Book Reviews

DOI: https://doi.org/10.13023/disclosure.15.18

Follow this and additional works at: https://uknowledge.uky.edu/disclosure

Part of the Arts and Humanities Commons, and the Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 License.

Recommended Citation
DOI: https://doi.org/10.13023/disclosure.15.18
Available at: https://uknowledge.uky.edu/disclosure/vol15/iss1/18

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by disClosure: A Journal of Social Theory. Questions about the journal can be sent to disclosurejournal@gmail.com

bell hooks, a distinguished Kentuckian feminist who teaches at Berea College, broadens her feminist approach by looking at “the new men” from an intimate, personal, and anti-gendered point of view in *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love*. This analysis of the situation of men within our society brings two key points to the current gender debate. On one hand, it revisits the oppression that patriarchal and phallocentric dominant discourses exercise over individuals and collectives; on the other hand, it presents in a new light, and seeks to understand, men who do not conform to “traditional” male behavior.

Using feminist approaches to the male situation, hooks examines the difficult position of these new men. The author denounces the lack of space for sentimentalism and manifestation of feelings that men have endured for centuries. By discussing the violent and aggressive character of men, this critic opens a way for a “different” man. hooks calls for a rupture with traditional male repression and looks for an upgrade in inner and outer male relationships that aims at liberating them and allowing individuals to express themselves freely by avoiding patriarchal and subjugating ideological and physical barriers that still exist in our society.

The author attacks the main contexts of society where traditional masculinity collides with emotions and undermines the possibilities of full development for men. Workplaces and work behaviors, conceptions of sex and sexual life, fear of performances considered feminine, and popular culture and mass media that maintain a male dominant discourse, as well as the role of women as guiders to show the path for these new men to follow, are the aspects that hooks brings to the table. Circumstances understood as conventions forbid men to communicate in a completely open way; at the same time, these behaviors create unnecessary tension and unfulfilled relationships between men and women and among men themselves.

The use of feminist theories to analyze male behavior is innovative, capable of breaking away from old-fashioned classifications and alignments. By advocating male integrity and by redefining masculinity without linking it to violence, power, and domination, this author offers a new understanding of men and of human beings which is necessary in our society. hooks
establishes a new and useful paradigm for life: the will to change for both men and women that will allow free relationships with our own minds and bodies and improve relationships among human beings.

—JORGE GONZÁLEZ DEL POZO


Nietzsche on Gender sets out to address a perplexity that has frustrated generations of Nietzsche's readers: How do we square this perspectival thinker who insists on avoiding the "bad habit" of binary thinking "where there are, not opposites, but differences of degree" (Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits) with his reductive, mystifying, and infuriating remarks about women? Frances Nesbitt Oppel provides some answers in an enlightening book by inviting us to revisit such remarks within the larger context of Nietzsche's oeuvre; in the process, she makes compelling claims about Nietzsche's attitudes about gender.

Nietzsche on Gender begins with the prescient argument that Nietzsche intentionally made inflammatory remarks about women to call attention to the unnecessary rigidity of sexuality and gender roles. In chapter 2, Oppel reveals the extent to which Nietzsche's ideas on women and gender roles are indebted to Eduard von Hartmann, the philosopher of the unconscious, and Johann Jacob Bachofen, Nietzsche's colleague at the University of Basel. Chapter 3 investigates the peculiarity of opening The Birth of Tragedy with a trope that likens the relationship between the Apollonian and Dionysian (both masculine gods) to that of sexual union and then proceeding to surreptitiously encode the feminine throughout the book. In chapter 4, Oppel turns to Nietzsche's language in The Gay Science and provides one of the most careful considerations of Nietzschean irony in the past decade. Chapter 5 begins a discussion of Thus Spoke Zarathustra in which Oppel methodically relocates one of Nietzsche's most infamous remarks—"You are going to women? Do not forget the whip!"—in a number of valid and conflicting contexts to demonstrate the extent to which such a comment is "vastly overdetermined." Chapter 6 then suggests that Zarathustra advances a veiled feminine agenda in the eternal recurrence.

For all that this book does, one cannot help but wish it went even further. In the preface, Oppel reveals that her original idea was to write a study about Nietzsche and women but that her project changed direction when she found that Nietzsche's comments on women were part of a larger commentary. But, as the above suggests, the original project is still very much present here; what is said about women might be better balanced by considera-
tions of masculinity. Masculine perspectives are hardly considered beyond their framing of women, and one wonders why, for example, Oppel makes no reference to Beyond Sexuality, Tim Dean's similar project on Lacan and gender, or why, in otherwise notable discussions of birth and motherhood, Oppel does not address confounding statements Nietzsche makes about fatherhood in Schopenhauer as Educator and Human, All Too Human.

Oppel's attention to Nietzsche's tropes (particularly in chapter 4) perhaps betrays her literary theoretical background, and she herself is the first to point out that her training may leave some philosophers wanting. Still, she is by no means new to Nietzsche—her previous book examined his influence on the plays of W. B. Yeats—and, because she is a careful reader who brings feminist and queer theories to bear in novel ways on this notoriously dynamic thinker, Nietzsche on Gender will undoubtedly prove useful to literary theorists and philosophers alike.

—GEORGE MICAJAH PHILLIPS


Antiterrorist legislation, the increasing compression of time and space, globalization, the fate of the liberal democratic state in the face of capital, new strategies for organizing labor—these are some of the timely issues explored in Benedict Anderson's Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-Colonial Imagination. Drawing on his own 1991 Imagined Communities, Anderson explores the interconnected nature of fin-de-siècle politics and culture, fanning out from the Philippines to the Caribbean and Western Europe in an experiment in "political astronomy" that attempts to map the force of anarchism between militant nationalisms on opposite sides of the globe.

The first two chapters of Under Three Flags explore the relationship between two Filipino patriots, the political novelist José Rizal (1861–96) and anthropologist and activist Isabela de los Reyes (1864–1938). Chapter 1 is centered on a detailed analysis of de los Reyes's El folk-lore filipino (Manila, 1887), which was highly revolutionary in drawing on the work of contemporary European ethnologists and folklorists and, combined with de los Reyes's own local research (which he called sabiduría popular, or "local knowledge"), questioned the intellectual credibility of those in power. It is no exaggeration to describe de los Reyes's position as that of someone bringing the light of modern Europe into the mental darkness of the colonial regime. According to de los Reyes, the Philippines was not a country containing a mass of exotica unknown to Europeans but the site of a significant thresholds.
contribution to the future of mankind through cultural, political, and medicinal knowledge that, from the beginning, gave Philippine folklore a future-oriented character that contrasted sharply with peninsular Spanish notions of the new science. This methodology and these findings, combined with de los Reyes's assertion that all of the indigenous groups of the archipelago stemmed from a common culture, would give successive generations of Filipinos a firm base on which to found their anti-imperialist and independence movements.

Rizal, discussed in chapter 2, prefaced his first widely read novel, *Noli me tangere* (1886), with these words directed to his European motherland: “Desiring your well-being, which is our own, and searching for the best cure [for your disease], I will do with you as the ancients did with their afflicted: expose them on the steps of the temple so that each one who came to invoke the Divinity would propose a cure.” He would continue to speak against the reactionary religiosity, superstition, and intellectual backwardness of Spain in his second novel, *El filibusterismo* (1891), in the climax of which a jeweled pomegranate is set to detonate to destroy the colonial elite of Manila. Anderson analyzes the political and cultural importance of the work of both Rizal and de los Reyes in the light of the European avant-garde and political movements in a way that forces historians and cultural critics of several disciplines to reconsider the nature of colonial and post-colonial dynamics.

Rizal was executed in 1896, at the age of thirty-five, by Spanish authorities in the Philippines. De los Reyes was imprisoned in Manila after the uprisings of 1896 and later incarcerated with Catalan anarchists in the fortress of Montjuich in Barcelona. He returned to his home after the American occupation had begun and, armed with what he had learned from the Catalans, formed the first militant trade unions under the influence of Malatesta and Bakunin. The rest of Anderson’s book considers the political positions and intellectual contributions of Rizal and de los Reyes in the context of militant anarchism in the Americas and Western Europe, against José Martí’s armed uprising in Cuba and anti-imperialist protests in Japan and China. A complex web of anarchist internationalism and radical anticolonialism serves as a useful framework for today’s most violent and costly struggles.

Within the field of Hispanic studies, the philosophy and politics of Spain’s so-called Generation of 98, the group of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century intellectuals reeling after the loss of Spain’s colonies in the Spanish-American War, are, for better or for worse, at the core of almost all discussions of nation, culture, and politics. Even supposedly more enlightened recent readings of the culture and assumptions of fin-de-siècle thresholds