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Feminist (re)visions of anthropology

Barnns, Christopher Anne, M.A.

The University of Arizona, 1994

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FEMINIST (RE)VISIONS OF ANTHROPOLOGY

by

Christopher Anne Barnns

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

In the Graduate College

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

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STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late grandmother, Anne Catherine Granett Barnocky (1902-1994), who was a wonderfully spiritual, strong and patient woman. She was not quite sure of what I was doing in school or why I was doing it, but she was proud of me nonetheless. I miss her very much.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION..... 8

II. A BRIEF HISTORY OF FEMINIST INSPIRATION IN ANTHROPOLOGY..... 15

The Question of Universal Male Dominance..... 16
The Symbolic Tradition..... 17
The Material Nature of Women's Oppression..... 18
Counter-arguments in the Debate of Universal Male Dominance..... 20
Reproduction..... 22

The Phenomenon of Gender in Feminist Anthropology... 22
Gender as a Political and Non-political Construct..... 28
Gender Ideology..... 30
Gender and Language: Feminism in Linguistic Anthropology..... 32

Problems in the Investigation of Gender..... 37

III. THE CURIOUS PROBLEM OF POST-MODERNISM IN FEMINIST THOUGHT AND ACTION..... 42

Epistemology..... 45
Epistemology and Methodology..... 54

Power and Resistance: Foucault's Impact on Theory... 58
Foucault's Power and the Feminists..... 64

The Body: Foucault, French and not-so-French Feminists..... 69
Women's Sexuality..... 72

Essentialism, Difference and Deconstruction..... 81

Sexism in Post-Modern/Post-StructuralistThought..... 94

TABLE OF CONTENTS - CONTINUED

IV. POST-MODERNISM AND FEMINIST ANTHROPOLOGY..... 99

Epistemology and the Creation of Ethnography..... 99
Voices..... 106

Power and Resistance in Anthropological Theory..... 110
Feminist Ethnography and Resistance..... 113

The Body: Site of the
Articulation of Power and Resistance..... 122
The Rare Application of French
Feminism in Feminist Anthropology..... 125

Anthropological Realities:
Essentialism in the Field..... 127

The Future of Feminist Anthropology..... 130

V. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS..... 135

Defining Feminism..... 138

Praxis in the Field..... 140

Praxis in the University..... 143

ENDNOTES..... 146

REFERENCES CITED..... 148

ABSTRACT

This thesis characterizes feminist anthropology's past, present and future. The early years of feminist anthropology were committed to explication of the relationship between gender and power. Currently feminists are engaging in new post-modern ideas. Post-modern concerns with epistemology and knowledge/truth production resound with feminist observations, but post-modern concepts of power, resistance and deconstruction present problems for feminists. For post-modern anthropologists, traditional ethnography has been replaced by experimental texts. Feminist anthropologists created the textual innovation of "voices."

Feminist anthropological texts are now focusing on how women handle the complex and diverse power structures that oppress them, incorporating a focus on media and discourse. Recent feminist anthropology combines textual experimentation with a focus on resistance at its various levels. Future feminist anthropologists will return to the discussion of gender and power begun in the 70s retaining the post-modern textual experimentation and interest in resistance and power.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I have titled this thesis Feminist (Re)Visions of Anthropology. I thought a great deal about the current trendiness of placing part of a word in parentheses. I am, in truth, skeptical of anything that is too popular. And yet this disruption of spelling achieved certain ends and so I decided to retain it. First, it is an example of a new practice by some feminists that only a few can pull off ingeniously. Second, it is a metaphoric representation of the impact of feminism on academia, forcing it to alter its focus, change its long-standing lexicons and dialects, and make room for alternative approaches. Finally, I do believe that feminists strive for a different vision, a new perspective and fresh insight. Feminists have not only revised anthropology, but they have also re-seen it, looked at it anew, incorporated into an old discipline new methodology and new theory. Thus, the awkwardness of the title gives pause to contemplate the polysemy of words and to find within words a new understanding.

Despite the transparency of feminist influence on academia to me, however, for others, the impact of feminism is less clear. For example, Ortner's (1984) article on theory in anthropology since the 1960s ignores the influence

of feminist theory on the discipline. This is especially surprising as Ortner, herself, was one of the earliest feminist anthropologists. How could a body of thought so rich and challenging be completely ignored even by one of its proponents?

An answer may be found in the continued androcentric perceptions that permeate academia despite feminist attempts to dislodge them. Feminist academicians have engaged Kuhn's (1970) theory of the process of academic paradigm shift to explain the current marginalization of feminist studies in academia (e.g. Strathern 1987). Kuhn argued that paradigm shifts are largely unnoticed until after they have occurred.

Feminist academic work, however, does not entirely conform to Kuhn's thesis. Feminist academics are actively challenging the status quo, purposefully shifting the paradigm, and are quite aware of their goal. This thesis, then, is an attempt to return feminist theory to its rightful historical place as a major transformer of anthropology. It is also a journey into how future feminist anthropology will continue to change the landscape of anthropological theory.

Feminism has contributed three primary theoretical issues to anthropology: 1) the question of the universality of male dominance; 2) the social, rather than biological, nature of gender and its subsequent mutability; and 3) the

recognition of gender as a construct of power relations. The feminist movement based its protests and political action on the permeance of male dominance and sexual inequality in American society. Feminist anthropology looked at these issues cross-culturally. In discussing and delineating male dominance across societies, feminist anthropologists transformed previous understandings of power, emphasizing how gender, the positions and roles of the sexes, and the symbols and ideologies surrounding gender, were central to the creation of elaborate structures of power. By looking at power in gender relations cross-culturally, feminist anthropologists gave the feminist movement insights into how power manifested itself in American society as well as alternative visions of reality to pursue. By emphasizing the arbitrariness of sign and the mutability of gender ideology, feminist anthropologists gave feminists hope for the future.

Chapter 2 of this thesis is a discussion of the formative years of feminist anthropology. The chapter focuses on how feminist anthropology introduced the ideas of male dominance, social constructionism and gendered power into cultural anthropology, although it does address the other subdisciplines albeit briefly. The history begins in the mid-seventies and ends in the late eighties. Chapter 2 situates the discussion of more recent feminist

anthropological work and how it has been influenced by post-modernism which appears in Chapter 4, by establishing the main ideas of feminist anthropology which remain central to current work.

All feminist theory in academia is inspired by and is therefore united by the broader feminist movement. It is not surprising, then, to discover that feminist theoretical progress in other academic areas shares concerns with and greatly influences feminist anthropology. Within each academic discipline, pet theories are created and applied, protected and defended. Yet feminists have always followed a rhetoric of cross-disciplinary sharing. Feminist thinkers and researchers have scopes wider than their disciplines and participate in larger debates as well as in localized discussions. Thus, particular feminist theories overlap and extend, shrink and enlarge, according to popularity and active academic sharing. Further, ideas from other areas of thought, not feminist, intrude into the picture, influencing, and being influenced by, feminist analysis.

Current feminist theory has been challenged by the ideas of the new post-modern era. Chapter 3 demonstrates how post-modern and post-structural philosophies are debated by feminists in wider circles. To create the chapter I worked backwards from feminist theory to the major theoretical influences or issues the feminists were

engaging. The chapter, then, is primarily a discussion of feminist theorists and their perspectives on post-modernism, rather than on post-modernism generally. Post-modernism is seen through the prism of feminism. Many post-modern concepts will not be discussed as their impact on feminist theory is minimal.

There are, however, some rather ubiquitous arguments going on among feminists over post-modern ideas. Chapter 3 will describe, in addition to an already existing discussion of epistemology present in both feminism and post-modern thought, how feminists have engaged Foucault's ideas of power and resistance, Derrida's definition of woman as Other, and the general theoretical trend toward the deconstruction of such feminist truths as "womanhood," "gender" and "oppression."

Chapter 4 demonstrates how some of these same concepts are being incorporated into feminist anthropology as well. The texts I focus on in this chapter are first and foremost feminist and secondarily, if at all, post-modern. This chapter discusses how the major theoretical additions of the formative years have been modified by the inclusion of post-modern theory.

General post-modern influences in anthropology have largely been expressed textually, with the arrival of the new ethnographers who question the ability of

anthropological scientists to accurately depict reality. While these post-modern anthropologists share with feminist anthropologists concerns with the power of the anthropologist over the subject and with the unavoidable bias of the writer of the ethnographic text, feminist anthropologists have been in many ways excluded from prominence as post-modern anthropologists by those anthropologists themselves. Instead, feminist anthropologists have created their own experimental style: the inclusion of women's voices in their texts.

Topically, feminist anthropologists, like their sisters in other disciplines, are looking at issues that take some inspiration from post-modern theorists, especially the manipulation of the female body (i.e. Martin 1987) and the manifestation of resistance across cultures (i.e. Ong 1987). I end Chapter 4 with an attempt to characterize the future of feminist anthropology and to determine whether post-modern influences will continue to matter in the coming years.

Chapter 5 reviews the material presented in the work and winds up the paper with a reflection on what feminism is and how it can be practiced in the field and at home by future feminist anthropologists like myself.

This thesis, then, is more than an excursion into theory. It is also the first step into determining what my

feminist anthropology will look like, which ideas I will privilege in my own work, which topics I will pursue, and how I will conduct myself in school and in the field.

CHAPTER 2

A BRIEF HISTORY OF FEMINIST INSPIRATION IN ANTHROPOLOGY

The review article is a prevalent genre in anthropology. Despite a brief twenty-year history, feminism in anthropology has been the topic of a great number of review articles, each of which attempts to characterize the various movements or phases within the study. While some basic trends are easy to recognize, I would argue that these reviewers have been a bit premature in carving up the history of feminist anthropology. Their claims that feminist anthropology has espoused and then disproved and discarded certain notions about women need to be examined within the context of such a short history. Instead, I believe that there is great continuity of thought between "early" feminist anthropologists and more recent ones, especially as older feminists have entered positions of power in academia and are steadily bringing up the younger ranks. Thus, many of the current trends in feminist anthropology I will discuss later rest upon themes of the past. This review chapter will serve to situate the rest of the discussion.

As mentioned in the Introduction, the formative years of feminist anthropology contributed three primary theoretical advances to the discipline: 1) the question of

universal male dominance; 2) the social nature of gender; and 3) the importance of gender as a basis for power inequality. The impact and permanence of these theoretical additions can be measured in the salience of both gender and power in current anthropological work.

The Question of Universal Male Dominance

Most reviewers of feminist anthropology date its beginnings at 1974 and 1975 with the publication of Rosaldo and Lamphere's Woman, Culture, and Society (1974) and Reiter's Toward an Anthropology of Women (1975) (Scheper-Hughes 1983, Lamphere 1987, Morgen 1989, di Leonardo 1991b).[1] Along with the business of adding women to ethnographic accounts in detail (see also Weiner 1976, 1979 and Bourguignon 1980), the discussion of women's oppression permeated both of these texts, which took male dominance as a universal fact. In explaining why male dominance was universal, the most salient contributors to Rosaldo and Lamphere's volume emphasized the social and symbolic aspects of male/female interaction. Reiter's volume, however, emphasized the economic aspects of male dominance, positioning women as an oppressed class along the lines of Marx and Engels. These two texts set the tenor of the debate over male dominance.[2]

The Social-Symbolic Tradition

Much as women and men were seen as opposites in an asymmetrical relationship, the earliest symbolic anthropologists who believed in a universal male dominance postulated other binary constructs as causal of this inequality. Rosaldo (1974) presented a universal domestic/public split of all societies through which men gained public power and child-focused women were relegated to a non-influential private sphere. Ortner (1974) argued that a worldwide nature/culture hierarchy of symbol and association enabled men everywhere as makers of culture to rationalize the domination and control of nature-bound females. Chodorow (1974) argued from a Freudian perspective that boys, in defining their maleness, were required to separate from their mothers psychologically. The denigration of women as a group by boys who would later become men eased this transition.

In all of these theories, the reproductive role of women as mothers was believed to be the basis for male dominance. As childbearers, women were associated with fecundity and nature; as childrearers, they were subsequently relegated to the domestic sphere. Girls were socialized to be nurturing and responsible for their future role as mothers, whereas boys were taught self-reliance. It is not surprising that Rosaldo believed that the relative

equality of the sexes among the Ilongot was due to the larger participation of Ilongot men in childrearing. It seems, according to her thesis, that motherhood, which was naturally child-oriented, could only be valued if fatherhood were equally (but extraordinarily and unnaturally) time-consuming. For these theorists, female reproduction and motherhood held the same shape cross-culturally, but could be interpreted and valued differently.

The Material Nature of Women's Oppression

The proponents of the materialist tradition, represented early on by Sacks and Leacock, were highly suspicious of such explanations for male dominance as those found in the Rosaldo and Lamphere volume. Coming from a Marxist background, these scholars traced male dominance to economic factors (although they allowed that these might have symbolic or ideological repercussions), the rise of the classed society and the spread of capitalism through colonial contact. Engels' (1884) explanation for the oppression of women rested on his belief that originally egalitarian, classless tribes grew into sexist, classed societies through the unequal acquisition of property (for Engels this property was in the form of livestock).

Although Sacks (1975)[3] pointed out mistakes in Engels' hypothesis of women's subordination, she combined a Marxist

perspective with Rosaldo's public/private distinction, arguing that the relegation of women to the production and reproduction of private use value alone (i.e. household goods and services) prevented them from engaging in social collective activity and therefore, from attaining true adult social status. "Through their labor men are social adults; women are domestic wards" (Sacks 1975:231).

Leacock (1978, 1981) argued that sexually egalitarian band societies had been forever altered by their incorporation into a world system of capitalism. For example, among the Iroquois, the impact of capitalism created male leaders, male wage earners, and changed matrilocal living arrangements. Leacock argued that the status of women declined as class was created or imposed from the outside.[4] In a treatise on women and colonization, Etienne and Leacock argued that "the origins of both socioeconomic and sexual hierarchy are inextricably bound together" (1980:8).

Meillassoux (1981 [1975]) argued that the transition of foraging populations to an agricultural lifestyle resulted in the increasingly complex manipulation of women by men to cement and create social relationships between them. The investment in land use and ownership resulted in the necessity of men to claim children as their own in order to maintain control of the land. According to Meillassoux, as

societies become increasingly complex, women are not valued for their productive roles but their reproductive ones. Men's power could be measured in their ability to control reproduction through the distribution of women as wives.

Later, Sacks (1979:115) argued that Meillassoux's theoretical model was not "an accurate description of women in other non-class society modes of production" such as kinship based economies. Women served not only as reproducing wives but also as sisters with a stake in the production of the resources of their natal families. As sisters, women have claims on the productive activities of their brothers; as wives, they produced for their husband's lineage, but did not reap any of the benefits of ownership.

Counter-arguments in the Debate of Universal Male Dominance

The proponents of the two traditions, social-symbolic and materialist, were in a dialogue about the source of male dominance.[5] However, other feminist anthropologists argued that male dominance was not a universal fact at all. These counter-arguments were proffered along the continuum of culture types and complexities. However, they largely engaged the social and symbolic side of the debate rather than the material side.[6]

Rogers (1975) did not argue that Rosaldo's separate domestic/public spheres existed in modern-day French peasant

society. However, she did contend that the existence and maintenance of separate spheres by women and men led merely to an illusion of male power rather than to the actual denigration of the women's sphere. The women themselves saw their sphere as preferable to the men's domain.

Schlegel (1977a) presented the most convincing argument against universal male dominance by describing the traditional agricultural Hopi culture as being comprised of two balanced, separate but equal, male and female spheres. Women held power in the lineage and the household; men handled the religious and political organization at the village level. Both men and women participated in the major Hopi political, economic and social institutions. Male and female roles were not only complementary but balanced.

A matrilineal kinship structure is one of the essential aspects of Hopi culture that directly influences its egalitarianism. Women's potential for life and their role in the continuation of the lineage are highly valued. Contrary to the feminists of the symbolic tradition, however, Schlegel argues that among the Hopi women's childbearing is not a handicap, but an essential element of their high status.

Reproduction

Women's capacity for reproduction is a salient theme throughout the work of most of these early theorists. As mentioned earlier, Rosaldo, Ortner and Chodorow argued that motherhood lowered women's mobility and status. The material school demonstrated that women's reproductive roles hampered their productive ones. Meillassoux, in particular, emphasized that it was the control by men of women's reproduction that gave men power, while women accepted a yoke of passivity. Conversely, Schlegel argued that motherhood could be presitigious, especially in matrilineal societies.

In this sense, the early group of feminist anthropologists were biological reductionists, if not biological determinists. Women's status was largely tied to the constraints of motherhood. These feminists, then, emphasized sex and reproduction. The introduction of the term "gender" in the early 1980s, while it had deep roots in the anthropological tradition, was a reaction to such biologically-based theories.

The Phenomenon of Gender in Feminist Anthropology

In her review, Lamphere identifies a second phase of feminist anthropology which occurred in the early 1980s. Its emphasis was on the variability of women's roles and

"toward the end of this phase, a number of new works had begun to focus on relationships between men and women" (Lamphere 1987:18, my emphasis). For the first time in her review article, Lamphere begins to use the terms "gender," "gender relations" and "gender system" rather than the terms "sex," "sex roles" and "sexual asymmetry" she employed pages earlier to describe issues in feminist anthropology.

Lamphere does not comment on the significance of this shift in her wording. I believe her terminology reflects a more general shift in feminist anthropology from a focus on a biologically-oriented (albeit socially elaborated) "sex" to socially constructed "gender," in many ways independent of sexuality. Indeed, Moore (1988) also recognizes such a shift and champions the switch from the "study of women" to the "study of gender" as not only a means to new theoretical inquiry, but also as a way for feminist anthropologists to avoid the increasing ghettoization and marginalization of their work by the mainstream. I believe this switch to be more problematic than Moore sees it as the discussion of gender has become so mainstreamed that its original relationship to power differences among men and women often has been obscured. I will return to this point later in the chapter.

The study of gender in anthropology has its earliest roots in the work of Margaret Mead who first saw the

differences between women and men as worthy of focused study rather than of passing mention. While Mead (1950:xii [1935]) reassured her audience that her book Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies was "not a treatise on the rights of women, nor an inquiry into the basis of femininism [sic]," she steadfastly maintained her thesis that women and men were not biologically pre-programmed for certain behaviors, an idea still with us today:

> If those temperamental attitudes which we have traditionally regarded as feminine - such as passivity, responsiveness and a willingness to cherish children - can so easily be set up as the masculine pattern in one tribe, and in another be outlawed for the majority of women as well as for the majority of men, we no longer have any basis for regarding such aspects of behaviour as sex-linked. [Mead 1950:205]

Thus, Mead's privileging of culture lent itself to the development of a theory that held that the behavioral differences between the sexes were socially constructed, rather than an inescapable product of biology.

Influences from the work of sociologists Erving Goffman and Harold Garfinkel in the 1950s and 60s provided an enhanced theoretical background for the discussion of gender, although neither man had an explicit focus on it and oftentimes their contribution to these ideas is ignored. Goffman (1959) theorizes that much of the creation of personhood occurs in face to face interaction. He presents social actors as manipulators of their own presentation who

divulge or withhold personal information (with or without conscious choice) depending on context and audience. Gender is one aspect of personhood that is extremely obvious in face-to-face interaction.

Garfinkel (1967) concludes that the personhoods (and therefore genders) of actors are jointly constructed by the participants in any interaction. Garfinkel's hermaphroditic patient learns how to present herself as a woman by copying others who do not suspect her interstitiality.

Garfinkel's story must lead to the suspicion that while our biological sex is fairly immutable, all of us learn our gender much as Agnes did (without, of course, the burden of carrying such a secret) through subtle cues, imitation, social mores and trial and error. This conclusion resonates nicely with de Beauvoir's famous statement: "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (de Beauvoir 1957:267). Gender, then refers to the dress, behavior and role expectations surrounding, adding to, elaborating upon or in some cases, obscuring the biological reality of sex (Oakley 1972). Gender is a socially constructed complex; sex is a biological, physiological condition.

However, the relationship between sex and gender is not an unproblematic one. Although some may argue that "we cannot surely predict, on the basis of either genitals, chromosomes, or hormones what an individual's gender

configuration will be in a particular group" (Miller 1993:5), Butler (1987) points out that the gender of an individual in any group is almost always indicative of his or her sex and vice versa. She contends that although the concept of gender implies some mutability, rarely does anyone deliberately choose or change her or his gender. Instead, gender development seems to go hand in hand with biological development and all of experience and existence is gendered from birth. She (1987:24) queries, "how can we choose what we already are?"

Yet Butler is a literary critic, and the difference between sex and gender is more than semantic for anthropologists. Gender differs cross-culturally, whereas sex does not. As Mead showed, a temperament or gender that is appropriate in one society is inappropriate in another. Further gender roles, behavior and appearance in any society change over time. Finally, sex and gender are not always related, especially in the case of people who are biologically one and socially the other, such as transvestites. In fact, some anthropologists have argued that there exist third genders, interstitial individuals who exhibit a combination of male and female behaviors (Shore 1981, Whitehead 1981; for a dissenting view, see Besnier in press).

Because of its definition as a cultural rather than a biological construct, gender became the topic of choice in feminist anthropology in 1980s, and largely still is. In many ways, gender liberated feminist anthropologists from a difficult theoretical pinch. If motherhood was the source of male dominance, the majority of women worldwide would forever remain oppressed. Further, if motherhood lent women status, as Schlegel argues, women may never gain status through achievement rather than ascription. Thus, the idea of gender, while not completely disassociated from the ideological and symbolic elaboration of women's reproductive roles, did lend to feminist analyses of male dominance the element of mutability which sex never could.

As well, the study of gender also involved a more complex study of power since gender was cross-culturally variable, while motherhood itself as a biological event is not. As Rubin (1975) had demonstrated, an important aspect of the translation of sex into gender is its relationship to power relations between men and women. The construction of genders in a society, the symbolic and/or social valuing or devaluing of male and female roles, activities and speech, can be related to its degree of male dominance. Delineating symbolic gender systems and gender ideologies cross-culturally gave feminists a means of describing, measuring and comparing power worldwide.

Gender quickly became mainstreamed and along with it, so did the discussion of power relations among men and women. However, as with any concept that becomes mainstreamed, gender has been used in a very depoliticized way even by feminists who believe themselves to be creating feminist work. Gender, in many instances, has lost its original definition as a construct around which power relations are erected. Gender difference, then, is a popular topic; the relationship of gender differences to differences in power, which I believe is particularly feminist, however, is not as widely pursued.

Gender as a Political and Non-political Construct

The use of gender to investigate power relations between men and women is one of the legacies of feminism in anthropology. In that sense, the two volumes edited by MacCormack and Strathern (1980) and by Ortner and Whitehead (1981) can be compared in the strength of their commitment to the discussion of power. MacCormack and Strathern's book focused on disproving Ortner's thesis by presenting cross-cultural data that demonstrated that "...the link between nature and women is not a given" (MacCormack 1980:18). Harris (1980) argued that among the Laymi Indians of Bolivia there was no equating of women with the natural. Harris criticized Ortner for ignoring the complexities of signs and

their multifaceted relationship to a whole series of other meanings and structures.

Strathern (1980) made similar observations about the Hageners of Papua New Guinea. The concept of "nature" among the Hageners was fairly ambiguous and was better defined as "nondomesticable." She argued that whereas Hagener women were more associated with the domestic realm, it was Hagener men who were associated with the mystical power of wild nature.

It should be noted that in neither the Laymi nor the Hagener case are women and their associated spheres, symbols and things given more prestige relative to the male domain. Although Harris and Strathern do indicate that both the Laymi and the Hageners are male dominant, their primary effort is focused on disproving Ortner rather than on elucidating the obvious dominance of men over women in both societies. While Strathern and Harris adequately challenged Ortner's thesis that the nature/culture split was causal of male dominance, they do not deal directly with issues of power. It was Ortner and Whitehead's volume that continued to focus on inequality itself.

Ortner and Whitehead's volume did not step back from the hotly debated nature/culture dichotomy, but it did serve to broaden the discussion of the cultural construction of gender systems. This volume intended to show that "a gender

system is first and foremost a prestige structure" and that "in every known society, men and women compose two differentially valued terms of a value set, men being men, higher" (Ortner and Whitehead 1981:16). By reminding the reader that gender systems were power systems, Ortner and Whitehead returned their discussion to more political topics which are lacking in the volume by MacCormack and Strathern.

Gender Ideology

In Ortner and Whitehead's introduction to their volume, they do not distinguish between "gender system" and "gender ideology." By the latter half of the 1980s, however, with an increased theoretical sophistication, the two terms were not synonymous. Gender system referred to a Levi-Straussian depiction of symbol and sign along the binary opposition male/female. Gender ideology came to refer to a complex of beliefs surrounding male and female that always included symbolic elements and yet was much less rigid in its structure, and much more wide in its coverage (Sanday 1990). Use of the Marxist-inspired "ideology" sets the term within a connotation of struggle. Yet many explanations of gender ideology do not describe it as the site of power differences, negotiations and struggles between men and women.

Articles in Sanday and Goodenough's volume (1990) suggest that gender ideology is often multiple, that gender ideologies within a culture can be employed at different times and in differing contexts, and that gender ideologies that motivate behavior can be conflictual. For instance, Schlegel (1990) in her discussion of the Hopi, demonstrates how the specific ritualized denigration of sexuality actually indexes the gendered non-sexual brother/sister relationship. At the same time, however, the mother/father reproductive (i.e. sexual) pair has great importance in more general Hopi thought. An interpretation of Hopi gender ideology along the axis of male/female, then, would be incomplete if only one relationship, brother/sister or father/mother, were analyzed.

Meigs (1990) also described three different gender ideologies among the male Hua of New Guinea. One system of thought denigrated women as polluting and dangerous. The second recognized the special essence of women as reproductive and enduring, an essence that the men lacked and tried to make up for through the consumption of certain foods. The third saw the two genders as different, yet complementary: the "hardness" of the men as necessary for their role in defense and the "softness" of the women as essential to their reproductive capacity.

These articles, while they demonstrate the multifaceted deployment of ideology across time and place, do not engage the existence of competing ideologies across groups of people. Meigs does not discuss how New Guinea women react to the male ideologies which denigrate them (neither does Gelber [1986]). Do women concur that they are polluting and dangerous? Do they resist this designation? A more feminist discussion of multiple gender ideologies must delve into the struggles over gender ideology among individuals or between women and men as groups, and how these ideological struggles result in power differences between the sexes.

Gender and Language: Feminism in Linguistic Anthropology

Around this time the study of gender and language also took flight in linguistic anthropology. While class and sex differences had been noticed early on in English pronunciation (Labov 1966), during the 1970s and 1980s the feminist movement created an awareness of language as a political tool. Lakoff's (1975) landmark work distinguished between American male and female lexicons and styles, elucidating the perceived powerlessness of women's preference for polite speech and hedging (or nonessential qualifying statements). Women came across as flighty, weak and indecisive. American men's speech, however, was more direct, more forceful and less sympathetic. O'Barr and

Atkins (1980) suggested that the "weak" elements of women's speech were present in the speech of others situated in similarly powerless positions. Lakoff suggested that women speak more like men in order to gain power.

One job of linguistic anthropologists was to determine if these findings were valid cross-culturally (e.g. Brown 1980). It also seemed that particular genres of speech were cross-culturally limited to one or the other gender. For instance, Harding (1975) noticed that the speech of Spanish villagers differed along gender lines such that women spoke in an interpersonal style appropriate to the home, but were excluded from men's speech style which was used in public and political negotiations. In this endeavor, then, Rosaldo's domestic/public construct was helpful to linguistic anthropologists who had tended to emphasize highly genred, public speech (Philips 1980). Except for certain genres such as ritual wailing (Briggs 1992, Feld 1982), an investigation of women's styles required a more domestic focus.

Linguistic anthropologists discovered that despite its elaboration in the domestic sphere, women's language use had important social aspects. Ochs (1992) argued that baby talk resulted in poor self-presentation and lower status on the part of American mothers. She argued that Samoan mothers had higher prestige because they did not engage in such

facile discourse. Abu-Lughod (1986) presented the poetry of Bedouin women. They created poems daily to express discontent with their husbands and male kin. Although the poems remained in the women's sphere, they did contribute to the solidarity of the women. Thus, anthropologists studying gender and language investigated the significance of women's speech in the presentation of self, the socialization of children and as a means of resistance.

The concept of gender is a useful analytic tool for feminist anthropology only so far as gender is related by scientists to the larger power structures between men and women. An investigation of the volume edited by Philips, Steele and Tanz (1987) demonstrates both political and apolitical, feminist and non-feminist, studies of gender and language. The book investigates gender differences in speech across the disciplines of anthropology, psychology and linguistics, and across the foci of ethnography, child socialization, and brain studies. I will only deal with the anthropological work. The book is dedicated to Rosaldo and her vision of feminist ethnography, but not all of the work in the volume is feminist in focus, or more loosely, could be utilized by feminists to build theory.

For example, the article by Philips and Reynolds (1987) describes in detail the differential use of deletion and redundancy by women and men as they are being interviewed by

judges and lawyers as potential jurors. Philips and Reynolds conclude,

> But rather than say this shows women are more standard keepers of the flame of good form, more polite, or more powerless, we see <u>different strategies for the creation of discourse coherence</u>, and the imitation by same-sex speakers of one another's speech forms. We reject the view that these differences carry an obvious meaning or function... [Philips and Reynolds 1987:93, their emphasis]

The differences in speakers, while related to their genders, is not considered to be related to the wider context in which this speech is occurring. Unlike O'Barr and Atkins (1980), the different sets of speech are not presented to independent observers to determine which speech, men's or women's, is more valued, is seen as more believable or is seen as indicative of a better candidate for a jury. We have no data to suggest one way or the other that redundancy is another facet of the complex of powerless language characteristic of many American women (like hedges, mitigating statements and hesitations). Basically, there is no discussion of power differences between men and women generally, or for example, between female jurors and male lawyers and judges in particular.

Shibamoto's article in this volume (1987) similarly describes in detail the presence of "femininity" markers in Japanese women's speech, but again, leaves the task of relating these features to stereotypes of women and men or

to power relations between men and women for another paper. In this sense, these articles, while they discuss gender, are not feminist.

Hill's (1987) discussion of the Mexicano, however, is particularly feminist. Two trends can be seen in Mexicano society, the increasing use of Spanish and the social desire for linguistic purism which resists Spanish influence. While Mexicano men, their children and society at large encourage women to speak Spanish, there is considerable prestige given only to men associated with being legítimo mexicano. Thus, women are subject to "linguistic terrorism."

> In the matter of Mexicano, however, nothing of what women do is valued by men. If they become more Sapnish they violate the solidarity code; if they remain more Mexicano they are said to lag. [Hill 1987:158]

Although, some of these women tend to be technically more pure in their Mexicano speech, they are not generally seen as keepers of the norm. Hill argues, however, that women have their own norms different than men's and that their adherence to those norms despite male values, may be a source of change.

Perhaps the differences in these papers are methodological. A very particularist and structurally linguistic focus on particles or deletion may not lend itself to a discussion of wider cultural and contextual

power structures. On the other hand, the Mexicano may be so blatantly male-dominant as to make this fact evident in all interaction. However, as I return to argue in Chapter 5, choice of topic is an area of feminist praxis. While not all feminist work need argue for a universal male dominance, the gendered nature of power was an essential addition to anthropology by feminists and it is this focus that defines feminist anthropology as theoretically revolutionary and as particularly feminist.

Problems in the Investigation of Gender

According to Moore (1988), the study of gender transformed the "anthropology of women" into "feminist anthropology."

> The "anthropology of women" was the precursor to feminist anthropology; it was very successful in bringing women "back into view" in the discipline, but in so doing it was more remedial than radical. Feminist anthropology is more than the study of women. It is the study of gender, of the interrelations between women and men, and of the role of gender in structuring human societies, their histories, ideologies, economic systems and political structures. [Moore 1988:6]

In many ways Moore's statement is misleading. First, early feminist anthropology, although it did privilege women titularly throughout the 1970s, never did focus exclusively on women,[7] but rather on male dominance. Further, it was not until the 1980s that feminist ethnography focused solely on women (e.g. Bell 1983, Kendall 1985, Shostak 1981).

Second, while Moore credits the study of gender for widening the berth of feminist anthropology, she ignores the importance of gender as a power construct. It was not until the feminist movement that gender, like class (which Marxists had already delineated) and race (which was demonstrated by the civil rights movement), came to be seen as a fact around which power structures were organized. Lastly, Moore ignores the fact that gender has been used by anthropologists in a depoliticized way. There is nothing inherent in the concept of gender itself that automatically indexes structures of power and struggle.

The fact that gender has become so pervasive may actually be because it can be divorced from power. I have shown in this chapter how gender studies can focus on the differences between the sexes but never contextualize these differences in terms of power. The study of gender in anthropology has often presented gender ideology as monolithic rather than as contested and negotiated. Anthropological gender studies often provide few alternatives to the status quo. In fact, they may end up reifying it in that there still exists a bias toward studying gender ideologies created and maintained by men.

It is in this sense that Stanley and Wise (1990) call gender studies "a poor second" to the study of women, and argue that gender studies are a de-politicized version of

feminism, likening gender studies to studying race relations rather than racism itself (Stanley and Wise 1990:45). Stanley and Wise argue that a focus on women is the only true feminist academic approach. They caution against the conservative preference for the mainstream. According to them, the marginalization of women's studies is indicative of its potential threat to male dominance.

Stanley and Wise are reacting less to the study of gender as a whole than to those studies which ignore power. They themselves believe that women will never live in a world without men and that the study of the relationships between women and men is an important and necessary part of understanding power and effecting women's liberation. However, they see a tendency in gender studies, as do I, to discuss sex differences and not the power hierarchy that results from those differences. They believe women's studies focuses more on power.

Stanley and Wise, however ignore the fact that the study of gender often <u>is</u> the study of women. I myself am guilty of this. One of the students in my Summer 1993 class said the name of the course was misleading. "Gender and Language" should really be called "Women and Language." It occurred to me then that a great deal of "women's studies" was masquerading as "gender studies."

Why the misnomer? Perhaps the word "gender" avoids a radical or feminist connotation. Perhaps taking a class in "gender," rather than in "women's studies," is less threatening or embarrassing to male students. Perhaps my male students were disappointed when they learned less about themselves and more about women. Perhaps "gender" is trendy.

Stanley and Wise also ignore the increasing post-modern focus on women. As post-modern feminist anthropologists take inspiration from Foucault's focus on the local negotiation of power, they also tend to focus more on individual women or on particular groups of women in particular contexts. This trend will be addressed in Chapter 4. Post-modernists also seem to be quite obsessed with gendered power and gendered resistance, consistent with the concepts that feminist anthropologists introduced in the early 1970s. Unfortunately, however, also like post-modern philosophers, they often portray power as an inevitability, rather than as something that can be overcome.

I agree with Moore that "it would not be possible to pursue any sort of social science without a concept of gender" (1988:6). However, I disagree with Moore when she argues that the study of gender is actually more radical than the study of women. In fact, a combined use of the two foci results in the best feminist ethnography. In many

ways, recent feminist ethnographers, influenced by post-modernism, have utilized the construct of gender as it was originally designed to illuminate larger power relations, while discussing how women have locally managed these larger gender structures in their everyday lives (e.g. Ong 1987, Abu-Lughod 1993, Tsing 1993). In post-modern feminist ethnography, as I will show in Chapter 4, women's continual involvement and struggle with men and with dominance is not ignored, yet their lives as independent women are given a great deal of attention.

The legacy of the early years of feminist anthropology lies in the fact that any theoretical discussion of power cannot ignore the use of gender as a rationalization of or organizer of power structures. This critical awareness will appear over and again in Chapter 3 as feminists, in general, and feminist anthropologists, in particular, attempt to incorporate post-modern philosophy into their theories.

CHAPTER 3

THE CURIOUS PROBLEM OF POST-MODERNISM IN FEMINIST THOUGHT AND ACTION

The era we are currently in is popularly called the post-modern era. Post-modernism is a complex and confusing label and my use of it ought to be explained before preceding further. "Post-modern" is a label that describes today's high-tech and fast paced world as well as the feeling of isolation and fragmentation of individuals within that world. Here I focus on some of the theoretical aspects of post-modernism as they have been pursued by feminist social scientists. While many new theoretical issues can be labelled post-modern, I limit my discussion to those most engaged by feminists and most applicable to feminist theory, namely post-modern ideas of epistemology, power, the body, and the self. This chapter is a partial view of post-modernism: its translation in feminist discourse.

As Foucault's work demonstrates, the historical location of any discourse, such as post-modernism, very much determines its shape and tenor. Post-modernism is so new as to be difficult to locate historically and to characterize completely. Thus, I will portray post-modernism in what may be considered to be a post-modern way, as a collage of theorists and ideas rather than as a coherent and larger narrative. In so doing, and in limiting my topic to the

aspects of postmodernism most important to feminists, I am sure to neglect many areas of thought which can correctly be seen as post-modern.

I refer to di Leonardo's observation (1991b:25) that the terms "post-modern" and "post-structural" have been so diluted in meaning that they are now interchangeable despite their different historical uses. Although I agree with her that the two traditions are now part of a larger, general movement in the social sciences, I will make at least one distinction between them. I will use "post-structuralism" to refer to concepts (such as deconstruction) which directly challenge social scientific analytical constructs. I will use "post-modern," more generally than "post-structuralism" to refer to any explicit or implicit theoretical bias that appears to be anti-modern or anti-Enlightenment. Enlightenment values include the belief in the rational man, the existence of discoverable truths and the pursuit of science. On the other hand, post-modern ideas champion multiplicity, the relativity of any claim and the recognition of science as a discourse of power rather than an avenue to truth (cf. Flax 1987).

Feminists, of course, preceded post-modernists in their critique of Enlightenment ideals.

> But it was not...<u>any</u> professional intellectual voice... who was ultimately responsible for uncovering the pretensions and illusions of the

> ideals of epistemological objectivity, foundations, and neutral judgment. That uncovering first occurred, not in the course of philosophical conversation, but in political practice. Its agents were the liberation movements of the sixties and seventies, emerging not only to make a claim to the legitimacy of marginalized cultures, unheard voices, suppressed narratives, but also to expose the perspectivity and partiality of official accounts. [Bordo 1990:137]

De Beauvior (1957) was one of the first to critique the position of women in Enlightenment thought. Enlightenment values are based on binary oppositions which by analogy place women on the same side as emotion (rather than reason), weakness (rather than strength) and body (rather than mind). Women are excluded from participation in Enlightenment thought by the simple fact that they are defined as outsiders. The rational man is not a woman.

Although feminist thinkers began to question the validity of modern thought prior to post-modernists, post-modernists generally do not claim any historical relatedness to feminists, nor do they draw on feminist theory to inform their philosophy. This is due to an implicit sexism in much post-modern thought which I will discuss later. However, while post-modernists do not acknowledge feminist influence, feminists have spent much time and thought delving into the implications, desirable and undesirable, of post-modernism for feminist theory. What follows is a discussion of the critical tests through which feminists have put post-modern

ideas. The next chapter will pursue how feminist anthropologists in particular have incorporated post-modern tendencies.

Epistemology

One of the buzzwords of post-modern philosophy is "epistemology." Epistemology is defined as the study of how knowledge is produced, or how we come to know what it is we know (cf. Duran 1991:80). The post-modern interest in epistemology is based on the idea that knowledge is created rather than discovered, that truth is arrived at rather than pre-existent. Discourse is the medium through which truth is established. Discourse is historically informed and determined. Truth is relevant to place and time, to questions asked and to answers preferred. Thus, truth is relative across time and place and is in constant flux. There is no one absolute Truth.

Further, an investigation of epistemology and the use of knowledge illuminates power relationships. All knowledge explains reality, yet only some ideas and experiences will be elevated to the position of Truth. Science has been the dominant mode of Truth discovery in the modern world. According to post-modernists, however, science is but one discourse infused with power. Scientific discourse is manipulated by the powerful to support and maintain social

inequality. Thus, post-modernists believe that science is not a pure avenue to Truth, because there is no such thing. Instead, it is imbued with the same biases and prejudices as its producers: scientists, their financial backers, and the wider society.

As mentioned earlier, feminists have long found fault with scientific inquiry. It is not surprising, then, that this post-modern critique has stimulated much discussion. However, in critiqueing science, feminists find themselves in a quandry.

> A woman scientist is a contradiction in terms, as the feminist critics of science point out... [Harding 1991a:103]

> From this point of view, science -- the real game in town, the one we must play -- is rhetoric, the persuasion of the relevant social actors that one's manufactured knowledge is a route to a desired form of very objective power.... Here, artefacts and facts are parts of the powerful art of rhetoric. Practice is persuasion, and the focus is very much on practice. All knowledge is a condensed node in an agonistic power field. [Haraway 1991:184-185]

While Harding points out that scientific pursuits are not woman-friendly, Haraway reminds women that it is the rhetoric of science that they must master in order to be heard. As members of Western culture and indeed, as Western social scientists, feminist theorists are questioning a system in which they are well versed. They are also questioning a system of power, which some feminists believe

should be employed to advance the causes of women. Thus, feminists tend to value science more than post-modernists.

Harding (1986, 1987, 1990, 1991a, 1991b) has wrestled extensively with this problem which she calls "the science question in feminism." She identifies three modes of feminist epistemology. Only one of these epistemologies is post-modern, demonstrating that the concern with knowledge production is more extensive in feminist thought and cannot be thought of as a purely post-modern influence.

Harding calls the first style "feminist empiricism." Feminist empiricists believe that it is not scientific method that is androcentric, but the topics chosen by scientists to investigate. The solution, then, is to increase the number of female scientists. Harding points out the logical inconsistency of this position: if the presence of women in science alters its bias, then scientific methods are not neutral, value-free or user-blind. Thus, these feminists, although they reify empiricism as objective, must recognize it is not.

According to Harding, the second solution to androcentric bias in science is suggested by "feminist standpoint" theorists. These feminists argue that women have a different and better perspective based on their struggle with oppression. Standpoint social science is politically and socially motivated and informed. Feminist

standpoint theorists recognize bias in empirical methods, but use them to further feminist projects. This position tends to essentialize womanhood and reifies a singular view of oppression despite the fact that oppression necessarily manifests itself in varying degrees across women.

Finally, the third perspective, feminist post-modernism, proposes that science does not have and never did have the authority it claimed. Scientific method is discounted and discarded. The one benefit Harding attributes to post-modern thought as a movement is that it allows for multiplicity. If truths are relative, then everyone's version must be considered.

However, Harding identifies at least three problems with post-modernism. First, she cautions that the post-modern emphasis on relativism actually may work against feminists as it can be used by men to dismiss women's views rather than engage them (1987). Second, Harding (1990) objects to the distorted view postmodernists have of science as monolithic and unchanging. She points out that science has the ability to change and improve in the years to come.

Finally, Harding (1990) believes that the goal of feminist scholars should be to tell "less false" stories, and sees post-modern rhetoric as obstructive to that end. According to Harding, post-modernists are caught in their own binary opposition, viewing truth and falsity as

symmetrical opposites. Instead, she proposes that truth is a continuum, and that while an absolute truth may not be obtainable, there can be the recognition that some stories, versions or theories are more true than others.

> Feminist inquiry can aim to produce less partial and perverse representations without having to assert the absolute, complete, universal or eternal adequacy of these representations. [Harding 1990:100]

Harding does not wish to abandon science or the belief in truth altogether. She believes that feminists can utilize science, albeit warily, to their advantage.

This idea of "less false" interpretations of reality seems to have permeated feminist theory. Haraway, who can be labeled post-modern in her deconstructive tendencies and reification of plurality, echoes Harding:

> Feminists have to insist on a <u>better</u> account of the world; it is not enough to show radical historical contingency and modes of construction for everything. [Haraway 1991:187, emphasis mine]

Although Haraway recognizes the power and problems of scientific rhetoric, she also takes issue with the post-modern feminist reduction of truth and knowledge to relativizing discourse, which results in no attempt to capture reality. Unlike Harding who breaks feminist epistemology into three fairly discrete blocks, Haraway proposes that it is theoretically possible to approach science from more than one place at a time. According to

Haraway, one can be empirical, feminist and post-modern at once.

To engage in feminist post-modern science, Haraway insists that the researcher must realize that her knowledge is always produced from a specific location. Producers of knowledge are situated so that they cannot see everything at once. Their vision is always blocked. Since knowledge is forever partial, its creators and its users must recognize this partiality through a reflexive examination. A better account of the world need not abandon all scientific inquiry. Instead it must recognize that knowledge is always contextually informed and that science presents many pitfalls such as a false semblance of power, omniscience and objectivity. The position of the researcher, her age, ethnicity, sexuality, religion and so on, inform her science, method and interpretation, and situate her to discover or "know" some things and not others.

Haraway's idea of situatedness is built on an issue brought up earlier by feminists of color who argued that feminist theory ignored their experience. In Feminist Theory From Margin to Center, bell hooks (1984) suggests that the position of black women at the margins of society and as doubly oppressed (racially and sexually) gives them a unique perspective that could broaden feminist theory. Assuming that feminism today is created and controlled by

white, middle-class women, hooks argues that black women would produce a more pluralistic feminism that would unite all people in struggle and focus on all social problems rather than just one. Sisterhood would be created, based not on victimization, but on the shared appreciation of diversity and political solidarity. Hooks would like to see feminists work toward a true all-encompassing social transformation, rather than limited benefits for the few (i.e. white women). She concludes that without the inclusion of black women and attention to their particular perspectives and problems, feminism will not succeed.

Collins (1991) has a similar opinion, calling African-American women "outsiders within." Collins believes that black women have a special objectivity as a result of being situated both within and outside of the American power structure. They can see patterns of oppression and power negotiation more clearly than can whites. Further, traditional sociological paradigms have not resonated with black female experiences, and in fact, have made these women invisible. Collins does not provide any specifics as to how black female sociologists will go about rectifying these omissions. However, she does argue that the particular epistemology of black women, gained from their position as insiders/outsiders, can be used to broaden sociological

thought so that it may better represent those on the margins.

Although many feminists, especially feminists of color, have made similar arguments (cf. Anzaldúa 1987, hooks 1992, Lorde 1984, Mohanty 1991b), there are problems inherent in their logic, difficulties which are not totally invisible to them. While they accuse white, middle-class feminists of disregarding the differences among women (especially those caused by race), they themselves struggle with their own presentation of ethnic women as homogeneous. Collins persists in representing black women as a united group despite her disclaimer that "no one Black feminist platform exists, nor should there be one" (1991:42).

Mohanty similarly takes issue with "the production of the 'third world woman' as a singular monolithic subject in some recent (Western) feminist texts" (1991b:51). She claims that when these Western feminists portray third world women as objects, sexual and otherwise, of colonialists, they create an artificial fissure between third world women and themselves. While they incorrectly are seen and see themselves as modern, free and in control of their bodies, lives, families and so on, they present third world women as their passive and dominated opposites.

Yet Mohanty herself repeatedly uses the term "third world women" throughout her articles. She justifies her

usage of the term by explaining that third world women can be recognized as a political entity:

> What seems to constitute "women of color" or "third world women" as a viable oppositional alliance is a common context of struggle rather than color or racial identifications. Similarly, it is third world women's oppositional political relation to sexist, racist, and imperialist structures that constitutes our potential commonality. [Mohanty 1991a:7, emphasis hers]

Here again, despite the care in definition, the potential variety in perspectives of the women encompassed in Mohanty's term is obscured. Some of these "third world women" may not be engaged in struggle, politically or otherwise, and in fact, may not even see themselves as oppressed!

Thus, despite the important contributions of these feminists and the perspectives and theories which emanate from their different life experiences, their knowledge is as partial and suffers from as much bias as anyone's (Flax 1987). Certainly one member of a group cannot claim to represent the whole. As Haraway reminds us, "The standpoints of the subjugated are not 'innocent' positions" (1991:191). Further, although these women gingerly present "marginal" women by appending the appropriate disclaimers, they do not show a similar understanding of the complexities of and varieties within so-called "mainstream" feminism (Bordo 1990:145). While I would acknowledge that power

plays an important role as to which ideas get spread and which get marginalized, I think that the presentation of one group (white middle-class feminists) as a monolith, while claiming that another is not, leads these theorists to some dangerous logical inconsistencies. If "black" and "third world" are to be deconstructed, "white," "Western" and "middle class" must be as well.

Current post-modern thought thus mirrors rather than adds to ideas about epistemology already present in feminist theory and practice. Yet post-modern critiques of science and philosophy leave out one crucial element. That is, post-modernists have ignored long-standing general feminist critiques that the bias in science and philosophy is an inherently male bias. Feminists of color continue the debate, arguing that science and philosophy have racial and class biases as well. These women caution that, unless these perspectives are widened, feminism may make the same mistakes found in traditionally male Western thought.

Epistemology and Methodology

The question of epistemology obviously affects not only feminist theory but method as well. If science's claims to truth are being questioned, certainly its methods of knowledge collection must also face scrutiny. One group that has repeatedly wrestled with the science question in

method as well as in theory has been feminist sociologists. As anthropologists share some of the same methods with sociologists, an in-depth look at this material is germane to this discussion.

Jayaratne and Stewart (1991), in their defense of quantitative methods, acknowledge the problems of traditional scientific endeavors, yet insist that they must remain as methods available for feminist use. They make an important distinction between methodology, the theory or rationale behind method, and method itself. A feminist methodology need not require a unique feminist method. Instead, well-established methods, especially scientific quantitative ones, should be carried out in the spirit of feminism.

> Feminist researchers must be critical of both quantitative and qualitative research which is used against women and must be able to marshal the richest and most persuasive evidence in the science of women. [Jayartne and Stewart 1991:100]

They caution that not all quantitative work is anti-feminist nor is all qualitative work, feminist.

Jayaratne and Stewart's methodology involves choosing a research topic that is designed to help women's lives, combining quantitative and qualitative methods when possible with cognizance of the problems of each, conducting research in as bias-free a way as possible, looking at as many

different interpretations of the data as can be found and actively publishing results so that others can benefit.

Mies (1991), Acker et al. (1991), Stanley (1990) and Stanley and Wise (1990, 1991) similarly champion undertaking science in the spirit of feminism. These sociologists embrace Harding's feminist standpoint epistemology, arguing that feminist social science must be emancipatory for women. They argue that theory must be rooted in the experience of women, that objectivity on the part of the researcher is thus impossible, and that merely describing a situation reinforces it. Thus, an important goal of social science must be to provide alternatives to the status quo.

Methodologically, they identify five sites of epistemological reflexivity which need to be explored by the researcher before she can adequately interpret her work. A feminist social scientist must examine: 1) the researcher-researched relationship, 2) emotion as a research experience, 3) her own intellectual autobiography, 4) the potential for different interpretations of reality by researched and researcher, and 5) the complex question of power involved in the ability of the researcher to write up and publish her results on the researched (Stanley and Wise 1990).

Obviously, these sociologists value a less exploitative relationship with the researched object, emphasizing the

emotional involvement of the scientist in her subject matter and the empathy she feels toward the people she studies. Stanley (1990) uses a Marxist analogy to describe traditional methodology. The reification of scientific rationalism results in a false objectivity, "alienated" knowledge. Good feminist research must create unalienated knowledge, or knowledge that recognizes the deep involvement of the researcher in the research.

In this vein, these sociologists tend to ground their discussions in real-life research experiences. Stanley and Wise (1991) base their article on the study of actual obscene phone calls they received as well-known lesbians. Acker and others (1991) comment that it took one subject five interviews before she felt that she had accurately portrayed herself to the researchers. Finally, Mies (1991) describes her "accidental" involvement in a movement by women in an Indian village to end wife abuse. "It never would have been possible for me to gain either of these insights by way of conventional research methods" (Mies 1991:74).

Epistemology, then, for feminist sociologists derives not only from method, but as well from life-experience, which is collected much more randomly than data. This life-experience, unique to each researcher, creates her perspective or locatedness, and influences greatly how she

pursues her science. Since science itself exists in a larger context whereby knowledge becomes truth, these feminist sociologists endeavor to write up their results in as explicit a way as possible in order to avoid telling any blatant falsehoods.

Finally, these sociologists believe that their locatedness as women gives them a concommitant ability to understand the female subjects of their studies. Sociologists share this belief in the existence of an intersubjectivity based on womanhood with many anthropologists. The fact that gender influences how a female anthropologist is perceived in the field is discussed in Chapter 4. Other feminist theorists, however, question the importance of (or even the reality of) gender. These issues are pursued in more detail in the discussion of essentialism later in this chapter.

Power and Resistance: Foucault's Impact on Theory

Although it has been argued that Foucault is not a true post-modern theorist (cf. McNay 1992), the post-modern concern with epistemology is largely inspired by his philosophy which posited that knowledge was translated into power through discourse. Discourse, or talk, sanctions and controls topic. How one experiences something, or knows something, is limited by the way one can talk about it.

In The History of Sexuality (1978), Foucault attempted to show this principle by looking at how sexuality had been defined and discussed in Western society through time. Foucault argues that earlier sexuality was a taboo topic:

> As if in order to gain mastery over it in reality, it had first been necessary to subjugate it at the level of language, control its free circulation in speech, expunge it from the things that were said, and extinguish the words that rendered it too visibly present. [Foucault 1978:17]

Discussion of sexuality was relegated to the confessional. However, eventually, through "the clinical codification of the inducement to speak," what was once secretive talk became public discourse (Foucault 1978:65). As it became public especially through the discourses of medicine and psychoanalysis, sexuality became body-centered, rather than relational, and certain sexual activities were defined as pathological. In particular, Foucault argues that homosexuals were defined totally in terms of their aberrant sexual behavior, such that nothing they did was not considered to be motivated by it. Thus, "real" sexuality, became obscured, controlled and limited by talk.

> By speaking about it so much, by discovering it multiplied, partitioned and specified precisely where one had placed it, what one was seeking essentially was simply to conceal sex: a screen-discourse, a dispersion-avoidance. [Foucault 1978:53]

Foucault's other work carries this same theme as he argues that discourses were created which rationalized the

medicalization of insanity (1965), the pursuit of the human sciences (1970), the spread of modern medicine (1973), and the creation of prisons (1977).

Although Foucault describes what he calls a "scheme for transforming sex into discourse," he does not provide a clear picture of who created such a scheme or who benefitted from such a scheme (1978:20).

> We must not expect the discourses on sex to tell us, above all, what strategy they derive from, or what moral divisions they accompany, or what ideology -- dominant or dominated -- they represent...[Foucault 1978:102]

Other than pointing out the participation of the medical and psychoanalytical fields, he neglects to discuss how discourse reverberates throughout a society. Do people passively accept new forms of talk or do they actively elaborate ideas? How are some ideas chosen to be spread and others discarded?

Foucault's difficulty with these concepts is a result of his complex conceptualization of power which is not well-integrated into his discussion of discourse. Power for Foucault does not exist as a separate entity apart from interaction. It is not hierarchical, it cannot be "acquired, seized or shared," nor is it the privilege solely of the state (Foucault 1978:94).

> By power, I do not mean "Power" as a group of institutions and mechanisms that ensure the subservience of the citizens of a given state. By

> power, I do not mean, either a mode of subjugation which, in contrast to violence, has the form of the rule. Finally, I do not have in mind a general system of domination exerted by one group over another, a system whose effects, through successive derivations, pervade the entire social body. [Foucault 1978:92]

Foucault is insistent on discarding the juridical view of power that describes it as an attainable and measurable possession of the strong used against the weak. Instead, Foucault describes power as a chain of unceasing local struggles and confrontations.

> In effect, what defines a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action which does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead it acts upon their actions: an action upon an action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or the future....On the other hand a power relationship can only be articulated on the basis of two elements which are each indispensable if it is really to be a power relationship: that "the other" (the one over whom power is exercised) be thoroughly recognized and maintained to the very end as a person who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions may open up. [Foucault 1982:219-220]

According to Foucault, power is inherently relational. This view of power as an entity present in all relationships between individuals can be seen in anthropological and non-anthropological feminist theory. Chapter 4 will demonstrate how feminist anthropologists have elaborated the complex and local responses and reactions to power cross-culturally.

Foucault spends less time theorizing resistance, although he claims it to be inseparable from power.

Resistance, like power, is not a separable, definable entity. Instead, any power relationship "depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance" (Foucault 1978:95). Thus, resistance cannot be owned or joined, rather "the swarm of points of resistance traverses social stratifications and individual unities" (Foucault 1978:96).

Despite Foucault's insistence that power and resistance are inherently relational, he rarely discusses either in terms of, or from the point of view of, any actual participants in relations. People, their roles and their actions are left untheorized. Foucault ignores the causes and sources of power; he gives no thought as to how power comes to exist. Because power is not a possession, Foucault does not engage the idea that some have more than others. He ignores exactly how power is felt, used, and resisted by people. Thus, his discussion of power appears to be no more than his own discursive trick; his elaborate definition lacks any real-life framing.

This indiscretion creates, or perhaps is a product of, a further problem in Foucault's philosophy, consistent with and yet aggravating the discursive difficulties of his definition of power: he lacks a coherent conceptualization of the self, the subject or the individual. And yet his philosophizing on the active relations of power would seem to require one.

The creation of the subject or self is a process in which power plays a large role. Foucault believes the current era is dominated by "struggles against subjection" whereby people react against the subject creating forces of the state which at once emphasize individualization and totalization:

> This form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects. There are two meanings of the word subject: subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to. [Foucault 1982:212, emphasis his]

Foucault argues that the concept of the "self" is merely a creation of a useful discourse by the modern state. While having individualism as an ethos, the state, through its penetration and domination of discourse, in fact prescribes and enforces standards of behavior, being and self. This talk of "self" obscures very real pressures to conform. The solution to this problem, according to Foucault, is "to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries" (1982:216). Yet once again, Foucault does not explicate real-life examples or possible strategies

that would make plain exactly how a new subjectivity would be created.

Foucault's Power and the Feminists

It is at these junctures that feminist theorists have become frustrated with Foucault's philosophy and have tried to broaden and enlighten it by testing its truth in the real world. Some feminists have dismissed most of what Foucault says about power out of hand because of its incompatibility with the feminist movement's goal of liberation. Others find the novelty of his conceptualization of power liberating. His concepts about the body, which have similar uses and drawbacks, will be addressed in the next section.

The primary feminist criticism of Foucault, shared even by those who find him fascinating, is that he ignores systematic power relations, such as those that create women's oppression (Diamond and Quinby 1988, Martin 1988, Hartsock 1990). His definition does not accept this type of domination or even slavery as a power relation (Foucault 1982). For Foucault, power does not exist in relations of physical dominance (although coercion may be a last resort when power does not work). Instead, power rests upon the consent and freedom of the parties in a relationship. True power is symbiosis, or statis, when the two parties do not

conflict. Power is a network into which all are plugged as a result of their participation in local relations.

Some feminists argue that this focus on local relations ignores very real but larger relations of domination in society, dominations of one group over others, in which certain parties truly have no freedom of choice (cf. Diamond and Quinby 1988). The implication of Foucault's description, however, is that everyone appears to be equal and to have the same agency within the power system. It is not surprising, then, that as a corollary to his description of power as a relational entity, Foucault characterizes the dominated as participants in their own domination.

The idea that people participate in their own oppression is at once problematic and insightful. Bordo claims that a feminist Foucauldian framework "forces us to recognize the degree to which women collude in sustaining sexism and sexist stereotypes" (1993:28). Yet Hartsock cautions against "blaming the victim" and complains that Foucault does not give a very detailed picture of power, never looking at exactly how the dominated participate, at what sites they must submit or at what sites they can resist (1990:169). So while Foucault provides a beginning for these ideas, their application to real-life instances must be carried out by feminist theorists.

Foucault's proposal that "where there is power, there is resistance" is, perhaps, inspiring (1978:95). Hartsock (1990), however, argues that because Foucault characterizes resistance as simply an extension of current power schemes, rather than liberatory of them, he believes that no viable alternative to the relations of today could possibly exist. She also criticizes Foucault for depicting "a world in which subjects become obliterated, or rather, recreated as passive objects" (Hartsock 1990:167). Although he talks about resistance, he does not describe individuals as actors and agents. Instead, a belief in individuality is dismissed by him as pure rhetoric created by the state. An alternative and resistant selfhood is never possible.[1]

These criticisms reflect a feminist ambivalence toward the Foucauldian deconstruction of Enlightenment ideals. Just as feminists are reluctant to discard science altogether, they are also troubled by philosophies such as Foucault's which, when carried to their ultimate conclusion, make the women's movement irrelevant.

> Essential to all Enlightenment beliefs is the existence of something called a "self," a stable, reliable, integrative entity that has access to our inner states and outer reality, at least to a limited (but knowable) degree. [Flax 1990:8]

During the Enlightenment, for example, rights were considered to be inalienable possessions of individuals, namely men. Since the beginnings of the movement, women

have fought to be defined as equals to men and have fought for the same rights legally and socially: the right to vote, the right to education, the right to privacy, the right to equal pay. Buying into Foucault's reduction of individualism as a rhetorical strategy of the state, rather than as a reality 1) precludes the pursual of equal rights by women, because no coherent individual exists who has rights and 2) denies that women have a coherent selfhood that can know, understand and resist their subjugation.

Simply, Foucault's resistance is not emancipatory. According to his rhetoric, lesbian separatists, for example, could never create a space apart from the rest of the world. Nor could women, in general, strive for or even imagine a different and better world where power is more shared. Thus, while Foucault's insights have been useful to feminist theory, their primary disadvantage is that they do not encourage political praxis, an essential element of feminism.

Finally, a commitment to the existence of the gendered individual is necessary for feminist theory (Bordo 1990). However, as if gender were also somehow the creation of rhetoric rather than a reality, Foucault rarely addresses the impact of gender on history, life, and institutions. Simply, he ignores the gendered nature of existence. Some feminists see this as a major theoretical flaw.

> Systematic consideration of gender relations would profoundly affect his genealogies of sexuality, subjectivity, power and knowledge. Many of his historical claims appear problematic when juxtaposed against feminist narratives. For example, his notion of biopower as a uniquely modern form of power runs contrary to many feminist accounts of history. According to these accounts, women's bodies have always, although in many different ways, been "colonized" by the intersection of knowledge and power. [Flax 1990:212]

Much as individual actors fade into the background in Foucault's analysis, so does anything that defines their selfhood, such as gender, and certainly for feminists engaged in struggle as women, this is disturbing. They argue that Foucault's histories are very male-oriented and not only ignore marginal accounts of the past, but also deny the importance of major events of history. Says Flax:

> From a feminist perspective no compelling history of the present could ignore the centrality of relations of gender and the struggles about them that reemerged in full force in the late 1960s. [Flax 1990:212]

Thus, Foucauldian logic, because of its omissions and inadequacies, does not describe women's experiences with oppression very well, nor does it offer them theoretically any means of escaping domination.

These criticisms notwithstanding, Foucault's primary influence, especially in feminist work, has been his reconceptualization of discourse as a means to power (Flax 1987). He has thus contributed to the critique of science

by making plain how certain ideas are elevated to Truth status. This focus on discourse and Truth has been pursued by feminist historians of science (e.g. Haraway 1989, 1991) and by scholars, not always feminist, in the new field of cultural studies whose focus is on the Western media (Grossberg, et al. 1992).

Foucault's influence has been extensive in anthropology as well. Linguistic anthropologists have embraced what for them is a new definition of discourse, expanding their field of textual study (Abu-Lughod and Lutz 1990). Ethnohistorians have also employed these concepts, focusing on how colonial discourse defined, situated and thereby subdued the "natives" (Silverblatt 1991, Stoler 1991). Additionally, Foucault's ideas on resistance and power have inspired others to pursue the study of their manifestations cross-culturally. A more complete discussion of the anthropological elaboration of these post-modern ideas will follow in the next chapter.

The Body: Foucault, French and not-so-French Feminists

A large part of Foucault's work has focused on the cultural and social manipulation of the human body. According to Foucault, the histories of medicine, sexuality and prisons have as their common trend an evolving definition of the body and the appropriate uses to which it can be put. As

modern times approach, bodies begin to come under surveillance, "caught up in a system of constraints and privations, obligations and prohibitions" (Foucault 1977:11). Yet, even as the body is socially controlled and manipulated through practice and talk, control and manipulation of the body also becomes the duty of the populus. Foucault calls this:

> An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorising to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself. [Foucault 1980:155]

Thus, again in Foucault's work, the individual is seen as a participant in his or her own domination.

Foucault argues that surveillance is a form of discipline which "produces subjected and practiced bodies, 'docile' bodies" (1977:138). Feminist theorists, Bartky (1988) and Bordo (1988, 1989, 1993), pursue the concepts of discipline and surveillance and their effect on women's bodies. Bartky's insight is that despite Foucault's framing of discipline in terms of institutions, disciplinary power is in fact quite diffuse and anonymous. The ubiquitous, uncontested and even unrecognized presence of discipline (i.e dieting and exercise) in the lives of individuals, especially women, "creates the impression that the production of femininity is either entirely voluntary or

natural" (Bartky 1988:75), rather than a result of the pernicious influence of the media.

Bordo also rails against the media in her analysis of the phenomenon of anorexia among American women. She believes that media presentations of women encourage them to attempt to fulfill harmful and impossible images of the female body. Speaking a rhetoric of choice and power learned from advertisements, magazines, the movies and television, young women today starve and exercise themselves in order to create skinny, perfect bodies. Thus, the bodies of anorexics are literally created by the women's embodiment of media images.

Bordo, however, emphasizes the participation of women who subscribe to this ideal female in their own domination. Anorexic bodies are not necessarily "docile" ones. She believes that Foucault's concept that power comes "from below," and that the dominated actually utilize and are an active part of processes of power, should be seen, not as a depressing inevitability, but as a means to freedom. Thus, for Bordo, if it is true that a young woman is often "in collusion with forces that sustain her own oppression" (1989:15), she can also use the same power in a different way to overcome them. The forces of domination will only be dismantled when women no longer come under their spell.

The problems with Foucault's work mentioned earlier are also evident in the application of his ideas by both Bartky and Bordo. Just as it is difficult to locate the source of domination in Foucault's philosophy, the emphasis on the media by these women leaves one equally perplexed. The media is presented as an anonymous monolithic source of domination which is never really deconstructed. Who creates the media? Who decides which images will be slicked up, magnified and disseminated? Again, who benefits? Even Bordo's insistence that women participate in their subjugation does not answer these questions. Finally, since they insist that the source of power is an amorphous "media," it is not surprising that neither Bordo nor Bartky offer any real avenues of resistance. If women refuse to consume media images, it does not ensure that the media will go away.

Women's Sexuality

It is in his focus on the body that Foucault actually addresses, albeit briefly, the idea that women's bodies were/are more manipulated than men's.[2] He argues that with the increasing discussion of sex and the widening berth of medicine, the female body was conceptualized as "being thoroughly saturated with sexuality" and was therefore "integrated into the sphere of medical practices, by reason

of a pathology intrinsic to it" (Foucault 1978:104). However, in an interview, Foucault commented that feminists have been able to effect change because they "have actually departed from the discourse conducted within the apparatuses of sexuality" (Foucault 1982:220). Women have not only denied the validity of their positioning in society as sexualized beings, but also have refused to engage the talk altogether. According to Foucault, women are thus more effective in comparison to homosexuals, who have continued in the sex discourse in order to claim their identities as sexual beings and have thus stalled their movement.

Sexuality and its importance to female identity as well as its place in the women's movement has been widely debated. According to Sawicki (1988), there have been two polar forms of feminist sexuality: libertarian, which resisted any limits on sexuality, and radical, which encouraged the displacement of a male definition of female sexuality for a kinder, gentler female sex. In the 1960s and 70s, feminism seemed wedded to a more libertarian perspective:

> The discourse of sexual revolution also produced critiques of specific sexual institutions such as mandatory heterosexism, phallocentrism, male dominance, monogamy, and the nuclear family, all of which were identified as culprits contributing to a climate of surplus repression that was costly in psychic, social, and political terms. [Singer 1993:115]

However, it has been argued that the actual result of sexual liberation was not female empowerment, but rather the increased access to (and thereby domination of) women's bodies by men. The sexual revolution centered sexuality in womanhood, thereby buttressing the age-old belief in woman's rampant sexuality. The association of women with nature appeared to be sanctioned by women themselves. Thus, a more radical view requires women to define their own sexuality, for example, as lesbian separatists or as heterosexual women who fight against pornographic (read: male) presentations of intercourse (Sawicki 1988).

In an opposite trend, however, as Foucault pointed out, the American women's movement has also tried repeatedly to remove the frame of sexuality from around many gender issues, such as rape (Woodhull 1988, Kaye/Kantrowitz 1992, Hall 1993) and sexual harassment (Crenshaw 1992). The aim is to pose these problems as issues of power and discuss them in terms of individual rights (i.e. the right to a non-hostile environment in the workplace). This reconceptualization is not without its critics, though, who argue that rape and sexual harassment are in fact outgrowths of (and not that different from) normal heterosexual behavior (MacKinnon 1982). Therefore, to desexualize them is to ignore the dialectic between sex and power in our society, and how male dominance is supported by

heterosexuality (Diamond and Quinby 1988). The move to desexualize thereby creates a yet another discourse, much as Foucault said modern society has, which obscures the reality of sex (Woodhull 1988).

A discussion of the problematic place of sex in the women's movement provides a nice segue into the work of the French feminists, who actually champion female sexuality as the sole means to liberation. This discussion will provide details on only three of the French feminists (Irigaray, Cixous and Kristeva). And while the work of the French feminists (especially Irigaray) engages a variety of thinkers from Plato to Derrida, the philosophical background provided here will only address the pertinent issues of this paper. Finally, although these women happen to French and feminist, it is a bit artificial to group them together as if they were in total agreement. That observation aside, I will continue to use the moniker while I attempt to show the differences among them.

The French feminists are highly influenced by Lacan's reconceptualization of Freud (Sellers 1991). Lacan retheorized the consequences of Freud's stages of childhood development in regard to the definition of self. According to Lacan, the pre-Oedipal stage is a state of blending where neither mother nor child has a sense of separation or of self. As the Oedipal stage commences, however, the child

begins to distinguish self from other through the use of language which to Lacan is the ultimate symbolic order. The mother is typically the first other a child can distinguish and thus, women as a group become classed as Other. (According to Sellers (1991), mother thus becomes m/other, an iconographic spelling which works for English, if not other spelling systems.) The male child realizes he is not Other but a possessor of the phallus. The phallus is Lacan's more symbolically laden substitute for Freud's word, penis, and invokes not only physiology but male-dominance and power. Girls, on the other hand, identify with m/other, and define themselves as absence, phallus/power-lacking women. Women can only achieve the phallus vicariously through the birth of a (preferably male) child.

For Lacan, the Other is woman. Since the definition of self occurs through mirroring, woman is merely the projection of man's opposite. Thus, "woman does not exist" as her own entity (Lacan 1966 and 1971, as cited by Sellers 1991), but rather is the phallus' projection of desire, all that the phallus is not (and does and does not want to be). It is through language, initially in the Oedipal stage and later in the power structure, through the act of naming and defining, that men subordinate women. The symbolic order is defined, controlled and created by men.

Irigaray is wary of Lacan and Freud. She considers their reckoning of woman accurate, but not uncontestable.

> The Oedipal interdict seems, however, a rather artificial and imprecise law -- even though it is the very means of perpetuating the authoritarian discourse of fathers -- when it is decreed in a culture where sexual relations are impracticable, since the desire of man and the desire of woman are so foreign to each other. [Irigaray 1981a:102]

Women are certainly Other, not simply because men are the norm, but also as a result of the incomprehensibility of womanhood. Man's world, his logic, his sexual appetites and desires, and his language cannot encompass woman.

For Irigaray, woman cannot be understood by man because of his inability to define her sexuality, since he is focused on the linear, external phallus. Instead, women possess a multiple and autoerotic sexuality, symbolized by the folds of the vulva, "two lips which embrace continually" (Irigaray 1981a:100). Irigaray claims that although men like to catalogue and number everything, "she is neither one nor two" (1981a:101).

Irigaray argues that the "dominant phallic economy" represses and suppresses women's innate, diffuse sexuality and instead, positions them as objects (Others) of male desire to be traded between men. Within such a system, women can only embrace a femininity prescribed by men which "corresponds only slightly to woman's desire" (Irigaray 1981a:104). Rather, the means to freedom for woman is the

rediscovery of her womanhood, giving her "the possibility of not sacrificing any of her pleasures to another, of not identifying with anyone in particular, of never being simply one" (Irigaray 1981a:104). In addition, women need to remove themselves from the market as men's sexual objects. "When the goods get together," the title of another of Irigaray's essays (1981b), or when women separate themselves, only then will they be able to enjoy the fullness of their selves. (It is unclear here whether Irigaray is advocating lesbian separatism.)

Although she claims that woman's "libido is cosmic" (1981:259), Cixous focuses much less on sexuality than Irigaray. Instead, Cixous conceptualizes an undefined (and undefinable) female body, the writing of which can give women access to their own innate power.

> Women must write through their bodies, they must invent the impregnable language that will wreck partitions, classes, and rhetorics, regulations and codes, they must submerge, cut through, get byond the ultimate reserve-discourse, including the one that laughs at the very idea of pronouncing the word "silence," the one that aiming for the impossible, stops short before the word "impossible" and writes it as "the end." [Cixous 1981:256]

Similar to Irigaray, Cixous blames men, culture and language (the symbolic) for repressing women, for silencing them. Thus, Cixous urges women to "write your self. Your body must be heard" (1981:250) and in so doing women will create a

language that will sweep away conventional grammar and syntax. For Cixous, "a feminine text cannot fail to be more than subversive," because the womanhood expressed in it is uncontrollable, undefinable, and unlimited.

Both Irigaray and Cixous imply that the symbolic order, or language (especially through the processes of nomination), suppresses womanhood and yet both writers use the medium of essays for the dispersal of their ideas. Their primary means around the symbolic order is to deliberately disrupt meaning and syntax through the use of parentheses to emphasize adjectives or morphemes (i.e. (re)create). Cixous' writing also has a tone and tempo which make the text feel like the rushed and hurried release of the body, much like her description of women who

> fly the coop, take pleasure in jumbling the order of space, in disorienting it, in changing around the furniture, dislocating things and values, breaking them all up, emptying structures and turning propriety upside down. [Cixous 1981:258]

Thus, instead of discarding language altogether, Irigaray and Cixous write it in ways that shake it up. Further, Cixous contends that <u>écriture féminine</u> or feminine writing of the body cannot possibly fall into the symbolic traps of male language, because it is too multiple, too all-knowing, too circular.

The French feminist description of an ill-defined and repressed female sexuality is pursued by a variety of non-

French feminists who desire to displace the (male-created) relationship between the signified and the signifier as a means to women's true expression. For this purpose, Daly created a wickedary, or "a dictionary for Wicked/Wiccen women" and websters, defined as women "...whose occupation is to Weave, esp. a Weaver of Words and Word-Webs" (1987:xiii). Her collection of words is based on word-play (Websters, of course, contrasts with Webster's of dictionary fame), the reclaiming of historical definitions (such as spinster which originally referred to a person who spun thread, rather than an unmarried woman), the use of parentheses, slashes and dashes to recreate meaning (i.e. dis-ease or the/rapist) and the synthesis of new words. Daly presents her work as an alternative to the dicktionary, which she defines as "any patriarchal dictionary: a derivative, tamed, muted lexicon compiled by dicks, which, despite its distortions, contains clues for Word-Weaving Websters/Wickedarians" (Daly 1987:194). In the dicktionary, words and thus reality have been defined by men so as to maintain their dominant position. Daly sees the redefining of words and the disruption of meaning as one road to women's liberation.

Cixous' "writing the body" has been translated by Lorde (1984) as living the erotic. Lorde defines the erotic as more than sexuality: it is true feeling, emotion and desire,

usually denied women by men through pornography and modern life which Lorde believes exploit the erasure of feeling. Accessing the erotic and understanding and expressing the body are women's best means to power. For Lorde, poetry is not only metaphoric enough to create slippage between signified and signifier such that meaning is created at a more abstract level, but poetry is also a metaphor for woman's existence. Says Lorde (1984): "And there is, for me, no difference between writing a good poem and moving into sunlight against the body of a woman I love." Anzaldúa (1987) and Klepfisz (1990) as well interweave poetry and text.

Thus, the French feminists, and particularly their idea of feminine writing, have had some influence among other feminists. However, as we shall see in Chapter 4 for anthropology, the application of French feminist ideas by social scientists to women of other cultures is limited. French feminist philosophy is very much a product of literate society. (These women themselves are very well read.) Further, some of its foundations, such as Freudian theory, are quite ethnocentric.

Essentialism, Difference and Deconstruction

The French feminists, Irigaray in particular, Lorde and Daly represent one side of a sticky problem for feminist theory.

The work of these feminists rests on the belief in a universalizing concept of Woman. They believe that there is some essential core of women, be it femininity or reproduction or Otherness, that allows women to stand apart from men and to create "body-writing." (Kristeva, however, is different in her belief that males such as James Joyce can write in "feminine" or disruptive ways.)

Yet even as political exigencies require a female consciousness, feminist theorists have not been able to agree on a concept of womanhood that is universally true for all women.

> Feminism is nothing if not paradoxical. It aims for individual freedoms by mobilizing sex solidarity. It acknowledges diversity among women while positing that women recognize their unity. It requires gender consciousness for its basis, yet calls for the elimination of prescribed gender roles. [Cott 1986:49]

In many ways, then, the requirements of theory and practice clash.

Feminists have approached the issue of essentialism in two different ways (Alcoff 1988). The first approach is characteristic of a feminist rhetoric which emphasizes and celebrates womanhood. Echols (1983) calls this "cultural feminism" and groups these women according to a shared commitment to the preservation of gender differences and the reification of female traits. Cultural feminists (like Daly and Rich) "have not challenged the defining of woman but

only that definition given by men" (Alcoff 1988:407). Thus, womanhood can and must be explicated, guarded and cherished by women. Cultural feminists believe that women and men differ so enormously that the difference can be thought of in cultural proportions. Tannen's (1990) work on gender differences in American speech is an outgrowth of this movement, giving the impression that men and women are so different that they do not even speak the same language.

Cultural feminists have been criticized for espousing an essentialist biological determinism, and thus replicating the male order. Alcoff (1988) rejoins that cultural feminists actually reject biological reductionism because they reject the concomitant binary opposition of mind/body on which such a determinism rests. The female essence is spiritual, intellectual and biological, and none of its elements can be separated one from the others. In addition, she writes:

> it is a helpful corrective to have cultural feminists argue instead that women's world is full of superior values, to be credited and learned from rather than despised. [Alcoff 1988:414]

And yet, for cultural feminists, the female anatomy, as well as the sexuality and experiences derived from it, is the ultimate source of women's difference from men, and thus, is as well, the ultimate source of female identity.

Irigaray is probably the most passionate in her espousal of cultural feminism as the means to liberation, believing that "women's exploitation is based upon sexual difference; its solution will come only through sexual difference" (1993:12). She argues that egalitarianism (the pursuit of equality with men) neutralizes sex as well as differences, thus obscuring any positive values to be discovered in woman's essential nature. Irigaray echoes Tannen when she agrees that women and men have different discourses, but argues that men's talk has prevailed. One aspect of men's talk that gives it power is its false appearance of neut(e)rality and access. Through the discovery of a women's language, women will be able to adequately represent the reality of their oppression by men, and the truth of their valiant womanhood.

As mentioned earlier, feminists have struggled with the frame of sexuality surrounding certain issues of power. Irigaray argues that to remove this frame is to ignore the fact that current culture is highly sexed and sexualized. Equal, she argues, need not mean neuter. Instead, Irigaray advocates the very opposite: the sexualizing of law. She calls for the legal encodification of virginity and motherhood. If women were seen as legally entitled to the "rights" of both virginity and motherhood, incest and rape would be more easily prosecuted, and abortion would be a

non-issue. If women's roles as life-givers were appreciated by society and if women were equally represented in all institutions, there would reign a "higher morality based on peace and love" (Irigaray 1993:90), whereby rampant gun use, harmful media images, violence against children, even pesticide-laced food would all vanish.

It is safe to say that Irigaray is a bit of a idealist. And it is in her cultural feminism that she differs from her French feminist counterparts, Cixous and Kristeva. While both Cixous and Kristeva talk about women in general, inclusive terms, they remind us that "Woman can never be defined" (Kristeva 1981). Instead, women share in common only "the infinite richness of their individual constitutions" (Cixous 1981:245). This logic is quite convoluted. Women are women because they are diverse and undefinable. In particular, Cixous' avoidance of Irigaray's emphasis on sexuality in favor of a more amorphous concept of "the body" is an subtle attempt to sidestep biological determinism.[3]

In response to the cultural feminist viewpoint on womanhood, post-structuralist feminism, as presented by Cixous and Kristeva, is highly influenced by the new post-modern trend in Continental philosophy: deconstruction. Post-structuralist feminists argue that such concepts as "woman" and "gender" exist only as categories created by the

discourse of oppressive power, rather than as material realities (Weedon 1987). These feminists attempt to "deconstruct" such categories in order to show their nonexistence. Some of their inspiration derives from Foucault's questioning of the validity of the self or subject. They take most of their direction, however, from the work of Derrida.

Derrida believed that binary oppositions (such as man/woman, culture/nature) are in fact merely linguistic illusions. Countering de Saussure's contention that the relationship between signifier and signified was an arbitrary one, Derrida believed that neither term in a binary set is independent. "Any unitary concept in fact contains repressed or negated material" (Scott 1988:37). Instead, both sides of a binary set take their meaning from the other and can only be defined relationally.

> This was the moment when language invaded the universal problematic, the moment when, in the absence of a center or origin, everything became discourse -- provided we can agree on this word -- that is to say, a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely. [Derrida 1978:280]

As an example: man is not-woman, woman is not-man, therefore tautologically, man is not-not-man, and so on and so forth.

Yet binary oppositions are always infused with power such that one side is always the subjugated of the pair (in this case, woman). To argue as cultural feminists do that "woman" exists is to invoke again this structure of power. It is not enough, post-structuralists claim, to call for a female definition of woman, especially if the essential nature of woman is found in her unique (i.e. different than man's) sexuality (Alcoff 1988). According to Derrida-inspired post-structuralists, the concept of woman can never be evoked without the concept of man.

Derrida felt that the only way to subvert power was to subvert, reverse and displace such binary oppositions. There were two ways to do so: deconstruction, the problematizing of oppositions as realities, and his concept of différance, difference with an alternative spelling. Différance plays on the two meanings of the verb, différer, "to differ" and "to defer" (Bass 1978:xvi). Différance is the element that is in-between, or non-categorizable, or appears on both sides of a binary opposition.

For Derrida, woman is différance:

> There is no essence of woman because woman averts and averts herself from herself, on her own. Out of the depths, endless and unfathomable, she engulfs and enveils any essentiality, any identity, any properness....There is no such thing as the truth of woman, but that is because this abyssal divergence of the truth, this non-truth is the "truth." Woman is a name of this non-truth of truth. [Derrida 1991:359]

Woman contains the ability to undermine all of Western metaphysics simply because she is undefinable. Thus, feminine writing and reading, the unique, jumbled and unpredictable assignment of meaning to words, is a means to liberation from oppressive thinking. Kristeva's obsession with the interstitial (cf. Kristeva 1982) and Cixous' promotion of écriture féminine, both derive from Derrida.

Some feminists are disturbed by Derrida's work because by defining woman as différance, Derrida thereby creates yet another binary opposition. In effect, Derrida essentializes woman as "the non-truth of truth." By calling woman the undefinable, he is, in essence, defining her. Further, he seems to portray man as the one attempting to answer "the question of woman," (rather than woman herself).

Flax (1990) objects to this transcendental quality in Derridan philosophy. She argues that for Derrida, woman always signifies difference, without need of historical context, or reference to specific individuals. Derrida does not deconstruct the binary opposition of man/woman, instead he builds a theory upon it. Flax argues that there is nothing post-modern in Derrida's claims; instead, he merely presents again ideas from Plato and Rousseau.[4]

Thus, post-structuralist feminists have begun to utilize the term "difference," to refer not to women's difference from men (which leads back to essentialism) but

to women's difference from and within themselves, arguing that to group these people under the category "women" is not possible. Post-structuralist feminist theory, then, steps away from essentialism to problematize it. According to post-structuralist feminists, the pursuit of a rhetoric of essentialism will only result in a reversal of power relations, rather than a liberation from them (Alcoff 1988). As Alarcón points out:

> By having women be the subject of knowledge, the so-called 'objectivity' of men is brought into question. Often, this leads to privileging women's way of knowing in opposition to men's way of knowing, thus sustaining the very binary opposition that feminism would like to change or transform. [Alarcón 1990:361]

And Haraway concludes: "the evidence is building of a need for a theory of 'difference' whose geometries, paradigms, and logics break out of binaries, dialectics and nature/culture models of any kind" (1991:129). It is in this spirit that Flax (1990) criticizes Rubin (1975) for postulating another binary opposition: sex/gender.

Post-modern and post-structuralist thought is never wholly new in feminism and the pursual of "a theory of difference" is not unique either. Much of this theory, like the questioning of traditional epistemology, is inspired and elaborated by feminists of color. As mentioned earlier, marginal feminists see themselves and their experiences ignored by larger feminist theory. Alarcón (1990:360)

argues that cultural feminists have ignored the fact that "one may also 'become a woman' in opposition to other women." Departing from the rhetoric of post-structuralism, Alarcón argues that white feminists have denied the multiple ways in which the female subject experiences life, not only as a woman, but also perhaps as a black person, a gay woman, or an under-class person. Anzaldúa (1987) continues in this vein, arguing that the idea of a unitary subject does not explain her fragmented experience (culturally, linguistically and sexually) as a Mexican-American lesbian.

Thus, these feminists call for a different description of the subject, one that denies that gender is the sole or most salient organizing factor or filter of experience. Yet as Bordo (1990) suggests and as I have suggested earlier, the primary problem with this perspective is that the other "axes" (her term) of subjectivity that are privileged by such critics, such as race, class, ethnicity, religious affiliation, and sexuality are not as equally deconstructed or examined as the category "woman."

Simplistically, cultural feminists maintain a belief in the coherent subject of humanism, while post-structuralist feminists deny its existence apart from discourse. Yet not all post-structural feminists are comfortable with the ultimate conclusion of such thinking: the eradication of the women's movement, long before women have made substantial

gains (cf. a similar criticism made by Hartsock 1990). This discomfort has led a number of post-structuralists to postulate that at the present time, it may be necessary for feminists to engage in both discussions at once. The women presenting these alternatives engage in a bit of double-speak.

For instance, Scott argues that women need to call for "an equality that rests on differences -- differences that confound, disrupt, and render ambiguous the meaning of any fixed binary opposition" (1988:48), even though the use of the term "equality" implies a binary opposition. (Equal to what?) In another vein, Poovey (1988) argues that because feminists can historically locate the belief in "woman" at the present time, they can approach it as if it were true. And yet, concurrently, they must also question the validity of the category.

> At the same time, however, this emphasis must also lead us to question the ahistorical nature of what has been taken as the basis of feminism. For, if the position "woman" <u>is</u> falsely unified and if one's identity is <u>not</u> given (solely or necessarily) by anatomy, then woman - or even women - cannot remain a legitimate rallying point for political actions. Real historical women have been (and are) oppressed, and the ways and means of that oppression need to be analyzed and fought. But at the same time, we need to be ready to abandon the binary thinking that has stabilized women as a group that <u>could</u> be collectively (although not uniformly) oppressed. [Poovey 1988:64]

Alcoff similarly hypothesizes that identity politics (or unification under the banner of womanhood, or for that matter, ethnicity or class) can be combined with what she calls "a concept of positionality" (1988:428). Identity is essential to political movement, because it provides a materialist response to power. Yet positionality requires the location of the subject in a given space and time, a focus on context rather than some inner metaphysical state. Again, she relies on a Foucauldian concept of a discursive "history," that seems real, even though it is not, which is seen also in Poovey's work:

> Thus, through a conception of human subjectivity as an emergent property of a historicized experience, we can say "feminine subjectivity is construed here and now in such and such a way" without this ever entailing a universalizable maxim about the "feminine." [Alcoff 1988:431]

Thus, women can at once call themselves women and deconstruct the very category to which they claim allegiance.

> At the same time, by highlighting historical movement and the subject's ability to alter her context, the concept of positionality avoids essentialism. It even avoids tying ourselves to a structure of gendered politics conceived as historically infinite, though it allows for the assertion of gender politics on the basis of positionality at any time. [Alcoff 1988:435]

Alcoff, Poovey and Scott seem to want things both ways. They attempt to avoid essentialism because women's oppression has been based on such a determination and yet

they also reserve for women the right to call on essentialism as an effective political manuever. In framing their arguments in this way, these feminists have ignored the agency of women in their own creation as gendered subjects. Their discussion leads to the conclusion that when women unite as a political movement, they are merely carrying out a rhetoric of essentialism created by men or by an amorphous "history," rather than actively mobilizing by means of very real and shared experience. As Bordo remarks:

> But, as anyone who has taught courses in gender knows, there are many junctures at which, for example, women of color and white women discover profound commonalities in their experience, as well as differences. [Bordo 1990:150, emphasis hers]

There are, then, in the new discourses on the bodies and sexuality of women a number of critical issues that feminists continue to engage. It is plain that bodies have been manipulated disproportionately by medicine and media, and that women's bodies have carried the brunt of such discipline. Thus, structures of oppression mobilize around essential gender concepts. Therefore, it puts feminists at a conceptual disadvantage if they continue to essentialize women by asserting the "fact" of shared experience, knowledge and concerns emanating from the "fact" of womanhood. In effect, they support the discourses of gender difference that in turn oppress them. Yet, on the other

hand, to argue post-modernly that women do not share a separate essence is to preclude the necessity of movement. It is also to displace the importance of the written word, which has been an incredible means to power for feminists. If all words no longer stand for their referents, if the referents are so undefinable as to be unspeakable, then Cixous' suggestion that women write themselves is simply not pursuable. Following post-modern ideas to their conclusion is to take away from women their very words (such as gender and woman), words that they have used to empower themselves. In this sense, post-modern ideas can be seen as contributing to quite sexist ends.

Sexism in Post-Modern/Post-Structuralist Thought

While Foucault has been criticized for ignoring gender in his analyses and Derrida, for his reification of womanhood, post-modern and post-structuralist philosophies have been more generally criticized for discrepancies and omissions which have led to an air of sexism surrounding the body of thought. This has drawn much discussion.

Post-modernists are condemned for their radical relativism (Wolff 1990). If there is no truth beyond that which is created but not justified by discourse, then there can be no representations of reality that are "truer" than others. Truth is simply a matter of interpretation.

Harding cautions against espousing interpretationism in that its relativism may actually work to marginalize, even "ghettoize," feminist studies and viewpoints more than they already are:

> This discourse also discounts feminist knowledge claims in scientific and everyday contexts. It does so by taking the position that while feminists certainly have a right to their interpretation... that is just their opinion. The conflicting interpretations made by nonfeminists are equally defensible. [Harding 1990:88]

Thus, the claims of feminists can be disregarded by sexist post-modern theorists as simply another, but not more valid, view.

The post-modern idea that the "self" is merely a construct of discourse is problematic for feminists on many levels already alluded to. First, it precludes political movement.

> If oppression is to be defined in terms of a loss of autonomy by the oppressed, as well as a fragmentation or alienation within the psyche of the oppressed, then a theory which insists upon the inevitable fragmentation of the subject appears to reproduce and valorize the very oppression that must be overcome. [Butler 1990:327]

Second, the denial of the self and the concomitant denial of shared experience fragment the coalition among women, even if it is rather tenuous. "An entirely dispersed and fragmented politics is both misconceived and impossible" (Wolff 1990:8).

And third, the belief that the self is fragmented is on some level merely a discursive technique. Flax (1990) points out that her experience as a psychoanalyst has given her contact with individuals whose selves were truly fragmented through schizophrenia or other psychosis. Those afflicted with such mental illnesses lived in torment. This calls into question the commitment post-modernists have toward this concept. Is it an accurate description of the individual or merely a philosophical nonsequitur?

Furthermore, the fact that post-modern critiques of feminism appear to be radically premature worries some feminists.

> But I find Donna Haraway's charge ... that "white feminists ... were forced kicking and screaming to notice" those [class and racial] biases to be remarkable. It is a strange (perhaps postmodern) conception of intellectual and political responsiveness that views white feminism, now critically scrutinizing (and often utterly discrediting) its conceptions of "female" reality and morality and its "gendered" readings of culture <u>barely more than a decade after they began to be produced</u>, as "resistant" to recognizing its own fictions of unity. [Bordo 1990:142, emphasis hers, critiqueing Haraway 1990, same volume]

Bordo argues that feminists of any color, as a previously and currently marginalized coalition, are particularly attune to and prioritize listening to and presenting other similarly silenced voices. Feminists themselves do not merely wish to reduplicate the pattern of the existing order, but wish to transform it completely. Finally,

Harding comments that gender, race and/or class can be transcendable. For example, she argues "White women can and do generate original anti-racist insights" (Harding 1991a:14).

This leads Hartsock to ponder the timing of post-modern and post-structuralist ideas. She describes current political coalitions (racial, female, homosexual) as movements of Others who critique and construct.

> We who have not been allowed to be subjects of history, who have not been allowed to make our history, are beginning to reclaim our pasts and remake our futures on our own terms. [Hartsock 1990:163]

And yet, just at the point that marginalized groups act to claim their own subjectivity, a "highly suspicious" post-modernism emerges that questions the subject, the existence of grand theory and the possibility of liberation.

> Why is it that just at the moment when so many of us who have been silenced begin to demand the right to name ourselves, to act a subjects rather than objects of history, that just then the concept of subjecthood becomes problematic? Just when we are forming our own theories about the world, uncertainty emerges about whether the world can be theorized. Just when we are talking about the changes we want, ideas of progress and the possibility of systematically and rationally organizing human society become dubious and suspect. [Hartsock 1990:163-164]

Hartsock does not want to promote the idea that there is a grand conspiracy alive attempting to thwart philosophically the efforts of feminists and other groups. Instead she

posits that post-modernism is not transcendental of or even beyond the Enlightenment, but rather is an extension of it. The denial of the subject is merely the powerful's way of annihilating the challenges and changes of recently empowered people.

These are basically charges of sexism, sexist ideals and sexist purposes, in post-modern thought. However, when these concepts are put into action, and are reified, valued and promoted by sexist men, they work against feminism, not only on a conceptual level, but also on a material level. This has been the case in anthropology.

The next chapter will discuss the phenomenon of post-modernism in anthropology. It will explore how these concepts can be and are being used by feminist anthropologists, how these ideas have altered the feminist focus in anthropology, how feminist anthropologists have skirted the mine field of sexism and impracticality in post-modernism in their own discipline and more widely, and how feminist anthropologists have contributed to the expansion of post-modern ideas.

CHAPTER 4

POST-MODERNISM AND FEMINIST ANTHROPOLOGY

Anthropology has not been isolated from wider philosophical trends, nor has feminist anthropology been isolated from wider feminist theory. This chapter attempts to uncover post-modern influences in anthropology and the ramifications of those trends for feminist anthropology. Feminist anthropologists have responded to post-modernism much the way feminists in other disciplines have. Feminists find themselves engaging not only sexist theory, but also sexist theorists. And yet, like post-modernism generally, post-modern anthropology (what little of it there is) not only has roots in earlier feminist anthropology but also presents some interesting avenues for present and future feminist intellectual pursuit. This chapter will be loosely organized along the lines of Chapter 3 for some continuity. However, many post-modern ideas are altered greatly when incorporated into anthropology.

Epistemology and the Creation of Ethnography

As has been suggested in Chapter 2, feminist anthropologists began their reform of anthropology by challenging male-dominated depictions of other cultures. Within this argument were two points. First, ethnographers had ignored

female knowledge which in many cases was considered to be different than male knowledge. And second, such biased ethnographies were given the status of truth, despite the fact that their descriptions were horribly partial. This feminist challenge, then, was based on claims similar to post-modern ones: knowledge was contested and negotiated (at least between the two sexes), and anthropological science, as it had been practiced, was not necessarily an avenue to truth. Thus, feminist anthropologists engaged the concept of epistemology (though it was not called that) at two levels: native and scientific.

Within post-modern anthropology, the second part of this argument caught on. Anthropologists began to discuss the problematic creation of ethnography. They saw ethnography not only as the creation of the anthropologist's mind, but also as a collaborative knowledge production by informants and researcher. Yet the natives' participation in ethnography has always been altered, structured, simplified and cleaned up by the anthropologist before it is written about. This led some to question the ability of the non-native to explain truly the experience of the native. During this "crisis of representation," anthropologists decided that their texts were less depictions of the other than they were depictions of self (Marcus and Fischer 1986).

The "ethnography as text" school took these ideas and combined them with other post-modern concepts. Incorporating the spirit of literary criticism, these anthropologists equated ethnography with fiction and argued that it could be evaluated in the same way. An author's experimental style, therefore, was valued for its contribution to good storytelling. The goal of truth-telling in ethnography was backgrounded by this school because it was considered to be impossible to accomplish. Though some of these theorists protest that they are not post-modern, they do believe that they are quite radical, they often refer to post-modern theorists and they use some of the same catchy post-modern terminology. For example, Clifford describes the essays in his volume as "post-anthropological" (1986a:5). I will hereafter call the creators of the new ethnography, post-modern anthropologists.

Some of the ideas of post-modern anthropologists, such as the questioning of truth in ethnography, would seem to appeal to feminist anthropologists since these ideas came directly from the feminist movement. However, the same post-modern snags feminists grapple with in other disciplines obstruct feminist anthropologists as well. The primary difficulties are the sexism of these post-modern anthropologists themselves and their refusal to engage the

salience of gender issues in their study particularly how their gender creates power differentials between them and their informants. Not all male post-modern anthropologists are liberated, nor perhaps do they want to be.

Feminists have criticized their blatant, but not unrecognized, omission from Clifford and Marcus' volume (1986) on experimental ethnography. It seems that Clifford himself knew this omission would cause problems and thus, addressed it in his introduction:

> Feminism had not contributed much to the theoretical analysis of ethnographies as texts. Where women had made textual innovations...they had not done so on feminists grounds. A few quite recent works...had reflected in their form feminist claims about subjectivity, relationality, and female experience, but these same textual forms were shared by other, nonfeminist, experimental works. Moreover, their authors did not seem conversant with the rhetorical and textual theory that we wanted to bring to bear on ethnography. Our focus was thus on textual theory as well as on textual form: a defensible, productive focus.
>
> Within this focus we could not draw on any developed debates generated by feminism on ethnographic textual practices....Feminism clearly has contributed to anthropological theory....But feminist ethnography has focused either on setting the record straight about women or on revising anthropological categories (for example, the nature/culture opposition). It has not produced either unconventional forms of writing or a developed reflection on ethnographic textuality as such. [Clifford 1986a:20-21]

Needless to say, feminist anthropologists took issue with this description of their work. Mascia-Lees, Sharpe and Cohen (1989) used Clifford's own work to disprove his

contention that feminists had not experimented with text. Although Clifford utilizes Shostak's Nisa (1981) as an example of inventive ethnographic allegory (1986b), they pointed out, he does not invite Shostak or any other feminist to participate in the collection.

> [Clifford] therefore reveals not only that he clearly knows of at least one feminist ethnography that has employed "unconventional forms of writing," but also that he prefers to write about feminists rather than inviting them to write for themselves. [Mascia-Lees, et al. 1989:13]

Certainly, many feminist anthropologists would be angered by a tokenism that included them where they could not contribute. However, the critiques of post-modern anthropology go much deeper than a desire by feminists for inclusion. Feminists question the very focus of the new ethnography on self and text, both of which can obscure and ignore sexism and other gender issues.

These feminists are disturbed by post-modern ethnography because of its focus on (usually male) ethnographers, who are already privileged in texts. A discussion of the other is replaced by a discussion of the self. By making themselves the focus of their work, the new ethnographers appear as if they are addressing issues of power (i.e. the inability to speak for their informants) but they do not truly alter power relations.

For example, Rabinow's Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco (1977) is seen as a journey in epistemology. Rabinow relays his inner feelings about fieldwork and describes his informants as friends. His often conflictual role as an ethnographer and friend becomes the focus of his work. Di Leonardo (1991a), however, critiques the randomness of Rabinow's self-reflexivity, especially when issues of gender enter the scene. The passage she questions in the book deals with the prostitution ring Rabinow's friends have set up using Berber women. On the best day he had in Morocco, Rabinow describes a jaunt with prostitutes that included skinny-dipping and plenty of sex (1977:59-69). He sounds rather foolish, surprised that the open women suddenly become impersonal when the sex act is occurring. He litters his text with exclamation marks and episodes of pouting. According to di Leonardo, Rabinow is merely

> a self-justifying john who wants to believe that buying sex involves no power dynamic, that the whore desires the encounter as much as he, and that she is not harmed by her status and his use of her. [di Leonardo 1991a:149]

Thus, di Leonardo considers Rabinow's self-reflexivity to be false and misleading, giving the appearance that power is actually being engaged and deconstructed, while failing to include any self-evaluation of such sexist, oppressive and downright slimy behavior on his part.

Further, by emphasizing the self rather than the other, post-modern anthropologists are replacing data collection, analysis and interpretation with story-telling. Hence,

> these new ways of structuring are more subtle and enigmatic than traditional modes of anthropological writing: they may serve to make the new ethnographies more obscure and thus, difficult for anyone but highly trained specialists to dispute. [Mascia-Lees, et al. 1989:10].

Not only does the emphasis on style make the new ethnography more difficult to evaluate and the new ethnographers less responsible for their work, but it also may in fact make it harder for other anthropologists unfamiliar with this type of discourse, or unable to pursue it, to succeed in the field. As Clifford points out in a footnote:

> It may generally be true that groups long excluded from positions of institutional power, like women or people of color, have less concrete freedom to indulge in textual experimentations. To write in an unorthodox way, Paul Rabinow suggests in this volume, one must first have tenure....For if one does not have to worry about the exclusion or true representation of one's experience, one is freer to undermine ways of telling, to focus on form over content. [Clifford 1986a:21 fn 11].

The fact that men with tenure (and therefore power) are creating prescriptions for appropriate anthropological work makes the new ethnography all the more oppressive. It also underscores the fact that despite their new realization of the extent of their power, post-modern anthropologists are

employing those very same power hierarchies to prescribe, exclude and dominate.

Finally, according to Clifford's quote above, post-modern anthropologists are more concerned with form than with content. In other words, text is more important than truth. Harding's (1991a) critique of post-modernists as discussed in Chapter 3 is applicable here. Post-modern anthropologists do not desire to write "truer" stories. Instead, if taken to its logical conclusions, the new ethnography validates the artistry of a text rather than its applicability to real life or its close approximation of lived experience.

Thus, the critique of science originating in feminist anthropology has had some of its dogma appropriated by post-modern anthropology. The importance of gender in power relations and the elevation of truth has been ignored by post-modern anthropologists. Instead, they have created their own truth, that there is not truth, but only form. This privileging of form over truth makes it difficult for feminist anthropologists to engage and apply post-modern ideas.

Voices

This is not to suggest that feminist anthropologists have never experimented with style. One of the more important

trends in feminist anthropology, which is quite compatible with some post-modern ideas (such as Haraway's borrowing of Bakhtin's "heteroglossia"), is the inclusion in feminist ethnography of what has come to be called "women's voices."

The roots of this new trend can be found in sociolinguistic studies of interruption and silence (Zimmerman and West 1975), and in two anthropological papers by E. Ardener (1975a, 1975b). Ardener commented that native women's models of their worlds were incompatible with the scientific goals of anthropology. Male models, on the other hand, were more structurally bounded, included explanations of female behavior and were thereby collected by anthropologists because of their ease in translation. Female models, Ardener argued, lacked metalanguage, were more rooted in particular experience and often avoided any attempt to explain men. Women were thus "muted" not only by the men in their cultures but also by anthropologists.

It would be difficult to prove Ardener's theory correct. It is not true that women lack the ability to comprehend their worlds in ways amenable to ethnographic research as Ardener suggests. However, the validity of Ardener's causal connection aside, his work did contribute to a recognition of the overwhelming oral and textual silence of women. This silence, however, was in many ways a

scientific red herring. Women were creating discourses; they were simply not heard. Women existed, as one anthropologist put it, somewhere between (socially recognized) speech and silence (Gal 1991).

Feminist anthropologists attempt to alter this muting by analyzing women's words and quoting them at length so that they might speak for themselves, such as Abu-Lughod's (1986) presentation of Bedouin women's poetry. Another example is Martin (1987) who analyzes women's discourse surrounding the medicalization of their bodies. Both books will be discussed later in this chapter.

Women's voices are also heard in Shostak (1981) and Menchú (1984) in the form of narrative-style ethnography. Shostak's volume presents the life-story of Nisa interspersed with text from Shostak that generalizes Nisa's experience to all of the !Kung. Rigoberta Menchú's story is preceded by a brief introduction by Burgos-Debray, the woman who collected it, and then we hear from her no more.

Of course, there are many problems with the presentation of such narratives that preclude them from being purely the "voice" of the native. Both Shostak and Burgos-Debray edited the stories of these women. They removed hesitations, incomplete sentences, and a whole variety of mis-sayings. They arranged the bits and pieces of talk into a whole, organizing the stories into chapters

and giving the reader the false appearance of coherent narrative. Additionally, there is a complete lack of context surrounding the telling of the story. What questions prompted which stories? Who was present at the telling of various parts of the story? How did any dialogue between teller and listener change the story? Also, of course, there are the myriad problems of translation whereby meaning can be misconstrued and metaphor lost.

Finally, the events of one woman's life story may not be generalizable to the rest of her culture. This became evident to Shostak:

> Nisa did not fairly represent the mainstream of !Kung life, either in her experiences or in her personality. None of the other women I interviewed had encountered as much tragedy as Nisa, or had a comparable extravagance of personal style....Another problem was the amount of violence she described -- between children, between children and parents, and between adults -- seemed excessive....What concerned me was that Nisa might have emphasized the negative experiences to the point where her narrative portrayed an extreme view of her culture, one not shared by many others around her. [Shostak 1981:350]

In this sense, feminist narrative ethnography is a break from traditional ethnography which tries to typify aspects of native life. Yet the gaps in these experiments also remind us that a change in the form of ethnography, as post-modern anthropologists believe, does not necessarily result in a clearer picture of the Other. Further, it makes

obvious the fact that variety in experience and knowledge exists in all societies, simple to complex.

Power and Resistance in Anthropological Theory

Discussions of power and resistance in anthropology have been influenced largely by Marxism. In recent years, more effort has gone into conceptualizing resistance cross-culturally of the peasantry or working class against the capitalistic rich. Resistance is explored as a means to understanding power relations, rather than vice versa. Yet while the Marxist view of power locates it in class, post-modern views of power and resistance emphasize the multiplicity of their location and practice.

Scott (1985) engages the Marxist concept of class power as presented by Marx and Engels, and as translated by Gramsci (cf. 1972). Marx and Engels argued that the ruling class dominated the masses, not only economically, but also ideologically. The ruling class has access, then, to a consciousness that the lower classes do not. The widespread dissemination of ruling class ideology kept laborers subordinate. This symbolic, mental and social domination was called hegemony by Gramsci.

Scott criticizes Gramsci (as well as Marx and Engels) for misconstruing the processes by which the upper classes ruled and the masses revolted. To them, ideological

hegemony had the support of the working class merely because of their being duped into a false consciousness. These Marxists were clear neither about how or whether the workers actively participated in hegemony, nor about how or whether the workers could effect the supplantation of hegemony by true consciousness.

According to Scott, the working classes do not have a false consciousness, nor do they passively accept hegemonic domination. They are very much aware of their subordination. They actively engage in acts of resistance against such domination everyday that do not culminate in revolution. And finally, these peasants express themselves in the language of hegemony, rationalizing their demands through it, rarely considering action or thought that is very radical.

Scott's example is a village of Malay peasants who after being fairly exploited by rich landowners are now facing an increased dearth of work due to mechanization. These peasants, accustomed to a practice of patronage by the wealthy, a practice that Scott gives ideological status, are dismayed at the new pressures upon them. They therefore invoke this idealized concept of patronage, harkening back to an earlier time. In this way, the peasants are fairly conservative. They prefer the continued social elaboration of an earlier hegemony in the face of changes.

For Scott, the participation of the workers in the maintenance of hegemony is unavoidable. In fact, he argues that the lower classes are fairly restricted to operating within a discourse of hegemony in order to express their dissatisfaction with their lot in life.

> The crucial point is rather that the very process of attempting to legitimate a social order by idealizing it always provides its subjects with the means, the symbolic tools, the very ideas for a critique that operates entirely within the hegemony. [Scott 1985:338]

The spread of hegemony allows even dispossessed people to demand that it operate as it says it does. However, this conclusion also lends a certain pessimism to Scott's thesis, in that he argues that while the working class can think beyond hegemony and can imagine alternate and revolutionary realities, they often never articulate or pursue them.

Scott seems to posit a talk/behavior split for these peasants, whereby they speak about the maintenance of an idealized hegemony, all the while acting to disrupt its process. These acts of resistance include such things as the deliberate slowing of work pace, feigned ignorance, gossip, arson, and the sabotage of machines. Scott points out that these acts are not revolutionary, however, because they are rarely discovered, even more rarely done in groups and responsibility for them is not usually claimed. Thus, despite such acts of resistance, the peasantry appears, and

generally is, on the surface compliant with the existing order.

In a sense, then, Scott does not explain revolution or the overthrow of hegemony any better than Marx, Engels or Gramsci. Nor does he adequately engage the concept of false consciousness. In portraying the peasants as purposefully and deliberately active in their self-preservation, he gives them a certain agency. And yet he never really answers his own question about the inevitability of hegemony. He does not show peasants effectively altering the forces of their domination.

Feminist Ethnography and Resistance

While a great deal of Marxist influence remains, recent feminist ethnography has attempted to portray power and resistance as locally negotiated, and argue along Foucauldian lines that power does not emanate directly from class structure but is constructed through the impositions of discourse. Ong's work (1987) provides an interesting post-modern and feminist counterpoint to Scott's work in the same culture.

Ong argues, counter to Engels' theory, that the entrance of Malay women into the public work arena, their movement from village to city, and their increased economic access did not result in their immediate acquisition of

power. Instead, she argues that media discourses, spurred by fundamentalist Islam, created an arena of increased external surveillance of the behavior, dress and attitudes of these women, who were viewed by society as being out of control. Discourse and surveillance are obvious Foucauldian buzzwords.

Despite such external control, the economic resources of Malay factory women were useful in creating what Ong calls "a new subjectivity." Money increased women's self-esteem through their large contribution to household income, it got them more training and better jobs, and it bought new Western-style clothing. Ong argues that such changes encouraged the women to demand rights previously reserved only for men, such as choosing their own spouses and determining reproductive timing, through abortion. Finally, for the first time, young Malay women began to associate with non-Malays, thereby broadening their world views.

Ong argues that while these women gained from their economic income, they still endured unjust working conditions and small wages. Thus, in a contradictory manner, Malay factory women resisted the very structure that in many ways liberated them. Ong presents a list of resistant behaviors that are reminiscent of Scott's: while on the job, Malay women cried, slowed their pace of work, became careless, lost their tempers, left the work area

under the guise of female problems, and sought breaks for prayer. They also attacked equipment, gossiped and encouraged men from their villages to retaliate against unusually demanding managers.

As an additional component of resistance, Malay factory women fell into trances whereby they were possessed by spirits. Such spirit possessions often led to the halting of work while the factory was ritually purified. Although the victims did not remember anything following a spell, there were cases when the spells appeared to be a group tactic: in at least one instance, more than one woman at a time fell into possession.

Ong's treatment of spirit possession, in particular, is in many ways problematic. Her work calls into question Scott's contention that working class people can and do recognize their oppression, and actively resist it. If Ong is correct that spirit possession is subconscious, she cannot claim that it is an act of resistance because it is employed toward an obvious, thought-out, conscious goal. Rather, she must legitimatize her claim that it is resistance by referring to the end result of spirit possession and its effect on power relations. Often spirit possession results in the cessation of work which would seem to indicate that despite its unconscious employment, it

creates the desired effect of stalling capitalism, however short-lived.

Additionally, the way managers have handled spirit possession is perhaps another clue to its power as a means of resistance. Ong describes the attempts of management to forestall spirit possession, through the public blessing of factories prior to beginning work or through the creation of a new discourse model which defines spirit possession as a medical problem. Management attempted to change the frame surrounding spirit possession, trying to prevent it by encouraging workers to eat and sleep well, and controlling its symbolic power by deeming it a simple health problem rather than a supernatural reality.

Thus, it would be safe to say that spirit possession among Malay working women is highly disruptive to the smooth running of a factory. However, its effectiveness as a long term tactic in protesting unjust conditions is doubtful. Spirit possession does not preclude the continued domination of capitalism. For example, Ong relates the story of one worker who had fallen into possession so many times that she was fired from her job.

Ong's classification of spirit possession as resistance makes her different than Scott. First, her definition of resistance alters previous Marxist emphases on revolutionary class consciousness, as well as Scott's reformulation of

those ideas which holds that class consciousness is always present. Ong argues that resistant responses to power are not always conscious. Second, Ong disagrees with Marxists and concurs with Scott, in arguing that resistance is rarely in the form of group rebellion. As well, Ong employs a more Foucauldian and post-modern framework of power and resistance, claiming that power relations do not emanate from class structures, as Scott would, but from competing discourses (i.e. the depiction of factory women as wanton). As she (1987:213) puts it: "These nomadic tactics, operating in diverse fields of power, speak not of class revolt but only of the local situation." Finally, whereas Scott would argue that ideological hegemony among the powerless and the powerful is fairly monolithic, Ong would argue that Malay factory women are actively creating new subjectivities in response to hegemony. Thus, Ong's definition of resistance is born more from the end result of the negotiation of power in local situations, encompassing both conscious and unconscious struggles, rather than from grand totalizing theory like Marxism.

Such a definition of resistance, however, affects its applicability to feminist research. Ong is wary of traditional feminist ethnography that she says

> errs in merely showing up the male bias of "ideological" constructs without attending to the daily production and reproduction of relationships

> according to "given" male-supremacist principles. [Ong 1987:180]

She believes her ethnography to be different from previous feminist work in that she attempts to demonstrate how these factory women are actively and locally creating selves that resist dominant ideologies. In many ways this focus on the local is a new trend in feminist ethnography. I will return to discuss this shortly.

Yet, unconscious spirit possession, as Ong has described it, cannot be an element in an active creation of subjectivity. Spirit possession may not be a noble act of resistance, but instead may be a pathetic, limited and ultimately ineffectual measure of the weakness of these women. The same is true for discussions of revenge suicide such as Counts (1984) who unconvincingly argues that killing oneself (limited, by the way, to women among the Lusi) can be an act of power. How can feminists take inspiration from work that portrays women's resistance and power as ineffectual?

Finally, a post-modern influenced feminist focus on the local translation of power relationships, such as Ong's ignores larger structural dynamics. Ong, unlike Scott, seems unconcerned with the inevitability that some have power and others, weakness. She does not engage at all the possibility of liberation for these Malay women. Instead

she seems critical of the fashionable trend in recent anthropology "to handle power in terms of given unities and oppositions: monopoly of power versus the powerless, domination versus resistance, exploitation versus protest" (Ong 1987:217). Although Ong is attempting to portray power as something that is always locally contested, the picture she paints indicates that the larger structures of power are rarely dismantled.

Abu-Lughod (1990b:313) sees merit in ethnographic studies like Ong's where "scholars seem to be trying to rescue for the record and to restore to our respect such previously devalued or ignored forms of resistance." Abu-Lughod argues that resistance is not always in the form of a conscious politics; nor is compliance, conversely, the product of a false consciousness. She asks that anthropologists "take for granted that resistances, of whatever form, signal sites of struggle" (1990b:324) and study them to discover the intricacies of power relations.

Abu-Lughod's following of Bedouin women's modes of resistance has allowed her to chart their changes through time and across generations. Her earlier work (Abu-Lughod 1986) demonstrated the use of poetry by women to complain about and challenge the existing system. A later paper (Abu-Lughod 1990a) indicated that such poetry was becoming exclusively a male domain. New modes of resistance to old

traditions have been increasing especially with sedentarization and access to Egyptian morals and attitudes (Abu-Lughod 1990b).

These resistances have not been without their drawbacks, however. Abu-Lughod argues that Bedouin women who have actively adopted Egyptian values (wearing lingerie, choosing husbands for love, attenuating kin ties) are actually creating for themselves worlds where they have increased financial dependence on men, less freedom to move around publicly and more pressure to make themselves sexually "attractive" to men. Thus, she argues (and note here an obvious ambivalence at discarding the concept of false consciousness) "they are becoming increasingly enmeshed in new sets of power relations of which they have little awareness" (Abu-Lughod 1990b:328). In this sense, then, Abu-Lughod herself proves her initial objective is not purely pursuable. Though she cautions against hierarchizing resistances in terms of their effectiveness, she goes on to demonstrate that not all resistances result in positive ends.

Thus, the anthropological discussion of resistance has evolved somewhat but not completely to reflect post-modern concepts of power. The most important influence of post-modernism that is particularly amenable to anthropological analysis has been the emphasis on the local negotiation of

power. This has been essential to the discovery that power is quite dispersed and tangled. In small measure, the articulation of everyday resistance is inspiring.

Yet the results of resistance, at some level, remain for anthropologists a question mark. And despite their intentions to the contrary, anthropologists seem to be unable to give up the (rather Marxist) idea that power structures can be overthrown. As I pointed out earlier, it distressed Scott that the resistance he documented rarely achieved revolution. His conclusion seems forced:

> All the more reason, then, to respect, if not celebrate, the weapons of the weak. All the more reason to see in the tenacity of self-preservation...a spirit and practice that prevents the worst and promises something better. [Scott 1985:350]

Abu-Lughod (1990b:332), too, falls prey to a half-hearted attempt at hope when she states "If the systems of power are multiple, then resisting at one level may catch people up at other levels." Thus, the romance with resistance as a means to liberation has not died in anthropology.

The romance with resistance also remains a justification for the feminist movement. In this sense, it is difficult to call post-modern studies of women's resistance particularly feminist, despite their focus on women. While post-modern discourses have given feminist anthropologists the means of articulating the various levels

of gendered power (B. Martin 1988), they have not been very inspirational for continued resistance to oppression in our own society. Ong and Abu-Lughod seem to indicate that various tactics of resistance are so dispersed as to be ineffectual or fraught with disadvantages.

The Body: Site of the Articulation of Power and Resistance

The discussion of the body in anthropological theory has traditionally emphasized its usage as symbolic metaphor for cultural explanatory schemes. In recent years, Bourdieu (1977) elaborated on the opposite scenario: rather than explaining outer reality through the extension of body metaphor, the body, according to Bourdieu, took on social facts through habitus, the essence of which was "dispositions and generative classificatory schemes" that existed in the heads as well as in the actions of individuals (Jenkins 1992:74). The various ways that the body is created by culture have been pursued extensively by medical anthropologists (cf. Nichter 1992).

For Bourdieu, habitus was all-encompassing, such that even when revolutionary ideas existed, they somehow emanated from habitus (1977:76). Thus, Bourdieu did not seem to believe in the ability of people to resist habitus, particularly the cultural definition of their bodies. In

feminist anthropology, however, the manipulation of women's bodies by biomedicine is an issue of resistance. As I suggested earlier, these ideas did not originate with post-modern thought but in feminist rhetoric early on (such as de Beauvoir 1957).

Martin's (1987) book on American reproduction carries conceptually a Marxist bent rather than a post-modern one. Stylistically, however, she includes the new feminist (and perhaps post-modernly inspired) textual innovation of "voices." Martin describes the effect of capitalistic metaphors on how biomedicine views women's reproductive processes. A metaphor of capitalistic efficiency, control and the attainment of a perfect product leads to a similar attempt by the medical establishment to disassociate a woman from her childbirth (through the use of invasive and restrictive technology and the prerogative of the doctor to determine the timing of cesarean section so as to produce a "better" baby). Similar metaphors are used to describe the "inefficiencies" and "failures" of menstruation and menopause.

Martin's interviews with middle and working class, black and white, women in Baltimore show the extent to which medical models have penetrated the lives of women. Martin concludes that the working class women, black and white, have resisted such medical models more than their middle

class sisters, explaining their reproductive experiences in a more phenomenological way rather than a scientific way. Women from both classes, however, directly resisted pressure during childbirth, which ranged from grabbing the scalpel of a doctor about to perform an unwanted cesarean to staying away from the hospital until on the verge of birth.

In her study, Martin engages not only the capitalistic nature of medicine but also its male bias. She argues against the loud voice of science which privileges the male point of view, even when describing experiences which only females have.

> Usually we do not hear the story, we only hear the "facts," and this is part of what makes science so powerful. But women -- whose bodily experience is denigrated and demolished by models implying failed production, waste, decay and breakdown -- have it literally within them to confront the story science tells with another story, based in their own experience. [Martin 1987:197].

Thus, Martin espouses the idea that women's voices have been silenced and that those voices speak a truth that needs to be heard.

Martin's book is an example of the feminist trend of presenting women's voices. As well, it is a description of women's local resistance to dominant gendered metaphors. Martin, however, is not a post-modernist; despite her focus on local resistance, Martin does not use any post-modern philosophy or refer to any particular thinker. Further,

Martin desires her readers to get a great deal of feminist inspiration from the stories of these women. Unlike Ong, Abu-Lughod and Tsing (whom I will get to below) Martin does not have what seems to be a post-modern reluctance to engage the larger structures surrounding local negotiations of power. The unwillingness to theorize larger structures makes post-modern work lack inspiration.

The Rare Application of French Feminism in Feminist Anthropology

Derrida and Kristeva, as described in Chapter 3, are post-modern deconstructionists whose work has been debated in wider feminist theory. Their ideas, however, are very rarely pursued in anthropological contexts. Trawick's work (1990) is one exception.

Kristeva's Derridean philosophy (1982) incorporates Douglas' (1966) ideas of matter out of place. According to Kristeva, matter out of place, or that which is polluting, disrupts the relationship between sign and referent as well as the Law of the Father. In analyzing the song of an untouchable woman in India, Trawick (1990) applies such Douglas-Kristevan concepts. While Cevi, as an untouchable Paraiyar, handles corpses and feces, there are people more polluting than the Paraiyar, the Kuravars, who eat scavengers, animals that feast on dead things, ingesting,

and thereby embodying, filth. It is a Kuravar woman, Singamma, that Cevi sings about, attempting to create for herself a wholeness within abjection. The song ends with Singamma resurrected and living in a palace.

> One of the things I wish to show is that Cevi, being always close both to the corpse (because she is a Paraiyar) and to the body of the mother (because she is female and Indian), is not fully governed by Language or the Father in the way that we are: She breaks their rules, she makes her own, and she does so systematically. [Trawick 1990:196]

Trawick's adoption of French feminist rhetoric, such as "Language of the Father," is quite evident.

This work is particularly eloquent and ambitious. It demonstrates a unique way of explicating a text. And yet, the application of French feminist work in anthropology has problems. First, ideas of defilement are quite easy to apply in India where caste concepts are structured around pollution. Trawick's discussion of how Cevi manages her abject status through the song is very believable. However, her contention that Cevi is somehow resisting the Language of the Father is not convincing. Never does she ask Cevi the purpose of her text and it is doubtful that Cevi would describe her motivations in this way.

Anthropologists such as Trawick who apply French feminist work in a post-modern experiment at discourse analysis must recognize its ethnocentric limitations.

Anthropological Realities: Essentialism in the Field

Similarly, the Derridean deconstruction of woman is fraught with ethnocentrism as far as anthropological data are concerned. As I described in Chapter 3, sociologists engaged in discovering women's knowledge espouse a particular feminist methodology which is self-reflexive and based on the womanhood of the researcher. These insights are similarly expressed by female anthropologists who emphasized

> social science research as the process and product of interaction between the questioner and the questioned and the need to subject this process to scrutiny. [Golde 1970:2]

Indeed, the very method of anthropological fieldwork underscores the importance of the anthropologist's questions on intersubjectivity.

However, Golde made these comments in the context of a volume whose focus was on the particular experiences of anthropologists as women in the field (Golde 1970). Women anthropologists have long noticed the effect their gender has on the people they visit, the types of data they can collect and the issues they find important (for a dissenting view cf. Gregory 1984).

The fact of a female anthropologist's womanhood is not lost on the people she visits, although as a stranger, she is not always expected to conform to a culture's concept of

woman (Bovin 1966). After getting to know her hosts, the gender expectations on an anthropologist increase. Briggs (1970:40) describes how her gender influenced the tenor of punishment and isolation by the Eskimo following an outburst of anger: "had I been a man, I think they might have seen my temper as dangerous, even potentially lethal -- anything but childish."

Age and marital status, as well as motherhood also have an effect on how an anthropologist is perceived and what expectations she will need to fulfill. Gewertz was quite dismayed at how the Chambri men treated her when her husband joined her in the field (Errington and Gewertz 1987). Although she had originally been privy to a male informant's secret magic, she found herself standing outside with the other women, while her husband (whom the informant did not know as well as Gewertz) was invited into the room to view his religious items. Bell (1983) argues that her status as a divorced mother gave her access to mature women's spheres. The fact that she was unaccompanied by a husband encouraged the Aboriginal women to share women's secret information with her because they did not worry that Bell would divulge it to any man. Clark (1983) found herself participating in the mature women's sphere when accompanied by her husband and the young unmarried women's sphere when doing fieldwork solo.

The areas of study open to women differ from those of men. Bell (1983) discovered secret ceremonial knowledge unknown and unaccessible to Aboriginal men. Female anthropologists have an easier time discovering social views of menstruation, childbirth and childcare (Thompson 1970). Female anthropologists are also perhaps more interested in the manipulation and cultural elaboration of women's reproductive systems in American society (Martin 1987, Rapp 1992).

In a very practical sense, then, the post-modern deconstruction of the category "woman" can be supported only partially by feminist anthropological data and experience. Feminist anthropologists since Mead have rarely assumed the universality of their gender constructs which post-modernism cautions against (Abbott 1983). Feminist anthropology shows that woman is defined differently everywhere, which supports the post-modern contention that gender is merely a creation of discourse or of culture. However, gender is a reality in any case. There is no society that does not recognize two sexes. While woman is not a monolithic term that can be universally defined or essentialized, the social fact of womanhood cross-culturally is real.

The Future of Feminist Anthropology

I would like to conclude my discussion of post-modern influences in feminist anthropology by discussing in depth two very recent ethnographies by Abu-Lughod (1993) and Tsing (1993) and how they may be predictors of how feminist anthropology will be constructed in the future.

I have already discussed Abu-Lughod a number of times throughout this text as an example of a feminist anthropologist who engages post-modern conceptual and textual influences. Abu-Lughod's most recent ethnography on Bedouin women (1993) incorporates elements of experimental ethnography with a focus on women. Abu-Lughod calls her ethnography "a book of stories" that attempts to capture the life of the Bedouin as it is lived (1993:1). In it, Abu-Lughod presents women's narratives, songs, and even an essay with connected commentary by the writer who interprets the essay as she reads it.

Abu-Lughod's project is feminist in that it is "sensitive to domination" (1993:5) and yet it does not ignore the impact of men in Bedouin women's everyday lives.

> In that sense, the stories represent women's voices in Awlad 'Ali society and their perspective on many matters that have generally entered the anthropological literature through men's voices. But I have excluded neither men's stories nor stories about issues that concerned men and women equally...because despite day-to-day sexual segregation, women define themselves in terms of their families, speak often with their husbands,

> brothers, fathers, uncles, nephews, and cousins, and are interested in all matters that concern those to whom they are close. [Abu-Lughod 1993:16]

Abu-Lughod accesses women's ideas about reproduction, their participation in the cultural gender ideology of honor and shame, and their perceptions about patrilineality. In this sense, she exhibits the characteristics of current and future feminist anthropology: the presentation of women's voices, the attention to gender ideology and the local translation and effect of larger structures in women's daily lives.

Tsing's book is also an experimental text; "This book piles up stories that do not fit with each other easily" (Tsing 1993:33). In her introduction, she juxtaposes over and again two stylistically different types of texts, one in italics, the other in regular print, whose thematic connections are understood by the reader only with concentration. She lets the juxtaposition be felt for pages before explaining its purpose.

Tsing's focus is on marginality, the marginality of the Meratus highlanders from the Indonesian state government, and the marginality and marginalization of women within Meratus shamanism and political life. She relates the story of Induan Hiling who, despite the fact that women are not allowed to be shamans and excluded from all-male apprenticeships, composes healing songs styled after popular

love music, rationalizes her claim to shamanhood by arguing that her dead father is teaching her through dreams, and creates symbolic healing diagrams to substitute for the public curing performed by male shamans.

Uma Adang, a self-styled political leader, similarly creates her power on the margins by parodying the talk and customs of state figures and structures. At her performances, she separates the sexes, in what she says is Muslim fashion. (The Meratus are not Muslim.) Her speeches counterpose the rhetoric of more powerful leaders with her own vision of history to result in speech that is locally esteemed but is nonetheless unintelligible to outsiders. Her retelling of a classic origin myth encompasses a gender switch whereby a long ago king becomes the Diamond Queen whose endurance and fortitude through difficulty made her succeed where men could not.

I have argued that post-modernism has largely affected anthropology in a stylistic way. The experimental texts of both Abu-Lughod and Tsing hold true to this observation. Further, both feminist anthropologists have attended to the particularly feminist textual variation: women's stories and voices.

Conceptually, both authors focus on the local and multiple negotiations of power which these women undertake, and I have argued that this focus on local relations is an

influence of post-modernism. This focus on the multiplicitous management of power has in both texts diluted earlier concepts of power as an over-arching structure. If power is everywhere, where are the weak to point their resistance?

Furthermore, the trendiness of capturing resistance results in the refusal of both anthropologists to deal directly with how larger power structures actually and systematically oppress these women as women. (This criticism of Foucault can be found in Chapter 3.) Gender's influence in daily life and its role as a frame of power inequality is mostly implicit in their work. When Tsing, for example, describes Uma Adang's unusual position of leadership, she is ignoring the very obvious fact of the instability of her power in the face of a male-dominant and ever-encroaching state government.

By emphasizing marginal acts of resistance, Tsing and Abu-Lughod ignore the fact that much of what goes on in the margins is defined by the center. Thus, in concentrating on local, marginal, and largely ineffective resistance, these anthropologists have forgotten feminist anthropology's theoretical center, that gender is a universal organizer of larger systems of power and that feminist anthropology's goal is to explain ways of ending male dominance.

The future of feminist anthropology, then, will require a return to gender as a central concept and to a commitment to the presentation of how women are positioned within larger power structures. The current focus on the lives, stories and voices of particular women is quite productive. In keeping with the original vision of feminism, however, feminist anthropologists need to recognize how post-modern influences (especially Foucault's depiction of power as present in every single relationship which when taken to an extreme seems to indicate that everyone's power is equal) have weakened the theoretical potential of "power" as a gendered structure and "resistance" as an emancipatory act. Returning to such visions will prevent feminist anthropological work from being trivialized as just one version of the truth.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In this thesis I have attempted to characterize feminist anthropology in its past, present and future. The early years of feminist anthropology established its commitment to the explication of the complex relationship between gender and power. The study of gender began as a look into the social, symbolic and material roots of male dominance. The concept of gender, or the behaviors, customs and social apparati surrounding sex, was invented by feminist anthropologists as a theoretical tool to be examined cross-culturally. Although there was some work done on gender and other work on power, feminist anthropologists grounded their work in the link between the two.

At the present time, feminist anthropologists, like feminists generally, are engaging in new ideas originating from a rather amorphous body of post-modern thought. The discussion in wider feminist theory demonstrated that while the Foucauldian concern with epistemology and knowledge/truth production resounded nicely with feminist observations, Foucauldian concepts of power and resistance presented problems for feminists. Foucault's observation that power and resistance were multifaceted was useful in broadening a feminist depiction of male dominance as

multiply located, not only in structures and men themselves, but in media presentations and in women's self-surveillance. However, Foucault's description of power also lacked a coherent subject and his discussion, grounding in reality. Feminists debated this post-modern avoidance of subjectivity as it threatened the identity politics feminists pursue for women's liberation.

Derridean deconstruction resulted in a similar ambivalence on the part of feminist scholars. The philosophical attempt to define woman as the all-knowing and truthful Other by this man, Derrida, tapped into an earlier debate in feminism between cultural feminists and radical feminists. Cultural feminists believed that the differences between men and women were real and that Womanhood, based in part on a reproductive essentialism, existed and could be reified. Post-structural feminists continued the radical tradition, arguing that gender was not a reality but a discourse, and that all women were so unique as to be unable to fit in one group. The French feminists who call for écriture féminine can be seen as a symbol of this ambivalence in that while they rejoice in womanhood, they also claim that women are too diverse for explanation or universalization.

For feminist anthropologists, however, the primary method in anthropology, participant-observation has not been

altered much by post-modern philosophy. However, the texts produced by anthropologists have undergone extensive changes. Traditional ethnography has been replaced by more experimental texts where the anthropologist attempts to demonstrate the multiple versions and levels of reality by telling the ethnographic story in alternative ways. Feminist anthropologists have added the textual innovation of "voices" in an effort to give silent women a means to speech.

Conceptually, feminist anthropological texts are now focusing more on how women handle the complex and diverse power structures that oppress them. Women must act and react against all levels of power from impeding capitalistic progress at work to physically preventing the manipulation of their bodies by doctors to counteracting media images of themselves as in need of control. The emphasis on power and resistance already present in feminist and Marxist anthropology began to incorporate a largely post-modern inspired focus on media and discourse.

Thus recent feminist anthropological texts combine the post-modern influences of textual experimentation and this look at resistance at its various levels. And yet the commitment to the explication of gendered power has in some ways been neglected. While post-modern inspired feminist anthropologists like Abu-Lughod and Tsing focus on women,

they do not make explicit the direct connection between power and gender, nor do they emphasize that the women they discuss are disempowered because of their status as women. Instead, their view of power as diffuse and multileveled seems to prevent such generalization. Further, by depicting the resistance by women as multifaceted but largely ineffective, they do not extend in their work any possible solutions to male dominance. Thus, I believe that future feminist anthropologists will return to their roots, continuing the discussion of gender and power begun in the 70s, and realigning themselves with the broader feminist movement which seeks to end oppression. The post-modern textual experimentation and interest in resistance and power will remain.

Defining Feminism

I have heretofore neglected to characterize the feminist movement in general, although in many ways my own implicit definition of feminism can be read between the lines throughout this thesis. As it is now fashionable to discuss many feminisms (Delmar 1986), I present here some of the definitions of feminism I have encountered along the way.

> Feminist theory is...experiential...brings to consciousness facets of experience as women that have hitherto escaped atterntion. [Keohane and Gelpi 1982]

> At the very least, a feminist is someone who holds that women suffer discrimination because of their sex, that they have specific needs which remain negated and unsatisfied, and that the satisfaction of those needs would require a radical change (some would say a revolution even) in the social economic and political order. But beyond that, things immediately become more complicated. [Delmar 1986:8]

> ...an awareness of women's oppression and exploitation within the family, at work and in society, and conscious action by women (and men) to change this situation. Feminism, in this definition, goes beyond movements for equality and emancipation which agitate for equal rights and legal reforms to redress the prevailing discrimination against women. [Jayawardena 1986:2]

> In a minimalist definition, feminism could be taken to refer to the awareness of women's oppression and exploitation at work, in the home and in society as well as to the conscious political action taken by women to change this situation. [Moore 1988:10]

> Feminist theory is not one, but many theories or perspectives and...each feminist theory or perspective attempts to describe women's oppression, to explain its causes and consequences, and to prescribe strategies for women's liberation. [Tong 1989:1]

The definitions I chose ignore the cultural differences of women and of feminism itself across societies. They also do not define "women" but present it as an understood term. In many ways, despite the influence of post-modern deconstruction of the concepts of gender, woman, power, resistance and oppression, the general definition of feminism (and for feminist anthropology in particular) still plants itself in the truth of womanhood and of women's oppression by men and by larger systems based on their sex.

These elements, as I have tried to show in the past chapters, are necessary for political movement.

Furthermore, all definitions emphasize consciousness or awareness of discrimination. All definitions emphasize the role of political action or strategy as the means to women's liberation. In these definitions of feminism there is an explicit relationship made between feminist theory and feminist practice. Since the entire preceding pages of this thesis have been about theory, I wish to conclude this paper with a discussion of feminist praxis in anthropology. A feminist anthropologist has at least two professional contexts in which she practices feminism: the field and the university.

Praxis in the Field

There is an ethos in anthropology of relativity that manifests itself in method. Anthropologists live for extended periods of time in other cultures, often visiting many different locales over the course of a career. While in the field, anthropologists participate and observe, being at once a "practicing native" and an "objective scientist."

I have already discussed the inability of anthropologists to fully pursue a post-modern philosophy which denies the existence of the subject. Part of the ambivalence toward post-modernism in anthropology is

methodological. Anthropologists in the field must believe in the existence of at least some intersubjectivity between researcher and native emanating either from a common humanity or from shared experience. In anthropology, intersubjectivity is accompanied by the discarding of ethnocentric interpretations of cross-cultural experience, such that another culture's customs, beliefs, activities, economies, and so on, have to be understood in that culture's own terms, relative to everything else in that society.

Relativity can cause some philosophical and ethical problems for feminist anthropologists as much as they may pursue the idea that the intersubjectivity of women can transverse cultural boundaries better than that between men and women of different cultures. Simply, if a feminist anthropologist subscribes to the belief that women can unite on the basis of their shared womanhood, she may not be able to view the injustices done to women cross-culturally in a relative light. Instead, the ethos of relativity may clash with her ethics of feminism. An example may suffice.

I had the privilege of going to breakfast with a well-known feminist linguistic anthropologist. Smith (not her real name) had documented childhood socialization in another society. In one of her papers, she had described the differential treatment of girls and boys by their mothers.

It was obvious that the differences in the status of men and women were directly related to the differences in how boys and girls were treated.

This is surely an decontextualized oversimplification, but it occured to me that, even understanding all of its complexities, Smith must have been very uncomfortable watching this behavior, recording it and explaining it. Over pancakes, I asked how she had felt about this and how she had responded. She downplayed any difficulty she had had with it by pointing out that her behavior had seemed as foreign to the natives as their behavior appeared to her. To paraphrase, she remarked that it was not really her place to pass judgment on another culture's practices.

Yet, in fact, she actually did do just that. She told me about an oblique comment she made to a native friend. She pointed out to her friend that if boys were not taught to hit their sisters, they would not grow up to beat their wives, an occurance that happened fairly regularly. Although her informant laughed, dismissed the point, and as far as I know, the conversation ended, I wondered what kinds of ramifications Smith's comment had.

Despite her protestations to the contrary, Smith had questioned a sexist cultural practice. Yet she had also remained within what she believed was the appropriate limits of relativity and gave the appropriate respect due her

friends and informants. Her feminist praxis took the appearance of an attempt to uncover the hidden rationales for and functions of behavior. Thus, cross-cultural feminist praxis can exist even (and maybe especially) in a question motivated by ignorance. By requesting an explanation for behavior, an anthropologist may reveal disfluency in rationalization. Further, by presenting her friend with an alternative but logical view, Smith may have unconsciously influenced her friends to alter their socialization patterns. In any event, Smith maintained her feminist values and yet respected others' as well.

Practicing feminism in the field, then, is surely limited by cultural considerations. I do not think it desirable or wise for feminist anthropologists to start liberation movements anywhere. However, neither is it desirable for an anthropologist to pretend that she comes to the field a clean slate without her own set of values. Each anthropologist then, feminist or not, must square her or his beliefs with her or his actions in the field, as difficult as it may be.

Praxis in the University

At home, a feminist anthropologist is primarily a creator of texts, written or oral. In this sense, the post-modern "ethnography as text" theorists can be of some philosophical

use. As text creators, feminist anthropologists deliberately discuss certain issues, experiences and knowledge even as they deliberately leave out others. As teachers, they determine what knowledge students will be required to know.

Thus, praxis in the academic setting involves the thoughtful and conscientious choice of topic. Feminist anthropologists can contribute to feminist discourses on domestic violence, poverty, racism, and war. They can also present methods of resistance used by women against power structures cross-culturally. They can broaden the concept of woman for men and women alike, demonstrating how women share and how they differ. Their texts can be personal accounts of how they have been enlightened by the viewpoints (which may or may not agree with feminism) of others. They can present other's voices. And finally, as creators of texts, they speak their own female voices.[1]

Praxis in the university also requires the teaching of feminist theory. One important feminist practice is the exposure of students to the alternatives of feminist studies. The choice of instructional materials is often the site of political confrontation (cf. Morgen 1988 for a deliberate attempt to aid anthropologists in creating

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[1]For this insight I am indebted to my colleague, Honoria Guarino.

syllabi of gender studies in all of the sub-disciplines). Encouraging students to learn feminist material may in large measure prevent its ghettoization by larger forces in the university which see it as irrelevant.

Thus, future feminist anthropology is confronted with a myriad of issues to tackle. As feminist anthropologists stress the importance of gender and power cross-culturally, both gender and power effect their daily interactions. While they transform their discipline theoretically, they also work practically and locally within their departments and within their other immediate contexts to transform gender relations. It is in these contexts that feminist anthropologists can share ideas across disciplines and across the artificial boundary of academia and the real world. Above all, feminist anthropologists must think critically about accuracy in their reporting, the opening up of space to allow women to speak, and finally, the usages to which their work can be put. Feminist anthropology must be as useful to practice as it is to theory.

ENDNOTES

Chapter II

1. Anthropology is seen as a discipline whose history made it particularly open to feminism's substantial impact in the mid-1970s (Stacey and Thorne 1985). Early work by female anthropologists such as Mead (1935), Benedict (1934) and Kayberry (1939, 1952) set the stage for later discussions of women and gender in cross-cultural perspective (cf. Morgen 1989).

2. Morgen (1989) sees a third group who emphasized the comparative method and Murdockian quantitative analysis and attempted to measure women's status. This tradition began with the publications of Schlegel (1972) and Sanday (1973). Whyte (1978) discovered correlations between certain cultural phenomena and women's power: women's ownership of property, their participation in kin relationships, their control over marriage and sex, the amount of value placed on women's lives and the ritualized fear of women by men all result in higher female power. Contrary to Sanday (1973), Whyte's data found no relationship between the contribution (great or small) of women to subsistence and their status. As well, the ritualized separation of the sexes, thought to be a sign of women's oppression, was modestly associated with increased female status. Whyte's primary contribution to the discussion of women's cross-cultural standing is his warning that women's status holds no consistent shape from society to society and that the specific aspects of status, roles and male/female relations are not categories that can be translated and compared cross-culturally.

Sanday (1981) differed from Whyte in that she attempted to include a symbolic dimension of culture. She added aspects of mythology, religion, secular codes and morals to her analysis. Her basic conclusion derives less from her data than from conjecture. She argues against universal male dominance but that its general existence is the result of the fact that, unlike men, women are reluctant to risk bodily danger for the gain of power.

Schlegel (1977b) created precise definitions of terms such as "power," "status," and "value" to facilitate comparative research.

The emphasis on comparison is also evident in large literature reviews of women's status cross-culturally (Quinn 1977, Mukhopadhyay and Higgins 1988).

3. This paper was originally published in Rosaldo & Lamphere (1974). Its Marxist elements are more at home in Reiter (1975).

4. See Friedl (1975) for a counterargument that it is not the production of goods but their distribution that influences status. Therefore, distribution is an element of prestige and power even in hunting and gathering societies where surplus food is exchanged.

5. For example, Leacock (1978, 1981) pointed out that domestic-public and nature-culture were not valid for hunter-gatherer bands.

6. There were exceptions such as Begler (1978) who argued that despite the forces of capitalism, post-contact foraging bands were still largely egalitarian.

7. This is less true for feminist physical anthropology and archaeology which emphasized the theoretical inclusion of women. Tanner and Zihlman (1976) and Zihlman (1978) proposed that the male bias of Darwinian ideas and the omission of women in evolutionary theory had valorized the typically male role as hunter and provider, thereby obscuring the fact that female activities, such as food gathering and processing, and caring for the increasingly dependent infant, were actually the primary motivators of language and social behavior among early humans. In this sense, these feminists focused in large part on women.

Chapter III

1. Phelan (1990) and Aladjem (1991) argue that Foucault's genius and the emancipatory aspect of his philosophy can be found in the fact that he refuses completely to embrace the totalizing theory of selfhood. The absence of the subject is the result of Foucault's refusal to define her.

> Perhaps she is speaking by virtue of her absence, and by not attributing a voice to her that resonates with modern subjectivity, an expression of who she really was might be heard from within the vortex of the power that defines her. [Aladjem 1991:281]

This position, of course, ignores the fact that the voices of the weak are rarely heard in the discourses of the powerful (Spivak 1988).

Spivak argues that the very practice of representing the subaltern, or dispossessed, will inevitably result in the mis-representation and thereby domination of the Other, because it emanates from those in positions of power relative to the subaltern. New categories such as "third world woman" merely circumscribe her voice. Even as Spivak supports the salvage project of feminist social science, Spivak warns that this creation of Other's subjectivity replicates the old order of power. She concludes that the subaltern cannot speak but in doing so, leaves feminists (especially those like myself who see value in voice studies; see Chapter 4) wondering what their task to be. She gives only one means to emancipation: the importance of speaking <u>to</u> rather than <u>about</u> the Other.

2. Although some would argue that sending men to be killed or wounded in war, either through draft, conscription or impressment, is equally as manipulative of their bodies.

3. Dallery (1989) sees the French feminists as resistant to any type of essentialism of womanhood. She does not, however, divide them as I do here, separating Irigaray's deliberate, political essentialism from Cixous' and Kristeva's feminine writing. For Dallery, French feminists advocate the replacement of dualisms with <u>jouissance</u>, or the female economy of pleasure. Note that jouissance is female rather than male.

4. Spivak (1983) in a volume on Derridean philosophy argues that women should and do deliberately write falsehoods to disprove Derrida's romantic vision that woman is and can know nothing but Truth.

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