

attractive and independent life.” (11) Hill sets out to take on the disparity between the tales of Jewitt’s life as a prostitute and the “reality” of life for a woman in New York City. We are presented with the charmed lifestyle of a single working woman in antebellum New York City: earning as much as \$50-\$100 per week, Jewitt was able to “attend the theatre, dress elegantly, make generous gifts to her friends, and even lend money on occasion.” (13)

Prostitution historiography has come a long way from the days of adopting reformers’ discourse depicting the sex trade workers as “poor unfortunates” and victims, or sexual predators. But here I think that the desire to champion these women’s lives has been pushed a little far. Certainly Hill is not the first to attribute agency to prostitutes. What troubles me, though, is that Hill seems to invoke a female version of the Horatio Alger rags-to-riches myth. An example of this romanticization is illustrated in the section “Achieving the Dream” (91) in which we learn about successful prostitutes who earned thousands of dollars each year and served as models for other women. Her focus on such “success stories” and her cursory treatment of the majority is most likely the result of emphasizing the fabulous sources concerning the lives of the rich and infamous. I do not wish to give the impression that this is yet another version of the insidious 1990s film “Pretty Woman” in which prostitution is portrayed in an inspiring week of glamour, sex, and shopping. But, like the film, this book emphasizes the potential of prostitution and ignores the tragic conditions of most prostitutes. The result is, at best, that the lives of the prostitutes on the street, at work, in relationships with lovers and friends, gain centre stage. At worst, the

book romanticizes prostitution and the system that produced and encouraged commercialized and criminalized sex. That prostitution did offer a small number of women opportunity and independence is a point well-taken. However, this point needs to be balanced with more in-depth work on the “ordinary” prostitute.

Also, the sections on the private world of the prostitute are an important avenue of discovery, yet connections to families and wages are not explored. Luise White’s work on prostitution in colonial Nairobi has made the case for linking the history of prostitution to the history of work and family in a broader way.

These criticisms are not to say that I found *Their Sisters’ Keepers* a bad read. Hill engages her subjects, tells their fascinating stories, and with the marvelous illustrations, this is a richly-textured work. But it should be read in conjunction with Timothy Gilfoyle’s *City of Eros* and Christine Stansell’s seminal *City of Women*, on New York in the same period.

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Dawn H. Currie and Valerie Raoul (eds.), *Anatomy of Gender: Women’s Struggle for the Body* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press 1993).

Anatomy of Gender is a diverse, informative collection of feminist writings that document the historical, masculinist control of the female body, while suggesting and advancing emancipatory alternatives. The editors have selected the essays according to the transforma-

tive character of Women's Studies, which promotes multifarious styles and approaches, favouring interdisciplinary work. Through its receptivity to alternative ways of knowing and being, Women's Studies moves from illuminating women's oppression to envisioning women's liberation. To reflect this development, the essays have been ordered significantly into three sections: "Representation of the Female Body;" "Repression of the Female Body;" "Reclaiming the Female Body."

Generally, the essays are very accessible and clearly written, particularly useful for the interested reader who is unfamiliar with Women's Studies. The introductory chapter makes transparent the arena of discourses on the female body, presenting traditional misogynist views, feminist views that unwittingly conspire with these (de Beauvoir, Firestone), linking women's oppression to female biology, and more liberatory feminist views (Daly, Dworkin) connecting women's oppression to pernicious social constructions of the female body. As a further aid to the uninitiated reader, the chapter provides a good summary of the rest of the book, though excessive in detail and over-emphatic in the book's intentions or non-intentions. The editors tend to stress that all women are not alike, thereby drawing inordinate attention to divisions among women.

Without doing justice to all the essays in this collection, I will discuss ideas I found to be of special interest and contention. In "Pornography or Misogyny? Fear and the Absurd," Isobel McAslan claims that the masculinist domination of women is generated by a fear of female biology, which posits women as "unknown" manipulable objects. This idea is supported in "On the Way to Female Imagery of God," where

Janet Cawley discusses the psychological concept of projection. She maintains that projection is used by men as a strategy for controlling women: men project characteristics perceived as undesirable, such as emotion and sensuality, unto women, and regard women's domination as necessary for their own security.

For both McAslan and Cawley, men seek to control women because of artificial constructions they impose upon them. Whatever the degree of truth to this position, Cawley is inconsistent in her use of the concept of projection, and relies on the very kind of essentialism that this concept rejects. Distinguishing between female imagery of God that reinforces the patriarchal dynamic structured by projection (the weak-willed, sentimental mother) and female imagery of God that challenges it (the fiercely devoted, loving mother), she presents nurture imagery as inherently female. This scarcely challenges patriarchal stereotypes, and only exacerbates the concern that Christianity is inevitably sexist.

McAslan and Cawley suggest that reclaiming the female body involves a struggle against the fear underpinning the patriarchal domination of women. The essays in Section Two, examining misogynist practices that embody the fear of women, underline the importance of grounding resistance in concrete activities. To be known on their own terms, women must be known as autonomous subjects with individual needs and interests.

In "A Suitable Case for Treatment? Premenstrual Syndrome and the Medicalization of Women's Bodies," Janet Stoppard skilfully argues that PMS is an ideological construct that serves to explain women's oppression in terms of female biology. The grouping of physical

and psychological problems that women sometimes experience in association with menstruation under the charged label of "disorder" provides an invidious sanction for belief in women's disorderly natures.

In "Sexual Difference and the Law," Kathy Kendall, sharing Stoppard's concern about PMS as a medical category, explores the implications of its invocation in legal cases. She recommends situating PMS in a context of interacting biological, social, and cognitive factors, arguing that this will illuminate the multiple dimensions of women's oppression, and help ensure that proposed solutions are not grounded in explanations partial to one or some (see Catherine Keller, 1986). Their writings are not as accessible as the rest of the essays in this collection, though this is to be expected in view of the profoundly radical nature of their enterprise.

In the final essay, "Habeas Corpus," Valerie Raoul, one of the editors, presents female narcissism as a central key to women's liberation, and the basic propellant of Women's Studies. But, while I agree that Women's Studies involves a focus on the investigation of women by women, to characterize Women's Studies as narcissistic is inappropriate. Narcissism has the derogatory connotation of egocentrism, and usually refers to a love that is self-consuming to the neglect of others. Women's Studies upholds the permeative self, relationships of cooperation and receptivity, not the separate self, relationships of control and domination. It promotes unity in diversity, feminism not feminisms. In denying that women are a homogeneous group, one is not forced to ground the WLM in egocentrism, reducing it to a haphazard formation of solitary women banging their chains together. This

collection of essays that vary widely in style and approach, yet partake in the common project of reclaiming the female body, supports an important task of Women's Studies: to reveal commonalities in the midst of differences.

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Teresa Brennan, *History After Lacan*
(London/New York: Routledge 1993)

The postmodernist's scorn for history, in the form of great explanatory narratives, is probably rivalled by the historian's scorn for psychoanalysis, especially of the structuralist variety. This situation makes Brennan's book seem rather unlikely, to say the least: a defense of history from the perspective of Lacanian psychoanalysis. More unlikely still, to those with a passing acquaintance of Lacan and Lacanians, is her insistence that Lacan was a historical thinker, rather than the ahistorical structuralist of legend. Noting that "the existence of the historical side of Lacan's theory of the imaginary, let alone its implications, has been ignored or at best mentioned in passing," (7) Brennan shows that there is a pervasive if marginal critique of the "ego's era" in Lacan's writing.

Using Lacan's comments as her starting point, Brennan argues that the modern era is psychotic. We are, she writes, in the grip of a historical development that saw its beginnings in the early modern period, and which has not yet reached its conclusion, a development in which the ego comes to be more and more central to the experience of the subject. One of the symptoms of this psychosis is an inability and an unwillingness to make connections, a condition