

## Women's Philosophy Review

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Cover Michèle Le Doeuff is on the front face of the cube; Catherine Constable is on the side; An image of Sappho from a Hydria is on the top.

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## EDITORIAL

To borrow from one of our reviewers, feminist philosophers continue to compel with their alternative visions of the present and its limits, and the future with its possibilities (see Sara Ahmed's review of Kelly Oliver's *Witnessing*, (79-85)). The contributors to this issue of *WPR* share a concern with the critical analysis of past and present, as well as with finding creative paths into the future. This is seen to involve the elaboration of alternative modes of theorizing alongside an engagement with practice and with complex political problems.

The volume begins with an interview with Michèle Le Doeuff by Meena Dhandu and Pamela Sue Anderson. As their discussion makes clear, a concern with practical politics has long been interwoven with Le Doeuff's approach to theory and philosophy. Here she suggests that social issues can function as a 'beacon' from which feminist philosophers 'may get an orientation in thought' (11). Conversely, philosophers and theorists may have important contributions to make to debates about practical issues of policy. However, for Le Doeuff, it is crucial that such contributions are offered in ways that respect the freedom of others to think for themselves and to change their minds, a process that demands that we give ideas time to circulate, grow, and be absorbed and adapted.

Le Doeuff's emphasis on the importance of self-determination for women often echoes the Kantian conception of enlightenment as having the courage to think for oneself. However, she appropriates and transforms this Kantian model via her attentiveness to concrete issues of political representation that condition the extent to which women are able to have autonomous voices in the public sphere. Moreover, she links these questions to a feminist approach to issues of race, locating her concerns in relation to recent French politics and the exclusionary operations of xenophobia in particular. Here her philosophical and political commitment to women's autonomy is reflected in her response to debates about the status of immigrant women in contemporary France.

Le Doeuff's concern to conjoin theory and practice, whilst taking care to allow each the freedom to develop at its own pace, is part of a methodology that takes pleasure in revealing unexpected or hidden connections—so much so that the interviewers delight in portraying her as a 'Miss Marple' of philosophy for her skills of detection. Le Doeuff does not see herself as single-handedly constructing a philosophical framework for feminist theorizing. Rather, and in keeping with her advocacy of a mode of philosophizing that accepts its own limits and open-endedness (see the essay 'Long Hair, Short Ideas' in Le Doeuff 1989 & 2002), she describes herself as 'at ease' with the 'unfinished' nature of her work and the way it holds open possibilities for further development by other thinkers. On this model, feminist theorizing itself is seen as dependent on the forging of productive connections: as a transformative project that welcomes its own on-going transformation via the work of different thinkers.

It is therefore appropriate that in the essay which follows the interview, Catherine Constable explores the potential of Le Doeuff's work for feminist theorizing, and that she does so by conjoining the work of Le Doeuff with that of Irigaray. As both she and the interviewers note, Le Doeuff's position diverges significantly from the so-called 'feminist philosophy of difference' with which Irigaray is standardly aligned. However, Constable argues that it is the differences between these two thinkers that mean their work can be productively entwined, so that 'each can be used to augment the other.' (40)

Constable begins by exploring the model of theorizing developed in *The Philosophical Imaginary*, in which she reads Le Doeuff as 'charting the repeated interpenetration' of the theoretical and the socio-cultural. On the one hand, this entails acknowledging the cultural specificity of philosophical writings, which cannot be seen as transcending their historical contexts. On the other, because of the 'double capacity' of images to simultaneously sustain and disrupt, the cultural representations woven through philosophical texts 'always hold open the possibility of future, different theorizations.' (45)

The essay goes on to compare Le Doeuff's and Irigaray's analyses of the role of femininity within philosophy. Le Doeuff's insistence on the diversity of socio-cultural discourses and representations counterbalances Irigaray's tendency to emphasize the hegemony of a single phallogocentric order. At the same time, Constable identifies a tension in Le Doeuff's position that arises when, for strategic reasons, she argues for a distinction between philosophical representations of femininity and 'real women'. Here, it is Irigaray who complements Le Doeuff, as the former's work on psychoanalysis shows how philosophical constructions of the feminine inflect the collective cultural imaginary, in ways that are in keeping with Le Doeuff's broader claim about the imbrication of the theoretical and the social.

Constable extends the productive conjunction of the two theorists in the final section, where she offers a detailed account of Le Doeuff's analysis of the chiasma alongside a reappraisal of Irigaray's critique of specular logic. Again, Constable's aim is not to unify the two theorists' perspectives, but to pay attention to their different accounts of woman and the vanishing point so as to allow each to augment the other. If Irigaray draws our gaze towards the possibilities for re-imagining woman that lie beyond patriarchal structures, Le Doeuff allows us to see how the unstable alliances between theory and image may already contain openings towards such alternative imaginary pathways.

Constable shows how Le Doeuff and Irigaray together not only allow us to review specific images and theorizations of the feminine, but also enable us to think again about theorizing itself. In this way, she can be read as offering one possible response to a more general concern with the current state and possible future of feminist theorizing. This concern is insightfully addressed by Beatrice Hanssen in the final chapter of her recent book *Critique of Violence*, where she asks, 'whatever happened to feminist theory?' (Hanssen 2000, 232) Indeed, both Le Doeuff's methodology of tracing intellectual *rapprochements* and Constable's conjunction of two different feminist philosophers, resonate with the mode of

creative bricolage that would characterize the pluralistic and dialogical approach that Hanssen advocates.

In her review of Hanssen's book, Diana Coole offers a thoughtful critical discussion of the version of neo-pragmatism that Hanssen favours as a response to the current anti-theory climate. In addition to noting the timely nature of Hanssen's critical reflections on violence, Coole also draws attention to the book's concern with political struggle and with finding an approach that effectively combines theory and practice. These concerns not only echo those of Le Doeuff, but are further elaborated in several other of the books reviewed in this volume. For example, Liz Spedling's *Women, Political Philosophy and Politics* (reviewed here by Monica Mookherjee) explores the interface between political philosophy and women's policy issues to show how the Western philosophical tradition impacts upon women's participation in the political.

In a different field, Penny Florence and Nicola Foster have produced a collection which bridges theory and practice and continues the debate about how to theorize by offering a multiplicity of ways into what they call a 'differential aesthetics'. The contributors to the volume—entitled *Differential Aesthetics*—investigate the relation of matter to the non-material by displacing binary structures of opposition, and exploring instead the mutual imbrication of artist and spectator, writer and reader, image and word, as well as mind and body, subject and object. The role of the material and affective in aesthetic production is a key theme in this collection, and is explored extensively in Barbara Kennedy's book on *Deloaze and Cinema*. And as Sara Ahmed shows, the affective is linked back to the political in Kelly Oliver's recent work, which draws on the notion of bearing witness to rethink subjectivity and sociality.

If, as Hanssen suggests, '[f]eminist theory only exists as a multi-colored assemblage of threads' (Hanssen 2000, 240), we hope that you will find a number of these threads entwined here in productive and thought-provoking ways. The preparation of this issue of *WPR* has been greatly helped by the excellent work of Andrea Rehberg as assistant editor, and Stella Sandford as book reviews editor. We would especially like

to offer our thanks to Stella for all her work on behalf of *WPR* in recent years. Stella is standing down after this issue and handing over the task of reviews editor to Alison Stone, who we are delighted to welcome to the editorial team.

Finally, our thanks to Pamela Sue Anderson and Meena Dhanda for conducting the interview with Michèle Le Doeuff. Those of you who are especially interested in Michèle Le Doeuff's work may want to look at Gerald Greenway's request for notes of endorsement to support the republication of *Hipparchia's Choice*, which we have included in the announcements at the end of this volume. If, as Michèle suggests in the interview, philosophy can sometimes be written as a pure act of joy, we hope a little of this joyful mood will infect the readers of this latest issue!

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## Bringing Us Into Twenty-First Century Feminism, With Joy and Wit.

An Interview with Michèle Le Doeuff

Conducted by Pamela Anderson and Meena Dhanda;  
28 June, 2002, Oxford.

### Independence for a Start.

PA Michèle, I see you as a philosopher who has always had a serious commitment to politics. Can you tell me something about your political commitment? Did you join a political party at a young age? If so, which party, and have you changed at all in this commitment?

MLD In fact, I never joined any political party nor indeed any '*groupuscule*', a word the French use to describe small leftist parties. In the sixties, many of my fellow-students were involved in that type of activism. It was the normal thing to do, for young people with a commitment to politics, to join one of these groups, mostly Maoist or Trotskyist or, if you were already a cut on the conservative side, the Youth Branch of the Communist Party. Most of these people are now slightly left of centre or perfectly right of centre.

To me, at the time, it was obvious that to join that sort of politics, one had to take oneself seriously, and I couldn't! Leftist groups' members behaved as if they could teach you a thing or two; they tended to be on the pompous side, come to that. I couldn't identify with such an attitude. Pamela, you have read

my work; you know that for me philosophers should take philosophy seriously, not themselves!

PA An important distinction—with a nice twist! A touch of your 'witticism', as well!

MLD Some sense of humour, some irony and modesty, that's what we must hope for and that's what should accompany our work, whether it is hard work or not.

Besides, I already was—we are talking of the Sixties—I already was an independent mind. Perhaps without being aware of it, I was protecting this independence. The only groups I ever joined in my life were groups where a certain amount of free speech was allowed. I have found that possibility of free speech occasionally in trade unions or in *Mouvement Français pour le Planning Familial* [the French Movement for Family Planning] and I always maintained it in my involvement in feminism.

True, I was involved in the movement against the Vietnam war. This mostly meant going to demos quite frequently—in stilettos, by the way, because no one ever thought, before 1968, that a demo could again be dangerous; older people had experienced police violence during the Algerian war, but we thought that was past history. I was convinced that a demo, although involving legs and vocal cords, was just citizen activity that would be respected as such by both government and constabulary. Sometimes, a demo was also an occasion for intelligent views to be circulated. I remember hearing an impressive speech by the famous mathematician Laurent Schwartz in 1966 or 1967, on some Parisian boulevard, out of a loudspeaker.

As soon as I could vote, I did vote, of course and, when I discovered the historical American and British women's struggle which launched the demand for all women to have the vote in the nineteenth century, I began to think that voting is also a way

to pay tribute to them. It added some colour to visits to the voting station. And today, I really think that it is an issue to vote and encourage others to vote.

My memory of the first women's demos in Paris tallies with my first experience. By the way, the very first I ever went to was November 1971, which I think was the second Women's Liberation Movement demo in France; the first one had taken place in August of 1970. There were nine women there, in August 1970, but in November 1971, we were, I can't remember ... perhaps 50,000 ... I mean, a huge number.

PA Could it have been much more than 50,000?

MLD Perhaps! I cannot say that on oath, but it was a huge demo, that is all I can say. On the streets, you discovered a whole new world and way of thinking, sometimes through slogans and songs, sometimes through pamphlets or leaflets. From 1971 to 1973, as far as feminism was concerned, I was simply a 'demo-goer', if you like, getting new ideas or new perspectives—enjoying myself a lot when the language of political protest was propped up with witicism!<sup>1</sup>

The issue in which I was most interested was access to contraception and abortion. In 1973, a movement called MLAC (Movement for Liberty of Abortion and Contraception) was created. I immediately joined it. With a friend who taught classics, I created a branch in Colombes, a suburban town. Very soon, women working at the local hospital came and then took over, which was a good thing. Let classicists or philosophers start something and let nurses continue! Women have talents, talents which are diverse and which, when pooled together, may prove creative indeed.

Later on I joined a MLAC group in my own area in Paris, in which I discovered at the same time the most distressing

aspects of life, and wonderful acts of solidarity. I understood how being the beneficiary of an act of respect or kindness may transform a woman's life. A Spanish *concierge* in her early forties endowed me with this true nugget of understanding. The group had sorted her out, which means that everyone had taken the risk (at least on paper) of charges and imprisonment to help her, free of charge of course. I saw her blossom and open up. For a while, she joined the group, radiant. Perhaps it was the first time in her life that she was treated as 'an end in itself', someone who had rights and needs that others would bother to meet.

PA How has your political commitment made a difference to your feminism? Or is it impossible to say, because your politics and feminism are inseparable, perhaps emerging and developing together? And then, what about their relation to your work in philosophy?

MLD I believe that social questions should be seen as a beacon from which we may get an orientation in thought. We need to know about how things are for ordinary women; your ordinary feminist philosopher ought to know what is suggested by those who do good work to try and change the position of women in society. I do believe in being involved, let us say from time to time, in practical issues and in debates about practical issues. Activist associations in France occasionally ask just for that. You have to be patient sometimes, you may develop an idea which will not be accepted straightaway. An intellectual's responsibility is simply to explain an idea to the best of her own understanding, in as well-reasoned and well-documented a way as possible, and no more. It is certainly not our job to persuade. I believe I have acquired this attitude through doing philosophy and with the idea that philosophy does not coincide with rhetoric nor indeed with propaganda of any kind. Philosophy exists by taking into

account the fact that we address other people as free minds, able to engage in a critical dialogue with their own beliefs.

In 2000, the Lyon group for Family Planning invited a GP and myself to a public debate. They were campaigning to extend the time limit for getting an abortion. My view (documented in England, by the way) was that asking for no time-limit might well lead to hospitals lingering more (even more than they do!) in providing an abortion, and therefore to longer waiting-lists, which is not what we want. I suggested that we also devised strategies to reduce the delay between the moment a woman decides she wants an abortion and the moment it is provided. Perhaps such a perspective was not adopted straightaway by my activist friends in the audience. It sounded a little awkward to their ears, I think. Well, that was the year 2000; I'm now reading exactly that here and there, and I'm very pleased! Everyone must be entitled to take their time to change their minds. I don't believe in being brusque or, you know, in ordering people's minds; let them think it out at leisure for themselves. So, if everyone must be entitled to take their time to change their minds, conversely, an intellectual should know that it will take time for some views to be accepted.

In my feminist writings, you may have noticed that I'm not seeking, nor indeed courting, immediate success. Otherwise, I would never have written what I did. In feminist studies, just as in any given field, there is a matter of consensus, or group ideology, or falling into line with accepted wisdom or the wisdom of a group, you know what I mean. My first piece ('Women and Philosophy', now reprinted as 'Long Hair, Short Ideas'<sup>2</sup>) was initially seen as singular partly because it was critical. It was not in agreement with 'the line', which at the time was about female difference; it still is, of course. It was not 'sisterly enough', because it was critical. And—this came as a surprise for many in the English-speaking world—it involved a knowledge of the

history of philosophical texts in the discussion about women and philosophy. My second piece, about de Beauvoir, was written in 1979 and promptly rejected by a British journal, the Editors claiming that de Beauvoir was 'passé', Irigaray having become the name of the game! In the US, it was also met, though not by everybody, with explicit disbelief. De Beauvoir, a philosopher? These two pieces have since then been reprinted a number of times, and re-xeroxed in a way which could make any publisher feel miserable.

It is hardly the duty of a thinker to look out for a crowd she could follow nor, come to that, to write books that will help promote her own career, which may always involve some kind of compromise with dominant, hence, patriarchal ideology.

- PA Yes; I like this idea that you have to allow people time to change their minds.
- MLD It has to do with the idea of freedom—their own freedom, and my wanting them to find their own freedom. And this is something I've learned partly through activism about contraception and abortion, because my role was to talk with women who were demanding an abortion—at the time it was illegal in France—within an activist group. The atmosphere, all that struggle, was about helping each individual woman to find her own way to her own freedom. It was important to discuss with her why she was not using contraception and therefore was in need of an abortion. It was crucial to make sure it was her, not the husband or the parents, who wanted the pregnancy to be terminated. Our message was: 'It is you, it is your opinion, that counts'. A woman who is in trouble may find an opportunity in it to discover her own liberty. Well, that sort of experience has shaped my work in philosophy or reinforced a tendency I already had. I find deep pleasure in respecting my readers' intellectual freedom; I write in

the hope of helping them to be freer and to find a true intellectual liberty.

### Women, Feminism and Food for Thought

PA Michèle, do you sometimes despair of women today, who do not seem to be aware of the need to engage in contemporary politics (as feminists)? Is it ever enough to be a strictly academic feminist? In fact, the latter might be impossible.

MLD Hmm, I'm now in two minds about that! Or rather, my brief time teaching feminist studies at Geneva has made me change my views. Most of my students, particularly the young ones, were not at all ready to engage in practical politics. They wanted intellectual food, they enjoyed reading the books suggested to them, and enjoyed discussing topics at the level of principles. It was feminism considered as a fine art, almost.

Only some mature students who already had experience as activists were, as a matter of course, carrying on with practical politics. To start with, I was slightly surprised that the younger ones would not engage in discussion with the mature students about also being a practical activist—I was surprised, and then I understood. There is such a thing as intellectual hunger, a pure need for ideas or for a renewed intellectual life. This hunger brought to my seminars an amazing mix of women and some men. Both the mature activists and the young students came for the same reason: they wanted some intellectual food. All seemed to describe my teaching in food metaphors to the point of licking their lips when they had particularly enjoyed the meal! Little bear cubs around a pot of honey! And yes, a right-wing woman magistrate a bit older than myself, just like an undergraduate with no politics at all, could find food for thought, say, in my discussion of John Locke.

At the time, I wondered if teaching feminist studies was not just about intellectual fulfillment, which is an issue in itself. My own political persuasion—namely, that things do not happen if women themselves do not stand up for them—was, for some of my students, like stating the obvious, for others like, well, a personal view of mine to which they didn't need to pay much attention. Moreover, those who also had connections with the Department of Politics were taught exactly the opposite as truth pure and simple, namely, that feminist movements never achieve anything, because they always are and were too weak; that progress for women comes only through international agencies! This was the creed, subject of exams, and of course, when I would hint at the opposite, well, it would be seen by some students as just an idea of mine. The mature students already knew that women themselves have to conquer and defend their hard-won liberties.

Anyway, since then, many of the younger students have understood what I meant. Again, time is relevant in debates. They really understood at the time when the question of paid maternity leave came under discussion in Switzerland. Many women had thought that the Federal government would win that issue without their help. When the reform aimed at giving compensation for maternity leave was defeated by referendum, they realized that even when something makes sense, even when the Head of State is a lovely woman, utterly dedicated to the reform (and Ruth Dreifuss, the aforesaid lovely woman, had put all her heart into it), all the same, it is necessary for ordinary women citizens to devote time and energy to the debate as well. To go around and explain why compensation for maternity leave is a just and good thing, to attend meetings on the topic, in order to show a keen collective interest, to distribute leaflets on the streets, and so on.

MD In a paper you gave to a philosophy seminar at Oxford, you've quoted Louise Weiss with some relish when she wrote in 1936 while campaigning for the vote that it would be necessary 'to kick feminism out of the few drawing-rooms where it shows off'. Are you engaged in a similar exercise with respect to certain types of intellectual currents in feminism?

MLD Meena, you are right to put the emphasis on 'certain types'. There are some types of feminism or women's studies which do not seem to lead anywhere or which seem to aim at creating apathy. All the same, I would not consider 'kicking out' any intellectual current. I would rather be critical and a little caustic as I always was, and then let my readers think it out for themselves. As long as there is an intellectual debate, it is fine by me. Being polemical has nothing to do with an attempt to exclude from the arena, nor indeed with forcing anyone to get some fresh air outside the walls of the Academy. But nonetheless, from time to time, I would recommend fresh air, remembering that life is a long process anyway—there is no need to rush.

Keeping in touch with practical social issues and with the activists who stand up for them is meaningful in many respects. Intellectual women have many means to circulate information, and it is crucial to help information to circulate. To take an example: Martha Nussbaum's book, *Sex and Social Justice* (Oxford University Press, 1999), is the book I would recommend on these grounds. All women considering themselves as feminists, and students in women's studies, should be better informed about the position of women in developing countries. I take my hat off to Martha Nussbaum for having collected so much material.

In the case of Safiya Husseini during the winter 2001–2002, it was also crucial to circulate information about her, to get people to e-mail the Nigerian Embassy and the UN Office for

Human Rights. I put all my heart and soul into Safiya's defence and I was very glad to see that Amnesty International and some groups of the French Human Rights League took it up. It is our responsibility to help movements as important as Amnesty to understand that they should be involved in the defence of women. This also took a long time. Twenty years ago, it was difficult to get movements which were not 'women's movements' involved in any campaign for women's rights.

Occasionally, we may provide to activists' movements a reflexion, a shift of emphasis, new lines of argument. At any rate, when connected with them, or when working on real issues, we take up a social responsibility and become different from what we were. In a sense, this is the reward: to become different from what we were by increasing our social responsibility. Every time I have the opportunity to have a dialogue with activists, or to attend a court hearing on the most difficult issues (incestuous rape, clitoridectomy...), I have the feeling that I'm changing, intellectually (because I discover aspects of life I had no idea of) and also personally. However disturbing it is to find out about the worst effects of patriarchy, one may have the feeling that there is a 'duty to know', and that one becomes more human by allowing oneself to know about what is most painful in human life. Besides, it is educated women's responsibility to organize into some theoretical construction empirical material and findings about oppression. A PhD about single motherhood in the USA today may put your future as an academic a bit at risk. It is all the same a most respectable and extremely valuable endeavour.

And, if we return to the question: 'is it possible to be strictly an academic feminist', on paper, it might be possible. Except that, within the aforesaid walls of the Academy, one is confronted with a masculinist tradition, which has despised women and women's contribution to the historical development

of liberties or to the history of ideas. Therefore, if the better part of the community holds opinions slightly or heavily biased by contempt, it is very hard to remain loyal even to intellectual rigour without touching base from time to time with the knowledge, discourse and values of activists working on practical issues.

Besides, I'm sorry to say, opinions which are questionable, not to say simply untrue, may get propagated within the academic context. See how many colleagues will credit Michel Foucault for the French women's liberation movement, or for having introduced the idea that sex is political. As if Mary Wollstonecraft, Simone de Beauvoir, Kate Millet, and a few others had not broached the topic before, nor even existed! See how many claim that John Locke's or John Rawls' philosophy is just what we always needed. Ideas always come from men, you see— that's very well-known, isn't it?— feminism is derived. You may even hear women academics claim that we did spend ten years with Lacan, but Heidegger is our mentor now...

But after all, were we to have a look into the works of geographers, we may well find aspects there which are biased as well by, say, nationalistic beliefs or by the last government's policy concerning regional development! At a certain time, a given set of ideas may be rewarded or may be punished. A grown-up person should never allow that structure to influence her production of ideas. We should know there is a 'tempo' for intellectual life. And if you produce ideas in accordance with what is rewarded or punished, well in that case, twenty years later things will have changed and your work will no longer have any relevance. It is, anyway, unworthy of any thinker to do that. But let us take a more optimistic view: life is a long process. Sometimes, you come across women who first started thinking about themselves within a 'current' you consider as leading nowhere and as inviting us to stay in the drawing-room, but who

eventually freed themselves from the limitation imposed on them.

**MD** Michèle, what you said just now about Locke and Heidegger reminds me of your continuing aversion to intellectual mentorship by men. You've always rejected an uncritical acceptance of readymade frameworks. But you've also said that a search for a philosophical framework, which could prove appropriate to the theorization of women's freedom, is a search that you have been engaged with. My question is: do you think such a framework is possible, and do you see yourself as constructing such a framework?

**MLD** I'm constantly trying to open up vistas and to push questions further. This might not be what could in the end produce a framework, particularly because I see thought as a dynamics, as something on the move, and myself as trying to remove obstacles on the way or to challenge fixations. What I offer may well be 'unfinished' in nature and I feel at ease with that. I often think that someone who has read me will perhaps produce a more complete theory eventually, I often think of my work as preparing other works.

All the same, I have some beliefs. I do see feminism as a yet-missing, or often-missing, face of humanism; women's rights are human rights. Besides, if we take up the Renaissance idea according to which the human being does not have any 'essence' but becomes human or more human by embracing the interests of humankind as a whole, I believe that this is true of feminism. By challenging patriarchy— not in order to put any kind of matriarchy in its place, nor to seek any sort of juxtaposition of patriarchy and matriarchy, but gradually to undo the power of one sex over the other— we may hope to achieve more than just what we are doing. For patriarchy may be responsible for more

than sex oppression. It is clearly at the core of all sorts of fundamentalism, from Tele-evangelists to the Taliban. Nazism was a reinforcement of the power of both men and the State over women, transforming them, as Rita Thalmann put it, into reproductive mares and beasts of burden.<sup>3</sup>

Conversely, resisting male power is resisting fundamentalism. I'm also convinced that, if her reproductive life was everywhere in the hands of each individual woman, families would be more balanced, children less numerous, not produced one after the other or by the dozen, until the woman collapses, which is unacceptable in itself. It is believed that in developing countries, hyper-production of children counteracts attempts to redress the economy. The fact that many of these children will die before adulthood is heartbreaking and, again, economically speaking, a disaster. Women free to choose how many children they really want: this would probably lead to their having less numerous children, but better fed, vaccinated and schooled... which is in itself a good vision to contemplate. It may also help promote peace. Societies that assume that there will always be new children to replace those that get killed at war, take sending their members to be butchered too lightly.

All in all, I believe that there is a lot of hope, for everybody, for the planet itself, in the dismantling of patriarchy.

#### Philosophy as Detection.

MD You seem to take a peculiar joy in detection—a bit like a Miss Marple of philosophy, if I may say so—in laying bare little known, and often-overlooked connections in the reconstruction of intellectual lineage. I mean 'detection' in the archaeological sense. Are you mainly concerned with paying homage where it is due, or are there deeper purposes at work in the laborious digging and exploration that you so often do?

MLD 'Peculiar joy'...! Of Meena, it must be said: 'this woman knows me!' Yes, it is a joy and one must suspect that this tendency to archaeological diggings is a personal trait of character, hence something I could not account for. In *Le Sexe du savoir* (1998, 2000), I obliquely acknowledged that such a tendency may come to you early in life. It is linked to the habit of sensing that there is something the matter in an event or in a passage from a book, something one is not able to understand straightaway; you must be wise enough to know that you do not understand it all on the spot. I must admit that I always was in the habit of somehow stowing away a fact in a corner of my memory, as a question, and with the vague idea that one day perhaps I would decipher what it meant. Perhaps reading Agatha Christie to teach myself more English when at school developed that sort of habit. Miss Marple collects bits of facts or conversations and, in the last chapter, the puzzle falls into place.

Let me try and explain how it may work from a cognitive point of view. We were taught that there is a basic opposition between analysis and synthesis. Analysis separates components one from another, synthesis puts them together. Analysis goes from things conditioned to what conditions them; synthetic order would go from what conditions something to what is conditioned. Please forgive this simplistic outline. Now, in usual thinking (as opposed to ways of reasoning which are more formalized), there may not be such a cut and dried difference between synthesis and analysis. In ordinary life, we often put two and two together and suddenly understand or decipher the meaning of this or that. If intellectual '*rapprochements*' are illuminating, it is because a synthesis (however summary or cursory) may produce an analysis.

It is not just to reconstructions of intellectual lineage that this may apply. Take Bachelard's books on the poetry of fire, water, space, earth, etc. He accumulates fragments of literature;

and the more numerous these fragments become, the deeper understanding you get of the image of fire, of daydreaming, of water, or of spatial organization. But it's true to say that this may also apply to the history of ideas, in the sense of reconstructions of lineage. It may be actual or probably actual lineage: say, Y had read X. For instance, I am pretty sure that the young Rousseau had read Gabrielle Suchon. It may be something a little different, namely, the reconstruction of shifts in a long evolution. This is, at least, what I have tried to do concerning the emergence of so-called 'female intuition'. You take the period of time when intuition is God's mode of knowing (or the wonderful human mode of knowing first principles); you take the period in time when intuition has become 'feminine'. What happened between these two historical times? What does it mean for a mode of knowledge to undergo such a change? The question is already a '*rapprochement*', demanding an explanation. In forming the question, we already have a humble synthesis. Except that there is a huge gap between the two moments and it is this gap which has to be filled as much as possible. What will fill the gap is a work combining analysis and synthesis.

And let me add this. On paper, or in principle, the analysis of a concept can be carried out quite easily (supposedly, all you need is to be sharp and endowed with methods of analysis), whereas synthesis implies collecting all sorts of odd bits and pieces, and a good dose of luck to get hold of the necessary findings. Except that lucky findings will produce '*rapprochements*' which in their turn will help unfold a more relevant analysis. This could be the biggest lesson in modesty which research may teach us, namely, that you have to be lucky. What would have become of my attempt to reconstruct the complex shift from intuition as God's mode of knowing to female intuition, had I not been lucky enough to have read Gabrielle Suchon and to

have got hold, by accident really, of a rightly forgotten book by a Scottish Reverend?

We analyze concepts with our already acquired knowledge of many things; our reading of dusty documents is informed by questions which were lingering in our minds. And luck is crucial, even when you try to be methodical. One day, I was wondering how to find out more about the connection between Bacon and Galileo. I got the idea of looking in the papers of someone who had been an English Ambassador in Italy (diplomats were good go-betweens). It so happened that he had also been an Ambassador in Vienna, and on his way had made a detour to meet Kepler and ... what I found in the Bodleian Library was material, not about Bacon and Galileo, but about Bacon and Kepler. What I had 'scented' for some time, against the received wisdom of Baconian studies—namely, that there had been some kind of connection between Bacon and Kepler—was suddenly substantiated.

PA As a feminist, you have important things to say about other feminists who fail to read past philosophers correctly. I find this really important. In an interview with Penelope Deutscher (*Hypatia* 2000), you suggest that these mistakes (often) come from misinterpretations originally done by men. But are there also problems with how women are taught philosophy today by other feminists?

MLD There are always problems with how anybody is taught anything by anybody. This is why we should advise young people to add as much self-teaching as possible to the curriculum. As for what you are referring to: yes, nineteenth and twentieth-century translations of Bacon's Latin works, by male translators, contain mistakes which in fact insert into the texts the sexist ideology of their time, as if these texts were not full enough already of

sexism, early seventeenth-century sexism. How is it that some feminists accepted these translations, which basically claim that science is a male knowledge of a female Nature? If we consider that the dominant ideology of the twentieth century has it that women and men are different, or rather, that women are different from men; and if we see this ideology as shared and upheld by both the majority of men and by 'differentialist' feminists; then it is no wonder that they will agree on the so-called 'fact' that science is for the males of the species, and research is a male and fairly violent attempt to know a poor lady Nature so as to enslave her. The problem is that it is not like that in Bacon, for one thing. There is blatant sexism in his writings, but it is a different sexism, based on the idea that a group of people who have scientific knowledge will have as much power over a group deprived of science as a God would have over a human being.

Besides, if you take Bacon's sexism as it is, the conclusion will be that sex-equality will not be achieved without women having as much access to science as men. If you focus on the twentieth-century form of sexism inserted by male translators and commentators, then the conclusion is bound to be that women should keep away from science, for they would put their souls or identities at risk by doing physics or biology!

- MD You have said many inspiring things about teaching philosophy. One simple comment that struck me was about why the continued teaching of a text can be fascinating. You explain that with successive generations of students the teacher has to explain different things, fill in different gaps. It is indeed good advice for the teacher to bear in mind the receptivity of the students when teaching the 'same' text again. To take this further, what criteria should govern the choice of a text in teaching philosophy?

- MLD Meena, you should keep the question of my views about teaching philosophy for yourself; you probably understand them better than I do myself. So why not keep the topic for an essay by yourself!

- MD If you did a seminar on 'Women and Philosophy' now, what text would you choose?

- MLD Right now, I would gladly teach Gabrielle Suchon.

#### A Critical Philosophy of Parity?

- MD In the parity debate in France, you have seemed to defend the idea of genderless citizenship. Given the nature of the debate's reliance on the philosophy of radical difference, your support for the demand for parity seems to have been conditional. Further, you have argued that parity must not mean simply what parliament looks like, but what it is able to do. What is your response to the direction that the pro-parity movement has taken?

- MLD The story is more complex than that. First in an article published in *Les Temps modernes* in 1981, and then in *Hipparchia's Choice* (1991), I had pleaded for equal numbers of women and men sitting on decision-making committees. Although I may have mentioned *en passant* in that book, and also in a paper given at a de Beauvoir conference, that it would be a good thing if Parliament became a fifty-fifty group, my real focus was on committees appointed from above. Particularly boards of electors for civil service positions—you know that in France, teachers, post-office employees, and so on, are all state-employed. I saw that as the real means to achieving equal opportunity in public appointments and employment. I really believe that we should make a sharp distinction between councils, commissions,

and panels nominated 'from above', and hence acting on the behalf of public institutions, and elected bodies, elected from below by the people. The latter, at least in principle, are elected on the basis of a programme, to defend certain ideas in Parliament.

When the parity movement started in France, first launched by Françoise Gaspard, Claude Servan-Schreiber and Anne Le Gall, I had the feeling that my beautiful idea had been taken up, but in a distorted way. They utterly forgot about councils and panels which are nominated by the highest agencies. (By the way, in 2000, Evelyne Pisier carried out a survey showing that in recent years no progress at all had been made regarding sex-balance as far as appointments from above were concerned). Parity activists have put the emphasis only on 'the' elected body, namely Parliament. With no reference at all to a political programme, even suggesting that 'women MPs would not represent women'. Their followers took it a step further by describing parity as the last and only goal of feminism. It was not parity as a means to achieving better laws or regulations for ordinary women, it was parity instead of political issues and to the detriment of all practical issues. It was as if a shift in language was taking place. As if talking of battered women, of lack of education about contraception for what were still large groups of women, were no longer acceptable topics in the public sphere, not fit for polite conversation, evoking dirty aspects of life perhaps, hence to be pushed out by a new topic. It was as if only the 'posher' topic of parity could still be discussed.

My criticism of the parity movement also involved a discussion about what 'representation' means. Taking the idea more or less from Hobbes, I explained that there is a theatrical meaning of the word and another one which is quite different. The latter is based on delegation of authority. When I give a mandate to my ground-floor neighbour and friend to represent me at the

general meeting of the building, he or she is not there to 'represent' me in any theatrical sense of the word. She or he will kindly vote on my behalf about repairing the gutter or redecorating the stairway according to what I said I thought best. I choose to give a mandate to Martha or Thomas, rather than to Philippe or Christine, because Martha or Thomas are more likely to defend my views than the latter. In politics, bodies supposed to be 'representative' should be elected like that: a programme, first of all, and then the choice of people who are likely to defend it sincerely. If parity were discussed from that perspective, we would first of all have to discuss, at grass-roots level, what our programme could be, and then to discuss with women politicians to what extent they—this woman politician, or that other one—could identify with it.

Unfortunately, we have all noticed that candidates in general elections or presidential elections talk less and less about a programme. Elections are more and more a matter of 'showbiz' and theatrical performance. I saw the parity movement as a new aspect of this shift, a shift which in itself is anti-democratic—you elect people without being told what they are going to do... And more often than not, they will do things you may not like.

All the same, this criticism does not amount to a defence of the idea of genderless citizenship. Quite the opposite, actually, and when anti-parity activists tried to make me sign petitions against that law, they were disappointed at my firmly declining to sign. They advocated a 'universal', and in this case it meant genderless citizenship. I'm a woman and a feminist, I have ideas about the necessary progress of sex equality, which France should support. I want these ideas to be represented in political programmes and discussed in the public sphere. Discussed with everybody, men and women alike. In fact, I want an insertion of feminist ideas into the collective discourse and onto the agenda, which should be one held in common. If the parity movement

had held this as its political end, and drafted a programme, however summary, I would have been with them enthusiastically.

Unfortunately, the opposite is taking place; we experienced a severe shock in February, when the government (which had prided itself on having introduced parity in the Constitution) submitted to Parliament a reform of parental authority. This reform was aimed at giving more rights (though not more duties) to divorced fathers, and didn't even take into account the fact that some divorces are pronounced because the man had been violent to his wife or his children. A violent man, divorced because of that, may demand shared custody of the children, and half of any child benefits. This law will make the life of many divorced women more of a misery than it may be already, and it will impoverish many of them. As if there was not already a large enough discrepancy between the incomes of male and female divorcees.

MD In the Fourth Notebook in *Hipparchia's Choice*, you wrote that the state must 'take as its prime aim to create a space where all can live together with their differences, which will probably be multiple and not planned by anyone.' (1991, 313) Would you like to elaborate on that?

MLD I always believed that if there were more equality between persons, equal freedom of consciousness—equal freedom full stop—and equal protection from the community, the outcome of this would be the emergence of multiple differences and not, as some claim, uniformity. And these would be differences to treasure because they would not be the end result of coercion. When I first discovered Harriet Taylor, I had the feeling that I had met a bosom friend. Her idea of 'good' differences was certainly not that Chinese women's feet are cramped whereas in the West it is the waist and chest of women which are compressed

by corsets. With her, I would hold that absence of coercion allows non-conformity which in its turn produces true individualities—not two human beings alike.

With such a view, you may and must adopt an ethics: when no one is predictable any longer, we need an ethics of sympathy for this very unpredictability of other people. But I think this is not enough. Nothing will happen without a clear definition of individuals' basic rights, from birth onward. Had we in France a positive law stating that bodily integrity is part of children's rights, and schooling a fundamental right for children of both sexes; had we the idea that the Republic must protect all children equally, it would be easier to stand up for little girls who are at risk of undergoing clitoridectomy and to stand up for Muslim teenagers who want to attend school with a scarf on their heads. Don't misunderstand me: I'm not a fan of this scarf, but I believe that a girl's right to schooling must prevail. As for clitoridectomy, I believe parents should be forbidden to carry out this ablation on their babies. On the other hand, if an adult woman were to decide to have this ablation carried out on her own body, I don't think the law should interfere, though I would feel very sorry for her. As for the scarf, you may have noticed that on the streets, on trains, one may come across Muslim adult women who clearly have rights, education, employment, the possibility of walking or travelling on their own... on them, the very aspect of the scarf changes.

#### From Politics of Sex to Politics of Race.

MD Just as there was an urgency about the politics of sex in the Sixties, in the current climate in Europe, it seems to me that the politics of race needs to be seriously addressed. What in your view should feminists be doing about the rise of the Far Right in France?

**MLD** Anti-racism is constantly urgent, as is a politics of sex, or perhaps I should say that in both cases, we should remember that only sustained action, and thinking in the long term, may achieve a better society. We usually advise battered wives to plan their steps; associations working to give them support often say that acting only in 'urgency', giving them help only when there is an acute crisis, is not what might really help. I feel tempted to say the same for many other political problems.

Now, to take a feminist angle on racism, I would first of all want to turn to a phenomenon which is not taken into account enough, namely xenophobia, which may well be a global platform for racism or interwoven with racism. I understood that when I lived in Geneva. In a tram, I was chatting with an elderly lady and trying to comfort her (she was distressed because she had found a public phone broken). At a certain stage, I gave away the fact that I was French. Her face reflected deep horror; she exclaimed 'You are French?' and then turned her back on me.

I have sometimes been the witness, sometimes on the receiving end, of incidents of that kind in other European countries, and in retrospect, I began to understand what I had witnessed or experienced. Xenophobia is a negative attitude towards people who in some way or another do not belong to the community, because they are not nationals or, when a nation is defined by one religion, because they are not members of that faith. Xenophobia may be hatred pure and simple, or distrust, or a wish to humiliate you, or systematically to take advantage of you and exploit you. It may take up many forms, so let us say it is about making a difference between people who belong and people who do not belong. And I think that in many cases it is the hidden platform of racism. 'These foreigners, you know'; a global hostility to foreigners except that, once this is set down, then a given community may think of introducing degrees of

foreignness. The Swiss law about immigration is clear; it is called 'the three-circles principle'. The first circle defines first-class potential immigrants, namely European citizens, considered as, and I quote, 'almost like us'. The second circle is for Americans, Australians and Canadians (almost like the 'almost'). The third circle is for the rest of the world—with an occasional exception for the Vietnamese and Cambodians who fled from Communism; 'the enemies of our main enemy being more or less perhaps our friends'.

If you take a close look at Le Pen's position, you will notice that it is xenophobia he is explicitly propagating. Jobs and housing should be given to French nationals, not to foreigners. 'French mothers' should have child benefits and even be paid to stay at home (but nothing is said of mothers who are not French). He does often let slip racist attitudes as well; his anti-semitic remarks are particularly repulsive. But his explicit and real line, I think, is xenophobia. He occasionally tries to remind himself that there are a lot of French citizens who are black; he might even remember that many French citizens are of Maghreb descent. These attempts clearly go against the grain with him, but perhaps some among his think-tank insist that he should try—try to limit himself to xenophobia, that is. Xenophobia which is not punished by law and which is aimed at migrant workers and migrant families.

If, from this description, we now turn to women's attitudes, we shall have to describe an old political gap among women themselves. In Germany, at the beginning of the twentieth century, women who were real feminists in my view, who had campaigned for the vote and contraception, were among the first victims of Nazism along with other political opponents, namely the Communists and the Socialists. A third of them (if my memory of Claudia Koonz' book is good) were assassinated in jail before the end of 1934, another third were in exile by

then, and a third underground.<sup>4</sup> We must never forget that fascism first gets rid of political opponents, feminists included, before attacking people who, according to a fascistic definition of conformity, should not belong. Before organizing mass deportation and the extermination of Jews, Tziganes and gay men, the Nazis assassinated those who would have stood up for them.

On the other hand, many associations of conservative women (mostly religious groupings, like women's institutes) joined the Nazis. We must never forget that. As my friend Liliane Kandel would put it, 'Being born a woman does not grant you any political grace'. Even if statistics show that today women vote less than men for Le Pen in France (except housewives who vote exactly like the men), even if a law against racist statements was approved by referendum in the Republic of Geneva only thanks to women voters, we must never forget that a portion of the women in any given country may turn out to be supporters of the worst politics. And the more traditional their life-style, the higher the risk of their identifying with a politics of exclusion, discrimination and extermination.

There may be an archaic factor in that attitude. In many traditional societies, women are allotted the role of being, in the words of Nira Yuval-Davies, 'the bearers of the collective'. They are in charge of maintaining traditions and are supposed to identify wholly with the community; to be the 'belongings' and instruments of this community and of its closure. This may well be an unconscious mechanism; the point of anchorage of the community in the people is probably under the surface.

PA Michèle, here I am reminded of the passage in *Le Sexe du savoir*, where you query the significance of the idea of a 'gender gap' (1998, 2000; 335). Taking as your example the French election of 1988, you note that the gap between the sexes is most apparent in votes for the extreme right. Certain women—those who are

educated and have had the opportunity to learn to think freely—diverge most strongly from the male supporters of the right's racism and xenophobia. These women are much less likely to follow men who vote for Le Pen and his like. However, it is women who work at home (e.g. house-wives) and are under the thumb of patriarchy who still tend to follow 'their men'. This is a good example of equality and divergence amongst women.

I find this example an important challenge to twentieth-century 'difference feminism', i.e. those who replace(d) 'equal' with 'different'. Moreover, this is a highly significant marker for your own divergence from the so-called French feminism of 'difference'. While twentieth-century feminists tended to reduce the debate to difference or equality, that is, either following the so-called 'French feminism' or not, you—Michèle—were waiting for women to take hold of their political freedom to change their own minds. The patience of your wisdom, treating each woman as autonomous in her thinking, would seem to be bringing us into the twenty-first century with your distinctive approach to feminist philosophy. In this particular case, women are to work for change by seizing the reality of their equal rights to vote, and their possible divergence from patriarchal men, as well as possibly from other women. I am excited by this third way to read women, philosophy and the significance of their political commitments. You also anticipated—uncannily—the crucial role of voting by women (against the extreme right, but also patriarchy) in this new century: it's their power for/to change! Michèle, I hope that I am not putting words in your mouth with these comments...

MLD You are not! And it is true that, if I had the means to campaign to encourage women to develop the habit of voting, in Europe or in America, I would! But, speaking of the Far Right in France, there is something I would like to tell my feminist friends and

many other citizens. It had been known since the late Eighties that, as soon as a politician drops a remark about migrants' right to vote, this kindles xenophobia and displaces 3, 4 or 5 per cent of voters from the classical Right to the Far Right. It was François Mitterrand who experimented with that, in order to defeat Chirac for the 1988 Presidential elections. The Socialist candidate this year, Lionel Jospin, mentioned this 'migrants' right to vote' on his official leaflet sent with other candidates' leaflets to all electors just before the first round. Without doubt, this again took some voters from Chirac to Le Pen, or some potential abstentionists to the voting station, with the result that Le Pen did better than Jospin in that preliminary 'round'.

I believe that an idea first introduced by the MODEFEN, the Movement for the Rights of Black Women, and called 'autonomous status for immigrant women', should supersede the topic of a migrant's right to vote. Most immigrant women in France are there on the grounds of 'family *rapprochement*'; basically, they are in France qua wives of their husbands, not as autonomous persons. It means that, if any kind of separation takes place, they lose every right, including the right to stay in France. If in their country of origin, the repudiation of the marriage is accepted, this may happen in five minutes. If the man is violent to them, they can't even leave the home. The same applies to any children: the father has every power to send them back to the country of origin. All in all, our legislation concerning migrant families gives to the husband and father more power over the wife(s) and offspring than these men had in their old country. No wonder teenagers have a tendency to be more submissive or more rebellious than they would in the old country.

The MODEFEN claims that 'autonomous status' for all women immigrants should come first, and I am with them. It should be put at the forefront of any political agenda concerning

immigration. A migrant's right to vote would in fact benefit mostly male heads of families, anyway. Let us work to give immigrant women equal rights with their French counterparts, to give them literacy and to create a solidarity between women of all origins. And let us have the courage, because it will take some, to tell the Left that we do not want to hear about a migrant's right to vote for the time being, not before autonomous status is achieved.

PA Yes, 'autonomous status for immigrant women' is clearly the correct priority.

Tell Me All Your Secrets...

MD How does philosophy get produced? And what gets you writing?

MLD I believe we should make a distinction between desire, the desire to do philosophy, and the production of philosophy. Of the desire to do philosophy, I would say I don't quite know where it comes from; but such a desire may lead you to read philosophical works, or to discuss philosophical topics, or to produce pieces, or to teach, or all these forms of philosophical activity at the same time. This desire does not have a pre-established destiny.

When it leads to production, I think it is because you perceive that something has not been said yet, which ought to be said. In my experience, there is often more to it, because the energy you have to put into completing a book is not a small matter. I have occasionally managed to have intense days of writing because life was bleak. Every morning, I would walk to my desk, thinking: 'when Pascal had a toothache, he did maths'. To resist intense suffering, an intense concentration of the mind is known to help or indeed to be necessary.

Occasionally, and this is what *Hipparchia's Choice* is, I have been led to produce philosophy as a pure act of joy. I started writing this book as a convalescent. It is no secret that I had a severe form of cancer in the Eighties, one which does not leave much hope. As a result, doctors have to take the risk of trying to treat it by prescribing heavy chemotherapy, and so on. It was an experience in a way beyond the limits of normal human experience. When, in the end, I recovered, I thought of Nietzsche and his *Gai Savoir*, a book written as convalescence work, he claimed. I wanted to say 'thank you' to the friends who had taken care of me, and to life for having kept me. Naomi Schor, when we first met, explained to me that she had been reading the book with constant amazement. She saw it as 'oué', fool-hardy, ignoring all sorts of conventions except intellectual rigour, indeed sacrificing conventions to intellectual rigour. She couldn't believe that an academic could take so much risk. And then, when she reached the passage where I allude to chemotherapy, she suddenly understood, she said: 'After such an experience, one can say to hell with trivial considerations'.

Had I not lived at death's door for a year, I would not have dared write *Hipparchia's Choice*. Nor had I not experienced the bliss of convalescence. It is amazing how persistent your body is; as soon as it is left in peace, it starts repairing itself as much as it can and resumes its old ways. I wanted *Hipparchia's Choice* to be a message of hope addressed to women who are diagnosed with breast cancer: there is a life after that tough experience. Moreover, you will not be mentally bound to the memory of it, you will find again the diversity of your previous centres of interest.

But if you want to know it all, what usually sends me to writing is that I am asked for a piece or a book. The dialogue we are just having together may well prove responsible for some project later on. Occasionally, I have first written 'pieces' on demand, as it were, because I had been asked, then got some

feedback and eventually merged various pieces into a larger project. The 'origin' of a piece of work is not to be sought entirely in the subjectivity of the person, taken as a separate entity, but rather in the interaction between that person and her environment. Sometimes also, a little fit of anger may send someone to research and writing. One day, I told Sarah Kofman that I had the feeling that there was some anger or impatience, of course tamed and kept under control, at the origin of all her books. She agreed!

## NOTES

The interviewers would like to thank Tanya Singh for her help with the transcription and preparation of this interview for publication.

1. Examples of such witticism are mentioned in *Hipparchia's Choice* (1991, 223).
2. 'Women and Philosophy' appeared in *Radical Philosophy* 17 (Summer 1977), and in *French Feminist Thought* (Moi 1987). It is reprinted as 'Long Hair, Short Ideas' in *The Philosophical Imaginary* (Le Doeuff, 1989, 2002).
3. See Rita Thalmann, *Etre Femme sous le IIIe Reich* (1982).
4. See Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics* (1986).

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## The Mirror of Woman: Theorizing Images with Michèle Le Doeuff and Luce Irigaray

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This paper will examine the work of Michèle Le Doeuff and Luce Irigaray in order to draw out their specific conceptions of theory and theorizing. Both theorists provide different ways of focusing on the crucial role played by images within philosophy. As such, they can be seen to utterly undermine the traditional opposition between philosophy and rhetoric in ways that result in a radical reconceptualization of theory.

I will begin by looking at Le Doeuff's analysis of the use of imagery in philosophy in the first chapter of *The Philosophical Imaginary*. Le Doeuff traces the ways in which philosophy is reliant upon the utilization of images from other socio-historical discourses, including those linking femininity, beauty and superficiality.

The second section of the paper will address both Le Doeuff's and Irigaray's accounts of the construction of femininity in philosophy in order to interlink the theoretical and political strategies that they offer. While both theorists emphasize the ways in which theory impacts upon the social, their analyses are different and I will argue that each can be used to augment the other.

The final section will look at Le Doeuff's and Irigaray's analyses of the different structures of thought that underpin philosophical analyses of femininity. I will draw particular attention to the ways in which their critiques deploy the imagery of woman and the mirror, in order to show that together, these theorists make us think again, both about specific images and about theorizing itself.

## Introducing the 'Philosophical Imaginary'

Le Doeuff begins her analysis of philosophical writing by focusing on a discrepancy between the way in which philosophy is defined and the texts in which it is actualized. Philosophical discourse is characterized as rational, conceptual, abstract and logical. It is explicitly defined in opposition to literature, myth and poetry. Le Doeuff comments:

If however, one goes looking for this philosophy in the texts which are meant to embody it, the least that can be said is that it is not to be found there in a pure state. We shall *also* find statues that breathe the scent of roses, comedies, tragedies, architects, foundations, dwellings, doors and windows, sand, navigators, various musical instruments, islands, clocks, horses, donkeys and even a lion ... (Le Doeuff 1989, 1)

Le Doeuff's identification of a plethora of images within philosophy is, in itself, not sufficient to disrupt its characterization as a purely rational discourse. Philosophical writing maintains its logical status by defining the role of the image as merely decorative. Images are said to constitute textual embellishments and, as such, are judged to be extrinsic to any theoretical enterprise (Le Doeuff 1989, 1-2). Le Doeuff argues that these assumptions result in two apparently contradictory strategies for dealing with images in philosophy.

In the first, the image is seen as heterogeneous to the text, an impure element which must be expelled in order to maintain the writing of 'true theory'. In the second, the image is said to be absorbed within the theoretical project, functioning as an illustration of a particular set of results or a translation of a specific theoretical point (Le Doeuff 1989, 7). Le Doeuff argues that these two philosophical strategies are fundamentally inter-related:

In each case there is a common failure of recognition: whether the image is seen as radically heterogeneous to, or completely isomorphic with, the corpus of concepts it translates ... , the

status of an element within philosophical work is denied it. It is not part of the enterprise. (7)

In sharp contrast to the traditional conception of the image as unphilosophical, Le Doeuff argues that imagery can be seen to constitute productive points of tension within philosophical texts. In this way, focusing on the image is said to provide a means of illuminating the fault lines of any theoretical system (Le Doeuff 1989, 3). This conception of the disruptive capacity of the image is largely in line with post-structuralism. However, Le Doeuff goes even further, arguing that textual imagery also 'stands in a relation of *solidarity* with the theoretical enterprise itself' (6). Within Le Doeuff's model, images have a doubled function, working both for and against the theoretical system in which they appear: 'For, because they sustain something which the system cannot itself justify, but which is nevertheless needed for its proper working. *Against*, for the same reason—or almost: their meaning is incompatible with the system's possibilities.' (3)

The doubled capacity of the image arises from its dual status: it is both a specific element within a philosophical text and a product of a wider socio-cultural context. Le Doeuff argues that philosophy incorporates images drawn from different social fields, social practices, and knowledges. Moreover, this process of incorporation involves transformation in that the images are imbued with particular theoretical significance once they are placed within a philosophical context. In this way, the images can be seen to crystallize into a specific formation in order to sustain the concomitant theoretical system. However, the process of incorporation that produces philosophical images can never be completed. The image always retains its previous connections to other socio-cultural contexts and, as a result, maintains its capacity to generate further meanings, some of which will be incompatible with the concomitant theoretical system.

Le Doeuff is concerned to emphasize the ways in which specific socio-cultural images are altered when they are circulated between different discursive fields. 'Certainly this circulation is not an undifferentiated

diffusion: what it imposes is rather the requirement, at each stage, to think through the transformations which are produced in a borrowed element by virtue of the act of borrowing itself.' (Le Doeuff 1989, 4) The philosophical take-up of cultural images for theoretical ends is said to result in the creation of a particular vocabulary, which Le Doeuff terms 'the philosophical imaginary'. Moreover, the images that constitute the philosophical imaginary are always seen to be subject to further transformations. These changes can be the result of the use of a single metaphor across a body of work, such as Kant's use of different types of islands (9). Amendments will also occur when an image is taken from a particular theoretical system and moved to another. Le Doeuff demonstrates this point by charting the ways in which Kant's famous metaphor of the island of truth in *The Critique of Pure Reason* draws on Bacon's earlier work *Temporis Partus Maximus* (Le Doeuff 1989, 9–12).

Le Doeuff positions philosophical writing within a series of feedback loops. At one level, the texts can be seen to utilize images from previous philosophical texts, altering and augmenting the philosophical imaginary. At another level, philosophical writing may be seen to draw on other socio-cultural elements in order to create theory. Importantly, both levels offer specific re-workings of images, which, in turn, may be fed back into wider socio-cultural networks. It is this charting of the repeated interpenetration of the theoretical and the social that enables Le Doeuff to argue that philosophical writing does not transcend its historical context. She offers a mode of reading philosophy which combines textual analysis with attention to socio-historical detail.

This interpenetration of the socio-historical and the theoretical is addressed in Bram Dijkstra's work in ways that also show how Le Doeuff's conception of the philosophical imaginary can be expanded and applied to visual images. Dijkstra explores the ways in which early psychoanalysis drew on the artistic and literary models of the time. He argues that late nineteenth-century paintings in which woman is presented as fascinated with her own mirror image formed the basis of Havelock Ellis' conception of female narcissism (Dijkstra 1986, 136–7,

146). Manet's depiction of Zola's heroine, Nana, is one example. Nana is positioned in the centre of the painting, standing sideways-on in front of an oval mirror. Her head is turned to the left 'as if to give the viewer a casual and only mildly curious glance.' (140) Dijkstra comments that the viewer's marginal positioning echoes that of the top-hatted suitor who is just visible at the right hand side of the painting, constructing him as another gentleman caller. 'Manet's message is clear enough: Nana stands self-contained, self-absorbed, largely unmoved by the concerns of the men around her.' (140) Her self-containment is also suggested by the duplication of curved shapes; Nana's rounded belly is visually matched with the soft roundness of the powder puff that she holds in her right hand and the convex curving of her oval mirror (140-3).

Dijkstra argues that this image and others like it were formative in the creation of the concept of female narcissism. However, this chain of cause and effect comes to be reversed in the work of Havelock Ellis in that artistic and literary representations are evidenced as proof of the existence of the psychoanalytic complex (Dijkstra, 147). This reversal is important because it effaces the substantial amount of theoretical work that is done by the images by covering over the ways in which the theory is ultimately reliant upon a crystallization of particular representations of femininity.

Dijkstra argues that these representations of woman and the mirror have specific resonances in relation to the wider normative social values of the mid-nineteenth century. Conventional gender roles set up the male egotist in contrast to the female altruist and the image of the narcissistic woman breaks up this binarism. Narcissa's egotistical self-absorption clearly constitutes a negation of the Victorian ideal of the selfless angel in the house (Dijkstra, 145). Dijkstra thus argues that Narcissa symbolizes a betrayal of nineteenth-century ideals of femininity and that her egotism was correspondingly represented as both destructive and dangerous (146). The negative connotations of this figure are also carried over into theoretical work on narcissism. The early sexologists

argued that Narcissa's self-absorption constituted a form of autoerotic enjoyment that they deemed to be perverse (145-47).

Le Doeuff's model of the mutual inflection of theory and the socio-cultural is clearly exhibited by Ellis' take up of literary and visual representations of woman and the subsequent circulation of the theoretical vocabulary of female narcissism.<sup>1</sup> Le Doeuff's emphasis on different discursive fields also opens up a way of thinking through the differential development of key images or concepts and the ways in which they are transformed by their transition between discourses. Thus, it would also be possible to plot the history of the cultural representation of woman and the mirror charting a trajectory from fin-de-siecle literature and paintings to the *femme fatale* of modern film noir. The history of the theorization of narcissism could be seen to weave in and out of such a cultural history, providing a means of tracing the doubled genealogy of theoretical concepts.

This conception of interweaving histories also serves to sustain the multiple contexts of the images that work both for and against diverse theoretical systems. The doubled capacity of the image means that cultural representations always hold open the possibility of future, different theorizations. As a result, examples can never be used to 'prove' the truth of a theory in any definitive way. On Le Doeuff's model any attempt to accumulate a quantity of examples as a form of corroboration is simply a means of covering over the ways in which they are actually embedded within the theoretical enterprise. For Le Doeuff, a single example is sufficient to form the basis of a particular theory because it comes to constitute a key structure within that specific philosophical imaginary. Le Doeuff can therefore be seen to recognize that all examples are not equal and that it is necessary to focus on the ones that play a pivotal role, creating and sustaining the concomitant theoretical system.

Le Doeuff's analysis of the importance of imagery within philosophical writing enables an appreciation of the ways in which philosophy secures its status as the voice of truth. The suppression of the role played by cultural representations can be seen to play a vital part in this process.

Ellis' attempt to read works of art as examples of his psychoanalytic prototype covers over their role in the creation of the theory. This deletion of cultural and historical specificity also enables the theory to gain its 'universal' and 'objective' status. Furthermore, the eradication of specificity enables theory to pass as more than an objective description, it becomes the means of delineating the boundaries between the thinkable and the unthinkable.

While Le Doeuff is concerned to offer a critique of philosophy, it is possible to draw a more positive picture of what she thinks theory should become. Any theory would have to acknowledge the work that is done by the specific examples, cultural representations and images embedded within it. This would also involve accepting the specificity and the historicity of the theory itself, which would, in turn, ensure that the proposed theoretical claims were seen as limited in their scope. In this way, a theory would always acknowledge its status as intrinsically perspectival in that it would be seen to arise from particular circumstances and to be created in relation to particular debates.

Le Doeuff's model has much in common with Bill Nichols' paradigm, developed in the context of film studies, in which he too stresses the importance of positioning theory within its social context. However, Nichols defines theorizing as purposeful, subject to specific ends, and this underpins a pragmatic evaluation of the success or failure of each theoretical system in terms of whether or not they achieve their own goals. Le Doeuff is more concerned to demonstrate the tangential and diverse ways in which theories take up and rework the gender politics expressed in socio-cultural discourses.

Both theorists offer ways of reappraising the process of abstraction that is part of any theoretical enterprise. They argue that abstraction cannot be considered to be the means by which a theory is rendered universally applicable. For Nichols, film theory always involves going beyond the single example: "To theorise is to step back, to assemble categories and concepts that will allow us to formulate ideas about film that have greater extension than a single instance." (Nichols 2000, 34)

However, all theories are seen to be limited in their scope. On Le Doeuff's model, any theory remains permeated by the imagery that has facilitated its creation. The process of crystallization that is undergone by the cultural images that are transferred into philosophical discourse is always incomplete and, as a result, they can always be mobilized differently, rendering the theory precarious.

Le Doeuff's conception of abstraction can therefore be seen to involve a transformation of form which does entail an expansion of scope. I will go on to discuss her analysis of the ways in which specific configurations of femininity come to form abstract structures for philosophical thought in the final section. However, the vital role played by the privileged examples/images ensures that any theory is permeated by a sense of its own specificity. Le Doeuff can therefore be seen to share Nichols' conception of theory as perspectival, and explicitly or implicitly, political. However her model also offers a way of viewing theory as *intrinsically* precarious and limited.

#### Le Doeuff and Irigaray: Focusing on Femininity

This section will address Le Doeuff's and Irigaray's analyses of the presentation of femininity in philosophy. Both theorists are concerned to address the role that is played by the concept of the feminine, exploring the ways in which it functions as a means of shoring up specific philosophical systems. However, their accounts of the interaction between the philosophical and the social are very different. I will argue that each theorist offers the other a way out of a particular impasse and will suggest that their accounts could be usefully combined. I will continue to utilize Le Doeuff's concept of the philosophical imaginary and will demonstrate that it facilitates a different understanding of Irigaray's project.

Le Doeuff provides an outline of 'the imaginary portrait of "woman"' that haunts philosophy. She is characterized as:

a power of disorder, a being of night, a twilight beauty, a dark continent, a sphinx of dissolution, an abyss of the unintelligi-

ble, a voice of underworld gods, an inner enemy who alters and perverts without visible sign of combat, a place where all forms dissolve. (Le Doeuff 1989, 113)

Le Doeuff comments that these many configurations of 'a femininity of chaos' (114) serve to demarcate the boundaries of philosophical thought in that they represent that which is unknowable, unthinkable or simply unthinking. Moreover, philosophy polices its boundaries by excluding modes of thought that do not conform to its definition of logic. Thus, the opposition *logos/mythos* serves to validate the rigorous logic of philosophical argument by contrasting it with the unthinking emotionalism of 'old wives' tales'. The superiority of philosophy is demonstrated by the repeated use of a scenario in which the shadows of superstition provided by such tales are cleared away, revealing the true light of the concept (Le Doeuff 1989, 115).

The continual process of separation and exclusion, which sets up the boundaries of philosophy, is also essential to its very definition. In this way, the femininity of chaos that has been constructed as the outside of philosophical thought becomes the Other within: 'Thus shadow is within the very field of light and woman is an internal enemy.' (115) However, Le Doeuff argues that the construction of the feminine as a purely hostile principle is a means of covering over the structural necessity of the role that she plays in the development of philosophical thought. 'Femininity as an inner enemy? Or rather the feminine, a support and signifier of something that, having been engendered by philosophy whilst being rejected by it, operates within it as an *indispensable deuchweight* which cannot be dialectically absorbed.' (115; my italics)

Luce Irigaray also draws attention to the vital role played by the concept of femininity in philosophy, arguing that it constitutes [a] reserve supply of *negativity* which underpins both present and future dialectical systems (Irigaray 1985, 22). Like Le Doeuff, Irigaray outlines the key ways in which philosophy constructs woman as Other. '[T]he feminine will be allowed and even obliged to return in such oppositions as: be/*become*, have/*not have* sex (organ), phallic/*non-phallic*, penis/*ditoris* or

else penis/*vagina*, plus/*minus*, clearly representable/*dark continent*, logos/*silence* or idle chatter...' (22). However, the inclusion of Freudian and Lacanian oppositions in this list indicates a key difference from Le Doeuff. Irigaray is concerned to demonstrate the ways in which the conception of the feminine as negative serves to uphold the position of the male subject. In this way, the Freudian construction of woman as lacking and consequently envious can be seen to create and sustain the value of the phallus. 'Inverse, contrary, contradictory even, necessary if the male subject's process of specul(ar)ization is to be raised and sublated.' (22)

Irigaray argues that the symmetrical structures of dialectical opposition reveal the particular economy of desire that underpins the construction of the Other. Within the psychoanalytic model woman functions as a 'mirror charged with sending man's image back to him—albeit inverted.' (51) It is her status as a simple inversion that reveals 'the desire for the same, for the self-identical, the self (as) same,' that forms the basis of this 'hom(m)osexual' economy (26). Irigaray's use of a Lacanian frame means that this model of desire is always intrinsically linked to the structures of representation. As a result, woman's construction as lack can be seen to present her as 'a *hole* in men's signifying economy.' (50) Irigaray summarizes the bleak implications of this positioning of woman thus: 'off-stage; off-side, beyond representation, beyond self-hood.' (22)

Both Irigaray and Le Doeuff argue that the images of femininity that appear within philosophy have a very specific role and that consequently they should not be taken to represent every aspect of the feminine. However, they arrive at this conclusion in very different ways. Irigaray argues that it is possible to challenge the construction of woman as Other by recognizing that the feminine forms a separate sexuete economy of desire and representation. The attempt to delineate 'two syntaxes' within the confines of the current masculine economy of representation requires paying attention to the significance of the spaces between the lines (Irigaray 1985, 139).

Spaces that organise the scene, blanks that sub-tend the scene's structuration and that will yet not be read as such. Or not read at all? Not seen at all? Never in truth represented or representable, though this is not to say that they have no effect upon the present scenography. But fixed in oblivion and waiting to come to life. (138)

For Irigaray, delineating the feminine economy is a process of recovering that which philosophy has erased and rendered unthinkable. As a result, the feminine is always already there and yet it is also that which needs to be created in the future because it has to be brought back to life.

In sharp contrast to Irigaray's vision of a pure femininity that can be recovered from the depths of the masculine symbolic, Le Doeuff emphasizes the multiple and diverse constructions of femininity that exist across different discourses. Le Doeuff comments that the philosophical conception of the chaotic feminine formed a contrast to the other representations that were available to her, enabling an appreciation of its limitations.

The icon of the feminine in philosophical texts is not a universal notion. It is indeed formulated in conjunction with some rather common phallogocentric prejudices, found in opinions, everyday behaviour and social practices extending far beyond the sphere of the learned few, but its specificity—not to say strangeness—seemed clear to me, no doubt because my personal sociological trajectory has also taken me through places in society where another image of the feminine is proposed for, or imposed upon, women's self-identification. (Le Doeuff 1989, 4)

While I think Le Doeuff is right to stress the diversity of discursive constructions of the feminine, her analysis of the way in which philosophy fails to secure its version of a femininity of chaos as the only one can be seen to undermine her own position. Le Doeuff goes against her model of the repeated interpenetration of the philosophical and the social in order to argue that the circulation of this specific imagery is limited.

As for the possibilities of such an element having progressively become absorbed into a more collective imaginary, that is another story. The sphere of influence of the gender-dichotomies created by philosophy is actually very limited. This notion of woman as sphinx and chaos is surely current today only among certain factions of the ruling class. (113–14)

This statement contains a contradiction of an assertion that I have quoted elsewhere, namely that we are always 'surrounded by masculine-feminine divisions that philosophy has helped to articulate and refine.' (101)<sup>2</sup> It is therefore worth ascertaining why Le Doeuff treats this specific imagery differently.

At stake here is the link between a femininity of chaos and the figure of the mad woman. Le Doeuff demonstrates that the concept of feminine irrationality sustains masculine rationality, which is then credited with the power to define the feminine position. As a result, woman becomes the privileged exemplar of madness while simultaneously being deprived of the ability to articulate and to understand her own state. The mad woman is thus constructed as a site of non-knowledge. Le Doeuff's emphatic rejection of this imagery serves to differentiate her work from that of other French feminists, such as Cixous, who have attempted to use the iconography of madness as a way of demarcating a space beyond patriarchy. In contrast, Le Doeuff points out that the designation of woman as 'a dear being without reason' only occurs within patriarchal societies and rightly concludes, 'it is being a little too generous always to credit power with the privilege of reason' (116).

Le Doeuff's attempt to vanquish this particular construction of the feminine by arguing that it constitutes 'a fantasy-product of conflicts within a field of reason that has been assimilated to masculinity' is linked to her position as a female reader of philosophy (116). In order to read herself into the philosophical project, Le Doeuff refuses to ally herself with that which the text explicitly excludes. Consequently, she argues in favour of a clear distinction between the philosophical construction of a femininity of chaos and real women. 'This is, in other words, to say

bluntly that women (real women) have no reason to be concerned by that femininity; we are constantly being confronted with that image, but we do not have to recognise ourselves in it.' (116) While this refusal of recognition is entirely understandable, the argument is problematic because it can be used to undermine the key link between the philosophical and the social that Le Doeuff fights so very hard to establish. The argument that philosophical conceptions of woman are not applicable to real women is frequently used by theorists who wish to deny the very obvious implications of their gendered imagery.

If Le Doeuff's system is to be applied consistently, it is necessary to examine the ways in which the imagery of a femininity of chaos is utilized within other social discourses. Barbara Creed argues that this imagery can be seen in contemporary horror films. She argues that the presentation of female protagonists as a locus of violent disorder draws on mythic representations of femininity and violence, specifically the figures of Medusa and the Bacchae (Creed 1993, 105-38). Moreover, she traces the ways in which these filmic reworkings of the myths both feed into and disrupt the psychoanalytic construction of woman as Other.<sup>3</sup> This involves examining the psychoanalytic transformation of myths into theoretical doctrine while also focusing on the elements that are lost during the process of crystallization. Importantly, Creed's work on horror suggests that the philosophical construction of a femininity of chaos constitutes a well-worn 'imaginary pathway' (Le Doeuff 1989, 165), which continues to inform the discourses of contemporary culture.

Le Doeuff's model of theory may also be used to trace the ways in which the construction of the feminine as irrational and chaotic draws on material from different theoretical systems. Irigaray's extensive critique of psychoanalysis in *Speculum* draws attention to its considerable debt to the Western philosophical tradition, and to such thinkers as Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Kant and Hegel in particular. She positions Freud and Lacan as the logical successors of this tradition in order to challenge the ways in which their key concepts are presented as ahistorical and universal.

You refuse to admit that the unconscious—your concept of the unconscious—did not spring fully armed from Freud's head, that it was not produced *ex nihilo* at the end of the nineteenth century, emerging suddenly to reimpose its truth on the whole of history—world history, at that—past, present and future. The unconscious is revealed as such, heard as such, spoken as such and interpreted as such within a tradition. It has a place within, by and through a culture. (Irigaray 1991, 80)

Moreover, she is particularly concerned to demonstrate that the Lacanian reworking of Freud constitutes an ossification of psychoanalysis into its most repressive form.<sup>4</sup> This is because the limits of the Freudian model come to be constituted as the very conditions of representation.

You would constantly reduce the yet-to-be subjected to the already subjected, the as yet unspoken or unsaid of language [*langage*] to something that a language [*langage*] has already struck dumb or *kept silent*. And so ... aren't you ... the agents or servants of repression and censorship ensuring that this order subsists as though it were the only possible order, that there can be no imaginable speech, desire or language other than those which have already taken place, no culture authorised by you other than the monocratism of patriarchal discourse? (Irigaray 1991, 82)

Irigaray's work on psychoanalysis is important because she constructs it as *applied* philosophy. This point can be translated into Le Doeuff's terms in that psychoanalysis can be seen as a means by which the philosophical imaginary is absorbed into the collective imaginary. It constitutes a point at which a number of the gender dichotomies promulgated by philosophy impact directly upon wider social discourses because it is used in the diagnosis of real people. Irigaray constantly stresses the ways in which the Lacanian construction of woman impacts upon the lives of real women in order to demonstrate the psychic cost of trying to live within the symbolic order. 'Love and desire between women and in women are still without signifiers that can be articulated

in language [*langue*]. The result is paralysis, somatization, non-differentiation between one woman and another, enforced rejection or hatred, or at best "pretence". (Irigaray 1991, 101) Furthermore, Irigaray demonstrates that this psychic state of 'dereliction' is enforced as the norm by the school of Lacanian psychoanalysis.

While I have argued that Irigaray's work provides a means of upholding Le Doeuff's model of the repeated interpenetration of the philosophical and social, it is also the case that Le Doeuff acts as a vital counterbalance to Irigaray. Although Irigaray is aware of the many ways in which the Lacanian model attempts to pass itself off as universal, she does tend to present the existence of alternative psychic economies as a possibility that has yet to be theorized.

Whatever you may think, women do not need to go through the looking glass to know that mother and daughter have a body of the same sex. All they have to do is touch one another, listen to one another, smell one another, see one another—without necessarily privileging the gaze, without a beautifying mask, without submitting to a libidinal economy which means that the body has to be covered with a veil if it is to be desirable! But these two women cannot speak to each other of their affects in the existing verbal code, and they cannot even imagine them in the ruling systems of representations. (Irigaray 1991, 101)

This quotation begins to delineate a possible model of female-female relations based on the neglected senses of touch, hearing and smell and then falls back into an analysis of the Lacanian construction of woman rather than addressing the ways in which this alternative economy might challenge the very concept of a single symbolic order.

Le Doeuff can be seen to provide a way out of Irigaray's impasse in that she insists upon the heterogeneity of diverse socio-cultural discourses, thus undermining the possibility of a single symbolic order. Le Doeuff offers a complex model of patriarchy as a dissipative system in which different socio-cultural discourses can generate and transform

particular iconographies of femininity, which may or may not work to sustain misogynistic imaginary pathways. In this way, psychoanalytic constructions of the feminine can be seen to reinscribe the gendered iconography promulgated by different philosophical systems, however, the model of woman as Other still exists alongside different socio-cultural constructions of femininity. For Le Doeuff, political analysis consists of a tracing of intricate connections between discourses, sustaining an awareness of the ways in which such interconnections serve to hold open alternative possibilities as well as closing them down.

### Structures of Femininity

While both Irigaray and Le Doeuff draw attention to the construction of the feminine as chaotic Other which occurs repeatedly within philosophical texts, they are also concerned to elucidate different structures of thought which work alongside the dialectical model. To this end, both theorists examine the structures which underpin the ways in which femininity is presented in particular philosophical works. Le Doeuff provides a detailed analysis of Pierre Roussel's text, *Système physique et moral de la femme*, which was originally published in 1777. She argues that his model of woman's body-space can be seen to produce 'new, abstract intellectual structures' which are taken up by other theorists (Le Doeuff 1989, 139). For Irigaray, the patriarchal model of dialectical opposition is reliant upon a particular staging of the appearances of femininity. She outlines a repeated scenario in which the generative capacity of the maternal body is repressed and appropriated by the masculine economy. I will begin with Le Doeuff's analysis and will use her theoretical vocabulary in order to address the ways in which Irigaray's dramatization of a repeated scenario serves to do more than simply 'jam the theoretical machinery'.

Le Doeuff argues that the underlying structure of Roussel's 'gynaecographia' is that of the 'chiasma'. This is defined as 'the denial of a quality "X" to an object or place which common sense holds it actually to possess, with the compensating attribution of that same quality to eve-

rything but that object or place.' (Le Doeuff 1989, 140) Roussel's analysis of sexual difference is said to begin with a denial in that he argues that the female's pubis does not possess greater mobility than the male's and concludes that the pubis does not constitute a site of sexual differentiation (145-6). Le Doeuff argues that this degenitalization of sexual difference results in its wider dissemination in that every aspect of women's lives and bodies is then presented as proof of their difference. Thus, Roussel's reasoning can be seen to correspond to the structure of the chiasma. 'Silence as to the literal meaning, a void at the centre; metonymic proliferation everywhere else.' (140)

Roussel follows tradition in constructing woman as 'the sex', and presenting procreation as her *raison d'être*. Le Doeuff comments on the metonymic proliferation of woman's procreative role. 'By degrees it comes to inform all the other parts and functions of woman's body, as well as her "moral" and relational existence.' (142) Her body is defined as elastic, 'more apt to yield to external impulses', and she is said to possess a greater 'tactile sensitivity', which means that her sensory impressions are vivid and detailed (143). However, she is confined within the vividness of the present moment, unable to apply herself to the study of science, or to comprehend political matters or moral principles. Her inability to concentrate also ensures that she is not able to create or even to appreciate Fine Art.

Roussel may be said to construct woman as an art object rather than an artist. He argues that her graceful, curving, soft body is beautiful. In this, he can be seen to take up a gendered conception of beauty that was common in the eighteenth century. Edmund Burke's work *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* was published in 1757 and provides a useful summary of the key aesthetic terms of this era. He argues that an object would be said to be beautiful if it possessed one or more of the following qualities: gradual variation in form or colour (expressed in curving rather than angular lines), gracefulness and elegance, smallness, powerlessness and fragility.<sup>5</sup> However, for Roussel, the aesthetic category of the beautiful is subsumed by the bio-

logical demands of procreation: 'A beautiful woman is thus one whose elastic, rounded body proclaims her aptitude for maternity' (Le Doeuff 1989, 144). Woman's attractiveness is said to be nature's way of ensuring the conservation of the species and, as a result, her beauty is constructed as a biological imperative. Time spent acquiring the skills which will enable her to be beautiful and pleasing, is also constructed as her natural occupation.

Importantly, Le Doeuff argues that Roussel's account of what constitutes feminine attractiveness corresponds to the structure of the chiasma. For Roussel, an attractive woman will be seen to combine two sets of opposing qualities: feminine modesty and beauty enhanced by coquetry. Taking up his energetic delineation of these qualities as 'two motors', Le Doeuff characterizes each as a directional force (Le Doeuff 1989, 149). Modesty is constructed as 'a negative, *centred* psychological disposition' which has a centripetal, inward movement, while beauty and coquetry are seen as 'positive outward faculties, centrifugal effects of sex'. Le Doeuff argues that these two forces correspond to the two aspects of the chiasma, constituting denial and metonymic proliferation respectively. 'Womanly modesty can be understood here as the mirror-image, the emblematic projection of Roussel's own constant negative practice—the void at the centre, the silence about the "place".' (149) The final part of the sentence clearly refers to Roussel's lack of commentary on the female genitalia located at the pubis. Moreover, the line 'the silence about the place' conjoins him with his mirror image in that it can be read as a reference to a later icon of feminine modesty, the angel in the house, who was the gentle, quiet, keeper of the hearth.

Le Doeuff goes on to argue that Roussel's construction of woman's 'yielding beauty', which acts as a continual reminder of her procreative role, is an overt demonstration of metonymic proliferation: 'this body dispersed about its own surface, is a mirror of metonymy.' (149) Interestingly, it is the female body that is reduced to two dimensions and constructed as pure surface. Le Doeuff's critique of Roussel draws at-

tention to the way in which his theories reconstruct woman as a mirror, a point to which I will return later.

While Roussel constructs feminine modesty and beauty as two different directional forces, they are both seen to serve the same ends, namely, to render woman pleasing to man. Le Doeuff links the capacity to be pleasing to the concept of feminine altruism. 'To please and, through sentiment, to prefer another to oneself. In either case, the same virtue: alienation. A woman does not live or act for herself but, spontaneously, for the other.' (154) Le Doeuff argues that Roussel can be seen to consolidate Rousseau's account of gender relations, presenting feminine altruism and dependency as the necessary counterpart to masculine individualism and independence (154-5). Importantly these accounts of woman's dependency serve to contain her within the domestic sphere, in that she is said to lack the mental capacity to take on a public role. For Le Doeuff, Roussel's work offers an enormously influential image of 'a womanhood enclosed in itself.' (157)<sup>6</sup>

Le Doeuff argues that Roussel's analysis of feminine attractiveness raises some key questions. Do the complementary structures of denegation and metonymic proliferation serve to 'incite the desires of man and render them more durable, as the text affirms, or doubly to efface a disagreeable object?' (186, fn.28) The structure of the chiasma can be seen to play a fundamental role in later theorizations of feminine beauty. The connection between denegation and beauty is asserted later by Freud, in that woman is said to seek different forms of adornment in order to cover over her status as a mutilated creature. On the Lacanian model, woman is not required to efface her disagreeable lack. Instead, she herself is effaced and reconstructed as pure masquerade. Zizek plays out the logic of this move most clearly. Woman cannot function as an exception to the symbolic order because there is nothing outside that order. She does not possess a 'narcissistic secret treasure that escapes the male Master's universal grasp, ... the truth of it is that *there is no secret*, that femininity is a masquerade concealing nothing' (Zizek 2001, 92). This move constructs femininity as a series of roles, paralleling the structure

of metonymic proliferation, which, in turn, sustains the Lacanian concept of desire as a never-ending process. Woman becomes a play of mirroring surfaces, the ultimate desirable object, because she can never be fully possessed or known.

While Le Doeuff characterizes the metonymic aspect of the chiasma as a mirror, she also describes the overall balance between the outward and inward movements as a visual structure. She argues that Roussel's analysis of woman can be seen to constitute a pictorial system because the many facets of femininity are derived from a central predicate, in this case the maternal function. Le Doeuff compares the structural role of the central predicate to that of the 'vanishing point' of a painting, which can be defined as an imaginary point that orientates the viewer's gaze and that is often positioned on the horizon line where the lines of perspective converge (Le Doeuff 1989, 144). In one sense the maternal function may seem to constitute a point of disappearance because its omnipresent quality is sustained by Roussel's postulation of the absence of genital difference. However, the vanishing point may be said to constitute a chiasmic structure insofar as it both organizes the gaze by drawing it into a specific point and also serves to lead the eye back outwards. Le Doeuff connects the visual arts of painting and sculpture by examining the prudish practice of adding fig leaves to classical statues (151). The fig leaf serves to draw the eye in but also baffles the gaze, thus drawing the eye out to view the figure in its entirety. Importantly, Le Doeuff argues that the chiasma comes to constitute a privileged form of spatial logic: 'the chiasma may well be, for the spatial imagination, what dialectical logic is for the conceptual.' (151)

Le Doeuff's redefinition of the chiasma enables her to trace the ways in which this abstract structure is used in other theoretical systems. However, she is also concerned to address the clusters of concepts that collect around this particular structural form. Thus the theme of woman's lack of relation to exteriority is explored alongside the chiasmic structure which also sustains this conception of femininity. Importantly, the focus on both content and form enables Le Doeuff to trace a so-

phisticated series of imaginary pathways across different theoretical discourses right up to the present day. For example, she examines the ways in which Evelyne Sullerot's writing on embryology in the 1970s presents spatial aptitude as a key mode of sexual differentiation, concluding that the 'imaginary schema' used to describe the development of the embryos is the same as Roussel's: 'woman enclosed in her interiorist cocoon, man with his relation to exteriority. "Inherent", staying-always-close-to-itself, developing without external influence: the female embryo is already a house-wife.' (167)<sup>7</sup>

The methodological practice of defining an abstract structure and tracing its use across a series of different philosophical texts is evident in both Le Doeuff's and Irigaray's work. Irigaray dramatizes a repeated scenario within Western philosophical discourse in which the generative capacity of the maternal body is repressed and appropriated in order to sustain the presentation of each particular philosophical system as its own point of origin. She offers a complex analysis of Plato's myth of the cave, arguing that it can be seen as 'a metaphor of the inner space, of the den, the womb or *hystera*' (Irigaray 1985, 243). However, the myth is said to offer an account of the origin of philosophy that marks the crystallization of the *hystera* as a metaphorical space which can only generate false images. Irigaray's critique uses detailed textual analysis in order to generate particular critical images, which she uses to augment and unpick Plato's mythology. Her reading emphasizes the ways in which his system is reliant upon the containment of particular metaphors and she goes on to trace the possibilities that he wishes to exclude from the philosophical imaginary.

As Irigaray notes, the topography of the cave is notoriously difficult to map. The chained prisoners can do nothing but stare at the shadow play on the wall opposite, at flickering images that they mistake for reality. The shadows are said to be caused by objects held by men travelling up and down a passageway. The passage is hidden behind 'a curtain wall ... like the screen at puppet shows' (Plato 1987, 317), and is positioned behind the prisoners and in front of a fire. Irigaray argues that

the prisoners are thus effectively positioned between two screens, which can be seen to constitute axes of symmetry, and proceeds to demonstrate this by swinging the topography of the cave on its axes. The prisoners 'are condemned to look ahead at the wall opposite, toward the back wall of the cave—the back which is also the front, the fore—toward the metaphorical project of the back of the cave, which will serve as a *backcloth* for all the representations to come.' (Irigaray 1985, 245) Irigaray's focus on the cave's multiple capacity for reflection and inversion sets up a key metaphor in her critique. Plato's *hystera* is compared to a concave mirror: '*this cave is already, and ipso facto, a speculum.*' (255)

The topography of the cave is said to be orientated towards the passageway which opens onto the outside world.<sup>8</sup> Famously, the true philosopher is the one who breaks free of his chains and clammers up and out of the cave into the dazzling sunlight. The sun supposedly represents the Form of the Good, a figure of eternal truth. It also acts as a template for the fire. This is 'lighted by the *hand of man* in the "image" of the sun' (246), and symbolizes the world of phenomena, said to be pale imitations of the Forms. In contrast, the shadow play on the cave wall has no direct relation to the world of the Forms because it is caused by the fire, and is therefore said to constitute an imitation of an imitation. Irigaray comments on the reversals that sustain the hierarchical presentation of the relations between the Forms, the phenomena and the shadow play: 'For if the cave is made in the image of the world, the world ... is equally made in the image of the cave. In cave or "world" all is but the image of an image.' (246)

For Irigaray, Plato's cave operates as a specular mirror, providing a simulation of reproduction which produces 'fake offspring'. Her critique links the shadow play on the cave wall to the eternal Ideas, presenting both as imitations.

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 simulates 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? The eternally present Idea? Target, or vanishing point, and death, that dominates this preliminary education.  
(255)

This imitation of reproduction marks the moment at which Plato appropriates the position of the maternal/material point of origin. The presentation of the Ideas as always already there serves to construct his system as self-generating. The Ideas may be said to constitute the 'vanishing point' of the system because they act as both the end point of the philosophical quest for knowledge and the original concepts that serve to create the possibility of the quest. Plato's account of knowledge as the recollection of the soul's prior acquaintance with the Forms can be seen to create a further series of inversions in that the end is the beginning and the point of death is also the moment of birth. For Irigaray, the world of the Forms is part of the relay of mirrors begun within the cave in that it is said to operate as both a projection screen and a mirage of origin.

While both Le Doeuff and Irigaray use the imagery of the mirror and the vanishing point to formulate their respective critiques of Rousset and Plato, it is important to appreciate that the images set up different constructions of femininity. In Le Doeuff's critique, woman is constructed as both vanishing point and mirror, drawing the gaze into a central point of denegation and then dispersing it across a series of reflective surfaces. On this model, the construction of woman as mirror is explicitly linked to ways in which feminine beauty has been theorized. By contrast for Irigaray, the metaphor of Plato's cave silvers over the hystera, replacing it with a self-contained relay of mirrors, which create and sustain the new vanishing point of the eternal Ideas. In this analysis woman is positioned on the other side of the looking glass. She becomes the point beyond the vanishing point, an unacknowledged ground whose generative capacity is co-opted and suppressed by the system. Irigaray

uses the mirror imagery in order to expose Plato as a conjurer whose model of absolute truth is reliant upon a considerable sleight of hand.

Irigaray's way out of the cave involves drawing attention to the way in which the central images work to exclude specific possibilities. She argues that Plato's use of the sun as a metaphor of knowledge of the Good sets up a particular imagery of light that comes to constitute a key pathway within the philosophical imaginary. While the transition from the shadows into the sunlight is said to dazzle the prisoner, Irigaray argues that the material dangers presented by the figure of the dazzling sun are overcome by the development of a specific vocabulary in which light becomes a metaphor for a cool, detached rationality.

But the consuming contact of light will also be avoided by paying attention to *forms* alone... Direct vision means looking directly ahead, of course, but it also means doing so through an optical apparatus that stands between man and light and prevents light from *touching* him at all. Reason—which will also be called natural light—is the result of systems of mirrors that enjoy a steady illumination, admittedly, but one without *heat* or brilliance. The everlasting correctness of things seen clearly, perceived rightly, has banished not only the darkness of night but also the fires of noon. (Irigaray 1985, 148)

This analysis of viewing correctly links the screen at the back/front of the cave with the membrane at the back of the eye, presenting both as specular mirrors which silver over the materiality of the hystera and the ocular cavity respectively. The comparison links Plato's mythology of light to Descartes' *Optics*. The mirror at the back of the eye is said to constitute a barrier which prevents the light from touching the I/eye, ensuring that the subject is never positioned as the object of the illuminating rays. Irigaray argues that these constructions of correct vision serve to set up and perpetuate an imaginary pathway in which the key metaphor of the natural light of reason is systematically secured through the elimination of other images which would sustain a different

analysis of the possible relations between the sun and the concave mirror.

Irigaray is therefore concerned to draw attention to the dazzling, blinding capacity of the sun in Plato's myth of the cave. She links this image of the sun to another story, the legend of Archimedes' defeat of the Roman fleet by using vast concave mirrors to set fire to their ships. 'And the sun, in its incandescence, joins together with a burning glass ... and sets the fleet of the whole nation aflame ...' (Irigaray 1985, 148). The motif of the burning glass is used to symbolize that which lies outside the visual economy of reason established by Plato and perpetuated by the Western philosophical tradition. In this way, the legend of Archimedes is linked to the figure of the female mystic who is said to form a '*miroir ardant*' when uttering prophecies in an ecstatic state (191). Irigaray's imagery stresses the materiality of light, explicitly linking it to the twin dangers of combustibility and emotional excess. In so doing she alerts us to the way in which the fires of emotion might actually function as an unacknowledged means of sustaining what passes for cool rationality. Importantly, her deployment of the image of the burning glass can be seen to set up a number of different imaginary pathways that gesture towards the possibility of other theoretical systems in which reason and vision could be constructed differently.<sup>9</sup>

This understanding of the moments in which Irigaray's work reaches beyond critique is made possible by reading her redeployment of images through Le Doeuff's concept of the philosophical imaginary. In turn, Irigaray's endeavour to map new imaginary pathways results in an expansion of Le Doeuff's methodology. *The Philosophical Imaginary* provides us with the means of tracing the development of particular pathways and abstract structures, noting the changes that are effected by the movement between different social and theoretical contexts. Le Doeuff's analyses also allow us to complicate the more familiar logic of binary opposition, by adding the chiasma and its dual structures of denegation and metonymic proliferation. Importantly, her work on chiasmic logic traces the *sedimentation* of particular images and structures, which

serve to perpetuate the equation of femininity with a lack of exteriority. Irigaray can be seen to alter the focus of this methodology, alerting us to look for images that do not simply support the system, while challenging us to think through their theoretical implications. Both approaches are compatible and can be seen as different trajectories that can intersect in a single image.

My point can be demonstrated by returning to Dijkstra's analysis of Manet's picture of Nana. For Dijkstra, Nana's casual gaze out of the painting indicates her lack of interest in the concerns of her gentlemen callers, showing her self-absorption. In this way, the quality of her exterior gaze is defined by her state of self-enclosure and mapped as an inability to feel for others, sedimenting the imaginary pathway begun by Roussel. However, it is also possible to view Nana's gaze as a point whereby a different trajectory emerges. Manet's painting stands out among those collected by Dijkstra because the protagonist does not simply gaze into the mirror. Thus, her look outwards can be seen as a gesture towards exteriority, which suspends her state of self-absorption. Nana's smile as she views the viewer out of the corner of her eye is one of recognition. It is an amused acknowledgement of her own desirability, which is reflected in the gaze of the viewer rather than the mirror itself. Her smile suggests that she is well able to understand the desires and concerns of her gentleman callers and, furthermore, that she has chosen to keep them waiting. Thus, her gaze outwards has a dismissive quality, indicating her enjoyment of the power she has over others. Manet's portrait of Nana is interesting because the protagonist can be seen to mobilize her own objectification in order to use it as a locus of power for herself, thus breaking out of the circle of self-absorption.

In this way, combining Le Doeuff and Irigaray provides a methodology which enables us to review the plethora of images of woman that pass between the cultural and philosophical imaginaries. This involves tracing the ways in which such images serve to sediment well-worn imaginary pathways, while all the time being alert to the possibility

of different readings, which constitute other pathways, the roads not yet taken.

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## NOTES

1. This paper is an edited version of the second chapter of my forthcoming book, provisionally titled *Thinking in Images: Feminist Philosophy, Film Theory and Marlene Dietrich*, which is due to be published by the British Film Institute in 2004. In the longer version for the book, this section of the chapter traces the ways in which the vocabulary of narcissism is taken up by Freud and later used in the analysis of film noir.
2. This quotation occurs at the beginning of the chapter in which Le Doeuff explores the construction of a femininity of chaos.
3. See Creed 1993, chapter 11, especially pages 156–66.
4. See Irigaray 1991, 83–4, where Irigaray argues that the Freudian model was originally far more open.
5. See Burke 1990, 102–6, 109. Burke argues that the assertion that a particular object is beautiful is not the result of rational judgement but is rather the product of sensory impressions of the objective qualities that the object possesses.
6. Le Doeuff's analysis of Roussel also provides a means of thinking through some of the theoretical antecedents of Freud's account of the narcissistic woman. Her construction of feminine modesty as a negative, centripetal movement is very close to Freud's conception of woman's narcissistic libido as turned in upon itself. Indeed, the dynamic of narcissistic autoeroticism can be seen to reproduce the centripetal movement of modesty, without the accompanying centrifugal movement of beauty. Freud's analysis of Narcissa's blissful state can therefore be seen to follow a well-worn imaginary pathway in that her pleasure in her own beauty serves to deprive her of any relation to exteriority and the wider social sphere.
7. For the full discussion of Sullerot's *Le Fait Féminin* (1978), see Le Doeuff 1989, 161–7.

8. See Irigaray 1985, 246. Irigaray analyzes the passageway as a symbol of the forgotten spaces in-between: 'for when the passage is forgotten, or by the very fact of its being reenacted in the cave, it will found, sub-tend, sustain a hardening of all dichotomies, categorical differences, clear cut distinctions...'
9. See Barb Bolt's analysis of light as glare in 'Shedding Light for the Matter' (2000).

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## BOOK REVIEWS

*Critique of Violence: Between Post-Structuralism and Critical Theory*

Beatrice Hanssen, Routledge, 2000

h/b £ 55.00 0 415 22339 3, p/b £ 15.99 0 415 22340 7

The main topic of this wonderfully lucid book is more timely than Beatrice Hanssen could have imagined when she wrote it, although anyone looking either for a simple moral condemnation of violence or for a historical catalogue of its instances will be disappointed. For this is a book situated firmly within the context of recent theoretical debates, in particular those between Habermasian critical theorists and poststructuralists, with the question of violence in its broadest senses offering a lens through which to probe the relative merits of the two approaches. Hanssen is especially wary of any position that associates violence or its elimination with foundationalist premises. Her dogged pursuit of universalist or transcendental assumptions here leads her to the conclusion that both the leading schools of thought have a tendency to stray in this direction in their pursuit of general theories and justifications. Her stated aim is to break through the deadlock she feels is ossifying discussion and even destroying the appeal of theory as such. She presents her own project as the search for a middle way, engendered through reflective disclosure of the strengths and weaknesses, as well as the often implicit and sometimes shared assumptions, of the two theoretical poles she identifies as the leading contemporary approaches (hence her subtitle: *Between Poststructuralism and Critical Theory*).

Hanssen's treatment of the two poles is incisive yet even-handed, critical but generous, while she is also willing to step outside the two main currents to consider alternative approaches where relevant. Her book is to be very strongly recommended to anyone interested in travelling through the complex debates of recent years. But Hanssen also has a mission. Her broad sense of what a middle way might involve

exemplifies the more appealing elements she derives from each approach: an open debate undertaken within an ethos of neither consensus nor antagonism, but of open, agonistic discussion (ethos being a term Hanssen greatly favours, having identified it with the critical attitude as a mode of being that she associates with the later Foucault's ethics). The 'between' of her subtitle is accordingly defined not as an undecidability, vapid compromise or synthesis, but as a 'space of possibility' (14). It would surely be difficult to fault this appealing ambition, even if the obvious question is how in practice it might avoid succumbing to the usual impasses concerning the status of normativity, the ubiquity of power, and so on. To some extent Hanssen has faith that her own astute analyses will clear away the unwarranted or unacceptable assumptions that block *rapprochement*, by throwing them open to critical scrutiny; and indeed she succeeds admirably in opening up the field for informed debate.

But there is also a third theory that makes a frequent, if rather shadowy and undertheorized, appearance within her analysis, namely, that of pragmatism. The friendly, pluralistic debates she advocates often seem in fact to become elided with, or named as, pragmatism. Here protagonists would surrender their more uncompromising theoretical claims to a more strategic and limited adherence. Within political life, Hanssen's confident analysis of recent arguments concerning recognition, alterity and multiculturalism also encourages her to propose a democratic ethos where 'vigorous debate and spirited discursive exchange' (1) might occur between those subscribing to different perspectives or living according to a particular ethos.

*Critique of Violence* is actually a collection of eight essays, of which two (the brief chapter four on Enzenberger's *Civil Wars* and the longer rumination on the Austrian feminist Elfriede Jelinek's deployment of a language of violence in chapter seven) look as if they might have started life as book reviews. The advantage of the essay structure is that it allows Hanssen to cover a variety of perspectives and facets concerning violence without the temptation to offer any final synthesis or closure,

while each chapter can also stand alone as an exemplary critical study. Thus chapter one is especially interested in Arendt's and Benjamin's efforts at defining violence and its boundaries; chapters two and three take us on a fascinating excursion through Foucault's search for a theory of power that Hanssen finds courting a dangerous metaphysics of violence; chapter five considers critical theory/poststructuralist disagreements as they focus on the relation between language and violence; chapter six focuses on questions of recognition and conflict, especially as they emerged in Hegel's and Fanon's writings; and chapter eight finally revisits the antagonisms of theory's leading protagonists as they have been played out among feminists. Because Hanssen has an enduring sense of where she wants to go in terms of a discursive pluralism—and even more strongly of what she wants to subvert, namely reifying foundationalisms—the essays do have a certain unity which is further supported by the focus on violence and critique.

Something I nevertheless found occasionally frustrating about the book's structure was that some of the key issues Hanssen poses so incisively in her conclusion to one essay, might remain unaddressed as her perspective shifts in the next. For example, the sixth chapter ends with her provocative claim that the retrieval of 'the radical alterity of otherness for a truly emancipatory pluralist politics is the challenge whose extraordinary dimensions we have perhaps only just begun to recognize'. A difficulty here, she acknowledges, is how to reclaim an ethical openness *within* the polity without succumbing to 'metaphysics, total undecidability, decisionism, or, simply, political disaffectedness' (209). 'Theorists' exchanges about Kantian universalism in this context, she adds, have often seemed remarkably unreflective on questions of corporate multiculturalism and global capitalism.

Yet in the next chapter we suddenly find ourselves thinking about violent language as a political strategy; the conceptual expansion the term violence has recently undergone (incorporated into Hanssen's own reflections on, for example, linguistic, discursive and epistemic violence); and debates about pornography. It is not of course that these are

unimportant topics, but it is regrettable that Hanssen does not pause to address the points already raised. Moreover, while she summarizes the urgent question of a political alterity as that of an ethics of democracy, the discontinuity imposed by the book's structure suggests an (unwitting?) elision of the question of political diversity with the problem of disagreement among theorists, which is where the appeals to a 'pragmatic bricolage' are made. This would surely be even less convincing politically than it is theoretically.

In fact, the question of the relationship between reality and theory clearly troubles and intrigues Hanssen throughout her book. It surfaces in her discussions of the theory/practice relationship; in her disquiet about the shift from social scientific to literary criticism; in her reflections on the question of ideology; and in a certain impatience with a tendency for theoretical debate to have replaced more substantive political engagement. It is also evident in her concerns with 'real' struggle—actual historical conflicts and what she sometimes refers to as material or empirical violence—and with a tendency for theories of violence to aestheticize or idealize violence in their search for conceptual grids and general frameworks. In her introduction, for example, she mentions the need for an encyclopaedia of violence that would offer a global, interdisciplinary survey of the history of actual violence: a project she distinguishes from her own more localized focus on its critical discourses (it would be fascinating to discover the relationship she envisages between the two).

She is clearly aware that at issue here is an older antagonism, between materialists and realists on one side, idealists on the other, as well as attempts at going beyond these alternatives in the imbrication of power and knowledge found among post-Nietzscheans. Indeed, Hanssen takes Foucault himself to task for losing sight of actual struggles concerning race, class and colonization, despite his emphasis on singularity and events, in his search for a general analytics of power. Even Fanon seemed to get caught between the political and the theoretical as he slipped, she suggests, towards a typology of violence that eventually

seemed to become a new unifying, if not a universalizing, force. Here, as elsewhere, she warns against the anthropological or vitalist accounts of a primordial violence she associates with Kojève or Nietzsche.

Yet one must wonder whether Hanssen would be able to find the discursive resources she needs to tackle, or even to pose, this difficult question of real/ideal relations, within the confines of the theories she is considering. My own view is that in order to do so, she would have needed to delve into epistemological questions that remain peripheral to her discussions here and, in particular, to challenge the prevailing Kantianism of the leading positions she mentions. The sort of dialectical relationship between material and conceptual developments, and thus between empirical and interpretative approaches, that an earlier generation of critical theorists had recognized could perhaps have provided a useful start here, as might the overtures towards political economy that these insights originally entailed. Indeed Hanssen herself alludes to such approaches in her endorsement of immanent critique and her consideration of Horkheimer's programme for a critical theory. But dismissals of Hegelian and Marxist dialectics as totalizing and teleological, and of redistributive questions as instrumental, binary and utilitarian, which have become the new orthodoxy among recent theorists, are not yet sufficiently challenged here to make such moves look appealing. Instead, Hanssen offers her hesitant endorsement of (neo)-pragmatism. I have mentioned this several times because it surfaces at various crucial junctures of her critiques as a possible, positive solution to the impasses of theoretical debate and to charges of theory's having become apolitical. What is she claiming here?

In an era in which the deficit of so many models, including the liberal one, has become so patently apparent, a pragmatic eclecticism seems to work best, turning us all into tinkers, handy-people, picking up tools to resolve problems, discarding them as we see fit, in a grand effort to retool pluralistic, radical democracy (253).

Hanssen nevertheless distinguishes between a Rortean 'strong pragmatism'—which she variously accuses of crypto-normativity; essentialism (in its reduction of women's oppression to a bullying of the weak by the strong); an uncritical endorsement of American liberalism and patriotism; and a tendency to bracket out power differentials—and the weak, methodological neo-pragmatism which she associates with the work of feminists like Nancy Fraser. She looks upon the latter favourably, presenting it as a sort of theoretical *ad hoc*-ism which remains sensitive to the intervention of power. In this context she speaks of 'a coalition of diverse theories and practices' that will 'lay the ground for a diversified program of discursive activism' (177). Likening this pragmatic eclecticism to the structuralists' *bricolage*, she sees the pragmatist taking useful bits and pieces from multiple theories, proceeding by trial and error, creative conjecture, towards fallibilistic and contingent conclusions that avoid grand or foundational claims by operating merely as heuristic devices.

It is easy to see how this approach fits well with the desire for theoretical humility and dialogical negotiation. If Hanssen nonetheless worries that pragmatism might simply be a name invoked to avoid the pejorative connotations theory has acquired, she has clearly attended many discussions already where pragmatism has been commended as a way forward, especially it seems among feminists (where she refers to 'the current antitheory moment in feminism'). 'Especially in the United States, the revival of pragmatism in the form of neopragmatism has presented itself as the only tenable alternative to theory' (234-5). In her own weak version, there is nevertheless room for theory, or theories, as well as practices. And while voicing concerns about this pragmatism becoming simply a new formalism, she also invokes its political efficacy during her critique of Foucault: as 'more concerned with the immediate practices of oppression than with the long-term or distant scripts of airtight methodological or political justification' (99).

I confess that I remain to be convinced here. Does not such pragmatism remain parasitic upon the theories on which it draws, with

their deeper justifications? Can it really assume the sort of neutrality implied, and does pragmatism at some level not remain a particularly American response? Would actors be willing to incur the risks and costs of political practice on the basis of such ungrounded, piecemeal claims? Could they find them sufficiently convincing to motivate political interventions? For surely one of the lessons of feminism has been that oppression is often invisible and requires a robust theoretical perspective to disclose its operations as well as to identify problems to be tackled and their structural interconnections. Could pragmatism, finally, yield the kind of analysis of real events and power relations that Hanssen demands? It would certainly have been helpful had she said more about the 'politicized "substantivist" pragmatism' to which she alludes (257).

Hanssen is laudably sensitive to the problems involved in squaring the circle of cultural difference and democratic procedures. However, in the end, one must surely wonder whether institutionalized power differences can in fact be translated into the congenial agonisms of a politics modelled on academic debating and, indeed, whether even these are amenable to pragmatic eclecticism. Hanssen's own allusions to empirical violence and real historical struggles suggest that she must share such disquiet. But her antipathy towards theories predicated on a war of all against all or on claims regarding the ubiquity of violence also warn her—and us—that this is dangerous terrain. As she reminds us in her critique of Foucault, such premises are duplicitous in that they can support conservative as well as radical politics. They also render all the more urgent some positive response stepping outside the circuit of violence lest we become trapped there. Inviting us to ponder such difficult issues, Hanssen's brilliant analyses have cleared away many murky presuppositions and opened the way for informed debate.

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*Women, Political Philosophy and Politics*

Liz Sperling, Edinburgh University Press, 2001

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This book aims to explore the interface between political philosophy and politics; it examines, that is, the effects of major Western philosophical traditions on contemporary women's involvement in the broadly-defined sphere of the 'political'. By analyzing key concepts such as the state, citizenship and representation, Sperling demonstrates how concepts internal to these traditions have come to serve as intractable truths that continue to differentiate between the sexes unfairly. The book is largely successful in delivering this critique, insofar as it offers noteworthy analyses of the self-perpetuating conceptions of equality in both Marxist and Liberal traditions; such conceptions have been defined by elites and have served to exclude women from the sphere of consensual politics because of their presumed irrationality.

The criticisms the book articulates are broadly convincing; less so, however, is Sperling's precise diagnosis of the problem of this philosophical legacy for contemporary feminism. As suggested by earlier feminist texts such as Okin's classic *Women in Western Political Thought* (1979) and Coole's *Western Political Theory: from Ancient Misogyny to Contemporary Feminism* (1988), there is clearly a paradox involved in women's quest for inclusion within political theory. In light of the specific aim of this book, it would thus have been fitting if Sperling had provided a unifying theme, for example, by highlighting the relationship between two of her central concepts, namely representation and recognition.

Before elaborating on this, it is worth remarking that the broad sweep of classical to late-modern thinkers in this book gives the sense of a somewhat overly schematic critique. Nevertheless this is, I think, to be explained on grounds of Sperling's specific aim, namely, to relate the abstract language of political philosophy to her wider research into women's policy issues, and particularly to those pertaining to women's position in the workplace. As such, she is able to approach internally

complex thinkers such as Plato and Rawls with the specific intention to extract particularly relevant attitudes, omissions, and silences.

Sperling follows Coole and Okin in showing—with the use of both a thinker and concept-based format—a direct continuity beginning in Plato's definition of women as auxiliaries to statecraft in an integrated polis, and culminating in the remarkable degree of anxiety about the maintenance of 'proper' roles for women in recent texts such as Etzioni's *The Spirit of Community*. (45) Indeed, one of the greatest strengths of this study is the compelling way in which she reveals the classical Greeks' inherent 'androcracy', against which she argues that, while domesticity may be the natural inclination for some women, it is unlikely that this pertains to all of them. (15) She therefore rejects biological essentialism, and in doing so raises problematic questions about the nature of the identity that women would ideally wish to have recognized publicly. Indeed, her account suggests, but does not fully articulate, the essential contestability and instability of the nature of the needs, interests and purposes that constitute such an identity. Sperling's objection to Plato is at least implicitly founded on the claim that androcratic political arrangements deny women's sovereignty, autonomy or capacity for creative self-definition. Yet it would have been useful to have in hand, alongside the critique, the positive implication of this for contemporary feminist politics.

This is equally so in the subsequent examination of Rousseau's treatise on education for citizenship. Sperling characterizes this as a bipartite system, Rousseau's model citizen, Emile, and his wife Sophie providing between them the two halves of the moral personality necessary to live in society: 'the level-headed decision-maker and the social agent'. (121) Promisingly, Sperling suggests in the concluding chapter that one of the problems with the contract tradition from Rousseau onwards is that it fails to anticipate a role for women which would enable self-redefinition across the boundaries of public and non-public spheres. It appears to follow that women's contemporary demands for recogni-

tion must, positively, involve deconstructing the socio-biological 'truths' constructed by thinkers in this tradition (125).

The explicit message Sperling's text delivers, however, remains largely negative: whether construed as 'natural' or 'social', or as 'sex' or 'gender', women's nature is reified by political theory, a fixed premise that then serves to perpetuate political exclusion. For Sperling, what follows in respect of Rousseau's framework is a social contract 'governed by the general will of socially inept, psychologically and morally weak love-lorn men' (125). If this is so, it would then appear that the question is not whether women have been excluded or misrepresented by this framework (for that would seem uncontested); rather, the issue is whether women can seek inclusion within it on terms which can be radically different or new. In other words: how can women seek political presence or representation without sacrificing the desire for recognition in terms which would appear to disrupt the political arrangements imagined in classical thought from Plato to Rousseau?

Sperling's treatment of nineteenth-century ideas of equality, as articulated by Mill, Marx and Engels, is more illuminating in this regard. She argues that their responses to the disadvantages historically suffered by various groups and classes constituted a genuine advance on the overt discrimination evidenced in classical political thought. However, she also correctly defines the problem in terms of the paradoxical way in which Enlightenment thinking—in both its Liberal and Marxist variants—failed to provide a sufficient critique of those inequalities. For all Mill's attention to the problem of women's subjection, he believed that women would inevitably choose domestic labour as a career, with the result that having a political voice in the liberal state would not necessarily release them from bonds of dependency. What is illuminating here is Sperling's treatment of the complex way in which women's exclusion survives the transition to modernity, how it is 'naturalized', and how it undercuts the inclusive and egalitarian impulse of the Enlightenment. Mill's attempt to revalue domesticity, equating it with manufacturing during the rise of industrialization, thus does not compensate for his failure to question the

unequal social conditions that shaped the choices made by women of his age, with or without formal political rights.

The troubling consequence of Mill's 'sciolism', she claims, brings into sharp relief the near complete absence of any account of gender justice in the influential contemporary accounts of Rawls and Nozick. Sperling's contention here is that 'the post-feminist umbrella under which women are implicitly incorporated as equally sovereign individuals' (173) is causally related to the elite politics of classical thought. Once again, the critique is powerful, even in the absence of a more systematic way of conceptualizing the problem. For it is clear that women must (if only to make a virtue out of necessity) seek inclusion and presence within the Rawlsian contract, using this language to claim the rights, liberties and primary goods he prioritizes. We also, however, seek inclusion to redefine the nature of those goods and interests; to suggest the partiality of this language of justice; and to advance new ways of conceiving social and political relations. Sperling's legitimate worry is that issues such as child care and positive action should not necessarily be prefixed as 'women's' or 'feminist' interests, as they could then be perceived as not integral to the common-wealth, and as such subject to repeal if necessary (177). More precisely, however, the problem with the Rawlsian approach is its failure to recognize that historically disadvantaged peoples need not in fact be constrained to present their interests in 'universal' terms. On the contrary, their struggles for recognition may, and often should, unsettle the universality of the identities, goods and interests which are taken as uncontested in this tradition.

Ultimately, Sperling is surely right in her claim that 'a clear pattern emerges in the type of person and the qualities selected for inclusion' (176). Yet one would have hoped here for some closer analysis of the ambiguities in Okin's liberal feminism. Her claim that the logic of Rawlsian justice must lead to questioning the justice of the domestic division of labour clearly presents feminists in general with the question of where or whether boundaries between public and private can be drawn. Sperling for her own part is, with reason, doubtful about the possibility of a

theoretical abolition of this distinction. However, we are thus led to ask how much non-public 'interference' this tradition can justify to enable the presence or representation of all individuals in the public domain, in order to express their particular demands for recognition. Sperling argues positively that 'women are utilizing the inconsistencies in the arguments that have historically excluded them' (186). It is worth reflecting further on how creative or radical a departure from Rawlsian or Nozickian liberalism this deconstructive project must take feminism.

The paradoxical relationship between representation and recognition, I have suggested, could have been fore-grounded to diagnose the problem which this critical study brings to light. Yet the book provides, as it is, a good basis for reflection and assessment, from a feminist perspective, of the normative potential and practical purpose of political philosophy from past to present.

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*Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*

Kelly Oliver, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2001

h/b £ 43.50 0 8166 3627 3, p/b £ 13.00 0 8166 3628 1

*Witnessing Beyond Recognition* is an ambitious book that has both a critical and affirmative project. It offers a critique of how subject formation has been theorized, arguing in particular that theories of subjectivity as subjection are problematic precisely in their presupposition that subordination or oppression are necessary to the very constitution of the subject. At the same time, *Witnessing* offers a hopeful, if not optimistic, vision of how subjectivity can be otherwise, by suggesting that we need an ethics of love as witnessing, and as an affective energy that bonds subjects together without overcoming differences or otherness: 'Subjectivity is not the result of war against all others. Rather, it is the result of a process of witnessing that connects us through the tissues of language

and gestures' (223). This combination of a sharp critical voice with a hopeful vision of a different world means that the process of reading *Witnessing* is itself affective: the reader is called to bear witness to the very demand for witnessing that gives the book its political edge.

Oliver's project is to offer a model of subjectivity based not on abjection, exclusion or recognition, but on the call to bear witness, and on responding to others as well as having responsibility for others (a double bond that is represented through the word, 'response-ability'): 'Witnessing is addressed to another and to a community, and witnessing—in both senses as addressing and responding, testifying and listening—is a commitment to embrace the responsibility of constituting communities, the responsibility inherent in subjectivity itself' (143). I thought the emphasis on bearing witness, as a response to the diminishment effected by oppression and as a means to resist oppression, was compelling. In dialogue with work on testimony by Doni Laub and Shoshana Felman, as well as writings on racism by Frantz Fanon, Patricia Williams and bell hooks, *Witnessing* asks us to think critically about how the act of bearing witness works to ameliorate the trauma of othered subjectivity such that the performance of witnessing is paradoxical: it requires the individual to become a subject by reflecting on that which made subjectivity impossible.

Indeed, Oliver argues that trauma, oppression and subordination all make subjectivity—and with it, agency and speech—impossible. Subjectivity is only possible, she suggests, when there is room to respond, to become a witness to one's own life as well as to the lives of others. Her main examples involve historical trauma (such as the Holocaust) and racism or racial domination (including examples of colour blindness in anti-discrimination politics in the United States). The book is not so much structured around these examples, but around the key concepts required to work through the argument. The first section examines the limits of the politics of recognition in relation to multi-culturalism and deconstruction, the second raises the question of witnessing in relation to subjectivity and historicity and the final section offers a critique of

models of vision (both in theory and in discourses of race) as well as an attempt to theorize a 'new vision'. Throughout, the reader has a very strong sense of a project and a vision of both the present—and its limits—and the future, with its possibilities.

Yet although Oliver's argument is original and engaging, it seems to offer a rather simplistic choice: one must either love or hate others, include or exclude others, be separate from or connected to others. Hence she calls for an ethical relation in 'which we love or at least respect others rather than subordinate or kill them' (69), and later says that relations between others can be 'loving adventures' rather than 'hostile alien encounters' (224). In both instances, love is constructed as an alternative to subordination, murder, alienation and hostility. How can we account for this simplicity and what are its effects?

To some extent, it is this simplicity which makes *Witnessing* so engaging: its critique of other theories paves the way for the construction of an alternative theory based on precisely those values that are understood as missing or negated in those theories (love, harmony, and so on). But at the same time, the simplicity of the framework limits the book, both in its reading of other theories, and in its positing of an alternative ethics of response-ability. In relation to the former, I agree with Oliver that to make oppression the necessary condition of subject formation is problematic. It makes such oppression inevitable and works to naturalize as well as normalize such relations. However, I think she fails to do justice to the complexity of some of the work which has argued that the history of subordination cannot be separated from the subordination of the subject, even if it is not reducible to that subordination.

Take Oliver's reading of Judith Butler. Oliver offers a reading of the model of subjectivity as subjection offered both in *Excitable Speech* and *The Psychic Life of Power*, suggesting that both texts assume that dependency on others necessarily involves subordination and oppression. She asks, provocatively: 'If "subordination", "pain", "trauma", "subjugation", "subjection", "vulnerability", "susceptibility", "violence", and so forth are all part of the normal and normalizing process of becoming a

subject, then how can we distinguish between becoming a subject and being oppressed, abused, or tortured?' (65).

At one level, we could respond to this question by insisting on the violence that is at stake in the securing of social norms in the life of individuals, a violence that is implicated in the production of ordinary as well as extraordinary events. But Oliver's question deserves a fuller response and also invites us to return to Butler (as I found myself doing in the middle of reading *Witnessing*). For Butler, the argument that subordination is a necessary part of subject formation means that subordination is not 'external to the subject' or 'imposed from without', but comes to be constitutive of the subject as interiority in the first place. Butler shows us that we need to understand how 'power' makes subjects who then become invested in the reproduction of power in order to theorize how and why political transformation is so difficult.

For me, Oliver's own model of oppression and subordination as that which makes subjectivity impossible cannot deal with the ways in which individuals 'take on' forms of power (in both speech and silence), even if that 'taking on' fails, a failure which makes transformation possible. Of course, we could then argue that Butler suggests that such 'taking on' is inevitable. However, I do not think that Butler argues that what a subject takes on (a taking on which paradoxically produces the very effect of their being a subject in the first place) necessarily has an oppressive form, although it may involve subordination. Butler shows us how becoming a subject requires a process of being hailed or called into existence by others, a calling which makes subjects vulnerable and dependent, but not necessarily oppressed (although Butler suggests that the power—to ordain or subordinate—can be abused, in the sense that our vulnerability makes us open to the abuse of the power that gives us existence).

I would suggest that Oliver's misreading of Butler relates to her assumption of an equivalence between the terms subordination and oppression: 'Oppression and subordination render individuals or groups of people as other by objectifying them' (7). Throughout, Oliver describes

oppression as a 'pathology' (I think it is unhelpful to describe power relations through the metaphor of disease) and it is usually equated with alienation and objectification—which are not the only forms of oppression. Perhaps more attention to the specific forms of oppression and how they operate to 'pathologize' the bodies of others (which is different to describing oppression itself *as* pathology) might have helped the analysis to move beyond its assumption that subjectivity has to be seen either as a result of oppression, or as rendered impossible by oppression.

Furthermore, Oliver's account of an ethics beyond witnessing does seem to rely on a dualism that limits the potential of the argument for thinking beyond the present. For example, she opposes an ethics which assumes hostility (and that involves disrespect and even murder) with an ethics of love, a love that celebrates difference and otherness. In doing so, she neglects the role of ambivalence towards others: the way in which love and hate exist simultaneously in the very approach to others. The productive nature of such ambivalence has been crucial to post-colonial theory (for example in the work of Homi Bhabha) and both Freudian and Kleinian psychoanalysis. Furthermore, although Oliver cites the work of bell hooks positively throughout, she neglects hooks' critique of how otherness has become desirable within multi-culturalism, as a relation of desire which means that others are increasingly incorporated into (rather than excluded from) the bodies of white subjects and nations. So love and incorporation can also involve forms of violence against others.

Of course, it would be possible to argue that incorporation is not love as Oliver defines it. But I would suggest that we need to deal with the fact that otherness is often celebrated in the name of a love that can then become the basis of incorporation. Oliver's imperative—that we should have 'loving adventures' with others to give us 'something new' (224)—is not far off the discourses of desire examined by bell hooks in her critique of consumer culture and the exoticization of difference. Rather than consider love as an ethical alternative to hate or subordination, we need to reflect on how the celebration and love of otherness can become another means by which oppressive relations are secured. Our

task then does not involve any simple choice (between love and hate, inclusion or exclusion, connection and separation) in relation to others. Rather, we need to think through the implications of the ambivalence towards others for finding other forms of sociality in which we do not simply move towards (love) or away (hate) from others but find different ways of being with others, and living *side by side*.

At one level, *Witnessing* does seek to do this by offering a vision of affect as social energy. Affect is theorized as that which moves or migrates between subjects and brings them together in what we could call an 'electric sociality'. However, I remained unconvinced by Oliver's reliance on a model of energy and her slide between different kinds of energies: chemical, thermal, electric, social (14). For me, such a vision, while compelling, does not consider how sociality and 'witness' are not just about connectedness or what brings subjects together. They are also about what differentiates subjects from others, as well as differentiating *between* others, in ways that are historical and contingent. Oliver does demonstrate convincingly why affect is crucial if we are to develop a different approach to sociality. But for me affect is crucial not as 'something' that passes between subjects and that brings them together. Rather affects, insofar as they do circulate and travel, do not reside positively in either the social or the collective body. In other words, affects are economic and they are crucial to sociality precisely insofar as *they fail to bring us together in one body*.

Oliver's ethics of love seems to rely on a fantasy of inclusion as harmony, despite her emphasis on irreducible differences and the value of otherness. I liked her commitment to the Freudian notion of 'working through' hostilities, but she employs this model in order to raise the possibility of overcoming or resolving dissent and antagonism. Dissent, it seems to me, is a structural possibility which it is crucial for us to recognize if we are to open the world to other others who have yet to approach us: although it is possible that others may agree with us, there is also always the possibility that they may not. Justice requires that we admit this possibility—the possibility of dissent—at every moment of a

conversation. It is hence ironic that Oliver cites the work of Levinas to build up her model of an ethics of touch and proximity (204-8), thereby ignoring one of the key aspects of Levinas' own ethics: the argument that the relation between self and other is *always* asymmetrical. Oliver seems to presuppose that to attend to the role of antagonism is necessarily to assume that antagonisms must take one form: overt hostility or disrespect. But perhaps antagonism is constitutive in the 'better' sense, in that it shows the impossibility of a merging between one and an other, or of becoming the other, given the asymmetry of the relation between others.

I thought Oliver's claim that witnessing is crucial to subject formation was persuasive, but remained unconvinced by her critique of theories of subjection, as well as by her claim that witnessing required a commitment to an ethics of love based on proximity and on a celebration of difference and otherness. But at the same time I was engaged by this text, I 'worked through it' and I enjoyed its own commitments to a critique of the present as well as an opening up of the future.

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*The Words of Selves: Identification, Solidarity, Irony*

Denise Riley, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2000

h/b £ 30.00 0 8047 3672 3, p/b £ 11.95, 0 8047 3911 0

*Damaged Identities, Narrative Repair*

Hilde Lindemann Nelson, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2001

h/b £ 28.50 0 8014 3665 6, p/b £ 11.95, 0 8014 8740 4

Denise Riley's work, both as a poet and as author of '*Am I That Name?*' *Feminism and the Category of 'Women' in History*, underlies her complex new book. She writes in a style full of images, ironies, and rhetorical flourishes. This amazing facility with words itself provides the problematic for the first part of her text, while her more outward-looking concern with identity is evident in the second part. A few of her section headings, in-

dicating her vivid and often mocking style, seize the reader's imagination: 'A Venus Fly-trap School of Language'; 'Taking Credit where Credit isn't Due'; 'The Wounded Fall in the Direction of the Wound'.

From the start, she engages with the significance of the issue of 'what you are called'. This moves from self-deprecating social self-description to the psychological effect that 'you become what, hearing yourself called, you acknowledge yourself to be.' (35) She brings together the psychological and the linguistic in claiming that 'language does not so much "express" feeling but ... in itself it "does" feeling'. (36) Arguing that the idea of 'depth' in feeling is a residue of Romantic ideas of sensibility, she draws on Wittgenstein and Nietzsche to attack it, moving in the direction of Deleuze—an important figure in this book—and his focus on surfaces.

Her second chapter meditates on the Althusserian theme of linguistic guilt. She elaborates on his notion of interpellation—the sense of being forcefully described from the outside—with the case of the guilt of the poet at her lack of originality. The 'I' demands this originality as a guarantor of authenticity, but the communality of language makes it impossible to attain. For the poet, the words, the aleatory allusions, and especially the rhymes, run ahead of her. Like Jean-Jacques Lecercle, she seeks a third path between a sense of control of language, and a sense of being controlled by language. She also contrasts the position of the creative writer with that of the academic writer. Riley argues that on publication the creative writer becomes an absence, unable to answer back to suppositions made about her. These may range from her sexual history to the source of her literary influences. Drawing on Judith Butler's examination of the power relation of naming in her discussion of subjectification, Riley makes an interesting connection between the temporality of psychological guilt, which anticipates the misdeed, and the guilt created in interpellation wherein I instantly sense myself failing in the category to which I have been ascribed, or where I am 'always already' guilty.

All this is brilliantly written, fascinating and persuasive. The notion of anticipatory guilt translates neatly into the context of originality in poetic creation, with the sounds of others' creations ringing in the ears. Yet here I have an unnerving sense of an *embarras de richesse*. When I think of guilt and unease, I think of the compromises made by women in order to survive in male-dominated society. When I read Riley's complaints at the condition of the published poet, I think of the very many women who for lack of time or recognition, rather than lack of merit, will never be published at all. I have a similar disquiet about her chapter on 'Lyric Selves'. She introduces a compelling reading of the Narcissus myth, in which Narcissus dies not through vanity but through the horror of self-knowledge. Her point is that naming always escapes us, always runs across us: 'there is, in effect, a will to name' (111). Most of this chapter is taken up with a mock critique of one poem, punningly entitled *The Castalian Spring, a First Draught*. This is followed by her self-proclaimed doggerel *Affection of the Ear*, her variant on the Narcissus myth. The self-dramatization in the poem illustrates her equivocation about her role as poet, but is trying for the reader. It seems arch, at best, to present the reader with four pages of witty doggerel.

From this point, for me, the book recovers as Riley focuses more on identification. The theme, woven from ancient myth, is that of determinedly inhabiting some injury to found a whole identity. In a section which has direct relevance for many women, she examines how the status of being an injured self freezes and perpetuates the injury. She uses the example of single parents later, but it would have been pertinent here. The mother left to bring up children may easily slip into a solidified sense of herself as victim. The difficulties of her task may reinforce this sense of herself. The harm this does to her, may, as Judith Butler suggests, be disturbed by irony. In ironizing a predicament, we loosen its hold on us.

From here on, Riley enters into an impressive discussion of identity politics. She considers Wendy Brown's point that identity is often gained through pain, but maintains her earlier position that identity

is, in a sense, an imposture. She distinguishes between identity and solidarity, where only the latter is politically useful and espousal of difference as an anchor for identity is dangerous. It may converge with the racists' espousal of difference—the difference of being white. Linking identity with solidarity moves towards linguistic healing, wherein a less private sense of oneself provides a way of transforming aggressive naming by associating the name I am called with a description of my group.

Riley gives a brief history of irony from Socrates through Kierkegaard to Beckert. Like Kierkegaard, Riley places echo as the initiator of the ironic. Irony supposes doubleness, a reader or listener who knows more than the surface sense of the words. Oppressed and marginalized groups have ironically, and usefully, adopted terms used to abuse them, e.g. Rude Boys, or Queers. Yet affirmation of identity can be politically harmful. It may isolate and solidify. Riley endorses Rancière's suggestion that 'politics with an adequate vocabulary will become anti-identificatory, not so much a confirmation of the self's identity as a reaching out to others' (181), or as Deleuze puts it 'so many beings and things think in us' (184).

In *Damaged Identities, Narrative Repair*, Hilde Lindemann Nelson is also concerned to trace the effects of the other's view of who I am. Her aim is to commend the creation of counterstories which challenge the version of oneself given, implicitly or explicitly, by dominant groups in society. Such counterstories will increase the moral agency of the subjects. Her method is to weave together conceptual analysis and stories from these groups.

Nelson is a good storyteller. Each chapter both refers back to earlier stories, filling out details and casting new light on events, and introduces new stories that illustrate her points. They treat familiar but intractable problems with respect for agents and recognition of the economic and social difficulties that the less powerful face. In my view, she has written an interesting book on stories, but not made the case for the coined word: 'counterstories'. Drawing on feminist theory, she demon-

strates female-centred angles on master-narratives, and accentuates the positive in the stories of the under-privileged.

An example may give the flavour of her approach: her initial stories are from a group of nurses who are disregarded and undervalued by the physicians. One seeks to discuss a dying patient with the doctor. The doctor refuses the discussion, saying she is 'over-involved and professionally out of line' (3). The damaging stories here are that she is an excitable Hispanic, that as a nurse she is not to be taken seriously, that as a woman she is only good at the 'touchy feely thing'. The counterstory created by the group focuses on the special values of nursing: is this a counterstory or a reevaluation?

In another example, in a chapter on narrative approaches to ethics, she uses the case of a lesbian partner trying to gain access to a child as an example of what Rorty calls the 'insouciance' of the power relations bearing down on our attempts to be ironic about our contingent situations. This woman, like so many others, experiences deprivation of opportunity (for family life) and decreased moral agency (her position vis-à-vis the child is not valued). Drawing on the work of Iris Marion Young, Nelson rejects the master-narratives of Taylor and MacIntyre as they ignore the difficulties of those who do not have a linear structure to their lives, nor a place in the *just-so* stories of the community.

Nelson identifies stories which are important for us as those which demonstrate commitment over time, looking both backward and forward. Such stories, she argues (against mainstream views) constitute our identity, pointing out that sometimes we do not have reasons, we just act. We are concerned with 'integrity or consistency of a more personal kind' (80). She questions Lieberman's notion of the stability of the unified self, noting that 'the greater the unity of identity the more precarious it is, because any stray or recalcitrant element that can't be made to conform to the whole destabilizes it'. (90) She gives due importance to how we create our identities from what we care about, quoting a Roman Catholic girl: 'I couldn't have an abortion and still be me'. (96) Placing together gypsies, transsexuals and mothers as groups of people whose

identities have been, in different ways, damaged to order, she writes about each group in a straightforward and helpful way. She is especially perceptive about the difficulties that transsexuals face in trying to match up with a 'clinically correct' story of who they are.

But ultimately this is a frustrating book in that Nelson is reluctant to give up on her concept of the 'counterstory' even though it proves unwieldy and unnecessary. The simple term 'story' has all the flexibility she seeks. Taken together, the two books compare interestingly. Nelson's *Damaged Identities, Narrative Repair* engages with contemporary problems and seeks a solution. Riley's project is rather different. Although her first three chapters were interesting in their exposé of the interpellation of the author, I found the later part on the formation of the subject more significant, when a more political, earlier Denise Riley emerges. Riley's *Words of Sexes* is a poetic meditation with a political edge.

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*Differential Aesthetics: Art Practices, Philosophy and Feminist Understandings*

Penny Florence and Nicola Foster, eds., Ashgate 2000

h/b £ 45.00 0 7546 1493 X

Penny Florence and Nicola Foster have put together an excellent collection of essays reaching towards a feminist aesthetics, renegotiating the binary logic of patriarchy, and restoring the physical presence of both spectator and reader. In place of binary logic they propose a 'differential aesthetics', where the 'differential' refers to 'the relation of the physical/material to all the energies, ideas and psycho-social elements that are often posed as not-material' (2-3). The key issue of how matter relates to the non-material plays across this book through a series of differences which have historically been laid out as oppositions: practitioner and theoretician; artist and spectator; writer and reader; male and female;

mind and body; image and word; subject and object; thing and sign. It is thereby conceptualized as a schism rather than a relation of difference. In the last essay of the book, Barb Bolt addresses this problem by focusing on the 'gap' of signification. Reading the book retrospectively, it is this 'gap' which precipitates the Kantian aesthetic of the sublime as opposed to that of the beautiful.

The number of papers and the depth of their analyses makes it impossible for me to do justice to the impressive range of arguments put forward. (My only practical criticism is that the bibliography does not always tally with the references in the text, a discrepancy I attribute to deadlines imposed by the perilous state of university funding.) In trying, however, to grasp the overall sense of playing out the 'differential', it is possible to identify some of the implicit theoretical contributions and also to suggest the next move.

Florence and Foster have chosen to lay out images and statements by artists as equivalent in status to the more analytic and philosophical essays which follow. It was a relief, for me, to find the artist and poet foregrounded in this way. Reading these statements and accounts, I became aware of how, in almost every instance, the body—as sensation, touch and voice—is intrinsic to both artistic intention and the pleasure of making: how that which I find moving, may also be touching. Complementing this, in the final group of papers questions of the body are explicit in relation to two main themes: the 'trace' of the body as it appears in the physical reality of the artwork, and the question of the embodiment of the spectator.

Hilary Robinson picks up these themes in discussions of the sculpture of Rachel Whiteread and the paintings of Bridget Riley, both of which in different ways deny the direct trace of the body and yet bear the physicality of the material. The 'gap' of signification is thought through Ingaray's conceptualization of how matter produces signification. Focusing also on Derrida's concept of *différance* as the play of material differences from which a syntax may develop, Robinson identifies this with Ingaray's treatment of 'the mucous'. The play of material signs, in

particular indices, thus creates a relation rather than a 'gap' between the art object and the interpretative essay. Starting with the question of how the body relates to the physicality of the artwork—and in particular to paint—Rosemary Betterton outlines a theory of the spectator. Writing about Susan Hiller (both her drawing and videowork), Betterton homes in on the experience of viewing as an encounter with the artwork, an encounter dependent on a fluid boundary of the subject, a self 'interpenetrated by otherness' (93).

Marsha Meskimmon, on the other hand, literally writes her relation to the art object, not as a solipsistic individual, but in relation to other women artist-theorists. Following Judith Butler's emphasis on the performative, these women make artwork in visual and textual workshops using processes such as the tracing of the etymology of words to reveal corporeal associations. It is not, then, a question of asking what the artwork represents, but rather what meanings and new knowledge it produces, as signification is here an effect of a material process. Recognizing the shortcomings of the Saussurean model of linguistic signification, Barb Bolt turns first to Butler's concept of excitable speech, as that which inspires ontological effects, and then to the general sign theory of C.S. Peirce. As Bolt points out, the relation between sign and object is not one of substitution but a 'dynamic relation'. In trying to understand the emotional effectiveness of the portrait, Bolt draws on Peirce's concept of the indexical sign as that which is causally related to its object. The photo-chemical photograph bears not only a mimetic relation to its subject, but also acts as the sign of existence, a way of 'being of'. (315)

These papers all point towards the need for an explicit theory of the body, perhaps available in the work of the 1930s psychoanalyst Paul Schilder. Schilder differentiates between body-image and the postural model of the body, where the latter carries an indexical relation to the corporeal body. Emphasizing that Peirce's semiotics is a theory of relations, not a taxonomy of reified signs, would suggest another mode of notating the relation between body and sign and—using Schilder—the

relation between bodies. Peirce's triadic concept of signification (sign/object/interpretant) in which the interpretant is necessary, brings the embodied spectator directly into the signifying chain.

The essays also raise the question of the complex relation between the artist/writer and the work, and the viewer/reader and the work, a question which I interpret as pointing to the need for a theory of identification encompassing the indexical resistance of the physical, corporeal body. To this end, perhaps, Rachel Jones draws on the poetry of Claire Goll, writing in the flux of the border between self and world, self and others. Such an expression of subjectivity avoids the trap of the patriarchal binary, in which woman as matter is the necessary 'other'. The 'female materiality' (131) which is developed in this re-signification of the boundary of the ego, appears in the aesthetics of the poems—love of the voice, colour and sensory pleasure—which Jones allies with Deleuze's non-psychological life of the spirit. Petra Kupperts presents the radical encounter between self and other, 'performer' and viewer, as an opening up of Hegel's dialectic of recognition. Writing about the kind of performance art which produces an experience of terror, Kupperts identifies this as the moment at which we realize our alterity while at the same time realizing that we find ourselves only in the other. The ensuing power struggle—a fight to the death—is therefore precisely that of the master-slave dialectic. Using Derrida's concept of *différance*, Kupperts re-signifies 'self and other' as an amalgam of signs. In the context of performance, she argues, the stasis of the dialectic is crucially ruptured by the forceful presence of the body.

Both of these essays implicitly present contributions to the theory of identification: Jones extending the self to include the world through aesthetic experience; Kupperts pointing out how the body's indexical effect forces the acknowledgement of the other as subject.

Negotiating the boundary of subject/other must also take into account the history which locates woman as 'other' and identifies her with matter. This task will in turn entail analysing the role of the phallus. Artist, writer and psychoanalyst Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger provides an

account of the pre-gendered field of experience—what she calls the *matrixial*—as a space of partial subjects which rejects the I/not-I schema of the emerging ego and is not defined by the phallus. As a topological schema, *matrixial* space allows for paradoxes of space and time, paradoxes which support a distribution of trauma and *jouissance* amongst the partial subjects. *Matrixial* love, then, literally feels the pain of the other. An artwork which opens this space therefore evokes a bodily participation from the viewer which may lead to a profound ethical encounter.

The loss of this 'matrixial' space to the logic of the Symbolic precipitates narratives of loss and mourning, which Christine Conley identifies with Benjamin's account of tragedy as an allegory of mourning. In the work of Mary Kelly, personal narratives of motherhood are juxtaposed with Lacan's mathemes and bodily indices of the baby: blood, shit and pee. From the perspective of Freud's theory in which the baby is a symbolic substitution for the phallus, Conley proposes allegory as transformation of loss with implications for subjecthood. Other papers in the collection also challenge the role of the phallus as limit. Barbara Underwood, for example, writes on the possibility of re-signifying Plato's account of the aesthetic principle of 'harmony' as non-phallic; Judy Purdom's use of Deleuze, in particular his *Difference and Repetition*, attempts to give an account of female identity as 'unlimited' and yet not 'infinite'; and Catherine Constable offers an account of the subversive force of laughter in work which parodies the performative maintenance of the heterosexual gender divide. These papers reveal, I think, the problem of the signifying function of the phallus. Is the phallus always a binary operator supporting the symbol of sexual difference, or can it act as a term within a complex signifying structure? If the latter, then is this term an amalgam or metaphor? Is it iconic (Peirce's sign relation of the mimetic) or indexical of the corporeal body?

The question of non-phallic signification is also raised by Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe who uses Kristeva's concept of the *chora*—the pre-semantic space of the mother's bodily rhythms—to re-signify the space of the Kantian sublime. Accusing feminists of an orthodoxy of resistance

which has allegedly resulted in the exclusion of both 'the pleasurable and optional' (99), Gilbert-Rolfe also criticizes feminist aesthetics for keeping the corpse of the patriarch in discourse through negation. Rather than the Kantian subject, the subject which takes account of the *chora* is released from the logic of the phallic framework. There is therefore, he argues, no annihilation in the abyss of the sublime and beauty is redeemed from the Kantian hierarchy. Robyn Ferrell also attempts, contra Plato, a restitution of beauty as physical pleasure. As Ferrell points out, the rescinding of love for the individual beloved in favour of an awareness of the beloved's beauty as an instance of a general quality—beauty in itself—is a hideous universalizing of our most intimate relations. It is also the first process of signification, reducing the other to a sign. Whereas Gilbert-Rolfe protests about the privileging of the ethical over and above the aesthetic status of the artwork, Ferrell affirms that there is an ethics of representation. Both papers have ideological implications for social relations.

The most optimistic viewpoint is presented by Sean Cubitt, whose analysis of time as it is realized through digital computer technology stresses the ephemeral as the condition of our constantly changing world and therefore of our subjecthood. Rather than defending ourselves against our mortality and the abyss of the sublime, Cubitt elevates the aesthetic of beauty as the paradigm of the 'cyborg community'.

In conclusion, all these essays point towards the need to develop the aesthetic of the index. Such a project would benefit from also understanding the index as the marker of brute reality that anchors aesthetic experience in the socio-political world in which we live.

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*Deleuze and Cinema: The Aesthetics of Sensation*

Barbara Kennedy, Edinburgh University Press, 2001

h/b £ 40.00 0 7486 1134 7

Barbara Kennedy's book is a stimulating and timely intervention, aiming to challenge theoretical orthodoxy in both aesthetics and film studies. Aimed at academic professionals, postgraduates, and final-year undergraduates, the book attempts to reshape the teaching of film studies to incorporate the new discipline 'Film/Philosophy'. The work also carries wider implications for the academic study of philosophy and art history as well as gender and cultural studies.

The background for this project is that theoretical ferment in aesthetics and the arts which Dorothea Olkowski calls the 'ruin of representation'. International aesthetic theory is beginning to respond to this shift and Kennedy's is one of the first British contributions to the debate from her field, foregrounding issues of concern to feminist theory. The book combines substantial film studies pedagogy and practical experience with meditations on contemporary philosophy in the service of an ethics of duration and motility based on French feminist theory and the work of Nietzsche, Bergson, Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze.

Drawing on recent developments in the relationship between philosophy and the creative arts as a starting-point, the book incorporates theoretical perspectives from both French feminist theory—in particular the work of Irigaray and Cixous—and from continental philosophy, focusing on Deleuze. From these two distinct but in many ways congruent perspectives, Kennedy explores the concepts of duration and movement in the abstract figure of the 'girl', interpreting the cinematic screen experience as both a 'choreography' and a space of duration and change.

The French feminist thinking that influences Kennedy developed out of and reworked Lacanian psychoanalysis to try to account for a specific female subjectivity. Deleuze, on the other hand, challenged the basic psychoanalytic map of psychic space. He suggests instead a conception

of subjectivity which operates by fields of force, intensities and durations. This has been influential in distinguishing a new paradigm in film studies in relation to movement. Traditional film theory—from Laura Mulvey onwards—has tended to account for cinematic pleasures through signification, semiotics and psychoanalytic structures of desire and pleasure, focusing on the centrality of the gaze. Kennedy, however, argues for a new dimension through which to theorize film as a choreography of experience in which the viewer's interactive responses to the screen are pivotal.

The study divides into three parts. The introduction provides a rationale for the project by mapping theoretical and aesthetic orthodoxies and positing the need for a Deleuzian intervention in aesthetics. A definition and discussion of key critical terms is provided in the second part. This section is of particular value to the novice, but the complexity and initial opacity of certain concepts will need further background study, suggestions for which are clearly signposted. A theoretical agenda is thus set, and readings of specific movies emerge in accordance with it. In the third part of the book, Kennedy explores five recent films, focusing on the aesthetic dynamics of body and camera, and highlighting the relations of textuality and affect stimulated by cinematography, editing and sound. She argues that Deleuze enables a post-linguistic, neo-aesthetic theory of film 'as an *event* across bodies, as a processual becoming, rather than the filmic text as a system or form of representation' (26).

The basis for this is the materialist aesthetic of sensation. Rather than theories of desire or pleasure (where, Kennedy argues, body and mind are separated) a theory of corporeal affect, which imbricates body and mind, is central here. The body is fore-grounded in its biological, molecular and material nature, and the perceptions of the mind/brain/body are melded with the 'body' of the natural world and of technological forms, such as film. This focus on corporeal awareness owes much to Irigaray and Cixous, celebrating the specificity of the female body and its perceptions.

The contentious issues raised by the hybrid of feminism and post-structuralism are addressed in the second chapter. For feminists one of Deleuze's most provocative terms is 'becoming-woman' or 'becoming-girl'. Following Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987) and Elizabeth Grosz in 'A Thousand Tiny Sexes: Feminism and Rhizomatics' (1994) Kennedy argues that 'becoming-woman' does not signify the biologically or culturally gendered woman at all. Instead, it suggests the possibility of a molecular transformation for either sex which destabilizes binary divisions in a process of becoming. Becomings are desubjectified affects. Woman, argues Kennedy, thus might be perceived as part of a molecular process within a machinic assemblage of technological, material, social and other forces, not just the cultural or biological. She asserts that 'becoming-woman' is 'the realm of the pre-personal, the affective, the transactivist and the fusional' (95).

To refute accusations of essentialism, Kennedy points to Deleuze's use of the traditionally 'feminine' associations of nature, matter, affect and passion as 'flowing and relational, changing and creative, and so their connotations in relation to 'woman' no longer have the earlier connotation of "otherness"' (96). She asserts that woman is not conceived here as a concept or an image, but as part of an assemblage or set of relations in process. Whilst I acknowledge the value of this productive rethinking of gender, Deleuze's choice of a gendered term rather than an alternative phrase to exemplify becoming inevitably continues the (re-appropriated) Romantic essentialism of French feminist theory.

Significantly, Kennedy notes the absence of the lived body in psychoanalytic theory. The application of Deleuze introduces new ways of bringing the concept of body back into focus. The human body shares material being-in-the-world with other 'bodies': aesthetic, material, technological, biological or machinic. In tandem with this, Deleuze reconsiders the significance of desire, now conceived as processual, without finality or satisfaction. Affect cannot be located only in the psychical, but exists also within the materiality of the organism's make-up. It may be defined as material energy, based on molecular structures of matter.

To argue that it is both psychical *and* material enables a break of the binary divide between rational, scientific claims on the definitions of pleasure, and humanist, idealist notions. Affect is rather a coagulation of the two regimes. The experiential aesthetics of affect incorporates the synaesthetic, the kinaesthetic, the proprioceptive and the processuality of duration and movement. The aesthetic is part of a material emotion, felt at a deeper level than psychically constructed subjectivity.

Moving on to her analysis of film, Kennedy begins from the premise that films are more than just representational images on screen. Movement, rhythm, dynamics, motility and duration are more relevant to our understanding of how movies work on our affective sensibilities. These are effected beyond psychic spaces in the affective, material location of the body's internal micro-movements. Film may be seen not only as a cultural formation, but also as an 'event' effecting psychic, corporeal and consciousness formation.

Kennedy's approach suggests a new consideration of the cinematic experience. She contends that the 'machinic assemblages' of Deleuze's works are themselves like screenic events, in their 'lines and landscapes of volitional and dynamic concepts, brushstrokes, notes, refrains, digital configurations' (1). Kennedy's aesthetic theory then tries to account for how the affective is formulated through colour, sound, movement, force and intensity; not just through representational or psychical mechanisms, but through material elements. 'Subjectivities' are no longer purely contained in the image, or in the spectatorial psychic spaces, but through a mind/body/machine meld of force and sensation *as* movement. Kennedy seeks to explain the cinema as 'material capture'—not simply as a text with meaning, but as a body which performs, as a machinic assemblage. Cinema impacts upon the viewer as a rich sensory experience which is more than visual and operates as perception-consciousness formation: many contemporary films, for example, display a wide range of effects, tonalities, reverberations, and intensities, which connect at an affective level, beyond any sense of subjectivity.

Kennedy chooses to examine several recent feature films which foreground innovative styles rather than recycled classic realist conventions. (It would still be interesting, however, to consider how far mainstream genre films rather than 'art-house' material might fit into her Deleuzian theory.) Most of the films she discusses feature women or girls who, according to Kennedy, manifest the process of becoming. She reads, for example, Sally Potter's adaptation of Virginia Woolf's novel *Orlando* through a 'post-feminist' interpretation based on the film's processual intensities, celebrating the sensuous tactile and aural affects of richly textured costumes and evocative music, as a paean to Orlando's 'becoming-other' via gender transformations.

The other films Kennedy examines in detail include *The English Patient*, Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo and Juliet* (in both of which readings the concept of synaesthesia figures strongly), and Kathryn Bigelow's *Strange Days*. In the final film analysis in the book, *Leon* is interpreted according to the concept of the 'girl'. The relationship between the young girl Mathilda and the Mafia hitman Leon is said to comprise an ambivalent mix of violence and sadism juxtaposed with the joys of becoming. For Deleuze, the 'girl' is figural of the speed and movement of molecular becoming. Kennedy argues that Leon and Mathilda meld into each other as molecular 'bodies without organs', but I found it impossible not to read their mutual, taboo and repressed attraction from a psychoanalytic perspective. An example of Deleuze's concept 'becoming-animal' is afforded by Gary's Oldman's performance as Stansfield, the sadistic cop.

Overall, Kennedy's desire to reconfigure the paradigm for film studies in focusing on art and aesthetics is welcome. For too long, film studies as an academic discipline has confined itself within ideological, sociological and culturalist models which neglect film as an art form. This book is part of the contemporary effort to redress that fault.

Anna Powell

Manchester Metropolitan University

### *Feminist Perspectives on Ethics*

Elisabeth Porter, Longman, 1999

p/b £ 17.99 0 582 35635 0

This book is part of an interdisciplinary series which aims to provide concise up-to-date introductions and guides to a variety of topics from a feminist perspective. It is intended that the books in the series will be used as textbooks for undergraduates. This is exemplified in the scope and format of *Feminist Perspectives on Ethics*, which provides a substantive overview of key concerns in contemporary feminist ethics and includes frequent summaries and guidance to further reading.

The book begins with an outline of the nature of feminist ethics and debates between different schools of thought, and in the succeeding chapters engages with the substantive topics of intimate relationships, professions, politics, sexual politics, abortion, and reproductive choices. In addition to providing an overview, Porter allows her own voice to come through at certain points and moves beyond reporting various arguments to making a case for how feminist ethics should be done and what its conclusions on certain matters should be. Here, as we might expect, her emphasis follows her earlier work in *Women and Moral Identity*, and stresses the importance of moving away from binary thinking and the perils of purist 'justice', 'care' or postmodernist perspectives.

There are a variety of criteria by which to assess books primarily geared to teaching. I will focus on three questions: does the book cater to an educational need? How effective is the book likely to be as a teaching aid? How adequate is the substantive coverage of the book to the field of its concern?

The book does cater to an educational need. It provides an accessible text for use in applied ethics courses, whether for philosophy or other students or for practitioners in a variety of professional fields. This will help in making feminist contributions to ethics part of mainstream introductions to the subject and not, as is common, a critical 'add-on' or something which is confined to specialist feminist theory/philosophy

courses. The effectiveness of the book as a teaching aid will depend on how it is used by teachers and students. It is not a book to read from cover to cover, but a resource to consult for summary information and suggestions for further work. It is most likely to be of use in the classroom when looking at the topics where the author develops a line of argument rather than just an overview of positions. Chapters 5-7, which deal with sexual politics, abortion and reproductive choices are more directly engaging than the earlier chapters in this respect.

The coverage offered by the book is impressive but is clearly not exhaustive in relation to the field of its concern. It is perhaps slightly odd not to have more coverage of feminist work on the ethics of war or development/distributive justice, which also provide engaging topics for students. But this is a short book and a degree of selectivity is therefore inevitable. On the whole the coverage seems more geared to issues of inter-personal ethics than to institutional or collective questions (although Chapter 4, on Politics, does give a good overview of some broader issues). In summary, this is a competent volume which delivers what it sets out to do.

*Kimberly Hutchings*  
London School of Economics

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dear Women in Philosophy,

I seek brief notes of endorsement for the republication of *Hipparchia's Choice: An Essay Concerning Women, Philosophy, Etc*

As some of you will know, Michèle Le Doeuff's book, published in English by Blackwell in 1991, is now out of print. The rights have reverted to the French publisher, Seuil.

The book would be reissued by Manchester University Press (UK), distributed by Palgrave in N. America and by other agents internationally, and would be published as part of the Angelaki Humanities book series, of which I am the general editor. We envisage a paperback selling at c.GBP15.99/US\$24.

We are close to agreeing terms with the French publisher and I would now like to assemble some short comments in support of putting the English translation of this book back in print.

If you would like to contribute, I would be grateful if you could drop me a few lines saying why you would like to see *Hipparchia's Choice* available again. Indications of textbook potential for graduate courses will of course be helpful in persuading the publisher to proceed. These comments will be passed to Manchester University Press with my formal proposal to republish the book. Please include your affiliation.

Please write to me at: [greenway@angelaki.demon.co.uk](mailto:greenway@angelaki.demon.co.uk)

Thank you for your consideration, I will let the list know what the result is.

Best wishes,  
Gerard Greenway  
General editor  
Angelaki Humanities  
<http://www.palgrave-usa.com/PhilosophyReligion/seriesph.htm>

**CALLS FOR PAPERS**

**The XIth Symposium of IAPh:  
Human Good—Dignity, Equality, and Diversity,  
17–19 June 2004, Göteborg, Sweden**

**First Call for papers**

Western philosophy has often claimed a universalist patriarchal prerogative during its first two and a half millennia. Today, however, philosophical and feminist dialogues are struggling with boundaries. This generates new conceptual reflections on hitherto neglected or under-theorized aspects of for instance identity, body, sexuality, and community, and aims at a transgression of the traditional separations between politics and philosophy.

The XIth Symposium of IAPh wants to welcome critiques and reconsiderations of traditional conceptions of our common human good and the conditions for flourishing human lives in a time of changing global relationships. It invites the participants to treat the subject of human good from a variety of divergent philosophical starting points:

- 1/ Welfare/Flourishing/Group identity/ Embodiment
- 2/ Justice and technology/Democracy and human good/Agency in the public sphere
- 3/ Personal relations/Sexuality/Death/Care

**Submission of abstracts**

Abstracts for papers should be submitted no later than 1st of November 2003, using the form on the website [www.iaph2004.com](http://www.iaph2004.com). Abstracts should be written in English. If you prefer to give your paper in German, Spanish or French you should submit two abstracts, one in the chosen language and another in English. In addition you need to give some keywords and a short biography of yourself in English.

For information, please contact professor Ulla Holm:  
[ulla.holm@wmst.gu.se](mailto:ulla.holm@wmst.gu.se)

**WPR Special Issue on Ancient Philosophy  
Guest Editor: Nicola Foster**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Call for Papers**

**Deadline for Abstracts has now been extended to October  
30<sup>th</sup> 2003.**

How might feminists read the texts of Ancient Philosophy? How might readings of ancient philosophy help feminist philosophers? This Special Issue seeks to explore the ways in which feminism and ancient philosophy can be mutually illuminating.

We welcome papers in which feminist approaches shed new light on topics in ancient philosophy as well as papers that shed new light on feminist topics through ancient philosophy. We also welcome papers that question the canon of topics in ancient philosophy and the canon of 'ancient philosophers'. We are very keen to include papers from both the so-called 'analytical' and 'continental' traditions.

If you are interested in contributing to this edition please contact:  
Nicola Foster, 20 Camberley Road, Rushmere, Ipswich, IP4 5QF  
e-mail [Nicola@nicolafoster.freereserve.co.uk](mailto:Nicola@nicolafoster.freereserve.co.uk)

**FORTHCOMING EDITIONS OF WOMEN'S PHILOSOPHY REVIEW**

The editors of WPR are planning the next series of editions of WPR. As well as continuing with our tried and tested formula of a mixture of book reviews, interviews, and review articles, we are also intending to broaden the range of material that appears in the journal. In particular we are considering a series of themed editions around topics such as Issues in Contemporary German Feminist Philosophy and Literary Criticism; Feminist Interventions in the Philosophy of Race; Ontologies of Sex; Feminist Theory of Place and Geography. We welcome expressions of interest for contributions to any of these themes either in the form of articles, review articles, suggested subjects for interviews etc. Also we would welcome any suggestions for themes for future issues and/or expressions of interest for guest editorships.

If you are interested in contributing, please contact either of the General Editors. Our contact details are to be found on the inside cover of this edition.

**Forthcoming Conference****Cultures of Birth****CALL FOR PAPERS**

This interdisciplinary conference will take place at the Institute of Romance Studies, London on Saturday, 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2004.

The conference will consider the significance of birth in philosophical discourses, and examine representations of birth in literary and visual culture.

Speakers will include Christine Battersby, University of Warwick, Grace Jantzen, University of Manchester and Alison Fell, Queens College, Oxford.

Paper proposals (20-30 minutes) are invited and should be sent by October 30<sup>th</sup> 2003 to:

Dr Alison Martin, Department of French  
University of Nottingham, Nottingham. NG7 2RD  
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If paying in overseas currency, please calculate at US\$ rate.

Libraries, subscription services & others not applying for SWIP membership should order from Dr. Helen Chapman, WPR Administrative Editor (address on inside front cover). Cheques should be made payable to the Society for Women in Philosophy (UK).

**Membership of the Society for Women in Philosophy (UK)**

SWIP is open to individual women who work in and with philosophy, both inside and outside Philosophy Departments, mainly in the UK, although it is also open to women working with philosophy overseas. It welcomes student members, those using philosophy in allied disciplines, as well as those in schools and those not formally attached to an educational institution. Institutions are not eligible to join.

Current UK membership rates for SWIP are: £20 waged, £10 p/t waged and unwaged. Cheques should be made payable to the 'Society for Women in Philosophy (UK)'. To apply please send details of yourself and any institutional affiliation to:

Meena Dhanda, SWIP Secretary & Treasurer, 18 Cavendish Drive, Old Marston, Oxford, OX3 0SB, UK ([MLDhanda@wlv.ac.uk](mailto:MLDhanda@wlv.ac.uk))

Overseas applicants for SWIP membership should contact Meena Dhanda for the appropriate rate. Please note only those SWIP members paying UK full rate are entitled to the annual **Special Issue** free of charge, although we will include it for others as a bonus when funds allow. When this is not possible, part-time and overseas SWIP members will be offered the Special Issue at a discount rate.