



FROM THE EDITOR

This edition of the *Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy* features a number of reviews of recent books in feminist philosophy. The books range from social and political philosophy, to environmental philosophy, and continental philosophy. They attest to the flourishing of feminist scholarship, and the reviews demonstrate the ongoing dialogue that has long characterized the field. I have organized them somewhat thematically, though readers will also note the impressive variety of topics and ideas represented.

But the news is not all good. In "Female-Friendly Departments: A Modest Proposal for Picking Graduate Programs in Philosophy," Julie Van Camp undertakes a thorough scrutiny of Brian Leiter's *The Philosophical Gourmet Report*. Her analysis, however, is not limited to that *Report*. Van Camp raises a series of questions regarding the status of women in the profession, and her article is a "must-read" for anyone considering graduate school or participating in the profession in a faculty role. Leiter's report has been the subject of numerous discussions on listservs, at conferences, and in the hallways of graduate institutions. Van Camp lends a clarity to the *Report's* accounting of women and, in turn, issues a challenge to Leiter, the APA, and all concerned feminist scholars.

As always, the *Newsletter* welcomes your submissions and ideas.

About the *Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy*

The *Newsletter on Feminism and Philosophy* is sponsored by the APA Committee on the Status of Women (CSW). The *Newsletter* is designed to provide an introduction to recent philosophical work that addresses issues of gender. None of the varied philosophical views presented by authors of *Newsletter* articles necessarily reflects the views of any or all of the members of the Committee on the Status of Women, including the editor(s) of the *Newsletter*, nor does the committee advocate any particular type of feminist philosophy. We advocate only that serious philosophical attention be given to issues of gender and that claims of gender bias in philosophy receive full and fair consideration.

Submission Guidelines and Information

1. **Purpose:** The purpose of the *Newsletter* is to publish information about the status of women in philosophy and to make the resources of feminist philosophy more widely available. The *Newsletter* contains discussions of recent developments in feminist philosophy and related work in other disciplines, literature overviews and book reviews, suggestions

for eliminating gender bias in the traditional philosophy curriculum, and reflections on feminist pedagogy. It also informs the profession about the work of the APA Committee on the Status of Women. Articles submitted to the *Newsletter* should be limited to 10 double-spaced pages and must follow the APA guidelines for gender-neutral language. Please submit four copies of essays, prepared for anonymous review. References should follow *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

2. **Book Reviews and Reviewers:** If you have published a book that is appropriate for review in the *Newsletter*, please have your publisher send us a copy of your book. We are always in need of book reviewers. To volunteer to review books (or some particular book), please send to the editor a CV and letter of interest, including mention of your areas of research and teaching.
3. **Where to Send Materials:** Please send all articles, comments, suggestions, books, and other communications to the Editor: Dr. Sally J. Scholz, Department of Philosophy, Villanova University, 800 Lancaster Avenue, Villanova, PA 19085-1699, sally.scholz@villanova.edu
4. **Submission Deadlines:** Submissions for Spring issues are due by the preceding September 1st; submissions for Fall issues are due by the preceding February 1st.

NEWS FROM THE COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Report from the Chair

Happy 2004 to each and every one of you! If you managed to get to the APA Eastern Division Meeting in Washington, you may have attended the CSW panel, "Women Philosophers, Sidelined Challenges, and Professional Philosophers." The session was chaired by Diana Tietjens Meyers, and the panelists included Charles Mills, Eileen O'Neill, Virginia Valian, and Margaret Walker. The panel was dynamite, and the quality of the presentations uniformly high. However, the take-home message was less than totally reassuring. Many philosophers remain confused about the nature and function of feminist philosophy, and whether it is integral to the curriculum at either the graduate or the undergraduate level. In addition, the numbers of women in philosophy remain low relative to the number of women in other arts and sciences/humanities

disciplines. Finally, truly “female-friendly departments” (see Julie C. Van Camp’s article) remain in relatively short supply.

On a more optimistic note, the APA Committee on Inclusiveness will be restructured as of July 1, 2004 to include the chairs of the APA diversity committees. The CSW Committee is delighted by this change. Now our Committee will have the opportunity to work conveniently as well as directly with the other diversity committees. We will be able to coalesce more easily to increase the numbers and, in the APA Committee on Inclusiveness’s terms, “respected presence,” in philosophy of groups that have historically been subjected to “invidious discrimination.” We will also be able to work together more effectively to promote women philosophers’ professional development, scholarly philosophical research (whatever variety), teaching (however traditional or nontraditional), and service initiatives.

The members of the CSW Committee are making a concerted effort to get to the APA Central Division Meeting in Chicago. There, we plan to have a lengthy meeting on how we can help the APA officers, particularly Michael Kelly’s office, gather better empirical data about the status of women in the profession. The data is not easy-to-get. Sometimes the wrong questions are asked. At other times, wrong or no answers are given to the right questions. The CSW Committee will be forwarding a long list of “woman-questions” to Michael Kelly in May. Around the same time, we will urge you to get your departments to answer them. Busy people often neglect to answer surveys or answer them too swiftly. We will need you to make data gathering a PRIORITY (here we go “gathering” again, though some “hunting” may also be in order).

In addition to focusing on data problems, the CSW Committee plans to use its time together in Chicago to discuss how to work better with the APA Committee on Inclusiveness and the other diversity committees. We also hope to improve the CSW Web page, to maintain the excellent quality of this *Newsletter*, to plan for the 2005 and 2006 CSW panels at the divisional meetings, and to discuss large-scale initiatives, such as a conference on diversity and inclusiveness in the profession that would be the result of the work of all the diversity committees together with the APA Committee on Inclusiveness.

If there are issues you would like for me to discuss in Chicago, please get in touch with me directly at: Rosemarie Tong, Ph.D., Distinguished Professor in Health Care Ethics, Department of Philosophy, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, 9201 University City Boulevard, Charlotte, NC 28223-0001; 704/687-2850; rotong@email.uncc.edu.

The success of our work depends on your support. Please help us by sharing your ideas.

Appreciatively,
Rosie

ARTICLE

Female-Friendly Departments: A Modest Proposal for Picking Graduate Programs in Philosophy

Julie C. Van Camp

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The Philosophical Gourmet Report, by Brian Leiter, has become the bible for students picking graduate programs in philosophy. Whether this is in the best interests of women in philosophy is another matter. I examine the issue of whether there is gender bias in the *Report* and the challenge of proving or disproving the existence of gender bias. I then propose additional factors for women to consider in selecting a graduate program in philosophy, factors which address the openness of a department to women as faculty members and as students.

I do not argue here that students and professionals should ignore the *Report*, even though the American Philosophical Association in 1994 issued a statement that it was “highly skeptical” of any such rankings.¹ Whatever one thinks of the *Report’s* numerical rankings, it admittedly is a gold mine of detailed and relevant information for picking departments, especially with regard to faculty members who are arriving, leaving, or retiring. Despite well-founded doubts about its methodology and import in the field, the *Report* seems here to stay.

Unfortunately, in addition to other criticisms of the *Report*, it has long had an uncomfortable relationship with women in philosophy. The current version does include a list of thirty women working on gender issues and the recommendation that students interested in these questions seek out a department where they are employed.² This is worthwhile, although women in philosophy do not work only on issues of gender or feminist philosophy, however broadly understood.

Equal opportunity surely means that women should be free to pursue any specialty they wish within philosophy, and it is with regard to the broader inclusion of women in the discipline overall that the *Report* is more troubling. I am not claiming here evidence that the *Report* is biased against women, mainly because the data are too incomplete to draw any such conclusion one way or the other. Yet, using information from the *Report* itself, we can at least raise serious questions about the inclusiveness of women in philosophy which warrant further attention and which also give us some insights into the status of women in philosophy today.

The *Report’s* Advisory Board

The 2002-2004 Advisory Board consists of forty-three members, only five of them women, 12% of the Board.³ Seventeen new members will join the Advisory Board for 2004-2006, three of them women.⁴ As the *Report* says nothing about any current members rotating off the Advisory Board, the total membership will apparently be fifty, including eight women, 16% of the Board. The *Report* does not say how Advisory Board members are selected, but presumably there was nothing like a national election. Is 12% or 16% an appropriate representation of women? To attempt to answer this, we at least would want to know the percentage of women on the faculties of the research institutions, which are the subject of this *Report*, and, to my knowledge, such data do not exist. Perhaps they should. A

good source would be the faculty listings on all department pages of doctoral programs.

We do know, from data compiled by the National Academy of Sciences, that, from 1992-1996, women received 27% of the Ph.D.s in philosophy in the United States, the most recent years for which this data is available.⁵ We also know, from data collected for the U.S. Department of Education, that women received 18% of the Ph.D.s in philosophy in the United States from 1949-1994; that same data shows that women received 23% of the Ph.D.s from the more recent period, 1980-1994.⁶ But we do not yet have data showing whether the proportion has increased since 1996, nor what proportion of women with Ph.D.s in philosophy is available in the labor pool for academic teaching positions in philosophy departments.

Nor do we have data on the total size of the labor pool in philosophy, those persons qualified and able to work. Many Ph.D.s, by choice, might be teaching in fields other than philosophy, such as law schools. They might be working as full-time administrators without faculty appointments, and some might be working in non-academic fields. Even if we did have more precise data on the available labor pool, we would need considerable study to determine whether women are appropriately represented in the research institutions of concern in the *Report*. We also would want to know whether factors leading people with Ph.D.s to leave academe affected men and women equally.

Statistical data alone, even for a very large group of workers, prove nothing in isolation. But it is well-established in federal civil rights law that a significant statistical disparity of an employment group, compared to the overall labor pool, can raise at least a *prima facie* instance of gender discrimination.

So, for example, if the national labor pool in philosophy (Ph.D.s qualified and able to work) were, say, 30% female, and the faculty at Ph.D. programs were only 15% female, that disparity alone would not prove that research institutions had discriminated systematically against women applying for faculty positions. But the disparity should at least lead us to ask more questions, to probe more deeply into this hiring disparity.

It's not clear which comparison would be appropriate in considering whether the 12-16% female composition of the Advisory Board raises a *prima facie* instance of gender discrimination. If the national labor pool of Ph.D.s in philosophy is 25-30% female, the Advisory Board seems disproportionately low on women. We don't know the proportion of women at all doctoral programs in philosophy, and perhaps the Advisory Board is appropriate by that measure. But if historic hiring practices in doctoral programs have disproportionately excluded women, then the Advisory Board would merely be reaffirming hiring practices that themselves might have been discriminatory.⁷

And any Advisory Board that is 88% or 84% male in this day and age, regardless of the other data we have, still strikes many of us as troublesome.

The Report's Evaluation Process

The same questions can be raised about the evaluators who actually completed the surveys used for the rankings in the *Report*. Of the 177 evaluators who returned the survey upon which the current rankings are based, only 25, or 14%, are women.⁸ The *Report* says the survey went to almost 300 philosophers, but no information is given on the gender of the original group surveyed. The *Report* also explains:

Approximately half those surveyed were philosophers who had filled out the surveys in previous years; the other half were nominated by members of the Advisory Board, who picked research-active faculty in their fields.⁹

The *Report's* description of selection criteria for the survey does not mention gender. Rather, "Evaluators were selected with an eye to balance, in terms of area, age and educational background," but the survey is also limited to what Leiter calls "research-active faculty." We can perhaps assume that the five women and, hopefully, many of the men on the Advisory Board nominated women to complete the survey. Were the nominations of women proportionate to the female "research-active faculty" in the country? Has Leiter compiled a master list of "research-active faculty"? What criteria were used to compile this list and who is on it? Is the proportion of women on that list comparable to the proportion of women at all doctoral programs? To all women in the profession? The data, if they exist, have not been released, so we do not know.

Especially if women are underrepresented on the Board and as evaluators, then we might wonder if there is a male bias in the rankings that have resulted from the survey. The rankings, the *Report* says, "are primarily measures of faculty quality and reputation."¹⁰ Do male and female evaluators make different assessments of male and female scholars, or are the evaluators gender-neutral in completing their questionnaires? Are the perceptions of the quality and reputation of female scholars assessed by the same standards as those of the males? Are the research issues and publication venues of women held in the same esteem as those of men? Is published work in feminist philosophy or applied ethics or aesthetics regarded as highly as work in logic or philosophy of language or philosophy of science or the traditional, core specialties?

Many women have anecdotal experience that the work they do and the publication venues they pursue are not always valued as highly as those of men are, but no empirical study of such questions exists, to my knowledge. Nor do we know whether any such biases exist in the *Report's* evaluation process.

The Report's Rankings

If there was a gender bias in judging the work of female researchers, then we might expect that departments with a higher percentage of women on tenured/tenure-track appointments suffer in the rankings overall. Departments with higher percentages of women might be lower on the list than they should otherwise be, and departments with lower percentages of women might be higher on the list than they should otherwise be. If we saw a clear and consistent correlation (say, the lower the percentage of women on a faculty, the higher the ranking of the department on the list), that might raise reasonable suspicions about gender bias, but certainly not settle the matter. It would be even more suspicious if a department moved up or down on the list over the years in concert with increases and decreases in its proportion of faculty women. In fact, there is no obvious correlation between the rankings in the *Report* and the percentage of women on the tenured/tenure-track faculties of those departments, but that does not settle the question of possible gender bias in the rankings either.

Evaluators for the *Report* are given 90 faculty lists that identify names of faculty but not the institution. Philosophy is a fairly small world in the academy, and it must be assumed that reviewers recognize individuals they know, including their gender, as well as affiliations. An evaluator quoted anonymously on the site refers to studying departmental Web sites and CVs,¹¹

so the identity of institutions does not appear to be truly anonymous, nor does there seem to be any reasonable way to maintain that. A more promising test of gender bias might be ratings that did not even identify the names of faculty, but only the academic training and publications. But within a given specialty, the authorship of books and articles will quickly be recognized by active researchers, so this would not provide anonymity either. Indeed, it is not clear how a reasonably convincing study of gender bias in such rating exercises could be developed, so long as the ratings depend on the stature of graduate training, publication, and publication venues.

It does give one pause that the top five departments on the *Report* ranking list all have faculties that are less than 20% female,¹² while the next group, ranked from 6th to 11th have faculties ranging from 19-36% female.¹³ It is tempting to wonder if the larger proportion of women on the faculty moved those departments out of the top five. We simply don't know. Indeed, the next grouping, from 12th through 15th, is also weak on female faculty members, ranging from 6%-13% female.¹⁴ For those, we can wonder if they would have dropped even further on the list if they had higher proportions of female faculty members, but we don't know that either.

No pattern emerges further down the list either. Departments with 10% or fewer female faculty members can be found at the top (Princeton, tied for #1, 10%), further down (University of Texas, Austin, tied for #14, 6%), much further down (University of California, Riverside, tied for #32, 7%), and near the bottom (University of California, Santa Barbara, tied for #40, 8%; Boston University, University of Illinois-Urbana-Champaign, and University of Virginia, tied at #42, all with 7%; and University of Rochester, tied at #46, with 10%).

Only seven doctoral programs on the top 50 list have over 30% female faculties: Columbia (#7, 32%), Harvard (tied at #8, 36%), Yale (tied at #16, 33%), University of Massachusetts (tied at #30, 31%), University of Washington (tied at #32, 33%), University of Illinois, Chicago (tied at #36, 37%), and University of Connecticut (tied at #40, 31%). Only two of the top ten terminal MA programs in the *Report* have over 30% female faculties (Virginia Tech, 45%, and Tufts, 33%).¹⁵

We also might wonder whether some doctoral programs with 30% or more female faculty failed to make the list of top-50 doctoral programs because of a perception that at least some “women’s work” in philosophy isn’t good enough to make the top 50. Notable here are Pennsylvania State University (41%), the University of Utah (39% female), UC Santa Cruz (33%), Duquesne (36%), New School University (36%), and Temple University (33%). But without controlled studies of bias among the evaluators, this is pure speculation.

The verdict on the *Report*? Despite some data which are troubling on an impressionistic level (especially the small proportion of women on the Advisory Board and the Evaluator Panel), we simply do not know enough about the labor pool, doctoral departments, or possible evaluator bias to draw any meaningful conclusions about gender bias in the *Report*. Designing a reliable test of gender bias in this evaluation appears difficult. But this does not mean that students should be satisfied to rely only on this *Report* in making decisions about graduate schools to attend. Although the incomplete information discussed above makes it impossible for us to claim gender bias against women, we also do not have information that would prove gender-neutrality in the rankings.

Women in Philosophy

Philosophy remains the most male-dominated field of the humanities in the academy, and speculation abounds as to why that is. Is the profession unusually hostile to women,

discouraging them from pursuing a career in this field? Does the relative paucity of female role models make the shortage of significant numbers of women a vicious self-fulfilling prophecy in philosophy?

Three decades after the leading edge of the Baby Boom charged into professional and graduate schools, encouraged by the Title IX protections against sex discrimination in higher education, other specialties do not seem to have suffered this seemingly endless male lopsidedness. Women poured into the law schools in the 1970s, so that women now make up about 50% of law school enrollment, a striking improvement over female enrollment of less than 10% in law schools in 1969. Perhaps the women who chose law school in the 1970s might have considered philosophy, if they had not been discouraged by the meltdown in academic employment during that decade, and opted instead for a career choice more likely to lead to gainful employment. Given that undergraduate training in philosophy is so supportive of successful work in law schools, it might well be that philosophy lost out to law schools in the 1970s to the influx of women enjoyed in other fields of the humanities. If so, this might help explain why philosophy missed an important transitional opportunity in the 1970s and 1980s to refashion the discipline to be more welcoming to women, with faculty who would have served as the female role models for later generations of students.

Are philosophy departments truly giving women at least a fair and equal opportunity as graduate students and, later, in their tenure-track hiring? Is the field still dominated by a male-centric bias which judges quality in male terms that women find difficult to endure, let alone change?

I have no answers to these questions. But I do have a suggestion for how women in philosophy might start to have a noticeable and much-needed impact on philosophy departments: vote with your feet. In selecting graduate programs, after consulting the *Report*, female students should be encouraged to consider whether the programs they are interested in attending are “female-friendly”—or, at least, not “female-hostile.” If talented female graduates start to shun departments which are hostile to women, lowering the number and quality of applications, they might actually start to make a difference, especially in second- and third-tier programs, which must work the hardest to attract quality graduate students.

Female-Friendly Departments

What female-friendly factors should students look at? The *Report* does not address this, so here are a few suggestions:

- (1) *Does the department show openness to hiring female faculty members for tenure-track positions?* If it is not open-minded in its hiring, perhaps it is not female-friendly to its graduate students. Certainly there are many factors that contribute to hiring patterns by gender, and I am not suggesting any particular quota for what is “acceptable” representation of women on a faculty. Very few philosophy departments are more than 30% female, and some of those with less have made genuine efforts to recruit more women. But a department with only one or two token women might warrant caution. If the department is essentially a male club forced to tolerate a token woman or two by the dean, female graduate students might not feel welcome either.

This data should be reasonably available to potential applicants on department Web sites. Applicants might also raise this issue with current graduate students, who will likely be familiar with recent tenure-track

searches in the department. Were female candidates taken seriously in the search? Were reasonable numbers of women brought to campus for the all-important finalist interviews? Do current graduate students perceive that the department is making a reasonable effort to open its doors fairly to new female faculty?

(2) *Are female faculty hired mainly for temporary, visiting, or adjunct positions?* At first blush, some department faculty listings look impressive in their diversity—until you notice that most women are congregated at the lower end of the faculty hierarchy. They are likely to be teaching far more introductory courses. They probably are not available for dissertation supervision. They might be moving on in the near future or face layoffs in a bad economic climate. An out-of-proportion clustering of women in these lower-ranked positions might also suggest reluctance by a department to treat women in the department with equal respect as peers, a troubling symptom for how they might treat their female graduate students. This data should be readily available, both on department Web pages and from conversations with current and recent graduate students in the department.

(3) *What is the department's placement record—for women?* Do they work as hard to place their best female graduates as the men? Students should not be satisfied with a few examples of placements, but ask for more complete data and consider how the female graduates are faring in comparison with their male counterparts.

Although many departments now list placement information on their Web sites, it is not always clear how many graduates are missing from those lists or what efforts were made on their behalf. Prospective applicants might consider contacting female graduates on those lists for their perceptions of the department's helpfulness in placement for both men and women.

(4) *Do female graduate students get choice teaching assignments and research experiences comparable to the men?* Developing a repertory of courses during graduate school might help in some employment searches, but not if the best courses only go to the male graduate students. Contacting current and recent graduate students in a department should yield helpful impressions on this issue.

(5) *Does the department have an established policy on faculty-student dating, and is it enforced?* An attitude by male faculty that dating young female students is one of the “perks of the job” can poison a department. A permissive department impacts not only the students being dated, but also the colleagues and graduate students who find themselves with impossible conflicts of interest. Imagine that your department chair is dating a student in the discussion group you are leading or is lavishing extra perks on a graduate student he is dating—at the expense of the other graduate students—and you can understand how debilitating this environment would be to any woman with the slightest feminist sensibilities.

The existence of a university policy on faculty-student dating should be available on the university's Web site. Insights into whether it is taken seriously by faculty in the philosophy department might be gained in conversations with current and recent graduate

students in the department. As they might be reluctant to be candid in e-mails, professional meetings with opportunities to talk with other graduate students could be explored as an alternative source of information.

(6) *Does the department offer a reasonable selection of courses in feminist philosophy?* Even if a student is not planning to specialize in feminist philosophy herself, a department that has developed such offerings as an essential part of its curriculum is more likely to be open to other concerns of women.

The availability of courses should be on a department's Web site, though perhaps not the frequency of offerings. The seriousness of a department's commitment to the courses also might be indicated by whether the department has hired a tenured/tenure-track specialist on the faculty to teach such courses, and provides dissertation advising and student mentoring. If feminist philosophy is being taught only by temporary lecturers or advanced graduate students, potential applicants should wonder how seriously the department is committed to this teaching.

(7) *Does the department include a reasonable proportion of women among its invited guest speakers at department events and conferences?* Do the faculty members attend to hear the women as well as the men they have invited to campus? If they are not interested in hearing what female guest speakers have to say, perhaps they're not interested in listening to female students either.

Names of speakers invited to a campus are now typically on a department's Web site. The seriousness of a department's interest in listening to these speakers might be learned from conversations with current and recent graduate students in that department.

First and foremost, taking into account whether a department is “female-friendly” is likely to help ensure a better graduate school experience for women. No *Gourmet Report* exists for such information, and obtaining answers might require many conversations with students, faculty, and graduates of a department. But that important research could avoid unhappy experiences from enrolling in a department hostile to women.

In addition, taking into account a department's treatment of women in selecting a department for graduate study will be one of many ways women can exert pressure on recalcitrant departments to open their doors to more women on their faculties. In the long run, that too will benefit women pursuing graduate degrees, by opening up the market once they are ready to pursue career positions themselves.

Let us also hope that departments that are open to more voices, more methodologies, and more perspectives will some day be recognized as better departments, period.

Endnotes

1. “APA Statements on the Profession: Rankings of Departments and Programs,” <http://www.apa.udel.edu/apa/governance/statements/rankings.html>. The APA publishes its own *A Guide to Graduate Programs in Philosophy*.
2. Brian Leiter, “Class, Race, Gender & Philosophy,” *The Philosophical Gourmet Report 2002-2004*, December 4, 2003, <http://www.philosophicalgourmet.com/class.htm>.
3. Brian Leiter, “Welcome to the 2002-2004 Philosophical Gourmet Report,” *The Philosophical Gourmet Report 2002-2004*, July 16 and December 4 2003, <http://www.philosophicalgourmet.com>.

4. Ibid.
5. Complete data are available on the American Philosophical Association Web site, July 16, 2003, <http://www.apa.udel.edu/apa/profession/phdgre.html>.
6. This data was compiled in the *Digest of Education Statistics*, prepared by the National Center for Education Statistics of the U.S. Department of Education. The data for philosophy are available on the American Philosophical Association Web site, July 16, 2003, <http://www.apa.udel.edu/apa/profession/degrees.html>.
7. The Advisory Board includes one member who does not currently teach at a doctoral program, Julia Driver, Dartmouth College, but she was previously an Associate Professor at the CUNY Graduate Program, <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~jdriver/cv.html>.
8. Brian Leiter, "Description of the Report," *The Philosophical Gourmet Report 2002-2004*, December 4, 2003, <http://www.philosophicalgourmet.com/reportdesc.htm>.
9. Ibid.
10. Brian Leiter, "What the Rankings Mean," *The Philosophical Gourmet Report 2002-2004*, December 4, 2003, <http://www.philosophicalgourmet.com/meaningof.htm>.
11. Leiter, "Description of the Report."
12. Throughout this discussion, I rely on data about faculty composition from each department's own Web site, although these are continuously in flux as persons pass away, retire, or move to different institutions. Some departments seem to keep their Web sites more up-to-date than others. I exclude faculty who are visiting, temporary, adjuncts, lecturers, or *emeriti*. The data cited here were accurate for Web pages online in late November 2003, and might well change by the time this appears in print. With those caveats, the percentage of female tenured/tenure-track faculty for the top-ranked departments on the *Gourmet Report* are: Tied for #1: New York University (13%), Princeton University (10%), Rutgers University, New Brunswick (15%); #4: University of Michigan, Ann Arbor (19%); University of Pittsburgh (18%).
13. #6: Stanford University (21%); #7: Columbia University (32%); tied for #8: Harvard University (36%), MIT (20%), University of Arizona (24%), UCLA (19%).
14. #12: University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (11%); #13: University of California, Berkeley (13%); tied at #14: University of Notre Dame (11%), and University of Texas, Austin (6%).
15. Brian Leiter, "M.A. Programs in Philosophy," *The Philosophical Gourmet Report 2002-2004*, December 4, 2003, <http://www.philosophicalgourmet.com/maprog.htm>.

BOOK REVIEWS

Theorizing Backlash: Philosophical Reflections on the Resistance to Feminism

Edited by Anita M. Superson and Ann E. Cudd (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002). 269 pp. \$26.95. ISBN: 0-7425-1374-2.

Reviewed by Elizabeth Kamarck Minnich

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Cudd and Superson's lively, if sadly still pertinent, anthology presents essays informed by differing analyses put to work on the authors' own as well as others' experiences of the "horrid details" (ix) of discrimination. Written by academic philosophers (and law professor Martha Chamallas), the papers expose the virulence of a protean, all-too-resourceful backlash against all women in the wake of achievements by the Women's Movement (itself related by some authors to other progressive movements, particularly the Civil Rights Movement). The authors are clearly committed to helping their colleagues, and many others, transmute personal experiences into critique, thence effective action.

Given the book's focus, it is not surprising that Susan Faludi's popular *Backlash: The Undeclared War against American Women* threads it together (she is cited on 23 pages, from xii to 254). It is somewhat more surprising that the authors draw rather lightly on academic feminist theorizing, which, in its own section ("Part II: Backlash against Feminist Theory"), is analyzed as a target of backlash distinguishable from that against women. While distinguishing discrimination against women from that against feminist theory is defensible—given that these are different kinds of things (a recognition that allows Keith Burgess-Jackson and Mark Owen Webb also to write in a personal voice about discrimination in two of the three essays in "Backlash against Feminist Theory"—it is also a bit odd. It evidences a sometimes fruitful, sometimes confusing, continuing, if complexly variable, tension between liberal focus on individual rights, and radical feminist systemic critiques. For example, the editors' introduction apparently assumes a liberal position that radical feminists would dispute. "One goal of these essays is to bring recognition to the problems inherent in doing feminism," the editors say, "which is a necessary step for ending the backlash" against all women. This recognizes the mutual implication of concern for the rights of women and of "doing feminism." But, they then say, "these essays share the larger goal of eliciting changes in academia that would ensure the same rights, freedoms, privileges, and opportunities for women that men enjoy" (xiv). So, for the editors (not for all the contributors), it seems that separating a movement for women and, "doing feminism," is proper not just to keep our categories straight, but because the former is the more capacious cause. Radical feminists might argue the opposite: that feminism is the more capacious cause, because achieving for women "the same" rights as men is impossible while the old exclusions are still built into male-normed systems (leaving a setup for "backlash" that should surprise no one).

This ongoing debate haunts the volume in interesting, more and less explicit, ways. Ann E. Cudd launches the theorizing of backlash by sketching a theory of social change that could encompass both individual and systematic issues. Working from "paradigmatic" historical examples, such as the

Jim Crow South after Reconstruction (although race then slips into the background), she defines *backlash* as “a systematic change in the laws, institutions, and social climate that reverse[s] the progress of a previous period” (4). That such reactions are indeed “systematic” entails her observation that they are not to be explained, although they may be encountered, as actions of “mean-spirited” individuals. Nevertheless, she “admit[s]” that her “concept of progress” assumes a “basic liberal bias” in taking “the human individual . . . to be held morally primary” (7), which leads her to call the radical feminist view that “such individualism is masculinist, and hence nonprogressive” “mistaken” (7). Unfortunately, given limited space, Cudd could not develop her individually centered moral stance. We are left to assume that it is not at odds with her systemic location of backlash, but without benefit of that full theory, some of her assertions prove puzzling.

For example, Cudd asserts that “women (or racial minorities) are wanted in the profession, but only if they do not do feminism (or race theory)” (14). That seems questionable on several counts, including those “or’s” which seem to make *race* an alternative to, rather than a construct mutually implicated with, *gender*. Cudd then speaks of “conceptual regress from the initial liberalization of the profession, where there was little or no prejudice against feminism before,” a historically odd statement she explains parenthetically: “(since its implications for fundamental change were unclear)” (14). One is left wondering what sort of “conceptual progress” could bring a profession, that for so long categorically excluded women, to “want” them as equal colleagues *absent* “fundamental change” in how “women” were defined. Are we to think that misogyny was a matter of the heart and glands, but not the mind? In philosophy? Perhaps, but if so, we now know better: “it turned out,” Cudd writes, that “women’s entrance into the profession of philosophy led inevitably to challenges to many traditional issues in philosophy” (14).

This suggests that the need for feminist critique of philosophy is intimately related to the possibility of any women, whether or not they “do feminism,” succeeding in the field. In the moving essay that closes the book, “Women in Philosophy: A Forty-Year Perspective on Academic Backlash,” Linda A. Bell writes of a “sadness” that “comes from my recognition that my own discipline seems one of the most resistant to change.” “I’ll never understand,” she says, “why philosophy, the proud discipline of Socrates and the examined life, attracts such a large number of mean-spirited individuals” (256).

Keith Burgess-Jackson’s “The Backlash against Feminist Philosophy” directly responds to the liberal/radical tension. He argues that, “Liberal feminism . . . is simply liberalism applied to the issue of sexual difference” and is bound to fail because, emphasizing the sameness with men supposedly achievable through formal justice, “does nothing to advance the cause of women *as women*, which . . . is the *sine qua non* of feminism” (34). Burgess-Jackson is clear that male-centered systems wrongly defined as neutral and normative cannot provide substantive justice for any who differ from that norm. This much is familiar, but then, adducing evolutionary psychology, Burgess-Jackson claims that women and men are *naturally* different, and that that is why non-natural social institutions that render unchangeable differences harmless are, in fact, required. Whether one wishes to use evolutionary psychology to reduce gender yet again to sex differences, Burgess-Jackson usefully highlights the persistently blurred distinction between equality and sameness.

Picking up on the need to evaluate evolutionary psychology, among other theories more often used to *attack* feminism, Martha Chamallas’ “The Backlash against Feminist Legal Theory” takes on proponents such as Richard Posner, whose *Sex and Reason* reduces gender to sex, and sex/sexuality to reproductive strategies by which the male seeks to impregnate many females, while the female seeks an enduring relationship with a protective, providing male. Admitting that it is “difficult to envision” evolutionary biology, with this suspiciously “conventional 1950s” storyline (73), “taking a feminist turn” (75), Chamallas does not just dismiss it. She points out that today “few assert . . . that biologically influenced preferences can never be altered” (75). Indeed, the real issue, she suggests, is whether deeply entrenched “cultural conventions,” as well as “biological conditions,” “can be changed, and whether it is worthwhile to do so” (75).

Chamallas also recognizes ways in which liberalism can be transmuted into anti-feminism, as evidenced, for example, in anti-“victim feminism” writers like Katie Roiphe. Roiphe charges systemic critiques with erasing individual agency, a shoot-the-messenger tactic similar to “the new right-wing attack.” As Judith Resnick puts it, “right-wing backlash . . . generally disputes the existence of systemic discrimination in legal institutions and regards feminism as the evil to be guarded against” (80). Cynthia Willett’s “Parenting and Other Human Casualties in the Pursuit of Academic Excellence” and Bell’s essay make similar points. Both discuss reactionary interpretations of affirmative action as a violation of individual rights, when what is actually at issue is a history of systematic, categorical denial of those rights.

Thus, the important subtext of this volume that invites us both to benefit from and to evaluate for ourselves the authors’ sometimes differing, sometimes overlapping analyses of backlash in its many forms, continues. The question of whether it is real or only a perception of progress that causes backlash mentioned in the preface returns to be analyzed in both Bell’s paper and in Anita M. Superson’s “Welcome to the Boys’ Club.” Superson’s essay focuses on tenure struggles that concern other authors as well. Carol J. Moeller, in line with but more radically than Cudd’s opening theorization of backlash, reflects on “progressive movements,” and Alisa L. Carse and Debra A. DeBruin offer analyses of and useful advice for “the feminist classroom” wherein many have encountered serious resistance. Julie E. Maybee’s “Politicizing the Personal” draws on critical race theory along with her understanding of earlier feminisms and Ann E. Cudd’s work. Maybee thus “reinvigorates” “the earlier rallying cry, ‘The personal is political’” by “[re-]focusing on the political realm as our battleground” (134).

I end with this recall of a politically feminist women’s movement to note that, in its light, Maybee critiques “the content of philosophy,” as it reinforces “the social position of those White males who have spread out their vision and made it the dominant one” (143). Maybee’s analysis suggests a response to the “mystery” of too many academic philosophers’ failure to break free of the “mean-spiritedness” that rightly saddens Bell. *Theorizing Backlash*, in this view, reveals that women need feminism, not just to achieve access, but for the long haul.

Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of a Self

Susan Brison (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2000). 165 pp. \$15.95. ISBN 0-691-11570-2.

Rethinking Rape

Ann J. Cahill (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 2001). 230 pp. \$19.95. ISBN: 0-8014-8718-8.

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Susan Brison's story self-referentially exemplifies its thesis: the rape victim's situation is unique, and her recovery is a transformation into a being capable of incorporating her experience into her life's narrative while, at the same time, condemning unequivocally the aggressor who forced it upon her. In Brison's view, and as her own life illustrates, the victim shattered by trauma can piece herself together into a coherent protagonist who surmounts the paralyzing effects of having her trust in the world and in people radically disrupted. Because the trauma derives from its unsettling revelation of the groundlessness of her former belief in her own security, the transformed self must confront the problem of human mortality, with all of its frightening implications. Brison might have died in that gully where her rapist (a French farmer) left her for dead, having explained his attempted murder to her in the following disturbing terms: "*Il le faut*" [it must be done/it is necessary]. But Brison survived to tell her story after recognizing, through a painful and difficult convalescence, that the only way to return to the world would be to engage herself in it again.

By the end of this narrative, I began to feel that Brison, through a bizarre set of circumstances (one must, by the way, read the entirety of *Aftermath*, including the "Afterword"), effectively experienced the trauma of September 11, 2001 a decade before anyone else. But then I suddenly understood Brison's insistence upon the subject's own perspective upon what has happened to her. Many rape victims experience such trauma without having the means, the credibility, and the confidence (because they lack sufficient evidence or have been discredited) to be able to explain what has happened to anyone who might actually listen, and even less who might believe what they have to say. While Brison's attacker left clear physical evidence of his attempt to kill her, other rape victims are no less subjected to the threat of death by the rapist, whose act of forcing himself upon the unsuspecting victim includes (at least) an implicit threat of death, since in raping the victim, he has already situated himself beyond the pale.

Brison honestly chronicles her emotional and philosophical evolution, including her own recognition that each telling of her story is only a version of what must have been to her (long steeped in analytic philosophy, according to which everything is supposedly neat and clean) a veritable intellectual revolution. Brison also offers insights into the dynamics and hierarchies of power in our society, which often prevent the victim from being able to achieve the sort of interpersonal validation that can only come through seeing one's rapist tried and convicted in a court of law. She is well aware that, had she been a poor farm girl and her rapist an eminent philosopher, her path to recovery would have had to follow an altogether different trajectory. But through her group therapy sessions with fellow

victims from every walk of life, Brison learned of the power of speech to transform even those victims whose rapes will never be tried or have been flatly denied in courts of law. Some eschew prosecution to avoid having to relive the experience of having their own innocence called into question by aggressive defense attorneys intent upon exculpating their clients. Others speak up only to be branded as liars.

In discussing trauma, Brison invokes the testimony of Holocaust survivors (some who ended by taking their own lives); for she recognizes that only individual subjects experience trauma, and that trauma transcends space and time. Trauma cannot be measured or accounted for in scientific terms; it can be understood only through sympathetic identification with the experience of the victim herself, from her own perspective. Every rape victim has had her raft overturned (though she believed it to be a stable piece of land), and, to survive, she must tread water until she finds a piece of driftwood on which to rest. She will never, however, return to the place she once was; for now she knows that her tract of "land" was only a raft.

Through *Aftermath*, Brison pays tribute to all who are like her in their suffering, but are socially situated so as not to be able to have their stories believed. Her story should be read not only by fellow victims, but also by those who think of rape victims in terms only of statistics. The profound metaphilosophical message of Brison's text will no doubt go unnoticed by analytic philosophers; but the beauty is certainly there, for all those with eyes that can see.

Ann Cahill's *Rethinking Rape* is a more "normal" (in the Kuhnian sense) philosophy book, which begins by diagnosing the shortcomings of previous feminist attempts to tackle the problem of rape. In Cahill's view, early radical and liberal feminists achieved pyrrhic victories by effectively defining the female subject away. Cahill is quite sympathetic of what she takes to be the underlying motivation behind attempts by liberals to define rape as a form of violence (viz., to absolve the victim from any responsibility for her having been raped), and by radicals to identify all heterosexual activity as differing from rape in degree, not in kind (viz., to open our eyes to the pervasiveness of patriarchy). But these "solutions" ultimately reinforce the very sexist hierarchies that feminists are so keen to dismantle. In their quest for neutrality, the liberals failed to see that the baseline standard is already, implicitly, masculine—there is no neutral, non-sexed person. In their noble endeavor to free women from patriarchy, the radicals effectively denied the very possibility of feminine agency.

Cahill's proposal is to identify the rape victim (in her view, a woman) as an essentially sexual, embodied subject. Rape, then, is an embodied sexually marked experience in which a woman is victimized through a rapist's denial of her personhood as a sexually embodied subject. Although it is not possible to delineate any list of necessary and sufficient conditions for being feminine, sexuality is central to one's subjectivity; and because of sexual difference, no human being, male or female, is capable of grasping in its entirety the human condition. Cahill avoids the traps of the liberal and radical feminist solutions to the problem of sexuality in rape, for the victim *is* a sexual being, but this does not imply that she is in any way responsible for victimization, an assumption which has often impeded the cause of justice. But the feminine embodied subject is not merely a victim; she can freely choose to enter into heterosexual relations, a possibility denied by radical feminists who claim that such relations are intrinsically coercive given the reigning patriarchy.

On one level, Cahill's understanding of rape appears uncontroversial. I would be surprised if most people did not

believe both that rape is sexual and that, while women *are* responsible for their normal heterosexual relations, they are not responsible for having been raped. “Rape” carries with it an intrinsically negative meaning. When people (including rapists) deny that a victim has been “raped,” they mean, precisely, that the victim bears responsibility for the sexual relation in which she engaged. If it is true, as Cahill further suggests, that the rapist has intercourse with his victim while the victim does not have intercourse with her rapist, then this presumably means that the rapist is fully responsible for his action. He was not coerced in any way, not by hormones, not by cultural images, not by appetites, not by having been indoctrinated with patriarchal ideology. Does this not imply, then, that the rapist believed that what he did was right? If free agents act upon their beliefs and values, then the actions of rapists reveal that they believe that they may rape. They usually know that it is illegal, but they rape nonetheless, recognizing that they will probably get away with it. Some rapists no doubt believe that women are essentially submissive potential victims who really “want it,” even when they say “no.” How, then, do we arrive at the view that rape is *really* wrong, contrary to what the rapist himself thinks?

Rape is wrong, for Cahill, not for the lack of consent on the part of the victim, nor because it violates a contract or is a form of theft, nor because it involves using the victim as a mere means to an end. Rape is wrong because it “at least temporarily denies the (bodily, and sexually differentiated) agency of the victim” (142). But, of course, the sexist who commits rape may well believe that his victim’s feminine sexuality inheres precisely in her rapability. From his own perspective, therefore, the rapist denies neither his victim’s personhood, nor her sexuality, for feminine persons are essentially distinct (he will agree with Cahill) from masculine persons, whose place in the world it is, he thinks, to dominate, subdue, and intimidate women.

Cahill’s account thus leaves us in a quandary: How can we retain our categorical denunciation of rape, while insisting upon the importance of an essential difference between the masculine and the feminine embodied subjects, *unless* she provides content for the feminine embodied subject such that submissiveness or passivity (milder forms of rapability—at least according to some radicals and rapists) are excluded? By insisting that the feminine embodied subject be conceived of as broadmindedly as possible, allowing her to be whatever she chooses to be, Cahill fails to provide the needed moral basis for a categorical condemnation of rape. Cahill does believe that men and women have free choice, despite the fact that we are indeed formed in a social milieu that limits our choices to some degree and tends to point us in some directions rather than others. But what can she say to the sexist, who simply disagrees with her own vague view of “the feminine embodied subject”?

Although Cahill would like to avoid the dogmatic decree of any necessary set of characteristics of femininity (any one of which would be refutable by a single counterexample), “the feminine embodied subject” is not entirely content-free. For in response to Baber, who downplays the importance of sexuality (“For the standard person . . . for whom sexuality is a peripheral matter on which relatively little hangs. . .”), Cahill offers only the following expression of consternation: “One wonders at this point just who is this standard person for whom sexuality is such a trifling matter” (177).

Professional philosophers (like everyone else) are constrained by their own experiences, values and beliefs, but without *either* providing content specific to “the feminine embodied subject” or falling back on the generic concept of

the “neutral” moral person (who would be common to both masculine and feminine embodied subjects), Cahill cannot impugn the standard sexist conceptualization of women against which both liberals and radicals have labored. Suffice it to say that Cahill cannot have it both ways. She cannot both embrace the particularism she claims to extol and reject Brison’s fundamental phenomenological insight that the agent is the ultimate authority regarding his or her own experience.

Furthermore, without denying the authority of the victim’s own perspective on what has happened to him or her, there are no grounds for accepting Cahill’s suggestion that the male rape victim is somehow less worse off than the female rape victim. I frankly do not believe (as Cahill repeatedly suggests) that the liberal attempt to desexualize rape is motivated only by a desire to prevent the victim’s revictimization in the courtroom. Many liberals no doubt believe that the rape of a young boy is, in fact, morally equivalent to the rape of a young girl. But to acknowledge the life-transforming effect of trauma upon any victim is not to deny that the world in which we live is prefigured by patriarchy and class. In such a world, the existence of irreducible difference implies that the challenges faced by different embodied subjects will be different. More women than men are raped. More poor black men than wealthy white women are maimed fighting in wars and are falsely executed for murders that they did not commit. These are all horrible things which should happen to no one.

Rape is prohibited by law because it is sex that involves violent coercion and/or lack of consent (the wording and emphasis differs from state to state). Cahill’s primary concern is to counter reform efforts that aim to define away the sexual aspect of rape, leaving behind only a crime of assault and battery. While Cahill conceives of “the rapist” as a single type of rational agent (for he is fully responsible for his action), she, like Brison, insists that a victim’s situation must be attended to individually. But only by presupposing the grosser (and well-established) legal concepts of coercion and consent can rape be prosecuted as a crime.

The chasm spanning language and the reality of subjective experience is infinitely deep, but we, nonetheless, muddle along, lumping disparate phenomena together using crude labels such as “rape” and understanding, intuitively, that “the act” is wrong, not because it is done to a feminine person, but because it is done to a person at all. While I do not believe that Cahill succeeds in providing a workable substitute for what seems to be the standard (and certainly is the legal) view regarding rape, her book is thought-provoking and would be good text for a course on the history and philosophy of feminism. Cahill covers a great deal of ground in both feminist and continental philosophy, raising hundreds of questions about the plight of the sexually embodied subject trapped in a world of no one’s creation, though with effects that sometimes seem as insidious as those of the most calculated conspiracy. In the end, both Brison and Cahill exhort women to resist, by learning how to defend themselves so that it becomes increasingly difficult for potential assailants to believe that they can rape with impunity. With this, it would be difficult to disagree.

Damaged Identities, Narrative Repair

Hilde Lindemann Nelson (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001). 204 pp. \$18.95. ISBN: 0-8014-8740-4.

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We define ourselves—and are defined by others—narratively. That is to say, identities are constituted by dominant, shared stories about groups and individuals. And those stories wind up both enabling and constraining individuals, often significantly restricting moral agency. How to understand, and ultimately, work to transform such restrictive narratives and identities is the subject of Hilde Lindemann Nelson's *Damaged Identities, Narrative Repair*.

Nelson's central thesis is that "narratives do moral work" (36), suggesting that the stories we tell—about ourselves, about others—constitute subjectivity. Oppressive narratives in wide social circulation can therefore significantly circumscribe group identity, creating a prescribed space within which to exercise individual agency, and from which individual action is interpreted. These interpretations, themselves, conditioned by shared narratives, reinforce the limits of individual agency. Nelson defines these dominant, oppressive interpretations as "master narratives."

Nelson begins with the example of a group of nurses at Cranford Community Hospital (a small, Midwestern hospital) who are having the frustrating experience of living and working with conflicting narratives concerning their authority, the purpose of their work, and, subsequently, their fundamental identities as nurses. A number of hospital physicians, working under *their* assumptions of what role these nurses are to play, come to restrict the nurses' agency in dismissive acts, large and small. Some of the nurses believe themselves to have more moral agency than their small prescribed roles would allow, but their institutional subordinate status (it is not insignificant that all the nurses in Nelson's example are women) denies them the power to express themselves, preventing them from exercising their full moral agency. Others in the group of Cranford nurses believe themselves to lack the moral competence and authority enjoyed by the physicians. Both groups of nurses suffer from "deprivation of opportunity" (21); additionally, the latter group suffers from "infiltrated consciousness" (21). For Nelson, both are instances of damaged identity. Those who suffer only deprivation of opportunity are, to some degree, aware of the injustice causing their marginality, while those with infiltrated consciousness tend to accept the master narratives informing their oppressed identities and limited agency. In those cases, sustained exposure to compelling counterstories is required to open up a space for possible self-redefinition.

Increased individual (and group) agency, then, derives from modified identities, themselves the result of counterstories: highly descriptive stories that resist and undermine the master narratives that limit one's agency and install in their place narratives that enable fuller self-expression and exercise of agency. For this argument to work, Nelson must first secure an intimate link between identity and agency. In chapter one, "Reclaiming Moral Agency," Nelson sketches her notion of self-definition through narrative and counter-narrative, discussing in detail the features that define the moral strength of stories and counterstories, both purposeful and inadvertent, and the relationship between individual and group stories and counterstories.

In developing her argument on the moral effects of narrative, Nelson considers different models of narrative self-constitution. She provides thorough accounts of Martha Nussbaum's theory of cultivating moral perception through reading narrative fiction and Richard Rorty's ironist approach to self-invention. Both require high degrees of specific competencies and privilege to enable access to practices of self-definition. Nelson further takes Rorty to task for his strong impulse toward privatizing the practice of self-definition, which weakens such a practice's political strength. Nelson then considers the projects of Alasdair MacIntyre and Charles Taylor, both of whom address the narrative constitution of the self. Nelson favors MacIntyre's insistence that individual identity is never privately, singularly authored, and his emphasis on community-grounded narrative traditions. However, like Nussbaum and Rorty, MacIntyre does not satisfy Nelson's need for a narrative ethics that takes account of marginalized groups and individuals, and their compromised access to dominant narratives and strategies of resistance. Taylor's account of an identity-constituting narrative equates a unified, rational narrative plot with individual experience, conflating the structure of a life story with life itself, and so leaves unanswered pressing questions about how certain narratives come to dominate others. Nelson develops the notion of the counterstory to address these shortcomings.

In chapter three, "The Narrative Construction of Personal Identities," Nelson systematically presents her argument that identity is narratively formed and transformed, and carefully defines the features of self-constituting stories and counterstories. Nelson's consideration of both first- and third-person narratives reinforces her foundational premise that the self is never purely its own author. She discusses the case in which an individual's narrative of himself can be eclipsed by others' narratives defining him, and vice-versa, using the example of painter Paul Gauguin (used by Bernard Williams as well), who flees to Tahiti to devote himself to his art, abandoning his wife and children in the process. To Gauguin, he is foremost a painter; to his family, Gauguin is a husband and father, with no personal history as an artist. Ultimately, his actions are justifiable to the degree that they strongly define his intentions and inform his ongoing and future personal narrative and actions. Such an example illustrates the complexity of inhabiting conflicting and competing narratives of the situated self. In examining the Gauguin case, Nelson is able to establish three criteria for determining a personal narrative's credibility: strong explanatory force, correlation to action, and heft.

Nelson concludes this discussion by establishing "respect for personal self-determination" as the criterion for privileging a first-person narrative over a third-person one, an effective and persuasive move. This move does not, however, entirely address the critique of self-determination itself: that claims of self-determination can never be purely separated from the shared cultural norms and the expectations of others. This problem weakens claims of self-determination; however, within modern liberal ethical discourses that take autonomy as an essential precondition for a full life, advocating respect for such claims is hard to argue against. Indeed, Nelson acknowledges as much.

The most exciting part of the argument is in the final two chapters when Nelson proposes *concrete* strategies for subverting dominant stories and installing counterstories in their place. Chapter four, "Identities Damaged to Order," provides persuasive examples of marginalized individuals and groups with damaged identities that respond to narrative repair, illustrating the necessarily political nature of narrative self-

definition and redefinition. Narrative repair entails a sort of promise of increased agency and, in her examples, Nelson tells of gypsies, transsexuals, and mothers who have managed to destabilize the oppressive narratives that informed their marginalized identities and have redefined themselves—or have experienced being redefined—by the telling of new stories. Nelson describes counterstories as liberating narratives, suggesting that one can experience total freedom if she is fortunate enough to be included in a strong counterstory. She does not explicitly address the possibility that all stories—even good counterstories—are limiting, in that they define the boundaries of personal identity and that such limits, while not necessarily oppressing individuals or groups, are limits nonetheless that define the space within which one lives one's life.

Given the endurance of sexism, racism, and countless other oppressive hatreds, it would seem that individual attempts to dislodge cultural assumptions are no weapon against established master narratives. Nelson recognizes that master narratives are entrenched, often naturalized, and deeply resistant to challenge, and that self-redefinition is therefore an exceptionally difficult and slow task. Nelson argues that good counterstories get an inning when their targets are vulnerable; the counterstories that succeed do so by identifying these weak points both within and among master narratives. Nelson makes good use of Marilyn Frye's notion of the "arrogant and loving eye" in arguing for the ways counterstories acquire legitimacy. Counterstories take authoritative hold within marginalized communities that perceive lovingly, endowing their individual members the authority to define themselves.

This book is an important achievement; it offers a compelling argument for the social construction of the self without adopting a fatalistic tone. It offers practical strategies for liberation thereby insisting on the necessarily political nature of narrative practices of self-constitution. By developing the notion of the counterstory, Nelson opens up a space for the repair of damaged identity as she describes it: deprivation of opportunity and infiltrated consciousness. Whether those practices are enough to combat social injustice depends, it seems, upon the weakness of master narratives and upon the determination of those suffering deprivation of opportunity. What is less clear is how to empower those with infiltrated consciousness to hear and endorse the counterstories in the first place.

Nelson writes elegantly about the dialectical nature of self-constitution—how identity persists as well as finds room for transformation through engagement with, and resistance to, others. Her analysis is a strong contribution to feminist ethics and social critique. This book would be an excellent choice for use in courses on feminist philosophy, ethics, narrative, and moral psychology, as well as a companion to studies of race, class, and gender privilege.

Virtual Gender: Technology, Consumption and Identity

Edited by Eileen Green and Alison Adam

(New York: Routledge, 2001). 330 pp. \$29.95. ISBN: 0-415-23315-1.

Reviewed by Lynn Somerstein

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Virtual Gender is a collection of essays about the relationships between women and computers. It exemplifies the principle of "networking in practice" (92) because it is written by and about women from North America, Europe, Africa, Australia, and Cyberland. The authors in this book locate themselves within their research and explain their associations to it, which is a quintessentially feminist methodological approach to discovering both process and information. They write from the "participant observer" point of view, produce both quantitative and qualitative research, and are concerned with the online creation of citizenship, ethics, and identity. This book makes a valuable contribution to the comparatively new subject of women's technological activities and also exemplifies feminist concerns about being in the world. The collected essays discuss individual and communal use of the Internet and the Internet's place within the community.

The book is divided into four main parts: access and experience of ICTs, leisure and consumption, citizens at work and in communities, and identity and the self. I was struck by certain repeated themes. Women's access to computers is restricted because of limited economic power and leisure time, which is particularly ironic because Internet communication can favor more feminine interaction styles. When women do have access to computers, they use them to foster community and family interaction. The Internet becomes a giant virtual social center devoted to e-mail and discussion groups, a massive network that can promote international woman-to-woman relationships and boundary crossings of all kinds, as women organize, solve problems, do research, play games, tell their stories, and send them around the world to others.

The book begins with a series of essays about "gendered access and experience of ICTs and the Internet." "Becoming a Technologist: Days in a Girl's Life," by Linda Stepulevage, is an account of why and how Stepulevage is at home with technology. Her biographical musings and remembrances provide the basis for an analysis of how her working-class origins allow her to feel free with tools, including a very new tool, the computer. She uses "experience stories that reconstruct the small concrete details" (65) of daily life, which she then spins out into a larger view of social process, as she follows her analysis from the small and particular to the larger and more general. Stepulevage also emphasizes that when faced with a dilemma, her usual practice is to ask the other question. For example, if she sees racism, she asks: Where is sexism? Where is patriarchy? Where is class? Her article exemplifies excellence in research and in ethical concern for the world.

Greg Michaelson and Margit Pohl have a different approach to their research about "Gender in E-mail-Based Co-operative Problem-Solving." They present the results of a quantitative analysis of e-mail communications, which reveal that asynchronous written communication breaks through the usual male dominance of synchronous verbal communication and can equalize the opportunity to "speak."

The next section of *Virtual Gender* deals with "Leisure, Pleasure and Consumption." I translated this to mean

“computer games” and did not expect to relate to this part of the book because the graphics and subjects of most computer games are made for the delectation of teenage boys whose aesthetic standards are quite different from mine. Simeon Yates and Karen Littleton write about this exact phenomenon in their chapter, “Understanding Computer Game Cultures,” which underscores the effect of culture and social context on game performance.

“Strange Yet Stylish Headgear,” by Nicola Green, is an intriguing chapter which analyzes how gender is embodied, shall we say, in virtual reality technologies. Green discusses two different virtual reality games: “Dactyl Nightmare,” an action game created for amusement parks, and OSMOSE, an interactive art piece created by Char Davies and shown in art galleries. Perhaps it is not quite fair to compare products of art and commerce, but both pieces are concerned with how technology produces gender and involves shifting gender as part of the interaction. The physical and cultural locations of the games themselves produce effects that have a strong influence on the understanding of how, and by whom, the games are used.

Although I don’t have much personal experience of MOO (multi-user object-oriented) worlds, I was intrigued by the description of the creation of identity online and how this can be used to begin to understand the psychological processes of identity formation and ethical behavior. Michelle White’s essay entitled, “Visual Pleasure in Textual Places,” makes identity and subjectivity come alive in her discussion of MOO worlds, where there are many genders and where the penetrating empowered gaze still exists.

Els Rommes, Ellen van Oost, and Nelly Oudshoorn describe the creation of a virtual digital city in the Netherlands that was less successful than it might have been because it was created top-down from a technocratic bias that assumed, among other things, that people even wanted a digital city in the first place.

People who do want to be part of the Web find that when they are online, they are both accessible and vulnerable, plagued by stalkers who threaten them with sexual come-ons or who destroy reputations with nasty revenge games. I was surprised to learn that in the UK, the libel laws apply to Internet communications. In the United States, however, Internet service providers are not held liable for content, as ICTs are seen as analogous to telephone companies. I am curious about the free speech implications of these two different policies. “Cyberstalking,” by Alison Adam, gives examples of Internet-based harassment and the different ways that people in the United States and the UK fight against it. In the UK, the Internet provider can be sued. In the United States friends of the victim form Internet posses and fight the aggressor independently. Adam recommends that computer ethicists investigate feminist theory, especially as it relates to the differences between men’s and women’s online experiences.

The last section of the book is concerned with identity and self, and gendered play. I was quite interested to read in the section written by Lynne D. Roberts and Malcolm R. Parks that most people do not actually switch genders in online MOO games. I would have guessed that changing virtual gender was part of the fun, especially since there is an abundance of gender types available, such as, *Spivak*, *neuter*, *either*, *splat*, *egotistical*, *plural*, *second and royal*, or no gender at all if that is what pleases you.

In a different type of investigation about identity, Krissi M. Jimroglou writes about Jennifer Ringley’s JenniCAM, which is an artful send up and depiction of the gazer and the gazed. Ringley portrays herself as subject and object and as human and Cyborg simultaneously. As soon as I came to this chapter,

I visited her site on the Internet so I could see what picture she was currently sending from her apartment. JenniCAM crosses the boundaries of artist and model, art and life, fantasy and reality, public and private space, and embodies them all once.

Anne Scott, Lesley Semmens, and Lynette Willoughby parse the Internet into three different stories: “the webbed Utopia; ‘flamed out;’ and ‘locked into locality.’” Maybe we can use feminist principles to help create a just and artful utopia that is available to all who wish to enter. Elaine Graham asks if we want to be “Cyborgs” or “Goddesses,” and thus provides a metaphor for what could be the ideal multiple Internet connections for all of the “Cybernomads” (319) in the world. *Virtual Reality* is a guidebook that points the way to helping create this world and embodies many of the principles that it holds up as ideals. It is a thought-provoking and worthy read.

The Subject of Liberty: Toward a Feminist Theory of Freedom

Nancy J. Hirschmann

(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

308 pp. \$17.95. ISBN: 0-691-09625-2.

Political Theory and Feminist Social Criticism

Brooke Ackerly

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

246 pp. \$25.00. ISBN: 0-521-659841.

Reviewed by Elisabeth Porter

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Nancy Hirschmann presents complex, clear arguments on freedom and feminist theory. Hirschmann addresses the inadequacies within dominant understandings of freedom that fail to include women’s experiences. Her argument is that freedom “is centrally about choice” (ix), which is influenced by context. Hirschmann addresses the deep issue of how the choice-making agent is constructed by context, discourse, and language that actually make meaning, selfhood, and choices possible. The “choosing subject” is formed by specific contexts, including gender hierarchy and oppression. What constitutes freedom for women who are reluctantly pregnant or who live with a violent partner? Hirschmann argues that choices are profoundly influenced by options within our social construction. We live in patriarchal, sexist, racist, and classist contexts that restrain freedom, yet provide the settings to empower agency. Freedom emerges through “the power of the self to make choices and act on them” (34), but the choosing subject is socially constructed.

Hirschmann shows how Locke, Mill, Rousseau, and Kant present women as unfree subjects, but construct men as free, political citizens. The subject of liberty is masculine. Mill is an exception in having a social constructionist element in his advocacy of education as key to women’s liberation. Hirschmann concludes that social construction was central to seventeenth century theories of liberty, despite typical readings in naturalist terms. “The betrayal of men as ‘naturally free and equal’ is, thus, a ruse to hide the masculinization of freedom” (71). Hirschmann defends social constructivism as a tool to critique naturalist, universalist themes. She draws on postmodern theorists to deconstruct choice and subjectivity. Social construction determines the available choices that are

influenced by customs, laws, and social practices. Social constructivism provides the language to scrutinize the contexts in which barriers and options are created. The claim that “it is only through a notion of social construction that we can critically engage” (100) in the complexity of being free and restrained choosers is important but is overstated at times.

The three practical examples of domestic violence, welfare, and Islamic veiling are useful. First, Hirschmann begins with the internal and external restraints facing battered women. The social construction of “battered women” speaks to discursive meanings on gender, male privilege, patriarchal control within marriage, and state power. The choice to stay with a battering partner or to leave and live in poverty arises around limited external options and internal self-perceptions. Martha Mahoney’s redefinition of agency as “acting for oneself under conditions of oppression” (131) may break a circle of victimhood.

Second, Hirschmann contrasts the stereotypical “welfare queen” with the “pathological dependent.” Questions of welfare, justice, and freedom are connected. Yet “how the choosing welfare subject is constructed” (150) and what women see as fair, necessary, or desirable goes unheeded by policymakers. Reality is misrepresented, so welfare recipients are labeled as dependents. Subjectively, women may be categorized as cheating, when they are really struggling. I am troubled by her proposal to disregard rights as regressive. Universal rights affirm equality and freedom. Since Gilligan’s, *In a Different Voice*, many theorists affirm the interdependence between just rights and caring responsibilities. Hirschmann suggests that “rights can be developed *within* a care approach” (164), but cautions an endorsement of rights as essential to a feminist theory of freedom. Those without basic human rights are not free. Certainly freedom cannot be reduced to rights, but a feminist reconstruction of rights should be contextualized through empowering women to claim rights that respond to their responsibilities. However, reconstructing welfare rights in terms of women’s care labor, risks restricting women’s freedom in assuming their caretaker roles.

In her third example, Hirschmann explains the diversity in the practices of Muslim women. Some voluntarily wear a veil as an affirmation of cultural membership and independence, while others are coerced unwillingly. Veiling is a complex practice, affected by contexts. For many Muslims, the freedom of Western clothes appears as morally corrupt. For many Westerners, the burqa restricts women’s freedom. A Western dichotomy is created. To accept the veil seems to imply an acceptance of women’s oppression. To discard the veil renders feminism as “part of the colonialist effort to delegitimize Islam” (176). Paradoxically, “women’s ability to choose the practice is key to freedom, yet the fact that women choose to wear the veil does not of itself make wearing it a free action” (193). While choice is central to freedom, choosing is not freedom. Meaningful choice requires power in the construction of contexts.

The book successfully explains the social construction of women’s choices. Hirschmann’s starting point for a feminist conception of freedom is negative liberty’s emphasis on external barriers. Choices and the choosing subject are socially, materially, and discursively located in contexts that affect desire. Yet feminist freedom shares an affinity with positive liberty. We have desires, evaluate them, and make choices. Her conclusion “that feminist freedom requires that the women’s decisions be respected, regardless of what they choose” (237) seems difficult to accept until qualified, that “such respect is motivated at least as much by recognition of oppression . . . as respect for freedom” (238) and this I accept.

Brooke Ackerly’s book is very readable. Her arguments flow freely, and are supported by practical examples. Ackerly begins with an anecdote about a group of women in Bangladesh who, when walking, overhear shrieks of terror coming from a household compound. The women share their stories on challenging domestic violence and recognize the importance of collective action. The women discuss how to challenge accepted norms and assert the right to be safe in their homes and to be educated. Ackerly uses this anecdote to highlight the everyday nature of the social critic who promotes inquiry, deliberation, and institutional change.

The theory of social criticism that she proposes is positioned within contemporary, deliberative, democratic theory. She reinstates the role of citizens in instigating political change. Her aim is to offer a philosophy of social criticism, which, despite the realities of inequality, coercion, exploitation, and oppression, can promote informed, collective, and uncoerced change. She advocates a Third World feminist social criticism. She uses “the term ‘Third World’ to refer to those seeking a third way, an empowered way, for women and for the social economic development of their countries” (16). Third World feminists are defined by their search for alternative feminist strategies, not by their geography, so they include Western and non-Western, Northern and Southern women. Most examples are drawn from Bangladesh and India. Ackerly’s feminist method of social criticism includes deliberative inquiry, skeptical scrutiny, and guiding criterion. The methodology aims at giving the silent voice, of making social criticism inclusive.

In articulating what constitutes a Third World feminist theory of social criticism, Ackerly criticizes deliberative democratic theorists who promote reason over inclusive, informed deliberation. Her justification is that many people’s experiences have been grounded in violence, coercion, and exploitative inequalities. Informed argument needs more than logical reason; it needs the equal chance to influence deliberations by bringing our stories, including those of pain and inequality, to debate. She maintains that speech norms of mutual respect may inhibit inclusivity, particularly where actual disrespect exists, or when norms cannot be upheld. However, she provides examples of theorists who argue that deliberative democracy can be more inclusive if it promotes listening,¹ encourages testimony, not just argument,² incorporates the different ways to persuade,³ and admits to evidence like narrative as well as argument.⁴ Inclusive deliberation can lead to a challenge of prevalent norms, dominant ideologies, and power structures in order to move toward more inclusive change. Yet despite the big assertions, I am unclear of how Third World feminist social criticism actually meets deliberative theorists’ principles of mutual respect. While Ackerly certainly contends that the content of deliberation becomes more inclusive, she does not clearly lay out the actual steps.

The method of Third World feminist social criticism has three components. First, skeptical scrutiny examines exploitable inequalities. It requires the critic to seek those who are silenced by coercive values and practices. Second, guiding criterion provides minimum standards to challenge values, practices, and norms. Third, deliberative inquiry allows critics to generate knowledge by collective questioning, exchanging views, and building strategies for collective action. She provides contextual examples from gender and development scholars. She suggests that this threefold methodology improves on the relativists’ exclusive reliance on skepticism and the essentialists’ generalized assumptions on women’s lives. She criticizes Michael Walzer (1994) for being overly reliant on skeptical scrutiny, Martha Nussbaum (1995) on guiding criterion, and neither for incorporating deliberative inquiry. I am not convinced by her quick conclusion that Third

World feminist methodology is more effective. To reconcile relativism and essentialism, she offers a list of sixteen criterion needed to live a fulfilled life. In my view, they do not make better sense than Nussbaum's capabilities list. But I thoroughly endorse the importance of using such universal lists to prioritize competing claims in local contexts.

Social critics play important roles, particularly for the silent and marginalized. Ackerly critically scrutinizes the women's human rights movement and concludes that successful outcomes of the movement coincide with Third World feminist critical roles. While one is repeatedly reminded that inquiry, deliberative opportunity, and institutional change measure success, I would like more actual examples of these successes. The roles of social critic can be taken by insiders working within the community, outsiders, or multi-sited critics who are outsiders-within or inside-outsiders. Our situatedness affects observation, questioning, and responses, Hirshmann's constructivism. Ackerly draws together threads of activists, theorists, and practitioners and has offered a way in which deliberations can be more informed, inclusive, and uncoerced. She makes a big claim that "Third World feminist social criticism advances deliberative democratic theory, feminist democratic theory, feminist critical theory, and postmodern feminist theory" (180). Social criticism does not always lead to constructive change. It is easier to ask the questions than to resolve solutions to exclusion and inequality. The critic is often ostracized or marginalized further. Both books are practically grounded in relational contexts. I highly recommend them.

Endnotes

1. Susan Bickford, *The Dissonance of Democracy: Listening, Conflict, and Citizenship* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1996).
2. Lynn Sanders, "Against Deliberation," *Political Theory* 25, no. 3 (1997): 347-76.
3. Iris Marion Young, "Communication and the Other: Beyond Deliberative Democracy," *Democracy and Difference*, ed. S. Benhabib (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).
4. James Tully, *Strange Multiplicities: Constitutionalism in an Age of Diversity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

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A Feminist Cosmology: Ecology, Solidarity, and Metaphysics

Nancy R. Howell

(Amherst: Humanity Books, 2000). 130 pp. \$47.00.

ISBN: 1-57392-653-1.

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A Feminist Cosmology is a very rich book. In brief, Howell uses Whitehead's relational epistemology to develop a feminist cosmology that can address issues of gender, race, and ecology. While sometimes it can seem as if there are three distinct projects here, the theme of developing and living through a relational epistemology is the theme I find holding it all together. This is a very important project. More traditional and dominant epistemologies based on dichotomies and hierarchies are limiting and damaging to humans and nonhumans alike. The shift Howell argues for is very important if we hope to improve the quality of our existence and the existence of others.

Howell hopes to show that "a constructive feminist cosmology may be based on the relational philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead. Whitehead's philosophy is particularly appropriate to the task, not only because it complements feminist theory, but also because it is a conceptual framework that assumes the reality and importance of relatedness. As an open system, Whitehead's philosophy accommodates new constructive efforts to say what relationships may be" (129). To this end, she provides a very concise and lucid summary of Whitehead's relational epistemology, and she situates this within the more recently emerging literature in feminist philosophy and theology. A theory of relations is, Howell argues, important for at least three reasons: 1) an ecological perspective that sees the world as an interconnected web of life is increasingly important to acknowledge and to work with; 2) feminism, moving beyond its critique of patriarchal, hierarchical relationships, has come to a relational paradigm that "is crucial as a model for liberating relationships and as a nurturing context for the emergence of women's selfhood"; and 3) theology and metaphysics are increasingly realizing the liberating effects of moving toward a relational metaphor (8-9). One thing all this gains for us is a good sense of the importance of realizing that a full and authentic self is one that emerges from relationships. "(H)ealthy selfhood entails independence and interdependence. Relationships are not merely incidental, aesthetic, or bothersome—relationships are central to the emergence of feminist selfhood" (1). This notion of a relational self becomes, for Howell, the key to improving our relationships with each other, with the environment and the other creatures in it, and with God.

Howell's notion of a feminist cosmology is rich and complex. She says that a feminist cosmology understands women's experiences in terms of relational, organic thinking. It takes the fullest range of diverse experiences as its starting point and understands both the importance of particular experiences and the dangers of universalizing from the particular. A feminist cosmology should inspire practice, resist classical dualisms, and describe reality as processive and consisting of dynamic relations. Further, a feminist cosmology values nature and, seeing the dynamic interconnections in nature, it rejects views of metaphysics and theology that rely on more fixed and dualistic accounts.

This understanding of nature is an important theme for Howell. Appealing to feminist literature like Sally Miller Gearhart's *The Wanderground: Stories of the Hill Women*, Howell shows that we see a "commitment to the idea that humans (women, at least) are connected to nature. The relationship of humans and nature is depicted as an intimate, nondualistic kinship. This portrayal contrasts sharply with dualistic, hierarchical, and anthropocentric perspectives that describe the relationship as a rather remote biological connection and emphasize the distance between humans and nature by concentrating on the superiority and complexity of humans" (37). This returns us to the theme of the relational notion of the self and of the realization that any sense of autonomy and individuality is based, not on separation, but on connectedness and interdependence. Among other things, we start to realize that there is continuity within nature and that humans are within nature. So, rather than sharp divides and rankings of value, we find an ongoing continuum and interconnected web of values.

This shift in understanding our place in nature, and the dynamic, fluid, interconnections we find there, has implications for how we see our relationships with other humans as well. Drawing on a variety of feminist sources, Howell explores the tensions between the formation of community and separatism. She then argues that, using Whitehead, "female friendship may function as a standpoint from which we exercise judgment on hetero-reality and systems of oppression" (87). Since, from a Whiteheadian perspective, there is a reciprocal relationship between one's individuality and one's society and social relationships, the health of the society and of one's social relationships is an important concern. "We become individuals through our social relationships, and we also contribute to society by our completion as individuals. . . . In a context of female friendship, women contribute to my search for my Self, . . . In hetero-reality, the richest contributions to my emergence, the contributions from Gyn/affectionate women, are truncated by an imposed dissociation from female relationships" (91). A feminist cosmology makes room for the development of Gyn/affectionate relationships, so as to enrich individual selves, society, and the earth as a whole. This includes changing our perception of, and relationship with, God.

In a feminist cosmology, it is important to develop a relational model of God that acknowledges the human interdependence with the rest of the living world, is inclusive and non-hierarchical, makes humans accountable for preserving and nurturing the rich variety of life we encounter, and is fluid and open to change (106). God fits into this model, not as some supreme omnipotent power, but as a loving presence that gives life, is responsive to needs and desires, is involved in a relationship of mutual commitment and trust, and is in relational interdependence with all life. This moves us from seeing God as being or having power over us, to seeing ourselves in a variety of potentially mutually empowering relationships. This shift in the understanding of power, which comes from a shift in one's metaphysical and theological models, results in a shift in ethics as well. We must learn to care for ourselves, other creatures, and the earth in ways that sustain the richness and diversity of possibilities.

Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason

Val Plumwood (London and New York: Routledge, 2002). 291 pp. \$21.95. ISBN: 0415178789.

Reviewed by Sheila Lintott

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Anyone interested in fully understanding the contributing factors behind the current ecological state of the world should read Val Plumwood's *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason*. Readers will not only gain a deeper understanding of those contributing factors, but will also, perhaps, adopt a stance of cautious optimism regarding the future directions humans can take in regard to the well-being of the planet and of the human and more-than-human planetary partners who share it. As the title suggests, Plumwood traces the roots of the current ecological crisis to the dominant and irrational culture of rationalist philosophy. Rationalist philosophy, as her thorough analysis illustrates, has negatively influenced virtually every theoretical and practical aspect of life, from the scientific and economic to the ethical and spiritual realms. Yet, according to Plumwood, reason itself is not the culprit; rather, the source of the problem lies in certain arrogant forms of knowledge championed in certain insensitive frameworks. Plumwood explains that "knowledges that involve injustice to those who are known do not provide accurate or ethically acceptable forms of knowledge" (44). To be ethically and rationally acceptable, reason must be guided by a nonexclusionary conception of justice. Drawing on feminist and postcolonial scholarship, Plumwood clearly articulates an alternative ethical stance, one of mutual and communicative relationships, tempered by context sensitivity, and based on an inclusive and truly rational interspecies ethical framework.

Plumwood opens by drawing an analogy between the *Titanic* (the ship, not the movie) and the current ecological crisis. Readers familiar with environmental philosophy will likely note that Plumwood's *Titanic* analogy is much more fitting than Garret Hardin's lifeboat analogy, which is clearly part of what Plumwood calls an "economic rationalist imaginary" (26). The apt analogy of the *Titanic* calls our attention to the salient features of the worldview behind current policies that halt all attempts to change our course as we continue to devastate our vessel, the home we share with many others, the earth. Specific examples that fit this scenario are hardly difficult to find. Consider the continued reliance on fossil fuels, despite common knowledge that we have the technology to radically reduce or to completely eliminate such reliance. And think about the unwillingness to recognize or take to heart the intense suffering that fills the entire lives of factory-farmed animals. Ponder the inability of many politicians to come up with real conflict resolution options rather than opting for the conflict perpetuation choice of war. Yet, those who are steering this ship of fools are too wedded to their financial investments and their power positions to seriously consider not continuing "Full Speed Ahead." Plumwood's analogy makes salient the fact that the motivation behind the decision to stay "Full Speed Ahead," despite an embarrassment of well-founded warnings against doing so, is as terribly short-sighted and insidiously fueled by greed (for money, power, resources, and so on) as it is seemingly inevitable and highly problematic. The course might be rational in the sense that it is the best means to a given end; however, the end is too likely our literal end and is thus obviously completely irrational. In

the closing pages of the book, Plumwood again refers to the *Titanic* analogy. She calls upon her readers to act now rather than waiting for those in power (the most well-off) to realize the error of their ways. Now, she urges, “we must aim for fairer inputs in steering the ship, determining its directions in ways that are rational for everyone” (239). Those in power will be the last to see their imminent demise, for they are the most prone to accept the illusion of their own remoteness from ecological degradation. This is because they can (through political power and money) temporarily manipulate and escape dangerous situations to allow for their own survival and even profit. But, even for the powerful, the end is inevitable; for they too are ecologically embodied beings, despite their unwillingness to admit or understand this.

Plumwood goes beyond criticizing historically traditional ethical theories to explain why attempts to correct these flaws from within the same framework will likewise be flawed. Thus, to the question of whether an acceptable environmental ethic can be cultivated by expanding the traditional scope of moral considerability, which has usually included only humans, to garner respect also for the more-than-human creatures and entities in the world, Plumwood responds with a definitive no. The ethical framework we have inherited from a tradition of hierarchical dualisms, instrumentalism, and oppressive conceptual schemes must be rejected. The alleged divisions between humans and animals or humans and nature are illusions, and dangerous ones at that. Even when an acceptance of such dualisms leads to apparently ethical behavior, such as ethically motivated veganism or vegetarianism, they are problematic. They are problematic because dualisms such as Use/Respect (or Instrumental/Intrinsic Value) lead us to believe that some entities are merely food commodities and can be used without reflection for that purpose while others are never food commodities and must always be respected as more-than and not-food commodities. But, as Plumwood points out, humans are ecologically embedded and embodied beings and “all ecologically embodied beings are food for some other beings” (156).

Plumwood leads her readers through a careful reconceptualization of the relationship between human beings and the natural world. In the process, Plumwood underscores the ways in which the rationalist tradition of philosophy has left us with an irrational conception of that relationship and calls upon her readers to recognize and to fully appreciate the fact that “all of our lives are situated in both culture and nature” (52). That is, human beings are necessarily ecologically embodied creatures. The truly rational goal for us now is to find “respectful and reverential ways to use the earth to meet our life needs,” which is “a better way to protect nature than a rigid division between spheres of use and spheres of respect and reverence” (145). The assimilationist core that makes all value derivative of human value, with the implication that anything that falls outside the scope of moral standing is a resource to be used at human discretion, is not amenable to satisfactory modification; it is, rather, an unacceptable element for any feasible moral outlook. In the context of this discussion, Plumwood’s readers will find a timely and constructive criticism of the influential extensionist ethical theories of Peter Singer and Tom Regan. Instead of an extensionist approach, Plumwood moves toward an interspecies model of justice based not on similarities, but on solidarity and communication.

Plumwood defends an ecological ethic informed by the quest for solidarity that can be positioned between various forms of centric ethics (including human-centrism, androcentrism, and Eurocentrism, for example) and deep ecologist ethics. By doing so, Plumwood offers her readers a

much needed reality check, showing a way past the apparent standstill in environmental debates between prudence and morality. Arguing that there is a middle ground between those who argue that we must (or can) act *only* in our own interest and between those who demand that we *completely disregard* our own interests when we act, Plumwood builds on the recognition that humans are ecologically embodied creatures. If we can come to accept and appreciate the implications of the fact that our place in the world is one in a dependent and interconnected relationship with nature (rather than above or independent of it), the false dichotomy between prudence and morality becomes clear. It is not only with intense hubris, but also in shallow foolishness that human culture continues to disregard or undervalue the extent to which we are part of, are at the mercy of, and are connected to the natural world. Plumwood argues that rather than discounting or only considering human interests, we must articulate a just manner in which such interests can legitimately figure into an interspecies communicative ethical framework.

Plumwood has written another courageous and inspiring philosophical work. *Environmental Culture* will be of interest to a wide range of philosophers. It is an essential reading for those working in ethical theory or environmental ethics. It is accessible to those with an interest, but little background in feminist or environmental philosophy, and will also be philosophically satisfying to experts in those areas. Moreover, it is a work that draws on the work of and speaks to the interests of epistemologists and philosophers of mind, and has noteworthy implications by aestheticians and philosophers of religion.

Feminists Doing Ethics

Edited by Peggy DesAutels and Joanne Waugh
(Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers,
2001). 240 pp. \$24.95. ISBN: 0-7425-1211-8.

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Feminists Doing Ethics is an important collection of essays on topics ranging from moral agency and moral reasoning, to character and virtue, to hate crimes and humanitarian aid. Editors Peggy DesAutels and Joanne Waugh intend for their volume to emphasize a fundamental insight of feminist ethics that Margaret Walker identifies in her opening essay: rather than viewing morality as being opposed to power many feminist moral philosophers view morality as “inevitably, and fundamentally,” about power (ix).¹ True to the spirit in which this volume is offered, these essays form an enlightening body of theoretical work governed by the idea that fundamental to the study of things moral is the study of real moral agents who find themselves in complex relationships of power.

The view that morality is about power requires a methodological departure from the underpinnings of traditional moral philosophy. Accordingly, this volume begins with a section entitled “Theory Matters.” In the first essay, Margaret Walker proposes that by naturalizing our approach to ethics, we can embrace a power-sensitive morality that is both “empirically obligated and politically emancipatory” (4). One important task for moral philosophers is to analyze the way morality as a naturally occurring structure manifests itself in particular communities and the various powers that must be used to maintain it. This kind of analysis requires moral philosophy to be interdisciplinary, which marks yet another distinctive feature of the essays in this collection and of much contemporary feminist moral philosophy in general. Though most of the contributors to this collection are philosophers, careful reflection on and integration of empirical information from many other disciplines supports many of their respective analyses and conclusions.

In the second essay, Uma Narayan exposes the inadequacy of the category “Woman” for organizing feminist theoretical and political work. Her argument stems from reflections on the complex ways in which the interests of women who are differently situated may not be compatible because of disparities in power that stem from the intersection of gender, race, class, sexual orientation, and other such factors. Narayan challenges feminists to organize theoretical and political work around politically chosen alliances that more accurately represent the complexities of various forms of oppression and that allow more of us who are politically interested to address them. Though any essay in this book could be read discretely, I found it extremely beneficial to read them in light of these two opening essays as they create a methodological framework for the remaining contributions.

One of the most cohesive sections of this volume, “Forming Selves, Being Agents,” contains three outstanding essays that explore the ways in which power affects identity and moral agency. Diana Tietjens Meyers engages the debate in contemporary feminist theory over whether or not women have gender identities. Arguing against both essentialist views and anti-identity views and drawing from Nancy Chodorow’s work in psychoanalytic theory, Meyers presents a more nuanced third alternative she calls individualized gender identities. This third alternative acknowledges that all women

do not share the same identity *as women*, but allows that the selves we are and can become depend, to some degree, on the gendered meanings attached to the social locations that we inhabit—in ways that we may not be able to change.

This theme is picked up by the remaining two essays in this section. Hilde Lindemann Nelson uses rich examples from life and fiction to demonstrate how the narrative construction of oppressive identities can restrict one’s ability to freely exercise moral agency. Though identities can be narratively repaired, which can redeem one’s capacity to exercise moral agency; if enough damage is done, repair may be limited or impossible. Bat-Ami Bar On discusses how the formation of her body as a violent body has been both her own project and, as a Jewish-Israeli child in post-independence Israel, the project of a nation (63). Drawing on the work of Hannah Arendt, Bar On explores the possibility of justification for the violent female body, carefully navigating the issue, as she recognizes that feminists are typically suspicious and critical of violent bodies, since violent bodies have often been the bodies of men inflicting violence on women.

The essays in “Character and Its Virtues” extend the discussion of moral agency using a virtue ethics lens. Lisa Tessman argues persuasively that because oppression functions in a structural, systemic, and targeted way, it prevents members of certain groups from attaining certain external goods necessary for leading a good life, and it deprives people of a social environment conducive to the development of virtues that facilitate human flourishing. While making a strong case for this kind of analysis, Tessman proceeds cautiously, as she is acutely aware of the problematic nature of characterizing the oppressed as lacking virtue. Nancy Potter offers a context-sensitive investigation of forgiveness. Through extended analysis of a fictional story in which the characters’ lives are marked by physical and sexual abuse and by oppressive identities, Potter concludes that in some contexts, refusing to forgive may not be a vice. Determining how to act virtuously requires being attentive to our individual tendencies and inclinations; but Potter cautions that “we also need to know how structural power relations have socialized us to view virtues and vices differently for different groups of people” (148).

The remaining two essays in this section probe some issues that have plagued the justice/care debate in feminist moral philosophy. Margaret McLaren argues that placing care within a virtue-ethics framework can solve some of the problems of viewing care ethics as a normative moral theory, problems such as perpetuating damaging feminine stereotypes (109). Like McLaren, Barbara Andrew is also concerned that care ethics upholds an ideal of the moral agent that perpetuates a damaging feminine stereotype, one she calls the “Angel in the House.” Seeking to free care ethics from the “Angel in the House,” but arguing that ideals are important, Andrew suggests an alternative moral ideal for feminist ethics, one that embodies both autonomy and relationship: “the creator of found art and the pursuer of erotic joy” (120). Echoing the theme that runs throughout this volume, Andrew remarks that though all “ethics participate in power,” not “all power limits and oppresses; some liberates and empowers” (130). Our goal is to develop ideals that facilitate the latter.

The fourth section of the volume, “Thinking Right, Feeling Good,” includes two essays that explore moral reasoning or emotions. Phyllis Rooney derives important conclusions about moral reasoning by exploring how recent studies in feminist psychology on sex and gender reveal situational aspects of gender that facilitate a better understanding of situational aspects of moral reasoning. James Lindemann Nelson then

turns our attention to the emotions. Using literary examples primarily from Jane Austen's work, Nelson challenges Naomi Scheman's ontology of emotions—that they are entirely socially constructed—arguing that it may undermine Scheman's important epistemic conclusions about the role of emotion in achieving moral knowledge and moral objectivity.

The final section, "Taking Responsibility," includes three essays that tackle some applied issues. Using a feminist ethic of care, Joan Tronto's insightful essay reveals an alternative way to understand and to resolve the conflicts that often arise between professionals and managers. Natalie Brender convincingly demonstrates that the way in which well-intended, but politically impoverished individuals in Western countries extend to suffering peoples in distant places is ineffectual. She argues that our care for distant others needs to be informed not just by "realities of need" that are made so vivid in the visual images of the suffering in mass media, but also by "realities of power," which will enable us to understand and address the causes of such suffering and not merely its symptoms (211). In the final essay, Alison Bailey argues for an approach to hate crimes that calls for community and not just individual accountability. She revises Larry May's work on shared responsibility to create moral space for victims to participate more fully in addressing these problems. Bailey's "shared respond-ability" approach preserves the moral agency of victims, by encouraging community members not to fix problems for victims, but to fix problems with them.

Feminists Doing Ethics is an outstanding collection of essays by feminist scholars that can quite effectively supplement both beginning and more advanced thinking about morality. Perhaps one of its greatest contributions to the field is the way these authors and editors conceive of moral philosophy itself. As the title suggests, ethics is indeed something that we do, and moral philosophy is better understood as a practice rather than as a profession. Conceiving of moral philosophy as a practice encourages sensitivity to the powers involved in defining, naming, educating, and influencing, and reveals new possibilities for what moral theory can contribute to the real world.

Endnotes

1. In their introduction, the editors also note that many of these essays came out of an international conference on feminist ethics, *Feminist Ethics Revisited*, that took place in October 1999.

Feminist Interpretations of Ludwig Wittgenstein

Edited by Naomi Scheman and Peg O' Connor (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002). 472 pp. \$34.50. ISBN: 0271021985.

Oppression and Responsibility: A Wittgensteinian Approach to Social Practices and Moral Theory

Peg O' Connor (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002). 168 pp. \$21.95. ISBN: 0271023465.

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For those of us who came of age, philosophically, when Wittgenstein's work was still largely the intellectual "property" of positivist philosophers, the very idea that his work would attract the critical attention of feminist thinkers still takes a moment to process. However, as the two works I review here eloquently attest, this hesitation is unwarranted. The growing feminist literature on Wittgenstein has already begun to underscore the deep relevance his thought has for a variety of feminist projects; and this despite the many aspects of his work and life that might make such an outcome seem so highly improbable, or even "perverse."

It is well-known, of course, that Wittgenstein's personal and professional lives were a maze of contradictions. His misogyny and anti-Semitism were aspects of an ambivalent relationship to his own sexuality born, in part, of a Victorianism that had not yet run its course in the *fin de Siecle* Vienna of Wittgenstein's youth. His work in the *Tractatus* reflected a naïve faith in the power and potential of the positivist agenda for language and science initiated by Russell, Whitehead, and Frege, among others. Had he taken seriously his own pronouncements that the *Tractatus* laid to rest most of the important problems confronting philosophy, his place as merely one more of the analytical boy philosophers who provided the impetus for the Vienna Circle would have been secure. But the real power of his thought prevented this from happening. His discovery that the nature of language is intimately entangled with the cultural world in the form of "games" and "family resemblances" would, almost from the beginning, illuminate the inadequacies of positivist thought. But this aspect of his work had to wait until he rejected the atomism of the *Tractatus* that he did as part of the struggle that drove him to rethink his own life and the role of philosophy in general, two projects that would occupy him until his death. These later elements in Wittgenstein's thought provide much, although not all, of the background for the material found in *Feminist Interpretations of Ludwig Wittgenstein* and *Oppression and Responsibility: A Wittgensteinian Approach to Social Practices and Moral Theory*.

As with each of the previous volumes in the Rereading the Canon series, *Feminist Interpretations of Ludwig Wittgenstein* offers a generous selection of original essays in which feminist philosophers engage the thought of a major figure in the Western philosophical canon. Compiled and edited by Naomi Scheman and Peg O'Connor, the present anthology engenders what, for many, will be completely new conversations in which Wittgenstein becomes a dialogical

partner. The editors accomplish this not inconsiderable feat by including a wide variety of topical approaches in the volume that consist of essays on epistemology, metaphysics, social/political thought, and race theory, as well as enough additional material to keep thinkers of practically any persuasion busy for some time. Divided into five sections grouped by thematic content, the unfamiliar terrain of feminist responses to Wittgenstein becomes a bit less daunting, which is not to say that these writings will yield their treasures easily.

An example of the anthology's thematic diversity can be found in Sarah Hoagland's essay, "Making Mistakes, Rendering Nonsense, and Moving Toward Uncertainty." In her analysis, she develops a reading of Wittgenstein's critique of G.E. Moore's "Proof of an External World" and "Defense of Common Sense" in *On Certainty*. Noting that "[w]hat (Wittgenstein) challenged was Moore's strategy of claiming to know the propositions of Common Sense," Hoagland produces a "criticism of the hegemonic language-games of white Western heteropatriarchy" by calling into question, the idea that the "Propositions of Common Sense are unconditionally true, absolute" (120-121). She understands that ideas are relative to their context and, outside of that context, are not simply potentially mistaken but, indeed, meaningless. This much was clear to Wittgenstein, as he was well aware of Einstein's work on relativity. Hoagland says, "[t]o make sense of a claim concerning a mistake, a frame of reference needs to be determined, and that relates the question of mistake to quite particular circumstances. An absolute claim is meaningless" (126). She shows that the "facts" of common sense that Moore believes to be both obvious and absolute are neither; they are, in fact, part of the patriarchal language-game.

With this in mind, she argues for a "conceptual separatism" that will allow "lesbian language-games" to emerge. This is, for Hoagland, a crucial move that avoids the pitfall of granting the legitimacy of patriarchal power; this is inherently meaningless in the first place. She notes that, "engaging in 'debates' within an androcentric, racist, heterosexist, classist, capitalist, abelist, anti-Semitic, ageist, imperial framework, while resistance, nevertheless nurtures that framework. . . . We want a shift in our form of life, not a debate/validation of the terms of the existing language-game" (128).

By using Wittgenstein's critique of Moore, Hoagland exposes the strategic possibilities of "epistemic uncertainty" rather than the hegemony of "certainty" which is crucial to the maintenance of patriarchal power dynamics. She denies legitimacy to the meaningless language-game of power, which accrues to male privilege *vis-à-vis* the history of "certainty" evinced, for instance, in Moore's work. By showing that there are only "kinds of certainty" which are, in fact, ". . . way(s) of acting, form(s) of life" (130), she produces a radically transformative intellectual and political move that is nascent in Wittgenstein, but is never fully articulated. This, of course, is the power of feminist critique: to redirect and transform canonical thinking through a strategic rereading of foundational texts. Hoagland's essay and each of the essays in this volume comprise a collective work that adds significant new material to this project.

Peg O'Connor, co-editor of *Feminist Interpretations of Wittgenstein* and author of "Moving to New Burroughs: Transforming the World by Inventing Language Games," the last essay in the anthology, extends and develops her argument in *Oppression and Responsibility: A Wittgensteinian Approach to Social Practices and Moral Theory*. In her book, O'Connor explores Wittgenstein's notion that "meaning is use" and that "use is fundamentally tied to social practices of which they are a part" (2). The entwining of social practices form

"backgrounds" that are often invisible to us, and this, O'Connor points out, has deeply social, moral, and political ramifications. Her argument grows out of Wittgenstein's insight in §129 of *Philosophical Investigations* that "[t]he aspects of things that are most important to us are hidden from us because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something—because it is always before one's eyes)" (5). O'Connor shows that these invisible backgrounds can be oppressive and we must draw attention to them or we run the risk "of leaving the framework of oppressive systems intact . . . Oppressive practices are fused into the very framework of the background and made invisible by their commonplace nature" (6). Beginning her analysis with an astute critique of the "essentialist" character of rationality, she develops a nonessentialist account of rational thought that reveals it to be a manifestation of power relationships: "The categories of rational and irrational are created and maintained through a variety of social practices and institutions; they are not natural givens but social productions . . . Rationality, like all social productions, involves the use of power" (26). Since power relations, O'Connor argues, are the product of "public and shared" language-games, any analysis of the invisible backgrounds in which we find ourselves embedded and by which we are oppressed will be enhanced by Wittgenstein's study in *On Certainty* of "the conditions under which language-games are played" (31).

O'Connor understands that this is a foundational issue for Wittgenstein and one that has far reaching and complex implications for feminist critiques of oppression. It is not, she claims, merely the "rules" of the language-games employed by androcentric, racist, and sexist cultural institutions that are at stake, but, much more importantly, which games will be played at all. What is needed, O'Connor shows, is a strategic transgression of those language-games that keep us enslaved to the "stable" and invisible backgrounds of oppressive social practices. She accomplishes this by analyzing the nature of several such practices: among them, church burnings and the racism inherent in such actions, sexual abuse, and the problems with which lesbian and gay individuals must contend because they cannot locate themselves as individual participants in the dominant language-games.

In each case, O'Connor employs Wittgenstein's claim in the *Tractatus* that "[t]he limits of my language mean the limits of my world" (5.6). O'Connor shows that we are all complicit in the maintenance of the practices and institutions that structure power. While we may not think of ourselves as sexist or racist we must, nonetheless, address those tensions produced by embedded language-games that maintain racist and sexist power structures. Individuals and groups thus situated within the refigured language that emerges from a careful analysis of the invisible backgrounds which foster oppression find themselves better-positioned to engage in new and powerful liberatory projects. Wittgenstein does not see this but, again, feminist analysis can and does reveal many insights that are unavailable to traditional modes of thought.

Both *Feminist Interpretations of Ludwig Wittgenstein and Oppression and Responsibility* provide tantalizing examples of the ways in which feminist scholarship benefits from close and careful readings of Wittgenstein's work through a feminist lens. The question remains, of course, as to whether Wittgenstein's radical transformation of language will survive further feminist investigations and the ways in which his philosophical investigations intersect with feminist inquiry. Neither of these volumes answer this question, nor could they. Rather, these texts act as promissory notes for future feminist work on the wide variety of foundational issues in philosophy that Wittgenstein thought important. It should come as no

surprise that feminist researchers, though situated very differently both culturally and philosophically than Wittgenstein, have found in his writings a provocative dialogical partner.

Retrieving Experience: Subjectivity and Recognition in Feminist Politics

Sonia Kruks (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001). 215 pp. \$17.95. ISBN: 0-8014-8417-0.

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Sonia Kruks's *Retrieving Experience: Subjectivity and Recognition in Feminist Politics* seeks to challenge a frequently told story about Western philosophy. As Kruks recounts, the story is that a radical shift from modernity to postmodernity occurred in the second half of the twentieth century. With some rare exceptions, prior to this shift the humanist values of the Enlightenment reigned in Western intellectual thought. An unambiguous truth existed to be known by a unified and stable subject, and reason eliminated all difference in its aggressive quest to comprehend the totality of the world. In the 1960s, however, French theorists such as Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Jean-Francois Lyotard, and Jacques Lacan—soon joined by Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva—challenged modernity's metanarratives. Truth, knowledge, and reason were all destabilized by their work. The subject, in particular, was radically decentered by postmodern and poststructuralist theory. Stripped of its creativity and agency, the subject was revealed to be not the producer, but rather the mere product of language, discourse, and the play of signifiers (1-2).

Kruks is especially concerned about the impact of this story on feminist thought. While the tale might be loosely accurate, a wholesale acceptance of it makes it difficult, if not impossible to address the lived experience of situated, embodied subjects. Postmodern philosophy tends to view experience as a foundational category to abandon, and yet the concept is crucial to feminist efforts to challenge sexism, racism, heterosexism, and other forms of oppression. For this reason, Kruks argues, feminists should question oft-told tales about the development of Western philosophy and should retrieve the concept of experience from the postmodern dustbin (6).

Crucial to this retrieval, as Kruks construes it, is the existential phenomenology of Frantz Fanon, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Jean-Paul Sartre, and above all, Simone de Beauvoir. On the frequently told story, these philosophers' work is part of the totalizing, humanist philosophy from which postmodernism saved us. Kruks allows that French existentialism and phenomenology are philosophies of the subject, but she argues that to depict the existential subject as the disembodied Cartesian cogito of Enlightenment philosophy is to grossly misrepresent it (8-9). Postmodern philosophy presents feminists with a stark choice between two extremely "thin" conceptions of subjectivity: the subject as either a pure constituting consciousness or a wholly constituted effect of discourse. But, as Kruks views it, this choice presents a false dilemma because it omits the affective, situated subject that both constitutes and also is constituted by social processes (13-14, 141, 147). This "thick" conception of the subject makes room for felt, lived experiences that are impacted by but are not fully contained in discourse. The subject of these experiences best supports feminist political

work and avoids the postmodern tendency toward quietism (14-15).

As she retrieves a "thick" conception of the subject, Kruks is particularly concerned with mediations between the personal and the structural and across radical differences. What is the relationship between "the experiential dimensions of oppression and resistance and the wider social processes in which they are enmeshed" (104)? And given the different experiences of oppression had by differently located subjects, how might commonalities across those differences, which are essential to effective political action, be built? Kruks acknowledges that Fanon and the early Sartre fail to answer these questions because their work lacks an adequate theory and politics of mediation. After powerfully analyzing the lived experiences of Black and Jewish people, they each resort to an abstract individualism to (attempt to) solve political problems of oppression (104). The later Sartre's emphasis on praxis, however, helps build the bridges that feminism needs. Objecting to Donna Haraway's focus on vision, Kruks argues that doing, not seeing, both mediates personal experience and social structures and allows us to understand each other across our differences (119, 128). For Kruks, recognizing distinctive identities is important to liberatory politics, but it need not result in an "epistemology of provenance" that denies the possibility of shared knowledge (109).

Refuting the "discourse reductionism" of Richard Rorty and Joan Scott, Kruks argues that the body is not a mere conduit for discursive effects, nor are its pains and pleasures merely meaningless eruptions of individual emotion (132, 144, 146). Kruks holds that a common experience of feminine embodiment exists, which both allows women to tacitly know each other's experiences and provides an affective predisposition to act on behalf of women different than oneself (151, 156). Embodiment, then, is the key form of mediation on Kruks's account. With Sandra Bartky (who draws from Max Scheler), Kruks prefers to describe the bodily, affective experience of solidarity as "feeling-with" (*Mitgefuehl*), rather than empathy. While empathy connotes a total identification of one person with another, feeling-with allows for understanding across differences without an objectifying collapse of the other into sameness (160, 166). For Kruks, embodiment enables a respectful recognition of the other that is neither an appropriation of the other nor the covert "distance of unconcern" (154-55).

While I share Kruks's interest in making room for lived, embodied experience within feminist philosophy (and philosophy, more generally), I have two concerns about the claims that she makes regarding the body as mediator of different experiences. (I also disagree with some of her readings of Foucault and Maria Lugones, but I do not have the space to address them here.) The first is the admitted sexual solipsism that results from her account. Acknowledging that some tactile-kinesthetic experiences do not vary according to gender, Kruks argues that there also are some that are sex-specific (169). She gives the examples of a woman who has been battered by a male partner and a man (Nelson Mandela) who was circumcised as an adolescent following a Xhosa manhood ritual. Kruks argues that although she has not had the same or even similar experiences as either person in these examples, she can feel-with the battered woman's pain and suffering, but not with Mandela's. Because she "do[es] not experience as full a recognition of [her] own body image in seeing another person who is male . . . the background conditions for feeling-with his pain are somewhat less strongly fulfilled" (168). Likewise, Kruks claims that women (but presumably not men) can feel-with other women who have undergone experiences such as rape and abortions and birthing

labor without anesthesia, even though they have not undergone those experiences themselves (169). “We know our ‘own make,’” Kruks argues, and this knowledge is provided by the gender/sex of one’s body.

While not denying the importance of broad similarities across sex/gender lines, I have difficulty agreeing that “a certain doubling of embodied awareness” exists between me and another woman that gives me access to “an immediate intersubjective apprehension of [her] experience of pain” (166). Even though I have a vagina and uterus, I find it difficult to imagine what it feels like to have an abortion or to give birth without anesthesia. Mandela’s circumcision, moreover, seems equally easy/difficult to feel-with since I have a clitoris—the physiological counterpart of a penis—and can imagine what a knife-cut on such an extremely sensitive body part might feel like. To her credit, Kruks occasionally cautions that bodily similarities do not guarantee affective knowledge across gender/sex lines (151, 175). Yet I nonetheless think that she tends to use the body as a shortcut across the difficult terrain of building commonalities and solidarities.

Another troubling aspect of Kruks account of shared, embodied knowledge is her claim that “visible or tangible” signs of suffering are more easily or are more immediately apprehended than other forms of physical suffering (171-72). Kruks gives the example of a colleague who has a disabling headache. She claims that it is more difficult to affectively know the colleague’s pain in this case because the headache is not visible. In contrast, if the colleague had a bruise on her forehead, its visibility would allow Kruks to feel-with her. As someone who has had terrible headaches, but has never had a bad bruise on the forehead, I find the opposite conclusion much more plausible. While I do not feel the exact same pain as the headache-suffering colleague does, I immediately know something about the agony that she is enduring. Having had bruises elsewhere on my body, I suppose that I can feel-with the bruised colleague as well, but I do not understand how the visibility of the bruised forehead makes it more available to affective knowledge than the invisible headache. Especially given Kruks’s criticism of Haraway for her emphasis on vision, Kruks’s prioritization of visible suffering is puzzling. In the age of media saturation, perhaps people are likely to be more concerned with suffering in distant parts of the world if they can see it on their televisions. Even if true, this fact does not explain why visible commonalities allegedly carry more experiential significance than non-visible ones. Recalling the above examples of rape and abortion, moreover, which often do not leave visible marks on the exterior of the body, Kruks’s prioritization of visibility would seem to conflict with her claims about the affective knowledge provided by the commonalities of women’s bodies.

These concerns do not, however, negate the overall value of Kruks’s reclamation of existentialism and phenomenology for feminist thought. With their focus on felt experience, these fields can help feminists analyze how women both become invested in and also might resist the discursive and institutional structures that oppress them. Kruks’s retrieval of experience is an important project for all who are interested in the role of lived, embodied subjectivity in feminist theory and politics.

Continental Philosophy in Feminist Perspective: Re-Reading the Canon in German

Edited by Herta Nagl-Docekal and Cornelia Klinger
(University Park: Pennsylvania State University
Press, 2000). 354 pp. \$22.50. ISBN: 0-271-01964-6

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“Philosophical debate is always situated; even where a claim to a radical new beginning is raised, thinking is nevertheless codetermined by the preceding situation of discourse” (5). So begin Herta Nagl-Docekal and Cornelia Klinger in the introduction to *Continental Philosophy in Feminist Perspective: Re-Reading the Canon in German*, a collection of essays by German-speaking feminist philosophers. The essays in this volume share at least one trait particular to feminist thought in German-speaking countries, that of focusing their critique of the canon on the Enlightenment. While the Enlightenment is, of course, not limited to texts in German, nonetheless it is this focus that most unequivocally characterizes German feminism; the contributions to the volume, “taking their departure from Enlightenment thinking, are exemplary of the feminist reading of the ‘canon’ in the German-speaking community” (7). The editors of the volume situate their collective project as one which would move beyond the “high-pitched tone of moral indignation” (7) that is certainly evoked in any reader of Enlightenment texts with feminist sympathies. That is to say, the essays do not simply reject the Enlightenment texts as sexist and misogynistic out of hand, but rather they engage these “seminal” texts in ways that are both sympathetic and rigorously grounded in the text. For example, in Astrid Deuber-Mankowsky’s essay on “Woman: The Most Precious Loot in the ‘Triumph of Allegory’: Gender Relations in Walter Benjamin’s *Passagen Werk*,” she takes up Benjamin’s overall project, then turns to his work on sexual difference. She argues that, while Benjamin was “certainly no feminist,” in his later work he did demonstrate “that a thought that allies itself with experience cannot get around thematizing sexual difference” (302). This demonstration, she notes, contains more than a few points of departure for a philosophy that is both decidedly feminist-oriented and aware of its being situated in a historical tradition.

Deuber-Mankowsky’s argument is in keeping with the overall spirit of the essays in this volume, insofar as it explicitly contextualizes philosophical thinking within a given historical discourse. This is in accordance not only with the significant influence of Critical Theory on German feminism, but also with German-speaking academics’ more general focus on the continental European tradition from the Greeks to Heidegger. German feminism explicitly characterizes itself as addressing not particular figures in the Enlightenment, but rather as focusing on the categories and structures of Enlightenment philosophy. That is to say, feminist philosophy, in this sense, becomes less about ferreting out moments of sexist thought in canonical texts and purifying them, leaving the original structure intact, and more about dismantling “the male, gender-specific code of philosophical discourse, a code that plays an important role in constituting the gender relationship as one of domination” (7). Like their French colleague Luce Irigaray maintains,¹ it is not the case that philosophy forgot about gender. Rather, the very structure of philosophy is erected upon the domination of the feminine in all of its manifestations:

in the gender-specific division of labor, in androcentrism, and in the explicit denigration of women. While these tendencies are not limited to philosophy, it is, as Nagl-Docekal and Klinger claim, “particularly in philosophy that the exposure of the pretended neutrality and universal human applicability of male thinking and knowledge is of special significance,” insofar as it is philosophy that poses the question of the human as constituting a knowing and acting subject, a question which is answered by many Enlightenment texts in a manner that makes claims to universality but which in fact sets up models that are complicit with relations of power and dominance (8). This critique of modernity is, of course, neither novel nor particularly feminist; what is feminist, however, is the “insight that the link between knowledge and power is sexed” (9). As Nagl-Docekal and Klinger point out, this insight is also not particular to German feminism, as is illustrated by the work of Seyla Benhabib and others. This is not to say, however, that feminism can therefore take itself to be any more universal than the tradition out of which it emerges, namely, that of critique and self-reflection from the philosophers of suspicion (Marx, Nietzsche, Freud) to the Frankfurt School. Rather, one of the lessons to be learned from feminism is that all philosophy has a context, a concrete position from which all critique, self-referential or not, must come.

However, according to the authors featured in this volume, this does not mean that philosophy must then find a “feminine” voice to counteract the “masculine” power play that characterizes modernity, and it is on this point that German feminism distinguishes itself from Anglo-American and French feminism. Nagl-Docekal and Klinger assert that there are two assumptions behind the question of a “feminine antithesis” (10): first, that gender is constructed (hence not an essential component of human life); and second, that gender difference as a construction is symmetrical, hence can be inverted to replace a masculine theory with a feminist one. On this latter point, Nagl-Docekal and Klinger are certainly correct; however, it seems as though the first point is itself predicated on a false dichotomy, one that many Anglo-American and French feminist philosophers take issue with, namely, the either/or of “real” and “constructed.”² This dichotomy, itself founded upon that of nature and culture, assumes that the question of gender is one that can be settled by deeming gender either false (i.e., produced by culture) or true (i.e., based upon the immutable reality of sex), when it may be the case that gender is both real and constructed, a facet of human existence that is both a product of culture and is productive of it. The rejection of the real/constructed dichotomy has the added benefit of allowing for a multiplicity of very real experiences of what it means to be a woman, an allowance which does much in terms of overcoming the phallogocentric myth of essential femininity (one which makes certain ontological assumptions about the universal status of femininity) without thereby abandoning the political necessity of defining oneself as a woman. If one takes up the possibility of “feminine” thinking in a way not predicated on the (false) dichotomy of “real” and “constructed,” such a step becomes more in accordance with what German feminists take themselves to be doing, namely, dismantling sexist philosophical structures.

Still, Nagl-Docekal and Klinger are right to question this search for a feminine way of thinking, for more often than not this question gets taken up not as a legitimate and rigorous philosophical endeavor, but rather as a “quest for a totally alien, exotic vision of feminine alterity” (11). Hence, Nagl-Docekal and Klinger characterize German feminism as less concerned with “the hopeful prospect of redemption from the predicaments of the masculine system,” and more focused on “the question of the ontological status of femininity and gender

difference,” insofar as gender difference has rarely figured explicitly in male-dominated philosophical critique (12). In this context, gender is the effect of a “discursive constellation,” a term which for Nagl-Docekal and Klinger signifies “the totality of social and cultural discourse and practice within which gender identities and roles, along with the binary and polar (dichotomous) structure of their difference, are produced” (15). Furthermore, Nagl-Docekal and Klinger maintain that “it is only with the framework of conceiving of gender identities as *constructions* that it becomes possible to transcend this constellation” (15). It is not clear from the individual essays or from the introduction how revealing the biases of this discursive constellation is tantamount to transcending it, nor is it explicit how this claim fits in with the earlier assertion that “the epoch of transcendental philosophy is over as is that of metaphysics” (14). Beyond their shared focus on the Enlightenment, it seems that German feminists can be distinguished from their Anglo-American and French counterparts simply because they write in German. But it is certainly no easier to simply dismiss metaphysical thinking in German than in any other European language, as Heidegger realized;³ and the collection ultimately leaves open the question as to how feminism would grapple with metaphysics and metaphysical language even from within the very historical and linguistic structures of that tradition. Nonetheless, leading feminist writers from Austria, Germany, and Switzerland have much in common with their colleagues not only in North America and France, but also in Italy, Spain, and Eastern Europe; and as such, this collection does much in terms of situating German feminism as a relevant and rich counterpart to the conversation currently dominated by Anglo-American and French feminist writers.

Endnotes

1. See Luce Irigaray, particularly *Speculum*, translated by Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985) and *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, translated by Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).
2. See, for example, Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 20-21. See also Tina Chanter, *Ethics of Eros: Irigaray's Rewriting of the Philosophers* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 21-46.
3. See in particular Martin Heidegger, *Holderlin's Hymn "The Ister,"* translated by William McNeill and Julia Davis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 53.

Feminist Interpretations of Emmanuel Levinas

Edited by Tina Chanter

(University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001). 272 pp. \$25.00. ISBN: 0-271-02114-4.

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In a well-known footnote in the introduction to *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir claimed that insofar as Emmanuel Levinas characterized “the feminine” in terms of “mystery” and absolute otherness, his work was little more than a repetition of some all-too-familiar sexist cultural and philosophical prejudices. According to Beauvoir, Levinas had adopted “a man’s point of view,” and his account was therefore no more than “an assertion of masculine privilege.”¹ This brief but important comment stands as one of the earliest feminist objections to Levinas’s work. In addition to the obvious question that it raises about the adequacy of his treatment of “the feminine,” it also makes one wonder if perhaps there are larger problems with his philosophical project that could be made clear through feminist analysis. Of course, Beauvoir’s remarks appeared in 1949, and were directed towards Levinas’s 1947 essay *Time and the Other*. It would be many years before Levinas produced what are considered to be his two most important texts, *Totality and Infinity* (1961) and *Otherwise Than Being or Beyond Essence* (1974). These more recent works have not escaped the notice of feminist commentators. However, and in *Feminist Interpretations of Emmanuel Levinas*, Tina Chanter has collected ten essays that take up the line of questioning opened by Beauvoir, and offer insights not only into the status of “the feminine” in Levinas’s work, but also into the question of whether Levinas’s thought can withstand an engagement with critical feminism.

Those who approach Levinas’s work from feminist perspectives face several challenges, two of which deserve special attention. The first is that while there are certainly common threads that run through Levinas’s texts, there are also important differences between them. *Time and the Other* included discussions of such subjects as “the feminine,” Eros, fecundity, and paternity. But in this work, these concepts were organized around the theme of alterity, utilized to articulate Levinas’s claim that the other is radically other to consciousness while, at the same time, standing in relationship to it.² *Totality and Infinity* picked up on these themes, but by this point Levinas had focused his attention on ethics, and his reflections were modified to fit into the larger context of his ethical philosophy, where his preoccupation with the “face” of the other largely overshadowed his concerns about sexual difference. In addition, this work introduced Levinas’s phenomenological descriptions of “the dwelling” and the role of “the feminine” therein, which had not been a part of his earlier analyses.³ Finally, Levinas’s late work *Otherwise Than Being* seems to have abandoned many of these themes altogether; and instead of relying on the figure of “the feminine” to signify a kind of alterity (even if only a “secondary” kind), he employs metaphors of “maternity” to describe the production of the responsible subject.⁴ Such considerable shifts of context, emphasis, and meaning greatly complicate attempts to come to terms with Levinas’s thought on these subjects, and make readings across texts much more difficult.

A second challenge faced by feminist readers of Levinas has to do with the fact that most of the terms just mentioned

are intended to be phenomenologically rather than empirically descriptive. Hence, despite Levinas’s use of a vocabulary that would seem to indicate that he is referring to either gender, sex, or the relations between men and women, there are several places where he denies that he is referring to any of these, disavowing both biological and socio-cultural readings of his terms. In *Totality and Infinity*, for example, he claims that “the empirical absence of the human being of ‘feminine sex’” does nothing to affect the dimension of “femininity.”⁵ Many years later, when asked to comment on his discussion of Eros in *Time and the Other*, he said that his ideas might “appear less archaic” if readers were to keep in mind that “participation in the masculine and the feminine” was an “attribute of every human being.”⁶ This phenomenological appropriation of key terms clearly does not put an end to the questions that feminists may ask of Levinas, but it does demand an increased sensitivity to the goals of his philosophical project and the methods he employs to attain them.

The essays in *Feminist Interpretations of Emmanuel Levinas* do an admirable job taking on these challenges and others, and collectively present a comprehensive look at Levinas’s oeuvre. A number of essays concentrate on earlier works up to and including *Totality and Infinity*, one of which is Luce Irigaray’s “The Fecundity of the Caress.” Previously published, this essay is an excellent inclusion in the volume, as Irigaray’s critique of Levinas, like Beauvoir’s, is well-known and influential in many feminists’ readings of Levinas, something which is shown by the fact that Irigaray’s work finds its way into several other pieces in the volume. In addition to earlier texts, several essays in the volume focus on later works—particularly *Otherwise Than Being*—and center their analyses on Levinas’s notion of “the maternal.” There are also contributions that look at the spectrum of Levinas’s work, offering commentaries that skillfully navigate precisely the sorts of shifts and changes discussed above. Finally, some of the contributors to the volume focus on Levinas’s writings on Judaism and the Talmud, adding an interesting and important dimension to the conversation taken up in the book.

Besides the diversity of approaches found in the volume, there is also a diversity of assessments of Levinas. Some authors are sharply critical of his work; whereas others, while not claiming that it is entirely unproblematic, indicate that, despite its problems, it nevertheless has much to offer feminist thinkers. An example of the former is Sonia Sikka, who finds fault not only with Levinas’s descriptions of the feminine other, but also with his concept of alterity, which she feels is surprisingly disrespectful of difference. Ewa Ziarek, on the other hand, expresses reservations about Levinas’s account of sexuality, but finds his thought promising insofar as it locates ethics in sensibility and incarnation. It is interesting to note that many of the contributions fall somewhere in the middle, and give voice to a strained relation to Levinas’s texts. For the most part, this is due to the belief that his philosophy has potential for feminism, but that Levinas himself either failed to fully realize that potential or, worse, developed his thinking in a way that betrayed or foreclosed it.

In all, *Feminist Interpretations of Emmanuel Levinas* is an excellent collection for those interested in Levinas. It provides a thorough look at issues surrounding his texts that are of considerable importance, and is a good example of the work being done by feminists who are working with continental philosophy. The editor’s introduction is quite good, providing a valuable general overview of Levinas’s thought and the specific issues that the authors in the volume take up. The volume also contains an extensive bibliography of both primary and secondary sources, including monographs, multi-author collections and journal articles. This collection is a welcome

addition to the rapidly growing body of literature centered on Levinas and the project of ethics as “first philosophy.”

Endnotes

1. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. and ed. H. M. Parshley (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), xvi.
2. Emmanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987), especially Part IV.
3. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), especially Section II, D, “The Dwelling,” and Section IV.
4. Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1981), especially chapter IV, “Substitution.”
5. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 158.
6. Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity: Conversations with Philippe Nemo*, trans. Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985), 88.

A Politics of Impossible Difference: The Later Work of Luce Irigaray

Penelope Deutscher

(Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2002).
228 pp. \$17.95. ISBN: 0-8014-8797-8.

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In *A Politics of Impossible Difference*, Penelope Deutscher achieves what English-speaking readers of Luce Irigaray have long needed: a generous, careful, and rigorous reading of the later work of Irigaray. What Deutscher praises most in Irigaray’s readings of the philosophers is also what is best about her own reading of Irigaray: impeccable attention to ambiguity and inconsistency, to the polyvocal possibilities of a philosophical text.

Focused on Irigaray’s later work, and particularly attentive to the question of multiculturalism, Deutscher’s book is nevertheless a very good introduction to Irigaray’s thought more generally, particularly for those interested in making sense of Irigaray from a poststructuralist perspective. Her analysis of the central notion of “sexual difference” and of Irigaray’s call for “sexuate rights,” extends from Irigaray’s early work in linguistics, to her later interventions into theology and religion, to her recent application of linguistic study to the language of the philosophers.

Deutscher defends what is one of the most controversial aspects of Irigaray’s work: her proposals for legal reform, (i.e., her program of “sexuate rights”). She finds in Irigaray’s politics a challenge to the politics of recognition that have been so central to and so troublesome for both feminist and multicultural activists. At Irigaray’s best, Deutscher argues, she elaborates a “politics of impossible difference,” in which “sexual difference would not precede the time of its recognition. It would be instituted by it” (43). Thus, Irigaray’s politics are not to be understood as affirming sexual differences as they already exist (which always reduce to an economy of the same), and thus as inadequately critical of the structures of power in which those differences are constituted, but rather as affirming the possibility of an imagined sexual difference that those relations of power have systematically preempted. Deutscher finds in this aspect of Irigaray’s thought a resource for multicultural politics, which have tended to get bogged

down in endless conflict over the “authenticity” or “inauthenticity” of the cultural differences in question. A politics of impossible difference is fully aware that legal recognition may well produce the very difference it recognizes.

Deutscher argues that the radicality of Irigaray’s politics is in her recognition of this productive aspect of legal reform, and that it is this aspect of Irigaray’s work that is promising for a multicultural politics, rather than Irigaray’s own forays across the boundaries of Western thought (in *Between East and West*). In fact, Deutscher’s strongest criticism of Irigaray is that she “presupposes the translatability of sexual difference from one culture to another,” (176) particularly she assumes “a transparency between herself and Asia” (170). The subject position Irigaray adopts for herself in her discussions of the traditions of yoga, for example, is utopian, and this utopianism, on Deutscher’s reading, is a negative development that characterizes much of Irigaray’s later work. “Her writing does not figure its own engagement in practices of appropriation, violence, and indifference, because it tries to perform the utopian gesture of a possibly nonappropriative, nonviolent subjective position attentive to possible difference” (169).

For Deutscher, a similar failure characterizes Irigaray’s discussion of heterosocial friendship in *I Love to You*. Deutscher both defends Irigaray against charges of privileging the heterosexual couple and heterosocial friendship, and criticizes Irigaray’s relentless focus on heterosexuality as the privileged site of sexual difference (and wonder). Deutscher believes, on the one hand, that the Irigarayan project of transforming the heterosexual/heterosocial I-you relation is justified and necessitated by the historical specificity of that relation. It demands transformation because it is the site of the active and persistent foreclosure of sexual difference. On the other hand, Deutscher finds that Irigaray’s relentless attribution of “difference” to the heterosexual/social forecloses the possibility of homosexual/social relations as a site of difference. “The heterosexual, even in an ideal heterosexuality, is no more a privileged site of potential difference than the homosexual is a privileged site of the self-same,” (138) Deutscher writes.

Though much of Deutscher’s criticism here is well-placed, her response to Irigaray’s privileging of the heterosocial serves as a good example of a tendency that I found troubling throughout Deutscher’s discussion of Irigaray, a tendency I read as poststructuralist: the privileging of a vague and amorphous abstract “difference” or “contingency,” or sometimes “polyvocality,” over and against a notion of politically salient group differences (between men and women in this case), without a clear account of the political stakes of such privileging. In Deutscher’s response to Irigaray’s centralizing of the heterosocial, she draws on Irigaray’s notion of “genre” to argue that, even in Irigaray’s own text, “there can be no heterosexuality except as traversed by the homosocial, since the situation of each sex in the context of one’s own sexuate genre enables relations of sexual difference” (139). Putting aside the problem of Deutscher’s apparent affirmation of the role of homosociality as serving heterosexuality here, what is most troubling is that Deutscher seems to reduce what most characterizes Irigaray’s work: her insistence on the irreducibility of sexual difference, to a kind of proliferation of individual difference. “Relationship to genre enhances difference between subjects (and difference at the heart of subjects). But the genres are not two radically distinct, different forces. It is the subjects, mediated by their relationship to genre, who are irreducibly different from each other” (140). Here the difference between men and women that Irigaray insists on (however one interprets that difference), collapses with the distinction (radical or not) between the genres, and we have instead subjects (Rather than men and women? Subjects

ungendered?) whose relationships to genre (and what is genre now?) are apparently *individual*. This seems to me to thoroughly dilute the potential power of Irigarayan politics, in which genre mediates individuality into a kind of collectivity that is identifiable and is capable of acting politically, though of course the relation of the individual to this collectivity is always problematic.

Indeed, Deutscher's poststructuralist commitments seem to me to break down the sense of what is often a very acute account of Irigaray's work at several key moments in the book. I'll give just two examples here. Deutscher defends Irigaray against the criticism that her understanding of the relation between law and social change, or between language and social change, is instrumentalist. In a chapter entitled "Irigarayan Performativity: Is This a Question of Can Saying It Make It So?" Deutscher distinguishes between perlocutionary and illocutionary performativity, following Austin. She argues that, "Irigarayan sexuate rights should be interpreted not in terms of perlocutionary performativity (in terms of consequences that might or might not result from their enunciation of formal institutionalization) but in terms of their illocutionary performativity. What is their status as an act of declaration? Rather than asking whether the consequences would be all that Irigaray seems to anticipate, we would ask what kind of act this is already" (61). Deutscher proceeds by urging readers to understand Irigaray's rights "as performing an imaginary performativity" (61). When we try to understand what an "imaginary performativity" might be, we learn that what Irigarayan rights talk accomplishes is simply "the declaration of a radical political perspective" (61). The crucial issue becomes how it is that Deutscher believes this "declaration" to be different from any other declaration (i.e., how Irigarayan rights talk is politically salient or justified any more than any other kind of political speech or program) especially in light of the serious criticisms that have been raised. Deutscher is not unaware of this problem, and appeals to the work of Judith Butler in an attempt to resolve it. There is no space to recount the entire argument here, but we end by learning that Irigaray's program of sexuate rights is radical and "politically responsible" because it is subject to the unpredictability and uncertainty of all performative speech. "Judith Butler has noted that we need the uncertainty of how speech acts operate and signify . . . for it to be possible for existing discourse to signify differently. Irigaray's politics is subject to that uncertainty" (70-71). This amounts to saying that Irigarayan speech works in the same way all political speech works, unpredictably. The argument dissolves into an appeal to a possible future justification of Irigaray's politics, a "time will tell" approach that does little justice to either Irigaray or her critics.

The last area of concern requires a return to a point made above, that Deutscher is consistently critical of Irigaray for assuming a "utopian" position that does not "figure its own engagement in practices of appropriation, violence, and indifference." She affirms at several points the "inevitability" of appropriation and violence in relationship to the other, and her disappointment that Irigaray "tries to perform the utopian gesture of a possibly nonappropriative, nonviolent subjective position attentive to possible difference" (169). Granted that attentiveness to a kind of inevitable participation in *structures* of appropriation (economic and political structures, I mean, rather than identity structures) is important in all feminist work, wouldn't this very concern demand an effort at enacting a "nonappropriative, nonviolent" subjectivity? Might Deutscher's criticism here reduce to a kind of poststructuralist malaise about the possibility of politically transforming relationships between persons, along with the structural constituents of those relations?

Revolt, She Said

Julia Kristeva, Edited by Sylvère Lotringer and translated by Brian O'Keeffe
(Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2002). 139 pp. \$9.95.
ISBN: 1-58435-015-6.

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Julia Kristeva's rich work is remarkably difficult to characterize. A practicing psychoanalyst, her most well-known books (*Revolution in Poetic Language*, *Powers of Horror*, *Tales of Love*, *Black Sun*, *Strangers to Ourselves*, and *New Maladies of the Soul*) draw on Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic theory and also on the works of such diverse thinkers as Hegel, Nietzsche, Proust, Saussure, Sartre, and Beauvoir. As Kelly Oliver notes even the seemingly innocuous label "French feminist" is difficult to attach to Kristeva, as she is neither French nor explicitly feminist.¹

Revolt, She Said is a slim volume containing three interviews with Kristeva by French journalists (translated into English and printed by the nifty Semiotext(e) series). Those who are already familiar with her work are sure to be intrigued by this text because it is exciting to hear the seemingly unstudied musings of a brilliant intellectual, though those musings raise as many questions as they answer. While the longest interview is largely a reflection on the Parisian student uprising of May 1968, Kristeva's abiding theme is revolt itself as a psychological and artistic, though not necessarily "political," goal.

In advocating revolt, Kristeva is careful to distinguish "revolt" from the more familiar "revolution." "Political revolts"—revolutions—ultimately betrayed revolt, especially the psychic sense of the term. Why? Because revolt, as I understand it—psychic revolt, analytic revolt, artistic revolt—refers to a state of permanent questioning, of transformation, change, an endless probing of appearances" (120). Kristeva complains that the political revolutions of the past two centuries failed *qua* revolt because revolutionaries themselves lapsed into dogma when they ceased to question their own values. Real revolt asserts the fundamental human freedom to call the established order into question. "Revolt is indispensable, both to psychic life, and to the bonds that make society hang together, as long as it remains a live force and resists accommodations" (38).

Kristeva praises the spirit of the brief May 1968 student uprising because revolutionaries questioned the accepted norms of prosperous postwar France by demanding *jouissance* for the disenfranchised. In our own age of globalization, technocrats, and automation, Kristeva seems less optimistic that revolt could be achieved by conventional "political" movements. Instead, revolt is best accomplished by individuals engaging in self-questioning through psychoanalysis or through artistic expression. "It's by banking on the individual microcosm, by rehabilitating and valorizing it, by restoring pride in love, desire and revolt, that society has a chance to avoid ossifying into the mere act of managing business" (86).

Kristeva is a persuasive advocate of revolt, which she at one point flatly equates with thought: "to think is to revolt" (39). But oddly Kristeva skims over the relationship between revolt and philosophy. Though she quotes Nietzsche on the death of God, she might have also borrowed from *Beyond Good and Evil* 292, in which Nietzsche eloquently describes a philosopher: "A philosopher—is a human being who constantly

experiences, sees, hears, suspects, hopes, and dreams of extraordinary things . . . a being that often runs away from itself, often is afraid of itself—but is too inquisitive not to ‘come to’ again—always back to himself.”² Similarly Kristeva says: “[Revolt] is the idea that being is within us and that the truth can be acquired by a retrospective return, by anamnesis, by memory. The return to oneself leads the individual to question his truth, much like what is accomplished with philosophical dialogues, like Plato’s” (100). The difference she sees between the philosophical spirit (e.g., in Socrates, Augustine, or Nietzsche) and the psychoanalytic spirit is the Freudian “modern vision of psychic truth” that individuals experience both joy and pain delving into their own memories and traumas (100). If I had been interviewing Kristeva, I would have pressed harder: if revolt is reevaluating values and questioning existing orders, then why is revolt not identical to philosophy at its most earnest? What is the connection between philosophical inquiry, psychoanalysis, and revolt? Can philosophical reflection, in addition to aesthetic and psychoanalytic exploration, be a form of revolt?

Kristeva is most well-known for her complex writings in psychoanalysis. *Revolt, She Said* does not feature any revision of her views, but connects revolt with aspects of previous works. For example, in *Revolution in Poetic Language* and *Powers of Horror* Kristeva explored how rejection (the pre-linguistic drive of controlled expulsion) suffuses avant-garde art. Rejection as a social force challenges the symbolic realm, just as revolt does. There are real similarities between revolt and rejection, and it is unclear if revolt is an expansion of rejection. Revolt also overlaps with themes from later works. In *Strangers to Ourselves*, Kristeva presented psychoanalysis as the preferred form of politics. She likewise wonders here if “the revolt I am referring to is possible only in the private sphere: for example, in psychoanalytic self-interrogation” (107). Some critics have noted a shift in emphasis from earlier works (which accentuate the semiotic, pre-language, and the maternal) to later ones (which stress the symbolic, language, and the paternal).³ These interviews cannot confirm such a shift, as they draw on elements from her entire oeuvre.

Kristeva’s ambivalent attitude towards the feminist movement also emerges during these interviews. For example, Kristeva acknowledges the mistake some feminists have made in deriding mothers and motherhood: “By emphasizing professional life, even if it’s indispensable, feminists have neglected the most important civilizing vocation of women, and that is maternity. But they shouldn’t be incompatible with one another” (68). Kristeva indulges in sweeping generalizations, and the comment about women’s “civilizing vocation” could be easily misunderstood as endorsing feminine docility. Yet really her views are more nuanced. Kristeva asserts that motherhood is available to both men and women: “maternal experience is fundamental, for each person of either sex, not just the ones who have given birth . . . But I’m definitely aware of the real challenge, which is managing to do both things at once (i.e., lead a professional life and a life as a mother). Even if they aren’t actually succumbing to serious psychic illnesses, a lot of these ‘superwomen’ are still clearly exhausted” (70). Her rather bland assessment of superwomen is followed in the next breath with the startling claim that American feminists are especially “aggressive” and “vulgar” (71). On the other hand, “French women fight, but with a smile on their faces” (73).

It is difficult to know how to interpret such razor-sharp comments, whether Kristeva delivers them with frowning earnestness or an ironic smile. Hopefully it is the latter, as Kristeva’s position on “the difference between the sexes” refers us back to the rediscovery of love through revolt. Feminists

should not parody male machismo, but strive to incorporate maternal experience, coquetry, and feminine difference into public life. “Maybe [women] want another kind of politics. What kind? What kind of love, family and procreation might this involve” (75)? Indeed, what kind of politics is exactly the question with which feminists have been grappling. Kristeva’s reservations about political movements leaves one wondering if these queries could collectively be answered by individuals whose revolts are partitioned off by their analysts’ office doors.

The limitations of Kristeva’s *Revolt, She Said* may be a result of the extemporaneous interview format. Topics are only loosely organized, the follow-up questions are limited, and much of the text is devoted to one historical event (the May 1968 uprising). Kristeva’s banter with journalist Philippe Petit can be especially pointed; at times she herself seems to be revolting against the limits of the interview as a literary form (e.g., PP: “I find you optimistic” JK: “I find you pessimistic”) (53).

Ultimately Kristeva’s endorsement of revolt leaves us with doubts that might be allayed by turning to her previous works. For example, it is uncertain if all organized political revolutions are, by their nature, doomed to failure, or how Kristeva would interpret the recent European revolt against the war in Iraq. In addition, the relationship between philosophy and revolt could be spelled out in more detail. Similarly, more could be said about how individual revolt relates to the semiotic and the symbolic. Finally, feminists would be especially interested to learn how gender impacts revolt. In all, Kristeva’s eloquence makes the reader yearn for answers, and it is in creating that yearning that she most succeeds.

Endnotes

1. Kelly Oliver, *Reading Kristeva: Unraveling the Double-bind* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 164.
2. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1966), 230.
3. For example, see John Lechte, *Julia Kristeva* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 39. Also see Kelly Oliver, *Reading Kristeva* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 11.

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- Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982.
- . *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. Margaret Waller. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984.
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- . *Strangers to Ourselves*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.
- . *New Maladies of the Soul*, trans. Ross Guberman. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Correction: At the end of Sara Ruddick's response in the previous edition of the *Newsletter* (Vol. 03, No. 1), two columns were inadvertently joined (100). Sara Ruddick sends the following correction: "I wanted to set next to each other, in two opposing columns, examples of carelessness and care, letting each 'picture' reveal the meaning of the other. It didn't work conceptually, or despite the editors' best efforts, graphically."

Simone Weil: **Carelessness:** *"It is as though someone were repeating in his ear at every passing moment and with all possibility of reply excluded: Here you are nothing. You simply do not count."* ("Factory Work")

Hilde Nelson: **Care:** *"Each of us in the family I dare say, saw Carla in a slightly different light. Acting out of our various conceptions of who she was, we made a place for her among us, treating her according to how we saw her, and in so treating her, making her even more that person we saw."* ("What Child is This?")

