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GNDR G101  
Midterm Examination

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Throughout the course of this semester we have read numerous articles in which we frequently encounter the theme of revision and critique. In our classroom discussions, as we talk more in-depth about these critiques. We come to find through our readings and discussions that these are not only critiques of men's patriarchy, but as well as critiques of other women, and critiques of other feminist thinkers and ideas. For example we will look at Simone De Beauvoir's, *Childhood*, and the ways in which she both agrees and disagrees with Freud's psychoanalytical approach. Elizabeth Cady Stanton's, *Declaration of Sentiments* explicitly critiques the very structure of our country's own Declaration of Independence. And finally, we will look at Dorothy Sue Cobble's, *Halving the Double Day*, and how it portrays a critique on women, and more importantly identifies many of the struggles of balancing work and family life. Understanding the objectives of these critiques helps us develop a more balanced view on gender.

Sigmund Freud's paper, "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes", focuses greatly on the Oedipus complex. First stating that for boys, the Oedipus complex has a double orientation that can be either active or passive. What Freud means is that while a boy will want to take the mothers place as the love object of the father, the fear of castration will drive the boy to masculinity. Freud believed that the Oedipus complex in girls is slightly different. For girls the mother is as well the original

object, however Freud states that penis envy is responsible for girls abandonment in the mother as the original love object, to choosing the father as a love object. This idea was to be later critiqued by De Beauvoir.

In her piece, "Childhood", De Beauvoir refers to the same psychoanalytical approach Freud uses. However, De Beauvoir differs in that she takes a different approach on "penis envy". De Beauvoir argues that Freud does not shed accurate light on girls psychosexual development. She states that penis envy is apparent in different ways, in different scenarios. "For many others this tiny bit of flesh hanging between boys' legs is insignificant or even laughable; it is a peculiarity that merges with that of clothes or haircut"(De Beauvoir, *Childhood*). De Beauvoir offers an excellent critique of Freud's piece, and also talks about how in different cultures, the different sexes urinate in different positions around the world. She makes an excellent point stating that standing in the erect position constitutes a powerful cry of masculinity, where as sitting implies hiding and inferiority.

After reading and discussing Freud's and De Beauvoir's pieces side by side, we can develop a better understanding of the different psychoanalytical perspectives on gender development in little girls and boys. We can conclude that while Freud's perspective focuses on the influence of the Oedipus complex, De Beauvoir's piece argues that gender is more so, socially constructed. "Women apply themselves to changing her into a woman like themselves, manifesting a zeal in which arrogance and resentment are mingled; and even a generous mother, who sincerely seeks her child's welfare, will as a rule think that it is wiser to make a "true woman" of her, since society will more readily accept her if this is done"(De Beauvoir, *Childhood*).

This Freud, De Beauvoir side-by-side analysis is an example of one feminist thinker, critiquing the thoughts of another. We will now look at an example of an author explicitly critiquing men's patriarchy. In her *Declaration of Sentiments*, Elizabeth Cady Stanton argues that women have been misrepresented as a gender through out the history, "The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her"(Stanton, *Declaration of Sentiments*), and in the Declaration of Independence.

In her Declaration, Stanton argues that women as a gender are neglected in the Declaration of Independence. Stating that man has withheld women from the many rights guaranteed to every "man" in the country. Stanton argues that the Declaration of Independence has, "Taken from her all right in property, even to the wages she earns... He has made her, if married, in the eye of the law, civilly dead"(Stanton, *Declaration of Sentiments*). She believes that it is improper that women be forced to submit to these laws, because of them having no voice in the formation of these laws. Stanton offers an interesting take on the Declaration of Independence, because of the nature of the Declaration, declaring freedom from tyranny and injustice. Stanton makes clear in her declaration that the misrepresentation of women in the Declaration of Independence is something that is improper and needs to be addressed, for she understands that freedom means liberty and justice for all.

Stanton's Declaration of Sentiments is an excellent piece drawing light to the many aspects of the Declaration of Independence that imply the powers of the declaration are entitled to the men of America. Her explicit critique has much to say about the early times

of our country. Another type of critique encountered in our readings this semester can be found in Dorothy Sue Cobble's, *Halving the Double Day*. In her piece we see a critique of woman, as Cobble talks about the shift from traditional womanhood and motherly obligations, to society's newly created "double day".

Cobble makes an excellent point at the beginning of her paper when she states that in earlier generations, a woman would either embrace work, or the family. Cobble notes that this is no longer the case, "But her generation was the first to try in large numbers to combine the two, and their frustration was creating a new feminist politics" (Cobble, *Halving the Double Day*). In her critique, through out her paper, Cobble talks more in depth about the double day. Noting that by the 1950's the percent of the female work force rose to eighteen percent, Cobble states that new policies recognizing the needs of women's lives away from the workplace, "without sacrificing their claim to first-class citizenship on the job" (Cobble, *Halving the Double Day*). With this in mind she then argues for the raising of wages, lobbying that the government raise minimum wage and strive for equal opportunities and equal pay. She also lobbies for social supports for care giving, and shorter workdays. Cobble pushes for the strengthening of the FLSA, and surly enough, "The FLSA used the disincentive of time-and-a-half overtime pay after a 40-hour week to discourage long hours" (Cobble, *Halving the Double Day*).

When we look at the different pieces, we see that the subject of the critique can vary. Some authors critique men's patriarchy, some critiquing other feminist thinkers, and even some critiquing women as a gender. We can conclude that understanding the meanings of these critiques helps us paint a better picture of the meaning of these feminist thoughts.

**B. 3.**

Socio-economic class standing plays a key role in the shaping of women's lives, both as individuals and as a group. The readings and discussions held in class have shown that socio-economic class, race, and gender are relevant factors of women's feminist thinking.

Virginia Woolf's *A room of Ones Own*, argues that in order to write fiction, a woman must have money, and "a room of ones own". Dorothy Sue Cobble's, *Halving the Double Day*, talks about the emergence of women balancing motherhood and a working life, indicating that socio-economic class takes a new shape for women in the 1950's. And finally, Angela Davis's, "Essays from Women, Race, and Class" talks about the importance of intersectionality, and speaks about class status in regards to the women's movement.

Virginia Woolf's, *A Room of Ones Own*, is a fictional book talking about women's fictional writing. Through her book, Woolf voices her ideas about the things necessary to successfully write fiction as a woman writer. She states that a woman must be able to find available time, a place to write, and most importantly that a woman must achieve financial independence. She argues that with these three things, a woman's fictional mind can flourish and create at its maximum potential. "A woman is to have both money and a room of ones own if she is to write fiction"(Woolf, 4). In her piece, Woolf critiques women's literature, as well as theoretical and historical hierarchy's and ideas of womanhood.

Dorothy Sue Cobble also writes about the role of socio economic class in womanhood in her piece, *Halving the Double Day*. In her piece she focuses on the role of the workingwoman in the new age. Cobble notes that the shift from choosing between either

working or motherhood, to balancing both, has created a plethora of discussion regarding regulations and the well being of women as a gender. Cobble talks about organizations such as the FLSA and Labor women pushing for higher wages, equal pay and job opportunities. “In 1945, labor feminists introduced an Equal Pay Bill into Congress, and they reintroduced it every year until 1963 when the Equal Pay Act passed”(Cobble, *Halving the Double Day*). She also voices her concern that the importance of socioeconomic class standing will outweigh the importance of women/motherhood. In her piece she also talks about the importance of lobbying for federally funded universal child care programs, so that women would have a fair opportunity to improve their socioeconomic class standing.

We can see socio-economic class standing shape women’s lives as a group in Angela Davis’s, “Essays from Women, Race, and Class” for she talks about black women as a group. Davis states that many of the documents from Seneca falls follow abolitionist structure, “Many of the women... were becoming conscious of similar contradictions in their lives and had likewise seen, from the example of the anti-slavery struggle, that it was possible to fight for equality”(Davis, “Essays from Women, Race, and Class”), however does not include race. In her critique, Davis refers to the Declaration of sentiments and poses that more be done to increase the importance of class status in the woman’s movement, “there can never be a true peace in this republic until the “civil and political rights of all citizens of African decent and all women” are practically established”(Davis, “Essays from Women, Race, and Class).

Looking at Davis, Cobble, and Wolf’s pieces we can conclude that socio-economic class standing plays a critical role in womanhood, both as individuals and as a group. Wolfs

piece focusing on the woman as an individual, lays out the structure of the things necessary to successfully write woman's fiction. Cobble's piece argues both for women individually and as a group, as she talks about the "double day", and helps the reader understand the change in times, and the difficulty of balancing a working life and motherhood. And finally, in her piece, Davis refers to black women as a group in her "Essays from Women, Race, and Class", stressing the importance of class status in the woman's movement.

We can conclude that socio-economic class standing plays an increasingly bigger role in the shaping of woman's lives throughout the woman's movement. We can say increasingly, because of the shift of women in the work force through out the movement. Women now had more responsibility balancing both family life and work life.

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