

in integrating female aspects. He sees the need for a union of male and female energies expressed in Sybeberg's filming of Wagner's opera—which has the Parsifal role played by both a male and a female actor—and effusively and uncritically praises both Sybeberg and Wagner. Arnd Bohm analyzes a little known short story by Kleist, contending that “harmonization through androgyny”—the integration of male and female aspects advocated in the Pratts's article—was not a viable alternative for a man of Kleist's time, social circumstances and national context. Instead, both plot and narrative of Kleist's story—translated as “Saint Cecelia or the Power [I would have used the word ‘Force’ in order convey the violence contained in the word ‘Gewalt’] of Music (A Legend)” —are shown to link the feminine to something incomprehensible to, and destructive of, male consciousness. Kleist's story relates how four brothers become deranged through an encounter with feminine music; more significantly, the authority of the ostensibly masculine narrative voice is increasingly undermined as the narrator is shown incapable of making sense of inexplicable, non-realistic elements in the story. Within a literary and cultural context in which the force and clarity of realism was regarded as an expression of masculine identity, Bohm sees Kleist's inclusion of non-realistic elements as indicative of a crisis of gender. Barry Rutland's essay calls for a re-evaluation of the work of the Arthur Hugh Clough as equal in stature to that of his contemporary and friend, Matthew Arnold. Rutland argues for Clough's openness to contemporary questions of sexual difference in contrast with Arnold's apprehension of gender as a given. He elaborates the very similar class and social background of the two poets and their overlapping biographies, then goes on to show how their textual productions nevertheless represent the intertwining of class, gender, and subjectivity in very different ways. His detailed (and sometimes confusing) analysis of Clough's *Amours de Voyage* and Arnold's “Switzerland” (written the same year) compares how the two (intertextual) works contend with the power dynamics present in conceptions of sexuality, aesthetics, and culture.

Clearly, narratives persistently and relentlessly both reflect and construct sexual difference. *Gender and Narrativity* involves an interplay with sexual difference insofar as it provides, sometimes more successfully, sometimes less successfully, new and original narratives of how this occurs.

LORRAINE MARKOTIC



Judith Still. *Feminine Economies: Thinking Against the Market in the Enlightenment and the Late Twentieth Century*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1997. Pp. 240. £40.

In this provocative study, for the first time, Judith Still offers a systematic interrogation of the intricate relationship between the feminine

and the gift, which has vexed contemporary critical theory in recent years. Drawing on the resources of early twentieth-century anthropology, which analyses the circulation of gifts and gift exchange in the "primitive societies" of Melanesia and the Northwest coast of Canada, recent interventions in cultural studies and critical theory have expanded this ethnocentric notion of the gift to examine the circulation of women as gifts in western philosophy and culture. In Jacques Derrida's *Spurs* (1976) and Luce Irigaray's *Marine Lover* (1980), for example, the relationship between the feminine and philosophical conceptuality is figured in terms of a gift economy, where the feminine gives herself as a trope which both defines and threatens the coherence of masculine philosophical logic. By framing this theoretical discourse in terms of the historical, philosophical, and textual conceptualisation of the gift within classical market paradigms, Still traces the mechanics of feminine economies in the writing of Plato, More, Montaigne, Rousseau, and Diderot as well as more obvious figures, including Mauss, Bataille, Baudrillard, Lyotard, Derrida, Irigaray, and Cixous.

Chapter one offers a sustained critical commentary on the alignment of the gift and the feminine in contemporary French philosophy. In defining the concept of gift exchange as a "utopian horizon" in feminist thought, Still moves to situate the aneconomic thought of the gift in relation to questions about the material position of women in the market. The discussion of women's work in particular, illustrates the limits of recent theoretical discussions around the feminine and the gift for feminist emancipatory projects. As Still writes, "gift economies should not be tied to the feminine in any positive sense, because there is a real connection between women and 'gifts,' but we should be struggling to break that connection, since those so-called gifts are really the fruits of exploitation" (25). Yet Still also maintains the value of the gift as a point of leverage for feminist economic thought. Against the "false beneficence" of market representations of gift economies (13), epitomised in aristocratic magnanimity, potlatch, Bataillean expenditure and Baudrillard's symbolic violence, Still posits an ethical understanding of the gift based on the specificity of women's location at the borders of the economic. For Still, women's acts of generosity are "ambiguous because of the dominant relations of production between men and women in our society" (32). By recuperating women's acts of generosity from within the particular social, historical, and textual networks of the enlightenment and the late twentieth-century, however, Still underlines the transformative potential of the gift for feminist interventions in dominant economic and cultural thought.

The engagement with Plato's *Republic*, More's *Utopia*, and Montaigne's *On the Cannibals* in Chapter Two provides a useful philosophical background for situating the book's central discussion: the rise of

the market in the eighteenth century. While Still is careful to emphasize how the epistemological foundations of capitalism can be located in a chain of precursors "which would eventually take us back to Aristotle" (57), her readings of Rousseau, Diderot, and Sarah Scott make a persuasive case for the rise of commerce and property relations in the eighteenth century. Moreover, her recuperative reading of Rousseau's *Social Contract* in particular, demonstrates the enabling potential of the gift as a theoretical tool for feminist thought. For Still, there are elements of superabundant generosity in Rousseau's text, which work to undermine the exchange-based principles that underpin the unjust state. Moreover, Rousseau's discussion of the household as a site of economic transformation, and his emphasis on the need for sexual difference in the commercial world prefigures Still's later engagement with the feminist philosophy of Luce Irigaray. Indeed, Irigaray's gesture towards a sexuate culture, or a culture which emphasises the differences between the sexes rather than subordinating the feminine within a (masculine) economy of the same, resonates interestingly with Rousseau's "insistence on the need for sexual difference" (134).

Yet in spite of the attention to contextual detail in the first half of the book, Still's generous readings of Bataille, Irigaray, Derrida, Kristeva, and Cixous in subsequent chapters lack this broad historical and political focus. In her readings of Cixous, Irigaray, and Derrida in particular, Still is careful to distinguish between the "feminine" as a philosophical figure and the category of "women" as embodied subjects in the material world. Concentrating on the former category, Still argues that the main focus of the book is the connection between the gift and the feminine rather than any "direct political opposition to dominant economic structures" (182). Yet in spite of this disclaimer Still demonstrates that the feminine, like the gift, is an ambiguous figure which disrupts the stability of economic philosophies as well as philosophical economies. Rather than extending these insights to include a critique of feminist theory's location in the *contemporary* market, however, Still emphasizes the disruptive potential of the feminine as a negative force within the Western philosophical *économie*. Such an approach forecloses analysis of the global restructuring of capitalism, which underpins her theoretical interventions. What, for example, are the consequences of thinking against the market for women living on the borders of capitalism in homeworking economies and free trade zones? And how might the concept of the gift as a utopian horizon in feminist thought be mobilised to critique the false beneficence of the IMF and non-governmental organizations in targeting disenfranchised women for investment in microcredit programmes? Such questions mark the location and limitations of Still's otherwise cogent reading, and complicate its theoretical frame of reference.

*Feminine Economies* provides an illuminating and original engagement with a body of theory that has been largely ignored in critical

commentaries on French feminism and economic thought. The subversive potential of Still's book is however impeded by the rigorous adherence to contemporary theoretical paradigms. And while Still adds a new dimension to the intricate relationship between feminism, critical theory, economics, and the state, the gesture towards the economic as a future utopian horizon might have benefited from a closer reading of women's location in the contemporary economic text.

STEPHEN MORTON



Chandrani Biswas. *Women and War: A Study of the Novels of Emecheta, Ekwensi and Amadi*. New Delhi: Books Plus, 1998. Pp. viii, 133. Rs. 250.00, US\$20.00.

In the last two decades, many Indian universities have started offering courses in Postcolonial Literature in English. Indian students generally appear to be keener on African or Caribbean literature than on the literatures of such white settler colonies as Canada or Australia. Perhaps the historical experience of colonization provides a common ground (even though the consequences differed from country to country—it was not the same for India and Nigeria, for instance). In *Women and War: A Study of the Novels of Emecheta, Ekwensi and Amadi*, Chandrani Biswas the Indian scholar examines some Nigerian novels about the war in Biafra in the larger context of women's empowerment.

Biswas provides a useful survey of the changing status of women in Africa over the years. The status of women was (and is) not the same throughout Africa. Some societies had no distinct gender-based division of labour. In the hunter-gatherer society of the Mbuti pygmies of north-east Congo, "women are not alone or even chiefly responsible for childcare. Mbuti language distinguishes the sex of individuals only at the parental level, in the terms for 'mother' and 'father'; the language has no terms for 'male' and 'female,' 'boy' and 'girl'" (3). It is likely that women in Africa enjoyed a high status in antiquity, Nebet was a prime minister in the Old Kingdom in Egypt. But in recent centuries, women in Africa have suffered the same exploitation as their sisters in other continents. The process of colonization made their situation worse; in the traditional economy, women had an equal role. When property was communally owned, women's role as co-producers in the household was recognized. But with the creation of private property, man as the wage-earner in the cash economy was considered superior to the woman.

Biswas is very conscious of the collaboration between capitalism and patriarchy. The second chapter is devoted to "The Nigerian Civil War: A Historical Perspective." Literature does not exist in a vacuum, and Biswas takes care to study the history of the women's movement in