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Women: Contemporary Issues and Perspectives

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N. Jane McCandless
Editor

Myrna Cintron
Assistant Editor

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N. Jane McCandless, *Editor*
Myrna Cintron, *Assistant Editor*

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Foreword

Francis P. Conner, MSW

One of the functions of the *West Georgia College Studies in the Social Sciences* series is to encourage the extension and elaboration of ideas that are in the forefront of the various social sciences. Certainly, gender issues cut across all the disciplines, and feminist theory is having a dramatic impact on sociology, history, psychology, and even economics as we re-think what we have been learning and teaching. This is demonstrated clearly in this volume: *Women: Contemporary Issues and Perspectives*, edited by Dr. N. Jane McCandless, who has succeeded in bringing together a diverse group of scholars, whose common ground is the high quality of their scholarship.

This volume contains timely articles from different academic disciplines, and like the previous volume on *American Popular Music*, provides a forum for a wide-ranging discussion of current issues. From a re-assessment of home/house work, to demythologizing the sentimentalized first kiss, to re-thinking women's writing, this collection of articles provokes us into taking a new look at things we thought we knew. That is no small feat for a volume of this size.

I believe the reader will find this volume offers refreshing and thought-provoking views of gender issues, and I expect s/he will come back and read sections of it again, from time to time. If so, its purpose has been fulfilled.

PREFACE

N. Jane McCandless, *Editor*

While it wasn't until 1832 that Oberlin College opened its doors to women, it has not taken as long to recognize that traditional scholarship has excluded one half of the human population. Since then, academics have taken the challenge to reconstruct existing knowledge in an attempt to include women's experiences.

In 1993 we have a number of avenues for potential exploration. We might, for example, begin to reassess existing scholarship on women in light of yet more academic and social change. The first author argues that feminists in the social sciences still face the task of defining the cultural horizons of gender meanings. Thus, Malone considers the positive effects of a postmodern perspective on gender within the field of psychology. The authors of the second essay suggest that the study of homemakers and housework can inform the sociological study of change, family, gender, stratification, and work. And, Karraker and Hammons-Bryner assess such scholarship with an eye toward synthesizing implications for theory, research, and teaching.

While the first two essays consider new direction in current thought, the third essay attempts to fill in a gap. The evidence is overwhelming: there exists violence against women. Battery, rape, incest, and sexual harassment affects all women, whether directly or indirectly. However, there is a dearth of published evidence about adolescent kissing. And yet Alapack proposes that young women too frequently experience an initial kiss that burdens her with shame ... nothing less than another form of heterosexual violence.

Literature too holds an understanding of women's issues. Barker in her essay reminds us that a reading of "The Storm" challenges the reader to take a closer look at the submerged lives of women and understand the root causes of their subordination. More importantly, through discovery, a reading can challenge the restrictions of a reader's social codes and lead to an awareness of a woman's stance or to acceptance and change of mind. And Honaker, in the essay to

follow, uses five epistemological patterns to a character study of the ethical development of the female characters in *Middlemarch.*

As texts will be our mark for future generations, critical reviews are necessary. Baker, in her review of *Feminism Without Illusions* believes that Fox-Genovese's work is an important book for anyone committed to arguing the feminist case. And Crafton, in her review of *Sentimental Modernism: Women Writers and the Revolution of the Word* notes that Clark's work contributes to ongoing debates about feminist criticism, canon formation, and the rhetorical nature of discourse.

It is hoped that the articles in this volume will continue in the tradition that women's contemporary perspectives and issues are worthy of attention. If such issues are not, then we will only be guilty of transmitting impartial and distorted knowledge, leading yet another generation to believe that the lives and experiences of women are second to those of men.

And it is important to thank all of those who helped in this project. First, the series editor, Mr. Pick Conner and the assistant editor, Myrna Cintron. I want to thank the reviewers: Ellen Barker, Dekalb College; Dr. Florence Cook, West Georgia College; Dr. Marc LaFountain, West Georgia College; Cheryl Rice, West Georgia College; and Diane Smith, West Georgia College. Thanks also go to our department secretary, Joyce Tuttle and our student assistants, Cathy Hardy and Connie Stapler.

When We Speak of Sex, What are We Talking About: The Advent of Postmodernism and the Social Construction of Gender

by

Kareen Ror Malone

Over the past three years, a very successful series of advertisements was run by Anheuser-Busch. In these commercials, cameos of gender stereotypes were presented in rapid succession. The theme of these stereotypes was the manner in which one sex baffles and irritates the other sex. A voiceover inquired into the source of such impossibilities within sexual difference but in the end, we were told, "why ask why, drink Bud dry." In less than a minute we are shifted from an incipient hermeneutics inspired by gender to the elegant solution of fulfilled desire. The fulfillment as typically represented in such ads is a tilting of a long neck bottle towards a thirsty mouth. The camera modestly cuts away before we actually see Bud drunk dry. Simply, in this series of advertisements, one is offered a trajectory of gender meanings that flow from representations of an impasse that generates knowledge to an image of realization and complementarity: a bottleneck conjoined to a mouth.

Recognizing a hovering association between the male genitalia and the proper name, "dick" being the most frequent recipient of this honor, I was rather intrigued by a parallel ad campaign for Budweiser regular. These commercials featured diminutive super men, little bustles of (need I say hard) muscle who go by the name of Budmen. I asked a friend how tall she thought these anthropormorphized beers were, and she replied, "oh, six to eight inches." It is odd, in fact, that Bud is not a more prevalent double-entendre for penis (except in Budweiser commercials). One reason that John and Dick have served so well in this capacity is that they are commonplace names as in "any Tom, Dick, or Harry" and the expression, "John Doe." Given that Bud enjoys the colloquial signification of any old guy, it would seem plausible that its meaning could drift to male genitalia. Perhaps it is another meaning of bud (its botanical aspect) that precludes this semantic expansion. Perhaps, the buds of nature are too diminutive; bud was, at one time, vernacular for the clitoris, one of the few on record.

In suggesting that Anheuser-Busch intimates that its product, Budweiser, is a phallocentric answer to the question of sexual difference and desire, I am not (merely) indulging in the pleasures

of a vulgar Freudianism which would find some penile pre-occupation behind any symbolic concatenation (Gallop 1988). Rather, it is to point out that, even within the effective but idiotic medium of commercial television, there are nuances to the meaning of gender that implicate sex as prototype or ritual for the project of knowledge and representation. The ads seem to say that sexual difference is an impasse. Accordingly, they inquire as to the nature of this impasse. They then admonish the viewer to refrain from interpretation and suck a Bud. Sex, in this instance, both opens and closes the cycle of thinking.

One could say that the project of feminism is exactly what Anheuser Busch advises against - asking why. The most astonishing question of feminism is "why is there gender at all?" We are so easily lulled into a naturalistic view of sexuality, a view supported by the intimate involvement of our physicality in sex, sexual difference, and reproduction, that we often fail to grasp how radical the questioning of sexuality and gender actually is. In a way, gender and sex are the ultimate temptations to a naive positivism in which we ascribe to various binaries of conceptualization, subject vs. object, nature vs. culture, the fundamental ground of our thinking. To challenge the binaries of sexual difference and the essentialism of gender is thus to begin to re-think the very ground of subjectivity and cognition.

In addition to the epistemological stakes of gender, there are cultural pressures that promote the desire to retain some domain that remains pristine qua natural. Especially in Western history, we have a legacy of inalienable natural rights, an economic policy justified as the natural course of "laissez faire," and a preoccupation with the inviolate innocence of children which we deem natural and pre-given. We might note that society's attention to the abuse of children is most probably overdetermined; our concern is certainly not reflected in educational, nutritional, or child care policies. It seems that the preserve of sexual difference in part functions to maintain an idealized and yet supposedly unmediated category of what is natural. The imbrication of naturalness with sexuality entails any number of consequences; the natural association of men with

aggression, found in evolutionary fantasies of the "hunter" as well as in any number of significations, is cross-culturally correlated with the incidence of rape (Sanday 1990). If my speculation in this regard is partially true then we might expect "asking why" about gender would not only dispute the collusion of knowledge with dominant forms of sexual relations but speak to other fundamental beliefs that organize social relations.

> Sex role plans are part of the system of meanings by which a people explain their success, come to terms with their fears, enshrine their past, and stamp themselves with a sense of "peoplehood." The unique identity people weave for themselves, the cup from which to drink from life, mediates sexual identities. Hence, sex roles must be viewed as an interdependent part of the logico-meaningful system that defines and gives direction to a people's life (Sanday 1981, p. 163).

One could easily debate the logic of such symbolic systems within cultures, but Sanday's overall point is well taken. Sexual identity does not ultimately answer to a body. Rather it situates that body within a symbolic framework that organizes the conduct of living in its most foundational terms. Where do these categories of man and woman come from if we can no longer comfortably refer them to bodies and natural function? If, in fact, gender is a pivot of the umbrella of meanings which form the self within a culture, one must even question what is involved when notions such as the "healthy self esteem" are invoked in the social sciences. Western culture's prolific repertoire of images of the self do not stand alone but are imbricated with concurrent gender ideologies.

Conversely, of course, changes in dominant notions of gender will impact how we imagine subjectivity, its parameters and norms. If the frame of subjectivity answers to gender identities, we can presume its correlate, the objective world, is equally complicit with the field of sexuality and gender. Once gender is granted its participation in the evolution of our ideas of the subject and object,

it is clear that sexuality, so to speak, "infects" the domain of epistemology. As a result, we find that feminists have utilized a number of interpretative strategies developed to subvert prevalent epistemological paradigms - such a subversion follows from their transformation of gender relations.

For feminists in psychology, there is a steep price to following this path. Their feminist loyalties are no longer necessarily compatible with the definition of their profession as a natural science. Positivism, a near and dear cousin to the empiricist strain in psychology, is one of those universalistic philosophies obliquely supported by modes of cognition and identity that implicate traditional formations of gender. In positivism, there is a clear demarcation of the subject and object and the presumption of certain classical dichotomies, e.g. active vs. passive, form vs. matter. One can no longer benignly assume that these attributes are indifferent with respect to gender ideologies. In fact, one might argue that gender is nothing but such attributions. Thus, in a way, these enduring gender images do not reflect or sustain a body. Rather, they reflect and sustain an epistemology. The dilemma of feminists committed to a traditional empiricist approach, with its concomitant epistemological beliefs, is apparent (Morawski 1990). Can one just implement one's scientific practices more rigorously in order to circumvent this implication with gender? Or are such feminists on the cusp of a major reformulation of the operative paradigm of psychology as a science?

To unbind the referential allure of gender and encounter its various domains of meaning require that we treat gender in its function as a symbol. An interpretation of gender at the symbolic level implies not only that we see gender through the lenses of politics, or in terms of economic and instrumental interests, but also that we attend to the contexts in which images of gender arise. I would call these contexts, at least in terms of the symbolics of gender, narratives of sexual difference. Fully unfolding the meaning of gender in any given narrative may demand that we learn to, as Gayatri Spivak (1990) calls it, "inhabit" a text and begin to under-

stand how symbolism works without relying upon an "outside" of reference.

Following metaphors of gender, being alert to points of ellipsis, or simply by attending to the rhetoric of the text, feminists from a variety of disciplines have begun to unravel a number of questions at stake in sexual difference. It does not appear that sexual difference answers to universal nature but rather is conditioned by history (Laqueur 1990). Any apparently universal quality indicated through gender images does not harken to any originary corporeal necessity, as in the sexual appetites of men indicating prehistoric breeding exigencies. Rather such platitudes and images defer to certain social/symbolic claims, such as epistemology. Thus, if a woman's body symbolizes the plentitude of nature rather reliably throughout Western history, we need not resort to the mechanics of reproduction and to our fantasies about their primal and definitive impact (as in sociobiology). Instead we might examine the function of the idea of nature in Western philosophy and in reigning attitudes about self and world. It is in these arenas that we can most fully comprehend what characterizations of gender reflect.[1]

The cultural mandates placed upon gender cover an enormous amount of territory, from the economic sphere and the political arena to questions of philosophy, religion, authority, power, developmental stages, processes of cognition. Within psychology, for instance, there is a strong division between those who would privilege hard data over its soft counterpart. The connotation of hard and soft as masculine and feminine respectively is, in the United States, self-evident. A current economic expression for being in debt, "being in the hole," once referred to the sexual act. Upon hearing the metaphors of gender that appear in so many discourses, we begin to realize the culture's investment in sexuality. **It is an investment that extends beyond making babies to the question of making subjects.** The extent to which gender permeates social relations renders Freud's imputed pansexualism very meek and mild-mannered.[2]

In order to analyze the means by which gender meanings are generated within narratives, we must, for methodological reasons, look to the rules that govern the manner in which language, that is, words or signifiers, combine to produce coherent meanings, create new meanings, and censor meanings.[3] The interplay of signifiers has been taken up as a basis of interpretation and meaning by various schools of deconstruction, postmodernism, and Lacanian psychoanalysis. In part, the interest of such schools is directed toward the manner in which the operation of symbolism itself can point the way to opening up a narrative. In part, their interest is directed towards the undermining of the traditional Western ontology of being by indicating its submission to the effects of language or writing. For both of these reasons, a number of feminists have been attracted to such approaches even if their reading of genders risks being reactionary at points.

For the most part, at least within psychology, contemporary theories on the nature of signification, with their impact upon feminism, have been incorporated through concepts labelled "postmodern." Although there are many components to the postmodern approach, it appears that postmodern thinking is a particularly astute articulation of some viable feminist strategies within psychology and the social sciences in general. Deploying the tools of postmodernism, feminism within psychology has inaugurated the deconstruction of gender and sexuality and is moving away from a conception of gender compatible with an universalistic empiricism, one that is more attuned to questions of difference and subjectivity (Allen and Baber 1992).

As with all good ideas, feminism's initial contact with postmodernism has produced some excesses. These excesses are starting to be addressed in the field of literary criticism and women's studies. Psychology is not so far along in its love affair with the postmodern paradigm. Nonetheless, there appear to me to be some fairly significant issues that might be considered before we take gender down the primrose path of its contextual articulations.

First, we might want to conceptualize the profound effect of symbols on subjectivity. This is where the French psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan began when he inquired as to the nature of the "talking cure." In the talking cure, the therapist does not check the references of her client's speech. She works within the weave of language itself. By the same token, postmodernism allows us to conceptualize the power of symbols on their own turf, not by virtue of their reference or their subordination to a "metanarrative." The initial question then of the marriage of psychology, feminism, and postmodernism is an examination of the radicality of the symbol.

Secondly, a more specifically feminist question arises. This question asks why is it that images of gender and sexuality so frequently seep through to other symbolic systems such as economics (Foucault 1986). The vernacular of such ulterior systems seem unable to resist sexual metaphors; the expression, "making it" is a contemporary example of this ambiguous terrain. Are we referring to financial success or a standard sexual practice when we use this phrase?

The two questions posed above do not constitute the only ones that postmodernism poses to a feminist or psychological application, but they are rather important topics. Both revolve around an explication of the latent structural relationship between gender, identity and representation. Clearly, if gender is dependent upon a society's epistemological orientation, we are, in a sense, in a doubled investigation. We must not only perceive the radicality of symbolism as it impacts gender. We must equally dis-entangle how the structure of symbolism itself is founded on the images of gender, i.e. where does human desire interpellate itself within the processes of symbolism and to what degree is this desire "engendered" through sexual difference. Feminist psychologists have shown a keen awareness of gender's relationship to representation in their interrogation of the subject-object relationship. Obviously, any investigation of representation must begin in an idea of its two fundamental terms, ones which reach across sexual identity and the impasses of gender.

Within developmental psychology, Carol Gilligan (1982) has pursued an understanding of feminine identity that diverges sharply from the positioning of the masculine subject. She has brought to our attention the specious grounds of supposing that there is a standard subjectivity that possesses universal forms of psychological functioning. Her theory, in spite of its middle-class bias, has cast the putatively neutered subject of psychology as most definitively masculine. A masculine identity maintains certain relations to the objective world while a feminine identity maintains other types of relations. Postmodern thinking may take us even further into this critique of masculinity and thus even further into the nuances of subject-object relations (Moi 1989). Postmodernism would postulate there is no subject without reference to the other, no identity without difference. In fact, this paradigm would go so far as to posit that the concept of identity whether it is feminine or masculine has been misconceived. Identity is a prop to withstand the effects of difference. Both masculine and feminine identities circle around the quagmire of identity versus difference.

Although I think that feminism in psychology is quite pleased with the new interpretative tools provided by the deconstruction of identity, the ideas of postmodernism, and the new emphasis on textual analysis, I do not think we have fully come to terms with postmodernism's uncompromising reconceptualization of the subject, including the subject that exists after emancipation. I want to examine this subject as revealed in identity, being, and desire, and consider identity, being and desire in the terms offered by representation.

In order to articulate the conundrum of representation as it resides in sexual difference, I will allude to a Lacanian acrostic presented in "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason since Freud" (Lacan 1977, p.151). In this essay, Lacan provides two diagrams to indicate the relationship between human being and the signifier. The first, a variation of a Saussurian formula, is an innocuous picture of a tree with the word "tree" appended to it. The word, "tree" is the signifier and Lacan puts it on top of a

picture of a tree. The latter stands for the idea or the referent that is the tree. The two terms are separated by a bar or line. You might imagine the relationship as not confined to a correlation between a word and an idea or a word and a thing. Instead you might consider it as indicating the relationship between you and your name.[4] The signifier "tree" and whatever a tree is are not intrinsically tied, a bar separates the two. In other words, the signifier is arbitrarily imposed. You might have noticed this incommensurability when you have asked yourself, "who am I" or "what do they want of me" when you are asked to be a man or a woman or a psychologist, i.e. whenever you are asked to match the imputation of a signifier. It is symbolism that introduces this line of inquiry for the human subject. It is symbolism that gives the subject something other than herself to become. This is a blessing in that it allows a human to change vis a vis the elementary structures of communication. It is also a curse because we never get where the other of the signifier has placed us.

Although the symbol tree and the actual tree are not related, it is necessary to act as if they are. This ploy by language is especially important for us humans. Let us say that for the sake of possessing the possibility of communication, of expressing ourselves, of getting what we need and want, that we will generally operate from the "a tree is a tree" point of view (Apollon 1991). The ideal or referent that is guaranteed by an agreement in language is not essential in terms of the world of objects. The supposition of a symbolic system directly tied to referential reality is essential in terms of a prop for the subject, the prop of identity. Can the signifier tree ever reach the real tree? Can we ever truly be ourselves? Both of these questions are questions of identity.

The state of affairs inflicted upon our quest for identity is more radically represented in Lacan's second acrostic. It depicts two plain doors lined up side by side. Above each door sits one of two nominations, men or ladies. These "bathroom" doors are also separated from their respective signifiers by an impassable bar, but the situation is more complex. First, the doors are exactly alike while the distinction in signification is critical - recall, for example, the

intrepid boy claiming a sexed identity through his first solitary visit to the men's room. Secondly, the signifiers, "men" and "ladies" do not, in the least, refer to the doors or even to what is behind them (which are toilets). Rather they refer to the users of the facilities. The pictorial analogy implies that language and its structure answer to the subject, not to the object. More accurately, in the use of language (the facilities) the subject as well as the object is situated both within an overriding symbolic matrix and as the vehicle of his or her identity.[5] Further, in this diagram, the arbitrary relation between signifier and signified becomes even more powerfully evident. To what does a signifier refer? According to this diagram, it refers to another signifier. What is the ladies' door? It is not the men's door and vice-versa.

Far from there being a signified for the signifier, there is only difference.[6] What is missing from the two bathroom doors is a place for identity. The analogy offered by the acrostic suggests that language is a place of difference, not of identity. To salvage an identity out of language, we reify words. These reifications are merely words that have been stabilized by agreement or by aleatory processes of historical usage. Thus the status of language is a matter of contrivance, an effect of arbitrary but necessary law. The purely conventional source of identity, as stabilized meaning, does not distract from our investment in it, however. People marry using mere words, they pay X amount per hour to use words, they kill each other in the name of this or that. Witness, as my final example, the hyperbolic worry over public restrooms by opponents of the Equal Rights Amendment.

Bathrooms literally proclaim the capricious nature of language that is kept under control by the law. As subjected to language, one occupies the throne of identity (words mean what they say) through a cultural agreement. This cultural agreement suppresses the quicksand of difference. In order to stabilize this fissure within symbolic machinations, we must maintain some illusion of an identity supported by this binary of opposition, man and women. For Lacan,

this coup in language is the achievement of masculinity - making a man out of a body.

Notice here what has transpired under the auspices of gender. Gender is the provision of a set of fantasies that simultaneously organizes the body and maintains certain cultural structures. Gender does not answer to that body but rather to the structure of symbolism. Identity becomes a legal contrivance, as one can surmise through the historical and arbitrary exclusion of the other qua woman from the public sector. The masculine trick then is to turn the ruse of linguistic law into an achievement of a sexed identity. Bruce Fink (1991) puts the masculine position in these terms, "Men are wholly alienated within language" (p. 66).

This characterization of the male function is what is meant by the often heard equation of recent French feminism that proclaims the phallus as a fallacy; masculinity does not derive from the body, but from a prosthetic of the body which marks our symbolic alienation/ castration. Men, insofar as they are men, are those beings whose identities find their sustenance in the field of symbolic and cultural effects. A phallic identification means that one occupies a certain position in relationship to the operation of representational systems. One buys into the veracity of such cultural systems; one defends the (from another position) fabricated causes of the Symbolic Order and one's ego depends on this inherently fragile cultural edifice. More simply, the phallus is a dildo.

Mary Gergen (1992, p.10), in her study of autobiographies of famous men and women, finds a striking contrast in accounts of male and female embodiment. These differences affirm the pivotal effect of an identification with the symbolic order for masculinity:

> The woman's sense of identity remains closely tied to her physical condition. It is not so much that the body is used instrumentally - as a means to some other end outside the body. Rather, to be in a certain bodily condition is to "be oneself."
>
> Summing up the narratives of embodiment of adult years, we find that a man's bodily self fades even

more into the background as career interests expand. The career is typically tied to ideas and ideals, power and prestige, and not to corporeality.

Of course, once you have left the domain of biology, being a man or a woman is not an anatomical denotation; it is an expression of those elementary forms of subjective identity that are congruent with our existence in culture.

Women, as woman, assume a different position in relationship to the representational systems of a given culture. If masculinity is the sacrifice that guarantees the linguistic/symbolic edifice, woman would be the fragility of that edifice. If man is a being of the word, the so called "opposite sex" represents the moment of its failure. What is the nature of this failure within language and its importation into images of the feminine gender?

From the point of view of language, humans are just one signifier among many. Language, a system not accountable to being, would just as easily speak us as be spoken by us. One might note that in slips, arguments with intimates and in dreams, the indifference of symbolism to consciousness is glaringly evident. To come to terms with language allows us to find a self in the word "I" and to assume a sense of agency. This is the fantasy of the neutral but actually masculine subject. Otherwise an "I" is a grammatical shifter, subordinate to the signifiers that follow, empty in itself.

Language as difference is an affront to singularity and agency. It is a sliding, a wound on the edifice of identity and alien to sovereign consciousness. When we accede to language we realize ourselves as speaking beings but we are simultaneously condemned to incompletion. To be incomplete means that one is lacking. We typically think that to be lacking is in some sense to be deficient. At the same time, to lack is a pre-condition to desire.

In the conjunction of desire and deficiency, we find the other position bequeathed by language, the position inhabited by the category woman. The position of desire affords femininity universal attractiveness, regardless of the sex or sexual preference of the admirer. Beauty, however, turns to bimbo as the connection be-

tween deficiency and desire is negotiated in narratives and images of women. Western Civilization provides perpetual testimony to women's imputed inferiority even while it idealizes her. The tandem idealization and misogyny, historically covariant, (Bloch 1987) is an oxymoronic constellation. However, it acquires a touch of clarity when read through the impasses of representation.

Traditionally, a degree of symbolic ineptitude is attributed to the feminine sex, an ineptitude positively correlated with the health of her body and reproductive organs. In the nineteenth century, medical and psychological experts argued against the widespread admission of women to universities because of the dangers it posed to their ovaries. Contemporary society is more subtle about such characterizations than in the past. Still, in our continued indifference to childcare issues which symbolically bifurcates maternity from public life, in the insistent recuperation of a woman's body as purely erotic in sexual harassment, in our fetishization of the smell of a woman from feminine hygiene to perfume, we continue to replay positional divisions within the process of symbolizing. Woman is body, the pre-symbolized. Man is the operative agent of cultural law.

The masculine solution, a working hypothesis for the public sphere, is the illusion that identity overcomes difference. Masculine identity is enfranchised by the Symbolic and is supposedly trustworthy in relationship to it. A man's relationship to the Symbolic is such that he must be trusted to "die for the flag." In this act, he indicates his willingness to be that which sacrifices living being to the perpetuation of a symbolic order. The association between masculinity and death noted in the quotation below reflects the overriding significance of the symbolic order for male identity:

> If there is a basic difference between the sexes, other than differences associated with reproductivity, it is that women as a group have not willingly faced death in violent conflict. This fact, perhaps more than any other, explains why men have sometimes become the dominant sex (Sanday, 1981, pp. 210-211).

The first reading of Sanday's observation would suggest that men are simply more brutish - an obvious but perhaps incomplete insight for feminist theory. Equally significant is the context of Sanday's postulated sexual difference. She is discussing the degree to which women will "go to battle" over the question of their rights. Such rights are generally accorded through social/symbolic recognition. Thus implicit to this quotation is a notable difference in the way each sex responds to the quest for symbolic authorization. Do you give up your "living being" for power in the Symbolic Order? I would read this cultural valuation of death in two ways. First as an instrumental ascendence that echoes the, so to speak, triumph of culture over nature, i.e. we will die for the greater social order. I would also read the privileging of dying as a testament to our symbolic alienation; a mark of culture as the denial of the living body and the dominance of symbolism and signifying within human relations. It is a movement from a bio-logic to a psycho-logic and is a most tenuous usurpation.

In order to make such claims upon being, our investment in language must avoid the confrontation with its arbitrary foundation. This is a tortuous path for that which undermines language (difference) is also that which provides its evocative and creative possibilities. Although we like to be "who we say we are," we would hate for language's relation to being to come to an end in absolute identity. Again the dualism arises: deficiency or desire. By repressing difference within language, the masculine assumes a position of agency. Language does not slide out from under this position. Rather consciousness is in command of speech. Women's reputation as eternal gossips represents the inverse fear, that is, that one's speech is really at the behest of the proliferation of language itself. The defect within symbolism thus appears at the point of difference.[7]

Linked to the attribution of a defect is the feminine's association with desire. As defective and desirable, the feminine is associated with difference. Difference is never ending; one is never done; there is always something more. Thus, stitched into the nature of lan-

guage is the origin of a specifically human desire. As difference, woman becomes the chaste and unattainable, the ideal. She is the surplus of language, hidden behind its veil. As ideal, of course, the woman plays out the triad of desire, difference, and idealization.[8] Equally probable, woman is characterized as uncontrollably rapacious, deep inside a slut. Here the lack in the symbolic order reveals its chaotic core (within the structure of phallocentric fantasy). In either case, it is woman as a category that mediates the transformation of difference into desire.

Obviously, as two sides in the impasses of representation, woman and man are each other's weaknesses, with the latter, by any definition possessing the most power. At the same time, paradoxically, the feminine possesses the greatest threat. As ideal categories, one sex possess the Symbolic power, that is authority, while the other exposes the lack that undergirds that authority. This is one of the most terrifying complementaries within phallocentric cultures. Thus, once we factor in the role of gender in structuring representation, the agenda for liberation becomes exceeding complex.

This project is complicated by the fact that gender not only imprints logistical difficulties within symbolizing, it provides its own quaint solutions. We saw the structure of sexual impasse resolved by sexuality itself in the banal imagination of Anheuser-Busch. In order to encounter difference within the domain of its incarnation, we counter the impossibility of sexuality (as an effect of signifying) in terms of the desire to be **one**. In this manner, we overcome the question of difference within language insofar as its threatens identity (being one). Having sex for ontological reasons spawns an array of sexual images. I will name two. The abyss of the cleavage is answered by the ample plentitude of the breasts that provide its occasion. Both are attractive. On the other side, there is the absolutely terrifying triad of penis, qua gun, qua enforcer that re-enacts the violence of culture and its imposition of law.

When I discuss signifiers of gender, I am not unraveling various socially conditioned symbolizations of sexual difference. One can understand these types of signifiers of woman as serving ulterior

ends like the economic exploitation of women. Such ulterior ends are operative; there is no question on this point. However, I want to draw your attention to a very particular function of gender, a function that accounts for the pervasiveness of its imagery in every relationship of social mediation. In other words, we can't be socialized without first being symbolized. Further, since symbolizing actually always involves difference, not an identity, gender is already wrapped in the process of symbolization before it is called upon to hold up given social relationships.

If we accord a degree of priority to the symbolics of gender then we must examine the role sexual difference plays in the processes of representation. We must acknowledge that symbolizing is not neutral but always learned through sexual difference. In this odd ritual of representation and gender, man and woman occupy historically inscribed positions which answer to the nature of the subject itself. Identity with the Symbolic Order is man's frail support for his existence. The category imagined as woman escapes the symbolic directive but denies her any number of social privileges. Thus, at some level, woman incarnates the limits of our representational efforts; more radically, the position of the feminine presents the limit of masculine existence (as misogynists like to tell us). Is man, as Slavoj Zizek (1991) playfully suggests, a woman who thinks she (symbolically) exists.

Notes

[1] I am not implying here, however, that the body does not offer resistance, but rather that we know the body as a resistance to the Symbolic not in and of itself. When looking at gender as a symbol, the body is not the source but the vehicle of a meaning.

[2] Feminists of the postmodern persuasion within psychology have been reluctant to entertain a Freudian contribution to their efforts. This reluctance is maintained despite what I perceive as Freud's utility and the shared territories of the two inquiries: 1) pansexualism, with an equal tendency to expand the notion of sexuality and/or to get reductionistic about it. 2) gender as an imposition; for Freud we take up gender in the guise of a threat or as a deprivation (paraphrased from Lacan 1977a). 3) a relationship between gender and representation. At this time the joint venture between psychoanalysis and feminism -for feminists in psychology - has been carried out through object-relations theory. The aversion to Freud proper may be attributable to America's rendition of Freud that portrays him as brazenly reductionistic. This is an unfortunate trend in American psychology. In Europe, Freud has been very fruitfully employed in the service of feminism for nearly two decades.

[3] Lacanian thinking, for example, highlights the role of punctuation in determining meaning. In a sentence, each word awaits its successor and the finality of punctuation to attain its complete meaning. Thus meaning, insofar as it depends upon the processes of language, is never pinned down absolutely. We can always re-punctuate or re-open any chain of signifiers if significance is only granted retroactively. This intervention of language upon human existence is a great boon to therapists but the indeterminacy it implies is not the road to ontological security. The latter difficulty is, as I will suggest later, taken up in the construction of gender.

More important for a symbolic interpretation of gender is the axis of metaphor. Metaphor is simply the substitution of one word for another. Through substitution, different networks of signifiers are spliced together allowing for new meaning. In the same movement, a word and its context can be suppressed as the new substitution gains ascendence as a literal meaning. A metaphor is not merely ornamental. One can reasonably argue that language builds itself through the process of metaphoric substitution.

[4] In fact, we answer better to our signifiers than do most trees, but that is another question.

[5] This is commonplace knowledge in a therapeutic listening to narrative. One does not take the client utterances in terms of objective reality alone but equally one must be attuned to the psychic world that is being narrated.

[6] A binary opposition is the maximum degree of identity that can be imposed upon this scene. We recognize this stabilization in the permeations around what we call the opposite sexes.

[7] Thus when feminism attempts to articulate feminine empowerment, it must navigate within the tricky dynamics of identity, difference, agency, and their enchained associations with one gender or another.

[8] In Greece of course, young "passive" boys got the call and the gender-representation complex was more splintered although the association with passive appears rather unshakable.

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Homework: A Reassessment of Scholarship on Homemakers and Housework with Implications for Future Study

by

Meg Wilkes Karraker &
Sue Hammons-Bryner

Except for a brief burst of interest during the early 1970s (for example, Lopata 1971; Oakley 1974), housework and homemakers have received little attention in sociology. In view of the continuing decline in the number of married women who are full-time homemakers,[1] such a low level of interest may not seem surprising. This situation is unfortunate, however, when we consider the extent to which the study of homemakers and housework can inform the sociological study of change, family, gender, stratification, and work.

In this paper we assess the state of scholarship regarding women who pursue domestic work in their homes (i.e., homemakers) with an eye toward synthesizing implications for theory, research, and teaching. We categorize the literature on homemakers and housework into six areas:

The changing status of homemakers
The increased role conflict of homemakers
The social psychology of homemaking
Job characteristics of housework
The importance of class, ethnicity, and race
Displaced homemakers

In addition, literature exists regarding the history of homemaking (e.g., Sklar 1973; Strasser 1982); domestic service occupations (e.g., Auman and Conry 1985; Wrigley 1991); and on men whose primary occupation is homemaking (e.g., Klauda 1991). These bodies of literature are not the focus of our paper.

The Changing Status of Homemakers

Although many women are full-time homemakers during some portion of their lives—usually at the beginning of their childbearing years and during the retirement years—the proportion of women engaged in full-time homemaking continues to decline as more women become employed. This decline is especially dramatic among married women: the percentage of married women in the labor force has risen from 12.3 in 1960 to 30.5 in 1988 (U. S. Department of Commerce 1991b).

Researchers have ignored or discounted the changing social position of homemakers. One reason for this disregard is that full-time, exclusive homemakers in American society do not fit into standard indexes of occupational prestige. The job characteristics of housework are similar to those of other occupations, which usually are low in prestige and most notably include private household and other service work. One can argue that some of the job characteristics of home work parallel those of higher-prestige occupations, including teachers, managers, and artists.

Further complicating the discussion of homemakers' status is the complexity of their socioeconomic status, as generally defined. Acker (1973) addresses these issues in her article as assumptions about women and stratification. Although we agree with Acker's criticisms of the sociology of stratification, the assumptions (e.g., that the family's social position is determined by that of the male head of the household) draw attention to the reality that homemakers may be members of a household or family from any social stratum.

How can social status be assigned to homemakers with some degree of accuracy? The composite social status and social role configuration of the full-time homemaker wife of the professional is clearly different from that of the single mother who has decided to pursue higher education while maintaining a household. An individual's entire social status (and esteem) is closely tied not only to household wealth but to personally earned income. In the case of women whose occupation is exclusively homemaking, that earned income is zero. The absence of nondependent entitlement to pensions and social security is yet another indicator of depreciated status.

A desire for higher general social status and esteem, as well as a desire for higher economic status, can motivate a woman to exit a full-time, exclusive homemaker role. Throughout this paper we will quote from an ethnographic study conducted by Hammons-Bryner (1991) at "Rural College." "Denise," one subject in that study,

expressed this aspiration poignantly as she reflected on receiving the most prestigious academic award at "Rural College":

> You don't get awards keeping house...I wanted a separate identity from wife and mother. I wanted something for me, apart from my family (Hammons-Bryner 1991, pp. 151-52).

We are struck by the distance which our discipline has not come since Acker's criticisms two decades ago. Our review of the changing status of homemakers suggests that fruitful theoretical and methodological work could begin by focusing on two areas: (1) the impact of the changing status of homemakers on identity, especially esteem, formation and (2) the conceptualization of social status for full-time homemakers.

The Increased Role Conflict of Homemakers

The role sets of women occupying the homemaking role are remarkably diverse. Yet at a time when even Blondie has embarked on a career (Young and Drake 1991), sociologists seem slow to follow the popular media in examining either the lives of women who have exited full-time homemaking for careers or those of women who have elected to pursue full-time homemaking instead of the professional careers for which they were trained (e.g., Ehlert 1991).

The women studied by Lopata (1971) in the Chicago area in the 1960s and by Oakley (1974) in England in the 1970s were faced with the difficult choice between employment and homemaking. Yet because of the dramatic increases in the number of married women who are employed, especially the number of employed women with children, the role conflict inherent in the lives of women balancing home work with outside roles touches a greater proportion of women now than ever before. Not only are employed homemakers experiencing such role conflict but the increasing numbers of women entering higher education after marriage and/

or the arrival of children are experiencing role conflict as well. For such women, establishing priorities often means

> no time for home work, no time for kids,
> no time for the house, clothes stacked
> to the ceiling...I might be able to let
> my housework slide for a little while
> because if the kids need me worse, that's
> what I have to do (Hammons-Bryner 1991,
> p. 164).

For such a meager reward, women juggling home, school, or work pay a high cost in deferred or missed educational achievement and personal satisfaction.

A significant number of women (and men) feel strongly that at the least, mothers should care for young children in the home. In the words of "Toni," a nineteen-year-old woman attending "Rural College,"

> I disagree with leaving babies with
> a caretaker. I will go back to work
> [after having a baby], but the first
> year of a child's life [is] one of the
> most precious. I do want to be there
> to see the first steps and hear the
> first words. I would feel cheated if
> I were not there (Hammons-Bryner 1991,
> p. 155)

Younger women hold two beliefs: 1) the best child care provider is the mother in the home and 2) participation in child care is among the rewards to which women feel they are entitled. Although Toni plans to work outside the home, she adheres to that most basic element of a patriarchal system: the sex-typing of child care responsibilities and an ideology which has succeeded in persuading women that remaining at home is a sex-typed right.

Toni almost certainly underestimates the cumulative consequences of her decision for her occupational status attainment over

her lifetime, but she recognizes the price in family stress and role overload:

> I realize that having two working parents in a household is somewhat of a challenge, but I feel that everything worth having is worth a little effort (Hammons-Bryner 1991, p. 155).

Toni and other women like her appear to assume that "each person [in a marriage] must make sacrifices and compromise" (Hammons-Bryner 1991, p. 155), but they rarely evaluate the balance of those sacrifices. Whenever Toni refers to specific sacrifices, they are all made by women. She does not mention any possible sacrifices by men.

A woman's employment status is the most accurate predictor of the amount of time she spends on housework (Berardo et al., 1987). A husband's participation in household tasks increases somewhat with his wife's income (Nyquist et al. 1985), but a wife's employment has little effect on the division of labor in the home (Broman 1988; Maret and Finlay 1984). Describing this situation as "the second shift," Hochschild (1992) writes that the exodus of women from the home to the workplace has not been accompanied by a new view of marriage and work which would ease this transition. Most workplaces have remained inflexible in the face of the changing needs of workers (female as well as male) with families. Further, most men have yet to adapt to the changes in women's roles. Hochschild cites the disparity between the change in women's roles and the absence of change elsewhere in society as a case of profound structural strain.

Study of productivity has a long tradition in the sociology of work (see, for example, Miller 1981; Tausky 1978), most notably beginning with the Hawthorne Studies (Mayo 1933) and continuing with the current heated discussions of American versus Japanese workers ("Are We Really That Lazy?" 1992). Housework, however, appears to have been exempted from scholarly consideration of the quality of work performance.

Women of the 1990s, in contrast, are aware of variations in the quality of housework performance. Comparisons with the standards set by their mothers appear to be particularly invidious. In the 1990s, while juggling higher education, employment, child rearing, and housework, the daughters often feel that they do not come close to the previous generation's quality of performance. In the words of Denise, whose mother was a meticulous housekeeper,

> I'm busy with my son [who has cystic fibrosis] from the time he gets out of school until 8:00 p.m. Then I start [her emphasis] on supper (Hammons-Bryner 1991, p. 74).

This review has sensitized us to the need for more research on the different processes through which women enter and exit the homemaking role and the conflicts homemakers experience concerning homemaking tasks (especially child care and housekeeping standards). The mechanisms through which women manage conflicts (and dissonance) as they make role shifts and as they manage these conflicts would be of particular interest, even beyond the study of homemaking.

The Social Psychology of Homemaking

Gove and Tudor (1973) reported that women's traditional role (that is, as homemaker) contributes to the higher rate of certain types of mental illness among women. Additional research has focused on personality traits (e.g., Erdwins, Tyer, and Mellinger 1980), employment attitudes (e.g., Stake and Rogers 1989), and political opinions (e.g., Andersen and Cook 1985).

Although women may believe that their work is important, research shows that women (both working-class and middle-class) find housework itself unsatisfying (Hochschild 1992). As the proportion of women electing the role of full-time homemaker declines, the devaluation of this work continues. Commercial housekeeping and child care services continue to grow, but offer substandard wages to their employees. Furthermore, the popular typifica-

tions of homemaking tasks as boring and trivial has rendered homemaking a topic to be ignored by social psychologists.

The denigration of home work parallels the denigration of the work of volunteers and the retired in American society. Those who do not earn wages may be perceived as sitting at home and doing nothing. This image contrasts with the very real "leisure gap" that exists for women who work one shift at a place of paid employment and a "second shift" at home (Hochschild 1992).

The cultural context contributes to higher rates of certain types of mental illness among homemakers. We suspect that the trend toward fewer full-time homemakers has only exacerbated negative attitudes toward homemaking and has increased the negative social psychological consequences for homemakers. We suspect that because of continuing societal ambivalence regarding women's proper role priorities inside and outside the home, both the women who pursue homemaking and those who pursue employment full-time are likely to be defined as deviant, depending on the situation. Full-time homemakers are deviant because they labor at tasks that are perceived as boring, repetitive, and unimportant and they do so without pay! Employed women are deviant because they labor for money instead of for the love of their families.

Because of the extent to which homemaking is increasingly a statistically atypical pursuit, social construction of the identity of a person who chooses or otherwise occupies such a role merits further research. For example, we wonder how homemakers compare to other women and to men on alienation, happiness, self-esteem, and other social psychological characteristics. Perhaps insights from the sociology of deviance apply here.

In a similar vein, we would like to see more research on the impact of the homemaker role on the quality of life in families of women occupying that role. As noted earlier, the movement of women from the home to the workplace has not been accompanied by a new view of the links between work and family. How do families cope with the structural strain resulting from workplaces that have failed to respond to changes in women's roles? We might surmise that

women who are employed part-time have the most satisfied families. We speculate that only the unavailability of interesting, honored, secure, well-paid part-time work has limited women's election of this option.

Job Characteristics of Housework

In response to criticisms that sociologists have failed to consider women's labor at home as work, some sociologists have extended conceptualizations of work to include housework. Although this area includes some rather tedious statistics on (for example) who uses the microwave oven (Oropesa 1991), some of the research promises to link the more physical dimensions of the homemaker's job to social and psychological functioning (e.g., Reisine, Goodenow, and Grady 1987).

Surely certain classic conceptualizations about other jobs could be extended to women's work at home. Durkheim's ([1893]1964) research on division of labor, Marx's ([1844]1960) on alienation, Douglass's ([1845]1990) on slavery, and Parkinson's (1962) on the links between work and time are untapped sources of illumination of the social structure of women's work at home. The failure of sociologists to apply concepts from Durkheim, Marx, Douglass, Parkinson, and others illustrates our contention that a double standard applies to the employment of sociological concepts to explain the world of men and the world of women. A similar complaint has been raised by others, including Bernard (1981).

Durkheim, for example, posits that increased specialization accompanies societal change. Yet even as the self-sufficiency of American families evaporates, American society holds to the ideal of the wife/mother who does all tasks well, with no subcontracting (i.e., specialization).

Marx argues that workers who repetitively perform routine task segments suffer from alienation. Yet just as women are glorified in American society for sacrificing for their families, they are castigated if they rebel against being caught in the assembly line of cook, clean, and cook again.[2] This arrangement is a peculiar variety of false

consciousness, but it certainly benefits a capitalistic economic system and bolsters a patriarchal family system.

Passive resistance, a concept drawn from studies of slavery, may be applicable to theorizing about homemakers. Women may set artificially high standards for housework tasks as a mechanism to avoid further work. A woman scrubbing a floor is obviously busy and may be less likely to be interrupted by a family member to perform another task. Some full-time homemakers may choose to perform most major cleaning tasks in the presence of their husbands, with the implication that work not seen is work not appreciated. If he does not comment, she may call it to his attention.

Parkinson (1962) maintained that work expands to fill the time allotted to complete it. Although "Parkinson's Law" offers one explanation for the reduction in average hours spent in housework by employed women, an alternative explanation may be that reduced hours result from greater efficiency or lesser effectiveness (for example, lower standards of cleanliness). This result would seem to be associated with working outside the home; a woman would have to organize her time better. That is, it is not an alternative to Parkinson's Law but a corollary: less time is available for housework.

Employed women use cleaning and laundry services more often, place their children in child care institutions earlier and more often, rely more heavily on convenience foods, and dine out more often than full-time homemakers. Critics may blame social problems on women's reduced commitment to the home and homemaking, and particularly on outside child care. We are struck by the extent to which distasteful, low-skill, repetitive tasks (which might be viewed as "make-work" and which are targets for streamlining, elimination, or contracting out in bureaucratic organizations) are elevated to sacred rites[3] in women's home work.

The Importance of Class, Ethnicity, and Race

Conspicuously absent from the literature on homemakers is scholarship that acknowledges the diversity among homemakers by class, ethnicity, or race. Although social science research and literary

collections have included some discussion of women of color as domestic servants (for example, Anonymous 1972), our initial impression is that in homemaking, as in other areas, social class, ethnic, and race differences have been largely ignored.

Race is an important factor in self-definitions of femininity and in self-valuation of gender-appropriate role behavior. For example, stereotypical division of family roles appears to be more likely in white families than in African-American families (Broman 1988; Maret and Finlay 1984; Taylor et al. 1991). Both popular writers and social scientists emphasize the difference in roles that black and white women have played in society and in their families (Karraker 1989). In the words of a black clinical psychologist,

> The traditional role does not exist for the black woman. Historically, the black woman has been prepared to assume a responsibility the white woman has not... Accounting for some of the nontraditional behavior may be an internalization of the necessity to provide for her family... (Gump 1978, p. 351).

Black women's self-definition (including their definitions of femininity) reflects a past of economic insecurity, a historic reliance of black families and communities on women's labor and leadership, and the dominant society's prejudices and expectations regarding black women (Collins 1986; Karraker 1989). Black women may see less conflict than white women in being independent, self-reliant, and work-oriented as well as compassionate, nurturant, and sensitive (Weitzman 1984).

Black wives are more likely than white wives to expect and accept employment (Macke 1982; Scanzoni 1977). The concept of androgyny (little studied concerning racial differences; see Cook 1985) may define the apparent contradictions in the character of black women's gender roles and their success at performing multiple roles with less conflict than their white counterparts (Karraker 1989).

Billingsley (1968), Engram (1980), Gurin and Gaylord (1976), and Pinkney (1975) contend that black Americans are a subsystem of the larger society: they are subject to the same expectations but face additional obstacles in achieving those expectations. In other words, these writers argue that social class position, not race, determines differences in social roles (Karraker 1989). Some research among white ethnics supports the contention that race differences in gender-role orientation diminish with movement into the middle class (Howe 1976; Lopreato 1970). Given the recent debate over the "significance of race" (Wilson 1987), we would like to see more research on this intersection between class and ethnicity. We note that black feminist sociology has been particularly influential in focusing attention on the "intersections of multiple structures of domination" (Collins 1986, p. S19).

Displaced Homemakers

Like nonwhite women, the homemaker who loses financial support (through divorce, separation, desertion, or her spouse's death or disability) has received little attention from sociologists. (For an exception, see Crossman and Edmonson 1985.)

The number of displaced homemakers (15.6 million in 1989) grows by 200,000 each year, according to the National Displaced Homemakers Network, a Washington-based lobbying and activist organization. Among widowed and divorced women, fifty-seven percent are poor or nearly poor. Cheryl Henderson, head of the Network, warns that "homemaking is becoming a high-risk occupation"; 22 million married homemakers risk displacement if their husbands die or divorce them (Eskey 1990, p. 1J). Only a man stands between the full-time homemaker and poverty.

Forty-five percent of displaced homemakers have less than a high school education; they need education, job training, and housing to be economically self-sufficient (Eskey 1990). These homemakers and their families are at particular risk for downward mobility and poverty. Even women with higher education share these economic risks, should they become displaced. Yet because of

the persistence of wage inequity[4], even women who have remained employed during their marriages are likely to experience relative, if not absolute, deprivation.

In a study of the role of resources in displaced homemakers' assumption of the provider role, Crossman and Edmondson (1985, p. 465) found that "past employment experience did not preclude displacement." Certainly, understanding of both the antecedents and the consequences of displacement would benefit from additional study.

Discussion

Study of the social worlds of men whose primary occupation is homemaking can sharpen awareness of several important issues, although this topic is not the focus of our paper. Male homemakers come to the role in a variety of ways. Some men increase their homemaking responsibilities after the end of a relationship in which another person filled the role expectations of the homemaker. In a series of articles on single men, Klauda (1991) reports that single men are more likely than single women to live in dependent relationships.[5] One man says he "had always left the cooking, cleaning, and bill-paying to his wife" (Klauda 1991, p. 14A). After his divorce, he moved in with a male friend and stayed there in exchange for cleaning the friend's house. In a later arrangement, the same man moved in with his girlfriend and assumed responsibilities for cooking, cleaning, and laundry. Other men become homemakers after unemployment or retirement. The variety of avenues to homemaking for men can focus attention on the heterogeneity among homemakers (including different role expectations, role performance, and social psychological adjustment).

Most important the comparison and the contrast between female and male homemakers provide an excellent opportunity to examine the social construction of homemaking. In the 1980s movie Mr. Mom, one of the comic scenes revolves around the predicament in which the protagonist, played by Michael Keaton: he finds his friendships and fills his leisure time (by playing cards) with the only

other adults at home during the day—all women. The ridicule directed toward men who do housework has two outcomes: 1) the social control of men and 2) the denigration of the work. The latter has far-reaching consequences for both the social construction of housework and the formation of self-esteem among women who engage in this work. The image of men doing housework (Dagwood wearing an apron, for example) is amusing precisely because housework is something that only women do.

With its stereotyped connections to femininity (and unmasculinity) and to exclusively same-sex networks of social relations, homemaking provides sociologists with a means of examining sexuality, friendship, group dynamics, and the extent to which the social organization of work is gendered in postmodern society. In that regard, we conclude, the sociology of home work (and much other work as well) should be viewed through a gender model, not through the traditional job model[6].

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The authors share equal responsibility for this work, order of authorship is arvitrary. Please direct correspondence to Hammons-Bryner.

Notes

[1] The percentage of women who are full-time homemakers—that is, those who are not in the labor force—decreased from 68.1 percent in 1960 to 42.2 percent in 1989 (U. S. Department of Commerce 1991a).

[2] Note such movies as "Woman under the Influence" and, more recently, "Thelma and Louise." Also, in the election of 1992, great media attention was devoted to "family values," and the cookie-baking skills of the wives of the nominees.

[3] To extend the metaphor, we recall a quotation from comedian Roseanne Barr Arnold: "I hate to be called a homemaker; I prefer 'domestic goddess.'"

[4] As of March 1990, the median annual income of women working year-round full-time was $18,778, 68 percent of men's median annual earnings of $27,430 (U.S. Department of Commerce 1991c).

[5] One of seven single men age twenty-five and older is living in a dependent relationship, compared to one of ten single women of that age (Klauda 1991).

[6] For a discussion of job versus gender models, see Feldberg and Glenn (1982).

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Harbinger of Violence: A Young Woman's First Kiss

by

Richard J. Alapack

When is violence in heterosexual adolescent relationships first encountered? When does the young female initially face sexual alienation in her interactions with males, or experience incipient victimhood? At what place does it become evident, experientially, that males (mis)understand her as a sexual object, someone to be 'taken'? The purpose of this report is to demonstrate that one place at which it happens is during the touch of her first 'real' adolescent kiss.

Context of the Research

This study emerged out of a comprehensive, phenomenologically oriented research project on adolescent relationships which has included studies of Adolescent First Love (Alapack 1984b), the Outlaw Relationship (Alapack 1975), Leaving Home (Alapack 1984a), and the Adolescent First Kiss (Alapack 1991). The finding of the First Kiss study promoted further inquiry into the incipient violence of the way it takes place. This study reports the results of a descriptive, qualitative pursuit of that theme.

Method

Since a phenomenologically oriented human scientific approach provides the conceptual foundation of this study, the method employed is descriptive/qualitative. In an attempt to get the story 'out of the horses' mouths', written protocols were gathered from fifty-seven females who responded to the following stimulus: "Describe your first 'real' adolescent kiss, the one which was not just a 'peck'." The subjects included eleven adolescents who were sixteen years old, twenty-seven first year college students and nine graduate students. Of the total number of respondents, twelve wrote narratives spliced with alienation or violence. Five of those agreed to cooperate in a qualitative research interview so that the written sketch of their experience might be elaborated and amplified. The average length of the interviews was ninety minutes.

Results

By the time the young woman anticipates or confronts her first kiss predicament she shows the effects of socialization along gender lines. Alarmingly, she is already oriented toward abuse. Already she has found herself blushing in the presence of the other-gendered person, often in response to sounds of 'wolf whistles' which accent her burgeoning sexuality, or to the 'once over look' or 'second glance' stares, which undress her or ravish her. Thus when first kiss is an issue, she has already experienced assault by masculine eyes. She has been rendered bodily vulnerable. The masculine glance has reduced her to 'prey', as if the very fact that her body is developing into a woman has turned her into 'fair game'. Her first kiss will reinforce her acquaintanceship with violence if it should turn out to be assaulting, revolting or an act of betrayal. Especially if the experience of being 'pawed' accompanies it, she is left raw. She is left primed, too, for further abuse.

Ambigious Anticipation

What is the meaning of the young female adolescent's anticipation of kissing? Previous research had shown that both genders, while still inexperienced in "the subtle and delicate art of smooching", await the first touch of lips both eagerly and with dread, and both are plagued with layer after layer of increasingly difficult and awkward questions (Alapack 1991, pg.50). But intergender differences glare.

To the male the kiss appears both as an 'insurmountable threshold', an 'important hurdle' or 'barrier' on the road to becoming an adult, and also as 'a baptism under fire', 'a true test under game conditions', 'a trial by whichever might burn the most, acid or flame!' Such descriptions evoke the image of a football player, with a case of the 'butterflies', awaiting the opening kickoff. For the young woman the ambiguity takes a different turn. In her case the answer to the question whether or not to kiss pivots around **desirability**. She is plagued by a thinly veiled agony concerning **his** response to **her** response to **his** overture. Some descriptions exemplify this anxiety:

"If I chicken out when he tries to kiss me, will he ever phone me or ask me out again?" "Will he consider me 'frigid' if I refuse?" Or might he "think I'm a 'cheap sleaze' if I should kiss back, especially if I steal the initiative?" "What will I do if he tries to 'tongue kiss' me, or wants 'to pet'?" "Mother says guys only want one 'thing'. Does he think a kiss is just first base, a brief stop on his way to a home run?" However she might act, she wonders "if the guy will put up a poster at school the next day proclaiming it." And she worries "what tales he might tell his pals in the locker room."

Reflection on the above descriptions indicates that even if the adolescent female might be 'colossally curious' about kissing, and supremely ready for it, still she basically is in an attitude of a **respondent**, of someone wanting to **please** or to **be pleasing**. Even if **she** should orchestrate the kiss, the meaning of it to **him** dominates her consciousness. An example: A female remembers being twelve years old, curious and romantic, but not yet passionate. At summer camp she "set up" the most popular male camper. Listen to her series of maneuvers: "One rainy day I was lying on the couch in the Recreation Hall reading a comic book, poised in such a way that he was bound to notice me." Later she manipulated him into an ambiguous conversation, "stilted but strangely different from our previous talks." When he escorted her to her cabin after the marshmallow roast, she "stepped up on step to subtly accommodate for the height differences." He kissed her. She "performed." "I found myself mentally stepping back, thinking: 'no rockets, fireworks, music or stars.' I had to fake enjoyment, humor him. But I felt nothing! Later I sat on my bed and contemplated becoming a nun!" Even though she felt, at such a tender age, the need "to perform", and even though that need might later show itself in faking orgasm, still that description is gently comical compared to outcomes which are assaultive, repulsive and treacherous.

The Assaultive Kiss

Unexpected kisses, ones which intrude into the young woman's life-space before she is ready or willing, are physically alienating and

psychically bruising. One young woman describes the 'battle' that followed her 'offer': "Finally it hit: the invasion of Normandy was relived. I had properly closed my eyes and offered my lips when he placed his hands on my shoulder. I had, in my romantic naivete, anticipated a gentle kiss on the lips. Instead he pried them open somehow and invaded my mouth with what felt like his whole face. I was later relieved to discern it was only his tongue."

Another young woman's story shows that it often turns out to be more than a mere 'war'. She was working a summer job at a biblical wax museum. A much older man frequented it and would stop to chat with her. One evening he stayed until closing time to help her lock up. She was wary as she finished her chores. As they walked out of the building she wanted a quick getaway. The stranger moved toward her, held her, and French kissed her: "I tore myself away from him, said goodbye and walked away quickly, yet trying to give the impression of a nonchalant stroll. As soon as I hit the end of the block to turn, I ran as fast as I could." The shock of the assault was nothing compared to the lingering feelings: "a shadow of hurt, a glimpse of fear, maybe even the invasion or rape"; the feeling that "my dandelion possibilities had been penetrated by a longing tongue."

The Revolting Kiss

Some females experience the kiss when they are still too innocent to be wary. The subsequent incongruent kiss is repulsive. Some examples:

"I was the proverbial 'sweet sixteen' lass. Stupidly I said, 'I don't know how to kiss'. He said he was gonna teach me. I was tense. It was a 'peck' at first. I had no idea of what to do with my hands. I felt humiliated that I had to be told where to put them. Then it turned into a 'guided tour'. I couldn't wait till this 'memorable experience' was over."

Another female recalls: "I was shaking and blushing from head to foot, feeling helpless. First I was alarmed when his tongue started exploring my mouth. I didn't expect the moving of his hands all over

my body, or the moving of his hands to move my hands all over him. He started breathing heavier. I felt a heat come over me. It made me feel profoundly ashamed. I wanted to slap his face."

A third female was fourteen years old "in the last careless, carefree summer of girlhood". "He kissed me violently and pawed me all over. When I started to cry, he let me go." Perhaps she had captured the sense of all premature first kisses: "I didn't want it to count. I wanted to wipe it off as I rubbed off the saliva. I couldn't. It couldn't be reversed; I couldn't be unkissed again. And the moisture, I could feel it, smell it, even though it was wiped. It made me nauseous. I felt like I was going to throw up."

The Treacherous Kiss

We are familiar with the fact that the rapist is most often not a stranger, but a family friend, or a highly admired, respected other. That fact has made it difficult for the young woman to report an assault: she has been betrayed; she does not expect to be believed. The following account demonstrates that the same pattern takes place around the first kiss.

"I was waiting for a boy to come and visit me for the afternoon," the narrative begins. It was a sunny fall Georgia afternoon. She was excited. It was a contemporary version of waiting for a "gentleman caller" in the South. "I felt 'special' while waiting for the guy, doing all the grown-up womanly things I had been taught—cleaning, primping, making sure there was the right food in the house, that the glasses were clean, etc." It was her "first grown up date" that she was expecting, a fellow old enough to drive a car. She writes: "I was wearing a dark brown velvet, thickly gathered shirt. The neckline had a fine line of white. I remember holding myself tall, my tummy in, twirling in front of the mirror to see how I looked." The betrayal occurs as she turns to exit the kitchen pantry where she had just dumped trash. She encounters the family friend:

"Dr. M. was standing in the doorway, smoking a cigar, wearing tortoise glasses which hid what I then used to describe as watery bug eyes. His neck was jutting forward just like a chicken's. I had never

liked this man, my father's friend, a man my mother admired and would hear nothing bad about, because he was brilliant, a university full professor. He gave my teenage skin gooseflesh of the creepy, crawly variety. As he stood in front of me, blocking my path, grinning—I remember he had a gold crown which glittered—I asked him what he was doing there. I was surprised by him, but not scared of him, never having heard or experienced sexual abuse by an 'older' man toward a young girl. I had been promised the living room for my date and didn't want any other company encroaching on my privacy. He said, "You look beautiful." I smiled politely. Then, he put his hand on my shoulder and kissed me open mouthed and stuck his big, fat, sloppy tongue inside my mouth. I was totally disgusted, shocked, taken aback. When he started to kiss me, I had let him. Brought-up to be extremely polite and docile to older people, especially men, I hadn't wanted him to touch my lips: but it was not until he intruded his tongue into my mouth that I winced and pushed him away. His tongue felt so strong, like a barrel that I couldn't fight against. His face reddened when I pushed, and he said, "I'm sorry. Please don't tell your mother. She won't understand. You were just...so beautiful. Just say I dropped by for a moment and had to leave." Then he was gone; he evaporated. The front door bell rang; I went to answer it; it was my date. I put the incident behind and didn't think of it again. I never told my mother or father. I would never have discussed anything that intimate, personal or sexual with my father and didn't believe my mother would believe me. I always avoided Dr. M. and his visits to our house became fewer and fewer. Years later, after he died, when my mother was raving on and on about what a wonderful man he was, I could contain myself no longer. I was furious; I thought he was an evil, slimy, lecherous old man. I told my mother about it. She didn't believe me—Dr. M., the educated, erudite gentleman would never do such a thing. End of conversation."

This particular woman's reflections on the aftermath of her first kiss showcase typical tactics to which young women resort in order to cope with the introduction to violence. "I never counted that

kiss," she writes. "It wasn't mine. I wasn't there, present. Lips, skin, a mouth were involved in the kiss. Me, myself, and I were absent." Only by an act of alienating, schizoid-like detachment was she able to affirm that the kiss was "stolen" from her yet simultaneously became "the kiss that never was." She elaborates the mental gymnastics she utilized so that she could handle the ambiguity of not trusting men, (especially older/mature men), and of not trusting herself. "There was something inherently powerful and dangerous about me, wasn't there?!" "That dangerous part of me", she continues, "was not me, it was only what others saw. I was tucked away inside where no one could catch me, unless I wanted them to." She depicts the process of creating a "disjunction: a 'space of inviolability' between her essential self and her inconsequential skin. "I knew how to be present and absent at the same time", she concludes, indicating that the play-act allowed her "to remain safe, untouched, inviolate."

Discussion

Social science is silent about the Adolescent First Kiss. No empirical study of it can be found in developmental literature. There is a dearth of published empirical evidence about adolescent kissing in general. Several adolescent psychology texts do not mention it at all. Information about kissing at any age is scant in all sexuality texts. Whenever psychologists or sexologists do consider the phenomenon, they reduce it to a single meaning or purpose: a form of foreplay, a touch executed with genital intercourse the presumed goal.

This scientific institutionalization of the kiss as the warm-up for the main event, or the appetizer before gourmet lovemaking, only perpetuates alienation between the genders, and supports the view that the female is the victim, a 'babe' or the 'dish'.

According to Giorgi (1970) there is a pervasive dialectical relationship in psychology between approach, method, and content. The dominant research paradigm in our culture, technological pragmatics, is interlaced with a one-dimensional tool, quantification. Thus the social scientist is ill-equipped to deal with homey

phenomena, with experiences and meanings that are part of the everyday life-world. In terms of adolescence, relevant phenomena such as the blush, the first kiss, the hickey, the difference between being caressed and being 'pawed', are overlooked as if too trivial to consider worth scientific investigation. The consequence is that social science ignores basic steps in the development of sexuality, especially in the building of interpersonal relationships.

Since adolescent kissing is not considered a research problem by mainstream investigators, information about it is woefully lacking to parents, educators and therapists. Adults typically do not help adolescents to orient to their first kiss in an attitude of relaxed enthusiasm. In the absence of wholesome, proactive direction, the young female too frequently experiences a kiss that saddles her with feelings of shame, humiliation, disgust and self-loathing. If violence might start with a kiss, then with dialogue about it adults should begin to deconstruct violence out of the male-female encounter.

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Art of Discovery: Experiencing Kate Chopin's "The Storm"

by

Ellen Barker

In *The Prospect of Rhetoric*, published in 1971, Wayne Booth asserts that rhetoric is "the art of changing men's minds" (p. 95), and more recently, Richard McKeon in "Philosophy of Communication and the Arts" reaffirms that "the new art of rhetoric is the art of discovery" (1987, p.110). If the function of rhetoric is to change "men's minds" through an act of "discovery," how do authors accomplish the task of directing their audiences to a meaning of their fiction? What assumptions do authors make about the shared experiences of their interpretive communities and the ability of these communities to follow the prompts within the text to lead not only to an awareness of the text's meaning but to individual self-discovery?

"Discovering" the text occurs through the act of reading where readers undergo a series of transformations, such as Wayne Booth describes in The *Rhetoric of Fiction*:

> The author creates . . . an image of himself and another image of his reader; he makes his reader, as he makes his second self, and the most successful reading is one in which the created selves, author and reader, can find complete agreement. (1983, p. 138)

However, reaching a point of unified agreement between author and reader is not always easily accomplished when a reader comes to a work with varying expectations about the work and with beliefs created by class, gender, race, and historical period, to name only a few. For Wolfgang Iser (1974, p. 30), rhetoric can be used as a "guiding influence to help the reader produce the meaning of the text, but his participation is something that goes far beyond the scope of this influence" (30). The reader has to be guided into an awareness of the text by certain rhetorical strategies. Such participation enables the reader to take an interpretative role equal in value to that of the author and provides the foundation for communication between author and reader. The reader then "discovers" the meaning of the text and, as Iser notes, "discovers a new reality through a fiction which . . . is different from the world he himself

is used to; and he discovers the deficiencies inherent in prevalent norms and in his own restricted behavior" (1974, p. xiii).

In Kate Chopin's "The Storm," for instance, her reading audience is asked to take part in another culture, another social reality, to lay aside biases about gender and about roles in a marriage, and to examine some larger moral and philosophical concerns and through those experiences come to an understanding of Chopin's ultimate purpose as a feminist writer. More importantly, the reading should persuade the audience to accept the situations provided in the story and apply these to their own lives, either challenging or solidifying their established values and perspectives, but ultimately, in some way, "changing" their minds, enabling "discovery" of a "new reality."

Kate Chopin activates the reader's faculties to make meaning out of the text through the narrative technique defined by an "implied author" who chooses what the reader reads through creation of plot, character, and setting. These textual clues provided by the third person omniscient narrator invite the reader's active participation; therefore, the reader assists in the formulation of the story and can come to a more unified understanding of the story.

In both subject and form, Chopin revolted against tradition and authority and urged her readers to take a close look at the submerged lives of women and to understand the root causes of their unequal positon in American society. She is one of the first early American writers to trace the subject of women's sexuality as a symbol of freedom. "The Storm," in particular, deals with the issue of a woman's sexual freedom and the contradiction that sometimes exists between truth and this freedom. Although the story is not solely about Claxita, its general focus is on her and her family. Her afternoon of lovemaking with Alcee, a former lover and a man who is not her husband or of the same social class, calls into question the occasional constraints of conjugal love and that a woman possesses sexual desires of equal intensity to any man's. Certainly this was not a welcomed topic for the typical reader of the late nineteenth century, but even today's readers might have difficulty with what

seems to be an amoral response to Calixta and Alcee's romantic interlude. Sex between the two is elating, full of mutual passion and joy. At the conclusion of the story, the storm, a natural event that seems to sanction their adulterous interlude, "passed and everyone was happy" (p. 403). The task of Chopin's "implied author," then, is to deliver this theme through the detached observer who makes no moral judgment, but who supplies an objective narration of events so that Chopin's reader can understand a woman's passions and her rights to these passions, and through the process of this understanding, become open to actual change.

The physical structure of the story itself should awaken the reader's curiosity and stimulate intellectual involvement. "The Storm" is narrated in five separate vignettes. The first introduces Bibi, Calixta's son, and Bobinot, Calixta's husband, who are out running a household errand. The impending storm is first noted through their eyes. They comment on their concern for Calixta, who has been left alone, and Bobinot even buys a special can of shrimp as a gift for her. When the scene closes, Bobinot and Bibi are resting comfortably together, Bibi unafraid with his hand on his father's knee. This scene promotes the image of a happy, unified family.

Section two introduces Calixta seated at a sewing machine performing a traditionally assigned female task and a task Per Seyersted sites as a popular metaphor for sexual intercourse (p. 167). She feels no uneasiness for Bibi and Bobinot's safety, a narrative observation that counters Bibi and Bobinot's apparent concerns; however, the narrator's description indicates that she is not callous toward them but is too engaged in her work to even notice the storm. When she realizes that the storm is approaching, she quickly rises from her work to go outdoors and collect her husband's Sunday clothes from the front gallery where she had left them to air. All of this work indicates the reciprocal nature of Calixta's relationship with Bobinot: she does for him; he does for her and once again demonstrates that they represent a typical happy family. To emphasize Chopin's feminist message, however, the narrator clearly de-

fines Calixta's role of mother and of homemaker to help clarify her final point, which is the need to redefine the then existing perceptions of women and their roles.

When she runs outside to retrieve her husband's clothes, she sees Alcee Laballiere, a former lover before her marriage. The narrator tells us that "she had not seen him very often since her marriage, and never alone" (p. 399). When the rain begins, Alcee asks if he can take shelter under an outside projection, expressing his genuine "intention to remain outside" (p. 400), once again information the narrator provides. However, the narrator also describes the powerful attraction between the two by highlighting Calixta's reaction to seeing her former lover again: "his voice and her own startled her as if from a trance" (p. 400).

When it becomes clear that the storm will be too intense for Alcee to remain outside as he had originally intended, he assists her by bringing in Bobinot's trousers, a symbolic suggestion by the narrator of the sexual betrayal that is to occur, and he brings in Bibi's jacket "that was about to be carried away by a sudden gust of wind" (p. 400). Certainly the sudden gust of wind and the storm figuratively signify the eventual "carrying away" of sexual loyalty pledged by a marriage vow and pose a situational threat to this already established happy family. The careful reader would be aware that the conditions leaving these two former romantic partners alone are potentially threatening. Further foreshadowing is provided when the narrator shifts the point of view and directs commentary to Calixta's physical attributes. She is "a little fuller of figure than five years before . . .; but she had lost nothing of her vivacity" (p. 400). From a somewhat sensual description of Calixta, the narrator shifts again to a description of the house's interior, stopping with a description of the bedroom. Its door is open: "the room with its white, monumental bed, its closed shutters, looked dim and mysterious" (p. 400), almost as if it were a dimly lit sanctuary. In the late 1800's, of course, it would have been unthinkable to most people to describe the bedroom of a married couple, particularly one that would be violated by one adulterous moment.

The narrator quickly shifts again into a discussion of the storm and its climax. Its threatening nature frightens Calixta and causes her to express concern for her son, hoping that "Bobinot's got sense enough to come in out of a cyclone" (p. 400). She goes to her window to get a more direct view of the storm, and Alcee intuitively follows. When lightning strikes a nearby tree, Calixta becomes inconsolable, and, as the narrator tells us, Alcee "unthinkingly" (p. 401) draws her to him, but this action "aroused all the old-time infatuation and desire for her flesh" (p. 401). Once again, any emotions of desire are filtered through the narrator's detached position. Neither Alcee nor Calixta comment on their attraction to the other or on their desire to consumate this attraction. The narrator, not Alcee, describes her lips as being

> red and moist as a pomegranate seed. Her white neck and a glimpse of her full, firm bosom disturbed him powerfully. As he glanced up at him the fear in her liquid blue eyes had given place to a drowsy gleam that unconsciously betrayed a sensuous desire. He looked down into her eyes and there was nothing for him to do but to gather her lips in a kiss. It reminded him of Assumption. (p. 403)

Because the narrator describes these events and emotions, they become a mere statement of fact rather than an emotionally complex network of desires where one exerts one's will over the other.

At this point it becomes clear that their passion will culminate in sexual union, but often readers are confused by their own values and beliefs and have trouble accepting this sexual liason, especially when both partners are married. In fact, Calixta usually bears the brunt of most moral criticism. The implied author has created her as a mother and a wife, and in the eyes of most readers, she should not participate in such adulterous behavior. Instead, Calixta's response is just as passionate as Alcee's: "Her lips seemed in a manner free to be tasted, as well as her round, white throat and her white breasts" (p. 401). Rather than writhing in guilt, she laughs while she lays in Alcee's arms, throughly enjoying this unexpected sexual interlude.

Through the voice of the narrator, Chopin's own voice is heard as she asserts that it is a woman's "birthright" to enjoy sex and passion equal to any man's and that because sex is a natural act, neither character should be judged (p. 401):

> She was a revelation in that dim, mysterious chamber; as white as the couch she lay upon. Her firm, elastic flesh that was knowing for the first time its birthright, was like a creamy lily that the sun invites to contribute its breath and perfume to the undying life of the world. (p. 401)

Because pleasure is asserted not merely as a possibility but as a right for a woman, Calixta, in this instance, teaches Alcee, and perhaps all mankind, that "guile and trickery" (p. 401) are not an integral part of a woman's response in lovemaking.

In part four the reader learns that Alcee, too, has a family. His wife Clarisse is away visiting her family in Mississippi. Upon his return from his afternoon sexual frolic, he writes a loving letter to his wife, again, not to confess any sin or to beg for forgiveness. Instead he urges her to stay longer in Mississippi if she wishes; he is "getting on nicely" (p. 402). There is no attempt by the narrator to misconstrue this statement or to view it in light of Alcee's recent indiscretion. The narrator explains that "he was willing to bear the separation a while longer — realizing that their [his family's] health and pleasure were the first things to be considered" (p. 403). There is no cynicism in the narrator's remarks, only statement of genuine fact.

The story concludes with Clarrisse's delight in receiving Alcee's letter and in her relief at having the option of more time apart. She was enjoying her time with friends and family, but more importantly she was glad to be released from the sexual obligation imposed by marriage. Her separation from Alcee restores her to the "pleasant liberty of her maiden days" (p. 403). As the narrator adds, "devoted as she was to her husband, their intimate conjugal life was something which she was more than willing to forego for awhile" (p. 403).

Readers who come to this work with a set of values based on stereotypical notions most likely have trouble accepting that when

the storm concludes, Alcee gets up and rides away. Bobinot and Bibi return home shortly after the torid lovemaking scene, leaving Calixta time enough to prepare supper. She rushes out to greet both, clasping her son and "kissing him effusively" (p. 402). She "seemed to express nothing but satisfaction at their safe return" (p. 402). There is no guilt-ridden confession, no act of contrition, no other desire beyond seeing her family again and resuming life as normal. No one pays for this afternoon of sexual betrayal. Instead, as the narrator blithely tells us, "So the storm passed and everyone was happy," not an immediately satisfactory conclusion for most readers (p. 403).

It is at this point that reader involvement is most crucial. If readers do feel prone to judge either party, they are not getting the support they need from the implied author whose narrator has supplied an objective series of events. If Chopin is making a comment on a woman's right to participate in sexual pleasure without being duly punished, perhaps leaving readers in a position to judge leaves them also in a position to help her prove her point. If readers are prone to judge Calixta harshly, then they are exhibiting the type of repressive behavior that condemns a woman when she expresses her sexual desires. In this way they become a part of the text because they stereotype women and women's feeling and have categorized women into traditional roles. By initially becoming a judge or oppressor, the reader can know the type of oppression that nineteenth and twentieth century women have felt when they have tried to express themselves naturally in a male-dominated society; thus through such first-hand experience, recognition and reform may actually occur.

Sex, as Chopin hopes to emphasize through the story, is natural and as an act sanctioned by nature should never be viewed as indecient or immoral. In fact, the narrator's deliberate description, makes it appear that all of nature sanctioned the sexual encounter between Calixta and Alcee. As soon as the torrent was over, "the sun was turning the glistening green world into a palace of gems" (p. 402). These details create a sense of cosmic joy and mystery as Alcee

and Calixta become one with each other and with the elements. The narrator factually reaffirms that "they seemed to swoon together at the very borderland of life's mystery" (p. 401). Even the title of the story sanctions their union. Commenting on the French definition of the word **storm**, Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant (1988, p. 708) identify the storm as having a "romantic theme that symbolizes the aspirations of natural man toward a life less banal, a life tormented, agitated, burning with passion — a love of storms betrays a need of intensity in existence!"

Alcee's allusion to Assumption, a religious holiday celebrating the Assumption of the Virgin into heavenly bliss, as well as being a place-name where he had once kissed Calixta in an earlier story, suggests to Anna Elfenbein, in *Women on the Color Line*, the secularization of religious experience and the elevation of sexual experience to the status of religious sacrament" (1989, p. 140). Thus, in telling the tale, the narrator inserts varied religious imagery along the way. The bedroom is described as an almost holy place. Bobinot's Sunday clothes, a symbol of his sexuality, are hanging on the gallery. Alcee later carries in these trousers to save them from the storm.

That Alcee and Calixta's sexual experience is part of a natural act frees them from guilt and from any emotional repercussions if they confess their indiscretion to their families. The storm that ignites their passion also saves them from any devastating confrontations. In Calixta and Alcee's passion, man and woman equally participate in one of the mysteries of nature. The essence of this mystery as described through Chopin's implied authorship is a revelation of oneness of man, woman, and nature in an experience that precludes moral judgment.

Participation in the sexual act without moral repercussions represents a significant element of freedom for Chopin and for her readers. It will hopefully set women free to be themselves and to liberate themselves from society's elimination of certain basic rights. It could even be concluded that Alcee's brief visit is beneficial to all. Bobinot and Bibi gain as Calixta appears to be more amiable toward

them. With her rejuvenated spirit, she enlivens her family so that they all "laughed much and so loud that anyone might have heard them as far away as Laballiere's" (p. 402). Their union frees Calixta and Alcee briefly from the boring sexual routine of their physically unsatisfying marriages, and it frees them to complete an unfinished relationship that began long ago. Clarisse also benefits because she is permitted to return to the satisying experience of her youth and, for awhile, forgo the burden of wifely sexual obligations. Even the tone of the story figures into the greater message of freedom. While it is detached and unsentimental, it is also warm and "serenely free" (Seyersted 1969, p. 168).

Once Kate Chopin remarked, in reaction to criticism of the shocking portrayals of women's feelings in her fiction, "Sometimes I feel as if I should like to get a good, remunerative job to do the thinking for some people" (qtd. in Ewell 1986, p. 21). Of course, it could be that her writing was a way to do the "thinking for some people" with the hope that the final effect would be "changing men's minds." Certainly Kate Chopin exerted a powerful influence over the minds of her readers, and she must have realized, too, that her reading public was not ready for the revolutionary statement housed within "The Storm." It was never published during her lifetime. Wolfgang Iser reminds us that the act of discovery through the reading of a work is a form of "esthetic pleasure" (1974, p. xiii) because it offers the reader two separate possibilities: "first, to free himself — even if only temporarily — from what he is and to escape from the restrictions of his own social life; second, actively to exercise his faculties — generally the emotional and the cognitive" (1974, p. xiii). Chopin's story fulfills these requirements for "discovery." A reading of "The Storm" challenges the restrictions of a reader's social codes and heightens emotions into either an awareness of a woman's stance or to acceptance and change of mind. Through the creation of this potential act of discovery, Chopin must have accomplished her task of initiating necessary change regarding women, or an article such as this could never have been printed about a story once too shocking to be published.

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Epistemology, Ethics, and Eliot: Feminine Development in *Middlemarch*

by

Sandra S. Honaker

George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, set in England just before 1832, portrays a world where women are denied access to male methods of education. Women of this time are "considered sensible but not reasonable," and are "all but denied status as humans" (Richardson 1988, p. 14). Education, other than that which teaches young ladies how to conduct themselves decorously, is thought to be wasted on them. Consequently, women, denied traditional education and therefore epistemology, have to develop alternate ways of knowing, "different perspectives from which [to] view reality and draw conclusions about truth, knowledge, and authority" (Belenky et al 1986, p. 3). Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule, in their book *Women's Ways of Knowing*, describe five different epistemological patterns of women: silence, received knowledge, subjective knowledge, procedural knowledge, and constructed knowledge. If we apply their epistemological schemata to Rosamond Vincy, Dorothea Brooks, and Mary Garth in *Middlemarch*, we discover that the epistemological development of these women is directly related to their ethical development. In short, the more these women learn to value the self as a basis for knowing, the more they learn to value responsibility to self as well as others in making ethical choices.

Rosamond Vincy advances the least among the young women of the novel along the epistemological rubric in *Women's Ways of Knowing*. Rosamond, through the education of Mrs. Lemon, has progressed beyond the most elementary epistemological stage, silence, whose members are characterized as being "passive, subdued, and subordinate" (Belenky *et al* 1986, p. 30). Instead, Rosamond relies on received knowledge - the authority of knowledge received from Mrs. Lemon, for example. Unlike a silent knower, Rosamond knows the value of language - she learns by listening (Eliot 1874, p. 37) - but she fails to use language as a vehicle of thought or a mode of connection to others. Received knowers also tend to see the world in polarities, and believe so implicitly in authorities that they never realize "that authorities have the capacity for constructing knowledge. In their view, authorities must receive `truths' from the words of even higher authorities" (Belenky *et al* 1986, p. 39).

Rosamond, who has had the least amount of education of the young women in the novel, is "the flower of Mrs. Lemon's school, the chief school in the county, where the teaching included all that was demanding in the accomplished female - even to extras, such as the getting in and out of a carriage" (Eliot 1874, p. 65). Rosamond treats language as she does her musical ability: her execution is flawless but the sentiment is copied from her teachers. Language is important only in as far as it adorns her appearance as a lady. In her first scene she corrects her mother twice for using "unladylike" and "vulgar" language, and argues with her brother Fred that "correct English" is the only language that is not common slang (Eliot 1874, pp. 66-67). To her, language is either right or wrong. Its only value is utilitarian - language has no value in and of itself. This view of language points to a deficiency in Rosamond's character, for as Emmanuel Levinas points out in his essay "Language and Proximity," language "is essential to thought, inasmuch as thought is thematization and identification" (Levinas 1987, p. 110). Rosamond is, therefore, incapable of following another person's train of thought; she actually cannot understand Lydgate's financial problems (Eliot 1874, p. 456).

Because Rosamond holds this limited view of language, she does not see language as an effective tool for communicating with the other. In fact, she communicates most effectively when she does not rely on language. She wins the heart of Lydgate, for example, by crying in response to the gentle tone in his voice. Lydgate, seeing her tears, feels that there "could have been no more complete answer than silence" (Eliot 1874, p. 208). He responds to her subdued response with an engagement. She also expresses her anger silently; when her mother tells her that her father is not happy with the engagement, Rosamond "listened in silence, and at the end gave a certain turn of her graceful neck, of which only long experience could teach you that it meant perfect obstinacy" (Eliot 1874, p. 236).

Rosamond doesn't stoop to argue - she merely does what she feels is proper and right (at least for her) according to the dictates of Mrs. Lemon's school. When Lydgate admonishes her for going out

riding when she is pregnant, she doesn't argue with him, but merely turns her neck to indicate her obstinacy (Eliot 1874, p. 403). When Lydgate finally confesses their lack of funds to her and asks for her help, she responds only by putting into the words "'What can I do!' as much neutrality as they could hold" (Eliot 1874, p. 410). She is afraid to commit herself verbally, and seems not to understand Lydgate's words, even when he fully and forcefully explains their financial situation to her, trying to "nail down [Rosamond's] vague mind to imperative facts" (Eliot 1874, p. 450). She is convinced that all of Lydgate's attempts to save money are merely means to humiliate and embarrass her; no amount of argument on his part can convince her otherwise.

In light of her inability to communicate to others through language and her stunted epistemological development, Rosamond's lack of ethical development is not surprising. Levinas remarks that ethics and language are inextricably bound to one another. Since his ethical system is bound in recognition of the other, and language is "the foundation of the other one" (Levinas 1987, p. 116), then every act of language is an act of responsibility to another. But Rosamond never reaches the ethical level of responsibility, largely because she does not articulate her ethical beliefs, an action Charles Taylor (1989) insists is crucial to this development. She assumes ethical beliefs, the really important ones anyway, have already been taught to her by Mrs. Lemon. Rosamond doesn't need to talk about her ethics because she believes her ethics are perfectly correct. When she lies to Mrs. Plymdale about the availability of houses for rent, claiming no knowledge when she full well knows her husband intends to offer their house to Ned Plymdale, she shows no remorse. She is convinced she is in the right, her husband is in the wrong, and her object is "thoroughly justifiable" (Eliot 1874, p. 452).

In Carol Gilligan's study on feminine ethical development, she notes that the initial focus of ethics is "on caring for the self in order to ensure survival" (1982, p. 74). Rosamond has not even reached the early stage of defining her actions as selfish, which would at least indicate she was emerging from this egocentric mode. Instead, she

sees the actions of others around her as threats, and sees only herself as without blame. "In fact there was but one person in Rosamond's world whom she did not regard as blameworthy, and that was the graceful creature with blond plaits and with little hands crossed before her, who had never expressed herself unbecomingly" (Eliot 1874, p. 460). Since she alone in her world understands the importance of not being vulgar and common, she feels justified in taking any action necessary to ensure the continuation of her way of life, and does not actually weigh the morality of the situation - she acts.

When Rosamond's actions fail to change the disagreeable facts of the world, she pretends she doesn't care. At the New Year's party near the end of the novel she marvels at the distance she manages to feel from her husband, her cool detachment. This detachment, however, is actually "a studied negation by which she satisfied her inward opposition to him without compromise of propriety" (Eliot 1874, p. 443). She has decided not to care for her husband, that not caring is the safest route to her survival and to her plans to circumvent Lydgate. So she goes through the correct motions of the loving wife, sitting on Lydgate's knee when he asks her to, for example, but even as she does so "in her secret soul she was utterly aloof from him" (Eliot 1874, p. 448). It is easier for her to stop caring about others than to be forced to recognize the rightness and individuality of others.

But this "moral nihilism" (Gilligan 1982, p. 124) is dangerous, for when Rosamond feels her survival is threatened, her shaky ethical stance collapses. When Will Ladislaw curses her for putting him in an awkward position with Dorothea, Rosamond feels she is "almost losing the sense of her identity" (Eliot 1874, p. 537). After Will leaves, Rosamond collapses in the drawing room, and is unable to move or care for herself - she has lost even her instinct for survival in the face of criticism. Since her ethical system has been overthrown, Rosamond experiences a sense of aimlessness, of "floating" (Gilligan 1982, p. 145). Her world is undermined still more when

Dorothea comes to see her again, and instead of showing the jealous anger toward Rosamond that she expects, Dorothea is kind to her.

> [Rosamond] was under the first great shock that had shattered her dream-world in which she had been easily confident of herself and critical of others; and this strange unexpected manifestation of feeling in a woman whom she had approached with a shrinking aversion and dread, as one who must necessarily have a jealous hatred towards her, made her soul totter all the more with a sense that she had been walking in an unknown world which had just broken in upon her (Eliot 1874, p. 549).

Although this unanchored feeling often heralds a state of change, it is doubtful whether poor old Rosamond will ever change greatly. Even Lydgate recognizes that he will have to care for her for the rest of his life - she will never extend her responsibility to him (Eliot 1874, p. 552). And in the Finale, we see that this is true. Rosamond never gives up circumventing Lydgate's commands, but as their lives become more comfortable, she has less occassion to do so (Eliot 1874, p. 575). She never grows ethically; her life just becomes easier for her to defend.

For all this, George Eliot does not allow us to dismiss Rosamond, or hate her as purely evil. Eliot takes great pains to describe Rosamond's ennui with her static life, and when she has Rosamond say, "There really is nothing to care for much" (Eliot 1874, p. 415), she is reminding us of the awful stasis of the leisured woman's life. Later in the novel, after Lydgate's disgrace, Eliot refuses to let us condemn Rosamond for thinking that somehow the arrival of Will Ladislaw will change things by saying that this method of logic "is too common to be fairly regarded as a peculiar folly in Rosamond" (Eliot 1874, p. 531). Rosamond does have a moment of redemption, too, however slight, when she and Dorothea have their tete-a-tete. For the first time in the novel Rosamond seems to have a true conversation which acknowledges another and conveys true emotion. When they quietly part, Eliot comments on their lack of

ostentatious affection by saying "there had been between them too much serious emotion for them to use the signs of it superficially" (Eliot 1874, p. 551). Perhaps if Rosamond could have had more contact with Dorothea, she would have been more receptive to others - but as it is this brief recognition of Dorothea does not make a lasting impression on Rosamond. She is too firmly set in her own mold.

Dorothea Brooke also can be categorized as believing in received knowledge, but unlike Rosamond, she briefly advances to a subjective thinker. She too, has received a suitably feminine education (Eliot 1874, p. 2), but Dorothea feels frustrated by this lack of knowledge, and seeks to enlarge her mind. The main attraction of marriage with Casaubon is that it will "deliver her from her girlish subjection to her own ignorance" (Eliot 1874, p. 17). As Kathleen Blake observes in *Love and the Woman Question in Victorian Literature*, Dorothea feels Casaubon will give her "entry into the provinces of masculine knowledge - Latin and Greek" (1983, p. 33). However, instead of moving out of her reliance on received knowledge, Dorothea, in marrying Casaubon, is merely seeking refuge with a higher authority - she is still not developing her own way of knowing and understanding the world, and in fact is using Casaubon to be a barometer of her own hazy opinions (Blake 1983, p. 33). When she first considers marriage with him, she sees him as rescuing her from the "indefiniteness which hung in her mind, like a thick summer haze, over all her desire to make her life greatly effective" (Eliot 1874, p. 17). She hopes Casaubon will help her see "which opinions had the best foundation, and would help me to live according to them" (Eliot 1874, p. 26). It is her own disbelief in her ability and validity that causes Dorothea to choose such a pedant for a mate.

As her confidence in Casaubon wanes, Dorothea begins to make an epistemological shift from received knowledge to subjective knowledge. As with most women who move from received knowledge to subjective knowledge, Dorothea's shift in epistemological perception is brought about by a specific incident: in many cases this is motherhood, but in Dorothea's it comes about because of "failed

male authority" (Belenky *et al* 1986, p. 57). Dorothea first loses faith in Casaubon's authority during the weeks of her honeymoon; more importantly, she comes to this conclusion with a gut feeling, not scientific observation.

> How was it that in the weeks since her marriage, Dorothea had **not distinctly observed but felt** with a stifling depression, that the large vistas and wide fresh air which she had dreamed of finding in her husband's mind were replaced by anterooms and winding passages which seemed to lead nowhither? (Eliot 1874, p. 136; my emphasis).

She then moves into the realm of Hidden Multiplists, fledgling subjective knowers who are beginning to realize that they have different ideas than the authority figure, but keep silent out of fear of rebuke or isolation (Belenky *et al* 1986, p. 64) - with Dorothea, the fear of rebuke comes from both Casaubon and her god. She rebels against her husband in her private thought, and in a few instances aloud, but she often does not speak aloud because she suspects her inability to appreciate her husband might come from her own sin. On their honeymoon, when Casaubon shows irritation at Dorothea when she dares to comment upon his work, Dorothea angrily defends herself, but the encounter leaves her sobbing. Later in the novel, when Casaubon brusquely ignores Dorothea, she at first lets herself feel indignation - "What have I done . . . that he should treat me so?" (Eliot 1874, p. 294) - but later repents and waits up for him.

Her break with authority is complete only when her husband dies. Not only is her authority figure now dead, but he has humiliated her with the implication of the codicil in his will. Dorothea finalizes her break with her husband by refusing to continue his life's work, although it is clear Casaubon intended her to do so. When she finds the *Synoptical Tabulation for the use of Mrs Casaubon*, she inserts the following note into the envelope and seals it for her dead husband: "I could not use it. Do you not see that I could not submit

my soul to yours, by working hopelessly at what I have no belief in?" (Eliot 1874, p. 372). Since Dorothea only rebels after Casaubon's death, Eliot claims that this act "may perhaps be smiled at as superstitious" (Eliot 1874, p. 372), but this is an act of rebellion, nonetheless.

It is significant, too, that Dorothea communicates, or fails to communicate, with her dead husband through a note, for that is the form of communication that started their union. Casaubon writes her a letter of marriage proposal, and what a lifeless epistle this letter is!

> For in the first hour of meeting you, I had an impression of your eminent and perhaps exclusive fitness to supply that need (connected, I may say, with such activity of the affections as even the preoccupations of a work too special to be abdicated could not uninterruptedly dissimulate); and each succeeding opportunity for observation has given the impression an added depth by convincing me more emphatically of that fitness which I had pre-conceived, and thus evoking more decisively those affections to which I have but not referred (Eliot 1874, p. 27).

Dorothea's inability to detect the stilted artificiality of this language is remarked upon by George Eliot, when she comments as narrator that it did not occur to Dorothea to "examine the letter, to look at it critically as a profession of love" (Eliot 1874, p. 28). In fact, her very short and uncreative reply to Casaubon's letter, also a form of written, not spoken, speech foreshadows her relationship with Casaubon. As Levinas observes, the **contact** of speech is important, regardless of the message (1987, p. 115). Since Dorothea and Casaubon avoid spoken speech, and thus contact, their marriage is doomed to be a loveless one, and a relatively silent one.

After Casaubon's death, for a brief while, Dorothea becomes a subjective thinker, a more developed epistemological mode, and her use of language returns. Subjective thinkers have a "new conception

of truth as personal, private, and subjectively known or intuited" (Belenky *et al* 1986, p. 54). They believe in themselves instead of the authorities, even if they cannot cogently explain this belief. They also believe in "multiple personal truths" (Belenky *et al* 1986, p. 66). Dorothea distrusts authorities, sometimes in the face of direct evidence (Belenky *et al* 1986, p. 72), as when Dorothea instinctively rises to Lydgate's aid even though Mr. Farebrother believes he is guilty. She **declares** forcefully, "You don't believe that Mr Lydgate is guilty of anything base? I will not believe it. Let us find out the truth and clear him!" (Eliot 1874, p. 505; my emphasis). This declaration is as important as the content of the statement, for Dorothea, freed from stifling Casaubon, finds her voice again. And the first thing she does with this new found voice is to restore her feeling of responsibility, for language creates "fraternity, and thus a responsibility for the other, and hence a responsibility for what [she] has not committed, for the pain and the fault of others" (Levinas 1987, p. 123). Although she fails to clear Lydgate as far as the town is concerned, Dorothea does relieve Lydgate of his obligation to Bulstrode, and supports him with her strong belief in his innocence and strength of character. In fact, she supports him through her language and actions as the ideal wife would - two things his own wife, Rosamond, fails to provide.

It is this tendency to "devote [herself] to the care and empowerment of others while remaining `selfless'" (Belenky *et al* 1986, p. 46) that causes Dorothea to ultimately revert back to her dependence on authorities - she merely finds a worthier authority, in her view: Will Ladislaw. Instead of developing this growing sense of self, she decides to channel it into her "growing capacity to care for others" (Eliot 1874, p. 46).

So Dorothea falls victim to "the conventions of femininity, particularly the moral equation of goodness with self-sacrifice" (Gilligan 1982, p. 70). Dorothea is far beyond the selfish ethic of simple survival (Rosamond's sticking point), even at the beginning of the novel, and sees herself only in relationship to others. In fact, in her attempts to build new cottages on Sir James's estate, she

reveals a more developed moral imperative than Rosamond - Dorothea feels "an injunction to care, a responsibility to discern and alleviate the `real and recognizable trouble' of this world" (Gilligan 1982, p. 100). And Dorothea's recognition of responsibility is not just a simple desire to do no harm, but it "signifies response, an extension rather than a limitation of action. Thus it connotes an act of care rather than the restraint of aggression" (Gilligan 1982, p. 38). She feels she must help others - as seen in her response to Lydgate's predicament as well as in other places throughout the novel. But this willingness to help ultimately traps Dorothea - first with Casaubon and then with Will - because it does not extend to herself. She feels no responsibility to make herself happy; instead, her happiness can only come about as a by-product of securing someone else's happiness. She has relegated herself to the role of helpmate, which Daniel Levinson notes in his 1978 study has been the traditional role of women (Gilligan 1982). Women as helpmates are consigned to "play a relatively subordinate role in the individual drama of human development" (Gilligan 1982, p. 153).

Her morality is fueled by what Charles Taylor (1989) calls "hypergoods," driving moral forces which are seen to dominate moral life. There can only be one hypergood per moral framework, and although the hypergood may change in a person's lifetime, the new hypergood will "challenge and reject" (Taylor 1989, p. 65) the old hypergood. Dorothea's first hypergood is her determination to build the cottages, then it becomes Casaubon and the pursuit of his knowledge, then finally Will and this elevating love he promises, as well as his eventual career as a reformer and politician.

This tendency to see Will as her hypergood is why Dorothea's reaction when she thinks Will has betrayed her trust is so violent. After she sees Will and Rosamond together and hastily backs out of the room, she at first feels a strange rush of energy, as if "she had drunk a great draught of scorn that stimulated her beyond the susceptibility to other feelings. She had seen something so far below her belief, that her emotions rushed back from it and made an excited throng without an object" (Eliot 1874, p. 535). She, like

Rosamond, teeters on the edge of a moral nihilism for a brief moment, but Dorothea's moral nihilism is short lived. As soon as she is reminded of Will's human existence by the small detail of the tortoise-shell box that he gave as a present to Henrietta Noble, she can no longer deny her feeling for Will, and rushes home to blurt out "Oh, I did love him!" (Eliot 1874, p. 542). Afterwards, she, like Rosamond, loses the ability to care for herself for a while, but for very different reasons: Dorothea cares too greatly, and is unable to even try to pretend that she does not care for Will. "But she lost energy at last even for her loud-whispered cries and moans: she subsided into helpless sobs, and on the cold floor she sobbed herself to sleep" (Eliot 1874, p. 543). She at last decides this action is "selfish complaining" (Eliot 1874, p. 544) and rouses herself in order to fulfill her responsibility to another: to "attempt to see and save Rosamond" (Eliot 1874, p. 545), despite the fact that she believes Rosamond to have taken her Will away (Eliot, I believe, intends this pun). Dorothea's responsibility to others saves her from Rosamond's moral nihilism, but her ethical stance is still rooted in others, not herself. And this determines how she will live her life. Dorothea recognizes that without further epistemological development, this is the best ethical stance she can take. She states to Celia "It is quite true that I might be a wiser person . . . and that I might have done something better, if I had been better" (Eliot 1874, p. 566). But Dorothea feels the best she can do is marry Will Ladislaw; "this is what I am going to do" (Eliot 1874, p. 566).

This ending is often seen as a defeating one for Dorothea, and Eliot emphasizes this when she describes Dorothea in the Finale as feeling "that there was always something better which she might have done, if she had only been better and known better" (Eliot 1874, p. 576). Dorothea does, however, find fulfillment in her life with Will by supporting him in his life as an "ardent public man" (Eliot 1874, p. 576). And although Eliot states that many people who knew Dorothea felt it "a pity that so substantive and rare a creature should have been absorbed into the life of another . . . . no one stated exactly what else that was in her power she ought rather

to have done" (Eliot 1874, p. 576). In short, althought Dorothea shows the potential of becoming another St. Theresa at the beginning of the novel, this potential is wasted by her inability, or society's unwillingness, to allow her to develop an epistemology that would allow her go to further.

It is left to Mary Garth to live at least a small portion of the life that Dorothea falls short of. Mary's education is comparable to both Rosamond's and Dorothea's, but it is her attitude toward learning that sets her apart. Even though she has attended the same school as Rosamond, Mary attended as an "articled pupil" (Eliot 1874, p. 74) - one on scholarship. And instead of waiting for someone to come along and teach her, as Dorothea does, Mary reads to educate herself - despite resistance from Mr. Featherstone, who "can't abide to see her reading to herself" (Eliot 1874, p. 76).

Mary also does not rely blindly on what she reads, or kowtow to authorities. She is known for her observant remarks and biting wit, as when she teases Fred about his college education, and when she jokes with him about his failure to take the divinity exam: "Divide your cleverness by ten, and the quotient - dear me! - is able to take a degree" (Eliot 1874, p. 95). She is able to believe herself capable of knowing what is right and wrong, and shows this by demonstrating remarkable integrity on the night Mr. Featherstone dies. Her refusal to defer to his obvious authority (which sets her apart from the other characters in the novel) and burn the will, even though Fred would personally profit from it, shows an epistemological process devoid of reliance on authority. Mary simply knows she is doing the right thing.

Mary's training as a teacher, and her success at finding a position as such (Eliot 1874, p. 276), suggests that she has had the academic discipline associated with procedural knowledge, the next epistemological stage after subjective knowledge. The procedural knower learns that although many opinions are valid, there is a method of abstracting truth from process; in other words, she learns that "truth can be shared" (Belenky *et al* 1986, p. 92) without being dictated. Procedural knowledge comes closest to the traditional ways of

thinking, especially the subdivision labeled separate knowers, who, usually through an academic regimen, have mastered objective, analytic methods of acquiring knowledge. The separate knower learns to think academically, and then "uses this new mode of thinking to construct arguments powerful enough to meet the standards of impersonal authority" (Belenky *et al* 1986, p. 101). Connected knowers, on the other hand, **understand** as opposed to know. "Understanding involves intimacy and equality between self and object, while knowledge . . . implies separation from the object and mastery over it" (Belenky *et al* 1986, p. 101).

Mary consciously rejects the separated form of procedural knowledge for a connected form of knowledge when she expresses that her "mind is too fond of wandering on its own way" (Eliot 1874, p. 93). She does not **prefer** separated procedural knowing, but can perform it, as her teaching ability suggests. She is adept, however, at connected knowing, at analysis that is not devoid of relationship (Belenky *et al* 1986, p. 101). Her clever account of Tom, who knocked down the ants' house and "thought they didn't mind because he couldn't hear them cry" is a subtle jibe at Fred, who can not see the damage that his debt has caused the Garth family (Eliot 1874, p. 444). Mary also demonstrates this ability when her mother chastises her for her aversion to teaching, and Mary responds intelligently with "I suppose we never quite understand why another dislikes what we like, mother" (Eliot 1874, p. 276). Although Mary speaks curtly here, she expresses her opinion to her mother without alienating her or even angering her.

It may even be stated that Mary reaches the highest level of epistemological development, Belenky's constructed knowledge, which is typified by creative acts (1986). Although Mary Garth is hardly a picture of liberated womanhood, she is a remarkable product of her time, and it is noteworthy that it is she, not Dorothea, who eventually leaves her mark on the world. Mary writes and publishes a book for children called *Stories of Great Men, taken from Plutarch.* Yes, it is a book for children about men, but this creative act is above what any of the other women in the novel manages to

enact. Eliot ironically (and perhaps autobiographically) comments that Middlemarch refuses to believe that a mere women, who has not been to the university, has written on such a classical subject; this comment further draws attention to Mary's achievement.

According to Belenky, constructivist women, when confronted with a moral dilemma, want to know more about the situation before making judgements. They ask questions which "indicate a sensitivity to situation and context" (Belenky *et al* 1986, p. 149). As with Mary Garth, they recognize that "integrity and care must be included in a morality that can encompass the dilemmas of love and work that arise in adult life" (Gilligan 1982, p. 165). Mary does not hold blindly to a preconceived set of moral codes - she has a sense of integrity, but she never forgets the human side of morality. So, when Fred confesses his inability to pay his debt to her family, she shows how reprehensible a moral act this is to her without totally alienating Fred. But she refuses to marry Fred until he proves himself capable of caring for others and shows responsibility to himself and others. In short, until he moves toward her morality.

Mary can insist Fred come to her position because her moral focus has moved beyond Dorothea's, from responsibility to others to responsibility to self. Even though Mary still feels responsibility to others, she insists in having a moral obligation to herself - she will not yoke herself to Fred if he is unable to meet her moral standard. "Thus she strives to encompass the needs of both self and others, to be responsible to others and thus to be `good' but also to be responsible to herself and thus to be `honest' and `real'" (Gilligan 1982, p. 85). But Mary is never motivated by a desire to be a perfect daughter or be liked by others - she does what she must. She never sacrifices herself for a hypergood, as does Dorothea, but understands that the "good life must be . . one which somehow combines to the greatest possible degree all the goods we seek" (Gilligan 1982, p. 66). Mary values more than one thing at a time - family, her sense of self, love, honor. Just as Claire, a volunteer at an abortion clinic and a focus of Gilligan's study, recognizes that abortion, even though it is killing, is necessary and that she is "willing to go ahead

with it, and it's hard" (Gilligan 1982, p. 58), Mary goes ahead with her decisions, even though they are hard. Her moral integrity is unmatched in the novel. Farebrother's attraction to Mary underscores this integrity, as well as Mary's brother Albert's summation of her character: "she's an old brick" (Eliot 1874, p. 276).

Mary then, not only serves as the highest feminine moral attainment in the novel, but as a good model of the mature women's ethic, which is defined by the ethic of responsibility and "can become a self-chosen anchor of personal integrity and strength" (Gilligan 1982, p. 171). It is no accident that this moral integrity occurs in the one young woman in the novel who truly values education and believes herself capable of learning and knowing, and is known for her capability with language, which belongs, according to Levinas, "to the very work of truth" (1987, p. 114). Since Mary can articulate her moral system, she has her own moral source, and as Taylor points out, "Moral sources empower" (1989, p. 96). It is Mary who does the most with her life, attains her goals, and reaches her greatest happiness - she is truly empowered.

Although Dorothea at first may shine more brightly, Mary Garth serves as the moral beacon for the novel. Because Mary trusts herself as a source of both knowledge of the world and of morality, she is the only one with a clear vision of how she wants to live her life. Mary relies on "*truth of feeling*" (Eliot 1843, p. 581), which Eliot claims in a letter to a friend is the only way to develop personal moral systems - the only systems Eliot feels are true ones. Because Dorothea does not trust her feelings, and Rosamond cannot articulate hers, both of these women fail to develop a truly sustaining epistemology or ethical system.

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Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's *Feminism Without Illusions:* One Year Later

by

Barbara A. Baker

Pop-feminism is enjoying a great deal of recent press. Everyone from Oprah Winfrey to Phil Donahue is hosting Susan Faludi and Gloria Steinem in an effort to parse the meaning of the word, feminism, which has suffered connotations ranging from militant to individualist. While Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's *Feminism Without Illusions* has probably not stirred the beehive of popular culture, it has been the object of academic war. It is precisely the laying bare of contradictory notions which incite opposition that makes *Feminism Without Illusions* an important book for anyone committed to arguing the feminist case. An inclusive look at feminism through philosophic, historic, and even literary lenses, *Feminism Without Illusions* thrives in the contraries of Fox-Genovese's argument.

Primarily, her argument is a scathing critique of both individualism and its 'daughter,' feminism. Women would be further ahead, according to Fox-Genovese, to legitimize their needs in terms of a commonality rather than individual rights. She speaks of individualism in opposition to a collectivity as if they were absolute, separable categories. This distinction somehow fails to recognize a fundamental ethical situation: an individual in relation to or confrontation with the society in which she exists. Even though Fox-Genovese does not propose a means to achieve a commonality, by pitting individualism against a hypothetical collectivity, she sets the stage for an argument which has the potential to produce the grey area where individual self-consciousness will act responsibly in the larger whole. Such individual responsibility is vital to the collectivity Fox-Genovese imagines but does not offer a blue-print for achieving. In an effort to destroy one illusion, she creates another.

While dispelling the myth that women can unite in an essentialist sisterhood in order to decide collectively what they, as women, need, FoxGenovese illuminates the problem of an even larger collectivity articulating the needs of women. If, among themselves, women have failed to transcend racial, ethnic, and social class lines in order to create a solidarity committed to achieving equity for all, how can we expect men and women's combined interests to converge in a recognition of women's needs? Fox-Genovese's hope for the future

rests on that hypothetical anti-individualist community that considers socially derived rights prior to individual rights, yet recognizes women's needs as no other collectivity ever has.

Fox-Genovese does offer some concrete suggestions (which seem grounded primarily in her own individual beliefs). In answer to questions of pornography and abortion, we need only to decide collectively what is morally acceptable and what is not, a view which is frighteningly reminiscent of a moral majority. On pornography, she would "ban the more extreme forms without a second thought, and with precious few worries about the public expressions of healthy sexuality that might be banned along with them" (88). On abortion, she supports "the necessity of granting women the power to choose to have an abortion under socially determined conditions" (10). Both views assume an individual selfconsciousness which is potentially radically out of step with a collective social consciousness. Since she never asserts the framework in which this composite consciousness would be grounded, it is impossible to say if her anti-free speech, pro-choice stance would be completely undermined in her ideal community.

Concerning the canon, Fox-Genovese would introduce gender as an objective perspective. She believes that the canon "can take account of the feminist challenge by introducing the essential woman as counterpart to the essential man" (192). Our primary objective should be to "revise our view of the canon as a common legacy" (192). Again, it seems that Fox-Genovese is dealing in the hypothetical. Many canonized authors, particularly modernists like Eliot and Joyce, did not write works that lend themselves to gender-informed scrutiny. They set out with elitist attitudes designed specifically to exclude the feminine agenda. If canonized authors did not view "essential woman as counterpart to essential man," perhaps reading them as such would alienate the common history we seek to preserve (192). Nonetheless, her proposed gender perspective is entertaining and hopeful.

Though Fox-Genovese never works out many of the problems she presents, she intelligently and conscientiously brings diverse

points of view to the issues with which she struggles. She provides the information which will allow her reader to continue to grapple with the dilemma of individuals in modern societies. Because the book is packed with insights from across the disciplines, and because Fox-Genovese rarely shrinks from exposing the many facets of her complicated arguments, the book will remain a valuable commentary on individualism and feminism into the next wave and the next century.

Suzanne Clark's *Sentimental Modernism: Women Writers and the Revolution of the Word*

by

Lisa Plummer Crafton

Beginning with an acknowledgement that the sentimental is what Roland Barthes calls an "unwarranted discourse," Suzanne Clark contributes to a dialogue about the appropriation of the masculine and feminine in modern poetry. Clark's purpose is to argue for the restoration of the feminine discourse of the sentimental within modernism; this first requires her to trace the ways in which modernism as a movement treated the sentimental as both a past to be outgrown and a tendency to be despised, creating an intellectual, avant-garde community defined by its adversarial relationship to domestic culture. And because women have a privileged (or fatal) relationship with the sentimental, Clark sees this condemnation as a gendered one.

Positioning herself between both Ann Douglas' case against the sentimental in *The Feminization of Discourse* (a book in which Douglas sees femininity as a debilitating gendering imposed by culture) and Jane Tompkins' argument, in *Sensational Designs*, for an aesthetic/political acknowledgement of the sentimental, Clark mediates an understanding of the sentimental, specifically in modern women writers whose work appropriates a sentimental past and which "reveals a contradiction **within** modernism, challenging our understanding of it, and indeed of our own work" (5).

Underlying much of the book, then, is Clark's exposure of how modernism is stabilized by a system of gendered binaries (male/female, serious/sentimental, critical/popular) and how modern writers suffer not only from a pattern of anxiety created by past male authority (as Harold Bloom argues) but also by "an estrangement from a maternal enclosure" such that maturity, for many modern critics, is judged by one's separation from the sentimental (m)Other. Clark cites John Crowe Ransom's well-known disparagement of Edna St. Vincent Millay as a "sentimental" writer: "Millay is rarely and barely very intellectual, and I think everyone knows it" (9). Ransom implies that while women have to contend with the tradition of sensibility, male poets/critics can grow up and away from the sentimental; however, as Clark points out, this disguising of the sentimental within the masculine tradition leads to the

"successful cross-dressing of the male poet" and has a decidedly dishonest air about it.

It is not, however, only the male poetic and critical tradition that Clark wants to educate; she analyzes the ways in which women writers and feminists reject a "feminine" tradition. She openly asks, "Is it possible to talk about women writers and the sentimental without eliciting the modernist response? It is a knee-jerk reaction without parallel in literary criticism" (11). Just as intellectuals separate themselves from the ordinary, feminists separate themselves from the feminine, the community of women, and Clark's aim is to reunite these traditions.

Tracing the use of the sentimental in terms of the politics of literary criticism, Clark explores the roles of at least three kinds of women writers: those who worked for the political causes of modernism and yet were rejected on aesthetic terms (Emma Goldman's anarchist involvement with women's issues and Edna St. Vincent Millay's politics of free love are complicated by their brand of sentimentalism); those who identified with modernism and the avant-garde, defined by a struggle with the sentimental (Louise Bogan's alternating criticism/admiration for sentimental intensity and Kay Boyle's refusal to identify herself as a woman writer and rejection of feminist criticism); and, finally, those postmodern women writers whose style calls both genre and gender into question (Annie Dillard's objective, realistic narrative style which at the same time posits an unspoken "she" and Alice Walker's reconnection with the community of women and advocacy of a "womanist" prose).

After an introduction and an initial chapter briefly tracing the sentimental tradition in literature (from 18th century British to the Puritan tradition in America through 20th century feminist theories), Clark then devotes a chapter to each of the six women writers noted above. While Clark's subject seems at times simply too large (chapter one's necessarily inadequate survey) or is argued from a sometimes fallacious definition of the male modernist tradition, her appeal that literature be analyzed in its rhetorical sense asks readers

to re-examine the relationship between an intellectual/feminine sensibility and to recall the variety and value of a tradition that modernism reduced to a single, gendered, and therefore less serious aesthetic. Overall, offering much more than just a discussion of women writers within modernism, Clark's work contributes to ongoing debates about feminist criticism, canon formation, and the essentially rhetorical nature of discourse.

About the Authors

Richard Alapack received his Ph.D. from Duquesne University. Now an Assistant Professor of Psychology at West Georgia College, he has recently returned from Alaska where he conducted clinical work and research concerning the effects of the Exxon Valdese oil hemorrhage. He is the author of many articles on the depth phenomenology of human development, especially adolescence, some of which have been collected in the volume *Milestones in Adolescent Relationships*. He has lectured widely in the United States, Canada and Europe. During the Fall of 1990 he was an Overseas Research Fellow in South Africa.

Barbara A. Baker earned a degree in English from the University of Pittsburgh in 1991. She is currently teaching composition and studying at Auburn University, concentrating on gender studies and Twentieth Century Literature. She has published her poetry in *Frameworks Literary Magazine* and is currently working with Joyce's *Ulysses*.

Ellen Barker attended Ball State University and earned a degree in English education. With this degree, she taught two years of high school English and reading. From there she earned her Master of Arts degree at the University of Missouri, Columbia, and then returned to Ball State University where she began her career as gypsy English instructor. She has taught English and writing at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville; Eastern Oregon State College, where she gained experience teaching in a summer exchange program with the Community College of Micronesia on the island of Truk and on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation in central Oregon; West Georgia College, and now Dekalb College. Currently she is finishing her Ph.D. in rhetoric and composition and modern literature at Georgia State University.

Lisa Plummer Crafton received her Ph.D. in English Literature (British Romanticism) from the University of Tennessee. Now as Assistant Professor of English at West Georgia College, she is teaching courses in British Romanticism and Women's Literature.

Her research has focused upon Blake, Wordsworth, the lyric as genre, and Millay, and she is currently editing a book on the French Revolution debate of the 1790s.

Sue Hammons-Bryner is an Associate Professor of Social Science at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College. She has degrees from The University of Georgia (1970), West Georgia College (1974), and Florida State University (1991). Her current research interests include the barriers faced by nontraditional students.

Sandra S. Honaker received a Master of Arts in English Literature with an emphasis in Creative Writing in 1986 at the University of South Carolina. After a few years teaching in small colleges and a single year teaching English in a private high school (during which time she won the Tennessee Outstanding Teacher of the Year Award for 1988), she retired from academia in 1989 to write a novel. Older and wiser after this experience, and encouraged by the shift toward interdisciplinary studies, she came back to the academic fold in 1991. She now teaches a sophomore level course at Auburn University entitled Great Books, which is an interdisciplinary course stressing the teaching of philosophical, religious, historical and scientific works as well as literature.

Meg Wilkes Karraker is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota. Her research explores the impact of social structure on quality of life, and she has published research and review articles in a variety of journals.

Kareen Malone teaches social psychology, gender studies, and Lacanian psychoanalysis in the Psychology Department at West Georgia College. She received her Ph.D. in Psychology and Literature from the University of Dallas and has published and presented in the areas of humanistic psychology, phenomenology, feminism, and psychoanalysis. She is currently working on a manuscript that examines the significance of psychoanalytic structures within contemporary sexual practices and fantasies.

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