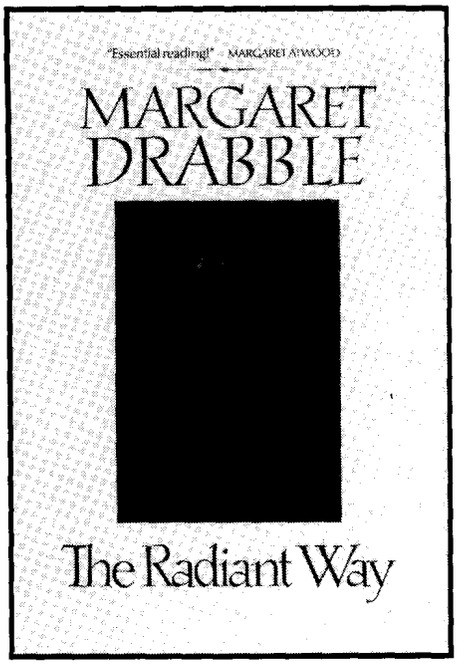
about a vulnerable young woman released on parole, and about giving up her job if her husband, declared redundant, must find employment outside of London. Esther knows that she will never write an important monograph on Crivelli; instead, she fusses about her potted palm. Liz consoles herself with a tabby cat. A gruesome series of murders preoccupies all three friends.

Margaret Atwood has compared *The Radiant Way* to *Middlemarch* in its scope and sympathy and, in many respects, the resemblance is powerful. On a second reading, the welter of information Drabble provides is more obviously unified and structured. Not only does Drabble interlace the stories of the three women, but she also roots them specifically in the political, moral and social setting. Drabble has praised George Eliot's ability to combine social situations with individual passion and here she attempts the same sort of vast integration.

The construction of the novel parallels its subject matter. Instead of being divided into conventional chapters, the book consists of two huge central portions, the second of them taking place three and a half years after the first. These two "mega-chapters" are bracketed by the introduction which describes the New Year's Eve events and by a short epilogue. Drabble has described her usual narrator as "slightly bewildered;" the



self-conscious voice of this narrative does not claim omniscience, but appears to have a considerable access to her characters. Sometimes she curtails her insights firmly, if a bit whimsically. In the midst of providing background information about Alix's husband, the narrator interrupts herself and her reader:

> *But that is another part of this story, and not to be pursued here, for Brian is not a woman and reflections on his prospects or lack of prospects in 1952 would at this juncture muddy the narrative tendency. Forget I mentioned him. Let us return to Liz, Alix and Esther.*

The Radiant Way ends in June 1985 on Esther's fiftieth birthday. The chain of horrible murders has ended with a psychopath's arrest. Liz, her mother dead at last, has uncovered the mystery of her father's disappearance. In the process she discovers her own childhood copy of *The Radiant Way*, the school primer which Charles used for the title of his challenging TV series, now long abandoned for less controversial work. On the book jacket are "a boy and a girl running gaily down (not up) a hill, against a background of radiant thirties sunburst.' The same sunburst-behind-the-clouds illustration decorates the opening of each of the four movements of the novel. It also provides the tranquil, quite unsentimental atmosphere of the novel's conclusion. As Liz looks at the little book:

> *the children aged, slowly. They skipped down hill for ever, along the radiant way, and behind them burned for ever that great dark dull sun. Liz shook her head, slowly, smiled to herself, slowly. It was beautiful, it was necessary, she said to herself. She touched her locket, she laid her fingers on the images in the book. She had been very near to knowledge. She would go no further, today she would nurse her strength, for the next encounter.*

THE GROUNDING OF MODERN FEMINISM

Nancy F. Cott. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987.

Deborah Jurdjevic

Nancy Cott, in *The Grounding of Modern Feminism,* argues for a plurality of feminist causes, recognizes that *feminism* allows "a range of possible relations between belief and action, a range of possible denotations of ideology or movement." Cott's book is an important one, not only for the sake of historical accuracy and for the sense of perspective that it brings to women's causes, but also for its sensitivity to the truth-telling properties of language.

Her thesis is that the new language of feminism marked the end of the 'woman' movement (the nineteenth-century phenomena which resulted in women getting the vote), and marked specifically the emergence of a modern political idea of woman. Feminists of our century, recognizing individuality and heterogeneity among their members, affirm their collective identity by their opposition to sex-hierarchy, by their recognition that women's condition is socially constructed (neither God nor Nature is responsible), and by their shared sense of identity (gender grouping) which itself is the basis for social change. Cott's study focuses on the years 1910 to 1930 and intends national scope for the struggle to discover "language, organization, and goals adequate to the paradoxical situation of modern women."

With an historian's appreciation for detail, Cott refuses to generalize, believing that summary betrays the truth of things. But while the poet and the historian may be at one in this faith in synecdoche, the general reader is somewhat numbed by the variety of causes, movements, ideologies to which women paid allegiance in the early decades of this century. (The introduction thoughtfully carries an alphabetized list of no fewer than thirty-two acronyms.) While there is, in some cases, an overlap of interests among these distinct groups, there is more often an indication of conflict along class or racial lines. Cott's study recognizes and affirms 'difference.' When 'difference' threatens to overwhelm her study, Cott reverts to metaphor. Nineteenth-

century feminists, for example, divided on the issues of individual rights and social responsibility, are credited with achieving a "stereographic or double-lensed view, bringing reality into three-dimensional focus."

Occasionally the metaphor itself threatens to overwhelm the thought. Noting the impact of advertising upon the homemaker of the 1930s, Cott writes, "advertisers drew arms and ammunition of scientific credibility from the stockpiles provided by the social sciences, and the conflicted definition of the modern woman provided ample terrain for psychological battle." Her sense, however, of the importance of fact, of telling detail, more than compensates for an overblown metaphor. Recognizing that young women were particularly pressured to define their own place in society at the beginning of this century, she hits upon a convincing statistic: "more than a quarter of all the American women born in the first decade of the twentieth century, those who came of age in the 1920s, never bore children, despite the waxing marriage rate." Writing of those women who did bear children, but who were not employed outside the home, Cott registers the truth of the situation by letting a variety of women speak, each in her own style. She includes the Irish wife of a carpenter who begins "don't you think I'm not a-wanting to do my share...;" she registers the protests of a middle-aged woman with a college education behind her, and the wife of a teacher, each of whom recognizes that the 'price' of being provided for is self-respect.

The integrity of Cott's study depends in large part on her holding to the terms of her thesis, on her respect for the individual voice, on her respect for difference in sameness. Summarizing twenty years of women's politics, Cott does not assert anything like solidarity, but rather affirms a "vital ambivalence." "Without coalescing into one movement, without mobilizing the mass, and often declining the label feminist, individual and group efforts nonetheless sparked again and again." Late twentieth-century feminists may do well to read by that flickering light.

BODY INVADERS: Panic Sex in America

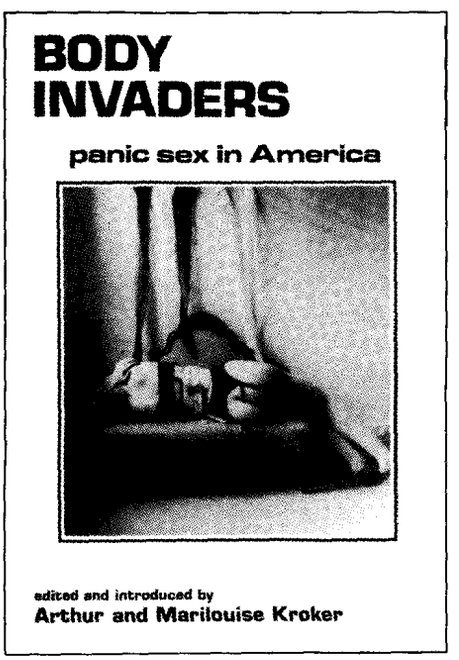
Edited and introduced by Arthur and Marilouise Kroker. Montreal: New World Perspectives, 1987.

Lisa Moore

Body Invaders is a collection of loosely-linked essays that explores the reconstruction of the body in postmodern culture and/or the construction of the postmodern body. These latter terms are constantly renegotiated throughout the volume: the writers spar with easy definitions to produce an enriched, if uncomfortably bruised and bleeding, sense of what it is to live in a body in the postmodern age. We live in a time when representations of the human body are more attractive, more powerful than the human body itself. Indeed, with the advent of reproductive technology, the crusade for fetal rights, and the increased use of organ transplants from animals, it is often impossible to tell just what constitutes "humanity." We who live in postmodern bodies are disconnected from our own flesh and from the communities that might help define it by the exigencies of mass reproduction. We see too many images of what we ought to be to be able to tell what we are.

Since the postmodern epoch is characterized by the domination of visual images produced by the media, the printed word is a somewhat anachronistic method of exploring it. The editors of *Body Invaders* have attempted to account for this incongruity by including photo essays, stills from videos, and graphic designs throughout the volume, and by including essays that experiment with dream narratives and dialogues.

In the context of this postmodern multimedia play between fiction and fact, word and image, it is interesting that one of the most sophisticated and moving essays is Eileen Manion's "A Ms.-Managed Womb," a relatively straightforward analytic piece written in clear, vigorous prose. Manion identifies a crucial contradiction in feminist responses to innovations in reproductive technology: that in rescuing women's individualism from coercive institutions like "the family," we distract attention from our efforts at community-building. The language of the abortion debate, with its emphasis on women's individual choice, is a good example of how feminist principles of community get muddied in discussions of reproductive issues. We have attempted to wrest control over our bodies from individual men and from the patriarchal church and state, but "this revolt against the notion of the body as male property has left us with the idea that the body is our property." This view, Manion claims, "leaves something to be desired — namely the element of the social." This fundamental contradiction has crippled feminist analysis of reproductive rights as a system, confining our politics to single-issue fights without an analytic context from which to establish priorities. Manion points out that feminists must become more involved with public policy-making on these issues because the rapid expansion of reproductive technologies could mean that we find our bodies spoken for before our politics can prevent it. Rather than either "perfecting" these technologies or outlawing them, Manion argues, "what we need is more creative thinking about social possibilities" they open up. Instead of using technology to produce the increasingly elusive fantasy TV family, we should use it as an occasion to ponder what kind of "families" feminists want, and whether we really need science to create them.



Another outstanding essay in this collection is also written from a feminist perspective. Kim Sawchuk's "A Tale of Inscription/Fashion Statements" is a