

<p>When women and men discovered that sex was connected with reproduction, things changed for both of them. Once it became connected with children, it took a different dimension. Woman became a producer of children, not automatically but through her capacity for intercourse, and children themselves, in a settled agricultural community, became a source of wealth (p. 259).</p> <p>Fisher is positively dazzling in her ability to make clear highly complex processes without simplifying them. Having made her general point, she then concentrates on an integrated look at the specific cultures which are the historical antecedents of our society. She provides excellent historical material on the development of civilization in the Middle East and later in Greece and Rome, showing how sexual repression plays a central role in the development of private property, war and class society.</p> <p>Integral to the success of the first organized bureaucracies was the distortion of human sexuality into actual and symbolic production, the repression of female sexuality, and the linkage of war and sex for men (p. 331).</p> <p>The book raises numerous questions but for me the most important is the one she ends with. The assumption of her argument is that women's oppression is centrally linked to all other social oppressions. She also assumes that oppression, sexual repression, dominance hierarchies and warfare are locked together in an ongoing cycle, which if it continues, threatens the very survival of the world. She asserts that we can only know how to break the cycle if we understand how it began:</p> <p>There will be no solutions, only increasing hierarchy and lack of freedom if we do not get at the causes, the oppressive principle growing out of the relation between man and woman which has mushroomed to be the greatest danger to the world's survival. As I see it, the dominance hierarchy is the underlying problem (p. 404).</p> <p>Knowing how it began is important but what we really need is to develop strategies to change the present. How does an understanding of the central importance of sexual repression translate into political action? What are the implications of this for the Women's and Lesbian Movements?</p>	<p>The real test for this book will be if it helps us debate these issues from a more informed and hence stronger position. I think it will.</p> <p><i>Women in Class Struggle</i>, by Marlene Dixon, Synthesis Publications, 1978, pp. 83, paperback, \$3.00.</p> <p><i>Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism</i>, edited by Zillah Eisenstein, Monthly Review Press, 1979, pp. 394, paperback, \$7.45.</p> <p><i>Feminism and Materialism</i>, edited by Annette Kuhn and AnnMarie Wolpe, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978, pp. 328, paperback, \$14.95.</p> <p>Bonnie Fox</p> <p>Although the late 1960s and early 1970s generated an impressive number of serious analyses of the position of women, these were typically (and not surprisingly) crude. Those of us desiring a more complex analysis of the specific ways women are exploited and oppressed under capitalism were left without a book that elaborated a satisfactory framework for understanding woman's position—one beginning with a class analysis of women's work but giving sexuality and childbearing equivalent consideration. Therefore, several Marxist feminist books that have recently appeared merit serious attention.</p> <p>Marlene Dixon's book consists of seven essays, the first five involving a mix of theoretical analysis of woman's position under capitalism and a consideration of strategies for change, and the last two consisting of political analyses of the changing Women's Movement. This joint consideration of theory and strategy is essential for the future of women's struggles for liberation. Unfortunately, Dixon's theoretical attempts suffer from what appears to be the construction of theory according to the strategic conclusions to which it leads. Nevertheless, Dixon's critique of the Women's Movement and her class analysis of its failure in the United States are both serious and authoritative—and demand that even those who disagree with their content consider them carefully. On the whole, the political analysis in this book raises the key issues confronting women activists. The theoretical analysis, though often weak and sometimes contradictory, nevertheless makes some crucial points (e.g., she argues: the root of women's subjugation is the family <i>as organized under capitalism</i>—as a privatized sphere of personal service; women</p>	<p>are not a class and men are not the enemy although they benefit from institutional sexism). In short, the collection would be excellent for use by a study group, especially one including some women who already have a clear theoretical analysis.</p> <p>Let me be more specific about this material and its problems. The mix of abstract theory and political polemic results in a failure to distinguish what is real about women's position and what is mystification. For example, discussing the relationship between husband and wife, Dixon argues that the woman is paid for her household work out of the husband's wage and thus is not the unpaid dependent she appears to be. Dixon is revealing here a reality not clearly apparent. Later, however, she maintains that the domestic labourer is 'a non-productive dependent' (50). This appearance, which she previously penetrated, now becomes reality for her. Similarly, early in the book Dixon argues that the relation between husband and wife is a class relation: she the proletarian, he the bourgeois. As a statement about reality this is clearly problematic. However, when she later refutes 'wages for housework' arguments, she correctly points out that the domestic labourer is not in an employee-employer relationship with her husband.</p> <p>Dixon's discussion of bourgeois morality is her key theoretical contribution: it indicates a framework with which to analyze woman's position. Arguing that the issue of sexuality must be central in any analysis of woman's position, she describes the importance to capital of control over the supply of future labour, in part through a husband's control over his wife's labour power and her reproductive power.</p> <p>While this issue of control over woman's reproductive power (and thus over future labour) extends the boundaries of class analysis towards development of a full understanding of woman's position, some theorists have preferred to abandon further elaboration of a class analysis and take up instead a formulation of the concept of 'patriarchy.' There are problems with this concept, however. First, because it springs from the assumption of the <i>universal</i> subordination of women to men, 'patriarchy' tends to be an historically unspecific concept. Moreover, in turning attention away from historical and cross-cultural variations in woman's position, its use usually excludes the obvious methodology for determining factors causally related to woman's status—namely, the examination of variations in woman's status and their relation to variations in other</p>
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