

TO: Wheaton Community

FROM: Ruth Schmidt and Bonnie Spanier, Director and Associate Director of the  
FIPSE Project for Curriculum Development

Report on the Fall Faculty Conference at Newport  
September 5-6, 1980

Sixty-three full-time and approximately twenty part-time faculty members attended the Wheaton Faculty Conference held at Salve Regina College in Newport, Rhode Island from late Friday afternoon, September 5, through Saturday, September 6, 1980.

Following cocktails and dinner Friday evening at Ochre Court on the Cliff Walk, President Alice Emerson welcomed the group. Provost Ruth Schmidt introduced Dr. Catharine Stimpson, who gave the keynote address on "The New Thinking About Women." One of the key figures in the establishment of women's studies as a scholarly field, Dr. Stimpson was the founding director of the Barnard Women's Center and the founding editor of Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society. She is currently Professor of English at Douglass College, Rutgers.

Dr. Stimpson's presentation centered on the new scholarship (also referred to as the new thinking) about women, a development in academic consciousness which she believes will change culture itself. She reviewed the growth of this new scholarship over its ten-year history and outlined its complex historical, political, and intellectual contexts. The attached article by Dr. Stimpson, "The New Scholarship About Women: The State of the Art" (Annals of Scholarship 1 (2): 2-14, Spring 1980), is an earlier published outline of the ideas expressed in her address to the Wheaton faculty. Questions and discussion followed the address. The evening session was recorded, and the tapes are available from the Mellon/FIPSE Grants Office, Knapton 001.

Saturday morning four concurrent meetings took place, each representing a major curriculum area at Wheaton:

Literature and the Arts

Moderator: Curtis Dahl  
Discussants: Ann Murray, Sheila Shaw  
Consultant: Catharine Stimpson

Studies in Perspective

Moderator: Jennifer Roberts  
Discussant: Nancy Norton  
Consultant: Elizabeth Pleck

Social and Behavioral Sciences

Moderator: Thomas Osborne  
Discussants: John Burton, Nancy Heer  
Consultant: Joseph Pleck

Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Moderator: Bojan Jennings  
Discussant: John Kricher  
Consultant: Evelyn Fox Keller

Summaries of the major points discussed in each meeting are appended to this report.

The men faculty then met with Joseph Pleck to discuss their concerns as men teaching at a women's college and their relationship to the FIPSE curriculum project. At Elizabeth Pleck's suggestion, the women faculty divided into two groups for discussions at the same hour. At lunch, the men and women exchanged information about the single-sex discussions.

After reports on the meetings were presented, Alison Bernstein, Program Officer at the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education spoke briefly to the group and said that she was very pleased that Wheaton's project had been funded by FIPSE. She praised Wheaton College for being among the first to develop the idea of integrating the research on women into the introductory curriculum on a college-wide basis. Ms. Bernstein expressed the view that there was a great need for this innovative project at this time. She also assured the group that, because of the pioneering nature of the program, FIPSE would allow some flexibility in the use of the fund.

Opportunities for recreation and exploration of Newport were enjoyed by many Conference participants in the afternoon. The event concluded with a clamboil given by President Emerson.

NOTICE  
This material may be protected by  
copyright law (Title 17, U. S. Code).

## The New Scholarship About Women: The State of the Art

CATHARINE R. STIMPSON

THE TERM "WOMEN'S STUDIES" tends to confuse people, whether they approve of the phenomenon or not. In part, the confusion exists because women's studies is too new to be well-known. In part, it is the result of the blurring of three related, but distinct, events: the women's movement, the women's studies movement, and the new scholarship about women. I want to define each of them and then offer a general reading of the new scholarship.

The women's movement seeks, through political and social action, to right the wrongs of women. Much less monolithic than people believe it to be, the movement consists of a number of groups, each with its own ideology and programs. All, however, believe that men have had more power and prestige than women, more pomp in their circumstances. Women's studies adapts the principles of the women's movement to educational institutions—from pre-school playgroups to research centers. It takes on classroom behavior; faculty sex ratios; curricula; athletic programs; medical services. It also wants to link the women's movement to other forces for social justice. What this might mean in practice is still in flux. Despite such uncertainties, or perhaps because of them, the growth of women's studies in the last decade has been extraordinary. Since 1969, the number of individual courses in universities has risen from 16 to over 15,000. More than half of the 301 programs offer either minors, majors, or graduate degrees.<sup>1</sup> In January, 1977, a national organization, the National Women's Studies Association, was formed.

The new scholarship about women concerns itself with ideas, facts, concepts, data. It generates material that texts, the media, and teachers may transmit.<sup>2</sup> It has three primary hopes: to deconstruct error about women, an extensive task; to add to the existing body of knowledge to compensate for the absence of women in the past; and to transform con-

sciousness through such processes. Obviously, many of the questions that the new scholarship about women asks, and the urgency with which it does so, are a consequence of the women's movement. Nancy Chodorow, the sociologist, says of her recent book:

This project owes its existence to the feminist movement and feminist community and its origins to a group of us who, several years ago, wondered what it meant that women parented women. Many of my ideas were first developed with the members of the mother-daughter group.<sup>3</sup>

Such comments are less evidence of a peccable politicizing of scholarship than a guide to the particular way in which this intellectual activity interweaves with a public context.

Many scholars do select research problems because they matter to large numbers of women and because their solutions may benefit women. A scientist may study the biochemistry of reproduction, because she hopes to develop a birth control device. An historian may explore women's loss of status in the Renaissance, because she wants to categorize the conditions under which women seem to have power and those under which they do not. An economist may ask why women hold some jobs and not others, because she is trying to explain the mechanisms of occupational segregation. So doing, they belong to the same pragmatic tradition of American scholarship that saw agronomists struggle to develop more fertile strains of rice. The fear that the new scholarship about women will distort its findings in order to support the platform of a mythologized "Women's Lib" is simply unrealistic. The fear that the new scholarship will have its own lacunae, errors, and fallacies is more plausible. To correct for them the new scholarship tries to uncover its own underlying assumptions and make them accessible. At its best it also claims to offer—not an absolute rendering of reality—but a valid reading of it.

To call the new scholarship about women "new" is only partially correct. Its rapid growth, its organizational ambitions, are novel, but critics of consciousness about women, like Mary Wollstonecraft or Charlotte Perkins Gilman, have argued since the eighteenth century that what we believe to be true about women is actually false. Since World War II, certain contemporary intellectual currents have helped the new scholarship about women provide the corrective that a Wollstonecraft or a Gilman thought necessary. Among them are black studies; the new social history;

family history; and the development of the theory in the sociology of knowledge that claims that we govern our perceptions of reality. Again and again, papers cite Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* and Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman's *The Social Construction of Reality* to support statements that men shape and then verify "the true," and that we can reshape "the true" with more cogency and depth.

In brief, the new scholarship about women flourishes within a context. Its influence upon that context has yet to be measured, but its most pertinent ideas are clear. Perhaps the most pervasive of those ideas is that patriarchy has been a historical force. Phrased so baldly, the idea seems crassly obvious, but the new scholarship about women has consistently had to state what only seemed obvious once stated. Patriarchy refers both to families that fathers dominate and large structures like the state that men regulate. Many patriarchal worlds tend to consist of two sub-worlds. The analysis of two sub-worlds becomes far more complex when race and class are included, a necessary task done more and more frequently. For example, Diane K. Lewis, the anthropologist, writes:

The point that female inequality is inseparable from differential male/female activity in the public sphere is well taken. Nevertheless, a careful look at the relationship between black men and women and between blacks and whites in this society casts doubt on the full validity of . . . [the] model.<sup>9</sup>

The first sub-world is the domain of men, of production, of public activity, of culture, and of formal speech. Because it decides what history is, it has forged our collective memory with all its gaps. The second world is the domain of women, of reproduction, of private and domestic activities, of "nature," and of informal speech. Because it has lacked control over the codification of history, it has no collective memory, except within families and in old wives' tales.

Much of the current new scholarship about women is devoted to the mapping of female worlds. An early anxiety about the presence of lesbians in some of those worlds is now diminishing. Indeed, the bolder theoreticians are excavating causal links between homosexuality and much modern female creativity, power, and self-esteem. Whatever their discoveries about sexual mores, anthropologists, reconstructing pre-history, speculate about the importance of mother-centered groups. Art historians ask if women artists use consistent patterns of "female im-

agery." Sociologists and psychologists study mother/daughter bonds. Historians examine Victorian female friendships and such women's institutions as colleges and convents. Economists graph the rise of the female-headed family.

In every discipline, the scholarship about female worlds demands the redemption of the everyday: the letter, the quilt, the stove, the common gesture, the daily toil. Ordinary, as well as exceptional, lives command respect. A nineteenth-century French laceworker is as plausible a research subject as George Sand. To understand them both, subjective as well as objective experiences are taken into account. As the Marxist feminist historian Linda Gordon states:

. . . the neglect of subjectivity . . . can create a misleading impression of the totality and a distorted interpretation of reality.<sup>9</sup>

Accompanying such work, which other social historians might also do, is a set of special attitudes towards women. The investigator tries to extend affection and esteem towards her subject. Two writers recently dedicated their collection of oral histories "To all the women we interviewed for the book, with love and gratitude." Next, the investigator tends to assume that women are sincere, not the chatty fibbers of legend, but reliable witnesses of their own experience. A rape victim is not a liar, but a believable victim. Virginia Woolf is not slandering her half-brothers when she talks about their assaults, but admitting to traumatic sexual events. Finally, because women are often vulnerable, their testimony is to be treated gently as well as trustingly.

Obviously, female worlds exist in relation to male worlds. Under certain conditions, men enter the female world, women the male world. They can, for example, become legislators. The passage of women into male worlds, their competence and their performance when they get there, fascinate American scholars who themselves have had to enter the male world of higher education. In addition, female and male worlds are sexually, psychologically, economically, and culturally dependent on each other. The exploration of the new scholarship into such dependencies has been inseparable from studies of power. This may, in part, reflect the closeness of the new scholarship to the women's movement, which wants to change the nature of sexual politics and sexual power.

Three questions seem particularly intractable. First, how unequal are the female and male worlds? How much more power and status does the male world have? How does one measure power and status? Most people

in the new scholarship about women find sexual inequality psychologically depressing and morally wrong. Their studies in differentiation become studies in a female deprivation and pain that they must help to alleviate as well. Their analyses of sexism are necessary, but not sufficient. As the authors of a fine, new legal history write:

Like many new terms, (sexism) is inelegant and scientifically inexact; it denotes a reality that is overwhelming to those who claim to experience it, and totally fictional to those who deny its existence. It is clearly more than a description, it is an accusation, that implies a disjunction of perspectives, a clash of world views, a debate about what is right and wrong.<sup>1</sup>

However, some decent scholars are uneasy with the insistence upon women's pain. They are aware that life is unfair; that both men and women suffer; that women have made men miserable, as well as men making women miserable; that women ought to stop name-calling and blaming men. Some, primarily in the social sciences, also believe that scholarship ought to be immaculate, remote from messy political and emotional issues. They have their own vision of what studying women professionally entails.

A second question asks about the origins of both gender differences and inequalities. Are they a permanent, tragic fact? Are gender differences permanent, inequalities transitory? If they are transitory, when did they begin? With the formation of private property? With the process of modernization? The third question concerns the reproduction of our sex/gender arrangements. How do they persist and insist upon their own survival? Is it the responsibility of primary school teachers? Of the media? Of a crude male need for domination? Of woman's immersion in "nature" through child-bearing? These interrogations have bred no common answer. Indeed, to dream of common answers may be Utopian, if only because the new scholarship about women co-exists with other systems of thought. If I borrow from Claude Lévi-Strauss, my theories of the source of gender difference will be at odds with a colleague who borrows from Michel Foucault.

In addition to such inquiries, the new scholarship about women is reevaluating certain of its premises that were prevalent only a few years ago. Easy assumptions about the universality of women's experience are being abandoned. As more and more squirming facts are being unearthed, the importance of seeing and deciphering the specifics of various societies has become clear. Maybe the one universal experience

remaining for women is the possession of the womb. In America, minority women, representatives of ethnic groups, and lesbians first urged the recognition of dissimilarities among women's lives. The growing number of international scholars has intensified their demand. The presence of religious courts makes the life of an Israeli woman special. So does the vast isolation of the land for an Australian.

As the need for specificity has grown, it has provoked an old question: whether or not we can pass explicit value judgments upon other cultures. The practice that has been most judged has been sexual surgery. For most American scholars, sexual surgery, particularly the clitoridectomy, is a painful operation that represents sexual repression and social oppression. For other Westerners, some sexual surgery is part of a self-ordained ritual that women perform within their own world.<sup>2</sup> If Western feminists criticize it blindly, they are indulging in imperialistic judgements. Still largely absent from the argument, which has been passionate, are interpretative statements from women within the cultures themselves.

Despite the dominant Western attitudes towards women who have had sexual surgery, the sense of women as victims is also being refined. To be sure, studies of rape, of wife abuse, of sexual harassment, and of economic hardship are being published. However, women are increasingly described as strong and active, not as weak and passive. If they have been subordinate, they have developed patterns of resistance, protest, and shrewd adaptation. Such a shift in emphasis, which has qualified the immediate influence of Simone de Beauvoir and *The Second Sex*, has had vital ramifications. Women no longer seem quite such epistemological blanks, such existential weaklings, such servants of socialization. Instead of accepting the culture and identities men gave them, they generated culture. Gertrude Stein no longer seems the fat proprietor of a famous salon who wrote babble but a brilliant modernist who presided over a charmed circle. If most women were denied full access to high culture, their creative impulse expressed itself in gardens, songs, stories, or else they became guardians of arts and letters. For example, a historian writes of women librarians, that often-maligned group:

Despite the respect paid them . . . women soon learned that they were seldom paid the same as men who were doing the same work . . . Yet in the library literature before 1900 there is hardly a hint that the hundreds of women librarians across the country were . . . disturbed at the inequality that was freely admitted

to be their lot . . . one finds feminine pride expressed at the prevalence of women in the library . . .<sup>10</sup>

Finally, practitioners of the new scholarship about women are reading symbolic systems more sensitively. For example, our picture of the Victorian icon of the frigid woman as sexually deprived is giving way to the picture of a survivor using sexual withdrawal as a way of claiming control over her body and her life. In the past, we were too often guilty of a certain semiological clumsiness. We presumed too quickly that the material world and its symbols were mirror images. If women looked fragile, they must have been fragile. Historians, anthropologists, and classicists have tended to be the better readers of relationships between signifiers and the signified.<sup>11</sup> The literary critics who might have warned us about the dangers of blunt literalism were often isolated in foreign languages or more interested in reclaiming lost authors and in revising the canon.

Without people in the new scholarship about women altogether wanting it, one inquiry is becoming more and more problematic. In all the disciplines, people have adopted a particular minimal theory about sexual differentiation. They have acknowledged, as only a fool or a fabulist would not, that biological differences exist. Women bear children; men do not. Inflating such biological givens are clusters of ideology, dogma, and symbols that have assigned women firmly to the realm of nature and natural law. Two anthropologists have written bluntly:

In no religious system do women's dominant metaphors derive from characteristics other than their sexual and reproductive status, while for men sexual status has little to do with religious representation and participation.<sup>12</sup>

Such assignments are no more than that, for social, cultural, and economic conditions, not nature, have largely structured sexual differentiation. They have decreed that women will rear children as well as bear them. If relations between the sexes are largely social relations; if nurture means more than nature; if gender controls sex, not sex gender, then history is a mutable record of conditions that we can change. We can, for example, alter the role of women as mothers, though it appears to be transhistorical. So a Nancy Chodorow reassures her readers that parenting can be reconstituted as one step towards establishing a sexually egalitarian world.<sup>13</sup>

However, interest in proving the permanence of a profound sexual difference has been revived. It implicitly construes history as a stable record of continuities. If history has maltreated women, we must destabilize the treatment of difference, not its recognition. We must release rather than repress the female; honor rather than sentimentalize and dishonor the maternal; applaud women's rich sexuality rather than mourn their lack of phallus. Such advocacy has emerged from several sources that are otherwise theoretically and stylistically incompatible. One is American social science, particularly the illustrious sociologist Alice S. Rossi. In her long, speculative essay, published in 1977, she asked us to see relations between the sexes from a "biosocial perspective"; to believe that physiological factors in the bonding of mother and child had facilitated the survival of our species; to fear thoughtless rearrangements of parenting.<sup>14</sup> Though Rossi is no reductionist, she attempts to restore the body as a law-giver for our sex/gender systems. A second source is American cultural feminism. Often hostile to academic enterprises, it celebrates the vision of a separate, happy world in which women hold in common their biology, sensibility, and virtue. Finally, contemporary French feminist theory seeks to reconstitute the female subject. Brilliant if diverse women, such as Julia Kristeva and Hélène Cixous, take what they need from psychoanalysis, linguistics, semiology, and philosophy to re-ground our sense of the distinctiveness of female and male.<sup>15</sup>

The argument about the status of sexual differentiation, and the role of the mother, is analogous to the political battles about the women's movement. In America three issues now provoke the most bitterness: the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment, during which some claim that passage of the ERA will destroy the family and flagrantly breed a unisex civilization; abortion, and the ability of women to control their reproductive capacities; and gay liberation, in which men and women demand the freedom to act out a sexuality divorced from reproduction. However, the social scientists, cultural feminists, and French theoreticians I have mentioned, who explore the possibility of profound sex differences, support the ERA, abortion rights, and gay liberation. They refuse to confuse that sense of difference with political conservatism.

The volatile arguments within the new scholarship about women signify a promising vitality. Unhappily, vitality is no guarantee of acceptance within current institutions. The new scholarship so firmly challenges claims that "knowledge" has been organized efficiently, objectively, and wholesomely that it tempts people to evade the challenge.

The new scholarship about women also audaciously asks that a significant number of women, as well as certain ideas and facts, be incorporated into the academy. It believes that discrimination against able women ought to stop. Then, too, most of its practitioners are women. Some men, like the historian Carl Degler, have generously nurtured the field, but if the new scholarship is to be done, the people who do it must be hired and retained, and they are primarily female.

Still another quest of the restless new scholarship is for fresh ways of working. Some people want to imagine and to use another form of scholarly discourse, that would deploy the personal, the subjective, even the lyrical. Such ambitions coincide both with post-modern experiments in discursive prose and with the contemporary interest (seen, for example, in Harold Bloom) in literary criticism in exposing the interaction between an original text and a critic reading that text as s/he prepares to write another text: the critical essay itself. Both groups are anxious to restore the "I" to what have become formalized rhetorical acts; to overthrow the dominance of the third-person and the impersonal "we."

Others within the new scholarship about women are more content with received languages, methods, and tools of inquiry. However, nearly everyone agrees that its adherents must co-operate with each other. Ideally, they should behave towards each other in helpful, attentive, supportive ways. Speech, stripped of a jargon that entwines members of a discipline as it strings more esoteric audiences along, should be as lucid as possible. People should travel with some grace among the disciplines. That hope is still unrealized. We fumble as we approach each other's field. In part, this reflects American graduate training; in part, the reward system of American higher education, in which tough-minded specialists get more praise than curiosity-ridden generalists. In spite of this, the hope remains. As a linguist listens to historians talk about periodization, one of their most interesting subjects, she remembers that it is more than a grammatical marker. When an economist mentions "crowding," Barbara Bergman's explanation for occupational segregation, a social psychologist learns that this means more than a jostled space.<sup>16</sup>

I suspect that the ideas of the new scholarship about women will be more readily accepted than the presence of many women in every area of the academy. The ideas may become diffuse, defanged, even corrupted, but most reasonable scholars will eventually notice them. Their commitment to their professional identity will require it. The "harder" the

discipline, the more difficulty it will have in admitting it has erred; that it has omitted a critical variable; that its tests of verification have failed. Hiring more women, in contrast, must dissolve an often unconscious psychic resistance to having women as colleagues; the resentment of affirmative action programs; and a harsh job market. Hard as it is for a woman to get tenure, it is even harder if she does the new scholarship about women. The more openly identified a woman is with women's issues, the more tainted she becomes. She is thought to be unable to help a department in versatile ways; to have selected a non-subject to explore. The loss of junior faculty, the sacrifice of a generation of scholars, has inexplicably come in disciplinary clusters. In 1977-78, several promising psychologists were denied tenure; in 1978-79 some economists. Counterbalancing such losses has been the formation of research institutes devoted to the subject of sex roles or women—at such places as Columbia, Wellesley, CUNY Graduate Center, the University of Wisconsin, the University of Kansas, the University of Arizona, and Stanford. The Ford Foundation has supported several of them. Indeed, a handful of private foundations and public agencies (Ford, Carnegie, Rockefeller, the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education) have provided crucial funding for an adventurous enterprise when other educational centers were hostile or remote.

I fear, too, that the content of the new scholarship will be integrated into American education more quickly than more benign scholarly methods. Of course, felicity is not wholly absent from the academy. It exists between teachers and students, between colleagues, among members of research teams. Yet, the prevailing notions of professionalism stress efficiency; impersonality; productiveness; the features of a deliberately bland rat race. In theory, the demands of professionalism sort out the less able, but in practice, success requires the sacrifice of domestic life—a strain on the women traditionally responsible for domesticity and for the men who wish to assume part of that burden. People will find it easier to footnote an article about the history of childcare than to insist that their universities have enough childcare facilities to enable men and women to combine professionalism and affectionate parenting.

Given such conditions, the new scholarship about women needs to adopt several strategies to accomplish its ambitions. It now has the maturity to move from a defensive to a stalwart posture. So doing, it can be responsibly expedient and show how much it has to offer scholarship

and teaching. It can add to this a threat of punishment and suggest what it will do if its legitimacy is denied, its truths ignored, its practitioners terminated, its principles spurned. Finally, it can seriously explore withdrawal from conventional colleges and universities. Instead of expending energy of tenure fights, it can build alternative institutions, strengthen women's libraries, develop separate computer networks. If I seem vulgar because I mention strategies, I am responding to the reality that the new scholarship about women will survive and become a part of our everyday intellectual life only if its supporters insist upon that survival. Neither their brains nor their ambitions will be enough. However, the brains are among the liveliest in contemporary scholarship, and the ambitions among the most generous. They were described most elegantly in a poem in 1968, a year before the first formal listing of women's studies courses in America. The poet is thinking of Carolyn Hershel, the astronomer, born in 1750, dead in 1848, the sister of the far better known William Hershel. The discoverer of eight comets, Carolyn Hershel is but one of the galaxies of women who have been impetuous and done penance for it. Then the poet says, of Carolyn Hershel, of herself, and of many others:

I have been standing all of my life  
in the direct path of a battery of signals  
the most accurately transmitted most  
untranslatable language in the universe

I am an instrument in the shape  
of a woman trying to translate pulsations  
into images for the relief of the body  
and the reconstruction of the mind.<sup>2</sup>

Barnard College

Editor, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*

- Florence Howe, "What Is a Women's Studies Program?", *Network News and Notes: Women's Educational Equity Communications Network* (Spring 1979), p. 1. Other articles about women's studies include:
- Annette Allen, and Osborne Wiggins, "The Feminist Critique of Self and Society: A Phenomenological Metacritique," *Catalyst*, Nos. 10-11 (Summer 1977) 37-59.
- Hill Conway, "Coeducation and Women's Studies: Two Approaches to the Question of Woman's Place in the Contemporary University," *Daedalus*, 103 (Fall 1974), 239-49.
- Jane Flax, "The Conflict Between Nurturance and Autonomy in Mother-Daughter Relationships and Within Feminism," *Feminist Studies*, 4 (June 1978), 171-92.
- Christine Allen Garside, "Conceptual History as a Methodology for Women's Studies," *McGill Journal of Education*, 10 (Spring 1975).
- Florence Howe, *Seven Years Later: Women's Studies Programs in 1976: A Report of the National Advisory Council on Women's Educational Programs*, June, 1977.
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Women and the Power to Change*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975).
- Joan Kelly, "The Doubled Vision of Feminist Theory: A Postscript to the 'Women and Power' Conference," *Feminist Studies*, 5 (Spring 1979), 216-228.
- Beth Reed, ed., *The Structure of Knowledge: A Feminist Perspective*, Proceedings for the Fourth Annual Great Lakes Colleges Association Women's Studies Conference, November 10-12, 1978, Ann Arbor, Mich.: GLCA Women's Studies Program, 1979.
- Adrienne Rich, "Toward a Woman-Centered University," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 21, 1975.
- Hanna-Beate Schöpp-Schilling, "Women's Studies, Women's Research and Women's Research Centres: Recent Developments in the U.S.A. and in the F.R.G.," *Women's Studies International Quarterly*, 2 (1979), 103-116.
- Susan S. Sherwin, "Women's Studies as a Scholarly Discipline: Some Questions for Discussion," *Female Studies V*, ed. Rae Lee Siporin.
- Catharine R. Stimpson, "The New Feminism and Women's Studies," *Change* (September 1973). Rpt. *Women on Campus* (New York: 1975), 69-85.
- \_\_\_\_\_, "What Matter Mind: A Theory about the Practice of Women's Studies," *Women's Studies*, 1 (Fall 1973).
- \_\_\_\_\_, "Women's Studies: An Overview," *University of Michigan Papers on Women's Studies*, Special Issue, May, 1978, 14-27.
- \_\_\_\_\_, "Editing Signs," *Bulletin of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, 12, 1 (Spring 1979), 40-42.
- Sheila Tobias, "Women's Studies: Its Origins, Its Organization and Its Prospects," *Women's Studies International Quarterly*, 1 (1978), 85-95.
- Mary Vipond, "Women's Studies Comes of Age," *Canadian Review of American Studies*, 7 (August 1976), 225-29.
- Gayle Graham Yates, "Women's Studies in Its Second Phase," *Women's Studies Newsletter*, Winter/Spring, 1977, pp. 4-5.

I am very grateful to Sherry O'Donnell for her invaluable help in the preparation of this selected bibliography.

<sup>2</sup> For detailed descriptions of disciplinary and thematic developments, see the various review essays in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*. *Signs*, which I edit, is a quarterly academic journal that the University of Chicago Press publishes. The first issue appeared in Fall, 1975. In addition to the review essays that assess the state of the art of the new scholarship about women, the *Signs'* editorials also comment on its development. Such



work, as well as the citations in footnote 1, bring up issues that I have either ignored here, or mentioned briefly.

<sup>1</sup> *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p. vii.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality*, (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967).

<sup>3</sup> Diane K. Lewis, "A Response to Inequality: Black Women, Racism, and Sexism," *Signs*, 3, 2 (Winter 1977), 341.

<sup>4</sup> Linda Gordon, "What Should Women's Historians Do: Politics, Social Theory, and Women's History," *Marxist Perspectives*, 1, 3 (Fall 1978), 131.

<sup>5</sup> *Dutiful Daughters: Women Talk About Their Lives*, ed. Jean McCrindle and Sheila Rowbotham (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1977), dedication page. Oral history provides a useful methodology for recording women's memories and perceptions.

<sup>6</sup> Albie Sachs and Joan Hoff Wilson, *Sexism and the Law: Male Beliefs and Legal Bias*, (New York: The Free Press, 1978), p. vii.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Carol P. McCormack, "Biological Events and Cultural Control," *Signs*, III, 1 (Fall, 1977), 93-100.

<sup>8</sup> Dee Garrison, *Apostles of Culture: The Public Librarian and American Society, 1876-1920*, (New York: The Free Press, 1979), 180-81.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women on Top," in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), 124-151, and Froma I. Zeitlin, "The Dynamics of Misogyny: Myth and Mythmaking in the Creteia," *Arethusa*, 11, 1-2 (Spring and Fall 1978), 149-184.

<sup>10</sup> Judith Hoch-Smith and Anita Spring, eds. *Women in Ritual and Symbolic Roles*, (New York: Plenum Press, 1978), 2.

<sup>11</sup> *The Reproduction of Mothering*, 211-219. In America the androgyne has been one popular model of change, though severely criticized as being too poetic, too personal, too bound to traditional notions of gender, and too homophobic in practice.

<sup>12</sup> "A Biosocial Perspective on Parenting," *Daedalus* (Spring 1977), 1-31. For comments on that article including Rossi's own, see *Signs*, IV, 4 (Summer 1979), 695-717.

<sup>13</sup> For a lucid analysis of the new French theory, see Elaine Marks, "Women and Literature in France," and Carolyn Greenstein Burke, "Report from Paris: Women's Writing and the Women's Movement," *Signs*, 3, 4 (Summer 1978), 832-855.

<sup>14</sup> For a useful placing of Bergman's concept within the general context of the discussion of occupational segregation, see Francine D. Blau and Carol L. Jusenius, "Economists' Approaches to Sex Segregation in the Labor Markets: An Appraisal," *Signs*, 1, 3, Pt. 2 (Spring 1976), 183-5.

<sup>15</sup> Adrienne Rich, "Planetarium," *Poems Selected and New, 1950-1974*, (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1975), p. 148.

## Historicism's Revenge

LEONARD KRIEGER

“HISTORICISM” IS ONE OF THOSE WORDS, like Renaissance, and romanticism, that has so many diverse meanings I have been tempted not to use it at all. But let us look at the use of such situations. When terms have multiple meanings, they mean whatever the user decides that they mean. In such a position the historian has the rare chance to overcome the limitations imposed on him by the language which he inherits; and I for one will take full advantage of this chance. Let us say, then, that historicism is the position in the philosophy of history that dissolves all the stream of historical becoming, eventuating ultimately in a worthy position of historical relativism and in the admission of the problem of the “anarchy of values”; and, because philosophy has such a bad name outside of Germany, let us say also that historicism refers to the position of practicing historians who simply refuse to step outside of history and write as if everything were history, whether they believe it or not. The negative attitude toward all things German evinced in the Italian, French, British, and American philosophies of history is, of course, related to the political situation in Germany during this century, but the noxiousness has served to confirm a pre-existing cultural attitude than to ground it. The historicist is more fundamental than reference to Nazism and Germanism would assume. Like the reprobation of all things French in France in the late eighteenth century, the opposition to historicism is a matter of style and form as much as political and cultural. The discussion of this prejudice would take too long a time to be pursued further here.

For in our view of historicism, it is hard to think of a man as bold as Toynbee who is not a historicist. It includes the great historians and nay-sayers like Croce, Collingwood, and Mannheim; it

## Report on the Literature and Arts session at Newport

Professor Curtis Dahl chaired the session on art and literature, presiding over a panel made up of Anne Murray, Sheila Shaw, and Catharine Stimpson. Three questions were postulated: where are we now?, what ought we to do?, and what can we do? Presentations from the panelists provided a starting point for discussion from the faculty members attending the session.

The most specific presentation came from Ms. Shaw, who described the three courses she has taught, at three different levels, during the past few years. A traditional "images of women" course has provided material for papers and discussion in English 101. A course combining the "images" aspect with material on the writers themselves was given last year at the 299 level, and introduced students to "The Epic Age of Women Writers." A senior seminar on feminist literature and criticism opened up to students much of the work that has been done since 1970, and aroused excitement in students who were exploring a kind of criticism they had never worked with before.

Ms. Shaw had doubts about the need for the "images" course, which could make women's literature a sort of "Jane Crow" subject, tucked off by itself. Questions were raised about the problems of the teacher whose period included virtually no women writers who could be included in the syllabus. Should time be spent explaining why there were none? It was a problem that beset historians of music and art as well, and discussion returned to it more broadly later in the hour.

Meanwhile, other problems were touched on. How could one reconcile one's own feminism with the "repelently patronizing" attitudes some earlier critics and writers had toward women? How do we show the stereotypes in criticism, and break the conventional molds? Should we change the canon and perhaps at the same time change the standard of what we bring into our already crowded courses? Should we teach more from the historic or the political point of view? Mr. Dahl asked the last two questions in response to Ms. Shaw's statement that we needed more than "women writers" or "images of women" courses, and must work to balance and integrate the curriculum.

More questions and musings grew spontaneously from this presentation. One must be careful not to preach. Women could be feminists and scholars--a feminist's mind need not be "angry mush." "Political" was a very broad word. There was a sense of assurance, too, that one could build on the traditional women's courses. Strategies used there could be integrated into other courses. The bibliographics, reading lists, and knowledge of available materials are essential for the integrated as well as the specialized courses.

Anne Murray surveyed the changing situation in art--the past decade has produced masses of resource material, as well as an increasing number of women artists, and such works as Art and Sexual Politics. Some of the problems are those of the teacher of literature: how can women artists be fitted into an already jammed syllabus in Art 101? Must the canon be changed, because women often produced untraditional works such as quilts and embroidery? How can one deal with the paucity of works and information from centuries before the nineteenth?

Style is obviously a major point. The recognized women of any period had styles that were similar to those of their male contemporaries, even though the subject might be different. How should one deal with women who painted in another style? Comments from the audience suggested that it was impossible to tell an artist's sex from the style of the work. Again and again the question turned to the canon. Were there works of art being overlooked because women, denied access to the traditional channels of artistic production, had turned their talents to other forms?

A series of suggestions were made, some by Ms. Murray and some from the floor. Certainly students should be made aware of the conditions of creativity under which women labored. They should be told, too, of women's role as patrons. They should be led to examine the images of women one sees in art. Or should they? Perhaps students should be taught to respond as women. Certainly we should be wary of projecting our own attitudes back into history. And certainly a little "ghetto" of women and art at the end of a survey course should be avoided. Students should learn to compare criticism by men and by women of the same works.

Finally the question was raised of how to cope with all the problems that has been noted. Should there be a curriculum revision? Should there be a new course that examined the problems? Should there be a careful exploration of the ways students respond as women? New materials should be incorporated, backgrounds should be explored, student creativity should be encouraged and taken seriously, and there should be a measure of re-education for the faculty. None of these suggestions were regarded as so radical that they couldn't be followed even by a person who is not a passionate feminist.

There were caveats, however. We must be sure that the faculty get good enough with these new issues so that students are as well taught as they are in more conventional materials. We must beware of doing too much changing of the curriculum when students yearn for stability. On the other hand, we must not try to settle on some fixed feminist curriculum. And finally, those who were better informed reminded some of the other, we must be wary of conflating "feminine", "female", and "feminist", as they were different conditions with different aesthetics attached to each.

Mr. Dahl turned to Ms. Stimpson for a final few words. She admitted that not all the answers were known, but was glad that we were at least trying to get at the questions. She noted various books that might be helpful, suggesting that we tell students of their reception as well as the contents. She re-emphasized her own hope that sound scholarship and feminism should not be regarded as mutually exclusive, pointed again to the wide range of opportunities for women, and encouraged the faculty members to continue wrestling with the problems for which even the experts had no absolute answers.

Respectfully submitted,

Frances Shirley

OCT 10 1980

## WHEATON COLLEGE

NORTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02766

PROVOST OFFICE

DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICS

October 9, 1980

To: Ruth Schmidt, Provost  
From: Jennifer Roberts  
Re: Studies in Perspective Session at Newport Conference

The Studies in Perspective group drew about fifteen people; the department of history accounted for the largest number of these, and most of our discussion focused on the teaching of history, although I tried to steer it into areas which would be of more interest to those faculty who represented departments such as philosophy and religion. Our guest, Elizabeth Pleck, spoke about models which have been developed for introducing more of the new research on women into the curricula of survey courses in American History and Western Civilization and gave me an address to which to write to obtain these, to wit:

Rachel Fuchs  
Office of Women's Affairs  
Indiana University  
Bloomington, Indiana

Our discussion focused on a number of concerns. First, several faculty expressed interest in finding ways to integrate more research on women into presently existing courses without losing too much time to devote to other important topics already in the syllabus. Second, several people reported negative experience in presenting social history to their students in courses whose main focus was not on social history; they sometimes found that the "soft" social history segments appealed to weaker students while alienating the stronger students, who wanted more "hard" political and diplomatic history. I stressed the fact that incorporating more material on women into the history curriculum seemed to me inevitably to entail a basic shift to social history and suggested that the reservations some people were expressing stemmed more from ambivalence about this shift of focus than from any ambivalence about the new research on women per se. I also reported that I had redesigned my Roman history course this semester so as to shift the focus to social history and that I was eager to see how this would work out since my training is chiefly in political and diplomatic history.

We also raised the question of how much we wanted to change the curriculum by a few large changes in the syllabi and how much we wanted to change it by a consistently different perspective in teaching the same materials in the classroom. Alison Bernstein, who had by this time joined our group, provided what I thought were very helpful insights here. I raised some of the issues that were treated by Catharine Stimpson in her keynote address. How are we to deal with the peculiar overlap of life philosophy and research interests which characterizes "women's studies" (and I use that phrase in both senses of the word)? While no logic dic-

# WHEATON COLLEGE

NORTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02766

DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICS

- 2 -

Roberts

tates that people who are doing the new research on women should share a fairly unified set of values about women's roles in society, nonetheless there is in most cases a pattern: feminists are far more likely to be doing this research than anti-feminists. Most Wheaton faculty (male and female) are feminists; most of us think it is our job to teach values, in some sense; but where does enlightenment stop and indoctrination begin? Finally, many faculty present reflected ambivalence about the real purpose of incorporating more research on women into the curriculum. How much of this is based on a (perfectly legitimate) concern that our students should know more about women in history than they do because they are women, and how much is based on sincere feelings that the present curriculum is, objectively speaking, unbalanced? How much of what we are planning to do, in other words, would we do just the same if we were teaching men students?

While the individual concerns I have cited here may seem to suggest a fundamentally negative attitude on the part of the faculty members present, this was not my overall sense of the session at all. It is my feeling that participants as a whole left the meeting with an enthusiastic commitment to broaden our curriculum in order to incorporate more of the new research on women. We are simply concerned about finding the most honest and effective way to do this.

WHEATON  
COLLEGE

NORTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02766

October 28, 1980

TO: Bonnie Spanier, Director, FIPSE

FROM: Thomas Osborne, Sociology with John Miller, Economics

RE: Report from the Session on Social Science: FIPSE conference September 6th, 1980, Newport, R.I.

A significant caveat must be made before the report is presented. The report is a compendium of impressions from several people as to what happened at the meeting. We hope that there are not too many gross omissions. If persons who were there have changes to make or additions that should be included please do not hesitate to send them to us: then, a final, more polished report can be compiled.

Nuances of discussion, the rather rapid nature of exchanges at all levels were impossible to record. However, it was our impression that the session was very active; it pursued a number of crucial problems in approaching the topic of self assessment and curriculum adjustment. We believe most persons came away with the conclusion that some groundwork was laid for considerable further thinking about the implications of subjects discussed.

Participants: Joseph Pleck, Wellesley College, Consultant  
Tom Osborne, Moderator  
John Miller, Assisting in Report  
Nancy Heer, Presenter  
John Burton, Presenter

General Issues Proposed for Discussion at the Meeting:

Since the goal of the grant is two-fold both aspects of the proposal were used as the basis for discussion: 1) to undertake a self assessment to determine where we think our fields are at in research on women and incorporation of research on women into Wheaton curricula 2) what changes might be undertaken to maximize use of the material now available on women in Wheaton's Social Science Curricula.

Presentations: Nancy Heer;

Ms. Heer discussed Soviet Politics and the problems encountered in the inclusion of material on Soviet Women into the course on Soviet Politics. She pointed out that although literature on women exists one must spend time "to dig it out." She noted that although many women appear to hold positions of high status and some power the real power remains in the hands of male decision makers. For example, although there is a high percentage of women in the medical profession in the Soviet Union, the profession itself does not have the status it does in the USA.

She stated that incorporating new research on women into her course did not change the basic mission of the course; to enable students to develop a comparative perspective with which they can assess the world around them whether this be the world of men, or of women or of both.

John Burton;

Mr. Burton discussed the role of the Anthropologist in the field as a data collector and therefore an "outside observer" in a society. His work done in Africa showed that being an outsider came first as far as status in the society was concerned so that whether or not he was a female or male made little difference. It did not appreciably interfere with his ability to ask about the role of the family. However, he did note that in East Africa he was unable to ask women how many children they had. Only a woman could ask that question.

He suggested that this raised several questions for the discussion group; to what extent are men who study women in our own society "outside observers"? How does this status, if it is the case, affect men's ability to do research on women and present the results?

#### General Discussion:

In the general discussion which followed these presentations a number of issues were raised on which considerable debate was centered. We have grouped the issues into several categories for clarity.

1) Why do a number of students react with alarm and some opposition to the new research on women?

It was suggested that students are less threatened by Marxism than Feminism possibly because their own perceptions of themselves more traditional than those in keeping with new research; that many students find the new research of systematic discrimination threatening to their more traditional plans for the future which are seen as unrealistic compared to new definitions. New research on women bring long held beliefs into question and inject uncertainty into student's lives. Mr. Pleck commented in this regard that 'if you can't rely on sex roles what can you rely on.' It was concluded that alternative views of sex roles was important to communicate and that a survey of where the students are at would be most important.

2) The college needs to examine the total environment of the students in conjunction with curriculum analysis.

A view was expressed that the total environment should be closely related to the curriculum so that it can support the social and political changes implied by the new research.

Considerable discussion related to the interface between career and family goals for students. The institutions of work and family present conflicts of which many students are aware, but they are not sure how they will deal with them. The administration is dedicated to making changes that support employees who are attempting to balance family life with their careers. There seemed little question that these concerns - family and career are salient for most students.

It was pointed out that there is a class bias in career-family orientations. Where most students see their work as a career, non-college, lower socio-economic women work outside the home in a job rather than a career; as a need to supplement and increase family income rather than a matter of fulfillment of identity needs.

3) Is Social Science Value-Free?

Although the discussion made it clear that the various disciplines represented at the meeting see their areas in various stages of awareness of bias a major question was, what bias? Is the new research on women value-free? It was concluded that such research is no more value laden than any other research. In addition it was thought that many areas have been male dominated in terms of research as well as presentation. Numerous examples of this were given. For example, women's work in the home is ignored in economic statistics. Although Sociology and Anthropology have had strong emphases on women's research it was observed that the large amount of material has had strong male biases for years.

4) What kind of changes should and could be made in our various programs?

It seemed quite clear that much material regardless of field has not been interpreted from women's perspectives. For example, Locke's justification for the laws of the State (the protection of private property) from a women's perspective was that the justification does not apply to women since they were not allowed to hold private property, and it follows that women were then under little obligation to observe the laws of the state. In Sociology heads of households as a variable has been almost exclusively male. The perspectives of women need to be better emphasized in dealing with most general topical areas. In order to do this faculty should become better acquainted with research in their areas and incorporate such in their various courses.

It was observed that this was already being done; in Psychology in particular, as well as other behavioral sciences. The question was raised as to a natural progression of more material or abrupt readjustments and reactions of the students to the latter.

It was concluded that departments should form internal committees to evaluate area curricula, and that partial release from teaching time might expedite analysis and restructuring of curricula.

It was also agreed that there is a necessity to present the broadest implications of the new research on women; that the problems are not merely field or area problems but gender problems; who sees what and from what perspective and what should be done about it?

Conclusions

There seemed little doubt of the need for curricula improvement with respect to new research on women; that formalization of an already strong commitment to change be undertaken; that there is a need to understand what the faculty can do and where the students are at in trying to implement policies; that this particular group was aware of many in field and general problems and issues; that creative research may result from some efforts; that Wheaton is already doing a great deal in focusing its attention on the need for changes; and that this particular discussion group-as a whole-had no reservations as to the importance of affecting needed changes.



WHEATON  
COLLEGE

NORTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02766

October 10, 1980

To: Ruth Schmidt, Provost  
From: Sharon Boudreau and Bojan H. Jennings  
Re: Natural Sciences and Mathematics Curriculum  
Newport Conference

WHEATON COLLEGE  
OCT 11 1980  
PROVOST OFFICE

The Natural Sciences and Mathematics curriculum group was chaired by Moderator, Bojan Jennings; Discussant, John Kricher; and Consultant, Evelyn Fox Keller, of the Division of Natural Sciences at SUNY Purchase currently Visiting Fellow, MIT, Prog. of Science, Technology and Society.

At the onset of the meeting, group members expressed some puzzlement about integration of the new scholarship of women into the science curriculum. Dr. Keller agreed that incorporation in the sciences is difficult due to the involvement with the teaching of the scientific method. She outlined a spectrum of feminist criticisms of the sciences. Included in this spectrum were the observations that both the history of science and the current working scientific community are male dominated. Why aren't more students enrolling in mathematics and science courses? Why is scientific history so dominated by males? In answer to these questions, she pointed out the tremendous anxiety associated with our curriculums. Students must be shown that they can succeed if they want to. A simple mathematical proof, which the student can carry out on her own, gives her the confidence she needs to tackle more difficult problems. Wheaton faculty mentioned the detraumatization that currently takes place on the first meeting of an introductory biology course.

In the scientific literature, women in the past have been given inadequate credit. The convention of using one's first initials in publication is also a disservice to women. Dr. Keller suggested that faculty members try to open up their disciplines and talk about the scientific founders. Don't try to rectify history, but involve one's students with current researchers in the field; both men and women.

Floor discussions included concerns as to teaching the myth about science or the truth. The life outside the student's ivory tower is very competitive, but just how much of that reality should we teach? Will the beginning student be scared away even before she has studied the discipline? Dr. Keller pointed out that women tend to go through college by book learning and are very naive. Men, on the other hand, have set up a series of networks which helps them deal with the competitive nature of society. Maybe what is needed are special programs to train and educate women in this area. Herb Ellison mentioned the current assertive training programs available on the Wheaton campus.

Also discussed were questions on the feasibility of a successful career and marriage. Can a woman have the best of both worlds? Is it a tough road to follow? Women may think of themselves as self-sufficient intellectually, but not necessarily economically. Workshops in career planning may be helpful.

Newport

# WHEATON COLLEGE

NORTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02766

September 3, 1980

TO: Wheaton Faculty and Other Conference Participants  
FROM: Ruth Schmidt, FIPSE Project Director *Ruth Schmidt*

As you may have heard, the Fall Faculty Conference at Newport is heavily subscribed and we are looking forward to a stimulating and enjoyable time together. Whether or not you are able to attend the conference, you may wish to read the materials in the accompanying folder. Please bring these materials with you if you are going to Newport. By means of this sheet I hope to bring you up to date on logistics for the Conference. If you have other questions, call the Provost's Office as early as possible, in case others are needing answers to the questions in your mind.

A bus, the two Wheaton College vans, and some private cars will be leaving from the Meadows parking lot shortly after the end of the faculty meeting on Friday. Assuming that the meeting lasts no more than one hour, we shall plan to leave at approximately 3:15 p.m. In order to facilitate loading of the vehicles, the drivers will have a list of those to go in vans, bus, and private cars. Please note that we have planned for those who requested bus transportation; we do not expect to have extra space for anyone who has not already signed up. People taking their own cars may pick up a map and directions to Salve Regina in the Provost's Office. It would be helpful to us if everyone taking a car to the conference would let us know your approximate departure time, for we have some specialized schedule and transportation needs to be arranged.

At Newport College (Salve Regina), we shall be housed in Miley Hall. College officials there will be issuing keys according to the list of reservations of single and double rooms sent to them last week. If there are any changes from the notification given to us, please let us know immediately in order to avoid problems on arrival. All persons not coming with spouses have been assigned single rooms. Rooms occupied by two people will have two keys issued. The College has not been definite on its check-out time, but we are hopeful that they will let us leave things in the rooms until after the clamboil. However, there is the possibility that we shall have to vacate the rooms earlier in order to allow them to clean. In that event, we shall designate a place to leave luggage for the afternoon. The bus and vans will leave for Norton following the clamboil, probably about dusk.

If there are persons who wish to rent a room for a second night at Salve Regina, those people must indicate this at the time of picking up their keys and pay the Newport College directly. The rate is \$12.00 per person in double occupancy rooms and \$17.50 for single occupancy. This does not include any meal service.

Readings: Home "Introduction: The First Decade of Women's Studies" - Harv Ed Rev 49 (4): 413 - Nov. 1979  
Westcott "Feminist Criticism of the Social Sciences" p. 422.