

painting" (Jenkner, *La Série des Couvents/The Convent Series*, 13). The orderliness of Gutsche's convent space is eerie, communicating a seemingly eternal and inevitable authority. By means of depth-photography, inanimate artifacts associated with contemporary feminine domesticity - sofas, chairs, televisions, hair dryers, potted plants, irons - assume a hyper-real, even ominous character. In "Une salle de travail/Utility Room" (37), a lurid reproduction of the sacred heart mounted on the wall invests the familiar, banal clutter of a laundry room with resonances of timeless suffering, sacrifice, and service. The accoutrements of domesticity are thereby imbued with the presence of disciplinary power.

In the 1990s, after negotiating permission from convent authorities to photograph sisters, Gutsche embarked on a theatricalized arrangement of the women within those spaces. By achieving "a consensual intimacy" with her subjects, whom she represents by means of "a staging approach" (15), she extends her interpretation of the spatial meaning of cloisters. In the process, she evokes profoundly disturbing questions concerning the cultural scriptedness of feminine desire, identity, discipline. The weirdness of cloistered nuns in their alien setting perhaps serves as an analogue of women's contemporary social construction.

Gutsche's photographic compositions emphasize the uniformity of nuns' costumes, postures, gestures, while the vividness of mass-produced artifacts, occupying equal importance within the frame, at once mirrors and reifies the women's presence. A traditional, monolithic feminine subjectivity appears to be infinitely reproduced. "Le musée/Museum" (64) exemplifies Gutsche's representation of women's preservation of sacral femininity. Fixed high onto the wall is a large children's doll, round-eyed, expressionless, costumed in sequined robe and wings: a commercially-produced angel. The doll presides over a table set with several framed reproductions; the foregrounded one, at least, is of Madonna and child. Beside the table stands an aged, bespectacled, rather vigorous-looking nun cradling a yard-high porcelain statue of the Christ child. The parodic image conjures a bizarre, but not cruel, revelation: "time has left behind" this woman and her enduring

identification with a divinely mysterious, young virgin mother. The old woman's willing performance as embodied mediator of a paradoxical role might provoke audiences to consider the dissonances inherent in their own situatedness in historical and popular cultural materiality.

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Cracking the Gender Code: Who Rules the Wired World? Melanie Stewart Millar. Second Story Press, Toronto, 1998; 230 pages; ISBN 1-89674-14-2.

Women Encounter Technology: Changing Patterns of Employment in the Third World. Swasti Mitter and Sheila Rowbotham, eds. Routledge, London and New York (published in association with the UNU Press); 1995 (paperback 1997); xvii + 356 pages; ISBN 0-415-14118-4.

There are, of course, more and more books on "the new technology" as more and more of us become aware of the profound changes "purely technological" changes can cause in so many aspects of our political, economic and social lives. These two books tackle very different aspects of the issues, and by doing so, illustrate how confusingly varied are both the problems and the feminist approaches to them. While the term "new technology" is usually broadly applied to technologies that incorporate the microchip, this invention has now permeated so much else that any discussion of it tends to encompass virtually anything that we might call "machinery" or "industrial production." We are not simply dealing with the ubiquitous PC or even the Internet, but with the way the microchip has transformed global production and trade and consequently the majority of work carried out by women in capitalist settings.

Millar and Mitter and Rowbotham not

only illustrate different feminist concerns about the impact of technology on women but also illustrate opposing perspectives on what those impacts might be. After delineating an account of "the roots of digital culture," Millar develops a typology of feminist responses to it. She describes both "liberal feminist" and "cyber-feminist" positions as being positive towards "digital culture" and in opposition to earlier, "eco-feminist" positions, which were inherently hostile to virtually all aspects of technological innovation. In contrast to all these, Millar tries to develop what she describes as "a feminist politics of anticipation." This sounds good, but unfortunately, Millar moves immediately to the main focus of her book (and of the PhD thesis that lies behind it) - an in-depth analysis of the computer/Internet journal *Wired*. For the majority of *Atlantis* readers who will not be familiar with *Wired* (except maybe for a quick flip through it in airport newspapers) it seems rather an insubstantial peg on which to hang a study of something so much bigger. Millar gives us a careful analysis of the content and presentation of the journal. This is useful, and doubtless *Wired* is as dreadful and macho as Millar describes it. *Wired* is significant in certain circles, but it seems misleading to base an analysis of the consequences of computers on women on what the (admittedly sexist) writers of *Wired* are saying to their predominantly white, male, north american/european and middle class readers. It leads Millar to depressing conclusions about the nature of the culture (or code) that she uncovers and to the *inherently* sexist and anti-women nature of computer culture. But computer culture - to say nothing of the new technology as a whole - is a lot bigger than the readership of one journal (however influential).

Women who have escaped the pernicious influence of *Wired* might well be expected to have various and different perspectives on their experience and the possibilities of the technologies, and this should not simply be dismissed as "liberal" optimism. The example of the feminist listserve PAR-L discussed in this issue of *Atlantis* is illustrative of a more hopeful perspective. Millar herself quotes from the second book in this review, *Women Encounter Technology*, where Mitter is describing how women in the Third World

welcome such technology providing they can control its effect on their lives. Whereas Millar's book is rooted firmly in cultural theory and analysis, Mitter and Rowbotham come from a political economy background and have developed an approach that certainly recognises the power of capital, especially global capital, but which is always concerned to locate themselves and their material in the appropriate specific and local contexts. This enables them to incorporate a variety of responses into their analysis, including the Bangladeshi factory workers enthusiastically embracing low paid, low skilled jobs as the price of independence and preferable to their lives as subsistence workers in the villages and the Tanzania Media Women's Association, which, in the words of the writer "shows the importance of technology in taking control of one's situation" (Mitter and Rowbotham, 303). Technology can have beneficial or harmful effects on women, but while it can create profound changes, it is, in itself, neutral. What matters is who controls it, how it can be used and how women can organise to take control of it for their own purposes.

Certainly women have been excluded from major sections of the new technology. Certainly women's weaker economic and political situation in the varied societies included in these two books makes it harder for them to take control of their lives. But what both these books make clear is that the new technology, like the technologies that came before, presents women with a stark choice. If we do not understand it and organise to control it, others will use it to control us, and in that case we will suffer all the cultural, economic and political indignities that technology's most hostile opponents have described.

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