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Introduction: Gender, Culture, and Political Economy

Feminist Anthropology in Historical Perspective

Micaela di Leonardo

The feminist project in anthropology has flown under several flags. It was at first termed the anthropology of women, as we focused on correcting male bias in the discipline. We have since written of the anthropology of gender to denote our concern with both sexes and their culturally and temporally varying relations. Sometimes we refer to feminist anthropology to acknowledge our interdisciplinary affinities with women's studies scholarship. Feminist-inspired anthropological research and writing on gender relations, after two decades of practice, has come of age.

Because anthropology stands at the crossroads of knowledge production, embracing scientific, social-scientific, and humanistic modes of interpretation, feminists in the discipline have worked in every part of the globe, in every specialized subfield, from primates to politics, from tropes to T-cells. Whether heralded by feminist sociologists for advanced theory (see Stacey and Thorne 1985) or ignored by some of our colleagues, feminist anthropologists have labored to develop a corpus of work in touch with developments in the field, in allied disciplines, and within feminism itself.[1]

But to describe the evolution of feminist anthropology in Whig-historical terms, to portray a linear progression from good to better, would be to paint over a nuanced, three-dimensional reality. Behind the facade of progress is a complex history of roads traveled and then abandoned, new starts, and alliances and fissures across disciplines and among anthropological subfields. Feminist anthropologists, like all scholars, have sharply disagreed among themselves and have revised their perspectives over time. As well, the feminist anthropological project has been influenced by shifts in the larger intellectual scene and in the global political economy in which we all live. This last point is crucial. Western feminist scholars twenty years ago had a sharp, taken-for-granted starting point: to expose sexism in public and private life,

to alter the male-biased presumptions of scholarly and popular culture. We now see both the adjective of location—we are *Western* feminists, and there are others—and the noun's contingent, historically determined existence. The political source of feminist scholarship, early 1970s feminism, was not the first but the second major wave of women's rights thought and activism. And there have been organized rebellions and individual protests among women in many cultures—even in the small-scale societies anthropologists have specialized in studying—and in numerous historical periods. We now see ourselves as part of global history.

In order to envision contemporary feminist anthropological work properly, then, we need to follow the project from its inception and to locate that changing body of thought within the kaleidoscopic crossroads of anthropological, feminist, intellectual, and political-economic history.

The early 1970s were years of closely linked scholarly and political ferment in the United States. The civil rights and antiwar movements of the 1960s had grown and given birth to theory and activism concerned with environmental issues, American foreign policy, gay, black, Latino, Asian, and Native American rights—and feminism.

All these movements were influenced by—and inspired—intellectual shifts of the 1960s. Foremost among these broad changes was the post-McCarthyite renascence of Marxist theory. Many others, however—such as the Kuhnian disrobing of "timeless" scientific authority, criticisms and radical revisions of Freudianism, and extensions of liberal pluralism to encompass new (ethnic, gay, female) claimant groups—were key to both scholarly and political movements of the era. Although each strand of 1970s radicalism had historical precedents, some predating the twentieth century, feminism's particular trajectory was unique. The late-nineteenth/early twentieth century woman movement in the United States and Western Europe (and, among anticolonialist nationalists, in many third-world societies) culminated in the achievement of suffrage in America and Britain, and subsequently entered a period of relative quiescence. Although one of the many victories of the period was the establishment of women's colleges and the entrance of women into the professions, most of these early feminists—as they began to be called in the first decade of the twentieth century—challenged neither domestic sexual divisions of labor nor the received wisdom of the contemporary scholarly and professional establishment.[2]

Late-twentieth-century feminists did precisely that. A relatively homogeneous cohort—at least in the first decade—these largely young, white, college-educated, middle-class women built a shared vision of the world turned upside down. In classic radical fashion, they questioned all received wisdom relating to their particular issue; and that issue, comprising the lives and statuses of all female humans, past and present, engaged every branch of

knowledge and labor.[3] This statue-toppling atmosphere bore parallels to the French Revolution, when, as Wordsworth wrote,

> Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
> But to be young was very Heaven.

Both groups were convinced that politics and knowledge were innately intertwined, and for that reason set out to reconstruct knowledge. Each group attempted to extirpate language deemed reflective of the political order to be overthrown (French honorifics, women's married titles), and each coined neologisms to substitute and to express new concepts and institutions (*citoyenne/citoyen*, Ms.). And each group turned to ancient Greece and Rome for models of prior political virtues—the Athenian republic, the myth of matriarchal Amazonia.

Feminist anthropology reflected all these tendencies—absent the romance with ancient Greece—in microcosm. Participants in early study groups and seminars shared the vision of rethinking and reworking an entire discipline, one that seemed vital to feminist thought. Because of American anthropology's historic, cross-cutting four-field emphasis, anthropology seemed to cover women from soup to nuts—from female proto-humans and primates to women in prehistoric societies to a survey of the lives of all contemporary women, whether in the first, second, or third worlds. Feminist anthropologists had a strong sense, as well, that the results of their intellectual work were of key importance to feminist political decision making. Only anthropology, after all, occupied itself with the search for human universals and the documentation of cross-cultural variation. New interpretations of these phenomena seemed likely to aid us in discovering the key factors related to women's secondary status, and thus to determine the Archimedean standpoint from which we could move the male-dominated globe. As Gayle Rubin noted, somewhat tongue in cheek,

> if innate male aggression and dominance are at the root of female oppression, then the feminist program would logically require either the extermination of the offending sex, or else a eugenics program to modify its character. If sexism is a by-product of capitalism's relentless appetite for profit, then sexism would wither away in the advent of a successful socialist revolution. If the world-historical defeat of women occurred at the hands of armed patriarchal revolt, then it is time for Amazon guerrillas to start training in the Adirondacks. (1975: 158–159)

GENDER IN ANTHROPOLOGICAL HISTORY

This sense of anthropology's edificatory place in American life, of seeing ourselves through seeing others, was in fact not an invention of 1970s feminists but was rooted in the history of American anthropology and, indeed, in

the discipline as a whole. The male Victorian British evolutionary theorists who would be labeled "anthropologists" only in the 1880s were concerned to taxonomize all known human groups, to place Hottentots, ancient Romans, and contemporary European bourgeoises on a stratified *scala naturae* according to their relatively savage, barbarous, or civilized characteristics. Although, as George Stocking (1987) demonstrates, much of the impetus behind Victorian anthropology lay in these men's efforts to establish and to make sense of a desacralized universe, moral anxieties in a newly Godless realm did not constitute the whole of their concern. Victorian Britain was the major world imperial power; it saw the growth of a vital, militant woman movement led by the daughters of its bourgeoisie. Victorian anthropology, then, was naturally engaged in attending to—legitimating but also protesting—the colonized status of third-world others. It also engaged, as Elizabeth Fee (1974) has shown, in a *dialogue in absentia* with the woman movement.

A central tension of mid-Victorian evolutionary debates was the problematized status of male rule over women. Had women once ruled and been deposed, as Bachofen asserted? Or were women now less exploited (especially sexually) than in the past and among primitives thought to be "living history"? Assertions of male lust, female purity or licentiousness, male anxieties over paternity, and female capacities for moral uplift were deeply woven into these accounts and found their way into the evolutionary schemata of those major late Victorians Marx and Freud.

In the years intervening between the Victorian evolutionists and the 1970s feminists, anthropology established itself, primarily in Britain and the United States, as a major academic field. Social anthropology in the United Kingdom and cultural anthropology in the United States jettisoned evolutionary thought and established the lengthy, intimate, daily living with and observing of people in another culture—fieldwork—as the constitutive practice of the discipline. British anthropologists, especially Radcliffe-Brown (1965), crafted structural-functionalism as a theoretical frame through which living societies could be seen to make sense. Societies were envisioned through an organic analogy: institutions such as kinship and marriage, politics, economics, and religion were demonstrated, again and again, to function in tandem with one another, like the individual organs in a body. Although Talal Asad (1973: 103–118) has noted that structural-functionalist assertions in British Africa functioned themselves as legitimations for indirect rule, the theoretical frame was also one strand of the growing hegemony of ethnographic liberalism. (James Clifford's useful term denotes a "set of roles and discursive possibilities" [1988: 78] through which ethnographers attempted to deal with their usually ambiguous roles both as advocates of particular groups and as citizens of colonizing states.)

American cultural anthropology focused largely on the Americas and the

Pacific until after World War II, and its primary early twentieth-century concern was the documentation of vanishing Native American cultures and languages. American extermination or forced relocation of Native American groups prevented the extensive use of the structuralist-functionalist frame. American anthropologists tended, instead, to practice "salvage ethnography"—the collection of any and all information with a heavy emphasis on vanishing languages. This American emphasis on culture (mental baggage)—rather than society (observable, patterned behavior)—was fueled also by contemporary American psychology's high status and conservative, especially racist presuppositions and applications. Liberal American anthropologists were, then, doubly inclined toward the psychological arena (Rosenberg 1982; Stocking 1982: 200 ff.)—thus the "culture and personality" theoretical leanings of the two best-known women anthropologists of the early twentieth century.

Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict were students of Franz Boas, the notable German-born Columbia University anthropologist. Given their great fame and at least Mead's highly popular didactic writings on the cross-cultural malleability of "natural" sex roles, one would assume that women have been prominent in American anthropology and that anthropology has been a progressive force in providing empirical fodder for arguments in favor of gender equity. In fact, despite the admiration and envy of feminists in other fields, women have historically done poorly in anthropology departments: Mead never held an official departmental position, Benedict was passed over as chair for a man when Boas retired, and Elsie Clews Parsons achieved her influence through the use of an independent fortune to finance her own and others' field trips and publications.[4] In more recent years, studies have documented female anthropologists' significantly lower academic status (Sanjek 1982). Finally, not until the 1970s did some anthropologists begin to approach women's and men's differing experiences as topics on their own terms. Most of the notable theoretical movements of the 1920s through the 1960s—and particularly those bearing on topics of direct relevance to women's status, such as kinship and marriage or the sexual division of labor—ignored or naturalized sexual difference. Structural-functionalist work on kinship in Africa, for example, assumed natural male dominance in its considerations of kinship and marriage patterns, while the linguistics-inspired kinship analyses of the 1960s generally ignored sexual difference altogether. So great was prefeminist insensitivity that Ward Goodenough, a well-respected kinship theorist, could write approvingly of a Trukese man's beating of his daughter: "A good hard jolt was just what she deserved" (1965: 12). (Change has not come smoothly. As late as 1985, a former male colleague would assure me that the anthropology of gender was "just trivial me-tooism.")

Nevertheless, prefeminist anthropology was not like so many other

branches of knowledge, such as literary criticism, which simply represented a largely male universe. Although one could—and many did—claim that few women had been important novelists or poets, it was much more difficult to represent functioning societies without female inhabitants. Similarly, ape and monkey populations are one-half female, as are prehistoric burials. It is for this reason that feminist anthropologists had little difficulty in switching early on from the anthropology of women to that of gender as their research focus. Prefeminist ethnographers often provided rich ethnographic information on gender. Oftentimes, the woman in husband-wife teams specialized in "women's affairs," and such information was woven, anonymously, into the ethnographic text. Other wives wrote independent, insightful analyses of female worlds in a variety of third-world contexts: Mary Smith on the life of Baba, a Hausa woman in Karo (1981); Elizabeth Fernea (1969) on village women in Iraq; Margery Wolf (1968) on peasant women in Taiwan; Marilyn Strathern (1972) on the Mount Hagen women of Papua New Guinea. In many cases, information in such work has been reinterpreted by subsequent generations of scholars. E. E. Evans-Pritchard, for example, whose 1940s work on the Nuer of then Anglo-Egyptian Sudan has the classic status of Malinowski's writings, overtly states that Nuer family life is characterized by the "unchallenged authority of the husband in the home" (1951: 133). But Evans-Pritchard also provides extraordinary vignettes of observed behavior which allow us to argue for modifications in that presumption:

> [S]hould she [a Nuer wife] in a quarrel with her husband disfigure him—knock a tooth out, for example—her father must pay him compensation. I have myself on two occasions seen a father pay a heifer to his son-in-law to atone for insults hurled at the husband's head by his wife when irritated by accusations of adultery. (1951: 104)

As I have observed elsewhere,

> [P]roprietary rights lose much of their powerful "ownership" connotation when we note that in this case, Nuer husband might say to his wife, "I have rights in you: if you insult me or knock my teeth out I can run to your father and make him pay me in cattle." (1979: 630)

Thus it was that feminist anthropologists, despite having been trained in a discipline literally saturated with gender, had the feeling of discovering the topic for the first time. They—we—strapped on the wide variety of theoretical oxygen tanks available, took deep breaths, and plunged in.

WRITING GENDER INTO ANTHROPOLOGY

These new feminist visions of anthropology's gendered seas were focused through both exogenous—popular cultural—and endogenous—professional—lenses. Two mid-1970s anthologies, Rayna Rapp Reiter's *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (1975) and Michelle Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere's *Women, Culture, and Society* (1974), responded to professional and public interest in bringing together much of this new work. These two volumes functioned as the "bibles" of feminist anthropology for the ensuing decade.[5]

As I have noted, American anthropology's edificatory tradition and second-wave feminism's penchant for fresh questioning led feminist anthropologists to problematize sexual relations to degrees unknown since the turn of the century. Physical anthropologists and zoologists challenged the dominant "Man the Hunter" model, which posited analogies between male-dominant African savanna baboons and the evolution of male-dominant human societies, and heralded cooperative male hunting as the key spur to human evolution. Thelma Rowell (1972), Sally Slocum (1975), and others pointed out, making use of already available information, that gendered primate social behavior varies greatly—and in any case, baboons are monkeys and are thus far more genetically distant from humans than are apes like chimpanzees, gorillas, and orangutans. Apes' social behavior, although various, evinces less visible male-female and intra-male stratification. Feminists also noted that in apotheosizing male hunting as the early human activity par excellence, "man-the-hunter" theorists ignored key evidence from contemporary hunting and gathering, or foraging, societies: women do some hunting, and female-gathered foods account for more than half and at times nearly all of what is eaten. (Unfortunately, these findings have had little effect on popular culture models of early human life, such as the still-ubiquitous caveman [*sic*] cartoons.)

Primatology and physical anthropology have been broadly influenced by the 1970s feminist critiques. Studies of gendered social behavior of primates in the wild, once the realm of projections of universal male rule, are now self-consciously careful to note variations between and within species. As well, primate studies have evolved to consider "primates in nature" (the title of Alison Richard's 1985 volume)—to see nonhuman primates less as Rorschach blots for human social and political concerns and more as animals existing and reproducing in a variety of floral and faunal environments.

The "woman-the-gatherer" challenge to the man-the-hunter model inspired Nancy Tanner and Adrienne Zihlman's (1976, 1978) female-focused model of human evolution. Turning man the hunter on its head, Tanner and Zihlman posited, for example, the key importance of gathered foodstuffs and thus the existence of "lost" female tools—fiber carrying nets and baskets which, unlike stone implements, would not fossilize. This model in turn stimulated consideration of food-sharing rather than hunting as a key spur to human evolution, and microwear studies on fossilized prehuman and human teeth to determine proportions of meat and plant foods in prehistoric diets.[6]

Feminists also attempted to review and reconsider gendered social rela-

tions in prehistoric state societies. Many made use of Engels's presumption that the "world-historic defeat of the female sex" coincided with the rise of private property and the state. Some, such as Eleanor Leacock (1981), used ethnohistorical evidence to argue for pre-Western contact and pre-state egalitarian societies. Others, such as Rayna Rapp (1977), concentrated on using theories of pre-state and state gender relations to rethink the meaning of kinship and its interrelations with differing economies and polities. In general, though, archeologists were slow to respond to the feminist challenge, and this lack of response stultified developments in both fields (see chaps. 2 and 3, this volume). At the same time, popular culture abhorring a vacuum, nonanthropologist feminist writers throughout the 1970s and 1980s were producing volume after volume of inferential histories of gendered humankind, many positing prior matriarchies. From Elizabeth Gould Davis's *The First Sex* (1971) to Elaine Morgan's *The Descent of Woman* (1972), these popular works merged with others recommending the "return" to Goddess worship or heralding the coming of a new "woman's era" of nurturance and nonviolence. At first, feminist anthropologists addressed this issue in popular feminist culture. Paula Webster (1975) explored the notion of matriarchy sympathetically, noting its millenarian appeal and development through Victorian kinship debates. Joan Bamberger (1974) analyzed South American Indian myths of prior matriarchy as legitimations of male rule. More recently, however, with both increasing specialization in feminist scholarship and the institutionalization of radical or cultural feminism as a counterculture, the gap between feminist anthropological knowledge and some popular feminist culture has grown. I will explore this issue, below.

Early social-cultural feminist anthropologists responded enthusiastically to the challenge of rewriting anthropology as if gender really mattered. One of their first and most important tasks was the reconsideration of entire subdisciplines in the light of feminist insights. Jane Collier's key 1974 piece on political anthropology, for example, redrew that discipline's map to include women's kinship struggles, which are concerned, after all, with the distribution of whatever domestic power is available to women and often also entail female influences on male public political actions. Louise Lamphere (1974) surveyed a wide variety of societies to consider the public political ramifications of women's cooperative and conflictual networks, and Sylvia Yanagisako (1979) wrote compellingly of the anthropological tradition of dichotomizing "male" public kinship and "female" domestic kinship—and, of course, of providing only "thin descriptions" of the latter. A number of feminist ethnographers, among them Pamela Constantinides (1979) considered women's strategic use of institutions and roles within organized religions in order to gain power, autonomy, or wealth.

Some feminist anthropologists of this period did restudies of populations well-known through earlier work. Annette Weiner (1976), for example, re-

turned to Malinowski's Trobriand Islands to consider women's lives in great detail. Jane Goodale's 1980 ethnography of the Tiwi of Melville Island (Melanesia), earlier studied by C. W. M. Hart and Arnold Pilling (1960), was perhaps the most instructive of these works. Hart and Pilling had been fascinated by men's narratives of strategic acquisition of young wives as a form of property and had been uninterested in women's perspectives. Goodale discovered that Tiwi kinship was enormously complex, but that the key affinal relationship was *ambrinua*, the label by which son-in-law and mother-in-law referred to one another. These Tiwi mothers-in-law, however, usually contracted an ambrinua relationship as young adolescents. Each girl's ambrinua would then labor lifelong for her and eventually be allowed to marry her daughter. An older woman, far from being a "toothless old hag" (Hart and Pilling 1960: 14), held considerable power and prestige among the Tiwi.

Other feminist ethnographers studied third-world peasant populations, overturning in the process anthropological peasant studies' tendency to focus on the labor, perceptions, and decision making of only male householders and to assume that peasant women's activities and thoughts belonged to a "timeless" domestic realm. Anna Rubbo (1975) documented rural Colombian women's ability to manage small subsistence farms without the assistance of adult men. With capital penetration and development, however, and the state's introduction of Green Revolution seeds and pesticides, women lost their farming autonomy and were forced into urban migration as large landowners increased their holdings and turned to factory farming. Susan Brown (1975) considered poor women's and men's lives in the Dominican Republic and noted the political-economic realities behind the common, and commonly decried, pattern of female serial monogamy. Poor women strategically allied with and broke with poor men, from whom they could receive little financial support, while relying on female kin and older children to form networks of economic cooperation for survival.

In the process of rewriting subdisciplines and ethnographies, feminist anthropologists were also rewriting theory. Collier's and Lamphere's emphasis on the interpenetrating dynamic of kinship and politics is in part an improvement on Radcliffe-Brown. Yanagisako's focus on the symbolic realm in kinship is a feminist revision of the cultural approach to kinship elaborated by David Schneider. Rubbo and Brown, like many feminist anthropologists since, made use of a transformed Marxism. The influential essays of Michelle Rosaldo, Nancy Chodorow, and Sherry Ortner, as we shall see, reflected Weberian, Freudian, and Levi-Straussian frameworks, respectively. And the maverick Gayle Rubin (1975), whose coinage the "sex-gender system" has greatly influenced subsequent work on sexuality, employed a wild bricolage of reoriented Freud, Marx, Lévi-Strauss, and Lacan.

Whatever theoretical frame they worked within, however, feminist

anthropologists were forced to deal with a key contradiction between their feminist conviction that male dominance over females, in any cultural setting, was fundamentally illegitimate, and the reigning notions of what would turn out to be the last gasp of ethnographic liberalism.

ETHNOGRAPHIC LIBERALISM AND THE FEMINIST CONUNDRUM

By and large, anthropologists in the mid-twentieth century heyday of ethnographic work tended to function as advocates for "their" groups, making sense (Western sense) of and justifying their "exotic" lifeways—right up to the boundaries of state power. Whether that authority was colonial (most often) or that of an independent capitalist or (rarely) communist state, it behooved the ethnographer who wished to be able to return to avoid criticism of government structures and policies. As well, anthropologists tended, in the great twentieth-century division of the pie of knowledge into lucrative disciplinary, professional, and departmental slices, to lay claim to social organization *beneath* state structures. Thus the liberal ideology of cultural relativism could decree that anthropologists justify cross-cousin marriage, ritual scarification, belief in witchcraft, or separate spheres of exchange but not protest against colonial domination, state-enforced economic and racial stratification, or the international economic pressures (such as austerity plans imposed by the International Monetary Fund) that may have been directly related to the continued operation of these customs. Thus the proliferation of liberal cultural relativist (and sexist) textbook titles in the 1960s and early 1970s: *Every Man His Way* (1968), *Man Makes Sense* (1970), *Man's Many Ways* (1973).

Feminist anthropologists in this period, then, were faced with a conundrum: how could we analyze critically instances of male domination and oppression in precisely those societies whose customs anthropology was traditionally pledged to advocate? I have discerned at least six separate modes of solving the conundrum, although of course many writers in practice combined two or more arguments. What follows, then, is a somewhat schematized typology of a complex two decades of feminist anthropological theorizing.

The first, and most traditional, response is to argue that women in a particular society actually enjoy a less onerous life or higher status—higher than one might have expected or higher than contemporary Western women. Margaret Mead, of course, is most well known for her 1928 argument that Samoan adolescent girls did not experience the anxieties and uncertainties of their American counterparts due to very different cultural constructions of sexuality, adulthood, and parenthood. Elizabeth Fernea, in her 1969 autobiographical ethnography *Guests of the Sheik*, argued that seclusion allowed village Iraqi women the opportunities to enjoy one another's company, offer

genuine emotional support, and, most important, to attain status through specialization as religious or medical professionals, as men had to avoid intimate contact with unrelated secluded women. Susan Carol Rogers argued that women in peasant societies worldwide, "actually wield considerable amounts of power," while both sexes perpetrate "the myth of male dominance" (1975: 752). Annette Weiner, in her 1976 restudy of the Trobriand Islanders, argued that Trobriand women held high symbolic status as reproducers of social meaning. I discovered—in a 1979 review of the West African ethnographies cited by Ward Goodenough as underwriting a presumption of women's universal lower status—that the original (and all male but one) writers had documented extraordinary instances of female sexual autonomy, wives' rights to husbands' labor and sexual services, and women's economic parity (and sometimes superiority) to men.

Making the "native women better off" argument afforded feminist anthropologists a number of advantages. It fit well with the advocacy stance of ethnographic liberalism, thus neatly solving the feminist conundrum. It functioned to *epater* complacent Westerners, since one major legitimation of Western imperialism, after all, had been that "they are brutish to their women." There have been, as well, numerous third-world complaints about uninformed Western feminist deprecation of non-Western gendered practices. And finally, depending on our agreed-upon standards for cross-cultural comparison, to argue that women in a particular population experienced certain freedoms or status unavailable to specific groups of Western women was sometimes simply to tell the truth.

Other feminist anthropologists returned to the Marxist evolutionist model Engels had put forward in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884). This work had key salience in the early 1970s for several reasons. First was the renascence of American Marxist thought after the period of McCarthyite censorship. Anthropologists such as Eric Wolf and Sidney Mintz were particularly active as writers and teachers in this era, and concern over the Vietnam War alerted many young anthropologists to the need for a radical rethinking of their theoretical premises. Returning to Marx led second-wave feminists to the text on which he and Engels worked together and that Engels had finished after Marx's death in 1883. Second, Marx and Engels relied on the extensive research and writing of a man who has been named the first American anthropologist, Lewis Henry Morgan. Morgan, a railroad lawyer in New York, became fascinated first by Seneca Indian life and then, more generally, by human kinship labeling systems around the world. Good Victorian that he was, Morgan linked differing terminology systems to evolutionary stages of humankind. Marx and Engels associated these kin terminology/social-level stages to particular modes of production, and to an originally egalitarian social structure that tipped to male dominance with the emergence of private property and institutionalized social stratification

(see Trautman 1987: 252 ff.). Feminist anthropologists, who were living in the midst of revitalized debates in kinship theory, found provocative this systematic linkage of kinship and economy. Literally, the feminist slogan "the personal is political" came alive in theory.

Finally, Engels was a singularly attractive thinker to second-wave feminists, a modern-sounding advocate of women's rights who believed strongly in the arrival, with socialist revolution, not only of women's equal rights but of a new form of egalitarian romantic love:

> What we can now conjecture about the way in which sexual relations will be ordered after the impending overthrow of capitalist production is mainly of a negative character, limited for the most part to what will disappear. But what will there be new? That will be answered when a new generation has grown up: a generation of men who never in their lives have known what it is to buy a woman's surrender with money or any other social instrument of power; a generation of women who have never known what it is to give themselves to a man from any other considerations than real love or to refuse to give themselves to their lover from fear of the economic consequences. When these people are in the world, they will care precious little what anybody today thinks they ought to do; they will make their own practice and their corresponding public opinion about the practice of each individual—and that will be the end of it. (1972 [1884]: 145)

Several feminist anthropologists, most notably Karen Sacks (1975), returned to Engels's model to test and refine it. Sacks and Eleanor Leacock, who wrote the preface for a 1972 edition of *Origins*, made strong claims for sexually egalitarian foraging and early horticultural societies which then moved to male dominance with increasing societal stratification and the accompanying privatization of kinship. While this theoretical framework was explicitly used almost entirely by scholars concerned with ethnohistorical records of prehistoric state societies (see chap. 3, this volume), it had wide-ranging effects on feminist anthropologists in general, particularly those who were concerned with the impact of colonialism on third-world populations, which often involved the rapid imposition of state structures on nonstate societies. In contradiction to the reigning Western ideology that colonial rule had, without exception, extended theretofore unknown rights and privileges to women, these scholars asserted that, whether the colonizer-colonized relationship was the Spanish among the sixteenth-century Inca, the Quakers among the eighteenth-century Seneca, or the French among the twentieth-century Baule of the Ivory Coast, such rule had clearly worsened women's status and made their lives more onerous (see Etienne and Leacock 1980). Janet Siskind's powerfully evocative ethnography of the Sharanahua Indians of Peru tellingly contrasts the carefree and socially satisfying lives of Indian women in the forest both to *mestizas* in the pioneer town of Esperanza and to

Indian women who slept with Peruvian men and in so doing experienced the misogynous brutality of the colonizer for the first time (1973: 169–189).

Other feminist anthropologists, less influenced by Marxism and more interested in symbolic structures, took different tacks. Sherry Ortner, in a tour-de-force 1974 rereading of Lévi-Strauss's structural dichotomization of human thought into "raw" and "cooked" categories, asserted that, worldwide, females were thought to be natural—close to the earth, timeless, unthinking, inferior, untouched by human creativity—whereas males were cultural—transcending earthly bounds, living in history, intelligent and creative, superior and representing humanness. Ortner's formulation, which seemed to order and explain so much in contemporary sexist ideologies of women's inferiority, had widespread influence among feminists across many disciplines.

Michelle Rosaldo (1974) also posited a single key explanation for women's lower status, but, as would befit a scholar more influenced by Weber and British anthropologist Meyer Fortes than by Lévi-Strauss, hers was both symbolic and institutional, and varied across culture and across time. Thus, whereas for Ortner female:nature, male:culture was a human universal, Rosaldo assumed that her key, and thus women's lower status, would be more or less present in different societies. Rosaldo's focus was the relative separation of domestic and public domains, the world of household, reproduction, and maintenance of children and adults, and the world of extra-household labor, citizenship, public culture, and the state. Rosaldo argued that societies with very rigid public-domestic distinctions, such as Islamic societies that practice seclusion, or prerevolutionary China, or Victorian Europe and the United States, would devalue and disempower private spheres and thus the women with whom they were associated. Feminists concerned with the devalued, powerless, and yet crucially responsible role of the Western housewife found Rosaldo's formulation intriguing. Historical work on the relative divisions between household and public life in Western history, and women's roles in both realms, grew over the 1970s and 1980s.

Nancy Chodorow (1978) also offered a key explanation for women's lower status worldwide. Using a revised Freudian logic, she argued that female childrearing led to male resentment of female authority, weak female ego boundaries, and thus the tendency to male rule.

Finally, two groups of feminist anthropologists eschewed both Marxist evolutionism and the grand-theoretical search for key explanations of women's lower status. In the tradition of Weber's call for social-scientific *Verstehen*, the sympathetic entrance into the cultural worlds of others, some ethnographers wrote as closely as possible from inside the minds of their female informants—without, however, proffering larger theoretical points concerning women's status. Margery Wolf (1974) on village women in

Taiwan, Lois Paul (1974) on Guatemalan peasant women, and Liza Dalby (1983) on geisha represent this trend. Some feminist anthropologists, such as Penny Brown (1981) and Nicole-Claude Mathieu (1978), have argued that cross-cultural comparisons of women's status are impossible in any event, the arrogant imposition of philistine Western grids on deeply divergent cultural understandings.

The second group of ethnographers, many of whom were British or from commonwealth states, were strongly influenced by Marxist theory but did not use Marx and Engels for evolutionist grand theorizing. Instead, they focused closely on women's lives in particular groups and on seeing those lives in historical and political-economic context. Two edited collections, Patricia Caplan and Janet Bujra's *Women United, Women Divided* (1979) and Kate Young et al.'s *Of Marriage and the Market* (1981), among many other works, exemplify this trend in scholarship. The thread uniting the former collection is the examination of material conditions that may or may not lead to solidarity among particular populations of women in particular cultural contexts. The latter volume combined theoretical overview pieces, such as Diane Elson and Ruth Pearson's (1981) summation of first- and third-world women's intersection with the internationalization of factory production, with ethnographic articles linking, for example, the politics of domestic budgeting in Britain with larger political-economic shifts (Whitehead 1981). Both volumes actively speak to feminist scholarly concerns outside anthropology. The case study analyses of contingent women's solidarity parallel work among feminist labor historians and sociologists on women's resistance vs. women's consent in the workplace. *Of Marriage and the Market*'s contributors share the Marxist-theoretical frame of many other social scientists and historians in their efforts to describe women's varying household and extra-household roles in the evolving global economy.

Despite this interdisciplinary linkage, studies in this vein have not had as much influence on feminist thought as a whole as have others, for a number of reasons. First, although they narrate women's lives in other societies, they do so fundamentally in terms of economic and political contexts. That is, in order to understand Mathare Valley shantytown women's lives (Nelson 1979), one has to understand the political-economic process of the development of shantytowns in third-world states, prevalent kinship structures, and Kenyan state policies. Amassing this economic and institutional knowledge in preparation for the *Verstehen* moment is a far cry from plunging into Nisa's first-person narrative of her thoughts and emotions surrounding life passages (Shostak 1981). Second, Western feminist thought has moved progressively away from economic-historical considerations over the past decade and toward universalizing psychologies, a tendency compounded by Americans' historical penchant for psychologizing and related reluctance to think economically about social processes. Finally, these studies take a stance critical of

all—not only male-female—stratification. Thus feminists uncomfortable with critiques of prior Western colonial or current postcolonial policies, of third-world state corruption, or even of class and race stratification in any state have difficulties with work in this vein. I once faced a minor student rebellion in a Yale anthropology seminar: the young women objected to two *Women United, Women Divided* ethnographers' critical analyses of the elite, class-maintaining activities of Brahmin women in Tamil Nadu (Caplan 1979) and of upper-status Creole women in Sierra Leone (Cohen 1979). In an interesting illustration of class interests *uber alles*, the students felt that women like their own mothers were being insulted.

Within the decade of the 1970s, many of these approaches to the feminist conundrum began to appear less satisfactory to anthropologists. Evolutionist Marxist explanations were hampered in two ways. First, they employed the hoary Victorian anthropological comparative method: considering contemporary cultures as though they were living history. Since all societies exist inside the same historical stream, have experienced the same number of years in which to alter, this perspective is both illogical and subtly deprecating to those considered less evolved, even when "less evolved" is interpreted as "better for women." Burgeoning interest in the arrogance of the West's representations of the rest, of the power dynamics of naming "others," enhanced this critical perspective. Second, the ethnographic record divulges too many counterexamples to the Marx-Engels model of sexually egalitarian small-scale societies. Some North American Native American populations such as the Seneca and the Pueblos seem to have been characterized historically by relatively high female status as evidenced by female political influence or autonomous marital decision-making (Brown 1975; Benedict 1934: 73–76). Others, such as the Plains Indians, who had less-complex, less-statelike social structures, were characterized by much lower status for women. Women in some South American horticultural groups (the Yanomama, the Mundurucu) experienced the threat of gang rape.[7] And women's lives in many Papua New Guinea societies involve much more arduous labor than do men's, while they are culturally characterized as distinctly inferior beings. Women among the Gainj, for example, even engage in ritualized revenge suicide to escape their onerous, unsatisfactory lives and to haunt abusive husbands—a custom with striking parallels to prerevolutionary China (Johnson 1981). Simply too many "primitive" women have been recorded as experiencing extreme exploitation and oppression at the hands of men in their own societies to lend credence to the argument that Western contact, colonialism, or capital penetration are alone responsible for all inegalitarian gender relations in foraging and horticultural societies. As Rapp points out, we now know that "changes brought about by colonialism, or, later, capitalist productive relations, are not automatically detrimental to women" (1979: 505).

Similarly, Ortner's compelling vision of women's universal symbolic association with inferior nature loses focus when we consider clear Western counterexamples: the Victorian "angel on the hearth" who enabled base men to transcend the contamination of their own brutish natures through contact with the "angel"'s spiritual, artistic capacities. Or there is the prevalent American myth of the cowboy civilized by the schoolmarm, classically embodied in a "primitive" third-world landscape in the film *African Queen* (Rogers 1978: 134). The contributors to Carol MacCormack and Marilyn Strathern's response to Ortner, *Nature, Culture and Gender* (1980), provided two other counterarguments. They noted first, in a number of separate ethnographic essays, that not only is the association nature:culture to female:male not universal, but that nature/culture and female/male are not even necessarily dichotomous pairs in non-Western cultures. Further, Maurice and Jean Bloch and L. Jordanova established the ambiguous, highly politically charged history of the concepts of nature, culture, and gender in the late eighteenth century. Far from being Western symbolic givens, these constructions were forged in the Enlightenment crucible as categories of challenge.[8]

Rosaldo's dichotimization of public and domestic spheres has also seemed less salient over time. Feminist historians have noted the ironies and ambiguities of separate spheres rhetoric in nineteenth-century Europe and the United States. Many woman movement activists, after all, made use of domestic, feminine, "moral motherhood" rhetoric to argue for women's rights to enter the public sphere. Jane Addams's coinage of "social housekeeping" is a case in point. As well, in class- and race-stratified societies, very separate spheres among one group may be quite permeable for others. Domesticated ladies coexisted with women miners and factory operatives—and street prostitutes. And of course for domestic servants, the largest group of employed women in Victorian Britain and the United States, household and workplace were profoundly interpenetrating institutions.[9]

Ruth Borker (1985) has also pointed out that the formulation domestic/public disguises a large number of separable phenomena—actual living spaces, specific social functions, personnel, linguistic categories. Rosaldo herself returned to her model in 1980 to interrogate her own assumptions and to link them to the heritage of dualistic nineteenth-century social science frameworks. Thus the domestic/public dichotomy has been demoted from a key explanatory factor to a research tool, a phenomenon that may exist in multiple forms with multiple meanings. Chodorow's dichotomizing Freudian model as well, although influential in feminist literary criticism, appeared to anthropologists similarly ahistorical and overly universalizing as the decade waned.

We are left, then, with the "native women better off," *Verstehen*, and historical Marxist perspectives as solutions to the feminist conundrum. Naomi Quinn, in a 1977 essay on anthropological studies of women's status, pointed

out that "status" is in actuality a portmanteau concept, encompassing at different times relative share in productive activities, control over resources, sexual autonomy, political power, and many other factors. Moreover, these differing phenomena are noncomparable: how much weight do we attach to absence of gang rape versus relative control over the food supply versus freedom to choose sexual and marital partners versus public political voice? Thus the positive or negative evaluation of women's lives elsewhere will always be partial and selective. There are, of course, overarching grids of concrete, countable, material phenomena, such as the United Nations statistics on women's versus men's caloric intakes and expenditures, the relative presence of forms of violence against women, specific state policies securing or hindering women's rights, and so on. But such figures are necessarily crude, subject to reporting bias and deliberate state obfuscation. Although aggregate figures can be used to brush large strokes—for example, worldwide, women work harder than men for less reward—we can make only partial, phenomenon-by-phenomenon comparisons among societies on this basis, and these comparisons do not at all attend to the varying ways in which women themselves perceive their situations.[10] The Strathern-Weiner debate is a case in point. As well as making claims concerning Trobriand women's high status, Weiner took Marilyn Strathern to task for not having attended properly to Mount Hagen women's symbolic trading and its meanings for women's (high) status (1976: 13). Strathern replied that although Mount Hagen women, like Trobriand women, did have their own symbolic trading networks, such trading simply did not bear the cultural meanings Weiner claimed for the Trobriands: "What it means to be a woman in this or that situation must rest to some extent on the cultural logic by which gender is constructed" (Strathern 1981: 683). One cannot, in other words, simply read out from institutions to their cultural constructions.

In the end (excluding the special problems of feminist physical anthropology and archeology), the careful attempt to discern the meanings of gender in other cultural worlds and the bringing together of ethnographic, historical, and political-economic knowledge of particular populations seem the most fruitful modes of feminist anthropological practice. But we are now practicing anthropology in a strikingly changed political, social, and scholarly climate. The era of ethnographic liberalism, and thus of the very raison d'être of the feminist conundrum, has ended. It is to the shifts of the 1970s and 1980s that I now turn.

FEMINIST ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE POSTMODERN ERA

The second-wave American feminist movement was almost immediately challenged by backlash. No sooner were reproductive rights, entry into formerly male jobs, rights to lesbian expression, male sharing of housework

and childcare, or protest against violence against women established as principles than they were attacked as unwarranted—even immoral—attempts at social engineering, even as improper tinkering with human nature. These attacks, and their institutionalized forms, such as Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum and the Moral Majority, were directly connected to a larger "new conservatism" in the United States. New Right activism, incorporating antifeminism, pro-United States imperialism, and anti-civil-rights and gay-rights stances, culminated in Ronald Reagan's 1980 presidential election and has had considerable influence on national political power throughout the decade.[11] Parallel developments took place across the Atlantic. Margaret Thatcher took power in the United Kingdom in 1979, and the governments of France, West Germany, Italy, and Spain (although some were nominally socialist) also took rightward turns.

The American rightward shift, coupled with demographic fluctuations and the Reagan administration's cutoff of many social programs, had immediate effects on American colleges and universities. Social science (excluding economics) and liberal arts programs lost student enrollments to business majors and to professional schools as undergraduates and graduates responded to economic insecurity and rightward shift through attempts to gain "practical" training. Anthropology departments in particular experienced the loss of questing students seeking to understand the lives of third-world populations and the effects of American and other imperialisms on those lives. At the same time, rightward shift and funding crises led anthropology departments to focus on staffing "traditional" fields and topics, and thus to neglect feminist, Marxist, and American-focused research.

Feminism (and Marxism, but that is another story)[12] nevertheless established itself in the American academy, having particular influence in literature and history departments but also through the maintenance of more than four hundred women's studies programs nationwide. Academic feminists, however, almost at once were forced to grapple with the question of "difference"—the multiple racial, ethnic, class, sexual, age, regional, and national identities of women—as they noted their own restricted demographic representation and research interests. Much feminist intellectual work of the two decades would attempt to redress this imbalance, whether through research focused on working-class, nonwhite, third-world, or lesbian women or through efforts to alter feminist academic personnel through affirmative-action hiring and the recruitment of minority and working-class (though not necessarily female) students.

These feminist academic efforts, however, took place in a rapidly altering intellectual environment, one we can only characterize as schizmogenetic—moving decisively in opposing directions. On the one hand, scholars of many sorts made renewed claims that the human world was characterized by order and regularities, and asserted the primacy of science—or the scientific status

of non-hard-science disciplines. On the other hand, scholars of other stripes made revised arguments for attention to history rather than structure, for the recognition of short-term, nonrecurrent historical regularities or of sheer randomness in human affairs.[13] This historical frame was often tied to a dethroning of sciences' claims to superordinate status to which all other disciplines should be relativized. Critics instead viewed science as intrinsically socially constructed: as expressing, in differing historical eras, reigning notions of proper human social life in its representations of both human and nonhuman worlds.

Gathering in the "science and order" corner in the 1970s were a number of strange intellectual bedfellows. Lévi-Straussian structuralism had percolated outward across disciplines (Ehrmann 1970) and was taken up and fused with Marxism. As practiced particularly by Louis Althusser (1969, 1971), structuralist Marxism promised to set Marxist analysis once again upon a scientific footing, to allow the clear taxonomy of societies across time and space by mode of production, and to incorporate successfully theories of both state and ideological functioning within ongoing capitalist economies. Although structuralist Marxism was strongly represented in anthropology by scholars of Africa, such as Bloch (1984, 1985) and Meillassoux (1981), few feminist anthropologists (one exception was Brigid O'Laughlin's 1974 work on the Mbum) made use of its intellectual framework.

Structuralism had a very strong influence on anthropology, however, in terms of the study of symbolic systems. We have seen the feminist reflection of this trend in Sherry Ortner's work. As well, a different brand of structuralism entered anthropology via structuralist linguistics and stimulated anti-Lévi-Straussian, highly empirical work on the linguistic ordering of native conceptions of the natural world, of kinship, law, health, and disease. This school, labeled cognitive anthropology by its practitioners, claimed status as a "formal science" offering "complete, accurate descriptions of particular cognitive systems" (Tyler 1969: 14). More recently, anthropologists interested in cognition have taken a less scientistic and universalizing tack and have joined with cognitive psychologists to consider varying human constructions of "softer," more emotion-laden (from a Western perspective) institutions such as marriage. Not coincidentally, explicitly feminist work looking at the gendered character of cognition has come to the fore in this latter period (see Holland and Quinn 1987). And Catherine Lutz's pioneering work on emotion on Ifaluk provides a feminist meta-commentary in its edificatory concluding point: we in the West falsely universalize our related set of dichotomies, thought/emotion and male/female. Such divisions do not obtain on Ifaluk yet are a part of an overarching ideology that constrains both our research on gender and our efforts to bring about social change (Lutz 1988).

The assertion of widespread structural regularities across time and space

also arose in biology and physical anthropology with the founding of "sociobiology." Entomologist E. O. Wilson, in the 1975 volume of that name, asserted that all living beings operate in some sense intentionally in order to maximize reproduction of their own genetic material. Thus all patterned behavior, Wilson argued, from beehives to Bauhaus, can be explained in terms of reproductive strategies.

Wilson's notorious chapter 27 applied sociobiological reasoning to human populations with results whose absurdity was quickly noted. Using already discredited "man-the-hunter" modeling and a clearly conservative political philosophy, Wilson asserted the genetic basis for racial or other IQ differences, for "natural" male dominance and "natural" class stratification.[14] Later sociobiologists would both make fewer claims about the functioning of human societies and would attempt to set the school up on a scientific basis. Some feminists became interested in revising sociobiology through attending to its neglect of the agency of female animals. These writers developed descriptions of female reproductive strategies and studied female primates with the presumption that they would display their own cooperative and competitive behavior (Hrdy 1981; and chap. 5, this volume).

During the same decades, the "history and critique of science" corner was also increasingly populated. There was a rediscovery of the refugee Marxists of the Frankfurt School, who had labored to use phenomenological insights on the social construction of knowledge to extend Marx's notions of culture and ideology (see Jay 1973). Previously, sociologists Erving Goffman (1959), Aaron Cicourel (1964, 1974), Harold Garfinkel (1967), and others also made use of phenomenology to found symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology, schools of thought focusing on an antipositivist analysis of the effects of varying social contexts—intimidating questionnaires administered to poor people by middle-class people, for example—on the knowledge gathered within them. Work in anthropological sociolinguistics paralleled these schools in sociology through its emphasis on communicative contexts—courtroom, classroom, streetcorner—and the importance of individuals' race, class, and gender statuses in both constraining and enabling their speech strategies (see chap. 4, this volume).

Social scientists were also greatly influenced by historian of science Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1970). Kuhn argued against official Whig histories of science, pointing out that in a series of key cases knowledge grew not through uncontroversial addition to accepted models, but through the clash of entirely opposed paradigms and the final triumph of one. Although Kuhn did not intend his work to apply to social science, his historical point—that received wisdom is the result of conflict among competing practitioners—was widely appreciated and extended the sociology-of-knowledge tradition begun in the work of Karl Mannheim (1936).

Critics of sociobiology and of other reductionists (such as the "IQ is genetic" school) used arguments from the sociology of knowledge, Marxism, and phenomenology to point out that these scholars were simply seeking to lay claim to the mantle of science for the legitimation of the status quo. Stephen Jay Gould and others documented the Western history of scientific "proof" of the inferiority of racial others, women, and the poor, and thus of the inherently ideological character of scientific practice.

Historian E. P. Thompson, whose 1963 volume *The Making of the English Working Class* had set the framework for the new "from the bottom up" cultural history, also joined the antistructuralist fray. Thompson (1978) and others argued that Althusserian structuralist Marxism allowed for neither the vagaries of historical change nor the role of human agency in effecting that change. Culture, in the structuralist vision, reduced to the "ideological state apparatus" and could not accommodate the contestation over meaning so evident in the history—particularly the labor history—of Western capitalist states and their colonies. Feminist historians found the cultural historical frame congenial, as it allowed (but had not been used for) the inclusion of differing and sometimes contesting women's perceptions of events and institutions. Historians of black Americans and other racial/ethnic populations, as well as those newly concerned with the histories of homosexual and heterosexual expression, also joined under the general cultural-history rubric.

Although structural Marxism had strongly affected anthropological work on Africa, other anthropological Marxist traditions continued throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The Latin American and Caribbean research of Eric Wolf and Sidney Mintz, in its concern with the perceptions and contestative actions of peasant populations experiencing colonialism and capitalist penetration, influenced a generation of anthropologists working in all areas of the globe. This trend, in conjunction with a renascent urban anthropology, encouraged radical studies of third world development. Feminist anthropologists, especially those working in Latin America, joined with feminist historians and other social scientists to create a massive and contentious field focused on "women and development" (see chaps. 7 and 8, this volume).

Radical and historical visions also influenced the framing of the discipline itself. Anthropologists began to look critically at the rise of anthropology as an auxiliary to British and other states' colonial ventures. Talal Asad's 1973 edited volume, *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, offered case studies of such complicit ethnography. More important, though, Asad and his contributors documented the distortions of vision involved in ignoring the phenomenology of anthropological knowledge production. The colonial encounter itself, the interaction between the powerful and the powerless, was the seemingly neutral communicative context through which anthropologists historically had gained visions of other cultures. In the United States, the 1972 anthology *Reinventing Anthropology* represented this historical and self-

reflexive trend. Contributors noted poor or absent work on Native Americans and black Americans, plumbed the history of American anthropology for positive and negative research traditions, and laid out radical research paths for the future.

Finally, Eric Wolf's monumental *Europe and the People Without History* (1982) attempts to set the specific histories of the peoples so often seen only in the timeless "ethnographic present"—the peasant and tribal peoples of the third and fourth worlds—in the context of European colonization, capital accumulation, the rise of global capitalism, and internationalization of labor. In focusing on the intimate historical interconnectedness of populations, on the fluctuating labels and self-identities of populations themselves, Wolf also argues strongly for anthropology's release from the "bounds of its own definitions" (1982: 18) into a Marxist perspective that reunites the sundered social sciences with history. None of the above works, however, really included gender analysis in its newly historical and self-reflexive considerations. A new generation of feminist scholars of empire (see chap. 1, this volume) has taken up this task.

Just as structuralism's sun was setting, however, a new set of intellectual tendencies, soon labeled poststructuralism, arose. Whereas structuralism originated in work in linguistics and folklore, spreading across disciplines via Lévi-Strauss's anthropology, poststructuralism was frankly literary from its inception. This was entirely appropriate, as poststructuralism's key claim was the supremacy not of social life, or even of language, but of texts. Poststructuralist writers (and here I am abridging mercilessly) tend to foreground textual art and to see all texts (narrative history, scientific reports, poems, novels, advertisements) fundamentally as more or less persuasive fictions. Many exciting insights have followed from this iconoclastic stance. Relations among differing texts are clearer to us, and this boundary-breaking function of poststructuralism has enabled feminists and antiracists, for example, to range widely across genres in redefining women's and minority writers' literature. They have also argued that "canonical texts"—those considered to be high art or key statements in Western civilization and thus most often taught—have been historically selected and reselected, in Foucauldian fashion, to enforce received wisdom and to legitimate the status quo. Thus "expanding the canon" to include texts by all women and racial minority and non-Western men challenges hegemonic ideas about which social groups have produced wisdom.

Outside literature per se, Hayden White's early (1978) *Tropics of Discourse*, which treated historical narratives as rhetorical art, had a major influence. Donald McClosky (1985) in economics and J. G. A. Pocock (1971) in political theory made analogous arguments about writing in their respective disciplines. And a similar school arose in anthropology, a group I label the ethnography-as-text school after a 1982 article of that title by George Marcus

and Dick Cushman. Ethnography-as-text writers, particularly the prolific James Clifford, focus away from specific human populations, away from the ethnographic experience, onto an analysis of ethnographic texts themselves.[15] Clifford (1983, 1988) and others were able to demonstrate the rhetorical strategies used by ethnographers to lend authorial privilege to texts claiming to describe the lifeways and cultural worlds of other human groups. We inscribe "fables of rapport," narratives describing the process through which we become accepted in another culture—narratives intended to convince the reader of our hard-earned expertise. We select and describe "common denominator people," individuals who symbolize "normal" understandings and actions among the "X." And we structure entire texts for specific effects—as allegories of lost paradise or of innately brutish human nature, for example.

Ethnography as text, then, has had a bracing, *epater l'ethnologiste* effect in anthropology, painting rude mustaches on some of our most sacred Mona Lisa texts. It is useful to remember that while we are attempting to convey with scientific accuracy the facts about a particular human group, we are also, if only behind our own backs, involved in constructing persuasive fictions for a particular, usually Western audience about some aspect of the meaning of human cultural difference. And ethnography-as-text writers tend to be very aware of anthropology's historic role in inscribing the lives of colonized or less-powerful others.

Clifford's work on the establishment of ethnographic liberalism and on the Western construction and exploitation of the notion of primitive art, the "restless power and desire of the modern West to collect the world" (1988: 196), attest to this concern. Ethnography-as-text writers, however, generally have had difficulties attending to gender in any context, whether as a category in the ethnographies they analyze or as a construct in the modern West. Indeed many ethnography-as-text writers find feminism itself problematic, deeming it, unlike their automatic anticolonialist perspective, to be a culture-bound ideology to be held at a distance and analyzed critically. Commentary on Margery Shostak's *Nisa* illustrates this point. Clifford asserts that "*Nisa* is a Western feminist allegory, part of the reinvention of the general category 'woman' in the 1970s and 1980s" (1986: 104). Marcus and Fischer allude to "Shostak's questions deriving from contemporary American feminism" (1986: 58), while Mary Pratt refers to "current Western conceptions of female solidarity and intimacy" in Shostak (1986: 45). Paul Rabinow, however, simply relies on synecdochic misidentification in his round declaration that "anthropological feminists work against an other cast as essentially different and violent" (1986: 257).

How can we understand the theoretical and political short-sightedness of these writers? Why do they insist on holding feminist perspectives at arm's length, insist on feminism's historical contingency, its status as a current

intellectual and political movement, while experiencing no difficulty in strongly reprobating, for all time, colonialist, racist mentalities? Imagine Marcus and Fischer referring, in the 1960s, to "Martin Luther King, Jr.'s questions deriving from contemporary American antiracism." Certainly one interpretation would point to the antifeminist backlash so ubiquitous in politics and scholarship in the 1980s. But the full answer, I believe, is more complex and ultimately much more interesting. The full answer engages with the problematics of the logic of poststructuralism itself.[16]

Poststructuralist arguments, by their very nature, attempt to destabilize received conceptions of science, order, society, and the self. Poststructuralism is antiscience, antitheory; it levels our distinctions among truth and falsehood, science and myth. It denies the existence of social order or real human selves, declaring the death of the subject. Poststructuralism entails, then, what Peter Dews (1987) terms a "logic of disintegration": it cannot affirm any truth or claim any political stance. It can only deconstruct.

Clifford recognizes the poststructuralist conundrum, which we can see is structurally parallel to the feminist conundrum, in his analysis of Edward Said's *Orientalism*. He identifies with Said's dilemma:

> Should criticism work to counter sets of culturally produced images such as those of Orientalism with more "authentic" or more "human" representations? Or if criticism must struggle against the procedures of representation itself, how is it to begin? . . . These are fundamental issues—inseparably political and epistemological—raised by Said's work. (1988: 259)

In other words, there is no place for any morally evaluative or politically committed stance within the disintegrating logic of poststructuralism. It is fundamentally nihilist and gives permission to what Perry Anderson terms "a finally unbridled subjectivity" (1983: 54). Ironically, given its sometime association with radical political stances, poststructuralism does not challenge the status quo in an increasingly retrograde era.[17]

Ethnography-as-text writers simply fail to subject their own deeply held representations to the same operations they perform on feminism. Uninterrogated convictions inevitably come in the back door. What we need, then, is an acknowledgment of poststructuralisms' deficiencies. It is really only a research stance, a set of tools for ground-breaking, perspective-altering work. But the intellectual frame within which the research is oriented, whether admitted or not, will derive from outside poststructuralism's closed system, will involve some means of coming to terms with the (culturally constructed, but nevertheless) actually existing material world. Thus some feminist scholars' new tendency to define "feminist theory" as a totality in literary poststructuralist terms both ignores all of material, social life (and the feminists who attend to such) and leaves out of the equation any means for justifying a feminist-theoretical stance.

Feminist poststructuralism, indeed, is part of a larger academic turf war, in which literary critics and others jostle for ownership of (no longer social or political) "theory." Those outside literary criticism, such as former cognitive anthropologist Stephen Tyler, must declare the superiority of their topics: "Ethnography is . . . a superordinate discourse to which all other discourses are relativized and in which they find their meaning and justification" (1986: 122). But for poststructuralists in anthropology as in other disciplines, theory is now only discourse theory, so only discourses may be studied. The logic is this: since we culturally construct social and material realities, to study the "material world" in addition to or instead of discourse on material life is to consider a fiction. Seyla Benhabib notes that "contemporary feminism has shifted its attention from social analysis to discourse analysis, from power itself to the politics of its representation" (1989: 370).[18]

Thus while feminist kinship theorists Jane Collier and Sylvia Yanagisako perform a great service in their recent historical contextualization of anthropological kinship studies (1987), they also threaten to "tip over" into a radical idealism that would deny any connection between cultural constructions of kinship processes, human biology, and varying economic systems (see chap. 11, this volume). It is precisely the process of moving between contingent acceptance of current Western understandings of biology and economics and radically non-Western constructions of kinship that has produced feminist advances in understanding the mutual interpenetrations of gender, sexuality, kinship, and political economy at home and abroad (e.g., Young et al. 1981; Stack 1974; Rapp 1987; Lindenbaum 1987). Poststructuralism is also associated with the so-called "postfeminist" era, in which claims that women have already achieved equality jostle against continued job segregation, increasingly feminized poverty, little increase in male child care or housework, and high rates of male violence against women. All of these phenomena are intimately part of Euroamerican kinship processes, both as material realities and as ideological tropes. We cannot analyze them if we deny that intimate connection.

Poststructuralism in recent years has been seen in connection to another term, postmodernism. Postmodernism originally arose as a description of a specific architectural style, one that both deliberately eschewed the clean, monumental surfaces of modernist architecture and which also mixed stylistic elements of different historical eras (pastiche or bricolage). The term rapidly gained currency in the United States and Europe as it was applied, in ever-widening circles, first to all graphic art, then to all of literature, and finally to social life and politics in the West (see Jameson 1984). Each further application diluted meaning; and finally postmodernism and poststructuralism began to be used interchangeably to denote both our era, its art and politics, and poststructuralist interpretations themselves. Since postmodernism/poststructuralism has become an academic industry, it is

difficult to discern an arena of agreed-upon characterizations. But Perry Anderson (1983, 1987), Edward Said (1987), Frederic Jameson (1984) and Todd Gitlin (1989), at least, endorse the understanding that postmodernism expresses the "cultural logic of late capital" (Jameson), a "moment in the history of American empire" (Said). Anderson argues strongly that postmodernism entails an "embrace of commodification, a Nietzschean embrace of the instant, a trivial and lighthearted rejection of politics."[19] Gitlin notes that poststructuralism/postmodernism embroils adherents who wish to hold political opinions in a fundamental contradiction:

> The impulse toward this sort of unmasking is certainly political: it stemmed from a desire to undo the hold of one system of knowledge/language/power over another. It followed from the 1960s revelation that various systems of knowledge were fundamentally implicated in injustice and violence—whether racist or sexist exclusions from literary canons, or the language and science of militarism and imperial justification. But the poststructuralist move in theory has flushed the Archimedean point away with the sewage of discourse. (1989: 357)

Said reminds us, however, that even the self-contradictory poststructuralism/postmodernism stance is itself innately solipsistic. It expresses the anxieties and obsessions, the political inaction and world-weary ennui, of a narrow, privileged, class fraction of Westerners, ignoring the fact that the present era has also seen the reemergence of notions of the "traditional, the native, the authentic"—and the return of religion, especially in its seemingly unpostmodern fundamentalist form. We should, then, disengage postmodernism, an intellectual approach, from the postmodern era, a descriptive term for our contemporary period—which has apparently obliterated all modernist conceptions of linear evolutionary change.

Just as the postmodern era has hosted the renascence of fundamentalist religions at home and abroad, so it has witnessed the continuation and elaboration of cultural feminist essentialism. The proposition that women are, across time and space, a single oppressed and virtuous class, and its entailed refusal to recognize the transhistorical and cross-class existence of wealthy, powerful, and evil women, has remained popular among many Western feminists. The dichotomizing, essentializing threads in 1970s feminist evolutionary models today weigh, to paraphrase Marx, like a nightmare on the brains of living feminists. Both feminist essentialists and conservative antifeminists have continued to draw on the nineteenth-century storehouse of moral motherhood symbolism, stressing women's innate identity with and nurturance of children and nature.[20] Popular volumes with both feminist and antifeminist intent call on women to reclaim "the Goddess" in themselves and to envision a new female and nurturing era to come. Rosalind Miles, for example, offers up a potted combination of woman the gatherer, lunar cycles,

> For woman, with her inexplicable moon rhythms and power of creating new life, *was* the most sacred mystery of the tribe. So miraculous, so powerful, she had to be more than man—more than human. As primitive man began to think symbolically, there was only one explanation. Woman *was* the primary symbol, the greatest entity of all—a goddess, no less. (Miles 1989: 17)

Even feminists with no interest in specious evolutionary reasoning have fallen victim to the vision of an innately nurturant, maternal womankind. Germaine Greer, whose prior literary and art-based scholarship was resolutely liberal feminist, recently (1984) converted to a pronatalist feminist essentialism. In the ultimate expression of privileged Western naiveté, Greer celebrated the lives of village women in India as the models for us all and singled out the close mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationship for special approbation: all this in an era when Indian feminists are actively protesting ubiquitous, mother-in-law-sanctioned bride-burning.[21]

Both Anderson and Peter Dews call for the solution to the poststructuralist paradox in the recognition of its neglected antecedent, the critical-theory tradition in Marxism. Frankfurt School and other scholars recognized the need to develop much more realistic senses of the complex operations of culture and consciousness within particular political economies and were equally aware of the need to take language seriously as more than a transparent representational medium. At the same time, however, they did not take the "turn to language" so far as to envision it as "a system of floating signifiers pure and simple, with no determinable relation to any extralinguistic referents at all" (Anderson 1983: 46). They affirmed the existence of a real material world, of living beings, of humans living in varying social formations, of political struggle in history over the contours of power.

The solution to the poststructural paradox, then, is very like that to its feminist anthropological cousin. It was necessary to break out of the closed system of ethnographic liberalism, to recognize that no ethnography is ever entirely nonevaluative, that ethnography itself is a genre made possible by ongoing Western imperialism. Just so is it imperative that we see language and ideology as important in and of themselves and as part of the evolving material, social world. And indeed, "language and political economy" research in anthropology is growing rapidly (see Gal 1989).

FEMINISM, CULTURE, AND POLITICAL ECONOMY

Envisioning language and political economy as mutually constitutive exemplifies the larger "culture and political economy" tendency in anthropology. "Culture and political economy" is a phrase traceable to Peter and Jane Schneider's 1976 *Culture and Political Economy in Western Sicily*. It is now used to denote, loosely, new work in anthropology that attends both to economics and politics and to the ways in which they are culturally construed by differ-

ing social actors in history (see Roseberry 1988). Many anthropologists are now working in this general area, and a large subgroup of these foregrounds the issue of gender in research and theory. We can summarize the framework of feminist culture and political economy in five key points.

First is the radical rejection, for the second time in anthropological history, of social evolutionism. George Stocking has established that in Victorian anthropology "a pervasive evolutionary racism contributed to the dehumanization and objectification of anthropology's subject matter" (1987: 273). Although social and cultural anthropologists summarily rejected evolutionism in the early twentieth century, it remained as an organizing principle of "origins research" in archeology (see chap. 2, this volume) and as a subtext in synchronic ethnographic accounts. Thus Shostak portrays the !Kung as living as Paleolithic humans must have in order to use Nisa's oral history as an exemplar, not of one woman's life in a minute foraging group (a group with, in any event, a nonforaging past), but of Ur-woman, her life cycle and emotion (1981: 5–6). It is not Shostak's feminism, then, that is the problem: it is her evolutionary framework.[22]

We have seen how resurgent Marxism in the 1960s influenced feminist anthropologists of the 1970s to entertain evolutionary models, and the ways in which these models lost salience over the decade. Relatedly, many Marxist theorists abandoned stage-theory evolutionism and structuralism over this period in favor of the study of the unique histories of specific social formations. This is not to say that one should never claim the existence of structural regularities across time and space—of, for example, efforts by capitalists to drive down the cost of labor power, or of the likelihood of prevalent ideologies legitimizing the lower status of stigmatized social groups. But no human group on earth represents "living history": no matter how rudimentary its technological level, every human population has experienced as many thousands of years in which to alter its language, its religious ideologies, its social arrangements as has every other. Thus feminist anthropologists cannot locate the "key" to male dominance over women in small-scale societies. We can, however, assess the range of possible human gender arrangements and their connections to human biology through comparative ethnography (chap. 10, this volume). We can consider the many histories, in all types of societies, of changing gendered social life and its political-economic correlates, and join with other feminist social scientists, historians, and literary critics to research the mutually influencing histories of changing gender arrangements and ideologies in Western states and their colonized territories over the past centuries (see chap. 1, this volume).

Second, integrally connected to respect for history is the recognition that those institutionalized perceptions and patterns of behavior we may conceive as innately human or at least as well-established are most likely neither. The historians of sexuality, for example, have charted the coming into being

of the social labels "heterosexual" and "homosexual" in Europe and the United States over the nineteenth century, and the widely varying possibilities for female and male sexual expression across time and space. We now know that race and ethnicity are not immutable characteristics of individuals but emergent and shifting social categories, categories that can and do become the objects of intense politial struggle. Marx first established the historically contingent character of class divisions in developing capitalist states. Continuing Marxist debates over the empirical meanings of class in societies around the world indicate the continued evolution of varying class divisions. And, of course, how women and men are thought to be like and unlike one another as human beings, what they can and cannot do, are rarely givens, but historically and culturally contingent. Feminist anthropologists working in Melanesia in particular have elaborated on *Verstehen* in a series of careful studies of radically non-Western constructions of gender (Poole 1981; Strathern 1987; Errington and Gewertz 1987). These cultural logics vary widely but are linked in that they do not contain notions of individual, developing selves or of the male achievement of self-worth through the control of female others.

All of these understandings may be subsumed under the general rubric of social constructionism or antiessentialism. Social constructionism clearly implies a respect for historical difference and change, but it also entails an understanding of the human use of history—of constructions of the past—to legitimize or to contest the status quo. Thus antifeminists refer to "traditions" of male dominance and feminists counter with alternate traditions and with histories of women's struggles for equal rights. Recently, Marxist historians have paid particular attention to the histories of state and popular inventions of tradition (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). American anthropologists have followed with a series of investigations of social scientific constructions of imagined pasts in first and third world states—pasts which, even when they are conceived romantically to counter deprecatory images of the oppressed, misconceive their actual histories, perceptions, and actions (Roseberry and O'Brien 1991). Thus, for example, I follow the construction of the notions of American white ethnic community and white ethnic woman in the 1970s, note both their compensatory function in making up for decades of negative imagery and their reliance on black civil rights rhetoric, and demonstrate the ways in which the constructs were not only empirically false but were, and are, used in both racist and antifeminist political rhetoric (1991). As Rapp warned in 1979, "we must not allow our own need for models of strong female collectivities to blind us to the dialectic of tradition" (1979: 513).

Societal boundaries themselves, not just ethnic and racial categories, are historically contingent constructions as well. Benedict Anderson's 1983 study of the rise of European and then third world nationalisms compellingly por-

trays the repeated constructions of "imagined community" which attended the creation and redrawing of national maps. Any assertion of unchanging diachronic groupness, in effect, denies this complex historical process. Thus some anthropologists' continued tendency to compare "cultures"—studied at varying points in time—like so many checkers pieces cannot be justified. To return to my discussion of comparative women's status: within the terms of synchronic ethnographic liberalism, women in some small-scale societies seem to have had a poor time of it. But the terms themselves must be interrogated. Not only are Quinn's disaggregated components, as she points out, noncomparable apples and oranges; but each population must also be considered in terms of its place in regional, national, and global history. "Women's status among the *X*" contains not one but three portmanteau terms: status, women, and *X*. As populations (*X*es) shift with changing political-economic realities, so do their female components alter both demographically and in terms of their connections to those realities. And our knowledge of past realities is dependent on past observers whose cultural lenses may be unclear to us. As Lamphere notes: "In some sense, we really will never know what it was like to be an Iroquois woman in the sixteenth century or a Navajo woman in the eighteenth" (1987: 24).

Although social constructionism can shade into poststructuralism, it cannot, when it is located inside historical and social scientific analysis, degenerate into a nihilist stance holding either that there is no truth or that, in Foucauldian logic, we are all trapped in the prisonhouse of language. Social constructionism need not, as Stephen Horigan (1988) points out, stand against the material world and the exigencies of biology. The very act of taking such a stand perpetuates the false dichotomies that poststructuralism tells us are ubiquitous and falsifying Western tropes. Although we recognize that our Archimedean point may be historically contingent, it is nonetheless real and we stand on it as we move the world.

The third and related insight is the embedded nature of gender, both as a material, social institution and as a set of ideologies.[23] As we have seen, one of the first developments of 1970s feminist scholarship, including feminist anthropology, was the contention that women could not be studied adequately in isolation. But recognizing the embedded nature of gender involves as well an understanding that women must be seen not only in relation to men but to one another. In any particular population, major social divisions—race/ethnicity, class, religion, age, sexual preference, nationality—will crosscut and influence the meanings of gender division. "Embeddedness" determined my attention to the construction and political uses of "white ethnic women" as it did Caplan's (1979) and Cohen's (1979) analyses of Brahmin and upper-status Sierra Leonean women. Assuming embeddedness in all feminist analyses constructs "difference" inside the logic of analy-
[illegible] it as an inorganic addition. Thus feminist schol-

ars can investigate both women's and men's differing economic activities and cultural conceptions of gendered labor, both human sexual biology and varying and changing cultural constructions thereof. Embeddedness follows directly from social constructionism, but we could also have derived it from anthropological tradition, from Frederick Barth's (1969) analysis of the construction of ethnicity at its boundaries—or from Marx's epigram to *The Critique of Political Economy*: "It is not the consciousness of men [*sic*] that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness" (1970 [1859]: 21).

Gender embeddedness entails the fourth proposition that all forms of patterned inequality merit analysis. Stratification is visible in the realities of individuals' and groups' unequal access to the material goods available in particular societies. It is also materially present, as Raymond Williams (1980) argues, in the ways in which social realities are expressed and contested in language. Thus the hoary anthropological shorthand, "the *X* say" must be replaced with genuine attention to what varying populations among the *X* say. Much work has been done in this area by historians, sociolinguists, and anthropologists *tout court*. Brett Williams's (1988) ethnography of a gentrifying inner-city Washington, D.C. neighborhood, for example, contrasts the actions and speech of black and Latin renters to the new white owners. Differential visions of the uses of public space, community responsibilities—even of favorite television programs—are linked to very different economic and political resources and to the material and cultural realities of racial difference in America. A large new group of studies of impoverished and working-class women workers in first and third world states also examines the intersection of class, culture, and gender in the ways women perceive and respond to their situations. Whether they are Mexicana *maquila* workers getting their own back on the male world by harassing a lone man on a bus, native white and Portuguese garment workers in Providence maintaining labor solidarity through "female" celebrations of birthdays, marriages, and births, or Malaysian factory operatives becoming hysterical and "possessed" and thus disrupting the assembly line, women workers' actions cannot be analyzed simply as "female," "working-class," or "cultural."[24] They occupy specific locations in nexuses of multiple stratifications (see chap. 9, this volume).

Finally, and again relatedly, we need to attend to and to investigate actively the multiple layers of context—or, in another formulation, social location—through which we perceive particular cultural realities. The first layer for ethnographers, one upon which much ink has been spilled, is the power-laden encounter between reseacher and researched. Feminists who have claimed the existence of specifically feminist methodologies in social research usually refer to this face-to-face level.[25] Such claims ignore the history of phenomenological work on precisely this issue, not to mention the long-running "ethics" column in the American Anthropological Associa-

tion's *Newsletter*, and the vast self-conscious literature on power dynamics in fieldwork. Although much of this work has not attended to gendered power dynamics, to do so is not to invent a new methdology but to extend an old.[26] Roger Keesing (1985), for example, has worked with the Melanesian Kwaio since 1969. His initial project was to contribute to cognitive anthropology's "grammar of culture," and to this end he elicited *kastom* (custom) from senior men. Over time, and particularly after he began working in the field with Shelly Schreiner, a female colleague, Keesing began to realize that "muted" Kwaio women were indeed capable of long, intricate, formal narratives reflecting on women's lives and their central roles in preserving kastom. The breakthrough came when senior men, in their efforts to "maintain control over the codification of women's rules and roles" (1985: 30) staged a recital for Keesing by a senior woman. She was agitated and nervous, and felt that a second, private session was necessary to make up for her poor showing. This session led to a series of "autobiographies" by Kwaio women of a wide age and status range, many of them with strong themes of women's unique cultural virtues and correctness in their opposition to kinsmen.

Less attended to are the more abstract and historical contextual forces, those of professional and larger intellectual location. The researcher's self exists not only in the "garrulous, overdetermined, cross-cultural encounter shot through with power relations and personal cross purposes" (Clifford 1983: 120), but also within networks of professional colleagues, and in historical *dialogue in absentia* with particular Western traditions. Sometimes it is the absence rather than presence of collegial networks, the clear social boundaries past which knowledge has not yet moved, that are most telling: witness the statements on feminism by ethnography-as-text scholars cited above. But in all cases we do intellectual work within particular collegial communicative frameworks, frameworks that are not immune to current political shifts. We need to be aware of the ways in which they tend to channel and shape our notions of what knowledge is and whom it should serve.

George Stocking, James Clifford, Donna Haraway, and others have labored to bring to light past and present intellectual frameworks in anthropology as a whole and to demonstrate the threads that tie them to material interests (or less directly, to sedimented structures of thought and feeling) connected first to British and continental European and later to American imperialism.[27] As Stocking summarizes, ". . . whether or not evolutionary writings provided specific guidelines for colonial administrators and missionaries, there can be no doubt that sociocultural thinking offered strong ideological support for the whole colonial enterprise in the late nineteenth century" (1987: 237). Clifford's dissection of the reign of ethnographic liberalism and Haraway's (1989) work in locating postwar primate studies within the political economy of African decolonization, shifting Western gender ... and the hegemony of American imperialism, have also helped

to extend this self-reflexive, sociology-of-knowledge history of the discipline itself.

Roger Keesing has made use of these new intellectual currents in his interpretation of Kwaio women's and men's talk. He now recognizes that in fieldwork "the genres and contexts we create together are alien and in some sense spurious" (1985: 32) and that,

> Our ethnographic encounters take place not only in contexts of the internal politics of the "society" we study but in wider historical and political contexts, in which we ourselves are inextricably situated. I have suggested that in the Kwaio case the ways in which women stepped into the role of ideologues in articulating accounts of their culture can only be understood in the historical context of colonial domination, the Kwaio struggle for autonomy, and the elevation of "culture" to the level of political symbol. . . . Perhaps we should go on to ask whether the cultural accounts *male* informants have constructed to ethnographers of tribal societies through the years must similarly be understood partly as artifacts of the historical context of colonial domination. (1985: 37)

The postmodern era, as Edward Said has noted, contains both social groups who seem to have lost political will and those who are just finding it. It is not really a period "beyond ideology" but one of very swift and confusing movements of capital and labor around the globe, and of equally rapid ideological shifts and rearrangements. Many feminist scholars are attempting to describe this moving stream, knowing all the while that we are moving with it, and knowing as well that our descriptions—and all descriptions—are profoundly ideological. The early feminist anthropologists saw no contradiction between their scholarship and anthropology's traditional edificatory role in the West. They felt that their work was directly relevant to American and European life and politics. Rayna Rapp declared both that her anthology had "its roots in the women's movement" and that the anthropology of women would "help feminists in the struggle against sexism in our own society" (1975: 11). Rosaldo and Lamphere linked their edited volume to the effort "to understand our position and to change it" (1974: 1). Even Naomi Quinn, in chiding other feminist anthropologists for faulty reasoning and in calling for more rigorous, less ideologically biased scholarship, celebrated "the social forces which inspired anthropological interest in women's status" (1977: 222). Most of us are now more chastened in our presumptions about the immediate utility of our work, while that work is worlds more sophisticated. But neither humility nor scholarly sophistication is a reason for ignoring Quinn's social forces, for withdrawing from anthropology's committed role. Our new knowledge should be broadly shared. It should affect the ways in which we see all women and men, including ourselves.

The dozen articles gathered here represent this recent sophistication in feminist anthropological work not only individually but collectively, not only in what they share but in the ways in which they differ. First, the writers themselves, though all anthropologists and all feminists, are not, as were the contributors to the two early bibles of feminist anthropology, all women and all white. As well, we represent an older center of gravity. We are no longer largely dissident graduate students and embattled young professors, with the addition of newly valued wives of well-known older male anthropologists. The bulk of us are solidly established in our fields.

Next, the contributors have self-consciously chosen a variety of genres through which to express their points: review essay (Gal, Warren and Bourque, Conkey), historical narrative (Stoler), straightforward ethnography (Povinelli, Rapp), single-issue critical essay (Scheffler, Sperling), and elegant genre combinations as well (Guyer, Peacock, Silverblatt). Then comes the matter of subdisciplinary specialization. Unlike so much recent scholarship, both feminist and nonfeminist, and in a return to the feminist pioneers, these writers stand squarely in their fields and yet speak to audiences far beyond a tiny group of specialists. Moreover, befitting the both/and stance of feminist culture and political economy, they acknowledge both material realities and cultural constructions. Archeologist Margaret Conkey "speaks" poststructuralism while remaining closely in touch with bones, stones, and shards. Sociolinguist Susan Gal articulates political-economic contexts for gendered language use around the globe. Cultural anthropologist Rayna Rapp helps us to perceive the material world of amniocentesis testing—the white rooms, the needles, the pregnant women's bodies—and the varying constructions of that experience expressed by New Yorkers across class, color, and gender lines.

The contributors also speak to one another. Although they may disagree (and disagree with me), they do not talk past one another, do not use disciplinary specialization to retreat from common intellectual projects. I originally organized the pieces in a classic linear Comtean fashion, starting with the physical anthropological "base" and ending with symbolic and linguistic studies. But while this structure has the virtues of convenience and familiarity—and also illustrates feminist anthropology's broad coverage of topics in all four fields—it tends to disguise connections among the studies and their fresh responses to the postmodern era.

One key connection is an emphasis on the politically constituted nature of knowledge production, and its historical embeddedness. In Part I, Gender in Colonial History and Anthropological Discourse, three scholars originally trained in economic anthropology (Stoler), Old World archeology (Conkey), and New World ethnohistory (Silverblatt) come together in tracing the histories of gendered meanings promulgated both by colonial powers and in [illegible] disciplines. Recognition of the power and entailments

of gendered representation also ties these pieces to one another. In Part II, Gender as Cultural Politics, a sociolinguist (Gal), biological anthropologist (Sperling), and cultural anthropologist (Povinelli) converge in analyzing histories of the representations of gendered worlds, whether in literary criticism and linguistic anthropology, in primatology, or among women and men on an aboriginal reserve. Each piece is simultaneously conscious of the cultural politics of representing gender in scholarly discourse and in popular culture. Serious attention to the ways in which women's lives intersect with larger economies constitutes a third point of convergence. In Part III, Representing Gendered Labor, Guyer, Warren and Bourque, and Zavella describe both women's and men's economic and kinship lives in particular social formations and locate our efforts to do so politically and historically. Thus they carry self-reflexive historical analysis into the too-often reductionist arena of economic studies. Each writer, as well, adds to our knowledge of varying Western representations of "Others," whether African female farmers, aggregated third-world women, or Chicanas in the western United States.

In the final section, Part IV, Contentious Kinship: Rethinking Gender and Reproduction, contributors rework old debates and break new ground. Peacock, trained in biological anthropology, uses her work with Efe in Zaire to rethink armchair feminist speculation on the biological channeling of sexual divisions of labor. Scheffler locates current problematic feminist tendencies in kinship studies within anthropological history. And Rapp, reversing popular cultural tendencies to focus on the American white, middle-class "norm," reports on her polyvocal, cross-class, multiracial study of amniocentesis testing in New York City.

The contributors speak to one another, as well, beyond these salient categories. Guyer, Silverblatt, and Stoler together engage new debates on historiography and gender. Gal, Warren and Bourque, and Scheffler unravel ragged arguments in contemporary feminist theory both inside and outside anthropology. Rapp, and Warren and Bourque, share a concern with the intersections of technology and women's lives, while Rapp and Peacock speak together on female biology and reproduction across major cultural divides. Silverblatt and Peacock write explicitly of the problematic heritage of early 1970s feminist anthropological models, while Conkey, Sperling, and Stoler converge in examining Western constructions of human sexuality wound into our interpretations of primates, prehistory, and the colonized third world. Zavella, Stoler, and Conkey all construct racial difference within, not as an addition to, their analyses. Peacock and Povinelli, at opposite ends of knowledge's Comtean scale, nevertheless both demonstrate for the reader the historically contingent, socially constructed nature of "gathering data."

Finally, all of these writers are self-consciously aware of their location in the mingling streams of anthropology, feminism, intellectual and political-

economic history, and of the inevitable reflections of contemporary American concerns in their work. Rapp's and Zavella's pieces are the most obvious, as they are specifically about gender, race, economy, and family in the contemporary United States. But Conkey, Sperling, and Peacock also speak directly to the ideological uses of anthropological theory in constructing contemporary, politicized meanings of gender. All the work in this volume, in fact, stands on that bedrock of awareness. Even Jane Guyer's piece on changing gendered agricultural practice among the West African Beti, which would seem to be as exotically far as it could be from contemporary gender concerns in the advanced capitalist United States, leads us to an awareness of cross-cultural structural parallels and of their limits. In both the Beti case and in the last two decades of American life, changing political economies have led, on average, to an increasingly assymetric sexual division of labor and intensified female work effort. Beti women's double-cropping and added trade activities evoke American women's double day in the household and the paid workforce. And in each case, women's increased responsibilities and efforts to ameliorate them have led to court cases and to piecemeal legislation—and to the strategic political use, by all interested parties, of the language of "tradition." Nevertheless, as Guyer indicates, even intra-African historical comparisons can mislead. If such narrowly gauged analogies are faulty, even more should we tread carefully and use seemingly parallel cases to suggest possible insights, not to determine meanings.

Any collection of articles on a large topic suffers from gaps. Although this volume represents all four fields in anthropology, many subfields, and research in the United States, Europe, Africa, Southeast Asia, Latin America, and Melanesia, it cannot—fortunately—contain the richness of all contemporary feminist work in the field. Many important arenas, such as gendered religious practice, are touched on (by Povinelli, Silverblatt, Rapp, and Stoler) but not squarely addressed. Others, such as gender and artistic production, are entirely absent. Neither an atheoretical encyclopedia nor a narrow sample, this volume offers a broad and coherent representation of the current nexus of feminist culture and political economy in anthropology.

NOTES

Susan Gal, Bill Kelly, Fitz John Porter Poole, Susan Sperling, Judith Stacey, and especially Adolph Reed helped me to clarify the arguments in this piece.

1. Major bibliographic reviews of the field include Stack et al. (1975), Lamphere (1977), Quinn (1977), Rapp (1979), Rogers (1978), Atkinson (1982), Mukhopadhyay and Higgins (1988). See also Sandra Morgen's edited teaching module (1989). Moore's recent (1988) volume provides a narration of feminist shifts within British social anthropology alone. Her discussion of work on the interpenetration of kinship and economy, however, is very helpful. Although this piece focuses on all four fields of American feminist anthropology, the discipline is genuinely transatlantic. Thus I include important British—and some French and third world—work as well.

2. On the American suffrage movement, see DuBois (1978), and Flexner (1974). On early twentieth-century third world feminism, see Jayawardena (1986). On continued American feminist activity in the "quiescent" period, see Cott (1987).

3. Two contemporary documents suffice to illustrate this revolutionary verve: Morgan (1970) and Gornick and Moran (1971). On the early history of the second wave, see Evans (1979).

4. See Howard (1984) on Margaret Mead; Modell (1983: esp. 256–258), on Ruth Benedict; and Rosenberg (1982) and Lamphere (1989) on Elsie Clews Parsons. See also Golde (1986) for women's first-person accounts of fieldwork experiences, and Gacs et al. (1989) for short biographies of selected women anthropologists.

5. See Lamphere (1987) for a first-person account of the making of *Women, Culture and Society* and for a history of American feminist anthropology with slightly different emphases.

6. See Potts and Shipman (1981), Shipman (1983), Isaac (1983).

7. See Shapiro (1976), Murphy (1985).

8. Ortner, with Harriet Whitehead, later altered her position to an assertion that "the cultural construction of sex and gender tends everywhere to be stamped by the prestige considerations of socially dominant male actors" (1981: 12). See Collier and Yanagisako for one set of criticisms of this formulation (1987: 27 ff.).

9. See Lerner (1969), Bloch (1978), Ryan (1979: 75–150), Hewitt, (1985).

10. See Seager and Olsen (1986: 108, 113) for statistical summaries.

11. See Crawford (1980), Piven and Cloward (1982), Phillips (1982).

12. See Jacoby (1987).

13. See also Vincent (1986) for an account of shifts from "system" to "process" analysis in legal, ecological, and symbolic anthropology.

14. See also Sahlin's (1976) extended critique of sociobiology.

15. Precursor to ethnography as text was Clifford Geertz's interpretive anthropology that envisioned cultures as texts. See Rabinow and Sullivan 1979.

16. See Mascia-Lees et al. (1989) for a spirited feminist critique of "the postmodernist turn in anthropology" from a very different set of presuppositions. See also work by two James Clifford students, Gordon (1988) and Visweswaren (1988), for attempts to read gender into the ethnography-as-text framework. Finally, see Strathern (1987, 1988) for interesting juxtapositions of anthropology and feminism from within the poststructuralist framework. Strathern, unlike the contributors to this volume, takes it as paradigmatic that feminism seeks to portray all males as Others. She is Rabinow's source for a similar assertion cited above.

17. See Polier and Roseberry (1989) for a somewhat separate set of critiques of the ethnography and text school. See also my review of James Clifford and Clifford Geertz.

18. Some examples are Flax (1987), Scott (1988). An interesting measure of American feminist theory's shift away from analysis of the actually existing world is the difference in content between the 1983 *Signs Reader* and that published in 1989. See Abel and Abel (1983), Malson et al. (1989). See Taussig 1989, for a poststructuralist anthropologist's criticism of Marxist historical anthropologists for choosing research

topics not amenable to discourse analysis; and see Mintz and Wolf (1989) for an embrace of culture and political economy research.

19. Unpaginated quotations from Anderson and Said are from talks given at "Postmodernism: Practice, Politics, Performance," Whitney Humanities Center, Yale University, February 21, 1987.

20. For critiques of feminist essentialism see Sayers (1982: 187–192), Echols (1983), Cocks (1984), di Leonardo (1985), forthcoming. Further examples of popular feminist essentialist writing include Eisler (1987), Andrews (1987), Cooey et al. (1987), Harris (1989).

21. See Shirley Lindenbaum's (1984) insightful review of Greer, Kishwar and Vanita (1984) for Indian feminists' protests against bride-burning.

22. *Contra* Shostak's assertion of the !Kung's "traditional value system" (1981: 6) see Schrire (1980) and Pratt (1986).

23. Naomi Quinn made this formulation, 1986.

24. See Lamphere (1985), Fernandez-Kelly (1984: 243), Ong (1983: 435–437).

25. See Oakley (1981), Bowles and Duelli-Klein (1983).

26. And, as Judith Stacey (1988) notes, even self-conscious feminist researchers find themselves complicit in the researcher's inevitable exploitation of subjects' friendship for privacy-invading information.

27. See also Kuper (1988) and Fabian (1983).

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PART I

Gender in Colonial History and Anthropological Discourse