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Review [untitled]

Susan Ferguson
Ryerson University

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for extending to women radical rights over all stages of the reproductive process." Women are rational, self-interested and without any natural impulse to care for infants. Hobbes's view not only gives women rights over children they bear, but suggests that to ward off a return to a state of nature: "the state would have to provide the support and inducements for women (and men as well) to have and care for children in appropriate ways" (195).

I think Makus is correct to find a deep correspondence between Hobbes and contemporary contractarian theorists of women's rights. I am less convinced than she is that this is a promising way forward for feminist understandings of reproductive activity and family life. Contractual theories focus on self-interested adults and suggest that children's rights follow from adults' voluntarily assumed obligations. I believe, by contrast, that contract is not the best way to ground liberal feminism, and that theories of parent-child relations can and should begin with a consideration of children's needs. This is not the place to conduct this larger debate. But by providing a careful reading of classic works of political philosophy and insightful reflections on how these texts are related to policy issues concerning reproduction and family life, Makus makes a significant contribution to that debate and to our understanding of both the history of political theory and contemporary feminist thought.

MARY LYNDON SHANLEY *Vassar College*

Finding a New Feminism: Rethinking the Woman Question for Liberal Democracy

Pamela Grande Jensen, ed.

Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996, pp. ix, 246

Feminist Interpretations of Mary Wollstonecraft

Maria J. Falco, ed.

University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996, pp. xiv, 234

Since the beginning of the second wave, feminists have critically engaged the canon of Western political thought in a systematic effort to tease out and undermine masculinist assumptions, on the one hand, and to draw attention to neglected feminine contributions, on the other. The publication of these two collections is testimony to the success of feminism's efforts to remap the contours of political theory.

Both texts address the tensions and accommodations that arise within liberal feminism. The contributors to the volume edited by Jensen suggest that feminist critiques have too easily dismissed liberalism without fully appreciating its potential to resolve women's claims to both equality and difference. They attempt to salvage a different sort of liberalism for feminism. The articles in the volume edited by Falco, while defending Mary Wollstonecraft's presence at the table of liberal theorists, argue that their subject is in fact a liberal with a difference.

As a re-evaluation of the feminist critique of various theorists, *Finding a New Feminism* has certain strengths, especially insofar as it resists facile analyses of its subjects' approaches to gender. Its claims about the liberal tradition, however, are undermined by an extraordinarily amorphous definition of liberalism. Liberal feminism, according to its poststructuralist critics, falters in the face of an intractable dilemma: if women vie for equality with men, they risk effacing the specificity of their identity, but if women's difference is acknowledged and accounted for, equality becomes either an unattainable or undesirable goal. The contributors to this volume dispute this claim, arguing instead

that equality and difference can coexist if the liberal political order comes to embrace the notion of community characteristic of ancient thought.

The contributors point to Sophocles', Aristotle's and Aristophanes' premise that the whole (that is, community) cannot be self-sufficing unless its distinct constituents are permitted self-expression. The ancients, they suggest, are thus able to incorporate women into the *polis* as actors in their own right and/or treat women and women's association with private life as essential to the community. Elements of this approach to community are present in liberal thought, they suggest.

It is a provocative argument, but unfortunately it falters early on. Indeed, the essayists examine a dubious group of liberals. While Hobbes and Locke are mentioned in passing, the articles engage directly with Machiavelli, Montesquieu, Rousseau and Henry James. Even the inclusion of Rousseau might be expected to require some explanation, but what little is offered must be read between the lines.

Finding a New Feminism's attempt to "teleport" ancient concepts into liberal theory runs into difficulties on other fronts. The writers are largely convincing in their argument that women are present in and accorded some value in ancient thought. They are less adept, however, at arguing that this fact amounts to sexual egalitarianism. Even more troublesome is the essayists' uncritical incorporation of an essentialized notion of difference—women are defined fundamentally as mothers. As a commentary on various ancient and early modern theorists, the volume edited by Jensen can be an interesting addition to feminist critique of the canon. As a vision of liberal feminism, it has a long way to go.

Feminist Interpretations of Mary Wollstonecraft, on the other hand, is generally a more convincing commentary on liberalism. Its contributors draw attention to those complexities of Wollstonecraft's thought that are too often neglected in standard accounts of liberal feminism. Where this is best argued (by Virginia L. Muller and Penny A. Weiss), readers are alerted to Wollstonecraft's roots in the Paineite radical democratic tradition (and its support for the French Revolution)—roots which set her well apart from the liberalism of either Locke or Mill.

At the same time, Muller, Weiss and others offer too one-sided an appraisal. Wollstonecraft's economic egalitarianism and sympathy for working-class women is emphasized, but her acceptance of capitalist forms of private property, and the limits this imposes on her project for women's emancipation, is not. Moreover, contributors suggest Wollstonecraft poses a radical challenge to modernity's distinction between public and private spheres on the basis that she sees activities and virtues in both spheres as mutually dependent. This argument is puzzling. As Jensen's book illustrates, similar views can be attributed to Montesquieu and Machiavelli, for example, but few would claim these theorists were, on this basis, particularly progressive.

Wollstonecraft's distinctive qualities are similarly overstated in two of three articles discussing gender and the subjective construction of the female philosopher. Only Miriam Brody manages to offer a well-balanced interpretation. Brody skillfully deconstructs Wollstonecraft's adoption and adaptation of Enlightenment rhetoric to illustrate how Wollstonecraft "feminizes" the rhetorical concepts and practices that dominated intellectual life in the eighteenth century. As a woman writing in a man's world, she argues, Wollstonecraft creates a specifically female space, but she does so by appropriating the sexualized images and "othering" discourse on which that tradition is founded, and transposing these into maternal symbols in which the "other" becomes the (mediocre) woman of fashion. This refor-

mulation, Brody suggests, revises Enlightenment rhetoric without revolutionizing it.

One of a series entitled *Re-reading the Canon*, *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Wollstonecraft* places its subject alongside the likes of Plato, Marx and Wittgenstein (Arendt is the only other woman). The article defending Wollstonecraft's stature is particularly noteworthy: Penny A. Weiss very simply, but with acumen, moves between Rousseau's and Wollstonecraft's works to illustrate their parallel relevance—as social critics of civilization, education, morality and so forth. Another contribution offers an annotated “conversation” between the two thinkers, which highlights not only their well-rehearsed differences but also the surprisingly substantial areas of general agreement: it is provocative though not sufficiently contextualized to be fully informative.

Brody's and Weiss's contributions are among the most rigorously argued chapters in the collection. The less impressive chapters (like one which combs Wollstonecraft's texts for evidence of childhood sexual abuse and another which discusses Wollstonecraft's relevance today) rely more on inference than grounded analysis. Thus, while the contributions to *Feminist Interpretations of Mary Wollstonecraft* are uneven, the collection generally succeeds in illustrating the depth and import of Wollstonecraft's thought.

SUSAN FERGUSON *Ryerson Polytechnic University*