

To exemplify compassion in action, *Healing the Wounds* includes three essays — by Radha Bhatt, Pamela Philipose, and Vandana Shiva — which celebrate the contributions of the village women in India. The most famous action was the *Chipko andolan* (the hug-the-trees movement) by which women saved forests — and livelihoods — from the ax. What is evident, however, in all three essays is the extent to which Indian women are motivated by their traditional religion and by the teachings of Gandhi. Even Shiva's touchstone quotation is from Gandhi: "There is enough in the world for everyone's need, but not for some people's greed" (p. 84). Eco-feminism in India seems less a question of culture building than of culture recovery.

In the West, finding roots for ecofeminism is more problematic. It is not only science and capitalism that are implicated in the destruction of the earth, but our Judaic-Christian tradition as well. As an alternative, Starhawk and others have recovered remnants of earth religions, which celebrate women's wisdom:

This is the story we like to  
tell ourselves  
in the night  
when the fire seems nothing but dying embers wink-  
ing out...  
We like to tell ourselves  
that we remember the First Mother... (p. 116)

And we like to create our own rituals. Take, for example, Dale Colleen Hamilton's poignant story of Emma, a doctor who undertakes the native custom of sleeping overnight in a hollow tree. Emma improvises and finds her own way to natural healing (p. 144). But surely the ecological significance of religious rituals is that they bind a culture together in a sustainable — or catastrophic — relationship with nature. It remains to be seen whether goddess spirituality can transform modern mass culture.

*Healing the Wounds* includes some challenging ideas from two native women, Gwaganad of the Haida and Marie Wilson of the Gitksan-Wet'suwet'en. Substantial difficulties — as well as benefits — emerge when we appropriate selected bits of native religion for white culture's use. In an interview with Judith Plant, Wilson cautions that the native view of land use differs from that of ecologists: "when we are finished dealing with the courts and our land claims, we will then have to battle the environmentalists and they will not understand why" (p. 217). This reminds me of Buffy Sainte-Marie's attack against romanzers of her people. "We starve in our splendour," she sang. To disaffected whites "desperate" to

find meaning in the native tradition, Marie Wilson advises: "You will have to go back to your own history, as many Gitksan have had to do" (p. 218).

For centuries, Western culture has used the slogan "it's a matter of survival" to justify inequity and repression. Injustice is a law of nature — say the Malthusians. These days, it is easy to succumb to the numbing statistics. India still loses 1.3 million hectares of forest a year — despite the *Chipko andolan* (p. 70). It is easy to dismiss voices from the wilderness as powerless and irrelevant. It is easy to be crippled with cynicism and despair. But the women's voices in *Healing the Wounds* call us to collective hope and action. The old slogan has been turned upside down. It is now "a matter of survival" that we seek just alternatives. Judith Plant might say to her circle of readers what she says to her community in the mountains: "Where's the guidance on how to go about creating a whole world? There is none. Only us" (p. 242).

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**Women Philosophers: A Bio-Critical Source Book.** Ethel M. Kersey, *Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1989. Pp. 241 hardcover.*

This is a welcome addition to the project of recovering women's past and will, I am sure, be very useful, not only to people wondering if there have been any women philosophers (the apparent genesis of the work [p. ix]), but also to people who know that there have been, but would like to know more about them.

As the title suggests, the author attempts to do several things. First of all, this is a reference book on the model of an encyclopedia, in that the entries are arranged in alphabetical order. The author tries to provide a comprehensive list of female philosophers prior to the 20th century. (She does not attempt to do the same for the 20th century.) Secondly, for each entry, she provides biographical detail, in terms of the philosopher's personal life, and in terms of her philosophical training and work. Finally, she provides some critical analysis of their work.

Unlike many works of this type, all of the entries are written by Kersey. This gives the work a rather idiosyncratic character, particularly in terms of the critical aspect of the entries. Although Kersey clearly tries to take into account, in the critical part of the entries, the views of other philosophers, it is clear that her own sympathy lies

more with existentialism and phenomenology than with analytic philosophy. One of the results is that she spends more space on philosophers in the former area. (One might compare the relative lengths of the entries on Margorie Grene [pp. 118-122] and Elizabeth Anscombe [pp. 34-36].) It is also clear that she is more familiar with the American than with the British philosophical world. (Here one might note her identification of Anscombe as "Gertrude" rather than "Elizabeth" [p. 34], and her obvious confusion about the structure of the University of London [pp. 186, 194].) This then is very much Kersey's book, rather than one which attempts to provide accounts from those who are expert in particular areas. This is not necessarily a criticism, but more in the nature of a warning to the reader.

The book's first goal, which I identified, was to provide a comprehensive list of female philosophers prior to the 20th century, as well as a few prominent representatives of this century (if born prior to 1920). There are 157 entries, of which 30 are from Antiquity and 19 from the "Christian Era." For most of these, and a number of the medieval entries, she admits her indebtedness to Gilles Menage's *The History of Women Philosophers*, recently (1984) translated into English by Beatrice H. Zedler. It appears that we indeed owe a lot to Menage in preserving this part of women's history, and must hope that his information is accurate. For these entries, the author's policy primarily has been to include all information available. The result is that the entries vary enormously in length, and that the length has no discernible relation to the importance of the figures.

For later periods, Kersey has done a certain amount of selection. Her criterion prior to the 20th century is to include women who have worked in "the traditional fields of philosophy, including metaphysics, ethics, aesthetics, and logic" (p. x). On this basis, she has explicitly excluded women such as Wollstonecraft, arguing that they are essentially polemicists and in any case "have been adequately dealt with in other sources."

I find it difficult to agree with this analysis. A large part of Wollstonecraft's work, for example, is a criticism and development of such political philosophers as Rousseau. I should have thought, first of all, that it falls clearly into the field of ethics, and secondly, that since we do not deny the title to philosophers such as Rousseau, who were fundamentally concerned with political and social questions, there seems no reason to do so in the case of women. I am also somewhat concerned by a policy, in what purports to be a general reference book, of excluding mention

of people because they have been adequately dealt with elsewhere.

In the 20th century, Kersey has necessarily had to be selective, given the exponential increase of women who have "seriously thought or written in the traditional fields of philosophy" (p. x), and thus she has limited herself to relatively major figures who were born prior to 1920. Here, of course, any individual's selection is likely to differ from the next person's. I myself am rather surprised that any list that includes Mary Warnock and Magda King does not also include Mary Hesse, Mary Midgley and Elizabeth Beardsley, all of whom fall into the appropriate age bracket. I think that, in this period, the idiosyncrasy of the volume is most clear, in that the choice largely reflects Kersey's own interests and experience.

In all of these periods, as I mentioned earlier with reference to Antiquity, the lengths of the entries do not really correspond to the importance of the figures or even to the size of the body of work produced. One of the longest entries in the book is given to Margaret Fuller (pp. 106-111). However unjustly one may feel she was treated by Emerson and subsequent writers, one wonders if she really merits an entry twice the length of the ones given to Harriet Martineau (pp. 152-154) or Harriet Taylor Mill (pp. 156-158). And one also wonders about the shortness of the entries for Mary Twibell Clark, the author of six books, who is given four lines (p. 78); for Lottie Henryka Kendzierski, the author of two books and a number of articles, given three lines (p. 139); or for Genevieve Rodis-Lewis, the author of eight books, given six lines (p. 179).

The biographical detail that is provided is somewhat uneven but, to a large degree, this reflects the availability of information. I did wonder, though, why no birth date is given for Mary Clark (p. 78), no dates of degrees for Adrienne Koch (p. 140), and no biographical information at all for Magda King (p. 139), since these are all 20th century figures, for whom information ought to be more readily available than for some of the more ancient figures, who are meticulously documented. In the case of Arria (p. 43) there is obviously some error. Although she is said to have lived under Severus Alexander (72-73), her dates are given as 200s A.D. In some cases, a wealth of detail is given about individuals' personal lives, in other cases, the emphasis is mainly on the philosophical work. Since this variation occurs in all time periods, it appears to reflect to a large degree what Kersey happened herself to find of interest. It would have been preferable to have established a policy on this question and to have followed it through

consistently, although I admit this might have deprived the reader of some interesting facts.

Finally, there is the question of the "critical" aspect of the entries. I have already discussed the question of the varying lengths of the entries. In a number of entries, Kersey provides a brief synopsis of some of the published work; in others, she gives an account of the philosopher's relations with other philosophers, and, in yet others, she attempts some critical analysis of the material. Again, a consistent policy would have been preferable. However, I think the lack of such a policy reflects the fact that this is the work of one person. Kersey is obviously more familiar with some areas of philosophy than with others. I would imagine that she did not feel competent to do more than provide a synopsis for some individuals. However, in some cases, such as the three women I mentioned earlier who were given extremely short entries, she did not even do that.

More seriously, in a number of cases, she appears to me to misrepresent the work of the individuals. Anscombe is represented mainly as a commentator on Wittgenstein, which appears to me to undervalue the original work that she has done. Otherwise she could hardly merit Kersey's description of her as "the most distinguished woman philosopher that England has produced" (p. 34). Although Suzanne Bachelard "centers her research on mathematical physics" (p. 51), most of the entry concerns her commentary on Husserl. Ruth Saw (p. 186) is best known as a philosopher of aesthetics, but most of her entry is concerned with her early commentaries on Leibniz and Spinoza. In general, there is a tendency to see the work of women as derivative of, and dependent upon, the works of male philosophers. I would agree that no philosopher works in a vacuum, and that we all, male or female, are influenced by our predecessors and contemporaries. However, I thought that this volume, to some degree, contributed to the view that women as philosophers must always be seen as followers of some male philosopher or other, rather than as figures in their own right. Most female philosophers, like most male philosophers, are of course not figures in their own right, but some, such as Anscombe, are. This should be recognized.

Despite the criticisms, I think this volume is a valuable contribution to the growing spread of knowledge about our female predecessors. I found it fascinating. I had not before heard of most of the figures. I had not realized the extent of Conway's influence on Leibniz. I had not realized how many American women had made their way successfully into the university hierarchy. In other words, I

was genuinely enlightened and educated by the book, and I congratulate Kersey on her achievement.

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**Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change.** Rita Felski, *Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989, Pp. 223 paperback.*

Unlike Toril Moi's *Sexual/Textual Politics* (1985) or K.K. Ruthven's *Feminist Literary Studies: An Introduction* (1984), Felski's book is not a primer for feminist literary theory. Instead, as the title *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics* suggests, the book attempts to go "beyond" current trends in Anglo-American and French feminist theories, beyond the gender-based essentialism associated with these schools, to what Felski has termed the "feminist public sphere." While Felski's arguments are well developed and clearly articulated, she does assume — and rightly so — that the reader already has some familiarity with the work of feminist critics, ranging from Elaine Showalter, Gilbert and Gubar, to Julia Kristeva and Hélène Cixous. Much of the introduction and the first chapter is a critical engagement rather than summary of these various forms of feminism.

Of the book's five chapters, three are devoted to theoretical considerations and feminist dialectics, while the other two are discussions of what Felski believes are dominant modes of "contemporary women's writing" (p. 86) — the autobiography and the *Bildungsroman*. This balance of sections between theory and practice is one that is becoming popular in studies of women's life writings. Note that Sidonie Smith's *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography: Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation* (1987), and Shari Benstock's collection of essays, *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings* (1988), are both structured this way. However, one quibble I have with Felski's book is that it is not clearly evident from the rather broad title of the book that the work is to be a study which would focus on these specific forms of contemporary women's writing.

Felski designates "feminist aesthetics" (Chapter 1) as "any theoretical position which argues a necessary or privileged relationship between female gender and a particular kind of literary structure, style, or form" (p. 19). The reason she is against both American and French forms of feminist analysis is that both positions claim that there is an abstract conception of "feminine" writing,