

Feminist Scholarship Review

Trinity College
Volume II No. 1

Hartford, CT
Fall 1992



Feminist Scholarship Review

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Feminist Scholarship Review

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Letter From the Editor

Women's Center: Reviewed Sources

Women's Center: Additional Sources

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Fall, 1992

To the Recipients of Feminist Scholarship Review

When I decided to review the twentieth anniversary issue of Ms. for this issue of FSR, I also decided to write an editorial about the differences between the original magazine and the "new" Ms., the publication which resulted from a 1990 decision to produce a document that is free of advertising and the interests that advertising represents. My plan was to interview people who had read both and ask them to compare the two. I'd summarize my myriad interviews and be able to write on the subject with the wisdom of hundreds (well, maybe scores) of informed readers to back me up. I spent my time at coffee machines, lunch lines and office doors asking the question: "Have you read Ms. both prior to and since September, 1990?" I found only one person who had been such a loyal fan: Diane Martell, director of the Trinity College Women's Center.

Diane believes that the new Ms., the Ms. that doesn't depend for its survival on advertising interests, has been enabled to include more perspectives and to enlist scholars, activists and writers, with greater freedom. I, too, find the new Ms. to be a fuller, richer magazine, still commercial, but free of the "slickness" that made me stop reading it several years ago.

What becomes apparent in reviewing current women's magazines is a split in commercial magazines between the "women on the go" magazines in which pay equity, child care for working women and sexual harassment in the workplace tend to be the only legitimate issues and those magazines, such as Ms., in which the explication of issues for women of all classes and nationalities is seen as an essential goal. I have reviewed both types of magazines in this issue of FSR, the new Ms. and the "women on the go" magazine called "Working Woman". I don't intend to make an evaluative statement about either "type", but with reading time in such short supply, it's worth knowing what perspective you'll find and what might be included or left out when you open the cover.

Both in the editorial and in my review of Ms. I encourage people--people who read the old version and gave up, as well as people who haven't yet been introduced to Ms.--to read the current edition of Ms. It is a journal that started out as a commercial venture, succeeded, and then found the energy and the courage to shed an image that was getting worn out at the least, faithless and jaded at the worst. It is a journal that took a risk with its very existence in order to re-establish a finer vision of itself. A rather noble action, I'd say: important, and worthy of support.



---Deborah Rose O'Neal

Ms.

Volume III. Number 1. September 29, 1992

The Twentieth Anniversary Issue of **Ms.** celebrates the history of much more than its own existence. Articles about feminist fashion (a funky cartoon version of this topic) and the National Organization for Women as well as histories of the feminist print media (in the form of abstracts), of feminist bookstores and of the feminist art movement all chronicle two decades of disappointment and joy, doubt and elation in crucial areas of feminist accomplishment. Editorials by Robin Morgan and Gloria Steinem present a pictorial and prose history of **Ms.** itself. The perspective is keen and is communicated in an engaging style.

Neither is the present neglected in this issue of **Ms.** One time articles such as Maxine Waters' response to the Rodney King incident/aftermath as well as recurring sections such as the one on international issues that effect women, including virginity testing in Turkey and sexual harassment in Japan, are clearly topical. An article called "Radical Heterosexuality" is refreshing both in style and content. This article by Naomi Wolfe begins: "All over the country, millions of women have a secret indulgence. By day, they fight gender injustice; by night, they sleep with men. Is this a dual life? A core contradiction?" Finding the answers is worth the reading time!

The **Ms.** of 1992 is a new **Ms.** Two years ago, **Ms.** went to a no advertising format in an effort to be free of the influences and subtle inhibitions that catering to the outside interests inevitably brings. The result is a "magabook" that is worth looking over, no matter what your experience with the old **Ms.** While the style of writing still reflects **Ms.**'s status as a commercial magazine, the articles are more scholarly and avowedly radical. The disadvantages of this move is that the cost of this magazine has inevitably increased. The advantage is that one can read about complex issues covered in few other journals, but written to carefully appeal to a wide range of readers. That is: non-technical, accessible, easy-to read, maybe even humorous.

Although much has changed about the magazine over the years, I found one thing to be the same. Whenever I read **Ms.**, I feel as though my needs and interest are in the foreground: my personal needs and my needs as a member of a community of women. A warning about hair care products directed towards black women, a poem called "Persephone Abducted," information on the latest research about the most fortuitous days of the menstrual cycle for breast cancer surgery, a short story by Ursula LeGuin. I don't know how they do, it but I feel taken care of when I read **Ms.** Still. After all these years. And that feels good.

---Deborah Rose O'Neal

Women's Center: Reviewed Sources

Working Woman

August, 1992

Working Woman is a commercial magazine which targets the population for whom it is titled. The emphasis is either on moving upward either into the ranks of or on through the ranks of white collar business professions. Of the five feature articles in this issue, two are on job security, one is on fashion ("how to stay stylish with integrity"), one is a character study of a successful career woman (in this case, Hillary Clinton) and one has to do with a woman's rights/working conditions issue: discrimination against pregnant workers both before and after maternity leave. Articles are written for a quick, easy read by a great range of readers. While the topics are directed toward a specific audience--women of ambition who have made their careers in the world of business--the writing contains neither technical terms nor difficult language. Meaning is clear; the message is a straight forward one.

Working Woman's report on pregnancy discrimination provides some disheartening information about the subject. For the first time in years, the number of complaints that have been brought before the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has risen. In addition, the EEOC, which is the federal enforcement agency most often used in discrimination cases, rarely rules in favor of the woman bringing in the complaint. In fact, EEOC ruled to support a pregnant woman against her employer only 3% of the time! The article elaborates on the subject, delineating the increasing subtle ways in which discrimination can be brought to bear to the detriment of pregnant employees. The article is discouraging in the end, but it has enough of a statistical bent to inform the reader rather thoroughly on this subject. The theory is, it's good to know what you're up against when your back is to the wall.

Working Woman speaks to a specific audience. Nowhere is this more apparent than in its advertising. Since the review of Ms. in this issue of FSR includes wholehearted support of a magazine which has chosen to go forward without advertising, the contrast between these two magazines presents itself as quite prominent. Cigarette ads, car ads and more--soap, luggage, toothpaste, diet foods. This is a part is what you get when you flip through the pages of Working Woman. But, you also get a mainstream magazine which doesn't pretend to be anything else. A magazine which addresses mainstream issues from a woman's point of view. Nothing radical here, one would think, but, in the letter to the editor, Lynn Povich states, "Government and business cannot continue to pit our children against our work so that one or the other suffers." I suppose I can read between the wine ads and the cosmetics ads to support that sentiment!

---Deborah Rose O'Neal

Anniversary Gift Inside! 20 Years

Women's Center Additional Sources

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VOLUME III, NUMBER 1

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Ms.

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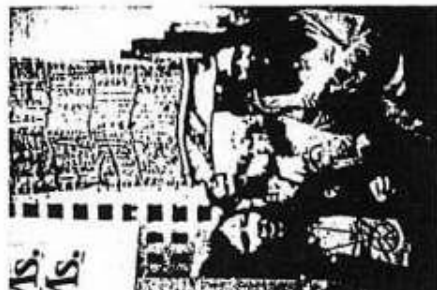
20 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

Ms.

To obtain information about reprints of articles in this issue, call Jane Fulton, permissions editor, at (212) 511-9193.

Maureen Kumin won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1973, and was consultant in poetry to the Library of Congress in 1981-82. She has published essays and fiction, and her tenth book of poems, "Looking for Luck," was published by W. W. Norton earlier this year.

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Rita Dove's most recent book of poems is "Crux Now" (W. W. Norton, 1989). She teaches at the University of Virginia and has just completed her first novel, "Through the Ivory Gate." In 1987, she received the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry for her book "Thomas and Beulah" (Carnegie Mellon, 1986).

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The World of Women Volume III, Number 1

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Alison Bechdel, creator of the popular comic strip "Dykes to Watch Out For," has published four collections of her work, the latest of which is "Dykes to Watch Out For: The Sequel" (Feminist, 1992). She thanks Helen Bechdel, Nancy Sherman, Jennifer Casper, Jenelle Green, and the "Ms." staff for their inspired fashion consultations.

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Marilyn Chin was born in Hong Kong, raised in Oregon, and lives in California. She is currently teaching at San Diego State University. Her awards include a National Endowment for the Arts Writing Fellowship. She is the author of "Dykes to Watch Out For: The Sequel" (Feminist, 1992), and her latest book of poems is "The Phoenix Game, the Tennis Enigma." page 67

Editorial intern: Goldfriede Altman, Sharon Debeaux, Priscilla Haskins, Erica Jucis, Christine Page. Art assistant: Erin Wiele. Research assistant: Judy Warner. Special assistant: Kelly Kuabirin.

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WORKING woman

AUGUST 1992

U.S.A. \$2.50 CANADA \$2.95

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Getting the Most From A Performance Review

Why Pregnancy Discrimination Is On the Rise



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ISSN 0277-5395

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PERGAMON PRESS

New York Oxford Seoul Tokyo

WOMEN'S STUDIES INTERNATIONAL FORUM

VOLUME 15 NUMBER 4 1992

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INDEXED/ABSTRACTED IN *Alt Press Ind*, *Amer Hist & Life*, *Ann Guide Wom Perio US/CANADA*, *Curr Cont ASCA*, *ASSIA*, *Br Hum Ind*, *Curr Cont/Soc & Beh Sci*, *Curr Cont Soc Sci Cit Indx*, *Fem Perio*, *Hist Abstr*, *PsycINFO*, *Psychol Abstr*, *Sociol Abstr*, *Stud Wom Abstr*

ISSN 0277-5395
WSINDA 15(4) 441-534 (1992)

The Women's Review of Books

Vol. X, No. 1

October 1992

74035 \$2.00

Inside:



A protester from the Women's Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice climbs the fence at the Seneca Army Depot. In *Nuclear Summer*, reviewed in this issue, Louise Krasniewicz analyzes the confrontations at Seneca in the summer of 1983.

- ◆ What is the men's movement, and why should feminists distrust it? Jill Johnston reviews women's reactions to Iron John and his followers, p.8.
- ◆ Reading long-forgotten recipe collections, Jeanne Schinto discovers that cookbooks offer instructions not just for cakes and casseroles, but for domestic roles as well, p.16.
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Self-help or self-harm?

by Cynthia D. Schrager

I'm Dysfunctional, You're Dysfunctional: The Recovery Movement and Other Self-Help Fashions, by Wendy Kaminer. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1992, 180 pp., \$18.95 hardcover.

Women and Self-Help Culture: Reading Between the Lines, by Wendy Simonds. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992, 257 pp., \$35.00 hardcover, \$14.00 paper.

More than twenty years after "the personal is political" became a rallying cry, American politics ironically seems obsessed with the personal. Republicans have mounted a campaign that packages anti-feminist and anti-gay messages as a call for "family values." Democrats have turned to ever more personal confessions to regain the moral high ground. After the Clinton and Gore acceptance speeches at the Democratic convention, *The New York Times* quoted Sally Jessy Raphael as saying, "These people belong on talk shows." Even Gloria Steinem, whose name was once synonymous with second-wave feminism, has written her own self-help confessional. In these strange postfeminist times, two new books on self-help and recovery offer contradictory explanations of what it all means.

I'm Dysfunctional, You're Dysfunctional, an intelligent, often funny, critique of America's love affair with recovery, is sure to offend as many readers as it pleases. Ranging broadly and anecdotally over such contemporary phenomena as self-help books (both secular and religious), twelve-step support groups, TV talk-show "testifying" and recovery and New Age workshops, Kaminer takes on the recovery vogue with the same glee and razor-sharp analysis with which Mark Twain took on Christian Science (another self-help movement that, she reminds us, is a forerunner of our current variety). A self-described "skeptical, secular

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Wellesley College Center
for Research on Women
Wellesley, MA 02181
(617) 283-2500
Volume X, number 1
October 1992

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The Women's Review takes no editorial stance; all the views expressed in it represent the opinion of the individual authors.

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The Women's Review of Books (ISSN 0038-1433) is published monthly except August by *The Women's Review, Inc.*, 828 Washington Street, Wellesley, MA 02181. Annual subscriptions are \$17.00 for individuals and \$30.00 for institutions. Overseas postage fees are an additional \$1.00 for Canada, and \$20.00 airmail or \$5.00 surface mail to all other countries. Back issues are available for \$2 per copy. Please allow 6-8 weeks for all subscription transactions.

Second-class postage paid at Boston, MA and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: send address corrections to *The Women's Review of Books*, Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, Wellesley, MA 02181.

The Women's Review of Books is a project of the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women. As an autonomous publication it has its own editorial board and board of directors, who set policy with regard to its editorial, financial and organizational character.

The Women's Review is distributed by Island Book Company, East Haven, CT; Ingram, Nashville, TN; Don Oton Distribution, Minneapolis, MN; Small Changers, Seattle, WA; and Doornbos, Toronto, Canada. Overseas distribution: Giovanni's Room, Philadelphia, PA. All other distribution is handled directly by *The Women's Review*.

The Women's Review is a member of the Council of Literary Magazines and Presses. It is indexed in the *Book Review Index*, the *American Humanities Index*, the *Alternative Press Index* and the *Left Index*.

The Women's Review is available on 16mm and 35mm microfilm and 105mm microfiche from University Microfilms International, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

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FS FEMINIST STUDIES

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NWSA Journal

A Publication of
The National Women's Studies Association



Ablex Publishing Corporation
Norwood, New Jersey

NWSA Journal

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VOLUME 18

NUMBER 1

STARS

JOURNAL OF WOMEN IN
CULTURE AND SOCIETY

SPECIAL CLUSTER: SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

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Watching publishers' series is a good way to follow new scholarship. The University of North Carolina Press has established the scholarship series Gender & American Culture as a place to publish new studies which combine feminist scholarship and American social history. The studies in this area call attention to gender in action. They challenge us to look more closely at all American experience and to use a variety of documentation, public, private and literary, to broaden conventional understanding.

A look at three recent publications reveal the thrust of this series. Elizabeth Faue's study **Community of Suffering & Struggle: Women, Men, and the Labor Movement in Minneapolis, 1915-1945** looks at how expectations about gender shaped the course of the American Labor Movement. Faue argues that for the major part of the 20th century women workers were either ignored or alienated by a labor movement that failed to acknowledge the connections between productive and reproductive labor and the importance of women's work to the family economy. Her focus on the labor movement within a specific community during a tumultuous period leads her to suggest a new social history of the 20th century, one that sees the economic crisis of the 1930s not as an aberration in American progress and growth but as a period which fundamentally altered the relationships between man and woman, labor and capital, citizen and state.

Paula Rabinowitz also looks at the 1930s but through a little-known group of novels written by women who were literary radicals. In **Labor & Desire: Women's Revolutionary Fiction in Depression America**, Rabinowitz challenges the common understanding that feminism as an ideology disappeared during the decade of the 1930s. She surveys more than 40 novels, reading them as cultural history, and concludes that the radical women's writing of this period did elaborate female subjectivity. For Rabinowitz, this genre rewrites women into the history of labor and workers into the history of feminism.

One of the most recent titles in this series analyzes poor women of the North Carolina Piedmont during the Civil War. Victoria Bynum's **Unruly Women: The Politics of Social and Sexual Control in the Old South** focuses on women marked as defiant, those who protested domestic abuse in the courts, those who engaged in illegal sexual relations, and those who protested the policies of the Confederacy during the Civil War. Bynum became acquainted with these otherwise obscure women by searching local and state court records, public documents, and manuscript collections. Her examination of the effects of these women's social and sexual behavior on the dominant society shows the ways in which power flowed between the public and private spheres. Whether wives or unmarried, enslaved or free, women were active agents of society ordering and dissolution.

The following lists the other titles in the series Gender & American Culture.

The Limits of Sisterhood: the Beecher Sisters on Women's Rights and Women's Sphere by Jeanne Boydston (1988)

Doing Literary Business: American Women Writers in the Nineteenth Century by Susan Coultrap-McQuinn (1990)

Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South by Elizabeth Fox-Genovese

Second Stories: the Policies of Language, Form, and Gender in Early American Fictions by Cynthia S. Jordan (1989)

Ladies, Women, & Wenches: Choice & Constraint in Antebellum Charleston & Boston by Jane H. Pease (1990)

The Work of Self-representation: Lyric Poetry in Colonial News England by Ivy Schweitzer (1991)

The Secret Eye: the Journal of Ella Gertrude Clanton Thomas, 1848-1889 edited by Virginia Ingraham Burr; Introduction by Neil Irvin Painter (1990)

FORTHCOMING

Made from this Earth: American Women and Nature by Vera Norwood (1993)

Revising Life: Sylvia Plath's Ariel Poems by Susan Dyne (1993)

---Linda R. McKinney

Waiting to Exhale, 1990

Waiting to Exhale by Terry MacMillan was one novel which I could have waited longer for. Compared to her first two novels, Mama (1986) and Disappearing Acts (1989), MacMillan did not provide her readers with her usual quality material as expected. It seemed to me the more characters which she involved in her books, the worse they are depicted.

Based on her prior works, MacMillan has had a flair for accurately portraying the "African-American experience," which is difficult to accomplish. However, in Waiting to Exhale, she did not offer her readers an original view of the hackneyed storyline of black women complaining either about being used and abused or just totally neglected by good black men. She basically gave superficial descriptions of each character, only scratching the surface of what they really are all about. She attempted to illustrate this scenario with four main characters: Bernadine, Robin, Gloria and Savannah. The reader had to distinguish which one of the four main characters was the narrator, which fluctuated from chapter to chapter. Yet, they remained one dimensional paper dolls, never actually being transformed to genuine black Barbies.

Waiting to Exhale lacked in-depth character description, among other things. MacMillan disguised these flaws with prolific profanity and sexual dialogue. She briefly touched on sensitive issues in society, such as the AIDS epidemic, racism at the workplace and dependency on public assistance, which directly pertain to black women. Her direct humor is still one of her better trademarks but it could not carry the entire book. The family pressures she really dug deep into were divorce, how to keep your teenager in check, and the consequences of interracial relationships.

The theme of sisterhood seemed like it was forced throughout the book. It was hard to believe that these "sistuh" got along so well with each other, yet they found it so hard to have a relationship with any man on their same level, both mentally and financially. I wished her book was about the insecurities of black men which hinder them from developing fruitful relationships with black women, instead of simply reminding black women, such as myself, that we are in competition for a nearly extinct species: decent black men.

Terry MacMillan managed to write an excellent story about the strength of the black woman. She portrayed both extremes; the one who will always forgive her man because he's a "super lover," and the one who cannot attract a man, because "she could stand to lose a few pounds". MacMillan practically glorified black women as though they are invincible, able to overcome any obstacle thrown their way. Perhaps this was her point in Waiting to Exhale, but how true is it today? Not to put down the black woman, but we must remember that this is a work of fiction, and until MacMillan gets the facts straight, I'll be "waiting" for her next novel.

NEW AND NOTE WORTHY TITLES

1. **Meeting at the Crossroads: Women's Psychology and Girl's Development.** Lyn Mikel Brown & Carol Gilligan. Harvard University Press. Available in cloth for \$19.95
2. **Backlash.** Susan Faludi. Now available in paper for \$12.50
3. **The Change: Women Aging and Menopause.** Germaine Greer. Knopf. Available in cloth for \$24.00
4. **The Beauty Myth.** Naomi Wolfe. Now available in paper for \$11.00
5. **Our Bodies, Ourselves** has been newly revised.

BOOKS ON POLITICS & ECONOMICS OF PARTICULAR INTERESTS TO WOMEN

1. **The Women Outside: Meanings and Myths of Homelessness.** Stephanie Golden. University of California. Available in cloth for \$25.00
2. **Shoot the Women First.** Eileen Mac Donald. Random House. Available in cloth for \$20.00
3. **Breaking the Glass Ceiling: Can Women Reach the Top of Americas Leading Corporations?** (Updated). Randall White, Eileen Van Velsor, and the Center for Creative Leadership. Addison-Wesley. Available in cloth for \$19.95
4. **Wage Justice: Comparable Work and the Paradox of Technocratic Reform.** Sara Evans and Barbara Nelson. University of Chicago. Available in cloth for \$10.95
5. **Forbidden Grounds: The Case Against Employment Discrimination Laws.** Richard Epstein. Harvard University Press. Available in cloth for 39.95
6. **Empowerment.** John Friedman. Basil Blackwell. Available in paper for \$19.95
7. **Destablizing Theory: Contemporary Feminist Debates.** Michele Barrett and Anne Phillips. Stanford University Press. Available in paper for 12.95

8. **Feminist Theorize the Political.** Judith Butler & Joan W. Scott. Routledge, Chapman, & Hall. Availabla in paper for \$16.95
9. **Inviting Women's Rebellion: A Political Process Interpretation of the Women's Movement.** Anne N. Costain. John Hopkins University Press. Available in cloth for \$28.00
10. **Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics.** Cynthia Enloe. University of California Press. Available in paper for \$14.00
11. **Women's Quest for Economic Equality.** Victor Fuchs. Harvard University Press. Available in paper for \$8.95

---David Givens

Only help her to know --
that she is more than this dress on the ironing board,
helpless before the iron.

-Tillie Olsen, 1954