

anti-imperialist, anti-racist, and anti-capitalist analysis were more ideologically in tune with Third World women than with their other Canadian sisters. Similarly, middle class or elite women form the First, Second (the then Communist world), and the Third Worlds tended to have more in common with each other than with non-elite women from their own or other countries. Finally, there were tensions between Western cultural/spiritualist feminists and socialist feminists from working-class and trade unionist backgrounds over questions of "feminine" and "masculine" styles of "negotiating."

If there was a rather solid dividing line between First World women (read white, middle class or elite, Western women in the "developed" world) and Third World women (including most "developing" world women and many women of colour as well as some labour, working-class, and poor women who live in the "developed" world), it was drawn over the issue of nationalism. As Cynthia Enloe has so powerfully revealed in her new book, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (University of California Press, 1989), the hardest thing to be in this world is a feminist nationalist. On the one hand, you must resist the notion purveyed by male nationalists that feminism is an alien and divisive force in the struggle for national self-determination, and, on the other hand, you must avoid allying yourself too closely with a supposedly global feminist agenda that is designed by largely white, middle class, Western women. The organizers of the Halifax conference had hoped that women could transcend their nationalistic identities and embrace a global feminist agenda for peace. This was read as a totalizing move by women who were not willing to negotiate away their still unfulfilled right to national self-determination even though they recognized that national independence did not necessarily translate into women's liberation or peace.

Enloe argues persuasively that nationalism will continue to be problematic for women as long as it remains a masculinist construction which insists on women's self-sacrifice on behalf of the male-run collective and its state-to-be or state-that-is. It will also remain problematic for peace as long as peace is construed as an insistence upon global homogeneity and an intolerance of difference. Looking back at the Halifax conference and all the events that preceded and followed it, these were spaces where diverse women

did (and will continue to) talk about multiple definitions of peace, security, non-violence, nationalism, and feminism, instead of settling for the totalizing search for "true security."

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**Talking Back: Thinking Feminist — Thinking Black.** Bell Hooks, *Toronto: Between the Lines, 1989, Pp. 184.*

After the publications of *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* and *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center*, Gloria Watkins has once again taken to print, this time to "talk back." Using her pen-name Bell Hooks, Watkins continues to establish herself as one of the most outspoken black feminist theorists with *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist — Thinking Black.*

"Talking Back" is, in two ways, the symbol of Hooks' ongoing struggle to mature as a writer. She herself defines "talking back" as something that set her apart from other children in the Southern United States of the 1950s: "It meant daring to disagree and sometimes it just meant having an opinion" (p. 5). While this early act of defiance liberated her from the silence imposed on little girls, "talking back" in the present context also enables Hooks to deal directly with some of the quite severe criticism she encountered over her two previous books.

*Talking Back* is made up of twenty-five short essays which address a variety of issues; in each essay, however, facets of racism, sexism and elitism are the main focus. In one interview reprinted in this book, the author ties all of these aspects together in one sentence: "I think that a lot of my analysis comes back to an insistence upon interlocking systems of domination, something that I occasionally refer to as a 'politic of domination'" (p. 175). While her conviction of the existence of such a "politic of domination" is well communicated, the individual articles occasionally do not make these connections obvious. Clearly, to point to the varied expressions of domination in each of the twenty-five pieces would be redundant; however, the brevity of the essays cannot excuse a sometimes apparent lack of cohesion.

The interests of Gloria Watkins, alias Bell Hooks, are varied indeed. Political theory, literary and film criticism, advocacy of social activism and a passionate declaration for the role of the teacher all find a place in *Talking Back*. The issue of education in particular is a joining theme throughout the book. Hooks' childhood impressions of powerful and dedicated black female schoolteachers ultimately encouraged her to pursue an academic career. Despite all the difficulties faced by a young feminist black graduate student, she managed to achieve her aim (inspired to a large extent by Paulo Freire's educational philosophy). Today, Gloria Watkins teaches women's studies at Yale University and she continues to develop her principle of a "revolutionary feminist pedagogy" as an active alternative to the conservative scholarship practised in academia.

Hooks returns to her childhood in several chapters of this book. Her early awareness that girls were to be seen but not heard led to her rebellion against the patriarchal attitudes of her own family. The author repeatedly relates her struggle to find ways of expressing her dissatisfaction, first through poetry then through other forms of writing — her use of a pseudonym in part fulfilling a "therapeutic function" (p. 162). When she had to leave home, however, to attend Stanford University as an undergraduate, she encountered a different kind of oppression. Racism outside the segregated Southern black community became a dominating factor in Hooks' life.

*Talking Back* deserves the most credit, however, for its clear language in respect to racist attitudes in American society. Hooks is not so much concerned with openly bigoted racist sentiment; rather her interest is focused on the more incidental acceptance of what she calls "white supremacist" notions:

It is the very small but highly visible liberal movement away from the perpetuation of overtly racist discrimination, exploitation, and oppression of black people which often masks how all-pervasive white supremacy is in this society, both as an ideology and as behaviour. (p. 113)

According to Hooks, the existence of white domination is therefore as prevalent in the feminist movement as it is in any other liberal field of endeavour. She strongly rejects the conviction of some feminists that women are inherently more caring and peaceful than men. Instead, she rightly points out that, throughout history, women have taken on the role of oppressors as well as that of

the oppressed, so why should the more recent time be an exception to this truism?

Indeed, Hooks suggests that, on occasion, it seems that perhaps women are more likely to be the perpetrators of subjugation than men, because of their intimate relationship with children:

[I]t is likely that the parent-child relationship with its very real imposed survival structure of dependency, ... was a site for the construction of a paradigm of domination. While this circumstance of dependency is not necessarily one that leads to domination, it lends itself to the enactment of a social drama wherein domination could easily occur as a means of exercising and maintaining control. This speculation does not place women outside the practice of domination, in the exclusive role of victim. It centrally names women as agents of domination.... (p. 20)

With this conjecture, Hooks, I think, is just as much on shaky ground as those feminists who maintain that almost all of women's negative actions are directly or indirectly the result of patriarchal indoctrination. Yet her speculation on the dynamics of "primitive" human society is worth pondering. Therefore, I do agree with Hooks that explanations for racism require more analysis than the simplistic notion that sees racism merely as a natural extension of patriarchy (as Andrea Dworkin implies).

*Talking Back* is articulate in its exposure of widespread racism — or rather white domination — within the feminist movement. In this sense, the book is an eye-opener for white women who either do not have much experience with the black community, or for white women involved in multi-racial feminist action. However, Hooks makes a point of stating that she in no way intended to supply white women with a ready-made programme on how they should interact with non-whites. Her insistence that black women are under no obligation to "serve" whites by providing a policy of conduct is well taken. Thus it seems strange to me that the author does not take a similarly resolute stand when she addresses the interaction of men and women in general.

I would take issue with Hooks' assertion that not enough work has been done to enlighten us about the social construction of masculinity (p. 127). Her proposal that women's socialization is responsible for this silence on the topic of men (even among feminists)

submits that it is women's job to enlighten their oppressors, something she clearly repudiated in the relations between whites and non-whites.

In all fairness, perhaps Hooks did not mean to suggest that women should take care that men understand the demands of feminism, but such misunderstandings are recurrent. Once again, the brevity of the separate essays is most likely responsible for the absence of a much-needed broader context, where subtleties can and should be explored. Of course, the strength of *Talking Back* lies in its concise rhetorical style, designed to arouse a similar emotional response from the reader as the author herself offers. At the same time, however, Hooks evades criticism of fundamental aspects of her book by adopting such a personal tone; it is the style rather than the content that focuses attention.

I acknowledge Gloria Watkins' concern that "feminist theory is rapidly becoming another sphere of academic elitism" (p. 36) and, in that sense, one can appreciate her attempt to speak to the non-academic community (no footnotes, short bibliography, etc.). *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist — Thinking Black* aspires to unite the popular writer Bell Hooks with the controversial educator Gloria Watkins in one aim:

To reaffirm the primacy of feminist struggle, feminist scholars must renew our collective commitment to a radical theoretical agenda, to a feminist education that is the practice of freedom. We begin this task by acknowledging that feminist theory is losing its vital connection to feminist struggle.... (p. 40-1)

This aim means to transcend the still persisting limitations of racism, sexism and other forms of domination. Therefore, regardless of some shortcomings in her book, Bell Hook's *Talking Back* is a stimulating work to read.

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**Taking Our Time: Feminist Perspectives on Temporality.** Frieda Johles Forman with Caoran Sowton, Toronto: Pergamon Press Canada, 1989, Pp. 209 paperback.

*Taking Our Time* is an interesting collection of essays and poems investigating the concept of time from a feminist perspective which draws on many different disciplines: philosophy, sociology, history and literature amongst others. The contributors share a distrust of "patriarchal time," that is, linear, objective time, which has excluded woman's cyclical, subjective and relative time. Heide Göttner-Abendroth's essay, entitled "Urania — Time and Space of the Stars: The Matriarchal Cosmos through the Lens of Modern Physics," is one of the best essays in the collection and is the only one which carefully explains just what the patriarchal concept of time *is* and how it came to be accepted as a universal concept of time. She points out that before the "patriarchalization" of time, time had so much to do with women that it was considered to be female.

For the bodily processes in women concerned with fertility — for which she was highly revered in matriarchies as the giver of life — run synchronously with the clocks of the heavenly bodies. The menstruation cycle runs synchronously with the phases of the moon, and the pregnancy cycle of nine months is embedded in the mythical year from Easter till Yule (vernal equinox till winter solstice). Presumably, the erotic acts of these peoples in the community, at least on a sacral level, were adjusted to these cycles, and everything obeyed this synchronous "inner clock" of women. (p. 110)

Public recognition of the inner clock of women was evident from the dance rituals at the moon and sun calendars such as Stonehenge and Avebury. Göttner-Abendroth points out that the matriarchal peoples were the first to conduct precise astronomical studies and that they did not conceive of time as a linear progression. Rather, time was the spiralling cyclical movement and rhythm of the planets and stars in space. This cyclical concept of time was destroyed, along with the rest of matriarchal society, by the patriarchal warrior societies in antiquity. These patriarchal societies held a rational-linear, historical concept of time which is glorified in "the enumeration of genealogies of ruling houses, all pure father-son genealogies, and in similar lists of the succession of dynasties and kingdoms." However, with the rapid