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ABSTRACT

The articles in this journal reflect the change that has taken place in the study of women's literature and language: women writers are now judged on their own merits, rather than by comparison to men writers. Included are the following: "A Feminist Perspective in the Classroom," a discussion of the ways in which a feminist perspective has enriched the author's own reading and teaching; "Feminine and Feminist Values in a 'High Minded and Spiritual Authoress'," a study of writer Elizabeth Missing Sewell, a didactic novelist and educator of the Victorian period; "FemSpeak, or What Do You Say to a Pregnant Person," a discussion of the relationship between language change and social reform; "Then Nora Slammed the Door," a list of possibilities for a unit on women in the classics; and "Reflections on a Froggy Lawn," a consideration of teaching values in the literature classroom. (MAI)

WOMEN AND LANGUAGE

The English Record

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Editors: John K. Crabbe and Katharyn F. Crabbe

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From the Editors

As a graduate student I had the experience, I've never decided whether fortunate or tragic, of studying with a professor who supported his theory that men were better students than women by demonstrating how he could differentiate between papers written by men and by women simply on the basis of the language. The implication was clear—if we women hoped to become competent and successful professionals, we must cultivate a forthright and manly style. If our letters of application were to be answered, if our articles and books were to be published, if (more immediately) our papers were to receive A's, we must learn to sound, at least on paper, like our male colleagues. I mention this historical item only because, in the immortal words of archy, "similar absurdities have all too often lodged in the crinkles of the human cerebrum."

Looking back, I see that my professor was no more unfair to me than he and I had both been to the female writers we studied. Then, behind all the matters of style, tone, form, and theme, what the "good" female writers had in common was their "tough-mindedness;" that is, they wrote like men (this story isn't all tragic; as a result of the experience I have already planned to occupy my golden years by translating Virginia Woolf into Hemingwayese). In this issue of the *Record* we bring you a series of articles concerned with just how far we have come in our classroom considerations of women and their language.

In our keynote essay, Florence Howe explains, with reference to Willa Cather's "A Wagner Matinee" and Harriet Arnow's *The Dollmaker*, how a feminist perspective has enriched her own reading and teaching. David Bergdahl points out the linguistic evidence that attempts to reform language can succeed only to the extent that attempts to reform society succeed, and his essay finds an interesting echo in Donald Purcell's meditation on the thanklessness of using literature to teach values.

The remaining essays in our emphasis section focus on the canon. Charlotte Klose presents several possibilities for organizing the present canon into units of study for high school classes, and Sarah Frerichs introduces a forgotten novelist of the 19th century, Elizabeth Missing Sewell, who affronted reviewers by daring to dabble in that male medium, the novel of theological controversy.

We hope that your summer is a pleasant and productive one, full of refreshment and re-invigoration.

In this Issue

Cover "I am half sick of shadows," said
The Lady of Shalott.

From an illustration by William Holman Hunt for Tennyson's "The Lady of Shaloft." Reproduction courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. James Jungwirth.

A Feminist Perspective in the Classroom

Florence Howe

Professor Hoxie Neale Fairchild, with whom I studied for two years in the late forties, told the class two things about his perspective: he said he was an Anglo-Catholic, and that when he entered the classroom each day he said to himself that sitting inside it was at least one person smarter than he. I wrote those statements down in my notebook along with everything else he and my other teachers said. I didn't ask why—about those statements or any other. My major activity in the literature classroom was note-taking: I considered it an accomplishment to get the lecture down entire—thus I could study before an exam.

But what did it mean that Professor Fairchild was an Anglo-Catholic? Why did he tell that to the class? I know I didn't think about it then—it was still a puzzle for me—a kid straight from the ghetto—to figure out what Anglo-Catholics *were*. Of course I understand some of his purpose now: it was one way to tell us what he was not: he was not a free thinker nor a true believer. He respected orthodoxy, but he demanded rationality from it. All this informed his teaching: he preferred the thinking of Swift to the ideas of all the Romantics combined, and while he could admire the poet's art in Tennyson, he was harder on Tennyson's mind than on Shelley's.

I need not go on with the details; I trust my point is clear. Even had I understood the connection between Professor Fairchild's statement of his perspective and the critical views he then espoused in his lectures, it would not have helped me, for I had no sense of myself as a person with an identity and a set of beliefs or even with a need for a set of beliefs. My Jewish identity was without intellect, religious or cultural; education, or belief. I knew I was not a Christian, just as I knew I was not a man. But what I was could only be defined as a student, and in my instance the image of the empty vessel probably was fairly accurate. I sat through all my classes—to miss one even because of illness was a continuing terror to me—taking notes of all that was said by the teacher. I was learning vital information about a world entirely different from the one I had been living in. It was a world which was not my own; I was a visitor; I was there to learn everything that the teacher—every teacher—had to teach me. I was the perfect student.

All of this suggests a close relationship between the view of the world a teacher brings into the classroom and the experience a student brings. I wish only to underscore that Professor Fairchild's mild reminder that he came to us with a particular world view penetrated not at all the wall between school—which defined what was to be learned—and the rest of life—irrelevant to learning. I want to mention also that the beginnings of the Cold War touched Hunter during my years there. I was peripherally conscious of "issues" like "academic freedom" and the alleged dangers of "communism in the classroom," but these seemed only extra-curricular, touching neither my literature classes nor my Brooklyn life. Only in recent years have the ideas of the Cold War come to seem the warp of an intellectual curtain drawn between the reality and the idea, between life and study.

I went off to graduate school and then to my first jobs with the notion that the teacher was someone with a lot of information to give to students; information about the lives of writers, the ideas in their works, and of course about the formal aspects of the art they were producing. In graduate school I had learned too that I was to be the protector of the language: as writing teacher, I had an additional responsibility—to help my students to think, to order their thoughts into essays, to write proper sentences using appropriate diction and punctuation. All of this was formidable enough: what did I know of perspective?

Had someone asked me, I would have said that I made no assumptions

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 A longer version of this essay was delivered as the opening session of the newly-formed Division on Teaching of the Modern Language Association's Annual Convention, December 1976.

about language or literature. I simply taught what was there. Or I might, in a daring moment, have agreed with Harvey Gross, who said once in the fifties that "Criticism was the act of finding good reasons to support your opinions." It didn't occur to me then to ask about the assumptions behind both the opinions and the reasons. Basically and most profoundly, I had never thought about assumptions.

The basic assumption that I had never questioned enough even to articulate it was what we now call male chauvinism. I assumed not only that the world was owned and run by males but that it was supposed to be that way. I was aware of my place as the privileged exception, and that knowledge only made me work harder and hold my tongue. I accepted the literary canon as given. Indeed, because I was so affected by Professor Fairchild as to forswear fiction for poetry, I thought of that canon as almost one hundred percent male. I did not read the great women novelists customarily admitted to the canon until I reached graduate school. And even then, when I was privy to the greatness of a few women writers, it was in the context of an assumption about the hierarchy of literary form. Anyone, even women, could write fiction, but *who* could write *The Waste Land* or great poetic drama?

In the classroom now I tell my students I am a feminist. In some classrooms, of course, some of them are feminists too. But I am not shy, as Professor Fairchild was, or, if I am misinterpreting his reluctance to talk about himself, I am not as willing to take some things for granted. I believe that it is part of the lesson for students to learn that the teacher has a perspective. It is part of the lesson for students to learn that the teacher's perspective informs not only the opinions expressed in the classroom but the literature selected for study.

But what is a feminist perspective? How does it work in a classroom? From one elementary point of view, what it means is keeping women in mind—not as butt for one's jokes, but with special respect and affection. Or at least with some awareness of their feelings, and more important, with some knowledge of their history, achievements, and experience of life. No one expects that men will become as expert on women's history as women have had to become on men's, but it will be impossible long before this decade is out for men and women to teach literature without encountering a feminist perspective, or, better, without becoming feminists themselves.

Let me give you an example from my own experience. If I ever read Willa Cather's "A Wagner Matinee" during my student years, it was not in a classroom, and it made no impression on me. Several years ago, urged on by Tillie Olsen's Reading Lists, I read it, and one summer reread it, in search of stories about working women for a new anthology I was helping to put together. I know why I had not remembered it. I had had no frame against which to read the story. I had no conception of the life of pioneer women, no vision of the women who gave up their potential for individual fulfillment as writers or musicians when they married and followed their husbands to the prairies.

The story is exquisite, but it requires what I am calling a feminist perspective, for like all great art, it doesn't preach its message. It suggests—in this instance through its characterization, since there is very little talk. The story is told through the consciousness of a young man, who, some thirty years earlier, was a guest for some years on a prairie farm. There his aunt taught him to read, helped him to cipher, and in general was his teacher and nurturer—all the time that she continued to do her household chores. Lessons were over the ironing board, for example. He knew that she had given up her life as a music teacher in Boston to go with her husband to the prairie, that she had not taken her piano with her, and that for the first fifteen years on the prairie she had heard no music at all.

She was coming to Boston for the first time in thirty years, and he, to surprise her, had bought tickets to a Wagner matinee. She has never heard Wagner, and for a short time, he fears that he has made an error—perhaps she is not enjoying the music, she sits so still. But he is totally unprepared—as she herself is—for the impact of the

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An advance look at Florence Howe's essay prompted this

President's Letter

A few years ago I dusted off a classroom set of Willa Cather's *My Antonia* and gave it to a group of sophomore and junior high school students to read. We focused on the character of Antonia, her strength and power. I had read the book as a high school junior myself and while I had enjoyed it I think I only responded to it as "required reading." Twenty years later I approached it as feminist literature. It worked. Even the most traditional non-believers (white inner city boys from lower middle class working people) had to admit that Antonia was "something else."

I think that we as English teachers can take a good look at books lining our bookroom shelves and view them from a feminist angle. As Howe tells us, she "had had no frame against which to read the story." We have to build that frame for ourselves as teachers and especially for our students.

Sincerely,

Josephine Kehoe

music on her ears. She weeps, and Cather, of course, does not tell us why. But it is not only pain, and it is not only for herself—not if we know about hundreds of thousands of lives like hers that went into the history of this country.

The buried social history of women opens this story to us, just as the story gives emotional life to that history. An even sharper instance may be drawn from a class on Harriet Arnow's *The Dollmaker.*

On the day my Contemporary American Literature class was to discuss the novel's ending, two students who had not done much talking thus far presented rather diverse views of the meaning of the heroine's last act. What Gertie does at the close of the novel is to rise from mourning her young daughter's tragic and needless death, to finish most of the carving she had wanted to do for years on a cherry wood head—all but the face—and then take the head, in a child's wagon, and followed by the neighborhood children, to a man who could slice it into boards. Thus, she could carve small Jesus-crosses for sale, and so help to support her family.

The central question focuses on the wood block. what is the meaning of this working-class woman's decision to destroy it? It had been for years her particular treasure; her future joy had always to do with carving it into a head. The two students offered two very different readings, although both agreed that the ending was a pessimistic one. Indeed, almost all the students agreed that, for Gertie, chopping up the block signified not only the end, but *her* end. And in the terms in which they had been taught to think both about life and art, that reading made sense. One student clearly laid out what I will call the idealist's position, the other, the materialist's. The idealist read the block of wood as Gertie's spirit, not only her self as artist, but her religious belief and hope. Splitting it into wood boards so that she might make objects for cash was a desecration of those hopes and beliefs. The decision became a signal for the reader, in this interpretation, that Gertie had personally given up, she was "adjusting" to life in the city, she was becoming a drudge. She would never become an artist. The materialist read the act as a sign of Gertie's being crushed by the system. She had no choice, capitalism makes it impossible for an artist to do good work anyway, working-class artists, moreover, can only turn into factory-like producers.

Interestingly, both of these commentators were male. Women had participated in class discussion during the several days leading up to this one, but no woman student had a holistic view of the novel's close that she was willing to present to the class. Some of the women did not look pleased with either of these views, but when I asked why, I got no response. I asked the class to read the last two pages of the novel again out loud, and then I talked about my own reading of the novel's ending, which I said was a feminist view.

A feminist's view begins with the fact of Gertie's womanhood. her life and responsibilities as a mother of four other children, a loyal wife, and, what is at least as important, a working woman who has all through her marriage shared economic burdens with her husband. I see no sign of her giving up her religious beliefs—which have always been quite heterodox and unorthodoxly people-centered anyway; indeed, those beliefs seem to have deepened and extended by her experience of living in a Detroit slum. She is hardly the bitter and alienated artist turned worker. She is a wood carver who loves the act of carving. I see no sign in these last pages that she will never carve again. In fact, I see every sign that she is going to do what working people have always done. continue an indomitable struggle to set personal joys and desires aside, perhaps temporarily, perhaps for a lifetime, for the sake of the family, sometimes of the neighborhood, community, or even a wider group.

"How do you know this?" one student asked. She meant. how did I know this about Gertie. I told her, of course, that in one finite sense I didn't. That we had in class that day a perfect illustration of possible readings of this novel. each of us who had offered a reading could attempt to support that perspective from the pages of the novel. But finally, we would each have to say also that we bring something else to the reading. I brought my own life, my consciousness about women's work in families, my love for and understanding of the life and work of a great artist like Tillie Olsen. I did not hear in the sounds of the words on the last few pages of the novel the voice of a defeated woman.

Let me add that I don't think that I convinced anyone that day, least of all the two young men who had read the novel in quite different ways. But that is not the point. I don't think of the teacher's job in that narrow way. And of course it takes a lot more than a single reading of the ending of a novel to equip readers with a feminist consciousness. That is to say, what I have called the "perspective" one brings to a classroom is not merely a tool for interpretation, the latest addition to critical terminology, "structuralism," say, or the "reader's impact on meaning." For feminists see the classroom not as a place for intellectual exercises, but as one arena to which we may bring apprehensions about our lives.

Hypatia

"Greek philosopher, renowned
for beauty"
ca 400 A.D.

She grew up famous
for skin luminous as stars
in Attica's rugged hills.
Her mind chased from scar to crag,
from dense air to thin.
One year, inside the house,
her pale face ablaze,
she burned away the surfaces of
things.

—Jeri L. Kroll

Feminine and Feminist Values in a "High Minded and Spirited Authoress"

Sarah C. Frerichs

Elizabeth Missing Sewell, didactic novelist and educator, was to all appearances, the prototypical Victorian spinster. Her long life (1815-1906) extended from the year of Waterloo to within a decade of World War I. Born into an upper middle-class family of twelve children, she lived comfortably until 1842, when her father's death left the family little money and many debts. To support an ailing mother, two invalid sisters, and eventually several young nieces, Elizabeth resorted to the only means available to a respectable English woman of that period: she took pupils and wrote books.

Having taught sisters and nieces from the age of fifteen, Elizabeth Sewell decided at thirty-seven to take boarding pupils into her home at Bonchurch, Isle of Wight, where her near neighbors were the parents of Algernon Swinburne. So began Ashcliff, the school she was to run for the next forty years. True to Victorian class structures, she accepted only "well-bred lambs (a student's phrase) as pupils in her home. Years later, in 1865, she founded St. Boniface School, an Anglican diocesan school for "girls of the middle classes." As late as the 1890's the venerable foundress still appeared occasionally at St. Boniface to lecture on history or to give out prizes.

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Thus far no taint of feminism besmirches the image of this proper Victorian, and Sewell's literary efforts confirm the impression of a solid, traditional Churchwoman. Her earliest published fiction grew out of parish visiting. Convinced that she could write more interesting stories than those contained in the Christian Knowledge Society tracts which she distributed, she wrote *Stories on the Lord's Prayer* for the 1840 issues of *The Cottagers' Monthly Visitor*. Four years later, Longmans published Sewell's *Amy Herbert*, a children's book destined to become a best seller in England and America. Longmans was later to publish twelve more novels, mainly for adults, plus numerous text books, devotional books, compilations, journals, and writings on education, including her best-known nonfiction work, *Principles of Education* (1865).

I shall consider here only a few of Elizabeth Sewell's writings, but the changes in theme and tone from earlier to later works will demonstrate the growing conflict between what might be called feminine and feminist values. My examples are *Amy Herbert* (1844), *Margaret Percival* (1847), *The Experience of Life* (1852), and *Note-Book of an Elderly Lady* (1881).

In *Amy Herbert* Elizabeth Sewell draws upon the stock character "pathetic governess" to glorify "wearying mortification and self-denial." She praises Emily Morton, the young governess, for submitting without a murmur to gross neglect, proud looks, and harsh words until "the calmness of her own mind became a sufficient recompense for all her difficulties."[1]

It may be argued that this is the Christian ethic of turning the other cheek and has nothing to do with feminine values *per se*. But if so, why are there no lessons in Christian humility for Colonel Herbert or Mr. Harrington of this work? Instead one can adduce many examples to show that self-abasement was a virtue thought singularly appropriate to females. Elsewhere in *Amy Herbert* strands of the plot reinforce female dependency, both physical and psychological. While Colonel Herbert is missing in India, for example, Mrs. Herbert's health declines to a point near death, later his unexpected return signals her slow but sure recovery. And it is Colonel Herbert who solves everyone's problems by suggesting that Emily Morton become governess to Amy.

Along with internal evidence, the circumstances of *Amy Herbert's* publication also point to Elizabeth Sewell's acceptance, at this point, of the traditional female role. The title page of *Amy Herbert* proclaims with modest anonymity that it was authored "by a Lady" and "edited by the Reverend William Sewell." William Sewell, Elizabeth's much older brother, was a tutor at Exeter College, Oxford, and an acquaintance of Newman, Keble, and other Oxford Movement luminaries. It was Elizabeth's custom at this time to defer to his judgment in

all matters of religion, literature, or finance. In 1846 William urged his sister to write something that would point out to young people the true claims of the English Church, and the grounds of its separation from Rome.[3] The result was *Margaret Percival*, published in 1847, and William got more than he bargained for.

Margaret Percival, the young protagonist, not yet twenty when her story begins, is a teacher but no pathetic governess type. She comes through as a real woman pulled in two directions. Should she remain loyal to the English Church with its very palpable failings or convert to Roman Catholicism? Each church has its champions. Representing the Anglican fold is a dearly loved clergyman uncle, Henry Sutherland. Personifying the attractions of Rome are a beautiful young widow, the Countess Novera, and her confessor, Father Andrea, who together subtly seek Margaret's conversion.

The novel *Margaret Percival* is of interest to us for the very qualities with which its early reviewers found fault. A look at several of the reviews will demonstrate what I mean. An article entitled "Puseyite Novels" appeared in the *Prospective Review* in 1850. The reviewer labels *Margaret Percival* "theologico-didactic"—which he intends as a term of scorn—and dismisses Mr. Sutherland's defense of the English Church as "more worthy of the logic of the reverend Editor [i.e. William Sewell] . . . than of the pages of this high-minded and spiritual authoress."[4] In other words, theology is a masculine prerogative, and it is presumptuous of an "authoress" to go poaching on the male preserve of theological controversy. But Elizabeth Sewell had been presuming to deal with theology—ever since William caught her with a copy of Butler's *Analogies of Religion* in her hand, and flung out a dare with the words, "You can't understand that."

Another critic, reviewing "Sewell's Religious Novels" for *North American Review*, October 1847, objects that Margaret Percival's feelings are "too much and too minutely dwelt upon," with the author going so far as to analyze and all but dissect "the secret thoughts of the heart."[4] *The Christian Remembrancer* ten years later singles out the unequal friendship of Margaret and the Countess and relegates it to the "romantic visionary side of our authoress's mind."[5] Actually, the degree of penetration into a young woman's mind in *Margaret Percival* is most remarkable for the 1840's. With the exception of the Brontës, few writers, male or female, attempted psychological analysis on the scale of Elizabeth Sewell. Her portrayal of what the critic called "unequal friendship" between Margaret and the Countess Novera is more remarkable still. In a perfectly direct and proper way, Sewell manages to convey a highly emotional attachment with a strong Lesbian undercurrent. What is more, when consumption and the English climate combine with a broken heart to bring about Beatrice Novera's death, the author does not contrive a marriage *ex machina* for Margaret. Instead she leaves her to mourn and work out her own salvation, finding vicarious satisfaction in her brother's ordination to the Anglican priesthood.

By now it must be abundantly evident that Elizabeth Sewell is no radical feminist. Yet within her heroines' hard-won submission to "woman's sphere," one senses the author's own impatience with the limitations imposed upon her sex. Margaret Percival, for example, chafes at being in the schoolroom teaching the younger children while her brother George receives tutoring for university entrance. She daydreams of being a clergyman, a statesman, or a general because she feels herself among "the gifted, the enthusiastic, the poetical, conscious of high intellectual powers," who believe themselves to be "equal to men in all but physical strength, and sobriety of judgment." The life of the gifted woman is, she observes, "a struggle between the inferiority of their natural position and the cravings of an ardent, highly-cultivated mind."[6]

In the 1840's it was heresy to leave the heroine without the prospect of marriage at novel's end, yet in Elizabeth Sewell's more successful novels the heroine remains unmarried. In *The Experience of Life* (1852) the vindication of spinsterhood as a viable lifestyle becomes a major theme. Several developments in the writer's own life reinforce this emphasis. In 1852 she at last shook herself free of William's domination. Not only did she, for the first time, publish in her own name, but she also took over the management of her financial affairs and purchased Ashcliff in her own name. By taking initiative in these matters she exerted what she elsewhere termed "a man's energy and power of will and passionate impulse."

Sewell's ideal woman combined the masculine energy, will, and impulse with gentle womanliness. She created that ideal woman imaginatively in Aunt Sarah Mortimer of her best-loved novel, *The Experience of Life*. In this tale Aunt Sarah guides her namesake, young Sarah, or Sally, from a "sickly, plain, and indifferently educated" girl into a serene, useful woman beloved of family and friends. Along the way Sewell recreates Aunt Sarah's world—a household where mulled elderberry wine, Oliver biscuits and strong coffee can charm away headaches and cure all ills. A world where Sally can retreat from the confusion of a large family to the peace of Aunt Sarah's "immensely white" spare bedroom, there to reflect on Aunt Sarah's sound advice tempered by humor.

As narrator of *The Experience of Life*, the second Sarah looks back on her own life and her Aunt Sarah's influence from the vantage point of sixty years. She recalls the way in which unmarried women were portrayed in the novels of her girlhood. Then, the alternative to "and she married and lived happily ever after" was either early death or a soured or silly spinsterhood. Common sense and Aunt Sarah's example countered the view of marriage as "the only thing without which a woman must be lonely and wretched, and almost despised."[7] How to avoid being lonely and wretched, is a question which the Sarahs chose to deal with in traditional ways. Give oneself to religion, cultivate

powers of study and reflection, and regard pupils as "foster-children given by God for one's own." The feminist achievement of this novel is that Elizabeth Sewell here created a Villette-type heroine—if one can conceive of a Brontë-style career woman without a Paul Emmanuel.

The last significant publication of Elizabeth Missing Sewell was a collection of short pieces reprinted from Charlotte Yonge's *Monthly Packet.* Published by Smith-Elder in 1881 under the title *Note-Book of an Elderly Lady,* this volume contains a particularly revealing essay on "Women's Rights." It consists of a running dialogue between Mrs. Blair, the "elderly lady" of the title, and Miss Brown, a feminist. What the reader actually experiences is Elizabeth Sewell's mind in dialogue with itself.

On the woman suffrage issue, for example, Mrs. Blair concedes that, while she sees no rational objection to women voting, she would find it compromising to her dignity to agitate for women's suffrage. Miss Brown has no such misgivings, and has plunged wholeheartedly into the movement. Then the two women toy with the question whether women, if allowed to vote, would become eligible for public office. Mrs. Blair would welcome women in local offices such as guardian of the poor, but she maintains that women's health would not allow them to serve in Parliament, where they would have to sit making laws far into the night. Miss Brown, in turn, insists that women can learn to manage their health more effectively and will then equal men in endurance. Mrs. Blair would like to see women enter new occupations—provided these occupations prove compatible with women's natural delicacy and refinement; Miss Brown affirms that "when great interests are at stake we must be content to put aside fastidiousness."[6] Mrs. Blair of course favors the gradual approach, arguing that women will, for example, gain the right to be school inspectors by increasing their knowledge of how to improve the schools. Miss Brown can only reply in exasperation, "Too slow!

Too slow!"

The dialogue of the *Note-Book* seems to continue *ad infinitum;* no one really wins. Elizabeth Sewell intends to give conservative Mrs. Blair the upper hand; yet she puts into Miss Brown's mouth the more convincing arguments. Thereby she begins, at long last to redress the balance between feminine and feminist values ■

Notes

[1] *Amy Herbert* (London, 1886), p 87

[2] *The Autobiography of Elizabeth M Sewell* ed Eleanor L Sewell (London, 1907), p 99

[3] "Puseyite Novels," *Prospective Review,* v 12, no 24, p 517

[4] "Sewell's Religious Novels," *North American Review,* 65 (Oct 1847), p 363

[5] "Ivors and Other Tales, by the Author of *Amy Herbert,*" *The Christian Remembrancer,* 33 (Jun 1857) p 321

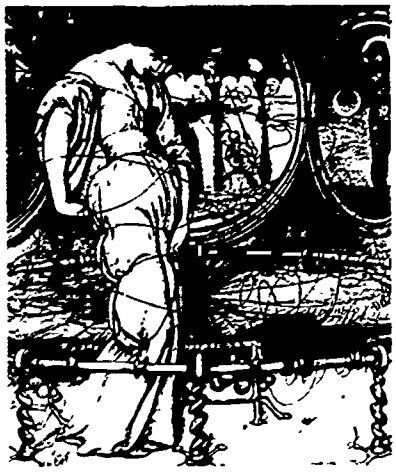
[6] *Margaret Percival* (London, 1858), p 125

[7] *The Experience of Life* (London, 1886), p. 162

[8] *Note-Book of an Elderly Lady* (London, 1881), p 153

Correction

In the Winter 1978 issue, several paragraphs of Richard Freed's article, "An Approach for Teaching Whitman to College Freshmen," were transposed. The entire passage from the paragraph beginning "Many of Whitman's best poems . . ." (p. 10) through the paragraph ending ". . . he views his world and show and appearance" (p. 11) should have appeared as the end of section I, following the quote from "Sea-Shore Fancies."



FemSpeak

What do you say to a Pregnant Person?

David L. Bergdahl

An anti-feminist quip that was circulating a while back parodies an undue concern with sexist language. 'In our house,' a weary husband is saying, 'we're so up-tight that we refer to the mailman as the person-person.' The intent of the quip is clear. It characterizes those concerned with sexist language as dingbats. Jokes are usually serious inasmuch as they address felt needs and relate to real social issues, so this one can stand some scrutiny. As a linguist I can bring some of my expertise to bear on the sexist language question, but I know I can make no claim of special competence, so I invoke only the reasonableness of my arguments.

The background of the quip is the serious effort given to eliminate reference to generic humankind that might be misconstrued as referring only to the male half, or to job titles in such a way that the suggestion is planted that certain jobs are reserved for males. Various remedies are suggested such as recasting sentences into the plural to avoid the familiar 'each student should write *his* notes legibly,' which might be misunderstood as suggesting male students are typical and female students are a deviation from the norm. Occupational titles have been recast. *flight attendant* in place of *steward* or *stewardess*, or *chairperson* instead of *chairman* or *lady chairman*. The use of the title *Ms.* to avoid differentiating marital status only for females is yet another example of the general tendency to manipulate the language to effect feminist goals. The usual objection to such manipulations is that the recommended substitution is awkward and, besides, the speaker intended no sexism by his use of the masculine pronoun, generic *man* or the *-man* of *chairman*. This last part is important because it reveals a component of the problem that is not usually given attention.

The unverbalized assumption of most of us that we have both an intended message and a verbal manifestation, and that when the two coincide we are "sincere," otherwise not. One of the counter-arguments to the claim that sexist language is being used is that the speaker is sincere and intends no slight. Surely the classic example of this is the tea party in *Alice in Wonderland* in which Alice's "I mean what I say" is twisted around to "I say what I mean." Meaning and saying are conceived as two distinct components of the communication process, one a pre-verbal mental operation and the other a post-mental verbal one. And yet a moment's reflection is all that's needed to reveal that intention is a sticky wicket indeed.

Intention and verbalization are problematic only because they are ill-chosen as the frames-of-reference for conceptualizing communication. In this frame-of-reference, intention is a purely psychological act which is followed by speech. But communication, although grounded in psychological acts, is primarily a social act Language is a vehicle of communication only because it is held in common. Intentions mean naught unless the symbolization chosen encodes them. ("Why, you might just as well say 'I see what I eat' is the same as 'I eat what I see' " is the March Hare's version of this.)

Focus upon the silent speech of thought and its suppression or broadcasting as the central fact of communication is simply wrong. the central fact of communication is that the language which is the medium of communication is socially held by the members of the speech community Both speaker and hearer are held in the speech act by the agreed-upon meanings of words and constructions If sentences could be read without regard to the order of their elements, then the March Hare's sentence would be acceptable, but they can't, and it isn't. There are rules of grammar (non-reversible serial order) and of discourse (" 'You should learn not to make personal remarks,' Alice said with some severity. 'it's very rude' ") and violations of these rules result in failed communication, whether of inexact encoding (" 'When *I* use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.' ") or misunderstanding the social conventions of speech, such as asking a riddle you don't know the answer to.

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Invoking Alice may seem unfair, since these sentences evidence breakdown in communication as the result of rule change, but it is not, rather it is nicely focused. Men who claim there is no sexist implication in their language are behaving quite like creatures from Wonderland who cannot conceive of a change in the rules of grammar or discourse or change in the meanings or words. Yet words do change, and while nothing as spectacular as *glory* coming to mean knock down drag out argument, dictionaries do record earlier meanings for *clod* as mass of rock and *girl* as young person of either sex. Words change meaning as people modify their associations over time. For many people the words *chairman, lady doctor, mailman* etc. have become obnoxious and refusing to adjust to their changed value is as foolish as pretending that miniskirts are still in fashion.

One may argue that feminists have tabooed certain words that were not previously under taboo, which is true, but we must remember that taboo is a linguistic force, accounting for the Indo-European name for bear and such euphemisms as *white meat* for chicken breast. Meaning and saying, if not the same thing, are related in this way. a word acquires denotation and connotation by being used in a particular context. *Girl*, for example, still means young female human but its meaning also involves the notion 'servant girl' and a reinterpretation of young (from positive youthful-looking to negative inexperienced). No one can deny the word has acquired these associations listening will prove it to be so.

Sometimes another tack is taken in the defense of sexist language. the sincerity issue is transferred to the language. Surely, the argument goes, there is no sexist impulse in the language, and so there can't be any blame for a person's use of material which the language neutrally provides. But to argue thus evidences a misunderstanding of the nature of meaning.

No one can deny that it is people who have meanings for words, not words that have meaning. It is also true that words are arbitrary—hence there is no "right" word for a certain object. These two axioms of general linguistics sometimes confuse, especially when presented together. A sound sequence has no necessary, natural connection with the mental concept it symbolizes because all naming is conventional, even the onomatopoetic imitations of the cries of animals. However, within a culture, signs and concepts are bound together by social acceptance So, although the name of something is undetermined from the point-of-view of nature, a name is determined within a speech community. An important aspect of the social determination of meaning is the value placed on the object or activity named. Consider *spinster*, originally 'female spinner' The modern meaning 'old maid' derives not from inherent fault of one who spins, but rather from the social valuation put on a woman who entered the economic realm dominated by men. The 'female spinner' became unmarriageable because she worked outside the home and was therefore assumed to have been sexually victimized by men. Speech communities are also ideological communities. the words in common use reflect social values. The language, far from being neutral, is deeply involved in our sexisms, our racism, and other American "values."

Feminists do wish to taboo some expressions. In doing so, they hope to change some aspects of the American Ideology The central question to be put to them, therefore, is whether manipulation of symbols can change reality. Those who laugh at the attempt to make English unisex say no! The more thoughtful of the nay-sayers recognize undue concern with sexist speech as a strategy aptly named "possess the symbol." This strategy evolves as compensation for the frustration of failing to meet primary goals. We read diet books as a substitute for dieting. The decorating hints in the magazine on the coffee table substitute for actual redecoration. The basement workshop is a substitute for a rewarding job. Mouthing revolutionary slogans replaces revolution. Possessing the symbol can be a copout, but it need not be.

One of the great attractions of *Greening of America* was the message that consciousness was first and that once consciousness was reformed other changes would magically follow. wear bells, eat organic peanut butter and poof! the revolution is achieved without having to work for it. This magical belief was mercilessly attacked and lampooned, but it bears a kernel of truth. We all know that the mental set of a person affects behavior. Insight into the role teacher expectation plays is gained by reading the studies in which teachers are told that (randomly-chosen) students have been tested as superior, thus creating self-fulfilling prophecies (see Robert Rosenthal and Leonore Jacobson, *Pygmalion in the Classroom* [New York Holt, 1968]). It is but a small step from reports of controlled experiments to self-fulfilling prophecies in the "real world." To some extent, our language use sets up self-fulfilling prophesies which affect behavior in a way not unlike post-hypnotic suggestion. As with anger, our frame of mind is achieved by continual reinforcement. Attention to the offensive sexism of our speech is a remedy, not a symbolic act.

The result of concern with sexist language, therefore, need not be limited to substituting the symbol for reality—achieving sexless speech in a sexist society; it can be part of a restructuring of society. Not a *cause* of the restructuring of mental attitudes and therefore actions, but a parallel to it. If society is reformed without attention to language, in time *telephone operator* and *schoolteacher* will cease being associated solely with women, and the terms will become neutral with respect to sex. However, even if language use is reformed, *chairperson* will come to mean 'female chairman' and *flight attendant* will come to mean 'stewardess' unless society changes as well. Language use, mental categories and social conditions are locked together. To be sure, abuses of reformist zeal will

(Please turn to Page 16)

Then Nora Slammed the Door

Charlotte Klose

Nature intended women to be our slaves. . . they are our property. . . . They belong to us, just as a tree that bears fruit belongs to a gardener. What a mad idea to demand equality for women! . . . Women are nothing but machines for producing children.

Napoleon Bonaparte

When a woman inclines to learning there is usually something wrong with her sex apparatus.

Friedrich Nietzsche

Women. . . are only children of larger growth; they have an entertaining rattle and sometimes wit; but not solid reasoning, or good sense. I never knew in my life one that had it or one who reasoned or acted consequently for four and twenty hours altogether. . . . A man of sense only trifles with them, plays with them, humors and flatters them. . ., but he neither consults them, nor trusts them with serious matters; though he often makes them believe that he does, which is the thing in the world that they are most proud of.

Lord Chesterfield

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For her world is her husband, her family, her children and her home. . . . We do not find it right when the woman presses into the world of the man. . . . The man, upholds the nation as the woman upholds the family. . . Reason is dominant in man.

Adolf Hitler

These four renowned men, all of them shapers of our modern world and its thought, reveal the stereotyped view of women which has dominated the world for centuries. The sexist view so eloquently revealed here limits, channels, and defines the lives of men and women in our society from infancy through adulthood. Gender identity, established by the age of eighteen months, decisively shapes the attitudes and behavior of children from then on. We roughhouse with boy babies, and we coo over girl babies. We teach little boys to play with Tonka trucks, and we teach little girls to play with Barbie dolls. And traditionally, by the time both boys and girls reach adolescence, their sex-stereotyped roles in society have been carefully delineated.

But new forces are dramatically altering these long entrenched social roles. Nowhere is this change more evident than in the prolific literature of modern women writers. Studying some of this literature can make students of both sexes more aware of the sexist nature of contemporary society. Even though the literature of the past did sometimes suppress the role and achievements of women, there are notable exceptions, some strikingly independent women who dared to defy society's standards and expectations. Reading past literature while attuned to both of these realities can broaden students' awareness of, first, the plight of many women in earlier ages, second, the possibilities for women in the present and future. This justification for studying literature by and about women in high school English classes is implicit in Norma Willson's words: "The feminist charge to English teachers is that they become aware of the warped picture that writers have [sometimes] painted of women and that they teach this awareness as a part of the teaching of each piece of literature" (*English Journal*, November, 1974, p. 16).

Selections from the following women's literature units and women's studies projects can be used in various combinations to develop sequential skills in all four strands of a high school English program (reading, writing, speaking, and listening). Appropriate for a variety of ability levels, these methods and materials can be used independently, with small groups, or with entire classes. The primary objectives for all participants are 1) to develop an understanding of women's role in literature, and 2) to heighten awareness of the altering preceptions of women's role today.

A man in general is better pleased when he has a good dinner than when his wife talks Greek.

Samuel Johnson

Most women have no characters at all.

Alexander Pope

Regard the society of women as a necessary unpleasantness of social life, and avoid it as much as possible.

Leo Tolstoy

And a woman is only a woman but a good cigar is a smoke.

Rudyard Kipling

These opinions of certain literary giants might serve to orient students to their investigation of women in past literature. Likewise, the views of the following literary figures might suggest to students ways that some modern literature has, unlike J. Alfred Prufrock, "dared disturb the universe":

Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size.

Virginia Woolf

Now of all the idealistic abominations that make society pestiferous, I doubt if there be any so mean as that of forcing self-sacrifice on a woman under the pretence that she likes it.

George Bernard Shaw

We've been taught that a man's role is to hunt experience, a woman's is to let it come upon us.

Hortense Calisher

If I show wisdom, the critics say I have a masculine mind. If I m silly and irrelevant . . ., then they say I have a typically feminine mind.

Katherine Anne Porter

There are numerous possibilities for a first unit, "Women in the Classics."

1. Homer. *Odyssey.*
   Consider the treatment of these typically dangerous and troublesome Homeric women:
   1) Helen of Troy, who deserts her husband for Paris and causes a ten-year war;
   2) Circe, who changes men into swine;
   3) the Sirens, who lure men to their death;
   4) Princess Nausicaa, who tries to trap Odysseus as her husband;
   5) Penelope, who is the patient, passive wife of Odysseus, a "good" woman who knows her place.
2. Virgil. *Aeneid.*
   Study Aeneas' encounter with proud Queen Dido in Book IV. Imperious and independent Di[redacted] distraught and desperate beca[redacted] Aeneas forsakes her, makes a tragic decision: "I have lived, I have run to the finish the course which fortune gave me."
3. Edith Hamilton. *Mythology.*
   Explore the treatment of goddesses and women at the hands of gods and men (Examples: Hera, Artemis, Athena, and Persephone).
4. Sophocles. *Antigone.*
   Stubborn Antigone defies her king to carry out her duty to the gods and comes to the expected disastrous end. Solemnly the Chorus characterizes her as "headstrong, deaf to reason! She has never learned to yield."
5. Euripedes. *Medea.*
   Medea, who steps out of woman's accepted role, finds a "perfect" means for revenge on her husband Jason, who deserted her for another woman. Jason accuses her: "Horrible woman! Now you are utterly loathed by the gods, and by me, and by all mankind. You had the heart to stab your children, you, their own mother, and to leave me childless." Despite her enormous crime, Medea accuses *him*: "Do you think the anguish of love is trifling for a woman?"
6. Chaucer. *Canterbury Tales.*
   The colorful, well-travelled Wife of Bath, who proclaims herself an authority on woman's role (and many other topics) in fourteenth-century England, is an unforgettable pilgrim:
   "Bold was hir face, and fair, and reed of hewe. She was a worthy womman al hir lyve; Housbandes at chirche-dore she hadd fyve."
7. Shakespeare. *The Merchant of Venice.*
   Portia is one of Shakespeare's most perceptive, witty, and independent heroines. She determines the course of much action in the play instead of passively accepting it like many Renaissance women. Disguised as a man, she cunningly dupes most of the men in the play (including her own husband) and speaks the wisest words of anyone.
   "The quality of mercy is not strain'd.
   It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
   Upon the place beneath; it is twice blest:
   It blesseth him that gives and him that takes."

Throughout nineteenth century literature, women were created to be dependent on men. Their education and training had to prepare them to find and keep husbands. Women writers were implicitly or explicitly denied the freedom to explore and describe their own experience. A second unit, "Women in Nineteenth Century Literature," clarifies these realities of the plight of women not so long ago.

1. Bronte, Charlotte. *Jane Eyre.*
   This novel reveals the double standard of critics. Since it was considered strong, intelligent, and passionate, it couldn't have been written by a woman—or if so, she must have been unnatural and perverted. Jane's assertion to Mr. Rochester that she would not be his servant after he married another woman violated society's standards of sexual submission, class submission, and religion. Intelligent and independent Jane certainly was not "feminine"!
2. Eliot, George. *Mill on the Floss.*
   This novel clearly reflects women's position in that century. Heroine Maggie Tulliver awakens to a physical passion for a man engaged to

her cousin. The book is a very modest acknowledgment of a woman's sexual feeling—the most daring scene involves a kiss on the arm! One critic of the time noted that it is not "quite consistent with feminine delicacy to lay so much stress on the bodily feeling for the other sex."

3. Flaubert, Gustave. *Madame Bovary.*
   [redacted] shocking to even its French audience when it appeared, portrays the tragedy of an imaginative woman who, bored with the banal expectations of her predictable existence as a docile wife, took seriously the romantic novels she read and, tired of waiting, fashioned her own life.

4. Hardy, Thomas. *Far from the Madding Crowd.*
   The independent, willful Bathsheba managed her own farm and a husband. She was determined to have a man's freedom—at what a cost!

5. Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *The Scarlet Letter.*
   This tragedy of a fallen woman illustrates woman's inferior status in harsh seventeenth-century Puritan Boston. The fate of Hester Prynne is proof that a woman could not be self-reliant in this society.

6. Ibsen, Henrik. *A Doll's House.*
   Nora's quiet, firm closing of her door in farewell to a stultifying domestic life became a slam that reverberated around the world.

7. James, Henry. *Portrait of a Lady.*
   Isabel Archer decided to shape her own life. To attain her freedom, she defied social convention, only to find herself ironically imprisoned by her sense of duty in a situation more despicable than her original plight.

8. Shaw, George Bernard. *Candida; Mrs. Warren's Profession.*
   Shaw rejected the Victorian woman, whose ideal was to suffer in silence. Both of these plays feature daring, outspoken "new" women.

9. Thackeray, William. *Vanity Fair.*
   In contrast to other "acceptably feminine" women in this novel which satirizes Victorian society, Becky Sharp achieves the wealth and status she covets by unscrupulously using men to her advantage.

Despite the conventional nineteenth century portraits of women, fictional achievements as momentous as the quiet, emphatic closing of Nora's door in Ibsen's *A Doll's House* have altered the lot of subsequent women in literature. Selections from a third unit, "Women in Twentieth Century Literature" verify this slow but relentless transformation.

1. Chopin, Kate. *The Awakening.*
   This is the first American novel (1899) to focus on the perceptions and experiences of a woman who finds that her marriage weakens her sense of self and who then actively seeks self-fulfillment, despite society's rejection of her. The title refers to Edna Pontellier's awakening to understand her physical nature and the consequent awakening of her entire individuality. The novel is an American *Madame Bovary.*

2. Crane, Stephen. *Maggie. A Girl of the Streets.*
   This startling, realistic account of how a pretty young slum girl is driven to brutal excesses by poverty and lonliness is a reaction against the Romantic view. It captures the despair of an American woman who, at the dawn of the twentieth century, is hopelessly trapped in a horrifying environment.

3. Hemingway, Ernest. *A Farewell to Arms.*
   As in *The Scarlet Letter*, the stigma of original sin taints the heroine, this time a modern woman. The myth of the fallen woman is illustrated as Catherine Barkley irrevocably suffers the consequences of her sin.

4. Mitchell, Margaret. *Gone with the Wind.*
   What hasn't already been said about this panoramic account of the Civil War era? The novel can be read through the eyes of a remarkable woman, Scarlet O'Hara, who, like Becky Thatcher in *Vanity Fair*, coldly uses others to her own ends. But, unlike Becky, Scarlet descends from riches to the fate that she "deserves" for her independent spirit.

5. Plath, Sylvia. *Ariel.*
   All of Plath's poetry, certainly this volume, articulates a woman's anguish in a world which denies her full value as a human being. This theme also runs through her autobiographical novel *The Bell Jar.*

6. Wharton, Edith. *The Age of Innocence.*
   In this earlier twentieth century novel, some problems of women in society are investigated. The heroine is shunned in society because of her divorce.

7. Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own.*
   This beautifully written essay stresses the difficulties faced by women who seek to develop their natural creativity in the arts. "A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction; and that. . . leaves the great problem of the true nature of woman and the true nature of fiction unresolved." Woolf concludes somewhat optimistically that if women live another century or so and have enough money, rooms of their own, the habit of freedom, and the courage to write exactly what they think —then Shakespeare's sister will be born!

One high school girl commented, "Like Eldridge Cleaver in *Soul on Ice*, I never realized how oppressed I was until someone brought it into the open." A final unit, "Literature of the Feminist Movement," leads students to consider many factors relevant to this observation. A host of recent books are pertinent.

1. DeCrow, Karen. *The Young Woman's Guide to Liberation* (1971)
   A primer on women's lib for teenagers. Penetrating analyses heightening the adolescent girl's aware-

ness of her role and her plight in society.

2. Epstein, Cynthia. *Woman's Place* (1970)
   An account of problems women face in employment.

3. Friedan, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique* (1964)
   A study of reasons for the unhappiness and frustration of women who have given up possible careers for homemaking.

4. Gornick, Vivian, and B.K. Moran, eds. *Woman in Sexist Society* (1971)
   A comprehensive collection of essays by modern feminists on the role of women in society.

5. Hole, Judith, and Ellen Levine. *Rebirth of Feminism* (1971)
   A broad collection of feminist ideas and actions, past and present.

6. Komisar, Lucy. *The New Feminism* (1971)
   A perceptive analysis of the women's rights movement of special interest to teenage girls.

7. Kraditor, Aileen, ed. *Up from the Pedestal* (1970)
   A good sampling of writings of the early feminist movement in America.

8. Merriam, Eve. *After Nora Slammed the Door* (1962)
   Incisive essays on the question of woman in society.

9. Millett, Kate. *Sexual Politics* (1970)
   One of the first feminist books of this decade to arouse nationwide male ire. A discussion of the subjugation of women, with emphasis on misogyny in literature.

10. Morgan, Robin, ed. *Sisterhood is Powerful* (1970)
    A collection of many varied writings from the Women's Liberation Movement.

11. Tanner, Leslie B., ed. *Voices from Women's Liberation* (1970)
    A collection of essays on the feminist movement, past and present.

Various projects related to women's studies can be included to stimulate or extend students' interest in the women's literature just described. These projects can also help raise the students' level of consciousness of the emerging roles and present perplexities of women. Possible activities include:

1. Prepare a report.
   Possible topics: history of the feminist movement, sexism in testbooks, women's roles in television and movies, women as artists, women in sports, women's changing roles.

2. Tabulate the examples of sexism which you observe on television for a period of one week. Write a critique which shows your conclusions and evaluations.

3. Compare some women's magazines. Examples: *Ms.* and *Good Housekeeping* or *House Beautiful.* Write a report illustrating and analyzing your findings.

4. Interview some friends (same or various age groups) of both sexes about women today and the women's rights movement. Tabulate your results.

5. Find, read, and discuss or orally present examples of non-sexist literature.

6. Write a non-sexist children's story. Or rewrite non-sexist versions of fairy tales, nursery rhymes, or comic strips.

7. Write poetry from a woman's point of view.

8. Write a satirical skit, drama, poem, essay, etc., parodying some aspect of sexism or the feminist movement.

9. Compile a scrapbook of material illustrating sexism and/or the feminist movement. *Ms.* magazine contains many ideas.

10. Study the situation of women in a second minority group—for example, the American Indian woman, the Black woman, or the Jewish woman. Write or give a report on your findings.

Some impatient feminists believe that the changes which are reflected, directly or indirectly, in the literature cited throughout this paper have not come fast enough. Yet, women have come a remarkable way in a comparatively short time. As late as 1913, one "generous" man noted that "women of genius and talent are not *necessarily* depraved." It was about 140 years ago that Oberlin College became the first in this country to open its doors to women and Blacks. The earliest women at Oberlin were given an alternate curriculum because they were considered incapable of handling the same courses as men. They were required to wash the male students' clothes, clean their rooms, and serve them at table. Lucy Stone, an early Oberlin graduate, refused to write her commencement essay because only male student would have been allowed to read it! Thus, the sex-stereotyped attitudes which dominate the opening quotations of this paper as well as much of our literature are not far behind us. Unquestionably, a judicious presentation of literature by and about women, works written both before and after. Ibsen's Nora slammed her door, can help to correct this myopic view of women's place in society. Informed students who are responsive to the ideas implied in this literature will admire more than the three intricate quatrains and the climactic couplet comprising Edna St. Vincent Millay's "Sonnet XXXI":

Oh, oh, you will be sorry for that word!
Give me back my book and take my
kiss instead.
Was it my enemy or my friend I heard,
"What a big book for such a little head!"
Come, I will show you now my newest
hat,
And you may watch me purse my
mouth and prink!
Oh, I shall love you still and all of that.
I never again shall tell you what I think.
I shall be sweet and crafty, soft and sly;
You will not catch me reading any more:
I shall be called a wife to pattern by;
And some day when you knock and push
the door,
Some sane day, not too bright and not
too stormy,
I shall be gone, and you may whistle
for me. ■

Reflections on a Froggy Lawn

Donald Purcell

For a number of reasons I question the wisdom of an explicit classroom search for values. I doubt that people accept values unless they feel that they have discovered them by themselves or have always had them. The value structure is part of a person's identity. Also, such overt searching may lead a few to exploit second-hand value formulae as a kind of insulation. By learning the right words, they will be free to do the wrong things, and the words will also screen them from the consequences of what they do. Value mongering makes us teachers sanctimonious too. Some of our classrooms must sound, I suspect, like the theologically oriented classrooms of the last century, though instead of finding exempla in The Bible we draw them from recent successful paperbacks. And think of the indignities we visit upon honest authors. By emphasizing literature-as-lesson, we obscure literature-as-life. No classic is more surely dead than today's work of art turned into a sermon.

For the rest of this essay, however, I shall focus on another complexity of an explicit classroom search for values. It is that values, many of them, are mutually contradictory. I shall cite four examples from Jonathan Swift, all but one from "A Voyage to Lilliput"; these four will be values related to self-examination, to scatology, to concrete thinking, and to indignation.

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It's been a great summer for frogs. Now, I happen to mow lawns, the other day I saw ahead of me a tiny, perhaps newly-hatched, frog. He hopped slowly forward. He hopped my way, but slower than I wanted to mow, and he yet to develop reflexes for jumping to the side of my mower's course. Suppressing irritation over the shortcomings of his education, I stopped, bent to take him in my palm, and, oh so gently, removed him from the future course of the machine, a course whose past, I may add, was littered with bloody severed members of frogs whom I'd not tried very hard to see.

Shall I go on to report what Swift would have eloquently not reported? That as I mowed on, I congratulated myself for being such a gentle person. Yes, I felt very good about me. I compared myself to Bobbie Burns and the mouse. I may even for a fraction of a second have enjoyed being a great poet— then I came in from mowing to think about this essay and to think of Swift.

If one is to probe the self one must be willing to deal himself a few rough blows. That the desire for power makes us do insignificant acts which we translate into an acceptable vocabulary for our own uses—in short, that we like cute little creatures not only because they don't threaten us but because we can, when we choose, destroy them—is a lesson that will never be popular. Even now you see that my way of talking about it palliates froggy's demonstration that I am one who will toy with a baby frog as boys with flies.

Wouldn't knowing the self, or trying to, be a fine value to find in a classroom? I'm sure we all agree that it would. But look how squarely it counters a value that parents, teachers, coaches, and many of those who wear uniforms have dinned in our ears since childhood. I refer to the value of self-confidence.

Be confident, assert yourself, stand up and be counted we've all been told. I actually had a naive boy come to my office the other day to claim that I should raise his grade to reward the self-assurance he displayed in coming to ask me to raise it! Self-assurance is so ingrained among us as a value *per se* that one wonders if our selection of leaders is any more efficient than selection by birth in Swift's time Woodward and Bernstein reveal a court in which the emperor would have felt at home. With us the self-assured posture before the TV cameras is what wins the election, not the message

Those who have so educated us have observed, or think they have, that successful persons possess confidence. Confidence, they conclude, is what brings success to the successful. They aren't clear as to what constitutes success, of course; and when they have seen successful persons, they have failed to infer that the success may have come as a consequence of talent, either inherent or self-developed. They have not concluded, as they should, that the process of developing the talent most likely began with awareness that something needed to be developed.

"Only the fools," Montaigne says, "are certain and assured."[1] And Socrates hoped that intelligent men would reprove his soon-to-be orphan-

ed sons "for . . . thinking they are something when they are really nothing."[2]

None of this is to advocate a mindless humility, though I think that trait causes less misery in the world than mindless self-confidence. What I am concerned to express is that self-confidence as a value is likely to be a dynamic part of an undergraduate's mental anatomy. A half-hour discussion with two dozen or more persons about why Swift made the Lilliputians tiny will not result in a successful transplant. Self-examination as lesson for the day will collide with a lifetime system already in equilibrium. The student's technique for rejecting contradictory values will only be reinforced, though he may well write words on a quiz that will please the instructor.

To explicit exposition of this value which counters an already well-established-cultural value, I prefer working to have imprinted in each student's mind some key scenes of Gulliver among the Lilliputians. If he can register the images sharply enough for them to become experience, I then trust that one of these summers he, too, will mow a froggy lawn.

I should now like to discuss Swift's scatology. I think good scatology a value, but one can't be too explicit about good scatology without rendering it a non-value, that is, bad scatology. By bad scatology I don't have in mind the less erotic pages of *Hustler* and *Playboy* or the Victorians who censored Swift. No, I think bad scatology is engendered by those who think that all humour about the hidden is unhealthy and that it should be quenched by disclosing all that is hidden. Fortunately, attendance at that other classroom, the baboon residence in a zoo, quickly teaches us the vanity of trying to escape the social condition.

Swift did not have to read Freud to sense that the difference, small as it may be at times, between us and yahoos may come from that early surrender to toilet training, a shock so great that it must either be stuffed into the unconscious or become a source of humour. I give secret F's to students who don't laugh over Gulliver's becoming a volunteer fire department in the nick of time. You recall, I assume, that he saved the burning palace by that method which every little boy uses more than once but which no little girl uses more than once. I don't doubt that Swift sensed Gulliver's presence of mind as a repetition of the act which, in late Victorian language, Freud was to claim, differentiates women and men as to economic function. This differentiation has determined the shape of the only society we know. One can claim that scatology is a very high value indeed.

I'm really talking here, you'll have already inferred, of a higher value than scatology. Swift is one of many great men who remained children. He was secretary to a nobleman in national politics, he administered a diocese, he became a lobbyist at court, he wrote great pamphlets and great love letters as well as one of the first pieces of science fiction, but he couldn't resist putting the fire into his story so that Gulliver could put it out. How many men kill the child in them—and never again see the world in terms of hopefulness!

> "From baby hood the child is told to hurry and grow up, until he's so sick of hearing it that he accepts the advice"

But the pathway on which we take the student for ten minutes towards what Swift's detractors call his "coprophilia"[3] ends before a brick wall. I find I do have to give those secret F's. From babyhood the child is told to hurry and grow up, until he's so sick of hearing it that he accepts the advice.

Every critic and biographer of Swift that I've read comments on his perception of reality as concrete-bound. He sees what he thinks. He does not deny what is for the pleasure of explaining what isn't. My own view is that a prejudice for concrete thinking may be the most important value that a young person can acquire, at least if he's a young person who cares to live happily. This calls for an epigram not from Gulliver but from a letter to Alexander Pope. I'm sure that many teachers write it on the blackboard for classes reading Gulliver. " . . . I hate and detest that animal called man, although I heartily love John, Peter, Thomas, and so forth . . . .

Once again we witness a clash of values. I am sure that many of us have read this aloud and within a very few breaths hoped that all our students would love all men.

An assignment that must have been made in many classrooms where Swift is being read—and it's an easy one to correct—is for the students to write their own epitaphs. Composed in an age of do-it-yourself headstone designing, Swift's remains alive, its English translation in the opinion of W. B. Yeats "almost finer" than the original Latin: "He has gone where fierce indignation can lacerate his heart no more."[5]

Now indignation, as any one who has tried writing fiction knows, may well be, after total reminiscence, the greatest cause of artistic failure. Indignation is not an emotion; it's a state, and its expression is likely to seem to those who don't already share it an attack. It's a state in which the author shows, his underwear, and there's nothing like a flash of underwear for loosening the suspenders of belief.

For those of us who like Swift, he remains one of the rare authors who gets away with being indignant. I believe that he's needed badly in America, for most of my students strike me as not knowing what indignation, fierce indignation, feels like. They've casually told me, their feelings apparently indifferent, of rapes, thefts, and beatings in their own communities, they do reserve traces of indignation over the crowding of the parking lots.

I suppose that indignation simply isn't an American trait. I can faintly imagine a modern Swift writing something about the Viet-Nam War that might resemble "A Modest Proposal" but in which he'd have to force in himself the geniality of a Russell Baker, if he wanted to be syndicated. The internal infection that Swift drained off

as indignation is healed among us by our refusal, some years later, to pay G. I. benefits to those we sent to that unpopular war.

Indignation clashes head-on with the value of being well-adjusted to society. By attacking what is, the indignant man tells those who value current getting-along that they waste their time. Our non-indignant majority cannot discriminate among the indignant, the hostile, and that natural pool of those envious of whoever is in power. How one wishes that they could, for of what value are our values if we do not act? Is not indignation often the spring that moves us when our values are attacked? It's a value that maintains other values.

Some may now object that Lemuel Gulliver does not behave indignantly Provoked to extremes, he, indeed, maintains an extreme stolidity, yet, I'm sure, most would agree that the student who doesn't perceive the entire book as an explosion of indignation hasn't read it. The book is a classic example of my thesis, that implicit searching for values is preferable to explicit searching.

May I cite an example of what I consider cause for healthy indignation for 1978?

As you know there lie in prisons now in countries over which we exert powerful influence what Amnesty International estimates to be about 50,000 Johns, Joans, Peters, Patricias, Thomases and Thomasinas. These are persons suspected of having thoughts distasteful to those who possess the means to imprison. Some of them, as I write, are stretched on tables undergoing torture.

E. L. Doctorow wonders:

> . . .why there is not an ongoing national cry of protest, an outrage, on behalf of all tortured people everywhere. Why do we not hear from the pastors of our churches, our college presidents and our statesmen? Where are our community spokesmen and our intellectuals and artists, our Nobel prize winners, our scientists, our economists? Why do we not hear from our businessmen, doctors, lawyers, our labor leaders, our police chiefs? Why is there not some great concerted refusal to condone, assist, endorse, or do business with those who practice torture?[6]

Yes, indignation, thoughtful indignation, is a value, though we shall find few works, even among the classics, that express it successfully. The principal reason for Swift's getting away with indignation is that he doesn't accuse a vague *they*, he accuses me. For of course a man who will clutch a baby frog for the sake of preening himself about his own benevolence will have so much the less benevolence for the Juans, Pedros, and Tomases of a Chilean torture cell.

> "Indignation clashes head-on with the value of being well-adjusted to society"

In advocating that the classroom search for values be implicit, not explicit, I am aware of some apparent redoubtable opposition. Mr. Fielding of *A Passage to India* says of his teaching philosophy, "I believe in teaching people to be individuals. . . . I mix it up with trigonometry, and so on."[7] And a physics teacher whom many others as well as I admire has told me and his students that he teaches physics because he wants to teach young people to walk alone.

But the trigonometry and physics students puzzling over their homework quickly learn not to waste time applying the teacher's ideas about life to the trig and the physics. They know, however, that they are working their way through a demonstration of things they haven't known that the teacher does know. When the same students read "literature", the one thing demonstrated is what the author, as well as the teacher, only opines.

Perhaps the examples of Mr. Fielding and my physics teacher friend suggest which classrooms are suitable for an explicit search for values—a search that parents and some employers will always demand. Perhaps it is in classrooms that deal with knowledge rather than opinion that a search for values can be both explicit and effective.

English teachers should not be asked to search for values explicitly, good books represent an ordering of the flux of life, they are charged with values because of the ordering process, but the organizing view of their authors must, to achieve convincingness, partake of the author's chaotic raw material.

How different the classroom of the teacher of facts or of lines of reasoning! Such teachers can, indeed, be explicit about values, for their expression of values will not assail the student's personality; all will ultimately be geared to the student's mastering what is demonstrable to every man. Many ex-students, including this writer, attest that it is these teachers who have transmitted explicit values the most unforgettably. ■

NOTES

[1] Michel de Montaigne, *Selections from the Essays*, ed and trans Donald M.Frame (Northbrook, Illinois: AHM Publishing, 1973). p 13

[2] Maynard Mack et al , eds , *World Masterpieces* (New York Norton, 1973) I. p 538.

[3] Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels and Other Writings*, ed Louis A. Landa (Boston Houghton Mifflin, 1960). p. xi

[4] Swift, p 494

[5] Swift, p vii

[6] E. L Doctorow, "The New Poetry," *Matchbox*, Summer, 1977, p. 2

[7] E M Forster, *A Passage to India* (New York Modern Library, 1924). p 121

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continue. But future generations, if sexism is destroyed root and branch, will have to resort to footnotes to understand the humor of "what do you say to a pregnant person?" much as we must to get Falstaff's pun on *grease/grace*. Then, perhaps sexist jokes will take their place alongside jokes of dirty Irishmen, dumb Poles, crafty Jews and the whole unfunny catalogue.