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## The Gender Revolution

Nancy Topping Bazin

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# The Politics of Women's Studies

*Testimony from  
Thirty Founding Mothers*

THE WOMEN'S STUDIES HISTORY SERIES: VOLUME ONE

Edited by  
Florence Howe

Introduction by  
Mari Jo Buhle



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New York

2000

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**Nancy Topping Bazin**



In 1978, I arrived at Old Dominion University in Norfolk to direct the first women's studies program in Virginia, having already coordinated programs at Rutgers College and the University of Pittsburgh. From 1985 to 1989, I was chair of the English department at Old Dominion.

In 1994, I was one of eleven in Virginia to receive an Outstanding Faculty Award. That summer I was a visiting scholar at Indiana University's Institute for Advanced Study and, during spring 1995, a fellow at the Virginia Center for the Humanities. In 1996, I received the Charles O. and Elisabeth Burgess Faculty Research and Creativity Award. That same year, Old Dominion University designated me an Eminent Scholar; of the honors I have received, this is the one that has pleased me the most.

I have participated in faculty development projects in postcolonial literature, Third World studies (with trips to the Ivory Coast, Tanzania, and Morocco), and East Asian studies (with a trip in 1989 to Japan and China). In 1998, I went to South Africa for a seminar sponsored by the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE).

I have published two books—*Virginia Woolf and the Androgynous Vision* and *Conversations with Nadine Gordimer*—and more than forty articles. In addition to essays on writers Margaret Atwood, Edith Wharton, Marge Piercy, Flora Nwapa, and Mariama Ba, my articles have been focused primarily on curriculum transformation, women's studies, and authors Doris

Lessing, Buchi Emecheta, Bessie  
Head, Virginia Woolf, and Nadine  
Gordimer.

On January 1, 2000, I retired  
from my position as a professor of  
English at Old Dominion University.

## The Gender Revolution

In the fall of 1958, when I arrived at Stanford University to begin a Ph.D., the all-male faculty of the English department were still grumbling in the corridors about the last woman they had hired. They had found her too assertive, so they did not want to repeat that mistake. Later, at a session on getting jobs, the department chair told us that females would be hired "at one level of university lower than what they deserved." In 1960, like the other silent students, I accepted that pattern as the way the world worked. Yet the injustice of it did not escape me. Another graduate student at Stanford told me how, on the day she received her Ph.D., her department chair had taken her aside and said, "You know that your husband will always come first, don't you?" After I had my Ph.D., I, too, accepted the social attitude articulated by this department chair: my husband's interests and career came first; mine must always come second—if at all.

In 1962, while leading the lonely life of a housewife and mother in Paris, I read Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* and Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*. I found them enlightening social documents but was not ready to comprehend what they could suggest to me personally. Nor did I fully grasp the feminist nature of what I was learning as I wrote my doctoral dissertation on Virginia Woolf's novels. Nevertheless, Woolf's insights were preparing me to become a feminist teacher and women's studies director. In the 1960s, I *understood* intellectually what Woolf was saying. However, not until the early 1970s, when the women's movement had become part of the historical moment and culture in which I was living, could I *feel* what she meant.

In Paris and later in Princeton, New Jersey, I lived according to my belief that children must be cared for by their own mothers. From 1962 until 1970, I was a stay-at-home mother who worked on her dissertation in the evenings. Because I saw the caretaking role as mine alone, for a long time I thought I could not justify a daytime babysitter

because I earned no money to pay for one. Gradually, I realized that I was working for my husband and, because the children were his responsibility, too, he could pay for a babysitter. Thus for a short while, I had a babysitter for two afternoons a week. However, when we traveled to Chile and Algeria during summers so that my husband might teach, I had no relief from child care. My progress with my intellectual pursuits was slow; I had too many distracting obligations, including long visits from my husband's French family. My husband, my children, and my husband's family came first; my mother, my dissertation, and I came last. Not surprisingly, writing my dissertation took me ten years.

Without having a name for it, I was writing feminist literary criticism. Connecting the feminine with the psychological state of mania and the masculine with depression, and relating both to Woolf's aesthetics, I was working with the concept of androgyny. My book on Virginia Woolf was about ready to go to press in 1972 when I decided that "androgyny" was a word that was "coming into being" along with the feminist movement and that I should refer to the ideal of the androgynous vision in the title.<sup>1</sup> Pioneering feminists created their own concepts and learned directly from doing rather than working consciously through theories and strategic plans. We discovered our goals and methods as we made our way through the unknown. Because of this process—perhaps the only one possible in 1973—I published a book titled *Virginia Woolf and the Androgynous Vision* without including a chapter on *Orlando*.<sup>2</sup>

In August 1970, at age thirty-six, I was hired to teach at Rutgers College. At that time, Rutgers, the state university in New Brunswick, New Jersey, consisted of five separate colleges: Rutgers College for male students; Douglass College for female students; University College for evening students; Cook College, primarily for agricultural and environmental studies students; and Livingston College, a new, experimental college that enrolled one-third black students, one-third Hispanic, and one-third white. Except for University College, which used the Rutgers College facilities at night, the colleges were quite separate geographically. The five English departments had little contact with one another. Furthermore, the mathematics and science departments of Rutgers College were across the river in Piscataway, a bus ride away from the humanities and social science departments. Therefore, as an assistant professor at the all-male Rutgers College, I was quite

isolated. At that time, of the 440 faculty on our two Rutgers College campuses, only 44 were female; of those 44, only 10 were tenured and 4 or 5 of those 10 were in math and sciences on the other side of the river.<sup>3</sup> Like the male students and professors, I became so accustomed to male bodies around me that once, glancing up from my book in the library, I recall doing a double-take when I saw a young woman walking by. A female body was still rare enough that it stood out as "abnormal."

Several male students came to me in 1970 and expressed their concern about having a female teacher. One reason was that they could no longer swear in the classroom; I assured them that neither happiness nor learning were dependent upon using profanity. I was shocked, however, at the boldly disrespectful comment of a student who wrote that he would like to "come into my orifice," a play on the word *office*! I was the third woman to join the full-time faculty of the English department; the other two were not then feminists. When one of the two women faculty came to my class and saw the film *Women on the March*, she said the images of the women demonstrating in the streets for the right to vote made her want to demonstrate in the streets *against* giving women the vote! A male colleague asked me why I did not wear jeans and an old shirt—his stereotype of feminist apparel. I purposely dressed to avoid fitting into such a stereotype.

My desire to teach a course on images of women in literature was inspired primarily by attending two conferences and reading two books. First, in December 1970, I went to the Modern Language Association Convention, where my dormant feminist consciousness blossomed for the first time. Attending sessions on women's literature, hearing a speech by Elaine Showalter, and, later, reading her 1971 article on the way the reviews of works by Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot changed once their female names were revealed, finally awakened me.<sup>4</sup>

Another formative experience was my attending the Women in the Arts Symposium, April 21–30, 1972, at State University College in Buffalo. Included were exhibits, plays, performances, and films by women and talks by female painters, architects, dancers, poets, critics, and opera singers. Being in this all-female and feminist environment for ten days was an extremely liberating—even ecstatic—experience; I emerged from it a different person. The absence of men had enabled me to talk freely with other women. I saw how women could express their inner, uncensored feelings in diverse arts.

Other moments of illumination came in a variety of ways. For example, through reading Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* and then rereading the chapter "Independent Women" in Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*. I suddenly could envision the meaningful role that feminist literary criticism might play in my life. I could finally make sense of much that had puzzled me. My personal life, my political interests, and my professional life became connected. Furthermore, although I had always been interested in teaching, I now had a reason to want to publish. Feminist scholarship befit my concerns and feelings.

The title of my first women's studies course was Female Roles and Feminine Consciousness in Literature; in my class I had eighteen Rutgers College male students and three female students, who came by bus from Douglass College. Given the makeup of the class, I emphasized how sex roles hurt both men and women; but I also explained that, although the men might be damaged, they had power and money that women did not, thus creating enormous differences in the degrees of their privilege and suffering. The literature provided convincing evidence of this. The best device I discovered to convey what I meant by a patriarchal society was to have them imagine what a matriarchal society would be like. There would be a female president, a female vice president, a cabinet that was all female, a Senate that was all female except for one man, a House of Representatives that had 423 women and twelve men,<sup>5</sup> a military that was mostly female, engineers, scientists, and religious leaders most of whom were female—all this when half the population (or at least 49 percent of it) was male. Even the diehards had to admit that such a society would seem quite sick and that the male domination in 1971, equally bizarre and unbalanced, was unlikely to change rapidly.

In one especially interesting hour, we talked about why few representations of giving birth existed in literature. Because men knew little about the birth process and most writers were male, the absence of this topic was not too surprising. But then I asked poet Alicia Ostriker to read to that class "Once More Out of Darkness," her long poem about birth. A stunned silence followed. The men began to raise their hands to say that if birth was as she described it, they were never going to get a woman pregnant. Then, the women raised hands and said that they never wanted to get pregnant! Alicia and I were shocked by the response, because we had found her poem to be an honest, nonfrightening description of the birth process.<sup>6</sup>

Except for a half-dozen faculty at Rutgers College, I began that first course in an environment that was, at its best, indifferent and, at its worst, hostile. Nevertheless, the response to the course by both male and female students was extremely positive. In that course and in those that followed, I found that students reached a consensus that women were not by nature inferior and that valid reasons existed for the women's movement; those were not attitudes that characterized the general population in the early 1970s.

In 1972, the first women students would be admitted to Rutgers College. The Women's Equity Action League and Ruth Bader Ginsburg (then a Rutgers-Newark professor) had clarified the imminent danger of lawsuits, thereby convincing the reluctant Board of Governors in 1971 to vote in favor of coeducation.<sup>7</sup>

The dean appointed me to a committee to plan for the arrival of women on campus. The administrators were concerned about the dormitories and athletic facilities. What would women do without walls between the showers? I suggested that all students—male and female—might appreciate having privacy. The physical education faculty were perhaps the most nervous about the prospect of female students. As one of the few female faculty members on the committee, I was sent to talk with them. They admitted that professors had taught them in their graduate studies that women could not roll on their chests, that you could not throw a ball at a woman for fear it would hurt her breasts, and that women could not swim during menstruation. Assuring them that such notions were myths, I told them that many female students would be capable of becoming excellent athletes.<sup>8</sup>

During a meeting with the academic dean, a history graduate student dared to suggest that perhaps the curriculum should be changed. For example, she had searched and found nothing about the women's suffrage movement in her American history books. Incensed, the dean immediately stood up, slammed his hand down on the table, and proclaimed very loudly, "If this curriculum has been good enough for the boys, then it is good enough for the girls!" That terminated the conversation.

Female graduate students in the English department took their own initiative in creating a women writers course called *Literature and the Feminist Imagination*. They designed the course, selected the texts, and asked me to teach it. Although the graduate adviser actively discouraged students from signing up for it, the course filled with thirty students.



Meanwhile, on the undergraduate level, my strategy was to get courses started in various disciplines and then seek approval for a Rutgers College Women's Studies Certificate, modeled on what already existed at Douglass College. I persuaded other faculty to teach courses on women. Many were reluctant, because they feared it would hurt their prospects for tenure. Among the faculty who chose to teach for women's studies were Ann Parelius (Sociology of Sex Roles and Sociology of the Family), William O'Neill (History of American Women.), Judy Stern (Psychobiology of Sex Differences), John Bird (Sex and Pregnancy), La Frances Rose (The Black Woman), Ann Bodine (Language and Sex Roles), Jim Reed (Women in American Medicine), and Elizabeth Platt (Ancient Near Eastern Religions, a course on gods and goddesses and their relationships to sex roles in those cultures). Some courses were developed by teaching assistants (for instance, Jill Kasen in the sociology department and Atina Grossman in the history department), and sometimes we crossed college boundaries: I taught literature and history courses with historians Judy Walkowitz (from University College) and Dee Garrison (from Livingston College). I met with department chairs individually to explain the new program and why it was good for men as well as women. After I had talked at length with many people, we finally had enough courses (six or seven per semester) to offer students an eighteen-credit certificate.

Without an official appointment, without released time, without a budget, and without an office other than my own in the English department, by January 1972, I was "coordinating" the Rutgers College women's studies program.<sup>9</sup> Eventually, in the fall of 1973, I took my proposal to the faculty-governing body for the college. Although some male professors expressed skepticism, the program had cost nothing and it already existed. So they approved it without delay.

Throughout the seven years I was at Rutgers, from 1970 to 1977, I moved from teaching courses in which 80 percent to 90 percent of the literature was by men to courses in which half the writers were women to courses composed of only women writers. My women writers course, consistently attracting about sixty-five students, earned a secure place in the department. In those days, student reactions to such courses were unusually intense and personal. For example, when students observed that often female protagonists had so few socially approved options or opportunities for change that they committed suicide and

that even women writers—including Sylvia Plath, Virginia Woolf, and Anne Sexton—had killed themselves, a few began leaving suicide notes on one another's dormitory room doors. One student even attempted suicide. When students became aware of how many women in Victorian fiction died in childbirth, their right to have birth control took a historical context that was new to them. Discovering lesbian, black, or immigrant literature enabled students to speak out about their feelings and have other members of the class understand. In addition, student enthusiasm about the course moved them to participate in activities outside the classroom. When contemporary women writers visited the campus, students eagerly attended their readings to learn more about women's experiences; as opportunities opened up for women, these writers could create female characters who had choices. A few students from the course joined together to create a rape crisis center in New Brunswick. Others fought to get gynecological services for women on campus. Many became activists.

Women writers courses were always the most rewarding to teach. I saw lives change because of such courses. Joy, self-confidence, career changes, escape from bad relationships, a new assertiveness, and pride in being a woman were common by-products. Student comments included the following: "Eye-opening course! This class was very stimulating and opened my eyes to new views. Very thought provoking." "My awareness of women's issues has increased and has caused me to re-examine my life with the new knowledge I have gained."

In spring 1972, in honor of the arrival of the first female students to this male college, the dean asked me to set up the Rutgers University Women's Series. Eight others and I planned thirty-three programs for 1972–73, without a cent from the dean. Alberta Arthurs, Dennis Cate, Gerri Frazier, Susan Gliserman, Carol Keon, Susan Nash, Joyce Wadlington, Joan Walsh, and I raised money from twelve funds and campus organizations on the Rutgers College campus and set up cosponsorship arrangements with other Rutgers University campuses. In September 1972, we held a symposium in the Rutgers College Student Center that included panels, talks, the women's theater group Earth Onion, a feminist art exhibit by Eva Cockcroft, and a feminist film festival. With the first hundred dollars raised, we invited Toni Morrison to do a reading; she was a newcomer to the literary scene, having just published (1970).<sup>10</sup>

In 1974, I was one of several cofounders of the Rutgers University

Women's Research Institute, located in a house near the Douglass College campus. Our immediate goal was to encourage more research by women faculty in all five colleges of Rutgers University in the New Brunswick area. Therefore, serving as its first director in 1974, I gathered information about who was doing what research and set up a series of faculty talks instead of inviting only outside speakers for the Rutgers University Women's Series. Not having tenure, Guida West, the woman who succeeded me the second semester of that first year, and I were holding the institute together until Mary Hartman of Douglass College would have tenure and become director the following year.

Because Kate Ellis at Livingston College and Elaine Showalter, Elizabeth Meese, and Adrienne Rich at Douglass College shared my feminist literary interests and because women in other fields gained an interest in women's studies, gradually, during my seven years at Rutgers, I came to feel much less isolated. However, within the Rutgers College English department, all but three of my colleagues still assumed that feminist literary criticism was a passing fad. Only those three believed that a variety of approaches to literature would enrich the department. Since the others were not yet reading feminist scholarship and criticism, to them, my creative efforts for women and women's studies were not of value. Therefore, in 1975-76, when I came up for tenure with a book, two articles, an annotated bibliography, and a draft of several chapters of a second book, I did not get it, even though the department chair had stated at a meeting with the junior faculty of Rutgers College that a published book was the requirement for tenure.<sup>11</sup>

When I speculate on why tenure was denied me, I guess at many factors, including a lack of respect for the new affirmative action policy written the year before (in 1974-75) and the evident hostility of some of the powerful senior men in the department. Unlike my younger male colleagues, many older ones seemed to have a special problem accepting me. When I was in a room with them, they treated me as if I were invisible. The ultimate example occurred one day when one of the departmental powers was walking down the steps and I said, "My book just came out from Rutgers University Press." He did not even turn his head toward me but kept on walking. The woman standing with me, the wife of another senior colleague, exclaimed to him, "She said her book just came out!" He ignored her, too, and continued on his way. He was evidently not at all pleased that I had a published book, because it

qualified me for the tenure he did not wish to grant. Another factor in my not getting tenure was perhaps the undemocratic nature of the department. I was hired by the chair without consultation with anyone else; the department had no hiring committees and no general meetings on policies.

After I was denied tenure, I looked at the letters that had been sent to outside readers of my work. The department chair had chosen three of his close friends, all of whom had recently given talks on campus. Although the names were blacked out, I could easily read them beneath the black marks. The letters also revealed that the chair had not sent (or mentioned) any of my published works to the readers, but merely the draft for the beginning chapters of the new book. I considered filing a grievance, and I had some faculty support across the five campuses, including Adrienne Rich, then at Douglass College. However, when I talked to Elaine Showalter, head of women's studies at Douglass, she discouraged me from appealing the decision. At another university, a well-known female professor who had made an appeal had just died of cancer, and stress was rumored to be a factor. Showalter mentioned that, as well as the stigma she felt a grievance would place on me in terms of getting hired elsewhere. Considering the times, her opinion was convincing. Because even the preliminary steps in exploring the possibilities of an appeal had caused me a great deal of stress, I decided that I would stop looking back and move on with my life.<sup>12</sup> But I had to do that alone, for my husband and I had separated in 1974.

Looking for a job in 1976–77 as the single mother of a four-year-old daughter and an eleven-year-old son was extremely discouraging. Budgets at all universities had been severely cut; not one advertisement appeared for an associate professorship in my literary field. I applied for more than two hundred jobs in all areas of university life—very few were academic—and had no luck. With two children now dependent on me, I became increasingly anxious.

Late in July 1977, I was offered a half-time administrative position in women's studies at the University of Pittsburgh, with the security of a three-year contract. This was not ideal, but half a salary (plus adjunct pay for a course each semester) was better than no salary. I worked happily at the University of Pittsburgh for one year as coordinator of women's studies within the framework of a well-established program. That program had financial difficulties (the dean refused to replace money for new programs cut off because the program was no longer

"new"), and it struggled with a broken promise that five faculty would be given joint appointments with women's studies (the number was down to two plus me). However, broad support for the program existed among both faculty and students. Because of this support, I was welcomed with a kind of warmth that had not existed at male-dominated Rutgers College. The presence of large numbers of female faculty—including tenured ones—and female students made a world of difference. Because men were accustomed to having women around, no one felt that women were trespassing on male territory. The dean, whose field was chemistry, had little concept of interdisciplinary study and gave minimal financial support; however, he did recognize me as an official head of a program. In that position, I was treated with respect. I even had a large office and a secretary.

Whereas the dean at Rutgers College in the 1970s seemed to perceive women's studies as a potential threat,<sup>13</sup> by contrast, the dean at the University of Pittsburgh saw women's studies as an asset to the university. By the time I moved to Old Dominion University as an associate professor of English and director of women's studies in August 1978, times had changed some more. Affirmative action was well established at Old Dominion, a relatively young and flexible university, and the dean, Heinz Meier, felt a strong commitment to making women's studies a success. When I began teaching there in the fall of 1978, he and his wife, Regula, invited the entire faculty of the College of Arts and Letters to their home for a reception in my honor.<sup>14</sup>

At Old Dominion University, I focused on curriculum and faculty development. Despite some pockets of opposition,<sup>15</sup> by the 1980s, the tide was turning. Gradually, most people were ceasing to applaud sexist behavior. What remained to be done was a transformation of the university. In 1980, I persuaded our affirmative action officer and members of the University Affirmative Action Committee to support the idea of affirmative action in the curriculum.<sup>16</sup> I postulated that a university commitment to the principle of equality would lead to hiring faculty with expertise on women, minorities, and non-Western peoples. Therefore, I wanted this commitment written into the mission statement of the university. After a series of meetings, President Alfred Rollins and two vice presidents of the university acknowledged the following: 1) the need for a curriculum that would reflect the perspectives of and include materials about women and minorities as well as Third World and non-Western peoples; 2) the need to hire faculty with

expertise in these fields; and 3) the appropriateness of including within the university mission statement a commitment to the ideal of equality. What followed during the late 1980s was a rewriting of the university mission statement along these lines (approved in 1989), and a revision of General Education requirements that made approval of the designated courses dependent upon the inclusion of material by and about women as well as minority and non-Western males. Departmental monitoring of syllabi by a committee encouraged compliance by all faculty. In addition, the English department, in 1986, placed in the new catalogue a requirement for all majors to take a course devoted to women, minority, or postcolonial writers. Thus the strategic plans of the university, the college, and the department made commitments to the ideals I had set forth in 1980. My idealistic words had become institutional language.

My wildest dreams of the 1970s had come true. Yet naïve students and faculty who think that the women's issues they care about have been permanently solved and an increasingly conservative student body and public (weary of being "politically correct") have the potential to undermine what has been achieved. As I retire at the turn of the century, I must rely on the young to determine what will prevail.

members at the other Claremont Colleges would describe other beginnings. I can tell only my own story. I wish to express my thanks to Sue Mansfield, history department at Claremont McKenna College, who shared with me her own research on the early days of our intercollegiate women's studies program.

- 1 The Claremont Colleges are five autonomous undergraduate colleges (Claremont McKenna, formerly Claremont Men's; Harvey Mudd; Pitzer; Pomona; and Scripps) and two graduate institutions on adjacent campuses, affiliated to broaden the intellectual, social, and cultural resources available to their students. The colleges jointly support certain central facilities, open their courses to one another's students, and cooperate in sponsoring special academic and extracurricular programs. (Description based on a statement in the 1998–99 Pomona College catalogue.)
- 2 The five coordinators have been Susan Seymour (anthropology department at Pitzer); Anne Bages (physical education department at Pomona); J'nan Sellery (literature department at Harvey Mudd); Sue Mansfield (history department at Claremont McKenna); and Jane O'Donnell (music department at Scripps).
- 3 Our primary interest was in the development of women's studies courses, but we were concerned also with the integration of women's studies materials into the

traditional liberal arts curriculum. An early example of our efforts is the well-attended conference offered in February 1983, *Traditions and Transitions: Women's Studies and a Balanced Curriculum*.

#### Nancy Topping Bazin

- 1 Although *androgynous* was not properly defined in dictionaries, I claimed that it was a word that was "coming into being." In accord with my prophetic sense, in April 1973, my book appeared, along with Carolyn Heilbrun's *Toward the Recognition of Androgyny*; Adrienne Rich's poem "The Stranger" (from *Diving into the Wreck*) about the baby "androgynous;" and Mary Daly's *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*, which focused on the ideal of "androgynous being." Androgyny was the topic of a major panel at the 1973 Modern Language Association Convention and a special 1974 issue of Wendy Martin's journal, *Women's Studies* 2, no. 2. In it, my coauthor, Alma Freeman, and I published an article titled "The Androgynous Vision" (185–215). In that same issue, I also published a long, annotated bibliography titled "The Concept of Androgyny: A Working Bibliography," (217–35). My inclusive philosophy developed from the concept of the androgynous vision; see Nancy Topping Bazin, "Emerging from Women's Studies: A New World View and a New Goal for

- Educators," *The Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* 4, no. 2 (Summer 1982): 187–92; and Nancy Topping Bazin, "Integrating Third World Women into the Women's Studies Curriculum," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* 7, no. 2 (1983): 13–17.
- 2 Nancy Topping Bazin, *Virginia Woolf and the Autonomous Vision* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1973).
  - 3 Several of the Rutgers College women faculty were in romance languages. Among the departments with no female faculty were art, history, music, and psychology. Nationwide, in art, those getting Ph.D.'s were 18 percent female; in history, 15 percent; and in English, 30 percent. As a response to a threat of having federal contracts withheld, Provost Kenneth Wheeler announced that faculties in departments should reflect these Ph.D. percentages. The Women's Equity Action League (WEAL) had lodged a complaint with the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. In an article about this in the May 10, 1971, *Rutgers Daily Targum*, a male professor was quoted as saying that the obvious discrimination against women was "as it should be." In addition, at that time faculty contracts provided "compensation of all diseases except those specifically related to women." Women staff members were fired in their seventh month of pregnancy and allowed to return only if their position were "still available." See Irene Ronciglione, "Discriminatory Employment Patterns Uncovered at R.U.," *Rutgers Daily Targum*, 10 May 1971: 3, 7.
  - 4 Elaine Showalter, "Women and the Literary Curriculum," *College English* 32, no. 8 (May 1971): 855–62 (publication of the paper read at the MLA Forum on the Status of Women in the Profession, December 27, 1970); and Elaine Showalter, "Women Writers and the Female Experience," in *Notes from the Third Year: Women's Liberation*, ed. Anne Koedt and Shulamith Firestone (New York: Notes from the Third Year [P.O. Box AA, Old Chelsea Station, New York, N.Y. 10011], 1971), 134–41.
  - 5 For the 1971 statistics on the actual number of women in the House of Representatives and in the Senate, see *Biographical Dictionary of the American Congress, 1774–1996*, ed. Joel Treese and Dorothy Countryman (Alexandria, Va.: CQ Staff Directories, 1997), 469–74; and Office of the Historian, U.S. House of Representatives, *Women in Congress, 1917–1990* (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1991), 1–241 *passim*. In 1971, the cabinet consisted of fifteen members, none of whom were women. See Robert, Zobel, ed., *Biographical Dictionary of the U.S. Executive Branch, 1774–1977* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1977), 398–99.
  - 6 Alicia Ostriker, "Once More Out of Darkness," in *Once More Out of*



*Darkness and Other Poems* (Berkeley: Berkeley Poets' Cooperative, 1974), 7–15.

- 7 See Melanie Janis Cooper, "'Resolved That I Should Be a Man': A Comprehensive Study of Coeducation at Rutgers College" (Henry Rutgers honors thesis submitted to the Department of History and the Department of American Studies, Rutgers University, 1997), 33–37 (available in Special Collections and University Archives, Rutgers University Libraries).

- 8 In 1974, when the first Rutgers College women's basketball team began playing, "'hostile spectators' chided the coaches and players with, 'Go back to the kitchen. Get out of our gym and go home. Whatever happened to motherhood?!'" (Jaynee LaVecchia and Beth Ludwig, "Women Add New Element to B-Ball Program," *Rutgers Daily Targum*, 5 December 1974, as quoted in Cooper, "Resolved," 100. Sexism existed, too, in certain classrooms. For example, on November 21, 1974, a female student published a letter in the student newspaper about "blatantly sexist film clips" shown as part of her biology teacher's "recent lecture on photosynthesis." The letter stated, "The woman hanging out of her bikini was offensive enough without having to take off her top, and finally her bikini bottom!" She asked, "Is this the only way you can make biology lectures more interesting—by spicing them up with *Penthouse* pic-

tures?" She concluded, "I can recall that last year many students complained to the biology department as well as the *Targum* that the lecture was offensive, yet nothing was done to change it. Why, gentlemen?" (Letters, *Rutgers Daily Targum*, 21 November 1974, as quoted in Cooper, "Resolved," 95). In response to the film clips, she and other women in that biology class had risen to their feet in protest and walked out.

- 9 At the other end of New Brunswick, Elaine Showalter and her colleagues were already teaching several women's studies courses at Douglass College, but at that time we had little direct contact. Kate Ellis in the Livingston College English department was interested in women's studies, too, but its development on that new campus had just begun. In working to develop women's studies, Ann Parelus in the sociology department at Rutgers College was a particularly supportive colleague. For acquiring women's studies books for the library, I had strong support from librarian Joan Walsh. Among administrators, Georgina Smith, Guida West, and Joyce Wadlington were active on several fronts.
- 10 Our other guests during that first year included artist Faith Ringgold; Cindy Nemser of the *Feminist Art Journal*; creative writers Doris Lessing, Adrienne Rich, Anais Nin, Diane Wakowski, Maxine Kumin, and Marge Piercy; biographer Nancy Milford; actor

- Donna Wilshire; feminist writers Deirdre English, Florence Howe, and Robin Morgan; members of the Viola Farber Dance Company; members of the Barbara Lloyd Dance Company; and New York City Ballet dancer Violetta Verdy.
- 11 During an earlier evaluation, the first ploy of the department's power clique (usually three men) was to declare that they did not need a tenured faculty member in my field of twentieth-century British literature. Because I had been the only one teaching that course at Rutgers College and for the graduate program, I was able to reply quickly to that, and they never mentioned it again.
  - 12 The next year at Rutgers College a young man was coming up for tenure, but he did not yet have a publisher for his book. The department's powers called unsuccessfully all over the country to help him find a publisher. Finally, they removed the name of a colleague from his acknowledgments and made this same colleague a reader (quickly, over the weekend) for Rutgers University Press. In this way his book was accepted for publication, and he was granted tenure.
  - 13 When I left Rutgers College, the dean placed women's studies in the hands of a moderate feminist who had become his associate dean, thus putting the program where he could control it.
  - 14 Old Dominion University had the first women's studies program in Virginia. It was initially funded by a 1977–78 pilot grant of \$42,836 from the National Endowment for the Humanities. During the first year, under the leadership of Carolyn Rhodes, six courses were team taught. When the dean of arts and letters, Heinz Meier, decided to seek a permanent director to be hired in time for the fall 1978 semester, the post could be full-time in women's studies or half-time in women's studies and half-time in a department. Before my on-campus interview, the chair of the English department had decided not to have the women's studies director in his department. However, while on campus, I convinced him that he should be interested in adding this extra position. Thus he canceled a meeting of English faculty and had them attend my talk. He told someone that he became interested in hiring me "because I looked like a Southern lady." Luckily, I had not fit his image of a feminist!
  - 15 One history professor predicted, "By the year 2000, the 'new freedom woman' will have dropped her hyphenated name and will have crawled out of her trousers and back into the security of her foundation and home. NOW will again become an adverb, and ERA a common noun." This prophecy appeared in a feature article by Patrick J. Rollins in the November 17, 1978, issue of *UNews*. The title of the article asked, "Feminist Consciousness Marks Collapse, Social Chaos?" Rollins fervently

answered yes to that question.

- 16 Nancy Topping Bazin, "Expanding the Concept of Affirmative Action to Include the Curriculum," *Women's Studies Newsletter* 4, no. 2 (Winter 1980): 10–11, 14–15; and Nancy Topping Bazin, "Transforming the Curriculum, the Mission Statement, the Strategic Goals: A Success Story," *Initiatives* (Journal of the National Association of Women in Education) 54, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 39–46.

#### Annis Pratt

- 1 See W. E. Cross, "Negro to Black Conversion Experience," *Black World* 20, no. 9 (1971): 13–27.
- 2 See Nancy E. Downing and Kristin L. Roush, "From Passive Acceptance to Active Commitment: A Model of Feminist Identity Development for Women," *The Counseling Psychologist* 13, no. 4 (October 1985): 695–709.
- 3 See Sarah Slavin and Jacqueline Macaulay, "Joan Roberts and the University," in *Rocking the Boat: Academic Women and Academic Processes*, ed. Gloria DeSole and Leonore Hoffmann (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1981), 37–49.
- 4 See Jacqueline Macaulay, "The Failure of Affirmative Action: One University's Experience," in *Rocking the Boat*, ed. DeSole and Hoffmann, 98–115.
- 5 During the Nazi era, Paul de Man, for example—the darling of the deconstructionists—wrote collaborationist journalism. See

Alice Kaplan, *French Lessons: A Memoir*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 167–69.

#### Josephine Donovan

- 1 This was what I heard at the time. The apocryphal bra burning was actually alleged to have occurred at the Miss America pageant in Atlantic City, New Jersey.
- 2 Robin Morgan, "Goodbye to All That," *Rat*, January 1970, reprinted in Robin Morgan, *Going Too Far* (New York: Random, 1977), 121–30; see also Marge Piercy, "The Grand Coolie Damn," in *Sisterhood Is Powerful*, ed. Robin Morgan (New York: Vintage, 1970), 421–38; Anne Koedt, "Women and the Radical Movement" (an early version of which appeared in *Notes from the First Year* [1968]) in *Radical Feminism*, ed. Anne Koedt, Ellen Levine, and Anita Rapone (New York: Quadrangle, 1973), 318–21; and Thomas Powers, *Diana: The Making of a Terrorist* (New York: Bantam, 1971). The phrase "goodbye to all that" actually dates from World War I.
- 3 Elaine Reuben was then, I believe, an assistant professor in the English department at the UW. She later became the first coordinator of the National Women's Studies Association.
- 4 I might mention as a historical footnote that my first assignment as a teaching assistant was in the spring of 1967 under Cyrena Pondrom (Evelyn Beck was also a TA in that course, Masterpieces of



# **THE POLITICS OF WOMEN'S STUDIES**



## **Testimony from 30 Founding Mothers**



**Edited by Florence Howe**  
**Introduction by Mari Jo Buhle**

