Dissolving the Hyphen:
From Socialist-Feminism to Feminist Feminism

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In recent years there has been a resurgence of interest among socialist-feminists in the deep and difficult questions of the origin of domination and the relationship of gender and class oppression. These kinds of questions were at the centre of socialist-feminism’s original challenge to the Old and New Left in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In the intervening years, however, the focus of socialist-feminist analysis has shifted from the origin and dynamics of gender and class domination to a concern with the particular shape of women’s oppression under capitalism. The renewed attention of some socialist-feminists to the broader theoretical questions facing feminism marks a return of the originality and creativity of the more daring early days of Women’s Liberation. It also puts these writers on the same theoretical ground as radical feminists concerned with questions of gender and class. This opens the way toward a resumption of the socialist-feminist/radical feminist dialogue that was so productive in the early days. It is therefore a major significance for the future development of feminist theory as a whole.

There have been three major anthologies of North American feminist theory that focus on the relation of class and gender and of socialism and feminism: From Feminism to Liberation, edited by Edith Hoshino Altbach; Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism, edited by Zillah Eisenstein and Women and Revolution: A Discussion of the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism, edited by Lydia Sargent. Hence, it seems appropriate to trace the development of North American socialist-feminist theory as it is reflected in these three volumes.

From Feminism to Liberation is a collection of classical early articles by feminist activists. The articles reflect the inspired and courageous early days of socialist women’s challenge to the hegemony of male-defined radical theory and practice. They are products of the tremendous struggle that marked the emergence of autonomous socialist-feminist practice in North
America. The struggle itself was the response of socialist women to the continuing, and even increasing, sexism of the New Left despite its avowed commitment to liberty and equality, and to the questions that liberal and radical feminists were raising with more and more persistence and power.  

The twelve articles in the collection are distinguished by the variety of their positions and their creative approach to the challenges raised by a newly emerging feminism. Two articles present interesting critical reflections on feminist practice around daycare and abortion; one offers a daring and original critique of the sexism of psychology; three tackle the question of gender domination and its relation to class in a direct theoretical way; and six (one of them historical) deal with the practical relationship of women, women's issues and women's liberation to male-dominated radical groups.

All of these articles were written at a time when:

In England we hear that Women's Liberation is 'not politics.' In the States...women are faced with the decision whether to support actions by the Left which thinks of you as less than human (and does not even know it thinks this), or to refuse to join with it in fighting the Establishment.

The authors rejected the widely held position of the time which defined “women's liberation as a sort of counter-revolutionary self-indulgence” and maintained that “organizing around women's issues [is] reformist because it is an attempt to ameliorate conditions within bourgeois society.” In the face of this viewpoint, the six articles on practice assert the importance and centrality of women's liberation to all progressive struggle. They go so far as to suggest that unless radical politics accepts this, they are doomed to fail:

Until working men see their female co-workers and their own wives as equal in their movement, and until these women see that it is in their own interests and that of their families to “dare to win,” the position of women will continue to undermine every working class struggle.

Mari-Jo Buhle, in her study of “Women in the Socialist Party 1901-1914,” makes the same case when she says in her conclusion that “despite its rapid eclipse, the women’s role in the Socialist Party was not a negligible one...but offered an early lesson...of what women could do to link their sex-oppression to the general oppression of the social system.” Of course, the fact, documented by Buhle, that women’s role was built over great resistance and was quickly eclipsed, did not escape the readers of this anthology and helped to reinforce another theme of the articles on practice—the need for autonomous women's organizations and politics.

The resistance of male radicals and male organizations to women's issues and to the idea of women's liberation is documented by these articles which make the case that women must organize autonomously as a women's liberation movement in order to struggle against gender and class oppression: “A women's liberation movement will be necessary if unity of the working class is ever to be achieved.” “We've got to do our own thing and get our own heads together.”

In this early period of socialist-feminist development, women challenged male theory as well as practice. Four of the more important early articles which broke with established patriarchal thought are reprinted in this collection. Naomi Weisstein's classic article “Psychology Constructs the Female, or the Fantasy Life of the Male Psychologist” stands as a powerful indictment of the ideological and control aspects of the apparently value free “science” of psychology. The three other articles focus on questions of gender
and class and go beyond indictment to posit new theory.

Juliet Mitchell, in "Women: The Longest Revolution," exposes marxism's failure to deal with "Women's condition." Mitchell attempts to analyse this condition in terms of structures which she identifies as Production, Reproduction, and Sex and Socialization. Her analysis is significant in its new attention to areas outside production proper, although its arbitrary designation of structures leaves it essentially static and descriptive.

However, it was soon surpassed by Margaret Benston who, in "The Political Economy of Women's Liberation," goes much further toward a dynamic revision of marxism. Benston defines women "as that group of people which is responsible for the production of use values in those activities associated with the home and family" and finds in this the "material base for the inferior status of women." In making reproduction central to her analysis, rather than one of a random list of structures, Benston can argue that "the roots of the secondary status of women are in fact economic" and that "women as a group do indeed have a definite relationship to the means of production and that this is different from that of men." Peggy Morton, in "A Woman's Work is Never Done," takes this analysis of reproduction further by noting that "the family is a unit whose function is the maintenance and reproduction of labour power."

Feminism to Liberation is an exciting collection which represents the powerful early potential of socialist-feminism for a new thinking and new practice. There is evidence in this book that the critical reactive focus on the Left, so essential to radical women's initial break with male-defined theory and practice, was beginning to give way to an active and autonomous focus on the praxis of women as revolutionary subjects. The collection includes Marlene Dixon's well-known article "Where Are We Going?" in which she argues that:

The energies of radical women have too long been deflected into arguing-pleading-justifying their cause i.e., to fighting male chauvinism, male supremacy, in the Movement.

It is a fearful thing for a woman to rebel, as much for the Movement 'wife' as for the average housewife.... The boldest and most fearless women [at the Conference] were clearly those who had bolted from, or never belonged to, established leftist organizations.

With these statements she signalled the readiness of some socialist-feminists to shift their political reference point from the Left to all women and to put priority on dialogue with these women rather than with the men who claimed hegemony for a radical tradition and politics that excluded or trivialized women. Weisstein's article is an example of just such theoretical writing. It deals with male psychology and psychologists but is addressed to women themselves as the group defined and controlled by this psychology.

These beginnings of a socialist-feminist practice addressing women, rather than only the Left, coincided with the development in the most adventurous socialist-feminist writing (represented in this volume by Benston and Morton) of a sound theoretical beginning for understanding women as a group across class lines. The stress in practice on women's political autonomy, the recognition of the theoretical and strategic significance of reproduction, and the resulting understanding of the objective basis of women's existence as a group, were all distinct breaks with male-dominated radical tradition. These departures put many socialist-feminists on the same political ground as radical feminists. Taken together these early insights required the development of new political perspectives
designed to shape a radical practice of women which breached traditional class lines even as it addressed the evil of class power as well as gender power. They indicated the necessity and the possibility of developing a liberatory politics that could challenge domination in a deeper, more radical and more universal way than class politics as traditionally conceived and practiced was able to do.

So it is not surprising that in the early days many socialist-feminists as well as radical feminists framed their theoretical and strategic questions in terms of the struggle against domination itself. In questioning all power they necessarily asked—what are the origins of domination, specifically of gender and class domination? How are these two related and reproduced? How can we best understand the relations of men and women as groups? These questions were new on the radical agenda. They were the result of autonomous definition by socialist-feminists of their revolutionary project. The early recognition that women were a group whose oppression, rooted in reproduction, cut across class lines, challenged the very shape of the radical political map and held the promise of a major reconstitution of progressive politics as a whole.

Unfortunately this promise was not fulfilled. Talk of women’s autonomy, the founding of women’s political groups and the articulation of new insights were not enough in themselves to end inhibition and control by traditional male-defined theory and practice continued long after its usefulness had been served. Socialist-feminists stated, restated and justified early insights to the Left rather than developing them further in dialogue with other feminists. Worse still, many turned their attention from central feminist questions around the origin and nature of domination to questions which could be addressed within marxist terms. The theoretical challenges voiced in the early years by many socialist-feminists were sidestepped. The larger questions of power and oppression were tacitly dropped to deal with more limited analysis of the particular shape of women’s exploitation under capitalism. This analysis is important of course, but if it is not undertaken within a larger framework addressing the "whys" of oppression itself, it becomes a limiting redefinition of feminism’s political project. Regardless of the intentions of most of the socialist-feminists involved, the shift of focus after the early days served to substitute marxist questions for feminist questions and to re-enclose feminism within marxism.

The most heretical of the early work, Margaret Benston’s “Political Economy of Women’s Liberation” and Peggy Morton’s “A Woman’s Work is Never Done,” for instance, came to serve as a focal point for criticism rather than for critical development. Later socialist-feminists used the inevitable weakness of early attempts to analyze women’s oppression as a way of reaffirming the existing marxist framework rather than challenging it more fully. Despite Benston’s and Morton’s important critiques of Juliet Mitchell’s “Women: The Longest Revolution,” the three abstract and arbitrary “structures” that she developed in this essay were unquestioningly reclaimed by later socialist-feminists. These “structures” were used to legitimate numberless, ill-conceived and theoretically pretentious descriptions of women’s situation under capitalism that avoided the really difficult and important feminist theoretical questions.
The strategic implications of the important fact that women are an oppressed group that cuts across class were also avoided in this period. Socialist-feminists chose not to acknowledge the dilemma this very real contradiction of a simple class analysis posed. Instead of pursuing the new thinking that their own and other feminist analyses required, they accepted the false solution of a strategic focus on working class women. Working class women qualified as oppressed by both standards and were therefore a safe focus for a practice uninformed by adequate theory. The question of middle class women (and working class men for that matter) was left in abeyance.

A focus on working class women that begged the real theoretical and political questions is evident in the articles in *Feminism to Liberation*:

Radical women must agitate among young working class girls, rank and file women workers, and workers’ wives around a double front, against their direct oppression by all male supremacist institutions and against their exploitation as workers.20

This is an understandable interim way of dealing with a political question when practice cannot wait for theory. But it became a long term refuge from essential new thinking and strategy that contributed to socialist-feminism’s theoretical stagnation.

The same neutralization of provocative political questions is seen in the socialist-feminist response to Maria-Rosa Dalla Costa and Selma James’s critique of male-centred class struggle. Their position is foreshadowed in the James article in *Feminism to Liberation* and fully presented in *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* published in 1973.21 The theoretical and strategic questions these authors raised were redefined by their socialist-feminist critics to generate a whole body of economistic literature focused, not on the dynamics of power and the reproduction of class and gender, but on the nature of domestic labour under capitalism.22 The debate deflected the attention of many socialist-feminists from key theoretical questions to narrower disputes which could be contained within marxism. This was one more aspect of socialist-feminism’s failure to follow up the important theoretical breakthroughs of its early days.

The lack of original socialist-feminist theory23 in this period was so complete that, when I examined that theory in 1978, the main body of material to be considered still consisted of the early classics I have mentioned, with the only addition being Sheila Rowbotham’s *Woman’s Consciousness, Man’s World*, published in 1973.24

It is significant that the next North American collection of varied socialist-feminist work on class and gender did not appear until 1979 when Monthly Review Press published *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*, edited by Zillah E. Eisenstein. It contains 17 articles written between 1974 and 1978. Ten articles provide descriptive analyses of women in history and in current capitalist and socialist societies; two are manifestoes of socialist-feminist political groups; seven tackle the question of gender and class oppression or socialist politics and feminism in a directly theoretical way. The number of articles listed adds up to more than 17 because two of them fall into more than one category, providing fine descriptive social analysis in the service of theoretical argument.

Most of the articles remain within the socialist theoretical framework accepted in the previous years, attempting to add descriptive detail of women’s specific place and experience and, at most, to extend marxist categories to encompass this. However, the collection has certain strengths that indicate a period of new creativity in socialist-feminist theory in the late 1970’s.

One of these is the power of the research about women accumulated since *Feminism to Libera-
tion was published. The ten articles analyzing women in history or in current capitalist or socialist societies all take advantage of this enormous advance to highlight, unapologetically and insistently and with fine detail, the reality of women's lives and politics. This focus on understanding women's specific condition and lived experience leads almost all the articles to focus on the sphere of reproduction and private and personal life as a key area of consideration—whether the concern of the author is primarily descriptive, theoretical or strategic. In this, even the articles which present the least overt theoretical challenge to traditional class analysis confirm the validity, and continue the development, of the focus on reproduction pioneered by the early feminists. The growing knowledge of women amassed during the years of relatively little theoretical challenge led necessarily to a shift of socialist-feminist emphasis from the workplace to the home, family and community. As a result, the detailed and well-documented descriptive analyses presented in *Capitalist Patriarchy* are beginning to outgrow the theoretical framework most of them are presented within.

More significant still, is the fact that articles are included which explicitly challenge simple or even extended class frameworks. All of the explicitly theoretical articles in this collection were written in the later period covered by the book. This attests to the re-emergence in these years, within socialist-feminism, of the kind of questions that have to be at the heart of a developing autonomous feminist practice. And it is these articles that make this collection an important representation of socialist-feminism's political development.

The increased commitment to analyzing history and society “from women's point of view” and the resultant focus on reproduction broadly defined will be clear in the following short outlines of the articles.

Ellen Dubois, in “The Nineteenth Century Woman Suffrage Movement and the Analysis of Women's Oppression,” departs from earlier dismissals of this movement as essentially middle class and reformist to “assert the basic radicalism of its politics” and to understand its radicalism as a response to “the facts of women's lives” in which capitalism and male supremacy were “two major systems that structured women’s oppression.”

Mary P. Ryan traces the development of the concept of the “feminine” and women's role in this development. She is concerned to examine the relationship between femininity and capitalism during the early stages of American industrialization and finds that “the structural similarity between working-class and middle-class womanhood outweighs incidental differences.... (W)omen of both classes maintained a distinctly female relationship to industrial capitalism...in the existence of an extensive sphere of private domestic, and female activity, which, while outside the productive sector was essential to capitalist industrialization.”

Jean Gardiner, in “Women’s Domestic Labour,” asks “Why have housework and child care in modern industrial capitalist societies such as Britain, continued to such a great extent to be the responsibility of women and organized on a private family basis?” In formulating her answer, she argues strongly for “the validity in their own right of the kind of questions being raised by the feminist movement” and rejects the kind of analytic approach that asks only “whether housewives can make a contribution to the class struggle.”

Batya Weinbaum and Amy Bridges, in “The Other Side of the Paycheck: Monopoly Capital and the Structure of Consumption,” continue the focus on housework and specifically its consumption aspect as essential to an understanding of the dynamics of capitalism and to an awareness that community based struggle cannot
be dismissed as necessarily reformist, or work place struggle hailed as necessarily progressive.

Linda Gordon, in “The Struggle for Reproductive Freedom: Three Stages of Feminism” says:

Marxism has focused on the relations of production.... Patterns of male domination in the area of reproduction, not only biological but also the social reproduction of human beings, predate capitalism and are not fully explained by Marxist thought.... Since sexual relations seem to have been determined to a great extent by considerations about reproduction, marxist approaches to the roots of sexual domination have been similarly inadequate.30

She presents a corrective analysis of the history of the American women’s movement which recognizes the legitimacy and radicalism of women’s concern for reproductive freedom and the crucial importance of struggles in the personal realm that the Left has not taken seriously. She concludes by insisting that:

the working class, like other classes has sexual hierarchy...(and) that the sex-gender system is located in patterns of human behaviour and human character that are not fully explained by capitalism (or even, possibly, by class). Liberation is going to require a struggle against capitalism and male supremacy as two connected, but not identical, forms of domination.31

Margery Davies, in “Woman’s Place Is at the Typewriter: The Feminization of the Clerical Labor Force,” presents a case study of the feminization of the clerical labour force, pointing out the importance of an expanding capitalism’s need for a huge clerical labour force that could only be supplied from the pool of educated female labour. She shows, at the same time, how “patriarchal patterns reinforced the office hierarchy”32 as the recruitment of large numbers of women allowed male white collar workers to escape individual down-grading as clerical work was routinized.

Heidi Hartmann, in “Capitalism, Patriarchy and Job Segregation,” breaks out of the other authors’ examination of a given patriarchal capitalist system to examine the dynamic relations between capitalism and patriarchy. She argues that “capitalism is a relative late comer, whereas patriarchy, the hierarchical relationship between men and women in which men are dominant and women subordinate, was an early arrival”33 and goes on to give an historical account in which emerging capitalism is shaped as much by male (worker and bourgeois) interests as by class interests. “Men and women had different places in the familial structure of authority, and capitalism proceeded in a way that built on that authority structure.”34

Carolleen Bengelsdorf and Alice Hageman, in “Emerging from Underdevelopment: Women and Work in Cuba” and Margaret Randall in “Introducing the Family Code,” look at women’s place in socialist Cuba. Judith Stacey, in “When Patriarchy Kowtows,” looks at the changes for women in post-revolutionary China. The first two writers are far more traditional in their theoretical approach than Stacey who critiques marxism’s and maoism’s inability to analyse the trans-historical, transcultural oppression that is “specific to women that cuts across class lines.”35 But all nevertheless focus on an examination of domestic labour as a key determinant of women’s condition.

“The Berkeley-Oakland Women’s Union Statement” and “The Black Feminist Statement” of the Combahee River Collective reaffirm the political themes of the early days of Women’s Liberation. They argue that sexual politics under patriarchy is as pervasive in women’s lives as the politics of class or race; that sexism benefits capitalism as well as men; that capitalism, racism,
imperialism and sexism must be fought together; that unpaid work must be recognized and the public/private split opposed; that, in the process of struggle, means and ends must not be separate; and that autonomous feminist groupings are necessary to develop a practice which can encompass all this.

The articles in this volume vary widely in the relative weight they are prepared to accord to patriarchy and to women’s struggle against their oppression. But, taken together, they reflect an undoubted and important shift of socialist-feminist analytical emphasis to the sphere of reproduction, the private, personal, domestic realm and the specific condition and interests of women as a group. This recognition of the theoretical and strategic significance of reproduction, even by those most contained within traditional categories of class analysis, is important testimony to the correctness of feminism’s early focus on this common aspect of women’s lives.

A number of articles in this collection, not only echo this early focus, but build on it in ways that more explicitly repudiate the limitations of existing class analysis. Heidi Hartmann, Linda Gordon and Judith Stacey all go beyond attempts to expand marxist categories to present a dualistic co-existence of patriarchal and class power. Their belief that patriarchy is a hierarchical structure of oppression as real and as materially based as class hierarchy, is most fully argued by Zillah Eisenstein in the two theoretical pieces which introduce this collection: “Developing a Theory of Capitalist Patriarchy and Socialist Feminism” and “Some Notes on the Relations of Capitalist Patriarchy.”

Eisenstein uses the term “capitalist patriarchy,” to emphasize the mutually reinforcing dialectical relationship between capitalist class structure and hierarchical sexual structuring. She argues that “the synthesis of radical feminist and marxist analysis is a necessary first step in formulating a cohesive socialist-feminist political theory, one that does not merely add together these two theories of power but sees them interrelated through the sexual division of labour.” However, despite her insistence that class and patriarchal power, together, shape the single social system we live in, and her determined efforts to analyse that system as a unity, her analysis is doomed to remain essentially dualistic.

Any social-analysis more universal that marxism must be based on a more complete understanding of the dynamics of domination. But Eisenstein explicitly refuses to deal with this level of theory. She quotes Juliet Mitchell’s prohibition of the study of the origins of domination approvingly, and largely accepts Mitchell’s limited definition of the theoretical project as a descriptive examination of gender and class exploitation in existing society as it is reflected in the “sexual division of labour.”

It seems to me that ‘Why did it happen’ and ‘historically when’ are both false questions. The questions that should, I think, be asked in the place of these are: how does it take place in our society?...in other words we can start by asking ‘how does it happen now?’

Eisenstein expands Mitchell’s focus of analysis to include the composite question “Why does it happen now?” and some attention to “patriarchal history as a real force” but this is not enough to prevent her replicating Mitchell’s substitution of a static photographic image of capitalist patriarchy for a dynamic analysis of its historical emergence and reproduction. This limited focus is also made explicit when Eisenstein criticizes radical feminists for asking “Why women are oppressed rather than how the process of power functions.”

By rejecting radical feminist concerns with “why male domination?” and, indeed, “why domination at all?” Eisenstein is rejecting an essential component of any truly new theory.
building. She closes the door to real socialist-feminist/radical feminist dialogue and leaves herself, by definition, unable to achieve the kind of "synthesis of marxism and radical feminism" that she seeks. In refusing to radically redefine her theoretical ground in feminist terms she remains on marxist ground adding and extending and questioning. Her terms of reference necessarily restrict her to either the simple extension of marxist categories or the addition of a separate system of patriarchal domination to the existing unchanged analysis of class domination.

Nevertheless, Eisenstein's choice of the latter option, her recognition of "the universal existence of patriarchy, her identification of its roots in "men's political control of reproduction," her location of the base of patriarchy and capitalism in "a sexual division of labour and society that defines people's activity, purposes, goals, desires, and dreams according to their biological sex," and her attempt to "break down the crude marxist division between material existence (economic or sexual) and ideology," were all important in renewing socialist-feminist attention to the feminist political questions.

The inclusion in this collection of three articles which point a way beyond dualism toward a basis for a unified feminist transcendence/ transformation of marxism is another indication of important movement in socialist-feminist thinking and self-definition in the late 1970's. Rosalind Petchesky, in "Dissolving the Hyphen: A Report on Marxist-Feminist Groups 1-5," calls for a more integrated analytical approach that can encompass both class and gender, both the public and private, both the political and the personal, both production and reproduction, while recognizing that these are not real dichotomies and that the separate realms they are supposed to represent are spurious. She asserts, as do Eisenstein and others, that the "two tasks of analyzing patriarchy and analyzing the political economy cannot be separated." But she follows the logic of this more faithfully to argue that this analysis "will necessarily deepen the Marxist dialectic and enrich its way of seeing and reflecting the world" and to call for an understanding of history as the product as much of gender struggle as class struggle. Petchesky simply calls for this unified analysis beyond marxism rather than attempting to present it herself, as Eisenstein does a dualistic analysis. Nevertheless, the call itself and the commitment to move beyond the hyphen are significant.

Nancy Harstock's article "Feminist Theory and Revolutionary Strategy" discusses the "feminist mode of analysis" rather than the content of that analysis. Her article is a radical reaffirmation that elements of the feminist praxis developed in the early days of women's liberation are essential to all progressive politics—the focus on daily life and the personal, the importance of consciousness and consciousness-raising, the refusal of the public/private divide, the insistence on the centrality of process and of means and ends, the necessary integration of experience with theory and theory with practice, and the absolute necessity of creating a new politics and new forms of political organization. All these real aspects of feminist praxis, she argues, amount to a reinvention of Marx's method long lost to the Left. This reinvention is, for Harstock, not a simple extension of, or addition to, existing socialist politics but a return to classic marxist methodology which provides the basis for a transformed revolutionary practice. Here she makes the important presumption that feminism is moving toward a more developed level of analysis and practice than socialism and that it points the way toward a more complete progressive politics in general.

By focusing on the mode of marxist analysis rather than its content, Harstock avoids dealing with the ways that feminism transforms not only socialist practice but also marxist analysis of class. So she does not examine the full transforming impact of feminism. This failure to deal with content, however, allowed her to speak in
terms of a new level of politics before the necessary new theory of gender and class had been developed. And this was an important contribution.

The other article in the collection that heralds a new unified theory of gender and class is “Mothering, Male Domination and Capitalism” by Nancy Chodorow. In this article Chodorow, alone, among the contributors to this volume, tackles the question of the origin of gender and class domination and suggests common roots in the socio-psychological outcome of near universal female mothering. In an argument which she presents more fully elsewhere and which I describe in greater detail later in this article, she says:

Women’s mothering as a nearly universal feature of family structures has given particular characteristics to the social organization and valuation of gender as we know it in all societies....

The same repressions, denials of affect and attachment, rejection of the world of women and things feminine, appropriation of the world of men, identification of the idealized absent father—all a product of women’s mothering—create masculinity and male dominance in the sex-gender system and also create men as participants in the [class system].

Chodorow’s new analysis of the socio-psychological roots of separation, domination and hierarchy in human society is one of the most important products of the resurgence of socialist-feminist theory in the late 1970s. It not only reclaims the radical themes of the late 1960s but moves feminist political theory in significant new directions. It brings a materialist dimension to the radical feminist concern with psychology and is an especially fine indication of how fruitful the exchange between these different tendencies of feminism can be when the dialogue is around feminist questions.

Feminists were not slow to appreciate and to use and expand the insights offered by Chodorow and the other more original socialist-feminist thinkers in the late 1970s. Women and Revolution, published two years after Capitalist Patriarchy reflects the resulting development of theory in the recent period. The original dates and places of publication of the articles in the book unfortunately are not included, but from footnote references to recent work, it is obvious that all the articles were written in the few years before the book was published. The growing strength of socialist-feminist theoretical development is evident in the fact that a far higher proportion of the articles in this collection deal directly with theoretical questions, and that it is organized around an explicit debate on gender and class that remained implicit in the varied positions of the contributors to Capitalist Patriarchy.

The articles are carefully selected and thoughtfully organized with a useful introduction by Lydia Sargent and an afterward by Heidi Hartmann whose article, “The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union,” forms the focal point of the collection. The book consists of Hartmann’s article followed by twelve other articles disagreeing, commenting on, or developing the analysis she presents there. Taken together, these articles represent a good cross section of the most recent North American socialist-feminist analyses of the origins and relations of gender and oppression. They clearly reflect the wide diversity of positions including, still, claims that orthodox marxism can adequately explain gender domination. But the fact that the dialogue is organized around the work of one of the contributors to Capitalist Patriarchy who broke most explicitly with traditional marxism indicates that the ground of socialist-feminist theory is shifting.
Hartmann, like Eisenstein, argues that “a materialist analysis demonstrates that patriarchy is not simply a psychic, but also a social and economic structure” and she develops a theory of dual patriarchal and class systems of oppression which accommodate themselves to, and help to perpetuate, each other. While marxism can provide “essential insight into the laws of historical development...of capital, only a specifically feminist analysis reveals the systemic character of relations between men and women.”

This is to conceptualize society as an essentially dualistic system of production and reproduction which can be understood if feminist analysis is simply added to an unchanged marxism. It is clearly inadequate as a last word, but has nevertheless proved immensely stimulating to socialist-feminists at this stage of theoretical development.

More important than the content of Hartmann’s analysis, is the fact that unlike Eisenstein who also presents a dualistic analysis, she clearly identified feminist theoretical questions around gender oppression and distinguishes these from the main concerns of marxist analyses of women:

The woman question has never been the ‘feminist question.’ The feminist question is directed at the causes of sexual inequality between women and men, of male dominance over women. Most marxist analyses of women’s position take as their question the relationship of women to the economic system, rather than that of women to men.

Hartmann’s article, in defining central theoretical questions in the same terms as radical feminists, opens the way toward a resumption of the socialist-feminist/radical feminist dialogue begun in the late sixties and so long delayed since then. The bulk of this collection continues the marxist versus socialist-feminist debate that is already well developed. Other authors build on Hartmann’s definition of specifically feminist theoretical questions to continue the opening toward radical feminism whose beginnings were evident in Capitalist Patriarchy. It is the reflection of this new aspect in socialist-feminist theory that makes Women and Revolution an interesting collection. Three of the articles in the book accept Hartmann’s dualist theory as a framework for descriptive analyses. Although this theory is clearly inadequate, its legitimation of serious attention to gender oppression has resulted, in these articles, in fine scholarly work and many valuable insights.

Carol Brown, in “Mothers, Fathers, and Children: From Private to Public Patriarchy,” uses the concept of patriarchy to analyse the history of child custody and divorce laws. She shows that the change in these laws represents a shift of power over women from individual men to the state and argues that this is inherent in the development of monopoly capitalism.

Katie Stewart, in “The Marriage of Capitalist and Patriarchal Ideologies: Meanings of Male Bonding and Male Ranking in U.S. Culture,” uses the notion of a dual capitalist and patriarchal system to explain what she argues is an historical and continuing conflict for men between ascribed and achieved male status. In a very interesting historical treatment of the culture of masculinity and maleness, she argues that the tension between the two reveals the dynamics between capitalism and patriarchy, “the first ranking men in relation to one another, and the second ranking them as a uniform gender over women.”

Ann Ferguson and Nancy Folbre, in “The Unhappy Marriage of Patriarchy and Capitalism,” accept Hartmann’s contention that “capitalism and patriarchy are separate and semi-autonomous systems” as “a viable theoretical middle position for socialist-feminists between the reductionist analyses of orthodox marxists...
and radical feminists." But they argue that Hartmann underestimates the importance of the specific forms of female labour which they call "sex affective production." They go on, using this concept, to argue that far from capitalism and patriarchy being mutually reinforcing as Hartmann suggests, the two systems are in increasing contradiction in this period. Ferguson and Folbre argue that because of these contradictions and because of the special values that women pick up in "sex affective production," women are likely to play a key role in revolutionary struggle. Nevertheless, they conceptualize their own theoretical and strategic activity as "infusing feminism into socialism" (emphasis added).

Other contributors to this volume who share this sense of socialism as the broader of the two struggles are more critical of Hartmann's dualism. A large part of the collection is made up of various reassertions that the social system must be analyzed as a unity by a unified theory and that this must be some form of marxism. This is the socialist-feminist/marxist debate that is by now well established and has a long history. There is nothing particularly new here.

Lise Vogel, in "Marxism and Feminism: Unhappy Marriage, Trial Separation or Something Else," examines the history of socialist-feminist theory. Interestingly enough, writing in 1981, she refers to essentially the same few works that I found to discuss in 1978. She asserts, without any substantiating argument, that the way forward requires not new feminist theory, and not transformed marxist theory, but rather a better understanding of marxism by feminists: "The problem is neither with the narrowness of marxist theory nor with socialist-feminists' lack of political independence. Rather socialist-feminists have worked with a conception of marxism that is itself inadequate and largely economistic."a cultural Marxism that can adequately explain the intricate interactions of the oppression of race, class, and sex; a cultural marxism that helps give clearer articulation of our various voices: feminist, black, chicano, Native American, Asian, male, female, gay, lesbian, heterosexual, a cultural marxism that understands human needs—family, ritual, religious, sex, fun, insanity, pain, fear and so on. These last two lists of "voices" and "needs" will give some impression of the eclecticism and confusion of Hicks's approach. This remains at the level of a plea with no analytical indication of why, contrary to the evidence of its own practice and to the important doubts raised by feminism, she feels it is possible for marxism to do this.

Gloria Joseph, in "The Incompatible Menage à Trois: Marxism and Feminism and Racism," echoes Hicks' call for a more inclusive politics and more decentralized practice emphasizing the need for a theory and practice that recognizes the importance of racism. She does not suggest any specific guidelines for the development of this theory which she clearly conceives as essentially socialist. When

white women understand the nature of their oppression within the context of the oppression of Blacks...we will be able to speak of 'The Happy Divorce of Patriarchy, Capitalism and Racism,' and the impending marriage of Black revolutionary socialism and socialist feminism. She did not outline the kind of realizations that Black revolutionaries would have to come to about women's oppression in order to make this "marriage" anything but a disaster for both white and black women each in their own specific ways.

Christine Riddiough, in "Socialism, Feminism, and Gay/Lesbian Liberation," finds "three
critical errors in Hartmann's analysis: her too narrow view of feminism, her failure to explain women's subordination to men, and her inability to unite marxism and feminism into an analysis of a society as a whole." All these are important and valid criticism but Riddiough's attempts to deal with these questions do not provide any adequate corrections to these problems. In the end she argues, with reference to Gramsci, for the importance of "counter hegemonic struggles" and the centrality of the gay and lesbian movement to those struggles.

Iris Young, in "Beyond the Unhappy Marriage: A Critique of Dual Systems Theory," presents the most interesting and important critique not only of Hartmann but of all socialist-feminist attempts to deal with gender and class by positing an additional system of domination with its basis in the relations of reproduction rather than production. The editor of the book quite rightly gives this article pride of place among the marxist criticisms. It is a thoughtfully and rigorously argued analysis of the limitations of a dualistic theory of what is, after all, a single society. She shows that a dual theory leaves marxism intact and necessarily concedes its dominant place:

However one formulates it, the dual-systems theory allows traditional marxism to maintain its theory of production relations, historical change, and analysis of the structure of capitalism in a basically unchanged form. That theory, as Hartmann points out, is completely gender-blind. The dual-systems theory thus accepts this gender-blind analysis of the relations of production.... Thus, not unlike traditional marxism, the dual-systems theory tends to see the question of women's oppression as merely an additive to the main questions of marxism.

Young's critique is built on a fine sense of the centrality and importance of gender domination, and her definition of feminism's theoretical project recognizes this:

Feminist marxism cannot be content with a mere 'wedding' of two theories, marxism and feminism, reflecting two systems, capitalism and patriarchy. Rather, the project of socialist-feminism should be to develop a single theory out of the best insights of both marxism and radical feminism, which can comprehend capitalist patriarchy as one system in which the oppression of women is a core attribute.

"...Instead of marrying marxism, feminism must take over marxism and transform it into such a theory."

Young's critique is well developed and clearly argued and deserves to be read by everyone concerned with developing feminist theory. Unfortunately, her own attempts to move toward the kind of theory she sees that we need are not as useful as her analysis of the need. As is clear from the quotation above, she is thinking in terms of a transformed marxism rather than an emerging new theory which draws on marxism. Thus she shares the tendency, that she criticized in dualistic theories, to accord marxism the dominant defining role in theoretical development. Young, like Eisenstein, focuses her own analysis on the gender division of labour rather than the power relations of patriarchal capitalism. In doing so she falls back into the economist pitfall of much of the earlier socialist-feminist work; she does not move beyond the dual-systems dilemma. Instead of attempting to analyze a dynamic system of oppression and its reproduction as Marx did, she retreats to developing an essentially static description of the division of labour. In the final analysis she focuses, as Hartmann noted most marxist analyses do, "on the relationship of women to the economic system, rather than that of women to men." The essential difference of focus that Hartmann acknowledged between feminist and marxist theoretical concerns is lost
again in Young's article. This is reflected in the last section of her article on practice where she ignores the important political question that is implicit in her belief that women's oppression is a core of capitalist patriarchy—what role can men reasonably be expected to play in fighting a system which has at its core their domination of women?

The most important and exciting aspect of this collection is its inclusion of four articles which depart much more radically from traditional marxism than either the revisionist marxist or the dualistic marxist/feminist approaches that have been discussed so far. Carol Ehrlich's article "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Can It Be Saved?" repudiates marxism altogether. She says Hartmann "extends marxism about as far as it can be stretched...[but it]...can still only account for some elements of patriarchy, not all." It is not possible "to build a marxist-feminist theory and practice that does not treat patriarchy as a less severe problem than capitalism, and that can account for all its manifestations." She sees power relationships in all their forms as the focus of struggle and both capitalism and patriarchy as particular cases of hierarchy. But she does not suggest any alternative theory of the emergence and continued reproduction of systems of domination. Instead, she merely asserts that power itself and power relations must be the focus of struggle and that marxism can only go so far in this respect. Only social anarchism can attack power adequately because only anarchism recognizes both its material and psychological forms. She criticizes the materialist reductionism that leads Hartmann to ground patriarchy only in men's desire to control women's labour power and adds seven other factors, including psychological ones, that compose patriarchy. But this list is a substitute for analysis rather than analysis. For it provides no way to understand the dynamic relationship between the direction of change in these factors. Ehrlich's solutory reminder is that feminist concern, as well as anarchist concern, is with all power. But her assertion of the identity of social anarchism and feminism means that, in the end, her repudiation of marxism is a repudiation of all theory rather than the beginnings of new theory.

The other three articles which refuse marxist frameworks or partnership, though not influence or heritage, are much more interesting. They share Ehrlich's opposition to all power relations. Unlike Ehrlich, however, they see the necessity of understanding the origins and dynamics of domination as well as the relationship of the struggles against different oppressions. They argue that the struggle against gender domination is the broadest liberatory struggle and must necessarily encompass all other struggles against oppression. It is on this basis that they can presume to go beyond the dualistic addition of gender analysis to class analysis to develop a unified but more complete theoretical analysis than marxism. Nancy Hartsock and Nancy Chodorow are both cited by authors in this collection who define their project this way. But it is even more significant that all three of the most far reaching articles in this respect give reproduction a theoretical prominence in the analyses of the origin and nature of domination as a whole that goes far beyond the equality claimed for it in dualistic descriptive analyses of current class and patriarchal arrangements.

Sandra Harding, in "What is the Real Material Base of Patriarchy and Capital?", rejects the dualism of Hartmann's approach to suggest that after the "progressive union" "there will be no independently recognizable marxism." Because gender oppression is the earliest and most prevalent domination and underlies all other domination, "a feminist perspective would have the potential to produce a more general theory which will include much of the substance of the older marxist theory and of utopian feminism, but has far greater explanatory power."
The primacy of patriarchal oppression also means that "feminism...must be a stronger partner in the more progressive union which is required to defeat the partnership of capital and patriarchy," and that it is women who can be expected to produce the needed theory and who "now stand at the revolutionary place in history."

The marxist and dualistic analyses in this book are either content with an economistic framework (Hartmann, Young, Ferguson and Folbe), argue that marxism's non-economistic subtlety should be recognized (Vogel), advocate the development of a cultural marxism (Hicks), or focus their analysis on non-economic aspects of the capitalist patriarchal system (Joseph, Riddiough). Harding, however, asserts the material reality of all social relations and not just economic relations. She develops an historical materialist analysis of the common origins and persistence of patriarchal and class domination that encompasses the dynamics of social, psychological and cultural relationships without being ahistorical, determinist or psychologically idealist.

Harding bases her analysis on the important socio-psychological work of Dorothy Dinnerstein and Nancy Chodorow. These two writers have shown that the particular social relations of mothering, in which the prime caretakers of children are universally women, underlie an extremely different psychological formation for males and females. In complex and original analyses that I cannot begin to present here and that everyone interested in understanding and combating oppression should read, Chodorow and Dinnerstein argue that males raised by someone of unlike sex have a less secure and more separative gender identity than women. Male identity requires to be established apart from and over and against the other sex in a way that female identity does not. The universal, material, but changeable, reality of males' absence from significant infant and child care thus lies at the root of "man's" urge to domination.

Harding uses this analysis to develop the case more fully that: "Capitalism and patriarchy are not really partners in a union [as Hartmann would have it]. They are siblings sharing the genes of psychological interests in maintaining the domination of others." Harding has made an important step toward integrating the psychological level of analysis that radical feminists have always known is important, into an historical materialist analysis.

It is interesting that the groundbreaking Canadian work of Mary O'Brien in *The Politics of Reproduction* also moves in the direction of redefining and transforming historical materialism. O'Brien shows that not just the relations of mothering, but sexual relations and the biology of birth itself are dialectical and material processes that must be included in any social analysis. She develops a sophisticated and well-documented argument in which she roots the causes of men's domination of women and each other in individual psychological needs that stem from their particular material relationship to these processes. And she, like Harding, makes women the central revolutionary force in this period.

Both these analyses are major breakthroughs in feminist theory. They map out the ground of future debate and development. They move feminist calls for a deeper and broader analysis that can encompass class, from affirmations of faith that such an analysis will emerge to the outlines of the theory itself. And they develop the earlier feminist focus on reproduction relationships as key to an understanding of the origins of all domination and to the struggle against that domination.

Azizah Al-Hibri, in "Capitalism is an Advanced Stage of Patriarchy: But Marxism is not Feminism," does not tackle methodological ques-
tions of historical materialism as Harding and O’Brien do. But she shares their identification of patriarchy as the original domination, with roots in men’s particular reproductive consciousness and psychological needs (in this case for immortality), and she, like them, sees women as the central agents in the struggle against domination in this period.

Al-Hibri presents an undeveloped, but powerful and thought-provoking, sketch of different historical periods from primitive society through feudalism, colonialism, capitalism and imperialism as different stages of patriarchy. She argues that these periods represent the extension of the dominated “Other” from the original “Other”—woman—to nature and to ever-enlarging categories of men to finally include “virtually all men.” Marxist struggle is “an attempt to shrink the ever enlarging category of the Other. This means that for the first time in history we are seeing an attempt to contain the continuous expansion of patriarchy. As such it is clearly a step forward in the struggle against patriarchy” but it does not and cannot, “question the patriarchal principle of domination itself.” In defining all changing forms of social organization and class relations as stages in the development of patriarchy, Al-Hibri raises, although she does not adequately deal with, what must be a central question in future feminist theoretical development: how can we understand the dynamics of change and development in patriarchal relations? Marx located the dynamic of social change in class struggle and the changing modes of economic production. In his analysis, reproduction, private life and male/female relations are the natural backdrop against which history is made. Their changed forms derive mainly from accommodation to changes in production relations. Feminist insistence that domination is first and foremost patriarchal, and that domination and power itself, and not just capitalist exploitation, must be the focus of our struggle, requires that we re-examine this dynamic. Radical feminist theory has been concerned mainly to understand the origins of male domination and has not yet vigorously tackled the question of its historical change and development. Socialist-feminist analyses, even those concerned with feminist questions, have tended to continue to see the motion of history in changing production relations alone. In this volume, Harding is concerned mainly with origins so it is Al-Hibri’s article alone that makes clear the need for future work on this question. It is especially interesting that this radical feminist article which makes no attempt to present a materialist analysis, and which clearly locates the motion of historical change in patriarchal rather than class relations, is included in this collection, because it makes explicit the growing potential for socialist-feminist/radical-feminist dialogue.

Zillah Eisenstein’s article “Reform and Revolution: Towards a Unified Women’s Movement” is an important sign that the opening up of some parts of socialist-feminism to rapprochement with radical feminism is occurring in practice as well as theory—a rapprochement that is only possible as marxism comes to play a smaller and smaller part in defining socialist-feminists’ theoretical and strategic concerns. Eisenstein returns to a theme that Marlene Dixon developed in the early days of socialist-feminist theorizing, to argue that socialist-feminism’s political arena is the women’s movement, not the Left, and that “there is much more to be politically gained by a dialogue between liberal, radical and socialist-feminists than by a dialogue between marxists and feminists” (original emphasis). The analysis that all women are oppressed and that patriarchal oppression goes deeper than class oppression can best be tested in feminist practice with women. The belief that it is possible to build a unified cross-class women’s movement, and that the movement will be a powerful progressive force, commits socialist-feminists to work primarily with women. “Rather than trying to persuade marxists that patriarchy lays the structural base of capitalism, let us radi-
calize liberal feminists to be able to see the patriarchal economic class base of liberalism."

This new orientation in practice, taken with the increasing willingness of some socialist-feminists to direct theoretical debate to radical and liberal feminists, is a development of major significance within feminism. For it is an explicit recognition by those socialist-feminists who are asking what Hartmann calls the "feminist questions," that the debate with marxism has never been around these questions, that to continue addressing marxists rather than feminists is to remain confined within the marxist questions. Radical feminist thinking can only benefit from the new direct challenges it can expect from these socialist-feminists in the future. And socialist-feminism is likely to develop quickly now that it is free to determine a truly autonomous agenda and to address the "feminist questions" in the context of challenge and debate from radical feminists. It is to be expected that the recent dramatic development of feminist theory will continue through the 1980s. This development may take these feminists in both orientations who are involved in the struggle against all domination, beyond the limiting definitions of their respective traditions to a more conscious acknowledgement of a common project and, therefore, an even more fruitful dialogue.

NOTES

1. I use the term socialist-feminist in the most inclusive way to refer to all self-defined socialist and marxist feminists. It thus encompasses feminists with a broad range of varied political positions all of whom distinguish themselves from radical feminists.

2. I use the term radical feminist to refer to all non-liberal feminists or feminist radicals who are not self-defined as socialist or marxist feminists.

3. The best known of these radical feminists are women such as Shulamith Firestone, Kate Millet and Germaine Greer. But far more of the radical feminist writing of this period remains accessible in such anthologies as "Sisterhood is Powerful," edited by Robin Morgan (New York: Random House, Vintage, 1970); "Liberation Now!" edited by Deborah Babcox and Madeleine Belkin (New York: Dell, 1971); "Voices from Women's Liberation," edited by Leslie B. Tanner (New York: New American Library, 1971); and "Radical Feminism," edited by Anne Koedt, Ellen Levine and Anita Rapone (New York: Quadrangle, 1973).


5. "Psychology Constructs the Female, or the Fantasy Life of the Male Psychologist," Naomi Weisstein.


8. James, p.191.


10. Ibid, p.34.


12. McAfee and Wood, p.34.


15. Ibid, p.199, emphasis added.


18. Ibid, p.54.


20. McAfee and Wood, p.32.


22. Hidden in the Household, edited by Bonnie Fox (Toronto: The Women's Press, 1980) is a recent collection of Canadian literature in this debate. For a fuller account of the debate's economist limitations and its failure to come to grips with the theoretical questions it claims to be addressing see my review essay based on this book in Studies in Political Economy, 11 (Summer 1983).

23. There was, of course, a tremendous amount of fine socialist-feminist research and writing in these years, much of it extremely important. In this review I am referring only to the lack of original theory in the area of gender and class domination.


29. Ibid, p.188.


33. Heidi Hartmann, "Capitalism, Patriarchy and Job Segregation" in Eisenstein, ed., p.207.

34. Ibid, p.214.


38. Ibid, p.43.
39. Ibid, p.44.
40. Ibid, p.25.
41. Ibid, p.27.
44. Ibid, p.377.
46. Ibid, p.66.
49. The articles between them refer to the whole of the earlier British and North American literature on the subject. So the collection, with its footnotes, provides access (though unfortunately not in bibliographical form) to most of the sources and debates in the historical development of socialist-feminist theory.
51. Ibid, p.3.
60. Ibid, p.44.
61. Ibid, p.50.
63. Ibid, p.140.
64. Ibid, p.137.
65. Ibid, p.141.
67. Harding, p.156.
70. Ibid, p.103.
71. The inclusion of this article by Eisenstein, who edited and wrote two of the theoretical pieces in Capitalist Patriarchy, is another clear sign of the shared heritage of the two collections.
73. Ibid, p.341.