

Re-ordering our Partiality: Reflections on Careerism and Feminist Commitment in Academia*

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The author raises several problems intrinsic to feminist discourse which have serious repercussions for female academics — for their work, career advancements, and collegial relationships. The argument isolates the question of “networking” as exacerbating rather than solving these problems, as such a system effectively excludes independent scholars and avoids any concerted advocacy for the part-time and sessional instructor within the institution. As women have been “outsiders” in a phallogocentric institution (historically and culturally) networking marginalises women from other women. In relating rhetoric to reality the author argues that the philosophical basis for feminism has always been “gynocentric” in nature and that while it empowers women ideologically it has serious practical implications.

Le discours féministe a de sérieuses répercussions dans la vie des femmes universitaires, tant au niveau de leur travail, de leur avancement dans la carrière et de leurs relations avec leurs collègues. La formation de réseaux de recherche universitaire plus particulièrement, loin d'aider à résoudre ces problèmes, contribue plutôt à les aggraver. D'une part, ce système finit par exclure les universitaires indépendantes; d'autre part, il rend impossible l'action concertée en faveur de toute personne qui n'est pas membre régulier d'une institution. La marginalisation des femmes qui, historiquement et culturellement, s'est faite jusqu'ici par l'institution phallogocrate se fait maintenant par la création des réseaux de recherche. Le fondement philosophique du féminisme a toujours été de type “gynocentrique;” bien que du point de vue idéologique il remet aux femmes un certain pouvoir, sur le plan de la pratique, il n'est pas sans entraîner de sérieuses conséquences.

Yet, I, too, act in a comparable way as a gatekeeper and I do it with women as well as men. I, too, have a partial view of the world, a view constrained by my color, my class, my cultural milieu, and my country of origin. It is because I find no consolation in repeating the error of *his* ways that I am concerned that feminists find a way of recognizing and reordering our partiality. (Spender, 1985)

In a succinct commentary on the relationship of feminism to academe, the radical feminist, Dale Spender, notes that the woman's movement has created its own language, symbols, and logic which produce its own forms of propaganda. Neither should we be surprised that “few of us [women as well as men] are prepared to explore our own engagement in the production of propaganda” given

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that feminism advocates a particular world-view and moral climate (Spender, 1985, p. 307). But propaganda is not something others produce — especially men — while we do not. This essay affirms Spender's hard counsel by insisting that for meaningful and lasting transformations to occur in academia, women academics must re-examine their own rhetoric and expose their own contradictions. In short we must at least recognize these before we can eradicate those prejudices and blind-spots that lead us to replicate structures that undermine the "just" world feminists avow as an alternative to the unjust world created by patriarchy.

The following reflections are made in the context and as consequence of Spender's remarks. Moreover its tenor is a deliberate reflection of the feminist axiom that "the personal is political." The reflections analyse the practical implications of the feminist discourse and its assumptions by examining the relationships of female academics to each other — apart from men — as well as to their work, careers, and collegiality. The reflections point to the improbability of changing patriarchal structures in university settings unless we who claim to be feminists re-order our partialities first.

Outsiders and Others

To take upon oneself the onerous task of *provocateur* while reflecting on the dissonance between the rhetoric and reality of feminist commitment in academia can be interpreted as arrogant at worst and foolhardy at best. Moreover, at the risk of losing all credibility from the outset, I shall begin with a confession. Having hovered on the peripheries of academia for over a decade, I remain somewhat of an academic virgin, and virginity is no longer something to which one freely confesses. Therefore I abashedly admit that it is all too easy to be "pure" when one has had no occasion of sin or been offered the seductions that lead to being compromised. Indeed, I am reminded of Jacques Barzun's remarks when asked to speak on the idea of the "educated man:"

For a speaker to express himself publicly about the educated man is as dangerous as for a lady to bring up the topic of the Virtuous Woman. In both cases everybody's attention immediately shifts to the person who is discussing it. What are his or her qualifications?¹

Alas, my qualifications are meager but whatever they are I leave for the reader to judge. A five year Canada Research Fellowship has followed a dismal progress of intermittent and part time sessional appointments, two modest co-joint research grants without stipends, a year of more generous support as an independent scholar [and even a four year honorary appointment as a previous editor of this journal]: in short, the usual treadmill any "disposable academic" recognizes. Throughout this professional wasteland I have maintained a modest scholarly record and learned to adjust to the politics of exclusion prevalent on today's campuses. At the same time I adopted the psychology of the "outsider." Isolated from the ecology of networking and denied significant institutional supports, I remained attentive to their advantages. Intellectually invisible and emotionally alienated, I found myself discarded by the institutional setting that sustains

research, wrested from the so-called community of scholars, isolated from that imaginative mental engagement essential for the life of the mind. Of course I was not alone. There are numerous by-products of academic marginalization, but as Emily K. Abel has noted in *Terminal Degrees* (1984), there is little comfort among rivals!

On the other hand, as an outsider I was free of the institutional seductions and compromises involved for those who operated within the parameters of university expectations; free of the ethical and pragmatic aerobics which result in a poignant testing of feminist commitment for so many women academics making their careers in an unsympathetic environment. Naturally it was a freedom I would have willingly relinquished even as I made observations from its pristine vantage point. Reluctantly I learned to operate outside the phallocracy (government of the men, by the men, and for the men) — an ethos which continues to pervade university governance and culture.

Moreover my status as “outsider” was twice-removed — first as an independent scholar and second, as a *female* scholar operating on the margins of an institutional setting whose traditions and structures are androcentric and whose reward system disproportionately favors males. In this setting women as a class remain outsiders, numerically, psychologically, and administratively. Virginia Woolf’s observation in *Three Guineas* that “women are a society of outsiders working on the inside as an enclave to transform the space in which we work” is no less appropriate today (Wenzel, 1983, p. 88). And a more recent social critic, Adrienne Rich, reminds us that in light of this reality we must not become too complacent with our relative and individual success, “for no woman is really an insider in the institutions fathered by masculine consciousness” (Rich, 1987, p. 7).

This then is the only qualification I can muster for an essay of this kind — that of the “outsider.” I am, therefore, aware that what I have to say may be discomforting to many, but to quote Wittgenstein, “the trouble with thinking about certain things is not thrilling but often downright nasty. *And when it is nasty then it is most important.*” (Elshtain, 1981, p.xi)

Tokenism and Feminism

My first reflection concerns tokenism. I am not, at this point, concerned with hiring practices and affirmative action programs at the lower echelons of the university structure. I am concerned with the process of gaining entry into the phallocracy where real power and status are conferred or denied.

Token women are those who have been admitted into phallocracy as representative of their gender because it is tacitly understood that they will identify with the norms and structures already in place. They will “fit in,” presumably because they already demonstrate that they do fit in by failing to exhibit any of the symptoms of being different, reforming, or troublesome. Moreover, they are in a prestigious position (e.g., dean, vice-president, associate dean) because of and not despite gender. This is not, however, to presuppose lack of qualification for the position. Qualification is not the issue, whereas identity is. Token women

may be generally described as "men-identified-women" whose presence in academe, while symbolically significant, do not effect real changes for their female colleagues or students in universities. Moreover, given the staying power of patriarchy, male hegemony, and phallocracy consolidated over thousands of years, any woman who sees herself on the *inside*, at last, suffers from "delusions of gender" even as tokenism and accommodations to a male dominated ethos reward her (Wenzel, 1983, p.89).

All of the above is quite apart from the fact that many token women genuinely think that they have succeeded because they are unusually deserving. They harbor a belief in the Petrarchan axiom *fama et virtus*, that virtue and merit equal success, that genuine public recognition is never accorded the unworthy, an astonishing sophistry in light of the abundance of evidence otherwise. The token woman is *encouraged* to see herself as different from most women,

... as exceptionally talented and deserving, and to separate herself from the wider female condition; and she is perceived by "ordinary" women as separate also, perhaps even stronger than themselves. (Rich, 1986, pp.6-9)²

At the same time as token women symbolize the acceptance of their gender into a previously all-male domain, either in a subordinate role or a more authoritative position, their success is generally singular. This does not necessarily mean that the woman perceives herself as a token although "tokenism standardly amounts neither to a refusal of marginal status on the part of the woman, nor to an end of marginalizing practices on the part of those who designate her status" (Code, 1987, pp. 46-49). Neither does it mean that a feminist should repudiate an offer even if from the standpoint of tokenism if she sees such a position as a means of expressing her feminist identity (being fully cognizant of the possible costs of involving oneself in "identity-politics") in order to facilitate change or, as Woolf expresses it, "to transform the place in which we work."

In an article on tokenism, Lorraine Code chastises zealots who deplore the silence and inaction of token women in positions of power. She accuses them of imposing an indefensible moral requirement on women who are already in such positions instead of better directing their energies so that more feminists come to occupy places in the patriarchy. On these grounds she is quite right, especially if the woman concerned has never advertised herself as a feminist of any kind, or use feminist appeals to bolster status. Her argument falters if the woman postures as a feminist because it is advantageous or expected of her. Some feminist rhetoric and cliches have become mandatory for professional women, even acceptable to their male colleagues, so long as it is not seen to be serious. Indeed a wag might ask, "Who at universities is *not* a feminist nowadays?"

In Code's comments we see a close relationship between tokenism and *role-modelling*. While women in significant positions are held up as exemplars for less successful women, sometimes the term "role model" seems to be a euphemism for tokenism. Perhaps an aside would clarify this point. I recall a comment from a radical woman at a conference I attended. After watching helplessly the demise

of yet another non-academic women's organization with its own journal as it was absorbed by an academic network where the newly self-proclaimed intelligentsia spoke much about "role-modelling" this wit drolly remarked, "*In my experience all this talk about role models is often only a way of getting on in the world just like men without having to feel guilty about it.*" One might sympathize with her point of view in light of the fact she had just seen a group of academics (who could obtain federal funding when the lay organization was beleaguered with financial trouble) elect themselves to the executive and plan to turn the next conference into an academic meeting with "proceedings" (of course). They agreed that an official document of the present proceedings should be co-operatively written as part of their scholarly production for the year's annual report. Consequently our disaffected wit left the meeting in disgust and muttering something about "opportunists" and "empire builders."

While recognizing the difficulties to maintaining a feminist identity in the phallocracy, regrettably the desire for success and career-making has neutralized many a feminist before the point of entry in the form of co-option. Co-option is usually understood as buying into those structures and practices which we as feminists vociferously protest as long as we are not part of them and which we recognize have traditionally excluded us. The processes of collusion are insidious and rarely do the compromises appear considerable. Moreover while even the moderately successful continue to face the subtleties of discrimination and sexism in the academy, the co-option of a single feminist weakens the sum of the whole. Co-option can drive the radical element underground out of the academic women's associations and the female networks so there might remain too few committed feminists to fight for the disadvantaged or further marginalized women among their ranks. If the radicals are in exile, we can be sure that the non-feminist career-minded woman will not do it. The words of one woman academic in a senior position come to mind:

I felt a responsibility to fight or I felt I would become the University's prime queen bee. My instinctive dislike for that possibility was intensified because I had published a number of books on women . . . from which I was making money. I felt I would be ripping off the movement if I continued to profit from the feminist interest that supported my writing if I backed away from a clear challenge to fight for its principles. (Margolis, 1987, p. 13)

If our feminist commitment only goes as far as to want a woman — any woman — in a previously male domain without effecting any changes for other women (although our feminist moral universe is ultimately much broader than that), then we are products of that male-ordered plastic feminism Mary Daly (1984) refers to as "that which disguises or exploits patriarchal modes of thinking and patriarchal structures rather than courageously tackling them" (Frye, 1985, p. 3). Assimilation of this kind distorts our vision and neutralizes our commitment.

The previous reflections compel me to raise another concern. Feminists have been anxious to embrace as many women as possible under the aegis of a term they have scrupulously avoided defining, not just narrowly, but sometimes at all.

In their reluctance to exclude any women who might remotely qualify on the grounds that gender alone is the main signifier in uniting women they find themselves in the anomalous situation of including any woman who says what is requisite even if failing to demonstrate any such conviction in actual deeds. But surely the biblical dictum, "by their fruits ye shall know them" is no less *apropos* in this case? Janice Raymond (1986) connects the individual with the collectivity in what she correctly cites as "the rigors of discernment":

The tyranny of tolerance dissuades women from tough-minded thinking, from responsibility for disagreement with others, and from the will to act. Worse it allows oppressive values to surface without being rebutted. . . . The tyranny of tolerance deprives not only individuals but also a political movement of its capacity for discernment. It saps moral passion and purpose from feminist politics. (Raymond, 1987, pp. 171-173)

On the other hand, Hilda Smith (1985) expresses reservations about the use of the term feminist which implies that anything a woman does to enhance her position can be termed "feminist" whether or not she is or society links it to the status of women generally. Gerda Lerner, the "mother" of American women's history agrees. She claims that women are not noteworthy because their achievement "falls exactly in the [categories] set up for men," but likewise neither are they noteworthy because they did anything at all as early feminists tended to think (Lerner, 1979, p.13). In turn, Jean Bethke Elshtain observes that "one begins to see that a repetition of key words, whether as explanation or metaphor, can become a substitute for thought" (Elshtain, 1981, p.216). While hesitating to use parameters that create definitional straight jackets, academics are a people usually trained in avoiding umbrella-terms that blur all distinction. But in the case of the term "feminist" one wonders if they have come to accept unquestioningly the absurd definition proffered by a guru of the early women's liberation movement who said (seriously) that a feminist was "a woman who had sex before marriage and a job after." (Not surprisingly I have forgotten who made this facile remark!).

Elsewhere I have argued that the tendency, even in academic circles, to use *feminism* so loosely demonstrates an intellectual affinity with the ideas of a single continuum of degrees of complexity which rejects a radical difference in kind, thereby denying the reality of kinds. It emphasizes

sameness and not differences, consensus and not conflict, differences of degree rather than of kind, differences that are superficial rather than radical. The phenomenon being compared possesses a common characteristic but one has more of it, the others less. (Rooke, 1985)

Oversimplifying a complex philosophical problem with emphasis on only two contraries — kind and degree — rather than a myriad of other possible contingencies minimizes both the androcentric biases and the phallogocentric sources of social organization and reference groups. This "all in together girls" view of feminism has meant male-identified women academics continue to skip to the pace of the men turning the rope and controlling the rules of the game.

The analytical failure to grapple with a feminist agenda and operate on it is based on the naive assumption that women are united by gender alone, that gender is more important than heterosocial and heterosexual alliances (marriage, family, and politics being obvious ones), social class, race, religion, and status — that we are united in a selfless sisterhood which transcends all differences including moral, aesthetic or intellectual ones. This ideological formlessness promotes flexibility and useful alliances but it also blurs the vision by confusing ends and means and does not allow for a genuine feminine renaissance. Meanwhile some careers are being made on such a formless feminism as the connection between individual success even as a generalized advancement of academic women remains remote. It remains to chart empirically what we assume to be a teleological progression from single cases of success to significant numbers of women (Ryan, 1982, pp. 4-7).

The creation of role models is *sine qua non* to the feminist cause. Nonetheless, it is alarming to hear the extraordinarily casual view being expressed that it is about time a woman gets into any high-powered position no matter who the model or what the role. *In itself this is scarcely objectionable unless the claim is being made — and it frequently is — that as a woman she will offer something better than a man.* Feminists see the matter of power as more than merely plugging a woman into a position and claiming this to be a major breakthrough. If that is all we want, and can do, as a female lobby (and I concede that in the face of phallographic opposition even this is almost impossible in many cases), there exists an inverted form of feminist tokenism no less insidious than the token-women phenomenon already discussed. Surely here too we must “re-order our partiality?”

Networks of Exclusion

I have alluded to networking earlier in the discussion and at this stage it seems appropriate to resume that reflection. I have found it almost shocking that while criticizing the inequities, elitism, biases and political alignments of male networking, academic women's networks have been able to simulate the experience and perpetuate an indifference and exclusiveness while claiming a “purism” that is far from obvious to those who have been excluded. One has only to attend any women's conference or browse through journals to observe the conclaves of like-mindedness, the equivalent of the old school tie and good ol' boys' network of friends, lovers, colleagues, associates and graduate students. Glancing at conference programs and journals, we notice the networks publishing each other, approving and reviewing each other, calling conferences for each other, sitting on review boards and selection committees, acting as “gatekeepers” and making decisions “about what is excellent, acceptable, needs revising, or should be rejected” (Spender, 1985, p. 313). As Dale Spencer observes in the article from which my opening quotation is taken,

I cannot adopt the customary mode of claiming that my own standards are fair, impartial, and above reproach while those of gatekeepers in general (and male gatekeepers in particular) are

to be deplored. I am as much a victim of patriarchy and its frame of reference as is anyone else who tries to make decisions. (Spender, 1985, p. 313)

At first I believed that ability, productivity, even creativity, were enough. Enough to be admitted, if not into phallocracy, then certainly the network system. But it never was. Initially I fiercely denied that women's networks duplicated the very worst features of the men's networks. Those all too familiar rat-race aphorisms came back to haunt me — aphorisms I had believed were products of patriarchy but never feminism. You know the sayings — “It's not what you know but who you know,” and “Them that has are them that gets,” and “The fat get fatter and the thin just die.”

My mother was a large, tough-minded, unschooled, and aggressive woman with a healthy skepticism about life born of poverty in the slums of Melbourne. She often said to me when I was a girl, “Remember Pat, nobody gives nothink for nothink.” It took me some years of advanced education in another country to comprehend that the more erudite have the same philosophy only they call it *quid pro quo* and it is on the basis of *quid pro quo* that all networks — including female ones — operate. This is precisely why women's networks — the answer to the silencing of women's voices by men's networks — fail their sisters who are independent and part-time scholars. The marginal women scholars have nothing to offer in return. They have no access to journals, contacts with editors, no names to drop, no invitations for conference sessions as a paper giver, comment or chair, no contacts with other universities, no position from which to write glowing references, and no research grants from which to distribute largesse. These are the channels of communication and opportunities that networks thrive on. These are their *raison d'être*.

It is, of course, tautological that the marginalized — those without institutional affiliation, without tenure and its professional benefits — are excluded from the network system and are outsiders even in the institutions they are occasionally or minimally attached to, reside near, or have graduated from. As they cling precariously onto the little they have *it is the network system that entirely fails them*. No scholar can thrive without encouragement, feedback, interest, and recognition, least of all the already marginalized. The network system works, but only if you are in it and part of it. The book *Terminal Degrees* contains numerous examples pointing to the failure of women's networking and demonstrates that the overall cost is an appalling waste of talent and training which ultimately diminishes the whole community of scholars. Consequently, marginalized women scholars

constantly express frustration and disillusion in the face of painful isolation . . . and intense covert support (in the rhetoric) that frequently dwindles to a trickle in practice . . . and are bitterly disappointed with the lack of support from academic women. (Margolis, 1987, p. 13)

Lack of support for other women in tenuous and invidious situations may be explained by a fear of retaliation which is especially intense for many academic women. In a tight job market, women are in the lowest ranks proportionately, are

the first to be penalized and the first to lose jobs in retrenchment, being frequently on "soft" money or not having tenure. Fear, however, can only partially explain the lack of female solidarity and support for the marginalized. There is a darker side, one which is well known in political theory. Full timers, of either gender, are unwilling to risk or relinquish benefits they derive from part-time help just as they derive psychological comfort, often at the unconscious level, that there are others who will be dismissed before they will. More often these are women than men.

In the final analysis, it is not just individuals who are isolated and excluded but whole bodies of knowledge, new and challenging perspectives, other ideological positions, criticisms, and revision. Networking, based on whichever gender, cannot afford to be a closed club that leads to an academic incestuousness that is fundamentally anti-intellectual. Networks are intellectually useful only if they represent a community of scholars and are not systems of exclusion or *invited* inclusion. Friends, lovers, associates, colleagues, and students may, and do, have major contributions to make, but existing outside the networking system are others unable to make any contributions at all because they lack either the means or opportunity.

All too readily we create our own stereotypes out of our feminist discourse and come to believe that any woman, no matter the evidence of her actual commitment, is preferable to any man. Now the argument might stand on grounds of equity, that a mediocrity of whatever sex is entitled to a certain position, but I doubt this is the feminists' argument. They argue that on compensatory grounds, given two different genders and equal capacities, the women ought to have the position as we are long overdue to such entitlements. But feminist consciousness requires something more than this surely, if only because a *moral agenda* is built into the feminist discourse. We cannot use this agenda in disputation and then proceed to operate as if it does not or ought not to exist in practice. What is the peculiar position feminists put forward in their moral agenda? Their moral agenda is built on the gynocentric ideal, a curious reaction to phallogocentric norms, in that both reflect assumptions popular in arguments about male and female natures.

While I am unable to fully subscribe to the gynocentric position, neither am I able to deny its psychological and ideological persuasiveness. It is an argument that has been popularized by male pro-feminists, male anti-feminists, women's liberationists, the moral majority, and radical lesbians alike. It is so encompassing as to scarcely exclude any major lobby interested in women's issues. In fact, it is an argument with a history going back at least as far as Plato's ideal republic.

The Gynocentric Ideal

The gynocentric ideal imputes certain characteristics, or cognitive, affective, and behavioral dispositions, which are genderized in favor of females. These are not necessarily genetically programmed; nevertheless they are assumed to exist. For example, women reputedly are more co-operative, peace-loving, intuitive, sensitive, moral, humanistic and nurturant than men. Gynocentric qualities are

uniformly positive. The pervasiveness of these gender-specific views is not exaggerated. One has only to listen to a range of contemporary feminists including Helen Caldicott, the women of Greenham Common or the Seneca Falls Communes, and the poet Adrienne Rich. One has only cursorily to read about the maternal and social feminists of the nineteenth century, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton in the United States, Elizabeth Blackwell and Josephine Butler in Britain, and Emily Murphy and Charlotte Whitton in twentieth-century Canada. One has only to glance through the numerous women's publications, scholarly articles, and subscribe to the excellent *Women's Review of Books*. The gynocentric ideal posits a new Manichaeism, a battle between virtue and vice, between sons of darkness and daughters of light, and like the old Manichean dualism of good and evil oversimplifies what amounts to ambiguous, paradoxical, complicated, and sometimes astonishing relations between and among the sexes (Elshtain, 1987, pp. 319-340).

To date, the anomalies within the gynocentric ideal have been more overlooked than addressed. First, it seems to affirm the Freudian vulgarity that woman's destiny is her anatomy. Second, it creates its own stereotypes and deviants thus alienating those women who do not, cannot, or will not identify with any or all of its characteristics and object to its implicit reductionism. Third, it bears a striking similarity to the nineteenth century "cult of true womanhood" which effectively trivialized female consciousness by reifying views that women were the moral caretakers of the social order, the civilizing leaven who existed to keep the boys in order and provide softness, purity, and self-denying nobility while taming the wild beast in the breast of their menfolk (Elshtain, 1981; Walter, 1966; Reuther, 1973).

The cult of true womanhood has since been interpreted by historians as an imposition, a form of social control, whose characteristics become accepted and perpetuated by women themselves while permitting economic, political, and masculinist structures to dominate society. We must take care to navigate the undercurrents of a contemporary version that argues for psycho-physiologically based female qualities which imputes that women are qualitatively and positively different from men (which is not the same as saying that women have had a qualitatively different experience). The paradox is obvious; if feminine qualities are innate, the re-socialization of women seems an inappropriate means by which to redress the practices of social activities relating to the helping services — and child care will continue to be seen as best performed by women.

No feminist, whether of gynocentric inclination or otherwise, would argue that women are not equal to men in all intellectual, moral, and social senses, that along with men, women are assertive, ambitious, objective, political, scientific, rational and practical. Yet the gynocentric ideal claims more than this. It claims that women, while possessing innate feminine qualities must also lay claim to the so-called masculine qualities. Does this make us, not only equal but superior to men? At this point the gynocentric ideal soars to lofty heights of a Great Metaphysic. Besides which, such a maternal metaphysics can be distorted into a kind of

feminist fascism where women who do not subscribe to gynocentric views or align themselves to some hypothetical bio-reproductive party line will be silenced or alienated. The sexist overtones of the position are startling. It has implications we would not easily accept for any other ideological position, e.g., a racist one who postulates whites are superior to blacks.³

Nonetheless it is unlikely that any oppressed group would reject such a comfortable notion as the gynocentric ideal, although one would think academic feminists might be more attentive to its ramifications. Academics, presumably, are trained to be suspicious of all forms of polemic and rhetoric. Indeed, arguments based on "human nature" have always been at the heart of the intellectual enterprise. It is therefore surprising to see how enthusiastically the gynocentric ideal is embraced in university circles as well as in the popular feminist culture. While some interesting and articulate analyses are emerging, the debate is still surprisingly muffled (Richards, 1980; O'Neill, 1968).

The main point I wish to make for this particular reflection is that in light of the pervasiveness and general acceptance of gynocentric assumptions, academic feminists cannot ignore the implications for a moral agenda. The gynocentric ideal is not merely an important component to that agenda, but to many feminists is the grounding of such an agenda, the necessary and sufficient condition. Therefore it follows that we ought to be working for better, more humane, co-operative environment, society, workplace and relations between people and both sexes; that is, for the depoliticization or repoliticization of our institutional structures — in this case, the university setting. The moral agenda compels us to be attentive to tokenism, role models, and networking, i.e., to avoid replicating male values and structures. The moral agenda challenges the assimilationist position adopted not only by "men-identified women" in academe but also feminists who run scared at the mere suggestion of separatism as a strategy to "transform the space in which we work." If the assimilationist woman "is the new androgyne who creates her own person in a hetero-relational image, in academe she is careerist (Raymond, 1986, p. 166).

Women's history has been especially attentive to the triumph of assimilationism in the twentieth century, post-Freud and post-suffrage. Already it has provided ample evidence that in the past, separatism helped mobilize women, gave the emotional sustenance, and gained them political and institutional leverage (Freedman, 1979; Rosenberg, 1983; Cook, 1979). Separatist strategy is not to be confused with lifestyle or sexual orientation, although I have been dismayed at the nervousness the terms evoke among women academics who hold significant positions in women's organizations or women's studies programs, to the extent many disclaim any identification with the radical and lesbian wings of the movement. Separatism has been integral to feminist politics for a century and a half and its possibility for solidarity is staggering. We avoid it, in practice and in discussion, favoring assimilationist positions which have served to perpetuate our secondary status at the same time as it placates the men. Instead of firmly countenancing the labels we fear — of being called lesbian, strident, fanatical, mannish, anachronistic,

and other less polite names — we are co-opted by our silences and confounded by compromise. By avoiding the discussion itself, we avoid the logical consequence of such silence. Thus we affirm the assimilationist position and unconsciously or pragmatically internalise a cultural bias that has historically favored male hierarchies.

Even in our work we adopt assimilationist perspectives to get our fair share of the reward system, sometimes tailoring our work so as not to appear extreme or a "separatist." Poignantly, while understanding our secondary status, we nevertheless continue to aspire to be acceptable (i.e., "real") women to our male colleagues. "Too many of us are too willing to write sneaky schizophrenic essays from under two or three different hats" depending on the occasion, the audience, the reviewers, the editor, or the chairman (Rich, 1986, p. 91). We compromise feminist principles to make our message more palatable. And less powerful. Adrienne Rich's challenge is rarely heeded: "feminist criticism must renounce the temptation to be pleasing and respectable and strive instead to be strong-minded, rash, and dangerous" (Rich, 1986, p.99). By meeting her challenge we can be certain of only one thing: There will, for a time, be even fewer rewards because there will be fewer compromises, unless we simultaneously work to change the male dominated views that allow for this state of affairs.

Conclusion

In brief it is dubious practice to criticize the exclusive, arbitrary, and partial nature of patriarchal structures yet continue to replicate them casually, opportunistically, cynically, or merely because they are familiar, comfortable, and convenient once we have gained admittance. Before recommendations for change can be affected, before we can transform the feminist vision into concrete alternatives, we must analyze our own contradictions and partialities. Only then can we reconcile theory and participate more fully in the "just society." I cannot pretend that such a process, which is at the heart of the educational and academic enterprise, will not be arduous.

These reflections ask that academic women acknowledge the feminist agenda that demands we "re-order our partiality," that is, broaden our horizons to include others, re-examine our network systems, rethink questions of tokenism and assimilationism and reflect upon our feminist assumptions, if only to avoid repeating "the error of his ways." Rhetoric and reality, words and deeds, the ideal and the reality — these have always dogged the reformer's vision and it dogs the feminist vision no less. We cannot afford to lose our hard won gains in the seductions of careerism, be compromised by token rewards that do not redress real inequalities, or be tempted into individualistic complacency. Mostly we must take care not to emulate those aspects of patriarchy that have failed to realize the human world our moral agenda implies for, as Natalie Harris Bluestone says in *Women and the Ideal Society*:

We who reason, think, imagine alternatives, weigh the just with the unjust, must keep alive the memory of (past) inequities. We must see that full equality is reached and maintained, not only in the ideal city, in the city of speech, but here in the real world. (Bluestone, 1987, p.196)

Notes

1. This quotation is one of those which is often used and never cited. While I have the full text of the address I have no information where, when, or to whom it was given!
2. She also says, "To become a token woman — whether you win the Nobel Prize or merely get tenure at the cost of denying your sisters — is to become something less than a man indeed, since men are at least loyal to their own world view and masculine self-interest."
3. For an unscholarly distortion of the gynocentric position by men who do not understand its complex historical antecedents, see *Essays in Canadian Education* (1986) edited by Nick Kach, et al. In a brief commentary on "The Feminist Movement" Kach and Ivan de Faveri refer to keeping the "fanatical element in check" who preach hatred against men while claiming their own superiority (pp. 143-144).

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