

Should gender relations be discussed in conjunction with class and/or race relations? What about our biases? Can one, with any degree of credibility, write

from a middle class, Western, feminist perspective on the problems in the Third World? Seminar participants emphasized the necessity for feminists, while recogniz-

ing the bias inherent in traditional scholarship, to be aware of the limitations of our own premises and methodological approaches.

PART THREE: HISTORY

Patricia Froese

The history session was led by Virginia Hunter and Cynthia Dent, of York University. Both women spoke about their experiences in the history department and expressed their thoughts about women's history. A discussion period followed each talk.

Virginia Hunter talked about the influence of the Annales school on her approach to history. The Annales school enlarged her perspective by focussing on agriculture, land use, kinship, family, and housing – all of which enriched her understanding of the status of women in ancient societies.

She discussed the reaction of women students to her courses. Women entered the course hating history because they felt incapable of doing it well. By the end of the course, women were not only doing the best work, but also had realized that they loved social history. This led to a discussion of students in general, which – as a student – I found very interesting.

Participants compared their students to professors, reaching the general consensus that students were more receptive to women's history than their male colleagues. History departments, as well as history professors, were described as sexist, reactionary, and hostile to women's history. The few professors sympathetic to women's studies were generally to be found in social history, a discipline that is also sympathetic to women.

Cynthia Dent's talk focussed mainly on the theories of Peggy MacIntosh on the different phases of historical research. The first type is womanless or traditional history. Token women in history, the second phase, was discussed at length. Many of the books written on women fall into this category and they are terrible. The authors of these books have jumped on the women's studies bandwagon but, since the area is not their passion, they do not research their subjects well enough. Concerning the third phase – woman as anomaly, victim, problem, or absence –

Cynthia stated her belief that this was not a phase to outgrow: sometimes women *have* been victims, problems, or anomalies. She gave the example of the witchcraft trials in which women indeed had been the victims. Woman as history was the fourth type of history, wherein we refuse to see women as problems or victims. The final and highest stage is history reconstructed to include us all.

The history session was very interesting. I had not realized how many problems exist in the struggle to include women in history. The discussion pointed out just how difficult that struggle is. I had hoped to hear success stories from professors: perhaps those do not yet exist.

Jackie Crawford, Anne Louise Currie, and Patricia Froese are students at York University: Jackie Crawford is studying Women's Studies and Anthropology; Anne Louise Currie studies Political Science; and Patricia Froese (who is also a librarian at the Nellie Langford Rowell Women's Collection) is entering the post-graduate program in Environmental Studies.



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