

Osterud asserts that the women in the Nanticoke Valley were conscious of their strategies of mutuality and inclusiveness in attempting to expand their spheres of influence (p. 192). From my reading of her book, it is difficult to ascertain from her evidence whether this was a strategy of conscious choice rather than one of required social and economic necessity and cultural conditioning.

Readers may respond differently to the questions of perspective, emphasis, and strategy that Osterud raises. However one responds, they will most certainly be aware of Osterud's careful use of detail to situate specific circumstances in the historical past. For me, Osterud was successful in making me feel uncomfortable enough in the reading to rethink interpretations of the historical past and present. While I might argue with her perspective in certain cases or want to challenge it with other interpretations about social relations in inherently patriarchal relationships, I, however, do appreciate the usefulness of her analysis. Osterud successfully demonstrates the theoretical usefulness and complexity of any analysis centred on the lives of men and women which holds the contradictions of mutuality and conflict in tension. She is clear in demonstrating that social and economic worlds are populated by men, women and children.

NOTES

1. Kerber, L.K. (1988). Separate spheres, female worlds, woman's place: The rhetoric of women's history. *Journal of American History*, (June 1988), 9-39.
2. Osterud refers to the use of bonds as a double metaphor. She credits her choice of the terminology to Sarah M. Grimke's use of the term in 1838 and Nancy F. Cott's subsequent reinterpretation of Grimke's and others' use of the term.
3. Rapp, R. (1982). Family and class in contemporary America: Notes toward an understanding of ideology. In B. Thorne & M. Yalom (Eds.), *Rethinking the family: Some feminist questions*. New York: Longman.

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Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics. bell hooks. 1990.

Bell hook's *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics* is a sober treasure of a book. Hooks, a scholar of African-American and feminist studies, is smart about the clever extension of Western consumerist capitalism and imperialism that is fuelling so much interest in "blackness" these days. She will not be persuaded by some of her popular black critics that patriarchy can simply be dealt with through black liberation struggle.

However, the isolation African-American feminists have experienced in Western culture and in the academy is a bit frightening to behold. Think about that fact and the recent Gulf War, and few progressives can help feeling that Western tradition cannot be wounded either too quickly or too deeply by diasporic African intellectuals like hooks or by the (careerist) white male postmoderns who hooks uneasily hails in *Yearning*.

Although hooks' intellectual alliance with postmodernism in *Yearning* is firm (and welcome, in my opinion), it will be an irritant to those radical, liberal or socialist feminist fans of hooks' previous books who still feel that postmodernism is simply "designer socialism." Hooks herself acidly notes the absence of works by African-American scholars in the reference notes and bibliographies of American essay collections on postmodernism (including feminist ones). Furthermore, she makes it clear that diasporic African intellectuals in America, whose ancestors suffered the trauma of slavery and segregation and whose brothers and sisters still suffer class injustice in disproportionate numbers, initially find the trendy cultural fragmentation of Western postmodernism depressing.

The "yearning" in the title of her book represents hooks' hope that the new spaces of transformative cultural critique opened up by privileged white male postmoderns can be recouped by African-American cultural critics as a site for renewed

black liberation struggle. Hooks, however, is almost solely an observer of Western postmodern critique in *Yearning* and she occasionally disappoints by not employing extended postmodern analysis.

In her fascinating essay, "Saving Black Folk Culture: Zora Neale Hurston as Anthropologist and Writer," hooks shows how Hurston deconstructed the subject/object relationship of conventional anthropology in her work. Hooks also suggests that, by popularizing black folk culture and simultaneously producing an autobiographical quest narrative, anthropologist Hurston was being deeply subversive. However, she does not take us down into a more intricate postmodern analysis of Hurston's critical and cultural place in world culture. This is the strength as well as the weakness of *Yearning*. Hooks, like Hurston, is a brilliant popularizer whose books are feeling intellectual autobiographies, not simply academic essays.

If hooks did employ the standard critical vocabulary of postmodernism, her work, like that of so many postmoderns, would become inaccessible to many of her readers. Thus, one asks, will hooks use more postmodern insights in her next book and somehow frame those analyses in less elitist terms than her academic colleagues? Or will she continue to observe the potential uses of postmodernism for African-American studies and give us more intellectual autobiography to send us off on our own to read African-American and Third World writers?

Hooks gives biting, effective examples of racist discourse and situations throughout the essays in this book to drive home the long, hard work that needs to be done to eliminate racism in America. The essays range in topic from her grandmother's quilting to the novels of Alice Walker and the films of Spike Lee, Stephen Frears/Hanif Kureishi, Wim Wenders and Euzan Palcy. One of the controversial essays in the book, "Seductive Sexualities: Representing Blackness in Poetry and on Screen," celebrates the vulnerability and ordinariness of black male bodies in the film "Looking for Langston" as well as the collective experience of gay black men. It should be read beside "Representations: Feminism and Black Masculinity," where hooks suggests

that the harsh censorship of black misogyny by feminists contains racist (excessive) fear of black masculinity.

Hooks is not always comfortable to read, nor does she intend to be. The most "comfortable" parts of *Yearning* are hooks' nostalgic, often romantic memories of black communities before integration and this, of course, is a troubling aspect of the book. Hooks' dialogue with Cornel West, "Black Women and Men: Partnership in the 1990s," does not talk about multiple strategies for black liberation in the America of the '90s but rather about a vague return to black community and service in unified terms. The pain of hooks' very important intellectual accomplishments is understandably plain and sobering. Perhaps her troubling romanticism masks a practical pessimism born in the Reagan years.

Yearning is an accomplished, canny, sometimes angry book by a talented, determined black writer and scholar. Hooks deserves her popular following.

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Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine. Margaret Whitford. *London & New York: Routledge, 1991, Pp. 241.*

Margaret Whitford's aims is to re-establish Luce Irigaray's status as a philosopher, and *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine* succeeds in doing just that and more. The book is extremely readable, and provides a provocative discussion of Irigaray's major works available in English translation, as well as those currently available only in French. It should serve both as an introduction to those unfamiliar with Irigaray's texts, as well as present a challenging and sympathetic feminist re-reading for others. Whitford claims at the outset that Irigaray is "engaged in that most philosophical of enterprises: philosophy examining its own foundations and its own presuppositions"; that she is "trying to work out the conditions of ethics and to rethink the social contract" (2).