

Hawthorne is proposing, things done for short-term profit with destructive long-term consequences would be discarded. She beautifully calls for a world in which relationship, reciprocity, and diversity are central to social interaction. There lies the sustainable survival of our planet (for at least 40,000 more years, she tell us)! Is it too much to ask?

## FOR-GIVING: A FEMINIST CRITICISM OF EXCHANGE

Genevieve Vaughan.  
Austin, TX: Plain View Press, 1997.

BY MECHTHILD HART

*For-Giving* is an exciting and difficult book. It moves the reader through the intricacies, multi-layered complexities, and emotional, spiritual and intellectual turmoils of two fundamentally different paradigms. Both the exchange and the gift paradigm shape our “world picture,” our language and culture, and how we live and survive in this world. In *For-Giving* Genevieve Vaughan describes and analyzes these paradigms and places them in the cultural context of western thinking where the *homo donans* is devalued (and exploited) and the *homo sapiens* has become the “masculated” norm. She describes how past experience and practice are transmitted through language and culture. They encompass economic structures and practices which today are omnipresent manifestations of exchange, making the market appear (and operate) as the most natural, rational foundation of our existence.

Vaughan’s analyses are rooted in a passionate call for unburying the giftgiving principle of life, culture, and language, and for re-discovering the logic of a paradigm that is older

and more fundamental than the exchange paradigm. Where the latter creates the un-community of competing, warring and killing masculated egos, the gift paradigm entails the possibility of creating and maintaining peaceful and abundant communities.

Giftgiving unfolds the principle of the Mother whose direct, non-calculated response to a child’s needs is paradigmatic for the “female value” of other-orientation. The good of the other is the ultimate life premise of the mothering model. The logic of exchange is, however, not “need-driven” but “availability-driven.” It is ruled by effective demand, not the need of the other. Throughout the book Vaughan describes how due to the forced coexistence of the two logics giftgiving becomes coopted, instrumentalized, or distorted. Exchange is dependent on the gift, and gift labour is necessary for profit where the many give to the few, not to each other. “Male values” such as self-interest, self-aggrandizement, competition, dominance, and hierarchy characterize the ego structure of the exchange paradigm.

Vaughan leaves few stones unturned, and certainly no space for sentimentalizing the “giftgiving grain” whose inner and outer working she describes, and how the exchange paradigm “drains it, blots it out, cancels it.” She shifts her focus back and forth between the two paradigms, and between the cultural, philosophical, psycho-social, and linguistic levels of analysis. Each new chapter makes the previous ones appear in a new light where it takes on new shades and colours and becomes more solid and fine-grained. Many points may at first strike a reader as rather difficult if not impossible to fully understand—especially if she doesn’t have the corresponding disciplinary background—but they become much clearer in the following chapters.

Vaughan has a powerful political agenda. Again, she connects multiple levels of experience and analysis

by addressing the difficulty of “maintaining ourselves in the gift logic” internally, and the importance of collectively (and globally) re-constructing and building a gift economy. Giftgiving subverts the economic structure of exchange, and it calls for a general, not an individual solution. Vaughan calls for a global, transnational feminist movement where all “unmasculated agents of change unite across the unprivileged categories.” In her final chapter she describes different ways of practicing her theory, individually as well as collectively, and she uses the Foundation for a Compassionate Society (an organization she founded) as an example.

Vaughan is right when she points out that we do not have a meta-language for giftgiving. Many of her insights have been articulated, however, by other feminist writers motivated by the same political-ethical desire but writing within different theoretical frameworks. It is especially the feminist sociologists of the “Bielefeld Approach” such as Maria Mies, Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen, and Claudia von Werlhof who for more than three decades have written about very similar if not identical concerns. Their language, such as “production of life” or “subsistence,” seems to use the master’s tools, but they are re-defining, re-appropriating this language, thus revealing its underlying giftgiving character. Above all, their writings are firmly anchored in a political economy that centres around the materiality of creating or producing the goods and services—the gifts—that satisfy human needs rather than a phallically-invested profit motive. By reading Vaughan’s book I kept looking for places where this material ground of giftgiving is explored. It is, however, mainly mentioned here and there, despite the claim that “beneath the surface of language and the givens of perception lies the free labour of the centuries, consisting of women’s free maintenance of things, as well as all the unpaid ‘other-tend-

ing' labor of the society as a whole." Nevertheless, Vaughan's book will certainly open her readers' minds and hands to seeing, touching, and enlarging the multi-colored, intricate weave of giving, and thus the fabric of a peaceful world.

## SEPTEMBER 11, 2001: FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES

Susan Hawthorne and Bronwyn Winter, Eds.  
Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 2002.

BY LIZ CROCK

In *September 11, 2001: Feminist Perspectives*, Tahmeena Faryal from the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) prophetically declares "Based on historical evidence, we gravely fear that continuation of the U.S. attacks and the resulting civilian lives lost gives excuses to the Taliban and Northern Alliance to wage war, and will also empower and embolden fundamentalist forces in the region and across the world — endangering not only Afghans, but further American lives, and the citizens of many countries." The bombing of a nightclub in Bali, Indonesia, on October 12, 2002, in which many Indonesian, Australian, British and European people lost their lives, may well be an example of such groups being "empower[ed] and embolden[ed]" by ongoing U.S. posturing and moral self-righteousness (if indeed such groups are found responsible). Feminists have a flair for seeing and articulating connections such as these, and in *September 11, 2001: Feminist Perspectives*, an impressive range of feminist writers and activists from all around the world illuminates the events and politics surrounding and deriving from September 11 from multiple angles. The writers

document their reactions and reflections upon September 11, its precursors and its aftermath, in a range of forms: from brief email messages, letters to the United Nations and to George W. Bush, and poems, to public statements and essays.

The reason this book was written, as the editors note, was to document "feminist voices against the war, and feminist analyses of the masculinist ideology behind it." The book also aims to "make feminist sense" of international events that have unfolded since the attacks on the World Trade Center, and it represents a "call for widespread resistance to the masculinist politics of war." *September 11, 2001 Feminist Perspectives*, achieves all these aims and far more. The editors have brought together contributors from many backgrounds and countries—there are representatives of RAWA and of Women Living Under Muslim Laws, UNIFEM, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the Union of Australian Women, and individual feminists from Australia, Aotearoa (New Zealand), the United States, Uganda, and India. Many are prominent feminists: Robin Morgan gives a moving first-hand account of the days following the attacks, although to read yet another first-hand account after the media excesses of the past year can feel burdensome at first glance; Catharine MacKinnon, in her piece entitled *State of Emergency* puts the atrocity of September 11 into perspective, in her characteristic brilliantly persuasive and perceptive style. She points out that the terrorism that goes on in the world against women every day should also be recognised as such and asks provocative questions about why what men do to women is not considered to be "war" or "terrorism"; Betty McLellan highlights the invisibility and marginalisation of women in almost all commentary and responses to September 11, and proposes a radical

feminist response and analysis; Farida Akhter analyzes war as a population policy (and the reverse—population policy as a war policy)—in disguised format. Other contributors are political and peace activists, such as Nobel Peace Laureate Rigoberta Menchu Tum whose letter to President Bush invites him to reflect and not to cry for war. A widow of a US soldier who died in the Pentagon attack pleads for non-violence in response to her husband's death. Ani Di Franco and Bronwyn Winter penned poignant poems reflecting upon the aftermath of September 11. What they all have in common is their commitment to "justice not revenge, peace not war" as the GABRIELA network, a U.S.–Phillipine women's solidarity organisation sums it up. In all there are over eighty contributors, all of whom have something powerful to say.

Sitting down to read a book about September 11, 2001 is hardly something to look forward to, though its subtitle "Feminist Perspectives" certainly holds promise and indeed was the only reason that could have persuaded me to read and review this book. Whilst it cannot be said that this is a book which makes enjoyable reading, the subject of September 11 itself being utterly disheartening, it is a book which at once inspires and shocks, moves and awakens and above all, re-affirms the strength of the world's women and the pure necessity for their voices to be heard. The book is rightfully dedicated to "Women who have struggled to perfect the difficult and valuable skill of surviving, who refuse to be overwhelmed by the overwhelming, and who continue to hope against hopelessness." The women contributing to this book, in their passion and clarity of thought and imagination, have surely given hope to many others where none seemed possible. *September 11, 2001: Feminist Perspectives*, represents an essential contribution to the vast literature spawned by the events of that day in New York.