

Feminist Scholarship Review

Spring 1992

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Feminist Scholarship Review



Creator and Editor:

Deborah R. O'Neal

(Visiting Lecturer in the Writing Center)

Contributing Reviewers:

Linda McKinney

(Reference Librarian)

Sakina Natar

(Class of '92)

Editorial Staff:

Sakina Natar

(Class of '92)

Feminist Scholarship Review

is a project of the Trinity College Women's Center.

Letter From the Editor

Women's Center: Reviewed Sources

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Trinity College Library : Reviewed Sources

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Gallows-Hill Bookstore: Additional Sources

Spring, 1992

To the Recipients of *Feminist Scholarship Review*:

On March 14, I attended a day long workshop entitled "Who is in Charge of the English Language?". The day began with a short linguistic history, given by Professor John Bollard of Smith College, and was followed by lectures on the language biases built around gender, race, age, and religious preference. The day's speakers, who included Helen Raisz, Visiting Lecturer in Sociology at Trinity, referred to the cultural expectations transmitted through language and to the relentless oppression of which language is capable. The movement to codify language that occupied men in the eighteenth century solidified society's prejudices at that time. Our own use of words reflects the present reality in which exclusion still plays a large role. As long as present language forms remain unchanged, they will prefigure our future reality, as well.

The lectures were followed by a lively debate about methods for reforming language in order to promote respect for all members of our society. Focusing on the generic "he/his," Casey Miller and Kate Swift, authors of the valuable reference, The Handbook for Nonsexist Writing, advocated use of the singular "they/their" in conjunction with the indefinite pronoun. Historical precedents for this usage include George Eliot who said, "I shouldn't like to punish anyone, even if they'd done me wrong," and Harriet Beecher Stowe who wrote "... everyone involuntarily looked at each other and drew their breath." Use of "s/he" or "he or she" is impractical due to awkwardness in spoken and written contexts, say Miller and Swift. Bollard added that this problem originated with the men who, in the push for codification, made indefinite pronouns to be singular when, in fact, such terms had historically had a plural usage.

I found myself going over in my mind the (infinite!) number of times I had corrected this very "error" on student papers: a usage that Miller and Swift now suggest is not an error at all. New ideas can be as discomforting as they are stimulating. What do I do now that I can no longer smugly cross out the "they"'s and "their"'s? I am inclined to explain these ideas to my students and to open the issue up for discussion. I am also inclined to be a participant in the movement of language in new direction, to acknowledge the reasonability (and the overwhelming colloquial usage which at least sometimes is an indicator of good common sense) of the "singular they" in conversational speech, and to relax and enjoy its ease of readability in written form.

In addition, I am inclined to ask what you, the readers of *Feminist Scholarship Review* will do. The answer to "Who is in charge of the English language?" is, after all, "We are!" And being in charge of the future demands thoughtful action. Right now.

Women's Studies International Forum.
Volume 14. Number 6. 1991.

Women's Studies International Forum is a bi-monthly journal which is both multidisciplinary and international in scope. The journal provides articles and book reviews gleaned from contributors engaged in feminist research who come from a variety of countries and backgrounds. At the back of the journal is a grass roots information forum in newsletter format called **Feminist Forum** to which all are invited to contribute. **Feminist Forum** contains conference reports, notices of events, campaigns, networks, and more.

This issue of **Women's Studies International Forum** is devoted to the subject of school-age child care. In the introduction, three of the editors, from U.K., the Netherlands, and Germany, summarize the present state of child care around the world. They state that child care is, in general, considered to be the concern of individual families rather than a public affair, and, within those families, it is the responsibility of the woman. They go on to talk about the effects that this system has upon the employment and advancement opportunities of women, internationally. This situation is further delineated in one of the articles in the journal entitled, "Child Care: Love, Work, and Exploitation" (pp. 551-556), an essay which focuses on women's attitudes and concludes that "personal convictions and values on the subject of motherhood and femininity as well as attitude towards social structures supportive of these..." are the elements which keep women from being willing to make changes. Questions of child welfare are often asked by mothers with this responsibility, but, the article notes, the question rarely asked is "to what extent can mothers cope with their burden of child care and how does this affect, in turn, their professional development, social security, their aspirations and life options?" (p. 555) Other articles in this volume discuss child rearing leave provisions, voluntary sector child care and economic considerations in child care.

Book reviews are also provided in this journal. One such review, written by Nancy P. Greenleaf is on **A Feminist Ethic for Social Science Research**, a collection of fourteen papers by feminist scholars which were gathered by the Nebraska Sociological Feminist Collective. Ms. Greenleaf highly recommends the book for both novices in this area and experienced researchers and feels that it "deserves a wide readership" who will gain, among other things, "a clearer understanding of the politics inherent..." in this area of study. (p. 614)

The focused nature of this volume makes it a valuable reference on this subject. Articles are written in easily understandable form.

---Deborah Rose O'Neal

Women's Studies Quarterly.
Volume XIX. Numbers 3 & 4. Fall/Winter, 1991.

In a notice to prospective contributors, the editors of **Women's Studies Quarterly** state that the review "...publishes contributions that introduce new feminist scholarship and theory applied to teaching and the curriculum, original sources and resources of direct use in course and program development, and reflective essays and original creative work on various themes of concern to women's studies practitioners." The originality and variety of the articles in the present volume attest to a faithful adherence to that goal. Articles in this volume range from a retrospective of the last twenty years of feminism which was inspired by the new edition of *Sexual Politics* by Kate Millett (whose introduction to the new edition is reprinted here) (pp. 30-40) to an article about the effect of gender issues in the textual editing of Emily Dickinson (pp. 78-111).

An article concerning gender issues for women in graduate school focuses on the question: "how does (a female graduate student) develop and claim her own voice, her writerly authority as an academic...(when) academic institutions, like the larger culture, gender authority as male?" (p. 156) Anne L. Aronson and Diane L. Swanson, authors of "Graduate Women on the Brink: Writing as 'Outsiders Within' " (pp. 156-173) conclude that the establishment of feminist dissertation groups create a community for women in the process of reworking their relationship to academic authority which occurs as they move from student to professor. Part of the movement, Aronson and Swanson contend, is the change in a graduate student's attitudes towards her personal writing identity and towards her reading of others' writing. Such groups, which are cooperative rather than competitive in nature, allow women to respond to and expand the natural change in self-image and authority relationships which attend their passage through graduate school. The article includes autobiographical reflections and a section which concretely outlines the program at the Center for Advanced Feminist Studies, University of Minnesota which developed the cooperative dissertation writing groups. The article concludes with a list of study questions concerning the composition of the essay which are quite suitable for classroom use.

Women's Studies Quarterly provides book reviews, original poetry, a newsbrief section which features conferences and calls for papers, and more. Articles are written and presented in creative ways. For example, a review by June Porter on a collection of critical essays called **Lesbian Texts and Contexts: Radical Revisions** begins with an autobiographical section in which Porter discusses her personal experience in teaching literature in which lesbian issues are central. Articles in this journal are, on the whole, written with an eye to reader interest and to pedagogical application. The sheer variety of the contents demands a quick look-through, at the least. This fine journal contains something for everyone.

Women's Art Journal.

Volume 12. Number 2. Fall, 1991/Winter 1992.

Women's Art Journal proudly advertises itself as bringing "the latest ideas and scholarship about women and art to public attention." Published semiannually, the journal focuses on biographical portraits of women in the visual arts and on book reviews on the subject of women and the arts. The fine stock on which it is printed and the quantity of black and white illustrations (cover illustrations inside and outside in color) make the journal a pleasure to read from a visual point of view.

Articles in this issue include interesting portraits of little-known women artists such as Oda Krohg, a turn-of-the-century Nordic artist whose portrait, painted by Christiania Fjord in 1886, is printed in color on the inside cover of the issue. The reprinted portrait is of a pensive woman, her face turned away from the interior in which she sits towards a darkening forest just outside her door. A paper lantern lights the interior; a lambence created by moonlight and fog illuminates the forest beyond.

Beyond biographical information, articles tell of the specific feminist perspective that the artists incorporate into their art. This is shown in an article about Dorothy Brett, a British-born artist whose connection with the Bloomsbury group was better known than her art. After living for some time in Taos, New Mexico, she began to take the ceremonies of the nearby Pueblos as material for her art. Reproductions of her paintings "The Matichinas" and "Women's Dance" which are shown in the article, are annotated with this observation, "Dorothy Brett's innovative ceremonial paintings are acute perceptions of social and spiritual organization. By denying individuation and heroism (the paintings) celebrate their rhythmic patterns of collective power" (13). Indeed, "Women's Art" which portrays an oval within an oval within an oval, each comprised of women with intricately braided hair and flowing robes reverberates with collective motion! Seeing this as an expression more readily available to a female artist is an enlightening idea.

Women's Art Journal contains articles of interest to a specialized audience: those interested in the intersection of women and the visual arts. Not surprisingly, the language of the articles is specialized as well. A working knowledge of Art History, of the vocabulary associated with various schools of art and the terms involved in understanding the elements of an artistic creation is helpful in reading this journal.

---Deborah Rose O'Neal

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Women's Studies Quarterly

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LITERATURE AND HISTORY
Reading and Writing That Changes Lives



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Correction

The title of Lyn Mikel Brown's essay in *Women's Studies Quarterly* Spring/Summer 1991 was incorrectly listed in the table of contents. It is "A Problem of Vision: The Development of Voice and Relational Knowledge in Girls Ages Seven to Sixteen."

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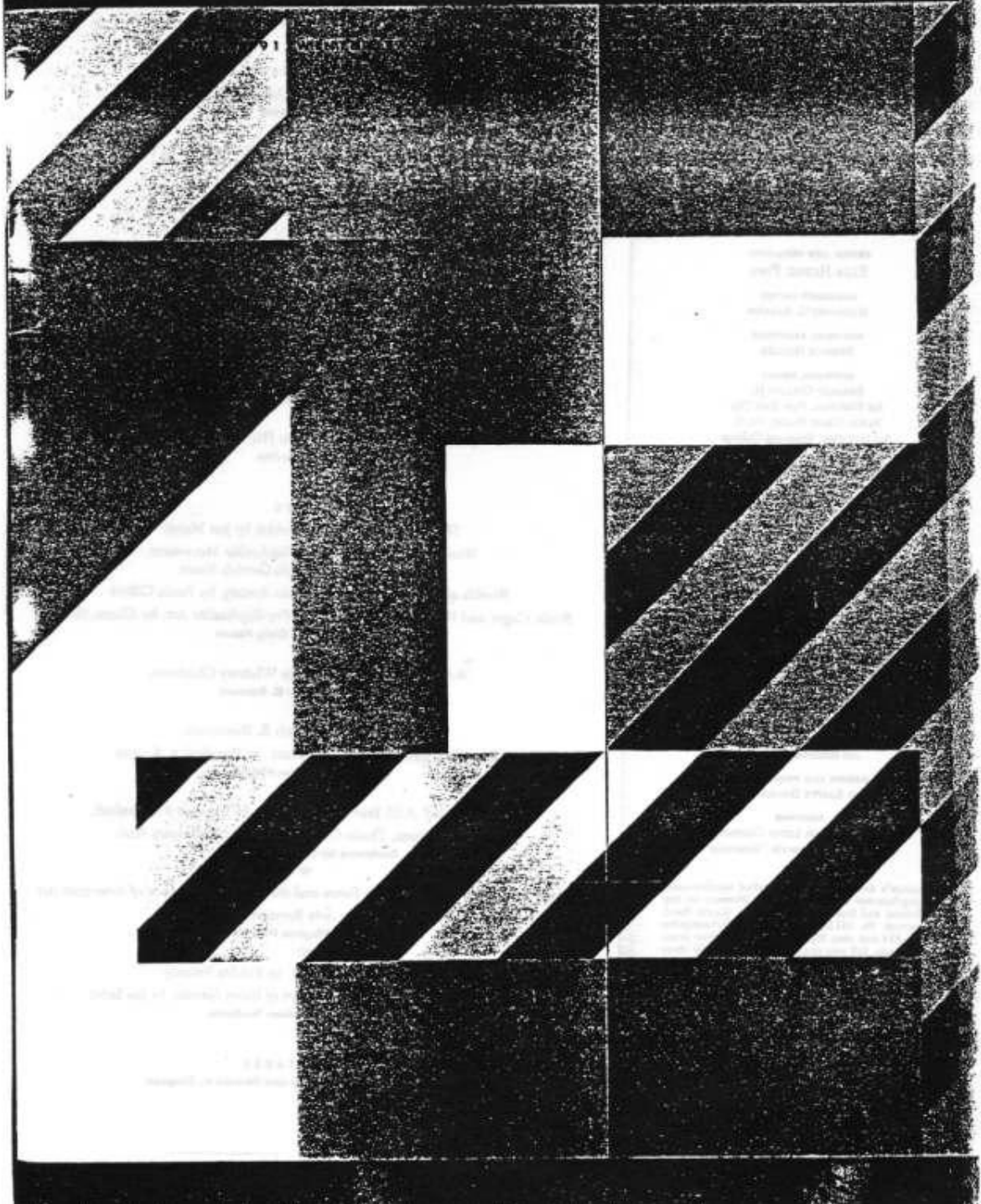
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ON THE COVER



Mary Henry, *Giverny #2* (1985), acrylic on canvas, 72" x 96". Artist's Collection. (detail on cover)

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"My pen is always freer than my tongue. I have written many things to you that I suppose I never could have talked."

Abigail Adams, 1775

Personal writings convey a dimension of history that no other sources can. Diaries, letters, and journals reveal more about a person's situation than even they intended. In the privacy of their diaries, women have revealed how they "really felt," what they believed, desired, and thought about both the little rituals of life and the large events of history. They provide source material for historical, sociological, psychological, and literary analysis. Getting access to a variety of women's diaries, however, is not easy. Trinity Reference has several bibliographies of women's diaries available in print form which simplify the access problem.

The Published Diaries and Letters of American Women: an Annotated Bibliography by Joyce D. Goodfriend. Boston, MA: G.K. Hall, 1987.

This is a comprehensive guide to the most readily accessible diaries and letters of American women writing in the United States. Some are available in printed book form and some in periodical form. Carefully excluded are diaries and letters of American women writing abroad and foreign women touring the United States. Goodfriend has chosen women's diaries that were composed at the time the events discussed were taking place. Her concern is with the immediate and personal rather than the retrospective.

The individual descriptions are arranged chronologically by the initial date of each diary's composition so that they might provide insight into individual lives within a variety of historical contexts. Each annotation describes the author and the time period in which it was written.

The preponderance of writings are of Protestant women of European background but does include diaries and letters written by Roman Catholics and Jews, African-Americans, Japanese, Irish, German, Norwegian, Swedish, and Czechoslovakian women. A subject index allows pinpointing women of a particular group, class, locality, profession, ethnicity, age, or marriage status.

Women's Diaries, Journals, and Letters: an Annotated Bibliography by Cheryl Cline. New York: Garland Publishing, 1989.

This guide lists diaries and other private writings which have been published

separately as books or articles or parts of larger works. It does not limit itself to American women. Authors vary from a Catholic woman in rural Brazil to an Iowa farm girl. Although most are in English, there are some in Spanish, French, German, Portuguese, and other languages where foreign-language material has not been translated to a definitive English edition.

Cline uses a broader definition of diary than Goodfriend to include travel narrative. Her guide to private narratives includes a secret prison diary of a woman interned during World War II, accounts of overland journeys by pioneer women, world travels of Victorian ladies, soul-searching pregnancy diaries, and those emphasizing religious self-improvement. She also includes in her guide other bibliographies of women's diaries, letters, journals, and some secondary critical works.

Each item is described and an extensive indexing is provided. There are separate indexes of authors by profession or significant characteristic, indexes of narratives by subject, and indexes of narrative by location.

The Goodfriend and Cline books are two guides specializing on women's diaries. There are many other more general guides which will also locate diaries of particular women in particular situations such as Barbara Kaner's Women in English History 1800-1914, Laura Arksey's American Diaries or Patricia Havlice's And So To Bed.

The Trinity Library not only has guides to locate women's diaries in print but owns a good number of printed diaries and sources which include diaries. To expand its holdings of diaries, the library has recently acquired a microfilm collection of women's diaries from the files of the American Antiquarian Society. It includes manuscript diaries of Southern and New England women from the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries from more than thirteen repositories. To aid in their use, printed guides to this collection contain an introduction to each diary and a detailed listing of the contents of each reel.

It is in diaries where women feel most free to speak for themselves. Use them to hear women's voices.

---Linda R. McKinney

Adrienne Rich first released her book, **Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution**, over 15 years ago and yet the rhetoric in the document still holds true for women today. Rich's book reveals the inner turmoil experienced by many women, mothers or not. During a time when women's rights over their bodies are once again being questioned, Rich's book gives insight into women understanding their bodies and minds; thus, she speaks of women gaining control of their lives.

Rich's explosive book draws from all the various aspects of her life - as a woman, mother, feminist, and poet. She addresses the backlash by the institution (of male domination) with the boldness of a strong woman. Though the Sixties were thought to have freed women, Rich shows that today's societal institutions still cage women into gender roles, such as the sole caretaker of children. Rich's candidness may shock the reader at first, but this candidness is at the heart of the beauty of the document. Rich explains the struggles and perseverance of womanhood by exploring the dilemmas of motherhood. The role of motherhood is explored through personal, historical, and literary materials. The confusion, frustration, love, and anger of motherhood is remarkably explained within the pages of this document.

If Rich's documentary appears a bit dry to the reader, then the option of studying Rich's philosophies through her poetry may be a more fruitful endeavor. Adrienne Rich has published over eighteen books of poetry. In her latest book of poems, **An Atlas of the Difficult World: Poems 1988-1991**, Rich once again jars the mind with the harsh realities of this country and world. The pain and suffering of impoverished persons, the environmental impact of our exploitative means of living and the apathy of the humanity is vividly expressed throughout this latest collection of poems. Rich's poetry is not only that of a woman but also of an insightful, vibrant human being.

---Sakina Natar

A Select Bibliography of Books About Religion and Sprituality By and About Women

Mary Daly

The Church and the Second Sex

Analysis of Women and Religion.

Beyond God the Father

Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation.

Bettina Aptheker

Tapestries of Life

Women's Work, Women's Experiences and the Meaning of Daily Experience.

Karen Armstrong

The Gospel According to Women

Christinaity's Creation of the Sex War in the West.

Carol Christ

Womanspirit Rising

A Feminist Reader in Religion.

Diving Deep and Serfacing

Women Writers on Spiritual Quest.

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A Personal Treatise on Ritual Herbal Abortion.

Diane Eisler

The Chalice and the Blade

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The Once and Future Goddess

A Visual Chronicle of the Sacred Female and Her Re-emergence in the Cultural
Mythology of Our Time.

Michelle Gimbutas

The Civilization of the Goddess

The World of Old Europe.

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Woman's Mysteries

Study of the Feminine Principle in Myths, Dreams, and Religious Symbolism.

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The Book and World of Margery Kempe.

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The Women's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets

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Women's Rituals

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The Woman's Dictionary of Symbols and Sacred Objects.

Guide to the History and Mythology of Women Related Symbols.

Witherington

Women and the Genesis of Christianity

New Testament Material Relating to Women and Their Roles in Context of the Movement Jesus Began.

Merlin Stone

When God Was a Woman

Story of the Religion of the Goddess.

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The Great Cosmic Mother

Rediscovering the Religion of the Earth.

**You may forget but
Let me tell you
This: someone in
Some future time
Will think of us.**

***-Sappho, Fragment 60,
early 6th century B.C.***