fundamentally unsettle the new model of middle-level research that Bordwell ostensibly endorses. It is hard to see how the interpretative work of Vito Russo and Richard Dyer on the representation of homosexuality in mainstream cinema could possibly be said to conform to this scientific paradigm. In the light of this analysis, it becomes clear that the cognitive paradigm that Bordwell endorses as one possible future strategy actually constitutes the 'true theory' of the future given its quasi-scientific status. (Nichols 2000, 42).

If Bordwell's model of a plurality of paradigms for future research is compromised by his vision of 'pure theory', Carroll's article makes the analytic trajectory towards one true theory much more overt. Drawing on *Making Meaning*, Carroll argues that the institutional prevalence of 'Interpretation, Inc.' (Bordwell 1989, 21) has resulted in the reduction of film theory to "theoretically' derived jargon' (Carroll 1996, 42). This jar-

gon can be understood as the remnants of a theoretical paradigm that has been cut and stretched to fit different films.<sup>13</sup> Carroll then inverts the story, arguing that the needs of 'Interpretation, Inc.' have actually determined which theories get taken up. He comments, '[t]heories with the greatest "weasel factor" are more attractive to scholars concerned primarily with producing interpretations, because such theories will be applicable almost everywhere and in more ways than one' (ibid. 44). Carroll, like Bordwell can therefore be seen to follow an analytic tradition in which Continental Philosophy is caricatured for being inherently imprecise and ambiguous. This caricature is contrasted with the scientific paradigm of neutral theoretical models which utilise the correct methodology of exposition and refutation.

Like Bordwell, Carroll advocates debate between different theorists in order to establish which of the proffered paradigms is superior (1996, 49, 63). Carroll envisages that such debates will take the form of dialectical argument in which the new theory will demonstrate that it has superseded the previous models (ibid. 56–8). The account of the dialectical process is couched in the language of pragmatism. Carroll advocates 'piece-meal' research projects that acknowledge their historical specificity as well as their need for constant revision. However, the revisions that arise out of dialectical debate are also said to constitute 'the successive elimination of error' from the theoretical paradigm (ibid. 58). Thus, Carroll can be seen to offer a teleological model of debate which could ultimately lead to the creation of one true theory. He admits that this is a possible result: '[p]erhaps one day we will be in a position [to] frame a unified or comprehensive theory of film.' (ibid. 58). The admission should be regarded as a disingenuous statement of the consequences of the teleological framework of his model of dialectic.

Carroll explicitly argues that theory should not be political. He criticises Mulvey and others for their 'partisan' deployment of theory to serve the interests of radical film movements (1996, 44). Moreover, he suggests that proponents of Grand Theory utilise a 'cloak of political

correctness' in order to protect their paradigms from proper logical analysis and refutation (ibid. 45). Ultimately, aesthetic theories are said to 'underdetermine the political viewpoints with which they are compatible, there is generally no real point in diagnosing them for their political allegiances.' (ibid. 46). Thus the politicisation of aesthetics is due to the personal inclination of the theorist rather than being an inherent part of the process of theorising.

Carroll's example of the neutrality of theory is informative in this context. He offers a sketch of a cognitive analysis of the effects of horror films, focusing on the 'startle response', 'an innate human tendency to 'jump' at loud noises and to recoil at fast movements.' (ibid. 50). This enables him to analyse audience response to horror films without reference to politics or ideology. Carroll comments that a film critic might want to relate this research to the political agendas of the chosen films, arguing that such a political interpretation would be entirely compatible with the cognitive data. However, it is important to note that the political critic is not positioned as a theorist: 'this is a matter of film interpretation, not film theory.' (ibid. 50) Thus, politics is relegated to the status of personal inclination or critical interpretation and positioned completely outside the realm of pure scientific theorising.

The adoption of dialectical argument as the only mode of theorising can be seen to erase many of the fundamental presuppositions of film theory. Carroll comments that his vision of 'methodologically robust pluralism' might be regarded as aggressively competitive and 'macho' (1996, 63). However, he contends that feminists who offer paradigms that are said to be better than patriarchal ones are equally embroiled in the competitive process. Here Carroll reveals a total lack of knowledge of feminist epistemology in which the process of theorising is not simply defined as the annihilation of the other. Importantly, Carroll envisages dialectical argument to be 'a debate between existing rivals ... before a court of fully rational participants, endowed with full information' (ibid. 59). This model erases differences between the participants in favour of a spurious democratic abstract rationality.

Thus, the considerable body of work in Film Studies which focuses on the representational consequences of differential power relations and material social positions is simply swept aside. The scientific model can therefore be seen to be reliant on a top-down totalising methodology (Nichols 2000, 42).

### **Debunking the Myth of Grand Theory**

I have examined the arguments in *Post-Theory* in detail in order to demonstrate the ways in which one of the polemics against Grand Theory has taken the form of a call for the depoliticisation of all theorising. I agree with Bill Nichols' evaluation of Bordwell's and Carroll's theoretical frameworks as the 'most regressive current in contemporary film study' (2000, 42). The range of critiques of Grand Theory can be seen to encompass the extreme positions of 'theoryworship' and 'theoryphobia' as well as nuanced criticisms of the lack of social and historical detail in the work of specific theorists (Perkins 2000, 83, 85). It is important to note that all these positions result in the inconsistent characterisation of Grand Theory as simultaneously atheoretical, untheoretical and overly theoretical. The only continuity in the use of the term is the designation of that which is to be superseded or altered. These considerable disparities suggest that Film Studies simply does not have a Grand Theory. I will contrast the myth of the monolithic block of abstract dogma with the work of specific film theorists in order to demonstrate that Grand Theory is an empty term.

I have chosen to focus on feminist psychoanalytic film theory because it is often presented as one of the prime examples of Grand Theory. Moreover, I wish to draw attention to its status as a tradition of theorising within Film Studies and thus to combat Bordwell's revisionist history in which feminism is conspicuous by its absence. Critiques of feminist psychoanalytic film theory usually focus on the problematic nature of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis. The film theorists are seen as commentators who fail to address the problematic features of the frameworks that they take up (Carroll 1990, 353-5).<sup>14</sup> The deploy-

ment of psychoanalytic categories of sexual difference is regarded as particularly contentious given that much feminist work is devoted to the undermining of traditional definitions of sex-roles (Freeland 1996, 200). Thus, the take-up of 'castration' (or 'lack') as a 'sign' of sexual difference is read as the promulgation of essentialist categories. In this way, the work of these film theorists is elided with the patriarchal structures of traditional psychoanalysis and often rejected out of hand. Alison Butler's summary in *Screen* is a typical reaction. 'For feminist film scholars studying a cultural form so massively dominated by men, the construction of a theoretical paradigm in which the absence of female subjectivity is a first principle has been more or less a disaster.' (Butler 2000, 74)

The argument that feminist psychoanalytic theory simply falls back into the patriarchal structures of the Freudian/Lacanian mainframes sustains the characterisation of Grand Theory as monolithic. Feminist theory is therefore said to constitute a master narrative because it promulgates some of the more totalising gestures of traditional psychoanalysis. While I am sympathetic to the argument that the take-up of psychoanalysis is problematic for feminism,<sup>15</sup> I am concerned to draw attention to the caricature of feminist psychoanalytic theory as mere commentary which accedes to the status of master narrative. This derogatory description is now commonplace in the critique of Grand Theory. However, I will demonstrate that it does not constitute an accurate summary of the work of these theorists and will begin by looking at Laura Mulvey's famous article. 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'.

In this piece Mulvey argues that the psychoanalytic model of sexual difference—that of 'having the phallus' or 'lacking the phallus'—underpins Hollywood cinema. Hollywood films are said to present a gendered division between narrative and image. The former is propelled by the active male protagonist who represents the male spectator's ego ideal, and the latter is fleshed out by the passive female character who is the object of the gaze rather than constituting a viable source of identification (in Mulvey 1989, 19–22). The spectacularised presentation of

the female character is said to have a fetishistic structure, in that it provides the means by which the male spectator can disavow his knowledge of castration. Narratives which investigate the woman, revealing her lack and subsequent punishment or redemption, are also said to offer a way out of castration anxiety by replaying the original trauma (ibid. 21). What is important is that Mulvey's analysis is prefaced by an indication of the aims and limits of her project:

It is helpful to understand what cinema has been, how its magic has worked in the past, while attempting a theory and a practice that will challenge this cinema of the past. Psychoanalytic theory is thus appropriated here as a political weapon, demonstrating the way in which the unconscious of patriarchal society has structured film form. (ibid. 14).

Tessa Perkins argues that Mulvey's deployment of psychoanalysis as a critique which sustains the impetus to create new theoretical and filmic paradigms, as well as new forms of pleasure, is often forgotten (2000, 78, 84). It is this forgetting which means that Mulvey's work is simply elided with traditional psychoanalysis even though the presentation of Freudian and Lacanian concepts as the means by which patriarchal ideology is perpetuated is hardly a 'traditional' position. Importantly, the distinction between the patriarchal practices of Hollywood cinema and the new practices of the avant-garde limits the application of the psychoanalytic concepts. Mulvey really cannot be said to promulgate a master narrative when she clearly delineates the possibility of other modes of psychic organisation, other models of desire, and therefore other truths. A master narrative can only function as *the* truth by denying that there is anything outside its totalising forms of explanation. While Mulvey's experiments in film form have not had the success that she hoped, this outcome does not affect the logical status of the argument that she presents.

The contention that feminist psychoanalytic film theory is monolithic can be seen to suggest that it forms a homogenous tradition. I want to demonstrate that this is not the case by contrasting Laura

Mulvey's (1989) and Kaja Silverman's (1987) analyses of the function of the figure of the castrated woman in Hollywood cinema. Mulvey's conception of the female star as fetish object deploys the Freudian definition in which the fetish is said to cover over lack. She also emphasises the visual nature of the object and its fragmentation in different forms of framing (1989, 19–20). This can be contrasted with Silverman's Lacanian re/reading of the castration complex which draws attention to language.

Silverman takes up the Lacanian account of individuation in which the acquisition of language cuts the child away from the mother. She then argues that Freud's castration complex, in which woman is positioned as the sole bearer of lack, can be seen as a displacement and denial of Symbolic castration (1987, 13, 14, 18). Classical Hollywood cinema is said to replicate this displacement in its presentation of female characters as lacking in order to secure the Symbolic potency of the male protagonist. Silverman combines the visual and the linguistic in that women's positioning as lack is demarcated through her exclusion from looking, listening or speaking with authority (*ibid.* 24, 31). The two different readings of the castration complex can therefore be seen to result in different analyses of the image of woman in Hollywood cinema. For Mulvey, the fetishised female object *conceals* her status as castrated, whereas Silverman argues that the incompetent female character *displays* Symbolic (cultural and linguistic) lack.

The differences between these two theorists display a little of the rich variety within the feminist psychoanalytic tradition. Silverman can be seen to follow Mulvey in providing a strategic critique of Hollywood cinema which is set against the positive possibilities of the alternative space of the avant-garde. Indeed, Silverman demonstrates some of these possibilities by offering a close analysis of Mulvey's film *Riddles of the Sphinx* (1987, 129–40). The avant-garde is said to offer a different configuration of the maternal voice and mother/daughter relations. Silverman builds on her distinction between language acquisition and the later configuration of woman as lack in the castration complex to

argue that women can therefore be seen to have equal access to language. This involves taking issue with Kristeva's concept of the *chora*—which is located in the Pre-Symbolic—in that Silverman locates the maternal voice within the Symbolic order (ibid. 102–6). The re-configuration of mother/daughter relations arises through a re/reading of Freud which focuses on his work on the negative Oedipus complex (ibid. 124–5, 151–6). What is important is that the positive image of the 'maternal fantasmatic' (ibid. 124) arises from focusing on the discrepancies between psychoanalytic systems and drawing attention to neglected areas of Freud's work. Thus Silverman can be seen to treat psychoanalysis as a cluster of provisional structures which can be mobilised and interpreted in different ways. Far from casting psychoanalysis as a master narrative or a theory that is set in stone (Bordwell 1996, 24–5), the best work of psychoanalytic feminist film theorists can be seen to return psychoanalysis to the status of a series of speculative paradigms.<sup>16</sup>

The argument that feminist film theory simply reiterates psychoanalytic concepts often focuses on its accounts of spectatorship. Some of the histories of theory define this tradition purely in terms of the spectator (Nowell-Smith 2000, 8; Durant 2000, 9). Psychoanalysis is therefore said to set out spectatorial patterns of identification, such as Mulvey's analysis of the voyeuristic and fetishistic positioning of the male spectator. These patterns are then equated with structures of interpellation, given that identification with the images of Hollywood cinema is also said to be the means by which the subject is constituted within patriarchal ideology. While the attempt to define spectator response in terms of the stages of subject formation has been effectively called into question by cultural theorists, the contention that the feminist psychoanalytic tradition is mainly concerned with spectatorship is problematic. Mulvey addresses characterisation as well as mechanisms of identification in 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema'. Her brief account of narrative as sadism (in Mulvey 1989, 22) is expanded in her later article 'Beyond the Riddles of the Sphinx' (1989, 177–201). Teresa de Lauretis also focuses on the structures of desire in narrative in *Alice Doesn't*

(1984). One of the best critiques of psychoanalytic models of spectatorship is Jackie Stacey's *Star Gazing* which focuses on the neglected area of the relation between female spectators and female stars. Stacey uses sociological material to develop a complex account of the different patterns of identification (1994, 138–170). However, her reading of the erotics of these identifications also draws on the psychoanalytic work of Jessica Benjamin and Mandy Merck, specifically their use of narcissism (*ibid.* 172–75).

Feminist psychoanalytic film theory can therefore be seen as a tradition which encompasses a number of different strands, including spectatorship, narrative and genre analysis. It is worth addressing patterns of continuity within the strands in order to make clear that the attempt to bracket off a specific decade of theorising by claiming that it constitutes Grand Theory is not viable. While there are clear differences between Mulvey's and Stacey's work, the demarcation of the first as untenable Grand Theory and the second as acceptable sociological critique, ignores their interrelation. Stacey's new paradigms arise out of a critical awareness of the limitations of Mulvey's position, specifically the masculinisation of the female spectator (1994, 19–22). Moreover, both theorists share a concept of Hollywood cinema as an important site of psychic investment. The attempt to designate and bracket off the 'unacceptable' results in some strange manoeuvres. Cynthia Freeland argues that Barbara Creed's work on horror is unacceptable because of its deployment of psychosexual categories of difference (1996, 197–8). Yet Carol Clover's work on the genre is deemed acceptable (202, 207) even though *both* theorists offer readings of the figure of the 'final girl'<sup>17</sup> in the 'slasher' film which make use of psycho-sexual categories (Creed 1993, 126–7; Clover 1992, 58–64). I will go on to discuss their readings in detail at the end of the article.

I have traced continuities between the parallel projects of Mulvey and Silverman, as well as the very different projects of Mulvey and Stacey, in order to argue in favour of viewing feminist psychoanalytic film theory as a series of interweaving strands that constitute theory in

process. Within this model, the attempt to set up particular elements of the tradition as Grand Theory in order to designate them defunct, is clearly not viable. Moreover, I agree with Bill Nichols that 'past theory is far too vital and formative of present effort to deserve such a fate' (2000, 34). The past can therefore be seen to offer a diversity of conceptual frames which can be mobilised, re/worked or rejected at different times in the future (ibid. 35). What is important is that this process of theorising cannot be said to conform to the antagonistic model of dialectic that Carroll favours. Instead, theorising is envisaged as a gesture towards the future that acknowledges and affirms its relation to the past.

### **Film Theory and Feminist Philosophy**

Dispensing with the myth of Grand Theory should not be seen as a refusal to accept that changes occur in modes of theorising. Indeed, getting rid of the myth is a key move towards enabling the appreciation of diverse patterns of change. Bill Nichols argues that the conceptual frameworks of film theory are already in the process of being mobilised, re/worked and rejected through their deployment in the analysis of 'specific forms, practices and effects' (2000, 38). Thus, the psychoanalytic definitions of sexual difference are already being re/positioned as one form of differential category among many others including race and sexuality. For Nichols, the future of film theory revolves around questions of representation and visibility:

Who gets to represent what to whom and why; what image, icon or person shall stand for what to whom are questions in a form that allows issues of visibility and cinematic representation to tie into issues of social and political consequence (ibid. 45).

These questions place the methodologies, practices and politics of queer theory and post-colonial theory firmly at the centre of future theorising (ibid. 43–4).<sup>18</sup>

While the conception of theory as political, perspectival and particular clearly bodes well for feminist film theory, I also want to draw attention to the inadequate characterisation of traditional philosophy in Nichols' article. For Nichols, the study of visual culture involves an analysis of sensory material as well as an appreciation of the links between images and affect (2000, 41). This focus on the sensual and the affective is said to place cultural theory outside traditional philosophical definitions of knowledge, such as those of Plato and Descartes. Nichols uses the term 'rhetoric' to describe the interpenetration of the theoretical and the material in the study of representation. 'Rhetoric is embodied, impassioned, situated and purposeful. Logic no longer stands as an end in itself; it becomes placed in the service of speaking well and moving others' (ibid. 45). Thus rhetoric is defined in opposition to traditional philosophy in which logic is said to be 'rational, abstract, universal and detached' (ibid. 46). It is important to note that Nichols does not subscribe to the myth of Grand Theory in Film Studies, yet he is happy to locate it elsewhere, in epistemology as traditionally conceived. Thus, the move towards particularity is presented as a move away from a body of totally abstract 'academic' theory.

I want to argue that this division between abstract theory and theories of particularity concedes far too much to traditional philosophy. If theorising is to be viewed as a perspectival, political process, it makes more sense to be very wary of any tradition that attempts to pass itself off as neutral and abstract. Nichols' nomination of Plato and Descartes as exemplary of this tradition ignores feminist critiques which address the gendering that underpins these models of 'abstract' rationality. Moreover, Irigaray's extensive analysis of Plato's myth of the cave in *Speculum* reads the space as a *hystera* (or womb) whose generative capacities are co-opted to create and sustain a transcendental metaphysics (1985, 243-64):

This cave intercepts the games of copula in a miming of reproduction and in each figuration of the inner space the image of the Sun engenders sham offspring. This mime simu-

lates offspring beyond appeal and recall, pretends to defer them by/for some kind of amnesia. Irretrievably. For has reminiscence not always already engaged in rapturous contemplation of the Idea? (ibid. 255)

Plato is said to usurp the position of the maternal/material origin by presenting the Ideas as always already there. Thus, the notion that Plato's system can be seen as 'pure' abstraction buys into its self-conception, quite literally, and fails to take note of the repression of materiality that is its inception and its point of destabilisation.

Irigaray's reading of the myth of the cave constantly draws attention to its status as metaphor. She pays particular attention to the kinds of rhetorical strategies that are deployed to make this figure compelling and convincing, transforming it from one possible figure to *the* story of the discovery of truth (ibid. 243). What is important here is that traditional philosophy is not positioned beyond rhetoric, but is seen to deploy the devices of metaphor in the formation of abstract systems. Any theoretical system that attempts to position itself beyond rhetoric should therefore be regarded with suspicion.

Bordwell's *Making Meaning* is a good example of the attempt to accede to the space beyond rhetoric by presenting his system as neutral and commonsensical in accordance with the analytic tradition. Bordwell explicitly uses the term rhetoric to describe critical strategies deployed in making interpretations seem plausible and convincing (1989, 30). Importantly, he concedes that he is using the term in its classical sense to designate that which 'is concerned only with persuasion, not truth' (ibid. 34). In the final chapter, Bordwell describes his project as a 'poetics of interpretation' which lays bare the underlying structures of the interpretative process, thereby contrasting it with the rhetoric deployed by different critical approaches or theoretical systems (ibid. 273). In this way the conceptual framework developed in *Making Meaning* is given the status of the truth.

The claims to neutrality are further enhanced by the adoption of quasi-scientific modes of argument. Bordwell makes frequent use of lists

as well as providing a series of flowcharts which designate the progress of his working model. The image of the critic as a carefree cyclist who knows nothing of the complexities of Physics or Sociology (ibid. 7) also serves to make Bordwell's model of interpretation less theoretical and abstract. After all, to continue with the image, he is merely providing a working description of the process of cycling. The neutrality of the commonsensical image can be called into question when it is seen to function as a means of effacing Bordwell's deployment of complex theoretical concepts such as semantic fields and Kantian schemata.

Within this context, Bordwell's attempt to create an absolute distinction between critical interpretation and true theory gains different resonances. In addition to discrediting other film theorists, Bordwell uses the distinction to deny his reliance on rhetorical figures, thereby presenting his work as 'pure' description. However, the use of quasi-scientific forms such as lists and flowcharts should not be regarded as any less figurative than the image of the cyclist. Like Lacan's 'mathemes', the flowcharts provide another configuration of the system. Bordwell's attempt to pass off his model of interpretation as transparent is a refusal to recognise that his work will also be subject to interpretation. The failure to acknowledge his use of rhetorical figures is symptomatic of a deeper failure to acknowledge the metaphorical status of his own system and the partial, polemical nature of the 'description' that he is offering.

I have drawn attention to Bordwell's deployment of the classical definition of rhetoric in order to demonstrate the problematic consequences of positioning any type of theory outside the realm of the rhetorical. Nichols' distinction between perspectival forms of theorising and traditional philosophy can therefore be seen to hold open a space that could be used to undermine the very projects he wishes to facilitate. His strategy can only be successful if he borrows from Irigaray and Derrida to argue that all theories are rhetorical but some appreciate their limitations more clearly than others. Nichols uses the term 'rhetoric' to indicate the perspectival, affective qualities of theorising (2000, 46-7). I

want to focus on the figurative aspect of rhetoric in order to briefly explore another way of linking the theoretical and the material.

The feminist philosopher Michèle le Dœuff uses the concept of imagery to link philosophy to its social context. Like Derrida and Irigaray, she argues that the definition of philosophy as abstract and purely intellectual disguises its debt to the imagination. Philosophical texts are said to employ myths, fables, poetry and other images to create and sustain their arguments (Le Dœuff 1989, 2). However, the disavowal of this debt means that the imagery forms points of productive destabilisation. The productive potentiality of the images lies in their capacity to gesture beyond the philosophical text to the broader social context in which they once resonated. Thus, specific figures from literary and cultural traditions are assimilated or re/worked in the construction of philosophy, creating what le Dœuff terms 'the philosophical imaginary'.

It is this link between the philosophical imaginary and the social imaginary that I wish to explore here. For le Dœuff, the intersection of the philosophical and the social means that there is no space outside philosophy. '[W]hether we like it or not, we are within philosophy, surrounded by masculine-feminine divisions that philosophy has helped to articulate and refine' (1989, 101). Thus, there is no upper level of abstract theory, all theories are seen to impact on the social by reifying/sedimenting/questioning particular modes of sociality within the images that they borrow or redefine. The crucial issue is to address what the images facilitate and how they intersect with other modes of social organisation.<sup>19</sup>

Creed's work on horror traces the mythic and literary imagery that informs Freud's analysis of woman as fetish object. She takes issue with Freud's reading of the Medusa in which the Gorgon's snake-hair is said to both conceal and reveal her 'lack' (1993, 110-11). Creed argues that Freud neglects a number of key features of the descriptions of the Medusa. In particular, he fails to comment on her 'huge mouth, lolling tongue and boar's tusks' as well as the fanged nature of each strand of

her snake-hair (ibid. 111). Following Erich Neumann, Creed concludes that the Medusa can be read as an example of the *vagina dentata*. Importantly, Creed builds on this reading to argue that Freud suppresses those aspects of texts which present woman as castrating rather than castrated. She demonstrates this point by looking at his reading of Friedrich Hebbel's play *Judith and Holofernes* in which Judith decapitates her lover. While Freud acknowledges that the act of decapitation is a form of castration, he maintains that Judith's action is symptomatic of penis envy and thus re/constructs her as castrated (ibid. 120–21).

What is important here is not the typological status of the *femme castratrice*, but rather the methodology that Creed deploys. She makes use of the wider aspects of the mythic and literary imagery in order to challenge Freudian and Lacanian constructions of woman as lack. Following le Dœuff's model, Creed can be seen to mobilise the social imaginary in order to destabilise key elements of the psychoanalytic frame. In linking woman with the threat of castration, Creed undermines the traditional characterisation of the father as threat which, in turn, serves to radically affect the status of the father as law (1993, 158–63).

The focus on the figure of the *femme castratrice* enables Creed to further disrupt gender binaries in which femininity is defined in terms of passivity and non-aggression. She argues against Clover's analysis of the masculinisation of the 'final girl' in slasher films because it is said to re-inforce gender binaries. It must be said that this summary of Clover does not really do justice to her analysis of the 'theatricalisation of gender' in the slasher film (1992, 57–9). However, Clover's reading of the 'final girl' does masculinise the moments at which she actively fights back:

she alternates between registers from the outset; before her final struggle she undergoes the deepest throes of 'femininity'; and even during the final struggle she is now weak and now strong, now flees the killer and now charges him, now stabs and is stabbed, now cries out in fear and now shouts in anger. (ibid. 63).

It is clear that Clover reads the 'final girl's' mutilation of the male slasher as a phallic attack. In contrast, Creed argues that the 'litany of horrific deeds enacted on the male slasher's body reads like a passage from an ancient myth of legend about the fate of the wandering hero who was foolish enough to arouse the anger of the female monster—the Bacchae, Furies, Sirens, Gorgons ...' (1993, 126). Creed's re/reading of the Medusa enables her to re/gender the capacity for violence as feminine.

The differences between Clover's and Creed's readings also have narratological implications. For Clover, the 'final girl's' efforts to save herself construct her as an epic hero reinforcing her status as masculine at the level of narrative form (1992, 59). In contrast, Creed's assessment of the final girl's acts of violence suggests that the slasher film can be re/viewed as the revenge of the female monster. Her comment can therefore be seen to take issue with de Lauretis' structuralist analysis of the female monster who is said to function as an obstacle for the male protagonist to overcome (1984, 118–19). Both readings construct the 'final girl' as narratologically problematic. Clover explicitly addresses the ways in which slasher films confound the traditional epic model (1992, 60–1). Importantly, the discussion of the social imaginary, here encapsulated in a particular sub-genre, generates material that substantially affects previous theoretical models of narrative. This demonstrates that the process of making theory requires a constant movement between different registers, a continual feedback loop between the social and the theoretical. Furthermore, the issue of which examples will become central theoretical pivot points is crucial.

I have chosen to focus on feminist work on the slasher film because it highlights some important features of feminist theory. Both Clover and Creed acknowledge the problematic nature of working on this particular sub-genre, given its reliance on graphic depictions of violence committed against female characters. However, their work can be seen to attest to the possibility of making feminist theory out of cultural resources that are always inevitably impure. As such, they convey

the importance of interpretation to the process of theorising, as well as the necessary precariousness of such theoretical projects. It is this sense of theory as a precarious process which relies on rhetorical devices to persuade its readers and uses metaphorical figures as its very foundation that can challenge Bordwell's and Carroll's pure scientism. I want to conclude by suggesting that it is the vision of theory as *impure*, perspectival and imaginative that offers a future for feminist theory in both Philosophy and Film Studies.

Catherine Constable  
Sheffield Hallam University

## Notes

- 1 I must thank Richard Dyer and Rachel Jones for all their helpful suggestions and advice concerning this article.
- 2 This is also discussed in the millennium issue of *Screen* 41 (1), 2–4.
- 3 Noel Carroll offers a diatribe against political correctness in *Post-Theory* (1996, 44–7). For a more nuanced discussion see the two articles by Branston and Perkins in *Reinventing Film Studies* (2000, 18–19, 81–5).
- 4 Laura Mulvey's article was originally published in *Screen* in 1975. Articles from Metz's book also appear in the 1970s. However, the suggestion that Grand Theory can be confined to the 1970s is misleading because so many of the articles offering critiques of it use material from the 1980s and even the 1990s.
- 5 This can be found in Lyotard's 1979 text *The Postmodern Condition*.
- 6 I owe the term 'Physics Envy' to Victor Perkins.
- 7 Bordwell makes the same point in *Making Meaning* (1989, 97).
- 8 There are two references to *Making Meaning* in this section (Bordwell 1996, 25–6, 34 fns 57,61).
- 9 For an example of the use of this tactic in philosophy see Jean Curthoys' (1997) attack on the work of Rosalyn Diprose.
- 10 See also Bordwell, *Making Meaning* (1989, 4–7).
- 11 I therefore disagree with Durant's more optimistic assessment of interpretive exemplars in *Screen* (Durant 2000, 16).

- 12 See Freeland's reading of Mulvey in *Post-Theory* (1996, 199).
- 13 Carroll borrows this argument from *Making Meaning* (Bordwell 1989, 104).
- 14 For an analysis of the invidious positioning of female philosophers as commentators see 'Imperfect Discretion: Interventions into the History of Philosophy by Twentieth-Century French Women Philosophers' (Deucher 2000, 160–80).
- 15 I agree with Freeland's criticisms of the problems caused by the psychoanalytic blind spots of race and class (Freeland 1996, 200).
- 16 Wollen positions psychoanalysis as a form of speculation in his new edition of *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* (1998, 170).
- 17 The term 'final girl' is used generically to designate the last female survivor of the community of teenage victims in the 'slasher' movie genre. One of the first examples of this would be the figure of Laurie in *Halloween*. (dir. John Carpenter, 1978)
- 18 See also Branston's comments on the central positioning of queer theory in the future of film theory (Branston 2000, 28–9).
- 19 Genevieve Lloyd uses le Dœuff to provide an analysis of racist implications of the imagery of 'terra nullius' in Australian philosophy and politics (Lloyd 2000, 26–39).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bordwell, D.** (1989) *Making Meaning: Inference and Rhetoric in the Interpretation of Cinema*, Harvard University Press.
- (1996) 'Contemporary Film Studies and the Vicissitudes of Grand Theory', in **Bordwell & Carroll**, 3–36.
- Bordwell D & Carroll, N.** (eds.) (1996) *Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies*, University of Wisconsin Press.
- Branston, G.** (2000) 'Why Theory?', in **Gledhill & Williams**, 18–33.
- Butler, A.** (2000) 'Feminist Theory and Women's Films at the Turn Of The Century', in *Screen* 41 (1) Spring Issue, 73–9.

- Carroll, N. (1990) 'The Image of Women in Film: A Defense of a Paradigm', in *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Fall issue, 349–60.
- (1996) 'Prospects for Film Theory: A Personal Assessment', in **Bordwell & Carroll**, 37–68.
- Clover, C. (1992) *Men, Women and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*, London, B.F.I.
- Creed, B. (1993) *The Monstrous Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*, Routledge.
- Curthoys, J. (1997) *Feminist Amnesia: The Wake of Women's Liberation*, London, Routledge.
- De Lauretis, T. (1984) *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema*, Macmillan.
- Deutscher, P. (2000) 'Imperfect Discretion: Interventions into the History of Philosophy by Twentieth-Century French Women Philosophers', in *Going Australian: Reconfiguring Feminism & Philosophy*, Special Issue of *Hypatia* 15 (2), 160–80.
- Durant, A. (2000) 'What Future for Interpretive Work in Film and Media Studies?', in *Screen* 41 (1) Spring Issue, 7–17.
- Dyer, R (1990) *Now You See It*, Routledge.
- Freeland, C. (1996) 'Feminist Frameworks for Horror Films', in **Bordwell & Carroll**, 195–218.
- Gledhill, C. (2000) 'Rethinking Genre', in **Gledhill & Williams**, 221–43.
- Gledhill, C. & Williams, L. (2000) *Reinventing Film Studies*, London, Arnold.
- Irigaray, L. (1985) *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Cornell University Press.
- Kuhn, A (2000) 'Millennial Editorial', *Screen* 41 (1) Spring Issue.

- Le Dœuff, M.** (1989) *The Philosophical Imaginary*, Athlone Press.
- Liotard, J.** (1979) *The Postmodern Condition* Manchester University Press
- Lloyd, G.** (2000) 'No One's Land: Australia and the Philosophical Imagination', in *Going Australian: Reconfiguring Feminism & Philosophy*, Special Issue of *Hypatia* 15 (2), 26–39.
- Metz, C.** (1982) *Psychoanalysis and Cinema: An Imaginary Signifier*, Macmillan.
- Mulvey, L.** (1989) *Visual and Other Pleasures*, Macmillan.
- Nichols, B.** 'Film Theory and the Revolt against Master Narratives', in **Gledhill & Williams**, 34–52.
- Nowell-Smith, G.** (2000) 'How Films Mean or from Aesthetics to Semiotics and Halfway Back Again', in **Gledhill & Williams**, 8–17.
- Perkins, T.** (2000) 'Who (and What) is it For?', in **Gledhill & Williams**, 76–95.
- Russo, Vito** (1987) *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies*, Harper Collins.
- Silverman, K.** (1983) *The Subject of Semiotics*, Oxford University Press.
- (1987) *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema*, Indiana University Press.
- Sokal, A.** (1999) *Postmodern Nonsense; Fashionable Intellectuals Abuse of Science*, Picador.
- Stacey, J.** (1994) *Star Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship*, London, Routledge.
- Wollen, P.** (1998) *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema*: London, B.F.I., Expanded Edition.

## BOOK REVIEWS

### *Passion and Action: The Emotions in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*

Susan James, Clarendon Press 1997

h/b £35 0 19 823674 3, p/b £14.99 0 1982 50134

*Passion and Action* sets out to retrieve the ways in which the passions were linked to scientific enquiry in the 17th century. Susan James has thus undertaken a topic of direct relevance to thinkers in the fields of epistemology, virtue ethics, literary criticism and the history of philosophical ideas. The book is an excellent history of ideas, if we define the latter as the attempt to inhabit a cognitive culture no longer readily available to 21st-century readers and thinkers.

The nub of her project is this: 'seventeenth-century conceptions of knowledge are pulled between two conflicting ideals—a vision of knowledge as separation and a conception of understanding as unification—which have yet to be reconciled' (161). These ideals, it is clearly suggested, remain in conflict today. In the 20th century, philosophy, fully secularised, has been split off from psychology. Modern philosophy allows itself to skip over the passions, emotions and sentiment, marginalising them as irrelevant. We try to draw lines today between degrees of affective *intensity*. The study of passions is now called 'psychopathology' and we use what we observe to monitor and manage suffering. Emotions we sometimes label 'neuroses', and they are manipulated to keep economies, domestic and commercial, ticking over. They are binding forces that enable offices to run (on resentment), women to be cooped up with young children (through guilt), and men to continue to justify themselves more or less indiscriminately (to excuse aggression).

James argues that we do not 'take account of the role of the affections in the acquisition of knowledge' (160), and that this failure has a long and intricate history. Underpinning a highly scholarly project is a

forceful insistence that the sources of future thought on subjectivity, feminism and ethics lie in understanding the apparently remote philosophical past, rather than having been seeded in the more recent splintering of forms of thought.

*Passion and Action* is an exploration, not an argument. It is broken into four parts, with a superb introduction. The introduction and first part of the book set out how the passions were viewed with suspicion and curiosity by 17th-century thinkers. Passions in European thought were basically understood to be 'thoughts or states of the soul which represent things as good or evil for us, and are therefore seen as objects of inclination or aversion' (4). 17th-century thinkers had inherited a 'long and palimpsestic tradition of attempts to provide a comprehensive classification of key emotions' (4). It is these two terms, 'states' and 'classification', which seem coded to show the distortion in 17th-century thought. How can a passion be described as a 'state' when a passion is in constant mutation? How can a necessarily static classification of such mutually reinforcing, dependent and entangled motions as passions ever be viable? James' book has to fight hard to avoid being tarred by some of the absurdities that any attempt to classify passions immediately provokes.

The traditional classificatory systems inherited and inflected by 17th-century philosophers are briefly sketched. James reminds us that discussion about the passions stemmed from philosophers such as Aristotle with his loose grouping of pairs of opposing passions. This was then refined in the 4th century by Augustine's four basic passions, seen as modifications of a single overarching prototype (love). In the 13th century, Thomas Aquinas' flamboyant compartmentalised typology gained considerable influence. This neatened passion-picture avoids all the glutinous diachronic intricacy which obtained in the 17th century, which James will investigate.

Aristotelianism did not collapse with the dawn of early modernity, and the search for a systematic replacement often looked backwards to classical alternatives such as Epicurean atomism, even as

metaphysics was becoming susceptible to accounts of the passions freed of plain typological frameworks. Aquinas's account of the states of the tripartite soul remained influential, and blocked any easy pathway to a 'post-Scholastic philosophical psychology' (22). Augustine's vigorous control of the passions had always been at risk of simply becoming useful software for several of the Christian doctrines. Christianised Stoicism rumbled along in the background, threatening to take over forms of discourse about the passions, and cutting off their connection to epistemology.

James' methodology throughout focuses on individual thinkers. Without writing biography, she makes it clear that thought emerges from intensive individual endeavour rather than being spontaneously generated in some kind of collective imaginary. This makes her work one of unapologetic close reading. She shows how Hobbes, Descartes, Locke, Pascal, Malebranche and Spinoza were all profoundly interested in the ambivalent functionality and destructiveness of the passions, and how this interest shaped 'both the philosophical problems they address and the solutions they propose' (14).

James gives three reasons why it is important to grasp the centrality of the passions to 17th-century conceptions of mind and polity. First of all, she wants to trace the intellectual route by which we now claim that actions result from beliefs and desires. Enlightenment thinkers represented the 17th century as an era dominated by dogmatic religious values. The early-modern period was conveniently dubbed that time in which a significant binarism gained currency: man's self-appointed superiority over nature. These characterisations of the early modern period served to create a justificatory backdrop for purported modern originality or insight. Clearly this demonising has to be recognised as an unavoidable dialectical movement of contention and recovery, but James argues that we need to be far more careful and self-conscious about the workings of that dialectic, and what it may be manipulated to repress.

This caricature, she argues, withered away an understanding that the passions were an integral part of early-modern cartographies of being. Passions were seen as states that straddled body and mind—philosophers grappling with them were far from being dualist separatists, and did not think of mental phenomena as transparently available to the mind. James revises the received idea that Cartesian dualism introduced an absolute distinction between body and soul that splits reason off from emotion, and banishes emotion to the body. Descartes, she points out, in fact distinguished between passions and 'intellectual emotions'. Passions were understood to be both 'obstacles to and prerequisites of knowledge' (16), and thus essential components of epistemological study.

Secondly, James makes an important claim that 'some feminist writers have ... argued, or assumed, that the patriarchal character of philosophy was clinched and consolidated in the seventeenth century: the emergence of a clear division between body and mind served to attach women more firmly to the physical world, and a comparable split between reason and passion condemned them to the realm of affect' (18). She is thinking here of writers such as Elizabeth Grosz and Seyla Benhabib. James is a firm advocate of 'finer grained studies of the cross-cutting conceptions of masculinity and femininity' (20), although she herself has tried to take a step back behind gender debates. James is acutely alert to the self-reflexive irony that condemning one's forebears condemns one to repeating their own strategy of vilification: 'Our craving for esteem, and the enviousness and anxiety that this breeds, shapes our intellectual life and makes us prone to the demonising strategy' (19). If anything, however, some vilification is positively needed here. Without it, her project can seem tantalising and crystalline.

Thirdly, *Passion and Action* is 'intended as a contribution to the reinstatement of the emotions within philosophy, to the gathering tide of opinion that we need to take account of our emotional life if we are to understand ... moral motivation and growth, the springs of action (rational and otherwise), and the nature of reasoning' (22). James'

thinker-led approach can produce confusion for the lay reader. It takes hard work to move back and forth between individual and general patterns and histories of thought. This may be offset, however, by recognising that hard work does pay dividends. Her style is underpinned rhetorically by a profound suspicion of metaphor, but this does not inhibit her attempts to negotiate ways of modelling mental phenomena radically unavailable to language. But, because her investment lies in accounting for many selves evenly (rather than many selves tyrannously), some signposting has been too modestly removed, and some argumentation too honourably avoided.

The debates on action and passion on-going four hundred years ago have undergone major scientific, medical, political, philosophical and literary re-organisations. They are practically extinguished for a current readership. James' book is all about the pain of resurrecting continuities, and confusing parallelisms, when clean, artful breaks are so much more seductive. In short, this is a book that sets out to retrieve how we have shifted from worrying about communities, when communities were quite small, to worrying about ourselves or a handful of others when communities have become monstrously distended. Seen in that light, this is a truly astonishing undertaking.

*Ingrid Wassenaar*

*Christ's College, University of Cambridge*

### ***Collective Imaginings: Spinoza, Past and Present***

**Moira Gatens & Genevieve Lloyd, Routledge 1999**

**h/b £42.50 0 415 16570 9, p/b £12.99 0 415 16571 7**

The novice who peruses a copy of Spinoza's *Ethics* is immediately confronted with a daunting array of axioms, propositions and the intricate rigours of the geometric method. Should she persevere she will be plunged into a careful series of demonstrations of the existence and essence of God. Such archaic notions would appear to fit the remit of the mediaevalist, the theologian or the historian of philosophy, being at

odds with the concerns of the contemporary world with all its disparities, conflicts and accelerated processes of globalisation.

What is in the writings of this odd, anomalous, even heretical thinker that has captivated people of diverse, indeed opposing, philosophical perspectives? What could a solitary lens grinder of Jewish Marrano extraction, based in the Holland of the 1600s, say that might have any relevance to the reader interested in considering different forms of political organisation in society or different conceptions of the individual and her relations with others, with the world and with God?

*Collective Imaginings: Spinoza Past and Present* is the result of a joint collaboration and dialogue. It is divided into two parts, the first dealing with 'imagination, freedom and responsibility', and the second dwelling on 'communities, difference and the present past'. The two sections are written by Genevieve Lloyd and Moira Gatens, respectively. In spite of this, the book is coherent, and there is a continuity of argument throughout. This is, in part, due to the decision to focus on the role of the imagination in this careful re-thinking of the relations of the individual and collective. Questions of responsibility consequently take on new parameters and guises.

They are keen to figure the imagination as a form of knowledge, one that is not simply to be superseded by reason (the common notions) and the intellectual love of God. The imagination is admittedly flawed, but is a necessary aspect of our being and individuality as bodies in the world. As they contend, sometimes fictitious inventions are not false and the line between reason and the imagination cannot be so easily demarcated. The imagination reveals to us our status as a part of nature and shows how our individuality can only be understood relatively and relationally.

The imagination might, at first glance, appear to be the source of all delusion, all passivity, all confusion, a good deal of struggle, misunderstanding, superstition and murder; in short an obstacle to be surmounted and annihilated. But to some extent, to negate the imagination, to focus simply on the negative and obstructive character of its

nature, is to deny also the role of the body and the entire ethical process of becoming active. Lloyd and Gatens underline the role of the imagination as a binding force. They affirm the positive manner in which the body experiences its embeddedness amongst other bodies as those bodies impinge on it, leaving their traces, with the correlative experiences of passive joyous affections. Moreover they perceive the political implication of the social fictions fabricated by the imagination which serve to 'stabilise social institutions which in turn confer identity on the individuals whom they ostensibly serve'. In this way they can renegotiate questions of responsibility because the individual is no longer seen as a bordered territory, distinct and apart from others. Responsibility thus becomes more pro-active, as individuals might *take* responsibility for that which they have not done, by virtue of being born into a community.

Associations of individuals create social fictions which bind each individual to the collective, but though these are often formed from fear and superstition, they can prepare the path for the common notions. This is the form of reason that we learn through experimentation, through discovering the commonalities with bodies that agree with our own. If political power is not imposed from on high but operates as a democratic form of communication, where an equilibrium of power is reached, understanding different polities and collectivities then becomes possible without recourse to transcendent universal norms. Evaluations are then based on *immanent* norms. There is a *genealogical* aspect to this process (understanding of the past) as well an *ethological* one (understanding the powers and capacities pertaining to the present). These webs of interdependence of individuals reveal to us an understanding of power which is relational and non-substantial.

What becomes stunningly clear from their book is the vaporisation of any atomistic notion of the individual as isolated and solitary, and the way in which the imagination shows us the irreducibly relational, material and sociable nature of our being. A rational understanding of what is non-rational, in other words the passions and appetites, rests on

discovering the commonalities that exist between bodies. These associations are to be found through practices, on the level of the affects, rather than as a set of pre-existing classifications and categories into which things fit.

Where there is power there will always be resistance, proclaims Gatens, echoing Foucault. The laws of nature mean that everything is constrained or limited in its capacities. Even tyrannical governments do not have complete power to annihilate the desire to persevere in being, the *conatus*, of the individuals in such a territoriality. Gatens remarks: 'Nothing in nature prohibits political power from taking the form of domination or oppression'. However these kinds of government which divide human powers, which do not encourage a flourishing of human potentials, are weaker than those which encourage, in almost musical terms, the composition of human powers, and enhance the possibilities of human reason.

What we learn from this is that ideas, beliefs and desires cannot be easily separated. And the same is true of knowledge and experience. Ideas cannot be simply abstracted from social life. Groups that were in the past discriminated against, stigmatised and excluded from a body politic may feel that the past is damaging to them, that their social imaginary is fractured, and that institutional recognition is not adequate. This book does not ignore practical and pressing issues of politics and ethics, but strives to address them in a systematic and thoughtful way. Far from residing on the philosophical plane of abstraction, Gatens and Lloyd demonstrate the co-implication of thought and action to try to transform the norms, values and imaginaries of communities. They force a recognition and affirmation of marginalised groups through their acknowledgement of the specificity of the *ethos* and imaginaries of different groups. Each singular life creates the possibility of resistance. The potential for change can surge forth from within the system, transforming, rejuvenating, rejoicing.

*Collective Imaginings* is a lucid exposition of the key movements and themes of Spinoza's works. That, in itself, is an impressive achievement.

However, rather than contenting themselves with a clear textual commentary, Gatens and Lloyd seek to reactivate Spinoza's concepts in a new setting. Spinoza is an exceptional thinker, they argue, because his system is one which positively affirms difference and which does not seek to coerce difference into a model of sameness, or to categorise it hierarchically. This is by no means to suggest that he is not interested in questions of identity, relationality and commonality. He is concerned with concrete practices of living, encouraging us to reconfigure questions about individuality, and suggesting a much richer idea of context as an embedded network of relations.

*Aislinn O'Donnell*  
*University of Warwick*

### ***Writing the Orgy: Power and Parody in Sade***

Lucienne Frappier-Mazur, trans. Gillian C. Gill, University of Pennsylvania Press 1996

h/b £37.95 0 812 23251 8, p/b £17.95 0 812 21590 7

From Apollinaire's ground-breaking study *L'Oeuvre du Marquis de Sade* (1909) to the current day, Sade has been being explained. He has been seen as an arch-exponent of black humour by the surrealists; a symptom of the brutalising effects of the so-called Enlightenment by Adorno and Horkheimer; a figure of heroic and resistant liberty of mind by Klossowski and Annie Le Brun; an innovator of language by the *Tel Quel* group and Roland Barthes; an ambiguous empowerer of the female sex by Angela Carter; Marcel Hénaf's Marxist reading reveals the aristocrat nostalgic for feudalism, whilst Jean Deprun and—more recently—Michel Delon look at his literary and philosophical contexts. Yet, in all this work, there has been no thorough psychoanalytical study of Sade's work, perhaps because the task seemed at once too big and too obvious. Nonetheless, of all the explanations required to understand Sade, this is surely one of the first. We want to know the meaning of the obscene cruelty, bright detail and ebullient taboo-smashing scenarios: we want to know what was the matter with Sade.

Lucienne Frappier-Mazur fills this gap with a psychoanalytical reading of great maturity and satisfying subtlety. She explains in turn the attack on women and the mother, the primacy of sodomy, the incest, parricide, filicide and taboo-smashing. She looks at the control the orgy re-imposes on the chaos of unrestrained libido. She shows us an aristocrat caught in a time of social meltdown; a man who needs to re-assert the power of the male and deny that of the reproducing woman. Anal control is therefore paramount and the orgy a way of facing, and facing down, the fear of losing control. Killing mothers (and some fathers) gives us the angry, rebellious Sade, imprisoned and let down by his parent generation. But Sade—released, ruined, and then re-imprisoned by the Revolution—kills children too. Sade, for Frappier-Mazur, is about 'the suppression of any filiation' (173).

She carries this reading over to the philosophical context and produces a similar conclusion: Sade's thinking is thus a 'thinking against' (129) which parodies and distorts his models. Here, however, Frappier-Mazur is skating on thin ice. Writing that Sade reproduces '*in his selective manner ... the materialist theories of his century*' (98), she opens herself to the charge of being insufficiently informed about that materialism and Sade's very complex relationship with it. In fact, Sade sees himself as having developed 18th-century French materialism to its logical conclusions, thereby correcting its course rather than perverting it. The difference is crucial, as Sade is not seeking to overturn his materialist forebears (with whom he could identify, as they were also disestablished: Frappier-Mazur's reading of Sade's tussles with power is therefore not threatened), but on the contrary to take on the mantle of their legacy.

Frappier-Mazur is also unconvincing when she claims that *Histoire de Juliette* is a reflective and heterogeneous fiction in the image of *Don Quixote*. With Sade, there is only one 'reality' provided by the text, and the alternating formats of pornographic scene and philosophical 'dissertation' (Sade's term) are designed to reinforce one another, not pull in different directions. Moreover, there is only one real point of view—that of the libertine—and this is despite the fact that, as

Frappier-Mazur points out, Sade's text is a fabric of allusions and borrowings from other authors. To assume that because it is a 'very obvious' 'bricolage' it is 'thus of a parodic nature' (109) is to misunderstand techniques of writing current in the 18th century. Quoting and misquoting, adapting and rephrasing were all acceptable and recognisable ways of carrying on intertextual conversations which the relatively small, essentially male and educated readership would understand.

Frappier-Mazur assumes that her sophisticated psychoanalytical reading of Sade's texts can, in conjunction with his life, be unproblematically transferred to his literary 'family', and that the enraged parricidal and filicidal aggression of the pornography has an exact parallel in the way he treats his literary and philosophical forebears. The ingenuousness of this approach gives a very lop-sided shape to *Writing the Orgy*. Disappointing as this is, it should not detract from the very real achievements of this densely-argued work. As a psychoanalytical reading of Sade's violence and obscenity, it is thoroughly convincing. Beautifully translated by Gillian Gill, it also, more than many studies, gives a rich sense of the variety of Sade's flavours and of his stinks.

Caroline Warman

De Montfort University, Leicester

### *The Forgetting of Air*

Luce Irigaray, trans. Mary Beth Mader, Athlone 1999

h/b £35.00 0 485 11491 7, p/b £12.99 0 485 12119

*The Forgetting of Air* forms part of Luce Irigaray's tetralogy on the elements, fire, water, earth and air. It offers an exploration of relations between man and woman in which woman is not completely subsumed by man. Only three texts of the tetralogy have so far been written. *Forgetting of Air* originally appeared in 1983 as the third in the series. It is also the third to be translated, sixteen years after it was first published. The other two texts, *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche* and *Elemental Passions*, appeared in English in 1991 and 1992 respectively. Each of the

twelve chapters in *The Forgetting of Air* is quite short and provides a 'commentary' on one or more of Heidegger's works.

The first things I noticed when I opened *Forgetting of Air* were its endnotes and index, both courtesy of the translator, Mary Beth Mader. The endnotes give information about the French and also show what Heideggerian texts Irigaray was engaging with. They are particularly useful for readers who want to make cross-references and for those who do not have access to the French original. The index, which is not present in the French edition, also saves the reader considerable time and effort.

Irigaray's texts are generally divided into three phases: firstly, a critique and deconstruction of the one, male, self-same subject of psychoanalysis and philosophy; secondly, the construction of a female subject and a female language; and, thirdly, the exploration of two sexually different subjects. As such, *Forgetting of Air* falls into the second category. For me, Irigaray's texts on the elements have a profoundly unsettling effect. On reading *Forgetting of Air* I felt as though I was being taken on a journey. Immersed in Irigaray's search for a different notion of subjectivity, you go somewhere unknown; when you return you know you have been there, but you do not have the words to describe it. So you pick up the book again and start from the beginning, this time reading so that you may tell of your travels. Yet the same thing happens again. I would like to suggest that this effect is intentional. The style of the texts on the elements is poetic, questioning and associative, precisely so that its topic cannot be recounted in analytic language.

I picked out three main themes. The first is Irigaray's well-known critique of the philosopher's unacknowledged debt to 'woman'/to the mother. In *Forgetting of Air* Irigaray points out that Heidegger's quest for Being misses out the very first instance of being in the mother's womb. Before man can think about Being he has to come into being. This does not (yet) take place without a woman. In the mother's womb, a foetus receives oxygen, air, through the woman's blood. Yet in Heidegger's thought on air as man's container, this first dwelling is left out. Man's

debt to woman is 'forgotten', and in his thinking man appropriates woman so that she becomes immersed into the self-same.

The second topic is language. In *Forgetting of Air* Irigaray suggests that man has created language as his element to live in. However, so long as he does not respect the (female) other in this language, it will be destructive. In order for philosophy and philosophy's language to become fruitful, a return to the pre-Socratic elements and a recognition of sexual difference are needed. This argument can be found in Irigaray's other elemental texts, too. The need for recognition and incorporation of sexual difference is the third thread that runs through *Forgetting of Air*. It connects to the need for respect for air and breath, and the critique of a male language that constitutes self-same subject(s).

For me, Irigaray's second phase is her most exciting and most creative period: that of the amorous interactions with her male philosophical partners. The poetic style of *Forgetting the Air* is enticing and beautiful. It is not recommended for those who want a clear and accessible account of female subjectivity. But for those who value Irigaray's engagements, this translation will be a welcome alternative to her later, rather more unidimensional work.

Hanneke Canters

*The Open University in the North*

### ***Writing the Self: Philosophy Becomes Autobiography***

Jo-Ann Pilardi, Westport CT: Praeger;

London: Greenwood Press 1999

h/b £47.95 0 3133 02537, p/b £11.95 0 275 96334 9

This is a welcome, if over-ambitious, contribution to studies of Simone de Beauvoir which aims to analyse 'Beauvoir's notion of the self and its use within her autobiographical writing'. This brief study is divided into six chapters: the first two chapters usefully explore Beauvoir's notions of selfhood, drawing on her moral essays of the 1940s, *Pyrrhus et Cénéas* and *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, as well as analysing what Pilardi terms 'the gendered self in *The Second Sex*'. The following four chapters examine,

somewhat schematically, the ways in which Beauvoir represents various existential themes and notions of selfhood (the child, the woman in love and the writer) in her four volumes of formal autobiography. The book seeks to interrelate two substantial areas of Beauvoir's corpus and invites us to see how she developed her philosophical thinking through the representation of her singular life.

The introduction and first two chapters are particularly interesting, for they attempt to tackle—in a regrettably brief discussion—a series of interconnected themes. The nature of the self in the existential–phenomenological tradition is examined along with the different conceptualisations of the self in the Anglo-American and Continental Philosophical traditions. Beauvoir's own contribution to these debates is then traced. Pilardi also touches on the distinct grammatical conventions which govern the linguistic representation of selfhood in French and English. However she disregards the crucial issue of the interrelation of gender and language in French which, some socio-linguists would argue, perpetuates the sedimentation of traditional gendered identities.

In subsequent chapters, Pilardi is often over-reliant on quotation from the primary autobiographical texts to make points about selfhood. This is despite her acknowledgement that autobiography is a literary construct which, in Beauvoir's case, uses a range of rhetorical devices to engage and, at times, outwit, her readers. Hence, the tensions between an analysis of the situated self in Beauvoir's philosophical essays and the retrospective representation of her 'own' self and life in literary autobiography are not sufficiently explored. Given Pilardi's recognition of the importance of the 'Other' in Beauvoir's notions of selfhood and literature, it is also perhaps surprising that there is no discussion of the author–reader relation in the production of the autobiographical self, and how significant Others and readers themselves constrain what is possible for Beauvoir—in her situation as a woman writer—to represent in autobiography.

References to Beauvoir's key statements on literature are absent here—such as her 1966 lecture 'Mon expérience d'écrivain' (My experience as a writer) or her contribution to the 'Que peut la littérature?' (What can literature do?) debate which was published in 1965. This is unfortunate given the centrality of the notion of 'writing the gendered self' in this discussion. Moreover, the major impact of history on the development of Beauvoir's notion of self-Other relations, specifically her experience of the German Occupation of France during World War II, is only mentioned briefly in the last few pages of chapter 6. Yet this 'discovery' of history is highly significant in terms of the central importance of testimony in Beauvoir's autobiography and her notion of the self's ethical obligation to the Other. On the whole, however, this study raises some useful issues about Beauvoir's notions of selfhood in the context of her formal autobiographical self-representations.

*Ursula Tidd*

*European Studies Research Institute*

*University of Salford*

***The Women's Suffrage Movement: New Feminist Perspectives***

**Maroula Joannou & June Purvis (eds), Manchester University Press 1998**

**h/b £45 0 7190 4860 5**

***The Women's Suffrage Movement: A Reference Guide 1866-1928***

**Elizabeth Crawford, London, UCL Press 1999**

**h/b £110 1 8414 2031 X**

The introduction to Maroula Joannou and June Purvis's edited volume, *The Women's Suffrage Movement*, situates the discussions in these collected essays by reminding us that 'the importance to women of the sixty-year struggle for the vote resonated far beyond its formal significance'. Yet women who agreed on the issue of women's suffrage did not agree on all points of political philosophy and those disagreements are indicated

in the representations of the earliest chroniclers. Ray Strachey's *The Cause* (1928) represents the liberal-feminist rational constitutional approach as the one which delivered the partial enfranchisement of women in 1918 and full enfranchisement in 1928. The effectiveness of militant tactics adopted by the Women's Social and Political Union after 1912, on the other hand, has long been a subject of controversy among historians.

What is certain is that there never existed the straightforward binary opposition often characterised as peaceful constitutional suffragists versus the militant suffragettes. Nor was the definition of militant action an uncontested one, as a number of different positions evolved. For example, the Women's Tax Resistance League, formed in 1909, discussed in this collection by Hilary Frances, offered a strategy for civil disobedience which fell short of damaging persons or property. This political position, as well as having 'legitimizing' historical precedents, was simple: if a woman could not be considered a person for the purpose of the Franchise Acts, then how could she be considered a person within the meaning of the Finance Acts? Most of the women tax resisters were single or widowed and—despite the successive Married Women's Property Acts (1870, 1874 and 1882) which established the separate incomes of husband and wife—income tax for both was nevertheless aggregated and treated as the responsibility of the husband. Official policy towards tax resisters was inconsistent. Some women were ignored, presumably in order to deny them the oxygen of publicity; some had goods distrained; some were imprisoned; at least one was bankrupted.

As well as presenting new information about previously under-researched aspects of the women's suffrage movement, this book is perhaps especially compelling in its accounts of the art, literature and music of the movement. Since Lisa Tickner's study of suffragette imagery, *The Spectacle of Women* (1989), and Glenda Norquay's literary anthology, *Votes and Voices* (1995), brought material previously only accessible to users of the Fawcett Library and other specialist libraries into the public domain, there has been increased attention to the

innovative cultural mechanisms by which the women's movement sought to orchestrate support for the Cause. Here, essays by Katherine Cockin, Deborah Tyler-Bennet, Maroula Joannou and Claire Tylee offer valuable analyses in this area.

Elizabeth Crawford, the author of *The Women's Suffrage Movement: A Reference Guide*, has long served feminist historians via her business, 'Woman and Her Sphere', that specialises in finding and selling books, postcards, pamphlets and ephemera by and about women. An historian in her own right, Crawford has fruitfully exploited a lifetime of collecting and finding good homes for her books to build up an unparalleled knowledge about the women's movement. Although we are all used to publishers making grandiose claims, this book is genuinely unique in bringing together a wealth of information never previously collated on individuals and organisations involved in the suffrage movement. What is especially valuable is that although there have been book-length biographies of some of the leaders—for example, Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon and the Pankhurst family—there are numerous lesser known workers and activists whose lives have been ignored in the conventional biographical source, the *Dictionary of National Biography*. Interestingly, even the accounts of male supporters who have been included in this dictionary for other reasons, have tended to ignore or gloss over their involvement with the women's suffrage campaign.

Elizabeth Crawford writes in her introduction 'how strong a motivation was the feeling that the vote was a symbolic proof of self-worth'. Starting with the 1866 petition to parliament of 1,499 women's signatures, Elizabeth Crawford analysed the names and addresses to identify both the distinct and the overlapping spheres of influence. Not surprisingly, she found that the wives and daughters of politically articulate families, especially those from Unitarian and Quaker families, predominate in those who signed this petition. In-depth archival work and meticulous cross-referencing enables the reader/researcher who has the good fortune to gain access to this guide to trace the political networks. The sensible authorial decision to include known addresses (with

dates) helps to recapture the political geographies in which feminist networks operated.

The scrupulous attention to political alliances shows that although there were sometimes ideological feuds, there were also strategic alliances (as well as strategic avoidances) between proliferating women's suffrage groups. The array of societies and their acronyms are here clearly dated and explained in terms of the individual society's ethics. For many of the women too, women's suffrage was not their only cause. Reading the individual biographies one finds women's commitment to a wide range of causes including animal rights and children's rights, and to educational efforts in a wide variety of contexts. Their party political commitments were widely varying and sometimes conflicted with commitment to the women's cause.

Elizabeth Crawford's guide is especially strong in its inclusion of cultural representations of suffrage campaigns—its pressure group journals, its literature, its banners, and its jewellery. As I read of all the women—of their petitions, their committees, their demonstrations, their commitment to their friends, to their families, and to the Cause itself—they become vivid in my mind. Elizabeth Crawford, who excels in primary research, has trawled registries, museums and libraries and they have yielded up their treasures in this extraordinarily valuable piece of scholarship.

*Pam Hirsch*

*Homerton College, Cambridge*

### ***Mother Time: Women, Aging and Ethics***

Margaret Urban Walker (ed.), Rowman & Littlefield 1999

h/b £24.44 0 8476 92604, p/b £14.95, 0 8476 9261 2

Issues concerning ageing and dying have not generally had a high profile in feminist writing during the last twenty years or so, but this collection itself, and the bibliographies it includes, indicate that this is changing. This is perhaps not surprising; the generation of writers and activists who were at the forefront of second-wave feminism are getting older,

and issues concerning ageing and mortality have a new personal immediacy which informs much of this book.

The feminist concerns addressed have two central themes. First, it is suggested that, in various ways, women disproportionately suffer or are disadvantaged when they are old. Some authors, however, also suggest that despite this, women's lives may also provide resources for coping with old age which can make this process less devastating than it is for some men.

The book is divided into four sections. The first focuses on issues concerning appearance and ageing; the second deals with the kinds of narratives and issues concerning self and identity that inform our conceptions of old age. The final sections deal with questions of health care and living arrangements. They offer some timely and thoughtful reflections on, for instance, the problems raised by age-segregated housing, and the devastating effects of much care, however well intentioned, in institutions euphemistically often called 'homes' for the aged. In this review, however, I want to focus on the first two sections, since they raise issues which are of particular philosophical interest.

Frida Kerner Furman discusses the ways in which women's failure to meet body ideals of youth, slenderness and sexual attractiveness becomes even more marked in old age. Disciplinary practices of 'physical normality', which concern not merely appearance but physical and mental health, energy and mobility, induce in older women feelings of shame, and subject them to the disciplinary gaze, not just of men, but of youth. The old, Kerner Furman suggests, represent a disruption of the visual field; women in particular are constantly pressured not to reveal their age or to try to look younger than they are.

These themes have been discussed in other feminist writing. But is not just a question of women suffering from the internalisation of damaging body or beauty ideals; there are complex issues concerning self and identity here.

Diana Tietjens Meyer discusses the ways in which, as women age, they may feel that they encounter a 'stranger in the mirror'; a face that is

disconnected from their sense of themselves, and their continued zest for life; a 'death mask *vivanti*' that speaks of decline and mortality amid their ongoing projects. But what philosophical assumptions lie behind the thought that 'that face in the mirror is not me'? The idea of a 'fit' (or a discrepancy) between my face and my 'inner self' may assume two highly problematic things. Meyer calls these the 'identity constancy postulate' (the idea that I have a stable authentic identity which my face may or may not reveal), and the 'facial legibility postulate', which supposes that it should be possible to decipher people's inner nature from their outward appearance. (She points out that the facial legibility postulate is not only dubious, but has been deployed in vicious racial stereotypes.)

How should we interpret the idea of 'reclaiming the face in the mirror', of salvaging 'face-esteem'? To think 'this face is me' may assume both a constancy of identity and an over-simple relation between physiognomy and the inner self. To say that 'this face is not me' seems to imply an almost Cartesian disconnection of the self from the body; an 'identity' which can somehow be lived apart from its bodily manifestations. Bodies are always problematic in some way; so too are faces, and there is, as Meyer notes, something 'Pollyanna-ish' about supposing that we can simply live in harmony with our bodies or our faces in ways which fly in the face of the human experience of change, decline and mortality.

Disquiet and disequilibrium resulting from processes of physical change is not something we can simply evade or ignore. 'Reclaiming the face in the mirror' is a task of philosophical complexity, and simply critiquing ageist and exclusionary ideals of beauty will not suffice. There is an equal need to rethink our notions of 'self', and the ways in which we think about the relation between the face and the body and what we may think of as 'the inner self'.

A concept which is central to a number of the articles in the second section of the book is that of the 'career self'. Margaret Urban Walker, for instance, suggests that the dominant cultural ideal today is

that of an energetic, self-disciplined and orderly life based on individual effort and achievement. This is philosophically underpinned by gleanings from views of the self which, whilst differing in many ways from each other, nevertheless in some way see life as a quest involving central commitments and goals which are constitutive of identity. Here we find the common themes of control, a coherent life plan, and the ability to tell a narrative about one's life which orders its events and episodes in relation to this central plan. The concept of 'retirement' seems to identify these central commitments with 'productive' or paid employment, and to indicate that, when this ceases, life is in some way almost over.

Central to the idea of the 'career self' is the concept of autonomy; independence, self-reliance and self-interested agency. Walker argues, however, that there is a bad fit between these norms and the situation of old people and their carers. Walker also suggests that women have an ambiguous relation to the idea of the 'career self'. It has been primarily a masculine ideal; furthermore, as both she and Hilda Lindemann Nelson point out, it is an ideal that remains at best aspirational, and the kinds of linear narrative and goal directedness assumed are not a realistic option for most people.

In addition, such a model ignores the ways in which our identities are formed by relations with others, and the narratives that others tell about us. But in so far as women themselves have adopted this model for their lives, they put themselves increasingly at risk of the feeling that life is over when they end paid employment. Walker and Ruddick also suggest that models of ageing which stress the importance of keeping busy, healthy and active are derivative from the idea of a 'productive' life, and can themselves be intimidating.

Walker suggests that we seek alternatives to 'life as a career', and to 'the impending obsolescence of aging career selves'. Women might find alternative meanings in things such as spirituality and religion, 'folk wisdom', occult or holistic health practices. She and other writers in the collection stress the importance, too, of relationships. James Lindemann Nelson argues that systematic differences in what people value are

relevant to the kind of harm that death constitutes; death takes away the goods of experience and action, hence their loss might be heavier for those who have aspired to be 'career selves'. But lives can also be lived '*seriatim*', in a series of fits and starts, none of which are necessarily life-defining. Nelson suggests that '*seriatim*' selves may place a greater importance on the goods of relationship rather than on the goods of agency and experience.

I find all of this quite problematic, for three main reasons. First, I am suspicious of an undue stress on the importance of relationships to women. Second, it seems to me highly problematic to draw any sharp contrast between 'the goods of relationship' and 'the goods of experience and action'. Relationships themselves involve experience and action. I am reminded of a close friend, paralysed and dying of cancer of the spine. She was devoted to her grandchildren. 'Who cares about a wheelchair', she said to me, 'I just want five more years of those kids'. Third, to live a life '*seriatim*', in which no one goal or set of goals is totally dominant or life-defining, does not mean that goals and purposes are not important. 'Ageing career selves' may sometimes suffer from feelings of obsolescence, but quite a lot of them also relish the ability to engage with projects which were always important to them, but for which they previously had no time.

Finally, consider the relationship between autonomy and ageing. A great deal of feminist writing has noted the masculine individualism of certain ways of thinking about autonomy, and argued that autonomy is always conditioned by varying forms of limitation and dependency. These forms may change as one gets older. But except in the problematic limiting case of such severe mental disability that there is no remaining possibility of action that could be seen as self-directed, autonomy remains at the root of personal identity. One of the most depressing aspects of the institutionalised care of old people is the removal of nearly all possibilities of choice or self-direction, and the failure to consider ways in which these could be encouraged. Autonomy needs redefining and supporting, not rejecting.

*Mother Time* raises both practical and philosophical issues of great importance, and my doubts about the directions of some of the analyses it offers suggest to me that there is a need for a great deal more work here. The book also brought home to me how problematic the concept of 'old age' itself is. More than one writer simply defined it as beginning at 70. The idea of 'old age' as a stage in life, whilst partly anchored in certain material realities, is also a cultural construction, just as much as the idea of 'youth' or 'the teenager'. Kerner Furman notes a conversation with 'Lucy' who contested the idea that 'old age' is radically different from youth or middle age, and the project of the dominant culture to separate life into stages. She tried to destabilise the notion that old people are 'Other' by virtue of ill health, or that old age is a decline from something more important. At times, I thought that the book itself tended to recapitulate the theme of the elderly as 'Other' by its own failure to problematise the very category of 'old age'. The problem here is how to contest the cultural construction of ideas of ages and stages of life, whilst at the same time not lapsing into the kinds of denial or cheery complacency which play down the real and material significance of ageing and mortality and evade facing up to the problems they pose.

Jean Grimshaw

Bristol

***Diagnosis: Difference: The Moral Authority of Medicine***

Abby L. Wilkerson, Cornell University Press 1998

h/b £29.95 0 8014 3448 3, p/b £11.95 0 8014 8459 6

The arena of bioethics and the social philosophy of health care have, in the last few years, attracted a growing number of feminist theorists impatient with the notion that all that is at stake is the delivery of a more egalitarian service. Following on from the insights of feminist epistemology in particular, the take-up of biomedical issues has broadened its scope to include a thoroughgoing critique of the normative assumptions that structure western ideals of health. It is no longer simply a matter of eliminating those assumptions, however, but of reconfiguring the theo-

retical basis on which they are made. The critique of rationality as an integral element of human worth, for example, is one widely familiar move, as is the citing of gender, sexual, racial, and class differences as features that must radically disrupt universalist pretensions. Abby Wilkerson's book treads a well-worn path here, and, indeed, as her title indicates, she makes the biomedical erasure of difference a central aspect of her account.

What is at issue for Wilkerson, and what makes the delivery of health care of crucial ethical importance, revolves around the question of justice. Where mainstream bioethics has characteristically focused on the question of distributive justice—on equality of access or on a fair allocation of goods—Wilkerson is concerned to open up the concept of justice to take account not only of differential and incommensurable need, but of the way in which biomedical and social oppressions are mutually reinforcing.

Far from arising from the supposed ideal of an abstract impartiality, medical judgments are all too often thinly disguised moral judgments which not only reflect existing discriminatory social relations, but act to constitute and authorise inequality. More explicitly, Wilkerson claims that by pathologising social and cultural differences, biomedicine and health care promote homophobia, erotophobia, and ableism within the wider context of unequal race, class and gender relations. In implicitly and often explicitly asserting the 'natural' status of cultural norms such as heterosexuality, motherhood, or the selflessness of women, the discourse and practice of medicine constitute forms of social control that affect us all. Somewhat surprisingly, although she mentions the medical gaze in passing, Wilkerson devotes no time to an analysis of the operation of power, still less disciplinary power, in either individual or group terms. Rather than raising questions of how it works, her concern is with the implications of biomedical control for justice.

There is nothing unfamiliar here, although it is good to find an author who is prepared to pay more than passing attention to issues of disability as the site of a deep-seated oppression based on notions of

what it is to be a 'real' person. Indeed there is little to disagree with in any of this, but neither alas is it very exciting or innovative. By adopting what she calls a material-semiotic view of the self, rather than a disembodied abstract analysis, Wilkerson means to stress both the interconnectedness of selves rather than their individualism, and to commend situated forms of knowledge as opposed to the view from nowhere.

As a relatively newly-established field of enquiry, bioethics, as I understand it, has already taken on board many of the insights advanced by feminists, and although Wilkerson has no difficulty in citing, to their disadvantage, some philosophers working within more traditional paradigms—and her analysis here is very clear—she is hardly the first to do so. The view that 'personhood' is not an abstract concept nor 'agency' primarily a matter of rationality, but rather that subjective experience, physicality, and emotion interact with socially-embedded practices, is now well-established, within progressive bioethics at least.

Where perhaps Wilkerson's analysis is more likely to continue to meet incomprehension or resistance is within the clinical sphere; but any influence that she might hope to have there is surely undermined by her unfortunate tendency to seemingly castigate all medical practice as though it were uniformly oppressive. I suppose my objection is that the term 'oppression' is simply too blunt a tool to adequately capture the intricacies of how power is mobilised. Whilst Wilkerson clearly has some understanding of how power is invested in the self, she nevertheless falls back on a notion of justice that speaks only to equity in the social. Her final call that '[m]edicine must become an arena for social change rather than social control' (145) seems both naively rhetorical, and rooted in a reformist paradigm at odds with her own earlier analysis. In the end it's both inconsistent and theoretically timid.

*Margrit Shildrick*  
*University of Staffordshire*

***Julia Kristeva: Speaking the Unspeakable***

Anne-Marie Smith, London & Sterling, VA: Pluto Press 1998

h/b £35 0 7453 1058 3; p/b £10.99 0 7453 1057 5

***After the Revolution: On Kristeva***

John Lechte & Mary Zournazi (eds), Woolloomooloo, NSW:

Artspace 1998, p/b 1 876017 37 6

Here are two books on the work of Julia Kristeva, arguably one of the most important thinkers in France in the latter third of the 20th century: Anne-Marie Smith's monograph is part of Pluto's useful 'Modern European Thinkers' series; John Lechte and Mary Zournazi's collection of essays is based on an interdisciplinary conference on Kristeva's work held in Sydney, Australia in 1996, a joint collaboration between a University and a local Arts Centre. Both volumes attest to the importance and ongoing relevance of Kristeva's thinking to contemporary issues in philosophy, politics, psychoanalysis and culture, and both volumes engage with the revolutionary nature of her cultural critique.

Smith's concise account functions admirably, both as an introduction to Kristeva's work and as a synthesis of the Kristevan corpus. It brings clarity to, and identifies cohesion in, what is not only a rich and complex body of work, but also an ongoing project—in Smith's terms, Kristeva's 'revolt in practice' (68). By this Smith means not only a 'work-in-progress of cultural critique' (back cover), but also the specifically interdisciplinary nature of Kristeva's practice. Kristeva's positioning as a speaking subject is always fluid and, as such, calls into question not only the boundaries of traditional disciplines, but even the very structures of establishment which are at their foundation. Throughout the discussion, full attention is paid to the evolution of different understandings of revolution and revolt in Kristeva's work—from the challenge of the avant-garde, through revolt against notions of a fixed identity, through abjection and transgression, to the most recent notion of a temporal return and remembrance. In all these understandings, Smith identifies Kristeva's concern with speaking the unspeakable—with the expression of what has been repressed.

Smith's study is divided into four chapters, each gathering together and illuminating some of the strongest themes in Kristeva's work: 'The Semiotic and the Symbolic', 'The Abject, the Maternal and Melancholy', 'Transference, Time, Literary Experience' and 'Foreignness, Femininity, Sacrifice'. Kristeva, as a Bulgarian-born intellectual in France, describes herself as being 'in a good position to know what "foreignness" is all about', yet in other countries she is considered to be 'the quintessence of Frenchness' (82). This paradox is at the heart of Smith's approach, which focuses on issues of translation and the crossing of cultures. Indeed, Smith treads a careful path between anglophone interpretations of Kristeva's work and the original French content, paying particular attention to language, and providing her own interpretations and translations of the original French texts. Her much-needed clarification of 'femininity' in Kristeva's thought is excellent.

Although focussing primarily on Kristeva's recent work, Smith does not neglect the earlier texts. One of the strengths of her approach is the way she traces concepts through a range of different texts and periods of Kristeva's career, highlighting connections as well as providing useful explanatory commentary. Thus in chapter 1, she follows Kristeva's concept of the *semiotic* and *symbolic* through a trajectory which takes in Kristeva's doctoral thesis, the seminal *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1974), her study of Proust, *Le temps sensible* (1994) and the more recent published volumes of Kristeva's lecture series, *Sens et non-sens de la révolte* (1996) and *La révolte intime* (1997).

Unusually, despite its intellectual rigour, this is a personal book, which embraces the subjective nature of Kristeva's work. It shows that she thinks and writes as a woman and as a foreigner; that loss, exile and mourning are at the heart of her creativity. It also explicitly incorporates Smith's own subjective position: her attendance at Kristeva's seminars; the fact that, like Kristeva, she works across languages and cultures.

Some of the contributions that are included in Lechte and Zournazi's volume, *After the Revolution*, are also personal. Mary Zournazi's own essay is notable. In order to raise issues about the dif-

ferent concepts of home and law which exist in relation to the Australian nation, it moves from a discussion of Kristeva's notion of foreignness in identity to Zournazi's own personal experiences of migration and belonging

*After the Revolution* is designed to explore Kristeva's influence in Australian cultural and academic life across a range of disciplines, including philosophy, literature, feminism, art, culture and politics. However, it is by no means restricted to local issues. In a similar way to Smith's book, this collection rests on the idea that, in Kristeva's work, the concept of revolution is essential to social and cultural life. As such, it includes analyses of both Kristeva's theory and fiction. Unlike Smith, however, many of the contributors rely on translations of Kristeva's works, although some—like Lechte himself who is a specialist on Kristeva—obviously work from the French originals.

Apart from a brief survey of the theme of revolution in Kristeva's work to date and a presentation of the contributions to come, the editors' introduction identifies one or two specific gaps in Kristeva's pessimistic analysis of our image-driven culture. However, neither the introduction nor the essays included in the volume go as far as engaging with these any further, which is a pity considering the frequency with which Kristeva is criticised for her élitist perspective on culture. Nonetheless, there is plenty of interesting material in this collection, which is divided into three sections: 'Society in the Present: Kristeva's Work Today'; 'Meaning and the Self'; 'Literary and Feminist Practice'.

*After the Revolution* begins with a scene-setting piece from Kristeva herself. 'Logics of the Sacred and Revolt', translated by John Lechte, is an extract from *Sens et non-sens de la révolte*, which presents the notion of psychic revolt and the importance of literature to the social bond. Lechte's own contribution, which follows, is a philosophical engagement with the problematic presented in this extract: the breaking down of the imaginary sphere in modern society. Lechte does not omit to a critique of Kristeva's contribution to the debate but, overall, his essay values her work for asking the questions that make us all think.

Kelly Oliver, another well-known Kristeva scholar, similarly values Kristeva's work for the way it raises important philosophical issues, especially the bringing together of questions about the meaning of language and the meaning of life. Here, Oliver engages with what she sees as the shortcomings of Kristeva's concept of the Imaginary Father, identifying in turn an abject father, which she suggests is an even greater threat to the psychic self than the abject mother. Oliver's argument is that we need not only to create but also to represent embodied fathers to accompany Kristeva's already theorised social mother. In contrast, Angela Tidmarsh, in a reading later in the collection, posits Kristeva's Imaginary Father as an ideal model for the literary writer. Robyn Ferrell's essay continues the philosophical approach to Kristeva's work, engaging with the conundrum of time. Ferrell focuses on the intersections between feminism and psychoanalysis. This is not from the perspective of feminist philosophy but, instead, is an attempt to negotiate a philosophical analysis of feminism, given feminism's challenge to the binary logic on which philosophy itself is based

Literature is both a constant and important factor in Kristeva's work, and many of the essays in this volume consider this aspect of her writing. Juliana de Nooy and Joan Kirkby analyse Kristeva's own fiction: *Possessions* (1996) and *The Old Man and the Wolves* (trans. 1994), respectively. Anna Smith and Anna Gibbs each look at Kristeva's work on Proust: Smith focussing on subjectivity; Gibbs exploring the sensations of Kristeva's notion of literary experience. Kirsten Campbell's essay on feminist epistemology closes the volume.

The essays in *After the Revolution* offer an Australian-based perspective on Kristevan studies in the 1990s. Although individual contributions provide some interesting insights, sometimes the result is a muddying, rather than an illumination, of Kristeva's thinking. Thus, for me, it is Anne Marie-Smith's little book that is the most valuable of the two. Apart from the irritating use of abbreviations throughout the main body of the text (when a short title would be much more immediately meaningful), I highly recommend Smith's clear and

accessible introduction to Kristeva's thought. I shall certainly point students in the direction of *Julia Kristeva: Speaking the Unspeakable*, but I shall also keep it on my bookshelf for continual reference. The fresh and clear approach helps sort the wood from the trees in the sometimes confusing and ever-growing body of critical work on this difficult but important thinker.

Gill Rye

University of Surrey, Roehampton

### *Adorno, Culture and Feminism*

Maggie O'Neill (ed.), Sage 1999

h/b £55.00 0 7619 5216 0, p/b £15.99 0 7619 5217 9.

The writings of the first generation of critical theorists do not immediately look like very promising territory for feminist scholars. It is true that unlike more orthodox Marxists, critical theory's three main exponents—Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse—had recognised by the 1930s that the working class was no longer the privileged agency of change. Their search for alternative forces of social transformation and critical intervention, coupled with a methodology which accorded as much importance to psychological and cultural as to economic factors, might have yielded analyses of women's oppression and political potential within late modern societies. But they gave no such analyses. Even the psychological studies of authoritarian personalities, which cast a critical eye over the family, focused primarily on the modern patriarch whose loss of power was associated with a demise of strong, critical egos.

Given this background, the contributors to *Adorno, Culture and Feminism* wisely decided, for the most part, to avoid what is feminism's most obvious textual strategy: eliciting explicit references to gender. Two of the more interesting essays in the collection do, nevertheless, skirt around this issue, and their differing conclusions are in many ways symptomatic of the volume's dominant themes.

Thus, on the one hand, Juliet Flower MacCannell's essay is typical of a desire to inflect Adorno's work through the prism of post-structuralism. She suggests that when he ignored women, Adorno was in fact being 'correctly' 'virtually gender-blind', and that when his aphorisms did mention the feminine, they were 'almost always proto-feminist'. She muses, nevertheless, on her own antipathy towards his work finding a lack of any emancipatory vision particular to women there. Yet MacCannell does find in the utopian image of subject-object reconciliation 'something exceptionally maternal'. It is this linkage between something beyond identity—an 'other', corresponding to a once-enchanted world now stifled by modern (masculinist) rationalism—and the feminine/maternal that imposes a gendered dimension on Adorno's work. This is a theme that haunts several of these contributions, but it is one that needs exceptionally careful finessing if its exponents are to avoid the sort of undialectical oppositions, reification or nostalgia that Adorno rejected, and I am not convinced that such care is always sustained here.

Gudrun Axeli Knapp's discussion of critical theory in German-speaking feminism, on the other hand, is more redolent of the theme which the editor seems to privilege in her introduction when she invokes Adorno as an aid to understanding women's situatedness and political practice within a contemporary social context. In other words, it is the methodological resources developed by the Frankfurt School which remain compelling. Too few of the contributors, however, accepted this wager, perhaps because their fascination with a poststructuralist theme of subjectivity/identity, together with the focus on aesthetics, deflected them from any real acknowledgement of Adorno's Marxist roots and his commitment to a historical materialism that was resolutely dialectical.

Knapp is exceptional here. She notes obstacles to feminists' receptiveness to the theory, citing an insufficient analysis of the gender system which neglected the contradictions of women's integration into the fully-administered society; the emphasis on social rather than

individual conditions; the sense that since reproductive relations were complicit in overall domination, there was little scope for social conflict here. But she insists on the enduring importance of Adorno's commitment to mediation, whereby subjectivity is always historically constituted and the object retains its (dialectical) primacy. It was from this position that the critical theorists offered a general critique of the commodification and rationalisation of late modernity, and it is here that Knapp locates the early Frankfurt School's most important legacy for feminism. She worries that it has been subdued by the more recent linguistic turn, and one only has to look at second-generation critical theory, exemplified by Habermas, to see why.

My main hesitation in commending this volume stems from the fact that most of its contributors pay insufficient attention to the 'and' in the collection's title, with the result that the relation between Adorno, culture *and* feminism remains largely unmediated. Instead, authors have tended merely to identify some interesting parallels, although in some essays either Adorno or feminism is virtually absent. The volume's first section, headed 'Adorno's Critical Theory: Aesthetics and Politics', fails—almost inevitably—to deliver its promise of offering a convincing overview of Adorno's aesthetics and politics. There is also a tendency here to focus on Walter Benjamin, although Shierry Weber Nicholson's fine contribution on photography stands in its own right as a fascinating essay. The second section of the book, headed 'Feminism, Culture Society: The Relevance of Critical Theory for Contemporary Feminisms', includes the essays by MacCannell and Knapp, but is sometimes quite poor. Overall the task Maggie O'Neill sets for *Adorno, Culture and Feminism* is an evocative one, but in most cases it is approached here only in a rather rudimentary way. A book to order for the library and a project to mark for the future, perhaps.

Diana Coole

*Queen Mary & Westfield College*

*University of London*

*The Body's Perilous Pleasures: Dangerous Desires and Contemporary Culture*

Michele Aaron (ed.), Edinburgh University Press 1999

p/b £16.95 0 7486 0961 X

This collection of essays, edited by Michele Aaron, aims to explore some meanings, implications and contexts of contemporary representations of the body's relationship to pleasure and danger. The introduction states that the essays will challenge and re-evaluate subjective positions of readership and spectatorship in the light of recent extreme representations. They will also analyse the extent to which we, as producers and consumers of culture, are implicated in these risky pleasures. The essays treat pleasurable dangers or dangerous pleasures as diverse as murder, piercing and necrophilia. The corpus of works discussed includes films such as Cronenberg's *The Brood* and *Crash*, and literary texts such as Richard Calder's *Dead* trilogy and Poppy Z. Brite's vampire novels.

The focus on the body as a source of signification is of central import to modern critical thought. Moreover, the link between sexuality and death in art and culture has been the subject of much criticism over the last few decades. Notably, Elisabeth Bronfen's *Over Her Dead Body* (1992) and Jonathan Dollimore's *Death, Desire and Loss in Western Culture* (1998) are interesting discussions of this theme. Such works form the (unacknowledged) genealogy to which Michele Aaron's volume belongs.

To my mind, one of the most interesting and difficult questions raised by this topic is the extent to which pleasure as bodily danger may be an adequate model for the formulation of new desirous identities (particularly feminist ones). The promotion of pleasure in pain risks falling into the trap of reinforcing and reifying negative masochistic images of the (particularly female) body. It is not easy to see how one would move outside of a patriarchal relation of desiring subject and objectified victim/other.

Of all the essays, Michele Aaron's discussion of recent cinematic representations of murderous lesbian couples addresses this question

most seriously. She highlights subtly the tension between, on the one hand, presenting lesbian killers as autonomous desiring beings (whose 'unrepresentable' desire is embodied in their liminal homicidal act) and, on the other, reinforcing homophobic and fetishising stereotypes of the lesbian as the exotic *femme fatale*. She highlights the shift in focus from the (implicitly heterosexual?) relationship of killer and victim, common to 'slasher' movies, to the relationship between the two lesbian killers who celebrate their unity in killing an other. These positions remain unresolved and implicit. Aaron suggests that this ambiguity and tension is itself productive and thought-provoking. Her discussion is as close as the collection gets, I feel, to cutting-edge critique of the paradigm of desire in representation, and her reading convinces me that New Queer Cinema is a space worth watching.

I am (much) less enthusiastic about other essays in the volume. Fran Mason's 'Loving the Technological Undead' failed completely to convince me that the necrophiliac cyborg is a figure for the history of human interaction as a whole. Her argument is fatally flawed by the fact that she does nothing to explore the theoretical and historical contexts of the concept of necrophilia, but uses it without comment as a convenient catch-all term to connote everything from cannibalistic impulses to the mechanisms of fetishistic consumerism.

What is equally annoying in many of the essays is the misuse of technical terminology, mainly from psychoanalysis, and the over-use of apparently meaningless jargon. Anna Powell is one of the worst culprits. Her 'Blood is the Drug: Narcophiliac Vampires in Recent Women's Fiction' employs the word 'cathexis' three times and, as far as I can see, she wants it to mean something different in each context, as well as something very different from what it means when used by Freud. She also badly over-simplifies Lacan's concept of *jouissance*, defining it in terms of 'extreme pleasure' (143). This tendency to over-literalise is a less than appealing characteristic of many of the essays.

As may be expected of a volume like this, the quality varies from the thorough and thought-provoking—such as Aaron's essay, and Julian

Petley's history of the monstrous child in literature and film—to the lamentably unclear, confused and confusing. Lacking a unified critical and theoretical agenda, the volume reads as a postmodern mish-mash of psychoanalysis, feminist-based criticism and queer theory, often very sketchily and badly applied.

I would recommend this volume on the strength of about half of its contributions. It is valuable in so far as it engages in a lively way with relevant and important theoretical questions and adds an ultra-modern perspective to existing debate. However, sadly, it offers very little in the way of theoretical rigour and fails completely to deliver anything so challenging or transgressive as the hoped-for textual *jouissance* on which its contributors so often dwell.

*Lisa Michelle Downing*  
*Queen Mary and Westfield College*  
*University of London*

***The Play of Reason: From the Modern to the Postmodern***

Linda Nicholson, Open University Press 1999; Cornell University Press 1998

p/b £14.99 0335 20328 0; h/b \$45.00 0 8014 3517 X, p/b \$17.95  
0 8014 8516 9

In this anthology of her essays, Linda Nicholson's twin preoccupations with history and cultural diversity engender a series of keen insights into the feminist condition. Her analyses point up a central problem for the feminist theorist of the late 20th century: how to stay true to the variety of female identities and experiences, and to contest the inevitability of the status quo, while retaining the common ground necessary for a feminist theory and practice?

As Nicholson's introductory self-description makes clear, the nine essays in the collection bear witness to the evolution of her thought on these questions, beginning with work written prior to her post-modern turn. The distinctiveness of the approach she develops becomes clear in the essay, co-written with Nancy Fraser, on feminism and post-

modernism. Here the two writers take postmodernism—represented by Lyotard—to task for its rejection of social criticism as a form of an untenable foundationalism, a stance which deprives it of the critical force with which to challenge injustice. Equally, they argue, much contemporary feminist theory replicates the essentialist assumptions of the positions it seeks to challenge. Instead they advocate a postmodern-feminist theory attentive to the historical and cultural specifics of gender and power. Such an approach, they claim, both avoids the theoretical fallacy of a single identity of 'woman', and provides a useful, adaptable tool for political practice.

Two subsequent essays take the issues this raises further. In 'Bringing it All Back Home: Reason in the Twilight of Foundationalism', Nicholson confronts 'the specter of relativism' raised by the rejection of the universalist model of reason. She argues that acknowledging that rationality is a human construction which takes diverse forms need not undercut belief in the rightness of a position or the possibility of resolving disputes between conflicting views. It means, less dramatically, that one simply lacks the ability to *prove* a position, through an appeal to an overarching set of principles. And the worst cases, where any common ground is absent, reveal a true-life rather than a theoretical predicament born of relativism, since the possibility of creating a resolution remains.

These concerns are shared by Charles Taylor, whose influential work on the politics of recognition Nicholson examines in a critical and not entirely cohesive essay. She finds that Taylor's account of the modern quest for identity neglects key differences in the struggles of different groups, and she contests the residual assumption of objectivity in his account of judgment and cultural difference.

Nicholson's thoroughgoing historicism is both exciting and alarming, since it extends to a future in which it is for us to develop the solutions to our historically created problems. But, in practice, her tone is far from grandiose. In writing of the past and present, she traces in a measured, documentary style the fluidity of the categories and

conceptions that shape our lives. This coolness makes for an unusual degree of even-handedness, as she finds both positive and negative features in developments where others might only have seen one side. For instance, she observes that a new family type which emerged among poor black communities in the 1960s provided levels of security and support that would otherwise have been absent, but exacted a price in terms of the individual's fulfilment. In similar vein, she suggests that the 'culture of feeling' in contemporary America has the negative effect of fostering a narcissistic individualism, but in providing legitimisation for those outside the mainstream, it also helps to make society more inclusive and democratic.

This objectivity makes her a good critical friend for a feminist theory which, like all of us, can fall prey to moods of self-delusion. And her insistence on its connections with current debates in ethics and political philosophy pushes feminist thought forward and keeps 'mainstream' philosophy on its toes.

*Alex Klaushofer*  
*Birkbeck College*  
*University of London*

### ***Rational Woman: A Feminist Critique of Dichotomy***

**Raia Prokhovnik, Routledge 1999**

**h/b £50 0 415 14618 6**

Prokhovnik's title, *Rational Woman*, suggests a paradox—a paradox based on the Western philosophical tradition's adherence to dichotomies. In the tradition, rationality is associated with the masculine and irrationality with the feminine. Prokhovnik's book sets out to give a feminist critique of such dichotomies. The critique includes a reconceptualisation of the terms 'rational' and 'woman' but also aims to give wider meanings to the terms 'emotion' and 'male'. The author puts forward a relational theory rather than a dichotomous theory for rethinking these terms. Prokhovnik is interested in the relationship of emotions

with respect to the mind. Indeed, what she attempts is the construction of a connection between body and mind which is relational.

The book is written in four chapters. In chapter 1, the author sums up what is wrong with dichotomous thinking, referring to its repressive nature and the resultant fact that woman has been excluded from the philosophical enterprise. The author draws on the work of Elizabeth Grosz, Moira Gatens and Genevieve Lloyd in developing ideas for an alternative to traditional dichotomous thinking. In the next chapter relationships between reason and emotion are delineated. Given Aristotle's idea of practical wisdom comprising practical wisdom accompanied by emotion, this is not something new.

The same criticism might be levelled at chapter 3 where sex and gender are discussed. Prokhovnik wants to move beyond that dichotomy towards an idea of corporeal subjectivity. Prokhovnik believes that although Grosz, Gatens and Judith Butler have theories of corporeal subjectivity, they retain the sex/gender distinction; the difference in what they propose is 'the chain of significance that runs through the meanings of gender, through being read in terms of a socially-understood significance' (151).

Prokhovnik wishes to stress, along with Grosz and Butler, that the corporeal body is not the material body. A materialist tends to privilege the body, thus suppressing emotion. Corporeal subjectivity, on the other hand, recognises a relationship between body and emotion where the terms are interdependent. As well as a relationship between body and emotions, and again building on the work of Gatens, Butler and Grosz, corporeal subjectivity holds out for relationships between theory and practice. Such a theory of corporeal subjectivity, with its relational elements, allows for a 'context of sexualities' (151), e.g. homosexuality, lesbianism, transsexuality, and so on. This would mean that although heterosexuality would be likely to be practised by the majority of the population, these other sexualities would be understood, recognised and included rather than excluded within social and political culture.

Chapter 4, the conclusion, deals with the future of feminism in its third wave. According to Prokhovnik, second-wave feminists operated within the body/mind dichotomy. Third-wave feminism proceeds in two steps: first, increasing gender visibility and, second, thinking in terms of corporeal subjectivity. Gender visibility is increased by pointing out and recognising gender inequalities, and showing how these have led to discriminatory practices. Corporeal subjectivity is achieved when differences between male/female and reason/emotion are expressed in relational rather than dichotomous terms.

The book is one of many recently published which attempt to show ways forward for feminist thinking. Many of these books explore relational forms of thinking, and the author has borrowed from these. For example, she cites Carol Gilligan who stresses relationality in her alternative ethics. However, Gilligan's 'self' is a unity, not a 'self' that is becoming, a conception which is different from the way in which other cited authors, such as Gatens and Grosz, view the self.

One of the problems with *Rational Woman* is that too many authors are cited; the bits of theory extracted are not all compatible with each other. For readers new to feminist philosophy, this could make it difficult to get a clear picture of Prokhovnik's own position. Experienced readers would also have this problem since there are three or four references to other writers on each page. Also, from a stylistic point of view, Prokhovnik uses too many numerical statements: 'six of the ways ... three main features ... four important aspects' (93-4, my emphasis). It makes for rather tedious reading, and it is difficult to keep track of all the numbers. As such, this new book is to be welcomed, but with reservations.

Lily Forrester  
University of Dundee

## AFTERWORD: A BRIEF HISTORY

Margaret Whitford

As my connection with the *Women's Philosophy Review* comes to an end, I look back with astonishment at how much has been done in only two decades. The origins of SWIP and the *Women's Philosophy Review* go back to the early '80s. In November 1983, there was a historic meeting in Oxford (reported in the *Times Higher Educational Supplement* on 10.2.84) which brought together fifteen women—most, but not all, working in philosophy. (Does anyone still have a record of the names?) The most senior of us was Mary Midgley, one of the generation of women who started their career around the time of the Second World War; (she had already published *Beast and Man*, which launched her on her second career as a writer.) Onora O'Neill (subsequently Principal of Newnham College) was also there. Others were mid-career or just starting out. And crucially, all the women who were to be active in the formation of SWIP were there. On the agenda was the possibility of linking feminist thought and academic philosophy. Morwenna Griffiths taped the proceedings, but the discussions couldn't be transcribed; the voices kept getting swamped in gales of laughter.

How I found myself in a group of women philosophers is a long story. In those days, the network didn't really exist, and I wasn't on any philosophy networks anyway. It was really chance that I happened to be there too. I won't go into the circuitous route by which I found myself at that meeting—it was one of those moments when your life is changed almost by accident, and certainly because you happen to find the right group of people at the right time.

It was, on the face of it, a most disparate and unlikely group. Despite the major philosophical disagreements and divergences between us, however, we decided to go ahead and organise seminars and meetings. There were so few of us that we couldn't allow the disagreements to stand in our way. Remember that in 1983 there were scarcely any

publications. Most of the key works, such as Genevieve Lloyd's *The Man of Reason*, had not yet appeared. And what we definitely didn't want to do was simply attack the sexism and misogyny of male philosophers. We wanted to do something much more constructive.

Reading groups and seminars followed for a year or two. It is difficult to convey now the exhilarating sense of excitement and challenge that we felt. It was as though we were venturing into unthought territory, almost the unthinkable. It turned out that quite a few of us had been pursuing our work with the uncertain feeling: 'But I am not really doing philosophy', so we refused to allow the question 'but is it philosophy?' to put a brake on our discussions. It was essential at that time to stay small. We knew that if sceptical colleagues had been there, we would not have felt the same sense of freedom and willingness to take risks. I remember publishing an article in 1992 entitled 'The Feminist Philosopher: A Contradiction in Terms?' We had to fight quite hard against an internalised professional interdiction; if we were threatened by the cardinal sin of philosophy—the contradiction in terms—we had to protect our space until our ideas were sufficiently convincing to stand on their own feet.

Out of this excitement and playfulness (for of course this wasn't yet 'real' philosophy, we were only 'playing'), came the Society for Women in Philosophy (founded around 1987—nobody seems to be able to remember the exact date) and the *Women in Philosophy Newsletter*. Issue no. 1 of the *Newsletter* came out in May 1989. It was intended as an information leaflet. The editorial stated: 'The newsletter will be a success if it diminishes the number of times that we say: "I wish I'd known about that." ... We have created this newsletter and society precisely because so many of us are isolated and don't know.' Conferences and publications followed and our numbers grew. They were never enormous, but they were enough.

Very quickly, there was a second generation, who thought we were the establishment. This was another new and disconcerting experience. Whatever else we were, we were still terribly marginal. But we

were that bit older, we had done something, we had founded a society and published, and we were perceived as 'seniors'. We now experienced for ourselves the conflict of generations that men are so familiar with. This too was positive, I think; there were suddenly 'generations' in feminist philosophy. It was possible to think of continuity, to turn the *Newsletter* into a journal. Morwenna Griffiths and I had been editing it since 1991. With Issue no. 10 (November 1993), we retitled it the *Women's Philosophy Review*. It remained a desktop publication until Issue no. 17 (summer/autumn 1997) when Christine Battersby took over as General Editor and launched the new format.

In the early '80s, we had leapt on the tiny number of books and articles about/in feminist philosophy like collectors finding a rare species. Now, quite quickly, there were enough books to keep a review journal furnished. We went from reading everything that was published in the field to becoming specialists again. Institutional recognition finally came, first in the form of appointments, now with the RAE; in the next round feminist philosophy has a voice on the panel, (*ergo*) we exist.

We had no idea where our explorations would take us. In the early '80s, it was impossible to predict such a scenario. The picture now is quite different, and it is equally impossible to imagine what the next two decades will bring. Huge changes are taking place in the higher education system as a whole, and feminist philosophy will have to make its way afresh in a world in which real research (of the kind I have been describing) is under threat from new pressures. Although I am withdrawing from an active part in SWIP and the *Women's Philosophy Review*, and finding a new set of challenges to respond to, I will follow with great interest the fortunes of a discipline where I was privileged enough to be in at the beginning. I wish my successors the satisfaction and sense of achievement, and above all the excitement, of making a difference to philosophy.

Margaret Whitford  
Queen Mary and Westfield College  
University of London

## CONCLUDING EDITORIAL POSTSCRIPT

Christine Battersby

So, my editorial involvement with *Women's Philosophy Review* comes to a stop with this issue. I greet this fact with mixed feelings. On the one hand, I feel very relieved since the administrative tasks wished on me by my Department have grown enormously since 1997 when I took over as Editor, and I feel that I can no longer cope with the many duties demanded of the Editor of *WPR*. As must have been clear to all subscribers (who have been wonderfully uncomplaining about the frequent lateness of the issues), I have simply been defeated by the pressures of trying to juggle the skills of being a writer/academic/editor/publisher—and even the 'post-lady' who mails out most of the issues.

Of course, it has not helped that I also helped organise a big conference on feminist philosophy during that period, and that I also helped with the subsequent volume: now published as *Going Australian* in *Hypatia* 2000, vol. 15 (2). It also did not help that I decided—rather unexpectedly—to move house. What I am looking forward to in giving up the Editorship is not only more opportunity to write, but also more time to spend building up the networks of friends and activities that make an new area seem not just a place to sleep and recover from work-overload, but home ...

On the other hand, I feel genuinely sad in giving up the Editorship in that I have found it not only enjoyable, but also instructive in a variety of ways. There was a sharp learning-curve in finding out about copy-editing and text design, the processes of printing and cover-design. More importantly, I have relished the contact with other philosophers and women working in adjacent fields; and have also delighted in researching and preparing the material for the covers, keeping up-to-date via the book reviews, the review essays and interviews.

I can't take the credit for the initial idea of including an interview—for that I owe a 'thank-you' to Penny Florence who approached

me, not long after I took over as Editor, about a possible interview with Drucilla Cornell for *WPR* 17. As I helped edit the results, I could clearly see how valuable the interview format would be in terms of allowing readers the privilege of eavesdropping on women theorists exploring points of overlap, of dissension, and recording histories of engagement with philosophy that might otherwise be forgotten. In the interview format the 'personal' can collide with the 'political' in ways that seem utterly appropriate to a journal that has developed its interest in women in philosophy through feminist concerns.

Building on the base of this initial interview, I feel proud of the interviews that have since appeared. Thus, after Cornell came Alessandra Tanesini interviewing Judith Butler (*WPR* 18); Susan James interviewing Genevieve Lloyd and Moira Gatens (*WPR* 19); Diemut Bubeck interviewing Martha Nussbaum (*WPR* 20); Janice Richardson interviewing Adriana Cavarero (*WPR* 21); Miranda Fricker interviewing Naomi Scheman (*WPR* 23); Penny Deutscher interviewing Monique David-Ménard, Barbara Cassin and Claude Imbert (*WPR* 24). All of these were fascinating and informative, as is also the conversation that appears in this issue between Meena Dhanda and Iris Marion Young.

The conversations seem quite 'natural', but have all involved a lot of work, not only by the interviewers (and sometimes also the transcribers and translators), but also the editor(s) concerned. But this work has clearly been worthwhile. Indeed, I hope to interest a major publisher in bringing these conversations together into an anthology. I am also pleased that there are plans for the tradition of the interview to carry on. Thus, I am delighted to announce Anne Seller has already interviewed Mary Midgley (to appear in *WPR* 27). This will be the first conversation with an important woman philosopher working in the UK. I would also expect there to be more dialogues with women working in continental Europe. It is ironic that it often seems much easier to find out about those working in feminist philosophy in North America or Australia than those who are located just a short hop away across The Channel.

Of the tasks that I saw as lying before the *WPR* team when I took over in 1997, several have been successfully started, but several still remain as possible goals for the new editorial team. I had wanted to put the publication of the journal on a more professional footing; this has been done, but I had thought that we might interest a commercial publisher in taking over its publication, marketing and advertising. As it is, we were all too busy with the day-to-day running of the journal to have time to thoroughly explore this latter option. This remains something for the future editors to explore—together with *WPR* Editorial Board (on which, of course, I will continue to serve).

In fact, my 'postscript' should include a 'thank-you' to all past members of this Board: in particular to those who so willingly gave up their Saturdays to meet at odd venues: arriving from Wales, from Scotland, or sometimes from the furthest reaches of London to spend their time in some room in an empty University Building, or in the upstairs room of a London pub—or (on one famous occasion when we were 'locked out' of the, rather grand, London meeting room that had been pre-arranged) in the pub itself. All that has been fun—even if, at times, it seemed utterly exhausting and not-at-all amusing (when, for example, I left for London at the crack of dawn only to find that the keys to the above-mentioned meeting room did not work and that we would need to rush round begging space from the nearby 'Mother's Union' Building and other, equally unlikely, venues).

I also owe thanks to the Editors of the Special Issues: Diemut Bubeck and Alex Klaushofer (no. 20); Stella Sandford and Alison Stone (no. 22); Penny Florence and Nicola Foster (no. 25) and to all those who have contributed book reviews, articles and other material over the last three years. Above all, however, I would like to thank Margaret Whitford who has put aside so much of her time and energy into the founding of, and then remaining as Book Reviews Editor of, *WPR*. I really don't think that I would have been rash enough to take on the role of General Editor if I had not known that Margaret would be there, ever ready with advice and experience—and providing the necessary

continuity back to the time when *WPR* was the *Newsletter*, co-edited with great efficiency and enthusiasm by Margaret and Morwenna Griffiths.

I am also extremely grateful to Alessandra Tanesini who agreed to become Administrative Editor as the first institutional and non-SWIP subscribers started to come through, and as I started to realise how little I could cope ... The other absolute bulwark during my time as General Editor has been Kimberly Hutchings, as SWIP Membership Secretary and Treasurer (but who stepped down earlier this year). She was always at the end of an email, with detailed advice and support as I wrestled with the price-structures, postage rates and other issues. We now also owe a debt to Meena Dhanda for taking over these tasks.

Kimberly was also extremely important in one of the other big successes that has come during my time as Editor: that of getting *WPR* and SWIP taken seriously in terms of the institutional structures of the discipline of Philosophy in the UK. Although this might seem to be, in some ways, at odds with the spirit of 'play' out of which the Society for Women in Philosophy emerged—and which Margaret Whitford talks about in her 'Afterword'—these institutional changes have significantly changed the prospects for feminist philosophers in Britain.

Of course, there are only a few jobs in Philosophy in Britain advertised each year. However, whereas in 1997 Philosophy Departments had every excuse to turn their backs on feminist philosophers (since this was a specialism that was not being recognised or rewarded via the all-important Research Assessment Exercise), in the case of the current RAE Panel, this is no longer the case. Thus, there are now three feminist philosophers on the panel who will be able to assess feminist work in 'continental', 'analytic' and 'applied' philosophy. And this is, at least in part, as a result of the meeting on the RAE that SWIP organised in London on 25.10.97 where we decided on a set of campaign strategies which were carried through, with the result that both SWIP and *WPR* were consulted about the RAE and other matters.

After the last RAE, we received reports that Heads of Departments had discouraged staff from submitting pieces in feminist

philosophy (or had persuaded them to put their work in to some entirely inappropriate Panel 'outside' Philosophy). But this should not happen this time. Nor should Departments refuse to appoint newly qualified PhDs working in feminist philosophy as they seek to 'predict' RAE scorings. And I like to think that the rash of recent appointments of young feminist philosophers is not unconnected to this fact. For it is, after all, good to think that small groupings of women working collectively in a bottom-up kind of way *can* make a difference!

That others feel that SWIP and *WPR* are important is testified to by the fact that some of our readers have been very generous in providing financial donations—sometimes very large anonymous donations—so that *WPR* can remain afloat and also keep its prices down (at least to students and other non-waged members of SWIP). Thank you—whoever you are! To know how much *WPR* is appreciated has been, for me, the motivation to carry on until the point at which a new set of editors would identify themselves ... as now has happened.

Helen Chapman had asked if she might in some way help on *WPR* and I had replied that it would be really useful if she could help edit this issue, given the need to get three issues of the journal 'to bed' before the RAE deadline of 31.12.00. She has nobly done most of the copy-editing of this issue—and discovered (in a way this is most pleasing!) that she enjoys the job ... and that it is a welcome relief from Teaching Quality Assessment and other such joys. It is! And maybe having *two* new Editors means that they will somehow manage to combine *WPR* with other such tasks. Her future co-editor, Rachel Jones, has also worked with me before, on the *Hypatia* Special Issue mentioned above. So I am very confident that the Editorship is being passed into two safe pairs of hands.

I wish them well (and the others in the Editorial team also), and look forward to seeing how the journal will grow and evolve in their care ...

*Christine Battersby*  
*University of Warwick*

**CALLS FOR PAPERS  
&  
CONFERENCE  
ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**SWIP DAY CONFERENCE**

**Feminism & Philosophy**

**Looking Towards New Horizons**

**21 April 2001**

Worcester College, Oxford

Speakers include

Jean Grimshaw on 'Ageing  
Embodiment and Identity';

Pamela Sue Anderson, 'Feminism in  
Philosophy of Religion'.

Offers of short papers for a special  
session devoted to feminist  
philosophy of religion are welcome.

Contact

[pamela.anderson@sunderland.ac.uk](mailto:pamela.anderson@sunderland.ac.uk)

or Meena Dhanda

[M.Dhanda@wlv.ac.uk](mailto:M.Dhanda@wlv.ac.uk)

**WPR SPECIAL ISSUE**

**PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION**

**WPR No 32 2002**

**Guest Editors:**

**Pamela Sue Anderson**

**(Sunderland)**

**& Harriet Harris**

**(Wadham, Oxford)**

Papers of 5–6,000 words on any  
aspect of philosophy of religion are  
welcome. If interested, please send an  
abstract of 200 words by 30/6/01.

The deadline for submission of papers  
will be 30/11/01. For preliminary  
discussion on a possible paper topic &  
a style-sheet contact Dr Pamela Sue  
Anderson, Reader in Philosophy,  
University of Sunderland, Priestman  
Building, Sunderland, SR1 3PZ  
[pamela.anderson@sunderland.ac.uk](mailto:pamela.anderson@sunderland.ac.uk)

**NEW ON-LINE JOURNAL  
CONTRETEMPS**

The 1st issue now available at  
<http://www.usyd.edu.au/contretemps>

Supported by the School of

Philosophy at the University of  
Sydney, *Contretemps* publishes original

research in modern European  
philosophy in a variety of formats.

Submissions requested. See website.

**CLASSICAL FRENCH  
PHILOSOPHY**

**2–5 May 2001**

Papers invited on all aspects of  
philosophy in France during the long  
17th century (c. 1595–1715) for 2  
sessions scheduled at the annual  
conference of the North American

Society for 17th-C French

Literature, to be held at Tempe,  
Arizona. Send proposals to:

Ziad Elmarsafy, French Dept, New  
York University, New York, NY

10003. Tel: 212-998-8700.

[ziad.elmarsafy@nyu.edu](mailto:ziad.elmarsafy@nyu.edu)

(E-mail proposals preferred.)

**HYPATIA**

Three Calls For Papers are posted:

\*Feminist Philosophy & the Problem of Evil\*

\*Feminist Science Studies\*

\*Feminist Aesthetics\*

More details on their new website:

[www.csupomona.edu/~hypatia/](http://www.csupomona.edu/~hypatia/)

**CULTURAL STUDIES:  
BETWEEN POLITICS &  
ETHICS**

An International Interdisciplinary  
Conference  
6-8 July 2001

20 minute papers are invited for  
parallel sessions from a variety of  
disciplines & approaches on a range  
of themes, including:

Respect for the 'other': a postcolonial  
perspective; The ethics of everyday  
life; Gender, ethics and difference;  
Bioethics and genetics.

Proposals by 28/2/01 to Dr Joanna  
Zylinska & Dr Mark Devenney, Bath  
Spa University College, Bath BA2  
9BN; [j.zylinska@bathspa.ac.uk](mailto:j.zylinska@bathspa.ac.uk)

**APA NEWSLETTER ON  
FEMINISM AND  
PHILOSOPHY.**

Papers on any relevant topic are  
invited. Deadline for Fall Issue is  
1/2/01.

For further details contact:  
Joan C. Callahan, Editor,  
APA Newsletter on Feminism &  
Philosophy, 114 Breckinridge Hall  
University of Kentucky  
Lexington, KY 40506-0056  
[www.uky.edu/ArtsSciences/  
WomenStudies/](http://www.uky.edu/ArtsSciences/WomenStudies/)

**The European Künstler(in)roman:  
Two Centuries of the Artist Novel**

28-30 June 2001

Please send a proposal of no more  
than 200 words outlining the paper  
you would like to deliver at the  
conference by 2/3/01 to:

Dr Evy Varsamopoulou,  
Department of Philosophy,  
School of Languages & Social  
Sciences, Anglia Polytechnic  
University, East Road,  
Cambridge, CB1 1PT.

[E.Varsamopoulou@anglia.ac.uk](mailto:E.Varsamopoulou@anglia.ac.uk) or  
[artistnovel@excite.com](mailto:artistnovel@excite.com)

**6TH INTERNATIONAL  
CONFERENCE ON PERSONS**

Gaming, Austria

August 7-12, 2001

The conference invites participation  
from scholars and thinkers in all  
disciplines and traditions concerning  
personhood and personal identity  
Completed papers (of up to 20 mins)  
& abstracts (500 words) & 1-page  
proposals by 15/3/01 to  
Patti Sayre, Program Chair  
Department of Philosophy  
Saint Mary's College  
Notre Dame, IN 46556

E-mail submissions are preferred and  
should be sent to:

[psayre@saintmarys.edu](mailto:psayre@saintmarys.edu)

More information at: [www.canisius.edu/~gallaghr/forum/ifop.html](http://www.canisius.edu/~gallaghr/forum/ifop.html)

**WOMEN ON THE  
THRESHOLD OF THE 21ST  
CENTURY**

**HAVANA, CUBA,  
12-16 November 2001**

Abstracts of 200 words by 24/7 2001.

More info: [eventos@rect.uh.cu](mailto:eventos@rect.uh.cu)