

Women's Studies in Focus: Remembering Michèle Pujol

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INTO THE MARGIN !

Introduction

The neoclassical economic paradigm is now over one hundred years old. Since its inception in the 1890s, it has grown to be the dominant paradigm in economic theory, building its hegemonic power to the exclusion of alternative approaches. I have studied and then taught economics for nearly twenty-five years now. I had come to economics, as an undergraduate student in Paris, with a lot of excitement and trepidation: that discipline was going to help me understand what was going on in the world. I soon found out that the neoclassical paradigm, while providing some seductive modeling, did not come close to answering the questions I had. But it was only much later, in graduate school, that other questions started coming up. As a woman in the field, I started realizing that my own realities were missing, that they were dismissed or trivialized when issues of women's places in the economy were brought up.

Examining the origins of the neoclassical paradigm, one can identify the Victorian ideology which is at the roots of the treatment of women within it. The founding fathers - Marshall, Pigou, Edgeworth, and Jevons - wrote as one in a voice laden with patriarchal condescension. Unfortunately, this attitude towards women has remained virtually the same. Yet, simply cataloguing the neoclassical record on the status of women seems increasingly fragmentary: giving voice, again, to "the big men" could not be the sole object of an exploration of the patriarchal bias of

neoclassical economics. Two other imperatives emerged.

First, to give voice to women, to feminists, writing on economic matters, asserting their disagreement with the status quo, in society and within the profession; and adding to these the voices of the few male economists approaching "the woman question" with a more sympathetic and innovative outlook.

Second, to go beyond a mere history of thought project to challenge the neoclassical monolith by rooting the contemporary feminist critique in the discipline's own history. This work contributes to the development of a feminist epistemology and ontology. It poses the questions, "who is writing theory? for what purpose?" It also challenges the notion that an epistemology based on the standpoints of women and other marginalized groups¹ in the capitalist/patriarchal system could ever find a place within the neoclassical paradigm.

Such an approach challenges two of the main silencings routinely performed within modern-day neoclassical economics: the erasure of women and feminists both within the paradigm and as voices of dissent, and the dismissal of methodological critics of the paradigm. I will note here that the second erasure is explicit, while the first is still implicit only. It is relevant to mention, in this respect, that my book (Pujol 1992) has been criticized so far, not so much for its feminist stance and its challenge of the erasure of women and feminists in the discipline, but for daring to criticize the neoclassical paradigm, to suggest that it is flawed. These flaws can be seen more clearly when

we analyze the five elements which characterize neoclassical views of women:

1. All women are married, or if not yet, they will be. Similarly, all women have or will have children.

2. All women are (and ought to be) economically dependent on a male relative: father or husband.

3. Women are (and ought to be) housewives; their reproductive capacities specialize them for that function.

4. Women are unproductive (whether absolutely or relative to men is not always clear) in the industrial workforce.

5. Women are irrational, they are unfit as economic agents, and they cannot be trusted to make the right economic decisions.

Through all these elements, women are constructed as different from the norm (men). All the above characteristics together contribute to rationalizing women's exclusion from the public realm of economics: the market. These characteristics are seldom openly and clearly stated by economists. They fall within what economists call "unstated assumptions" (even though there is so little awareness of their existence). And because they are unstated, it is not entirely easy for women in the discipline to put a name on the source of our malaise. And I quote here my own inner voice:

my voice, the "I" I am using here, a scary thing to do (there is no I in my book). I am doing it because it is necessary for us, women/feminist economists to use our own voices, to claim the right to do so. As Diana Strassmann and Livia Polanyi say, in economics:

direct voices have seldom been female voices, seldom been voices on the margin, seldom been voices not legitimated by the mainstream of power and control ... until women speak their own thoughts and experiences in their own voices and legitimate their speech by the authority of their own

histories and experiences, we will not have a truly feminist economics. (Strassmann and Polanyi 1992, 13-14)

Let us remember, as feminist economists, that the personal is political and the political is economic. As a woman, as a feminist, as a lesbian, and as a survivor within the discipline of economics, my identity, and the experiences I have encountered in this discipline for twenty-five years inform my analysis of economic theory.²

We turn, now, to an examination of the work of the early neoclassical economists to show how these five unstated assumptions have been used consistently,³ and contrast them with the actual situation of women and with feminist economic analyses of women's situation.

Women as Married and Dependent

The first two characterizations, that all women are married or are to be married,⁴ and its immediate corollary that they are the economic dependents of men, invariably inform neoclassical discussions of women's labour force behaviour, and beyond that of any economic activity in which they might be engaged. This sets the stage for questioning women's presence in the labour market or for refusing to take this presence seriously. Women, being supported, have no reason to be in the labour market. The concerns they might have - particularly for higher wage levels and for access to employment - can be and have been dismissed as inconsequential. By contrast, men's presence in the labour force has never been questioned by neoclassical economists.⁵

This characterization leads economists to see women as non-autonomous agents. For Pigou, the main determinant of (all?) women's labour supply is their husbands' labour income (Pigou 1960, 565-6). In modern/Beckerian neoclassical economics, women seek employment as the result of a "household decision" (Becker 1981). One can wonder if, in neoclassical economics, the decision to seek employment is an individual decision for women. Clearly such an approach allows us to

avoid asking why women continue to supply their labour when their wages are so low; such a decision might reflect an individually non-optimal use of their productive abilities; and women are not allowed by market conditions to optimize returns to their human capital investment.

Women's presence in the labour force is not seen as a contribution to economic welfare; it is instead problematized as threatening severe negative consequences for national welfare and "household utility." Edgeworth warned with alarm that large numbers of women in the workforce would bring a "depression or débâcle of industry," a "débâcle, ultimately ruinous alike to wealth and family life" (1922, 436; 1923, 493). Marshall, Jevons and Pigou all expressed concern for the impact of employment on women's household duties and on infant mortality rates (Marshall 1930: 198, 685; Jevons 1904; Pigou 1960, 187).

Ironically, the solutions to these "problems" proposed by the heretofore "free market" economists relied on Draconian interventions into existing labour market conditions. Marshall supported the Factory Acts (1930: 198, 751); Edgeworth argued for the maintenance of barriers to women's entry into occupations (1923, 490-4). Jevons was more severe, advocating legislating the complete exclusion of mothers of children under the age of three from factories.

In the same vein, where Pigou advocated state intervention to correct market failure in the labour market, women were explicitly exempted.⁶ Marshall, Pigou and Edgeworth were all either against legislating minimum wages for women, or against minimum wages set at the same level as men's. None of them supported equal pay for equal work legislation. These economists' opposition to women's employment went hand in hand with their support for both preserving men's privileged access to employment and an enhanced male pay packet such that all men, whether married or not, could earn a "family wage" (Edgeworth 1923). Such proposals, if implemented, would have removed what they saw as the main cause for women's labour force participation: their need to earn complementary family income.

We can find direct parallels in the contemporary neoclassical treatment of women's labour force participation. Since Mincer's (1962) seminal article, the focus has been on married women's labour supply. The main question has been "why are these (married) women in the labour force?" and not the appropriate pay scale, working conditions or utilization of their human capital investments. Hence, (all) women's waged employment is constructed as problematic; their human capital investment behaviour as anomalous (see Mincer 1962; Mincer and Polachek 1974, 1978; Sandel and Shapiro 1978; Mincer and Ofek 1979). Thus the New Home Economics is a rationale for (all) women's "specialization" in reproduction and housework as opposed to income-earning employment (see Becker 1973, 1976, 1981; Schultz 1974).

By implicitly generalizing from married women to all women, the existence and the needs of women who are not attached to men are denied, and the "norm" of women's economic dependence is ideologically reinforced by both contemporary (Mincer, Polachek) and early neoclassical economists (Marshall, Pigou, Edgeworth, Jevons). One has to look hard to find references to single women, or to no-longer-married women, let alone to lesbians - of whom economists must never have heard.⁷

Yet, the actual situation of women differed substantially from the view proffered by the neoclassical economists. In nineteenth- and early twentieth-century England, a substantial proportion of women were and remained unmarried (Bodichon 1859, 28), and among those who married, full economic support by husbands was often far from the more distressing reality (Cadbury et al. 1906; Smith 1915; Rathbone 1917, 1924). Women, both married and unmarried, were present in the labour force in large numbers (Scott and Tilly 1978). These facts were reported and documented by feminists who often used them as a basis for their demands for the means to economic independence for women: access to jobs, education, professional employment and equal pay (Bodichon 1859; Fawcett 1892, 1916, 1918; Webb 1914, 1919).⁸ The so-called "family wage" was described by Eleanor

Rathbone (1917, 1924) as an inadequate mode of support for families, and furthermore, as a completely ineffective mode of income distribution.⁹ The issue of the degree to which women supported themselves and their dependents was hotly debated and the object of contradictory empirical claims.¹⁰

Feminist writers who discussed issues of women's economic status, in the pages of the *Economic Journal* and elsewhere, provided ample documentation and analysis to contradict the assumptions and normative reasoning of neoclassical economists. Economic historians such as Georgiana Hill (1896), Edith Abbott (1910), Elizabeth Hutchins (1915), Alice Clark (1968) and Ivy Pinchbeck (1981) documented the work and economic contributions of women, from the Middle Ages to the late nineteenth century. The research team of Edward Cadbury, Cecile Matheson and George Shann published an extensive sociological study of working women in 1906. The Fabian Women's Group's survey of *Working Women and Their Dependents* in 1915 (Smith 1915) was corroborated by Hogg's study published in *Economica* in 1921.

Indeed, these studies documented the ongoing productive role of women, married and not married, and their contribution to their own support, the support of their dependents and to the overall economy. In the pages of the *Economic Journal*, Ada Heather-Bigg argued that it was not women's work, but their earning of an income, which was objectionable to the opponents of women's employment. She clearly perceived that the overwork of women was of no concern to patriarchal ideologues, but their fear of women's access to economic independence was, to quote her colourful words, "the veriest scooped-out, sheet-draped turnip that ever made a village dolt take to his heels and run" (1894, 55).

Feminists writing on these issues pointed out the necessity of women's employment as a source of economic support for themselves and others, thereby challenging the "family wage" and "pin money" doctrines. They argued and empirically demonstrated that there was no such thing as universal support of women by men, that

men's earnings were insufficient to support their families, and that women contributed a high proportion of subsistence needs out of their meagre earnings and hard work. Out of these observations arose serious challenges to some of the justifications for existing labour market conditions.

Feminists saw the Factory Acts as discriminatory restrictions to women's entry into the labour market. They denounced them as protecting the "monopoly" of men over some occupations (Bodichon 1857; Fawcett 1916, 1918; Webb 1914, 1919; Mill 1965, 1970; Taylor 1970) and the license of employers to exploit (Smart 1892). The "family wage" ideal was also seen as a protection of male privilege, of men's right to a job and to a pay cheque whether or not they had a family to support. Furthermore, it reinforced their power in the home (Rathbone 1917, 1924).¹¹ Policy proposals to exclude women from the labour force were denounced by feminists as a means to disempower women, to thwart their efforts to organize, and as an encouragement to employers to exploit them (Smart 1892; Fawcett 1918; Webb 1919).

Women as Mothers

Characterizing all women as married or to be married goes along, in the writing of the early neoclassical economists, with the third characterization of seeing them as mothers whose duty is to raise children properly and carry out related housework. Any other occupation was seen as interfering with this obligation and therefore causing major losses in economic and general welfare. Marshall maintained that (all) women's employment "tempts them to neglect their duty of building a true home, and investing their efforts in the personal capital of their children's character and abilities" and insisted on the necessity of their presence in the home (1930: 685, 721). He asserted that the "degradation of the working classes varies almost uniformly with the amount of rough work done by women" and more particularly with mothers losing their "tender and unselfish instincts" due to "the strain and stress of unfeminine work" (1930, 564).

Pigou advocated shorter workdays for women to provide them with "opportunities for better care of their homes" (1960, 463). He believed that "a woman's work has a special personal value in respect of her own children" (188) which led him to assign women to the home in his blueprint for economic welfare. Jevons asserted that "there are no duties which are more important in every respect than those which a mother is bound by with regard to her own children" (1904, 166). He also proclaimed "the right of the infant to the mother's breast" (171). Women's rights are never mentioned in such fashion.¹²

Marshall, Pigou, and Jevons' advocacy of full-time domesticity for mothers was based entirely upon alarmist accounts of high infant mortality in districts where women could find industrial employment (Jevons 1904, 153; Marshall 1930: 198, 529; Pigou 1960, 187). Other factors which might have caused high infant mortality, particularly starvation-level wages and the resulting unsanitary living conditions in working-class households were not investigated.

In fact, the evidence cited did not support the economists' claims regarding the negative effects of mothers' employment, but it was authoritatively dismissed anyway. Jevons, for example, attempted to explain away the case of Liverpool, which held "the place of dishonour" with the nation's highest infant mortality rate although there were no women-employing industries in Liverpool! Liverpool was an "anomaly" due to its population mix (1904, 153-4). In similar fashion, Pigou invoked *ceteris paribus* reasoning in his attempts to dismiss the annoying evidence that working mothers provided a remedy to poverty and infant mortality:

The reality of this evil [working mothers' alleged neglect] is not disproved by the low, and even negative, correlation which sometimes is found to exist between the factory work of mothers and the rate of infant mortality. For in districts where women's work of this kind prevails there is presumably - and this is the cause of

women's work - great poverty. This poverty, which is injurious to children's health, is likely, other things being equal, to be greater than elsewhere in families where the mother declines factory work, and it may be that the evil of the extra poverty is greater than that of the factory work. This consideration explains the statistical facts that are known. They, therefore, militate in no way against the view that, *other things equal* the factory work of mothers is injurious. (1960, 187)

Reasoning like this was used effectively to depict women who cared for children as criminals. Mothers who sought employment "and go earn good wages in the mills" (Jevons 1904, 166) along with the wet and dry nurses who provided childcare for the employed mothers, were held directly responsible for the death of children. Curiously, these women were not perceived by neoclassical economists as economic agents who exercised rational decision making under the specific constraints they faced.

Furthermore, working mothers were described as acting unnaturally. Jevons compared them unfavourably to female animals: "The very beasts of the field tend and guard their whelps with instinctive affection. It is only human mothers which shut their infants up alone, or systematically neglect to give them nourishment" (1904, 166). Casting employed mothers in such a light was obviously meant to generate public outrage and gain support for restrictions of their employment.

The economists' prescriptions were outright punitive. Jevons stated: "I will go so far as to advocate the *ultimate complete exclusion of mothers of children under the age of three years from factories and workshops*" (1904: 167-8, emphasis in text). He proposed to fine the husbands and employers of the derelict mothers, as well as the nurses. Mothers were not treated as responsible agents. Instead, they were patronized, and economists attempted to reinforce their dependency by making their husbands and employers answer for their actions. Pigou and Marshall also advocated the prohibition of employment for mothers. But,

while Marshall showed no concern for how this might affect the income of working-class households and women's ability to feed their children, Pigou proposed some form of state-funded "relief to those families whom the prohibition renders necessitous" (1960, 188).

The argument about mothers' nurturing instinct (although it was found lacking by economists) and of the special value of their reproductive work towards their own children was used to reject all other solutions, particularly that of day nurseries which could provide adequate childcare (Jevons 1904, 164-5). While he acknowledged that factory-supervised crèches observed in France "have produced most beneficial results," Jevons supported the idea only as a transitional measure for the period of adjustment to the new regime of employment prohibition. As for relief, it was to be provided only to "widows and deserted wives" to be "employed" by the state "as nurses to their own children" (169). Hence a sexual division of labour which served patriarchal interests and kept women in the domestic sphere, without access to an independent income source was assumed as "natural." As an element of nature it could then become the "logical" basis for policy prescriptions.

Whereas the proposed policy of prohibition of employment targeted specifically the mothers of young children, the economists cast a wider net to ensure the domestication of women in general. In particular, they uniformly supported the Factory Acts - Jevons praised them as "one of the noblest products of legislative skill and patience" at the end of his article on "Married Women in Factories" (172). The status quo of below-subsistence wages was also seen as inducing domesticity among women in general. Marshall explicitly opposed a rise of women's wages which he claimed to be detrimental to the performance of their domestic duties (1930, 685). More generally, Marshall, Pigou and Edgeworth's opposition to equal pay, to minimum wages for women, to access to industrial training all intended to keep women dependent and domesticated.

The strange paradox is that women do not seem to want to do what is claimed to be "natural"

for them; they have to be coerced on to that path. In the name of their "natural duties," women were kept away from making their own decisions. Severe legislation to keep them in the home was proposed as the panacea for the "evil" of infant mortality. Jevons evoked idyllic images of "the wife ... a true mother and a housekeeper; and round many a Christmas table troops of happy chubby children" which will miraculously appear once the legislator speeds up what he saw as a process of evolution whereby "the manufacturing population would become fitted to its environment" (1904, 171-2). Meanwhile, as working-class women were to be coerced into the dependent reproductive role, their economic contribution to their family and to society as a whole was to be further denied and made invisible: their work, although seemingly essential would receive no economic return or recognition.¹³

Contemporary neoclassical economists reveal an intimate commitment to nineteenth-century patriarchal ideology by their continued reliance upon the assumption that women are naturally suited for reproductive work. The New Home Economics takes this further and insists that women have a "comparative advantage" in the performance of mothering and household duties. Not only does this "scientific reasoning" reinforce the dominant sexual division of labour within the home and in society, it also bolsters the human capital school's circular explanation of women's lower wages: since women earn less than men, it is to their advantage and the advantage of their families for them to remain specialized in reproductive work. Women's assumed "comparative advantage" in nurturing is used to privilege their contribution to the human capital of others (husband, children) over maximizing returns to their own human capital (Becker 1973, 1976, 1981; Mincer and Polachek 1974; Schultz 1974).

All this fails to address the reality of women's "double workday" and the oddity of the lack of monetary return for the activities in which women have a "comparative advantage." We can see that, in spite of greater sophistication and more complex mathematical expression, very little change in either assumptions or reasoning has occurred since Marshall. Now, as then, this

economic "logic" tends to justify and maintain a status quo of female dependence, domesticity and "specialization" in reproductive work.

Feminists of the first wave of the women's movement opposed the existing barriers to women's access to the labour market. They denounced the Factory Acts (Bodichon 1859; Mill 1965, 1970; Strachey 1969; Taylor 1970) as well as trade boards and trade union restrictions on women's entry and access to skills and apprenticeship (Fawcett 1892, 1916, 1918; Webb 1914, 1919). However, in the feminist economic writings I have studied, I did not find anyone directly taking on the infant mortality argument of the neoclassical economists. But, as I have already mentioned, a number of studies documented the extent of income-earning support generated by working women.¹⁴

Eleanor Rathbone, however, focussed specifically on the economic position of working-class mothers in England post World War I. She criticized the ideologies of the "family wage" and of the male breadwinner as utterly flawed representations of the income-earning reality of working-class households and as an inadequate income distribution system (1917, 62). She developed a proposal for a "motherhood allowance" where mothers would receive from the state an independent income to provide for the subsistence needs of their children. Whereas she supported the position that mothers should stay home to take care of their children, she maintained that their reproductive work must receive the economic recognition of a specific income payment. She rejected the situation where mothers were the dependent victims of a patriarchal order. Her mother's allowance system proposed to provide mothers with an independent, state-funded income, to recognize their role and their work in the household and to generate economic support for children independent of the sometimes uncertain labour market earnings of men.

The economists of the time did not sanction Rathbone's proposals. As already mentioned, Pigou endorsed state allowances only in the case of widows, with the express purpose of maintaining them domesticated and dependent on

the state. He did not favour schemes which would economically recognize mothers' reproductive work while ensuring them access to an independent income. Edgeworth opposed motherhood allowances after applying a strict economic cost/benefit analysis to them (1922, 450-3) and was not willing to recognize that, in a wider social welfare approach, the balance might tip in their favour (1923, 494).¹⁵

Productivity

The fourth assumption, that of women's low industrial productivity, is pervasive in the early (and late) neoclassical economists' writings. For instance, women were repetitively characterized as unskilled and "low grade workers" by Pigou (1960: 607, 723). Pigou never demonstrated this and never stopped to wonder about employers' continued demand for women's labour, particularly in specific "women's" industries.¹⁶ The argument that women receive low wages as a result of low productivity is also reinforced by the assumption of perfect competition in the labour market. Given this assumption, women's low wages are seen as "proof" of their low productivity. Yet the absence of a necessary correlation between women's wages and productivity is paradoxically confirmed by Pigou. He argued that women's wages should be pegged at a presumably "fair" market-determined level even when their productivity should warrant a higher wage (Pigou 1960, 566-70).¹⁷

The views of neoclassical economists were contradicted in their days by the more realistic observations and theories of first wave feminists. Fawcett (1892, 1916) and Mill (1965) put forward a theory of non-competing groups which provided an alternative to the neoclassical unified labour market. The concept of crowding, which has today become an accepted approach to labour markets, was first developed by Bodichon (1859), Fawcett (1892, 1916), Smart (1892), Cannan (1914) and Beatrice Webb (1914, 1919). As early as 1859, Bodichon identified institutional and customary barriers to women's entry into industry. This analysis was refined by Mill (1965, 1970), Fawcett (1892, 1916) and Webb (1914, 1919). Others

developed a "customary wage" approach whereby customs and tradition were greater determinants of women's wages than actual productivity (Marshall and Marshall 1881; Smart 1892). Discrimination between the sexes in the form of a dual system of women's subsistence wage and men's "family wage" was another approach proposed by Smart (1892), Rathbone (1917, 1924) and Webb (1914, 1919). William Smart's 1892 comprehensive and incisive critique of the economists' use of the law of demand and supply to justify women's low wages is just as relevant today and testifies to the ossification of the discipline.¹⁸

It is interesting to see how the biases of the neoclassical economists were reasserted in spite of these other approaches and in spite of their own acknowledgment of less than competitive conditions in the labour market. Edgeworth listed three reasons why the labour market is not competitive: employers' power, their preference for hiring men even at a productivity disadvantage, and trade unions' interference (1922, 439). Yet he asserted "I submit as an *inference based on general impressions and ordinary experience* that, even if all restrictions on the competition between male and female workers were removed we should still find the average weekly earnings of the former to be considerably higher" (1922, 442, emphasis added). Here, against all precepts of positivist science, assertion prevails over evidence and proof.

Pigou's suggestions on the problem of non-competing markets for women workers was to keep them such. In contrast, where men receive wages below the value of their marginal product Pigou recommended state intervention to raise these wages to their efficiency level. No such solution was proposed in the case of women, as their wages were decreed "fair" if they corresponded to what women were "paid elsewhere," regardless of their actual productivity level (1960, 569-70). Pigou forgot his usual efficiency concerns and used instead the apparently solicitous argument that higher wages would deter employers from hiring women and thus harm women's position in the labour market. Reading on, we find out, however, that he was a lot more concerned with employers' access to a supply of

cheap female labour than with women's employment opportunities (600-02).

The belief that women have low industrial productivity did not lead to proposals to raise productivity levels via either training or education. The neoclassical economists saw such schemes as wasteful since they believed that women should not remain in the labour force, that their dependent status removed all motivation for productivity improvement, or that women's unproductivity is irremediable (Pigou 1960, 616). In a nutshell, any proposal to improve women's wage-earning capacity, whether through increased skills and training, through wages reflecting more adequately women's actual productivity, or through equal pay (and in some cases minimum wages) measures, were opposed (Edgeworth 1922, 1923; Pigou 1960, 1952; Marshall 1930: 715).

Such measures were seen as harmful to the market, to employers, and to overall economic welfare. Edgeworth believed they could cause a "débâcle of industry," or worse, men's rights to jobs and their status as breadwinners might be challenged (Edgeworth 1922, 1923). Pigou saw such measures as threatening to harm general welfare by "divert[ing] women into industrial activity away from home-making, child-rearing and child-bearing" (1952, 224-5) and as unnecessary because women do not need higher labour income, being dependents and only temporarily present in the labour market.

Once again we see direct parallels with contemporary human capital theory: the market is assumed to be both perfect and infallible in its determination of wages which truly reflect productivity; women's lower employment income is therefore attributed to their own choice in human capital investment and choice of low-productivity occupations. Any legislative approach (pay equity/comparable worth, affirmative action) will only create market imperfections and jeopardize women's chances in the labour market (Killingsworth 1985).

These positions are directly opposed to feminist analysis of women's labour force situation and to feminist economic policy recommendations.¹⁹ What is so striking is the

neoclassical economists' heavy reliance on their patriarchal bias rather than on theoretically and methodologically sound approaches to support their policy recommendations. The pervasiveness of this bias raises the question of whether feminist ideas and approaches can ever gain a place within the paradigm. To date, feminist critiques of human capital theory and of the New Home Economics have largely been ignored.

Rationality

The four assumptions/characterizations discussed above are closely linked. They reinforce each other and contribute to a specific construction of women by the early neoclassical economists. Through their combined effects (in theory and policy) women are seen as occupying a radically different place in the capitalist economy than men, who are conversely constructed as "rational economic men."²⁰

In neoclassical economics, men are autonomous, independent individuals, while women are dependents who cannot stand on their own. Women are always defined as members of family units, as wives, daughters, mothers. Men make economic decisions based on their own needs and their own abilities and options; they circulate freely in the market sphere. In contrast, women have limited access to the market and even more limited access to their own utility maximizing decision-making. Even in the single example Marshall uses where women are seen to skilfully exercise such decision-making, by stretching (i.e. "maximizing the allocation" of) the meagre household budget²¹ (1930, 195-6), it is not their own utility which is maximized, but that of the household.²² Where men may choose across an array of occupations, women are assigned to a single one: motherhood.

In this construction, women lack access to the conditions required to act freely and rationally in the capitalist marketplace. The complete absence of these conditions for women is mirrored in the monopoly exerted over them by men - a means through which the masculinity of *homoeconomicus* is erected. Women's condition is closest to that of

the pre-capitalist serfs or slaves whose lives are determined and whose decisions are made by someone else: husband, father, guardian. Isn't this why Jevons proposes to fine husbands when women break the law?²³

But are women's economic actions really so different? Don't they seek employment to support themselves and their families? Don't they respond to the economic incentive of starvation and poverty (their own and their children's) by seeking employment? And don't they try to make the best of the limited opportunities offered by the labour market? But, given the misogyny of neoclassical economists, we are not surprised to see women blamed for competing against each other and driving down their own wages (are men ever chastised for competing against each other?). Viewed from a feminist standpoint, it is obvious that women's behaviour is rational despite the incredible restrictions they continue to face.

Women are seen as irrational, not because they act against the laws of economic rationality, but because they are not allowed to act rationally, or because they act in contravention of the roles that are prescribed as "natural" for them. Taking this further, it seems that women's access to economic rationality is perceived as a threat to the economy and to society. Marshall, Jevons, Edgeworth and Pigou share this view, and it leads them to oppose systematically attempts by women to claim an equal economic status and to create for themselves the conditions for that status.

Conclusion

Approaches to women in neoclassical economics have not changed much since the founding of the paradigm in the last decade of the nineteenth century. The men who wrote then and the many men and women who write from this perspective today share a common commitment to a methodology which is imbued with patriarchy, sexism and misogyny. As in the early days, women and feminists are excluded from developing or establishing alternative theoretical approaches. Our words are not heard within the "malestream" of the discipline. Can neoclassical economics be cleansed

of its patriarchal bias so that it can open its eyes to the methodological flaws resulting from its ingrained sexism? With the authors of other papers in this collection, I want to suggest that the very logic, rhetoric and symbolism of the paradigm may be inseparable from the five sexist assumptions I have discussed here. Neoclassical economics has a *history* of stifling feminist approaches. We cannot wait for it to change. We must transcend it.

Michèle Pujol

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ENDNOTES

1. On standpoint theory see in particular Nancy Hartsock (1983, 1991).
2. Just as your experiences and identity shape your analyses.
3. I will focus on the following early neoclassical works: A. Marshall's *Principles of Economics* (1930), S. Jevons' 1904 article "Married Women in Factories," A.C. Pigou's *Economics of Welfare* (1960) and F. Edgeworth's two articles "Equal Pay to Men and Women for Equal Work" (1922) and "Women's Wages in Relation to Economic Welfare" (1923).
4. This goes back to the origins of patriarchal thought: Elizabeth Spelman, in *Inessential Woman*, discusses how, for Aristotle, women were acknowledged only if they were wives of citizens. All other women simply did not exist (1988, 45-7).
5. Their only worry is where it is deemed insufficient: e.g. in discussions of the Poor Rates impact on the (male) supply of labour.
6. See Pigou's discussion of unfair wages (1960, 549-70).
7. Widows - with children - are the only women not dependent on a male breadwinner who have elicited some interest. Pigou specifically devises state welfare schemes to keep them away from the labour force, staying home to reproduce the next

generation, and to keep them economically dependent - on the state (1960, 722-3).

8. In the Cambridge degree controversy, the argument used by Marshall to oppose women's admissions was his *belief* that most (90 percent) female students would marry and consequently not require the economic independence provided by a degree. On the opposite side of the controversy, E.M. Sidgwick documented, in a statistical study of families from which students would be drawn, that the marriage rate would be under 50 percent (McWilliams Tullberg 1992, 24).

9. On the "family wage," see also Land (1979-80) and Barrett and McIntosh (1980).

10. Two studies by Smith (1915) and Hogg (1921) show a high rate of self-support among women workers (85 percent in Smith's study), and additionally they show that one in three working women fully or partially supported dependents besides themselves. By contrast, Rowntree-Seebohm and Stuart (1921) found that only 12 percent of working women supported dependents. The latter, in spite of its dubious methodology, was used by Edgeworth to dismiss women's contribution.

11. Note that Edgeworth's reply to the feminists in 1923 does not contradict this analysis, but instead reasserts men's rights in the labour force as a rationale for unequal pay.

12. This position is by no means unique to the early neoclassical economists. We find it expressed by the feminist Mill (1965, 1970) who argued against married women's employment, and by Marx (1967) and Engels (1968) who saw the employment of married women as harmful to the living conditions and the autonomy of the working class.

13. Both Marshall (1930: 79-80, 524) and Pigou (1960, 32-3) prescribe the outright and unjustified exclusion of women's contribution from national income accounts (see Folbre 1991; Pujol 1992).

14. Similarly, today feminist studies point out how much worse poverty statistics would be without women's income contribution.

15. Interestingly, one of Edgeworth's arguments in favour of the status quo is the "seriously deleterious" effect that "relieving the average house-father from the necessity of providing necessaries for his family ... would remove a great part of his incentive to work" (1922, 453). It becomes clear, here, that constraining women to economic dependence on their husbands provides the further economic benefit to the nation (to capital) of increasing and stabilizing the male supply of labour.

16. This contradiction was acknowledged by Edgeworth (1922, 437).

17. See Pujol (1992) for a more detailed analysis of the approaches of Marshall, Edgeworth and Pigou to the issue of women's productivity and wages.

18. With thanks to Susan Feiner for this assessment.

19. See, for instance, Hartmann (1976), Phillips and Taylor (1980), Treiman and Hartmann (1981), England (1982), Bergmann (1986), Blau and Ferber (1986), Folbre and Hartmann (1988), Waring (1988), Ferber and Nelson (1993).

20. An important element of the different construction of women and men by the neoclassical economists lies in their assigned relationship to the market. See Grapard (1993) and Hewitson (1993).

21. Curiously, this is the only instance where women are allowed access to training (in home economics).

22. Here, we can see the close connection between the early neoclassical economists and the New Home Economics.

23. For a full discussion of these dichotomies, see Folbre and Hartmann (1988), McCrate (1991) and Nelson (1992, 1993).

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MICHÈLE PUJOL: WAYS FOR WOMEN TO BE

A long-legged girl with beautiful brown eyes looks thoughtfully out of the photograph taken of Michèle Pujol when she was a teenager living with her parents in Tahiti. Those eyes look out at me now in the last photograph I have of her, standing with her partner Brook outside the cabin on Salt Spring Island where Michèle died eleven weeks later on August 2, 1997.

Anyone who ever has worked with Michèle knows her integrity, her fierce loyalties, her meticulous and beautiful mind, her unrelenting solidarities with those who struggle for justice, and her ability to oppose critically and energetically what she regarded as wrong or inadequate. I have felt both her opposition and her support, and the extraordinary clarity behind each. I remember her as my colleague, at a time when I didn't think I would have any.

We both loved our work: she, a feminist economist, and I, a feminist literary scholar. And the work we shared in developing Women's Studies

was to make our other loves possible, to make our lives possible, to make so much more possible to the lives of women. Michèle's vision was an active and activist praxis, a focussing of critical consciousness on practical activities. There was nothing outside her discerning and demanding feminism, including the relations among women. She would show up with organic foods, seek out and support women and men estranged in our communities, weed an old lot, carry water from the river to sun-wilted plants, and embrace the opportunities to learn from other cultures. Her vision included a steady tenderness for gardens, for other people's children, for friends, for the beauties created around us and by us, and for those who did that creating in daily activities, politics and the arts.

When I met Michèle on the stairs at the University of Manitoba, she asked in her direct way if I was a real appointment or just term, and nodded at my reply. That was in 1984, and she had been here two years, teaching in Economics and Women's Studies. Imagine my surprise to find a feminist and an out lesbian, not undercover at the university, but engaging the people and structures there as directly as she had spoken to me. Right away, I knew lesbian and feminist were lovely ways for women to be.

From 1984 to 1988, Michèle coordinated Women's Studies, bringing in the Major and wresting from the university the economic basis for the Program. Michèle researched the position of women in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Manitoba, contributed to the proposal for the Prairie Endowed Chair in Women's Studies, signed the Human Rights Complaints against Manitoba universities for systemic discrimination against all women, and refused to separate academic Women's Studies from activist community participation. I remember her clear voice in one Women's Studies Committee meeting where we were being asked for a small contribution for a community-organized Lesbian Issues Conference. To the objection to funding a conference that was not academic, Michèle pointed out that lesbians experienced discrimination in our own Women's Studies classes and that the work to change that discrimination was being done in the community. So a pittance from