



BOOK REVIEWS

CWS/cf welcomes Frances Beer as our new Book Review Editor. Since 1971 she has taught in the English Department at Atkinson College, York University. She holds a Ph.D. from the Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Toronto, where she edited Julia of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love*. Before coming to Toronto she worked as an editor at Appleton-Century-Crofts in New York City.

MEDIEVAL WOMEN WRITERS

Edited by Katharina Wilson.
The University of Georgia Press, 1984.

Frances Beer

It would be difficult to praise this anthology too highly. The editor, Katharina Wilson, an assistant professor of comparative literature at the University of Georgia, has brought together an array of medieval writers and modern specialists that is simply dazzling. In all, fifteen women from seven centuries – the 9th to the 15th – are represented; they wrote in a total of eight languages, and came from ten different regions. So the spectrum is broad, but there is nothing mechanical about it; the excellence of each individual contribution is unquestionable.

How Prof. Wilson has managed to assemble her formidable cast of scholars is left unexplained. She has avoided that pitfall common to so many anthologies thrown together in response to a fad – reprinting a bunch of existing essays vaguely on topic and then trying to make them hang together. On the contrary, she has done the opposite: she has found scholars from a range of universities, and countries, who are in each case experts on the women about whom they are writing – as Wilson herself notes, “the heterogeneity of medieval women writers is reflected in the heterogeneity of the contri-

butors and their approaches.” Each has prepared an introduction that includes biographical material as well as a discussion of the writer's place in her time and culture, and a description of her work as a whole.

These introductions are followed by short, representative selections, in new translations; the choice of works presented shows the particular esteem and understanding that the modern contributors each feel towards their own medieval writers: a lot of care and love has gone into this volume. In addition – and perhaps as a result – the anthology is built upon a foundation of meticulous scholarship. Each introduction is thoroughly researched, and is accompanied by an exhaustive bibliography that includes both primary and secondary texts. “We hope,” says Wilson modestly, “to stimulate further research and continued interest in the women writers of the Middle Ages;” such “further research” will surely be facilitated by the existence of these booklists, and the quality of the selections suggests that “continued interest” is the very least response that can be expected to these astonishing women. Alas, it is not possible to discuss them all; it is equally impossible to choose a few who emerge as the best. The voices are different: stunning, personal, courageous, moving, each in her own way.

Dhuoda, a learned lay woman of the bloody Carolingian era, separated from her family, writes a *Manual* of advice to her absent son which reflects her substantial wisdom but as surely conveys to him her tender concern, the urgency of her need to care for him even from afar. Hrosvit, a Saxon canoness, writes a play about three fiesty Christian virgins who are imprisoned in a kitchen by a lecherous pagan governor; when he attempts a nocturnal assault on their chastity, a miracle directs him instead to the pots and pans, to which he proceeds to make ardent love (while the girls watch, giggling we presume, through a crack in the wall). Emerging

covered with soot, his inner evil is appropriately reflected by his new black exterior; the girls, of course, are martyred, and rejoice in the prospect of joining the heavenly company. And so it goes: Marie de France's *lai*, Yonec, glorifying adulterous love, is hauntingly beautiful; Heloise's letter to Abelard is a proud, fearless statement of passion; Hildegard's vision of the gigantic, flaming, world-egg is a staggering piece of surrealism described with exact scientific precision. Other selections include both the religious and the secular worlds: Mechthild of Magdeburg, Marguerite Porete, Hadewijch, St. Bridget and St. Catherine, Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe; and the *trobairitz* Castelloza, Florenca Pinar, and Christine de Pizan.

Katharina Wilson's excellent introduction performs a crucial unifying role. She discusses why she has chosen these particular writers: they represent a number of important stages in the Middle Ages; a range of genres; both vernacular and Latin compositions; both secular and religious points of view. She asks why, when many of these women were widely read and respected in their own times and for long after, they have since been lost to us. And she undertakes to discuss how they were similar to their male counterparts, and how different, the ways in which their writing can be seen to be characteristically female. Wilson's method is thoughtful, understated, and the more effective as a result. She is not taking aim at the male establishment for suppressing these extraordinary voices; she is simply giving them back to us, and with the gift we realize that there has been an eerie silence, which now, fortunately, has begun to be filled.

Appropriately, *Medieval Women Writers* is unexceptionable in its production: paper, typeface, and layout are all of the best quality, and result in a book that will survive the many perusals it will surely undergo at the hands of its enthusiastic readers.

NEW FRENCH FEMINISMS, AN ANTHOLOGY

Edited by Elaine Marks and
Isabelle de Courtivron. Amherst:
The University of
Massachusetts Press, 1980.

Somer Brodribb

Marks and de Courtivron claim that "We do not wish to suggest that all French feminists are theoreticians and that all American feminists are activists" (p. x). Yet they argue that "In France the most stimulating tests of the new feminisms are being written by women of letters, intellectuals, professors of literature and philosophy, psychoanalysts, formed by a radical anti-bourgeois bias, steeped in Marxist culture, trained in dialectical thinking" (p. xi). The editors convey a sense of American theoretical inadequacy, and awe of the French intellectual tradition. There is a tension between their reverence for discourse and the knowledge from their own movement of the importance of experience: "We cannot believe in the reduction of reality – oppression, suffering – to language (p. 3)." However, they opt for discourse, asserting that in France and "nowhere else have groups of women come together with the express purpose of criticizing and reshaping the official male language and, through it, male manners and male power (p. 6)."

The book gives little sense then of the actuality of feminist political struggles in France, and the reader is left with the impression that discourse theorists are the

most significant moment in the French women's movement. Clearly, this is not the case, but the movement and practice of French feminists have been lost in this collection. The editors have seriously misunderstood the group "Psych et Po" as "one of the most influential and radical of the women's groups" (p. x), "the cultural and intellectual centre of the MLF" (p. 31). By giving preeminence to a group whose "megalomaniac" and terroristic interventions in the women's movement have been documented by Christine Delphy and Dorothy Kaufmann-McCall,¹ the editors have presented us with a lopsided account. *Féministes révolutionnaires*, *Ligue du droit des femmes*, *Chosir*, and journal collectives such as *Questions féministes* are relegated to the periphery, even though several predated "Psych et Po" or were founded as counterpoints and remained in open disagreement with the *préciosité* of *l'écriture féminine*.

Although the third Introduction makes some reference to these schisms, there is a melting down of important differences in perspective and orientation which require understanding, not homogenization. But text become more significant than context:

Contextual differences are less important than textual similarities. On the level of a new imagery of woman, the explicit ideological disagreements between Monique Wittig and Hélène Cixous fade. The reader reacts to the representation of the female triumphant (p. 37).

The editors attempt briefly to treat male theoretical influences, and we are told that Irigaray is a Lacanian, Cixous a Derridean. But the impact of Althusser, Levi-Strauss,

Lacan and Derrida on the French feminist theorists is textually invisible. Important differences and meanings are obscured in a reduction to the female triumphant. And the extent to which the French women theorists have broken their dependency on these systems of male thought is not raised. Perhaps that can best be judged through the absence of textual references to women's experience and women writers historically. In this anthology, the French feminist writers are dematerialized and ahistorical subjects, and this facilitates their decontextualization and assignment to categories that don't fit. In spite of the diversity of their perspectives, de Beauvoir, Kristeva, Wittig and Cixous are presented together as writing on "Utopias."

To be truly useful as a means of cultural exchange, a feminist anthology must attend seriously and critically to cultural, historical, social and political contexts of writing; the influence of patriarchal premises must be visible; and disagreement and difference must be clear if we are to share in critical reflection rather than be lost in vague generalization. These are problems that all anthologies face, but in the case of *New French Feminisms* they have had unfortunate consequences for its value.

¹See Christine Delphy, "Women's Liberation in France: The Tenth Year," *Feminist Issues* (Winter 1981), pp. 103 - 112; and Dorothy Kaufmann-McCall, "Politics of Difference: The Women's Movement in France from May 1968 to Mitterrand," *Signs*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Winter 1983).

INTERNATIONAL DISCOGRAPHY OF WOMEN COMPOSERS

Aaron I. Cohen. Greenwood Press, 1984.

WOMEN IN MUSIC: AN ANTHOLOGY OF SOURCE READINGS FROM THE MIDDLE AGES TO THE PRESENT

Edited by Carol Neuls-Bates. Harper & Row, 1982.

Agnes Roberts

The appearance of Aaron Cohen's *International Encyclopedia of Women Composers* in 1981 was an event in the music world. He has followed that this year with the publication of an *International Discography of Women Composers*. With their work

ignored or infrequently performed, it has been difficult for women composers to become established in an area mostly controlled by male producers, publishers, critics, conductors and deans of music departments, to mention only a few influential positions. Certain areas of musical performance were traditionally designated as appropriate for women, such as keyboard instruments, harp and voice, but composition has been a man's domain.

That a discography of 128 pages of recorded works by women composers can be assembled testifies to the creative output by women from the twelfth century Blanche de Castille, through the Middle Ages and the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (most entries are drawn from this century). Three pages are given to listing the recorded works of the nine-

teenth century pianist Clara Schumann, an incredibly prolific composer whose total output is even more amazing considering her additional roles as wife to Robert and mother to their several children, as well as teacher and performer. There are 43 different countries represented, and 468 women composers listed, among whom are 13 Canadian women composers – altogether an impressive list of recorded music from a segment of the population which has been largely overlooked for centuries.

Mr. Cohen's discography effectively disproves the caustic remark by the late Sir Thomas Beecham, quoted at the front of the book, that "there are no women composers, never have been and possibly never will be." What's more, now there are women conductors too, Maestro!

In 1903 the New York Musicians' Union became affiliated with the A.F.L. and was forced to accept women into its membership. Acceptance of women into the Union was a big mistake, said one theatre music director, since women did not have the physical stamina to play wind or brass instruments and therefore played out of tune, and anyway they did not look pretty while playing! A concertmaster of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra in 1903 generously conceded that women might qualify for theatre orchestras, but the physical demands of opera would be more than a woman could handle.

These items are from Carol Neuls-Bates' *Women in Music*, a collection of interesting articles, interviews, biographies and letters about women in music from pre-Christian times to the present day.

The achievements of these women throughout the centuries are impressive, in spite of imposed limits of education and deliberate restrictions for performance because of their gender. In 1528 a publication

by a Baldesar Castiglione states what was expected of a Renaissance woman – a picture of demure, charming servility, able to sing and play several instruments and dance, all within the requisites of graceful feminine behaviour! We smile at the absurdity of this description of sixteenth-century courtly behaviour, but the pages of *Women in Music* testify to centuries of continuing impediments for women who wanted to pursue music as more than just a social decoration. Sixteenth-century convents and eighteenth-century Venetian conservatories produced many highly skilled women musicians, but scope for performing was limited. A privileged environment was another way a woman could receive education and musical training, as was the case with both Francesca Caccini of the Baroque period and Clara Schumann of the nineteenth century, whose artistry was acknowledged by her famous contemporaries Brahms and Joachim. Such recognition was not to be for the gifted Fanny Mendelssohn

whose father wrote to her that music "can and must only be an ornament, never the root of your being and doing". This sounds reminiscent of sixteenth-century Castiglione, but Fanny's letter from her father is dated 16 July 1820!

Carol Neuls-Bates concludes her book with an interview with the American composer Nancy van de Vate, and the point is made that women need not be categorized if they are good, a view which would have been quite impossible in any other century, and is only recently viable in this century. It is an encouraging finale to this anthology, which shows women musicians from the time when they were silenced in the fourth-century Christian churches to the present day, when they can and do write and perform. This is a thoroughly interesting book, with many entertaining quotes and many sobering historical facts, which combine to give an excellent account of the history of women in music.

SEX AND DESTINY: THE POLITICS OF HUMAN FERTILITY

Germaine Greer. Toronto: Stoddart, 1984.

Nancy Mandell

I struggled through Germaine Greer's new book, *Sex and Destiny: The Politics of Human Fertility*, alternately feeling elated, frustrated, provoked and bludgeoned. This mixture of emotions symbolizes my ambivalence in recommending this book. For while Greer has once again sparked our moral outrage and occasionally our imagination, there are problems of style, thematic structure, substance and ideology which make this a trying book to comprehend.

The topic of the book is human fertility. How do we define fertility in the West as opposed to non-Western countries? What fertility controls have Western countries developed in the past one hundred years and how have these been applied to Western and non-Western women? What is the relationship of mainstream fertility controls to our changing conceptions of sexuality? How have these changes affected the Western family, in particular our attitudes toward children and motherhood? How have Western ideas of population control become institutionalized in the form of increased medical control over

conception and contraception, and in the form of government and world wide population lobbies?

These are clearly important questions and ones which have not been raised within an implicit Western/non-Western frame of comparison. The problem is that Greer attempts to answer them all. As these questions suggest, the scope of the book is enormous. Any one of these issues constitutes a treatise in itself and therein lies the first limitation of this work. Too much material is covered, often too haphazardly for the reader to grasp anything except a few key points about each topic – points which are usually raised in the form of an outrageous overstatement or a condescending metaphor.

Greer, of course, would rightly argue that it is the readers' responsibility to be sufficiently informed about fertility issues that they are able to follow the diverse and tangled arguments she presents. But merely comprehending any of Greer's fundamental themes presupposes an extensive reading of both women's issues (such as the history of the birth control movement, the feminist critique of the professional health establishment, and the devalued role of women and children within patriarchal cultures), as well as presupposing an understanding of Western capitalism and its exploitation of Third World countries. Extensive knowledge and considerable patience is demanded from the reader in both grasping the

dimensions of the content presented and in wading through such an array of topics.

One of the consequences of this scope and complexity is to consign this book to a rather elitist readership. This seems contradictory to feminist attempts to demystify often obscure scientific writings. One is left wondering what audience Greer had in mind and, for what purpose. Given the density, style, lack of feminist references and the advancement of patriarchal arguments, she seems to be trying to reach male authorities in control of Third World population programs. In the process of trying to effect political change, Greer leaves the status of ordinary women and children in a decidedly ambiguous position.

In each of the topics addressed, Greer provides a sometimes irritating amount of detail which deflects attention from her arguments. It is only when one is wading through the myriad of details – for example, of fertility practices of the Bororos – that one begins to wonder exactly what is the unifying thesis of the book. Is it the arrogance and brutality of Western capitalism in imposing its fertility values on other cultures? Is it the anti-natalism of developed countries?

Herein lies perhaps the major failing of the book, namely the reluctance to identify a thesis around which fertility issues could be discussed. Fertility is, after all, one of the essential issues of the women's movement. By using the contexts of either

power or capitalism, for example, fertility could have been analyzed as part of women's overall subordination. Instead, what we receive is a panoramic view of the horrors of Western fertility as it is legalized, practiced and transported to non-Western countries. We are provided with an overview of the complexity and catastrophic consequences, but no identifiable solutions or remedial directions to pursue.

The lack of a unifying thesis raises an even more disturbing reflection than the desire for the inclusion of perhaps pat solutions to issues of population control. After all, Greer's style is to raise provocative questions, and, in this case, our collective global consciousness. She ended *The Female Eunuch* with the question "What will you do?" But this earlier work presented the objectification of women within the ideology of patriarchal domination. *Sex and Destiny* not only ignores the element of male power in determining cultural definitions of appropriate fertility practices, but also advocates a series of patriarchal alternatives to our dismal situation. The West, she argues forcefully, has grown profoundly disdainful of motherhood as evidenced in both the lack of desire for children and in the numerous cultural disincentives to having children. In Western society parenting is not encouraged, pregnancy is scorned as an abnormal state, mothering is denigrated and children are segregated from the world of adults.

Greer first enunciated this theme in *The Female Eunuch* and pursues it more strenuously in *Sex and Destiny*. This is in keeping with the second wave of feminism which has such authors as Firestone, Oakley, Spender and Freidan analyzing the origins and consequences of our child-hating society. As many of these writers suggest, what we require now is directions for integrating domestic and wage labour which overcome the restrictions placed on women by the separation of private and public patriarchal structures.

Rather than exploring the links between the degradation of women and the degradation of children, Greer focuses on the advantages of being a female and a child in non-Western societies. The implication is that underdeveloped societies, which Greer sees as placing mothers and children at the center of women's lives, are somehow free from our discrimination. This suggestion that non-Western cultures are superior in their treatment of women and children overlooks the growing feminist literature which discusses the

exploitation of Third World women. But more seriously, by not discussing non-Western cultures as patriarchal societies, Greer is ideologically endorsing an androcentric alternative.

Western societies have been cruel in their handling of minorities, but it seems facile to assume that non-Western women are blissfully happy with their lot. For example, the role of the Indian woman as mother is glorified while the practices of *suttee* and wife burning are ignored. A critical analysis of women's experiences is similarly rendered invisible in the discussion of Chinese mothers killing their newborn female infants in their desire to have their sole progeny a male heir.

Instead of investigating these contradictions as part of her analysis of Western anti-natalism, Greer's solution is a return to large families and extended arrangements. The reader is left dazed, wondering how a feminist critique of mothering and children could produce such an irresponsible solution to such a fundamentally political issue. It takes very little imagination to guess to what uses Greer's conclusions could be put by anti-feminist groups.

Not only does Greer advocate a patriarchal alternative to the problem of finding a place for women and children in our society, she also advocates a return to patriarchal methods of fertility control. The widespread use of birth control pills and IUDs, we are told, has wrought unsuspecting medical hazards on Western women's health. Voluntary sterilization, which is rapidly becoming the Western contraceptive method of choice, is bemoaned as "making as much sense as blinding a man who needs glasses." The resolution advised is a return to the use of the less medically dangerous methods of coitus interruptus, abstinence, and the use of condoms. As Dale Spender has commented, women's right to control their own bodies and sexual destiny has been exercised by women controlling their own reproduction – hence the demand for diaphragms, cervical caps, pills and IUDs. These may appear to be small gains, but they are socially and morally significant. While I agree with Greer's platitude that we need to put more effort and imagination into developing contraception, a return to male-controlled methods does not strike me as a reasonable interim solution.

The contradiction between seemingly arguing in the best interests of women and yet advocating androcentric alterna-

tives is similarly expressed in her discussion of the sexual revolution. Greer follows a familiar theme in her condemnation of permissive mores as further enslaving women as sexual bargaining units. In our twentieth century quest for self-awareness, articulated around the "perfect orgasm," women have been told that they must be constantly available to men since any form of sexual deprivation is viewed as unhealthy. Greer's call for a return to less "genital dabbling" and more sex as "amorous conversation" will no doubt be heeded in this post-permissive era. However, throughout this chapter, whether she is addressing the historical progression in our sexual attitudes by tracing the work of Freud, Reich and Foucault, or whether she is castigating the professionalization of sex as evidenced by the emergence of sex therapists and sex education, Greer promotes a heterosexual bias. The vast literature on bisexuality and homosexuality as political and social alternatives to gender oppression is ignored.

Greer seems less interested in advancing consistent themes and exploring options than in documenting the horrific fertility practices of Western societies. The breadth of the criticisms and the extensive, often caustic, treatment of certain fertility issues alone recommend the book. Criticisms include the relationship between fertility, morality and gender identities; cultural management of fertility through the controls of coitus interruptus, homosexuality, abstinence, abortion, infanticide and sterilization; the relationship between fertility and sexuality; the effects of fertility management on family life; and the institutionalization of Western fertility values. While all of these issues are provocatively documented, the presentation of the eugenics movement stands out as being particularly enervating.

Greer begins by tracing the link between Western fertility values and the eugenics movement. The historical emergence of the Western concept of the "worthless individual" is exposed as the underlying premise of eugenicists. Population lobbyists which include population control movements, the early birth control reformers, governments as family planners and international aid societies, have all adopted the Western value that the poor of the world should not have any more children because the poor are more degenerate, lustful and irresponsible than the wealthy. Eugenic arguments previously applied within our own Western

culture are now transported into Third World countries we can bully under the guise of limiting overpopulation. Greer reveals Western haughtiness when she suggests that the only reason we think we can dabble in other people's reproductive behaviour is because we, in the West, think the world belongs to us.

Falling under her condemnation are Sanger and Stopes, the early birth control reformers. The manner in which their connection with the eugenics movement is presented can only be interpreted as an attempt to discredit these women. What Greer fails to explain is how pervasive, throughout North American and Euro-

pean middle-class reformers, was the ideology that genetic superiority must be encouraged through government population policies. By removing Sanger and Stopes from the cultural context in which they acted, Greer's vitriolic statements appear churlish. The Canadian abortion issue today is the social and political equivalent of the early campaign for birth control information and dissemination. Ignoring the moral and legal victories of Sanger and Stopes today is akin to historians questioning Morgentaler's motives fifty years from now.

A central tenet of the feminist movement has been to ask, of every book,

political stance and ideological argument, "Where are the women?" One concludes Greer's book by asking the same disturbing question. The voice of women is heard too infrequently. Too frequently women are rendered invisible through the adoption of an androcentric style and through the exclusion of female references. In proposing solutions to urgent fertility issues – that is, women's issues – there is no attempt to move beyond androcentric alternatives. And while a failed attempt is regrettable, no attempt is merely contemptible.

SEX STEREOTYPING IN ADVERTISING

Alice E. Courtney and
Thomas W. Whipple.
Lexington Books.

Judith Posner

Sex Stereotyping in Advertising is exactly as its title suggests. It gives the plain, down-to-earth facts about the portrayal of men and women in advertising. No fancy footwork here. Unfortunately for us, the straight goods is that, contrary to popular belief, little has changed in the last decade.

The authors, Alice Courtney and Tom Whipple, are well-known experts in the field, especially here in Canada, although Whipple has recently returned to the United States to teach. Alice Courtney, who teaches marketing at York University, also has a track record with the Advertising Advisory Board, professional and government reports on the topic and women's advocacy groups. It is worth emphasizing the fact that she straddles a never-never line between business and academic communities, even between marketing and advocacy, this making her an esoteric and important, credible voice on the subject. In fact, one of the things that I like best about the book is its lack of rhetoric, although it is entirely clear where she and her co-author Whipple stand on the matter.

Essentially, the book is a systematic review of all the research in the area, which is largely in journal form and comes from a variety of disciplines ranging from women's studies, communications, and marketing and to the academic social sciences. They review over three hundred published articles (in English) around the

world. I was surprised to learn that the first empirical examination of the issue was published as recently as 1971, by Courtney herself. So, in a sense, one could say we have only just begun to fight. Clearly, however, the proliferation of studies on the topic since that time has been enormous, so it is useful to have 'old time' experts in the field as our guide.

Courtney and Whipple's book is thoroughly readable, with clearly defined chapters and subheadings – ten of them – each ending with a summary of research conclusions. The chapters reflect the range of relevant issues on the topic, such as the portrayal of gender, public attitudes, effects of stereotyping, the new female market, regulation of advertising, etc. Chapters which are of special interest to current issues include Chapter 6 on "Decorative and Sexual Portrayals," which relates rather nicely to the contemporary pornography controversy. Chapter 7 is a particularly original discussion of two issues, the use of humour in advertising (especially with regard to gender) and the effects of female voices and voice-overs. The latter is currently being debated here in Canada within ACTRA. My personal favourite, however, given my own involvement with the advertising industry, is Chapter 10 in which the authors discuss "Educating the Advertisers." They provide four rationalizations which the industry gives in its defense:

1. Advertising is merely a mirror of society.
2. Sex role stereotyping sells.
3. Research doesn't indicate a problem.
4. Complaints are from non-representative persons.

On a recent CBC taping on advertising ethics in which I participated (no jokes, please, about the world's shortest t.v. show) with members of the advertising

community, the latter espoused all of these points so predicably one would have thought they'd read the book themselves (unfortunately the sad fact of the matter is that they hadn't and probably won't). Although I personally don't believe in the conspiratorial theory of advertising, I firmly believe that advertisers suffer from what might better be called an "absence of malice." They are negligently apathetic until pressed to the wall. And, as consumers, we have failed to push them hard enough.

Probably the only real criticism I have of the book (save the dated title *sex* for gender stereotyping) is not so much a critique of their work as it is a critique of the studies they review, i.e. content analysis. To expect them to undertake an analysis of the methodology of content analysis would be an unrealistic expectation, to be sure. It is worth noting, however, that many of the contradictory results in the area (especially the discrepancies between industry and academic studies) might be due to the arbitrary nature of coding and the general unreflectiveness of much content analysis research. As the authors themselves indicate in Chapter 1, in which they review the few analyses that focus on visual imagery: "These studies indicate the need for additional content analyses to further document the body language and visual image used to portray the sexes in advertising." In short, much of this material, nuances of power, sexuality and gender, are merely glossed over by the researcher. Since it has also been demonstrated that advertising has become increasingly pictorial over time and less semantic, notions of visual literacy, semiotics and iconography are becoming increasingly germane to the study of ads.

Sex Stereotyping in Advertising is clearly the authoritative reference in the area (the

only other work at all comparable to it is Butler and Paisley's annotated bibliography *Women in the Mass Media* which contains a section on advertising). While it's thoroughness and cost (\$32.50) render it inappropriate as a text for most courses, it is a must in libraries, institutional and personal. Additionally, the book contains a number of original graphs, excellent for teaching purposes, which summarize the results of various research studies.

Finally, the stereotyping of women in

advertising and other aspects of mass media are reflective of the general tone of post-liberation ideology. All around us we are hearing rhetoric about the new woman, the working woman (as if women never worked before) and the liberated woman. But when it really comes down to brass tacks we are left with one primordial truth: "*De plus en plus les choses changent . . .*"

Afterword. It is also interesting to note that McClelland and Stewart has just re-

leased a book offering the industry view on the topic, John Straiton's *Of Women and Advertising*. It supports many of Courtney and Whipple's points about industry rationalizations. Essentially it asks female consumers to stop whining and pull themselves up by their own purse straps. Since such an attack is tantamount to blaming rape on the victim, one hopes it is not taken very seriously. Still, I am afraid industry people will be consoled by it.

INTERNATIONAL FEMINISM: NETWORKING AGAINST FEMALE SEXUAL SLAVERY

Edited by Kathleen Barry, Charlotte Bunch, Shirley Castley. (Distributed by) New York: The International Women's Tribune Centre, Inc., 1984.

Lorraine Gauthier

Violence against women has been a major concern of feminists for some time now. The international scope of this violence is rarely recognized however. It is this global dimension which *International Feminism: Networking against Female Sexual Slavery* attempts to address. This book is both angering and depressing while it simultaneously shows us what active international cooperation can achieve. Among these achievements is the disclosure of an international traffic in women and children which is, in itself, an impressive feat given the silence with which many countries shroud the dismal reality of the lives of many of their women and children, and given the silence which fear, shame, propriety or pure lethargy impose on women's angry denouncement within other, supposedly more liberal, societies.

In the first part of the book the authors present the *raison d'être* of the workshop, held in Rotterdam from 6-15 April 1983, called "International Feminist Networking against the Traffic in Women: Organizing against Female Sexual Slavery," outlining its goals, its framework and its resolution. Kathleen Barry's definition of sexual slavery as "any situation a woman is in, in which she cannot get away and in that situation is physically abused and sexually exploited" (p. 22) formed the basis of the participants' attempts to analyse the global and international characteristics of the sexual enslavement of women. Prostitution in its various forms was seen as the dominant manifestation

of this enslavement. In their analysis of prostitution the separation of the *individual* prostitute from the *institution* of prostitution became a central issue. The latter was defined as "a product of male domination, of sexual violence and enslavement" and further qualified in this way: "acceptance of prostitution as an inevitable social institution is lodged in the assumption that sex is a male right, whether it is bought, sold, seized as in rape, or more subtly coerced as in sexual harassment" (p. 26). The importance of this demarcation became apparent when strategies for fighting prostitution were discussed. In seeking possible corrective measures which did not further penalize women, all members were adamant that both state legalization and prohibition were detrimental to women; only decriminalization of prostitution and the creation of laws against the exploitation of prostitutes by pimps or procurers could be of any assistance to women and to the global feminist attack against the institution of prostitution.

Working in the opposite direction they attempted to reunite the issues of child prostitution and adult female prostitution which the general public and its legislative bodies tend to differentiate. The danger in this dichotomization was clearly expressed in the workshop on prostitution: "Ultimately, when a society can separate exploitation of women from that of children and consider them as different problems, the invisibility surrounding the violation of women serves to perpetuate the exploitation of children" (p. 30).

Marriage (with its ensuing dependent status for women) and poverty at all levels (individual, family and/or state) were seen as the two fundamental causes of prostitution. An important disclosure is the extent to which state governments are actively encouraging, organizing and regulating prostitution as a means of obtaining badly needed foreign currency. Sex

tours are but the more visible edge of this complicity. Much was said about poverty as a significant cause of self-prostitution and of the selling of women and children into prostitution either by family members or by the state. What is never clearly underlined is that women and children have to be seen as possible commodities for sale when dire circumstances warrant it. Nothing about poverty itself would lead us to see the sale of women as human chattel as a possible solution. This debasement or potential debasement must be present at all times for it to be acted upon during times of economic stress. What do we make of forced prostitution where no economic motive is detectable? The research presented here emphasizes that it is always poor women who are being sold to rich men. The subject of psychological causes is tackled in only one article, written by Hanna Olsson, whose insights are interesting but whose conclusions are profoundly disappointing.

In the violence and sexuality workshop the definition of sexuality adopted might give some pause for concern to women involved in the present day sexuality/pornography debate. Intricately linked with their notion of commodified sex as the basis for the institution of prostitution they stated that, in their view, "a redefinition of sexuality must reject this notion of sex as commodity, and understand sexuality as a means through which people can relate to each other as human beings and not as beings of a specific sex" (p. 53). The documentation presented in this book might, however, be of use to these same debaters since the liberating aspects of sadomasochistic sexuality should be explored in the context of the reality described here, a reality which is neither in the realm of fantasy nor consensual. It is important to ask, and I ask this seriously, what role violence and aggression play in the fantasies and desires of women and children who experience sexual violence

aggression every day. Is there a relationship between the experience or non-experience of violence in real terms and its presence or absence in fantasy? Although the book itself does not address this issue, those among us who are interested in the relationship between violence and sexuality would do well to ponder its implications.

The authors' belief that "there exists ONE universal patriarchal oppression of women which takes different forms in different cultures and different regions" (p. 53) stems from their notion that sexual commodification and sexual exploitation (violent or otherwise) is a universal phenomenon. The documentation presented in this book revealing international cooperation in the use and abuse of women and children certainly gives substance to the claim that "throughout all . . . forms of domination, the sexual exploitation of women persists" (p. 55). It is in the context of this "commonality of patriarchal oppression experienced by all women" that they sought to "devise a common strategy to eradicate female sexual slavery" (p. 53). Such a strategy for action included working with organized feminist groups in regional areas in a non-hierarchical network; working with governments and with United Nations agencies; and using the press for education and publicity. These latter two indicate perhaps a certain naivety as to our ability to turn aggressive institutions into allies, especially given the organizers' own experience *vis-à-vis* the funding and recognition of this workshop, and given that

the United Nations conference recommendation found in the appendix of the book is littered with "recommends, suggests, requests" all qualified by article 12 which states that: "The present Convention does not affect the principle that the offences to which it refers shall in each State to be defined, prosecuted and punished in conformity with its domestic law" (p. 137). Given their documentation of various states' involvement in the very organization of prostitution, cooperation – let alone corrective measures – seems unlikely.

More reliable sources of support for the network and for feminist activities in this area have been churches. The theoretical and political implications of collaboration with churches is never addressed, understandably perhaps, since the very dimension of the problem of violence against women seems to necessitate an uncritical acceptance of any support offered. Yet such a collaboration must be clearly analysed from a feminist perspective.

The second part of the book documents various aspects of sexual slavery which the workshop hoped to highlight: prostitution, trafficking in women and sex tours. Those of us for whom prostitution was defined in terms of the "streetwalkers" of the large urban cities will have our eyes rudely opened by the documentation presented here. Sex tours where men are promised their own "sexual slave" of any age (the younger the better); bride advertisements where other men are guaranteed docile and faithful wives; brothels staffed by women flown in from diverse

parts of the world with no identification, no skills, no way out, no home, with nothing but their commodified bodies between themselves and destitution or death; children (taken from refugee camps, bought from destitute families, kidnapped from large urban areas or poorly-populated rural ones) servicing from the age of six months to twelve years the perverse sadistic desires of adult men; women as political prisoners, beaten, raped, burned, attacked by animals, witnesses to their children's sexual torture, demoralized, dehumanized.

Anyone who doubted that this world is characterized by sadistic violence perpetrated by men against not only other men (militarism, colonialism, imperialism) but more generally, more brutally against women and children need only read this powerful account to clarify for themselves the dimensions of the task we face. But discouragement or disillusionment are neither the book's intention nor its achievement. There is strength in knowledge and strength in organization: both give us the power to act. The brief bibliography and the list of participants and resource people given at the back of the book gives us a place to start, a place from which to work. The structural limits of its theoretical discourse and the no less frustrating lack of editing (which leaves some sentences too incomplete or ambiguous to decipher) must be viewed within the financial, temporal and staffing limitations within which the workshop was held and its documentation published.

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Who's Who in Women's Studies in India. Available from: Research Unit on Women's Studies, S.N.D.T. Women's University, Sir Vithaldas Vidyavihar Juhu Road, Santacruz (West), Bombay – 400 049.