

***Gender Relations. International Debate***

In 2005 the journal *Historical Materialism* published the English translation of my essay on gender relations, originally written for the Historical Critical Dictionary of Marxism. This was the occasion to start an international debate. In the following I reprint the essay and the original letters, the different interventions sent to me to allow a wider audience to read and maybe participate in the debate.

I publish the texts in alphabetical order. I apologize for not correcting errors, because this might be understood as problematic. I just kept the form of letters. But I do not present the corrections within my essay itself, if somebody has taken the burden to do so, as some have.

If somebody wants to enter the debate please write to me: [Friggahaug@aol.com](mailto:Friggahaug@aol.com).

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## **Gender Relations Debate**

### **1. Joan Acker (USA)**

Dear Frigga,

Thanks for sending me your essay. I have not had time to read it thoroughly, but did give it a quick look. I found it very interesting - you cover a lot of territory and I like the idea of ending with the novelists who tried to imagine different societies. One comment - I found the need for a transition from the end of p. 1 to the beginning of p. 2. I was not prepared for your going into discussions of different theorists. You might add a transition sentence or two saying how you will go about exploring the different meanings of gender relations. I will try to go back to it later and give you more feedback.

Joan

### **2. Catherine Benamou, (USA)**

Dear Frigga:

here, at least is my "edit" of your wonderfully comprehensive genealogy of the use of "gender relations" in Marxist/Feminist thought. the "state of the art"... I may make two suggestions:

1) these anthropological words: gentes, hetaerism, punaluan and syndyasmian, are not in common usage in English (although of course, those of us who have studied anthropological theory and kinship relations might know some of them). Perhaps worthy of clarification since they are presented as models of marital practices and social/biological groupings.

2) there may be some objections in "queer" quarters that gender roles are not stressed as the means whereby gender difference is constructed according to prevailing ideologies governing gender relations. That is there might not only be "multiple genders" as in the Guatemalan (I think it was) case attached to

inanimate things, but same-gender relationships can exhibit unequal gender relations because of these gender roles, even though technically, there is no difference between the "sexes" there. Moreover, transgender surgeries are not only becoming more common, but are being openly "displayed" or referred to in public than ever before. Is this an appropriation of the female body by men? Or a less harmful reminder of the malleability of gender difference based on biological "givens" (so that the body is made to respond to a given construction that begins with the personal but has a social manifestation). Just a thought...

all my best

catherine

### **3. Abigail Bray (Australia)**

Dear Frigga,

thank you for the opportunity to read your brilliant historical overview of the concept of gender relations as a mode of production which occurs across many fronts, I found it insightful and it taught me a great deal about the shifting contextual terrain around the idea. As usual I found your passionate stance against the destructive effects of global capitalism inspirational. I would love to read your article on Gramsci. Please feel free to disregard my comments if they seem too wide of the mark. I was interested as well by one of your closing assertions, based around Haraway, that the commodification of the body is the 'beginning of a development whose effect upon gender relations constitutes the task of future analysis and a politics of emancipation'. How do we explain that women buy into such economies, that they profit from them socially and economically, that they have an investment in maintaining gender relations through these modes of production? I was fascinated to discover that de Gouges had worked with the idea that women are not innocent actors in power games, and would be interested to see how she connects this more to Nietzsche's idea of

slave morality and resentment, and how this might also connect with Lenz on women's power as the 'underside' of official power, and in turn how such early ideas might be connected to Haraway's advise that we should abandon an innocent position, and the more general critique of first world women's complicity with global capitalism.

I am currently struggling with the way children are positioned — and I wonder how things might be rethought if we consider that children and not women are the first slaves, that mothers are not simply slaves to their husbands and their children, but that they have more autonomy and agency than children. The history of child labor within the pre-industrial and industrial family might support this. The history of gender relations as a mode of production seems to often position children as a production, the nuclear family as a factory for producing workers etc and that the mother is enslaved by this inescapable biological, natural reproductive function. It is a gender relation which is at the core of many problems. Alternatives such as communal child care (already purchased in some ways by middle class working mothers who place their children in day care) also seems to celebrate women's emancipation from the enslavement of motherhood. It concerns me that the outsourcing of traditional family functions (such as food, emotional care, early education, etc) by capitalism seems to be expressed on one level as the liberation of women from children and it has resulted in the handing over of children to 'expert's and the production of a whole economy of parenting which is also coinciding with the seduction of children into consumption at younger ages. It is as though they have been handed over.

If the analysis of gender relations as a mode of production often seems to rest on the role of the mother then perhaps we need to rethink the position of the child. Instead of being locked into a dualistic, often reactionary, binary, or even a dialectic of sex/gender difference, we expand our thinking by including a third 'term' or agent, the child. (As a specific historical, social and biological subject). Is the child the excluded third term in the theory of gender relations and does this

exclusion form a silent foundation upon which a dialectic of gender production rests?

Should Wollstonecraft and the British Suffragettes, and even Charlotte Perkins Gilman, be mentioned before Woolf?

Perhaps the sex/gender distinction should be mentioned in the introduction?

Might a transition between Butler and Fraser be made through reference to Fraser's critique of Butler?

Is the critique of the late 20th century lack of attention to gender relations as a mode of production forgetting some feminist work in this area? Would it be appropriate to mention Chantal Mouffe, and sociological work on the feminisation of the secondary labor market in the post-Fordist economy and the identification of 'emotional work' as women's work?

I am not sure if any of this is of interest to you but thank you once again for sharing your work.

best wishes

Abigail

#### **4. Johanna Brenner (USA)**

Comment on Frigga Haug's article, Gender Relations

Marxist feminists have worked long and hard to find a route through which we might fully integrate gender into Marxist social theory. Frigga Haug's discussion of gender relations outlines many of these routes and proposes some ways forward. I understand her to say that an historical materialist approach to gender relations has to begin with several insights—gender relations, like other social relations, are historically changing rather than fixed (despite the fact of sexual difference in the human species); the demands of species survival are a non-determinist starting point for a materialist theory of gender relations; in any

social formation “gender relations are always relations of production just as, vice versa, relations of production are always also gender relations.”

But to make sense of this notion that gender relations are always relations of production, and vice versa, we need to rethink what we mean by relations of production. Marxist feminists begin, as Marx does, with the claim that social labor is fundamental to human survival. But we would argue that the process through which social labor leads to human survival includes not only the production of material goods but also the additional labor necessary to reproduce human beings both on a daily basis and intergenerationally. Intergenerational reproduction involves social labor (feeding, clothing, cleaning, enculturating children, etc.); it also refers to procreation (as the starting point of species survival). The notion of social reproduction was developed to capture that part of the process of social labor which focuses on meeting individual needs for sustenance and on birthing and rearing the next generation. Social reproduction refers to how food, clothing, and shelter are made available for immediate consumption, how children are cared for and socialized, how the needs of ill and infirm individuals are met, and how sexuality and procreative relations are organized. Social reproduction can thus be seen to include various kind of work—mental, manual, and emotional—aimed at providing the historically and socially, as well as biologically, defined care necessary to maintain existing life and to reproduce the next generation. The organization of social reproduction can be defined as the institutions within which this labor is performed, the strategies used to accomplish these tasks, and the cultural meanings that make both institutions and strategies sensible to social actors.

That we speak of production on the one hand and social reproduction on the other is, in part, an artifact of both the (masculinist) historical development of marxist thought (how production has been defined) and the nature of the capitalist mode of production. That is, in capitalism, the work done in households, although crucial to species survival, is separated off from the production and circulation of commodities. Nonetheless, as Marx pointed out,

commodities (and this would include commodified services) are both use values and exchange values. From the point of view of the production of use values, marketized and non-marketized labor is a unified process which has, as its end result, the reproduction of human beings. The separation of what is from one point of view (the point of view of production of use values) an integrated process into two different types of labor (commodified and uncommodified) is a result of capitalist class relations of production, not a universal fact of human social life nor even the consequence of industrialization or a complex division of labor in production (this division between commodified and uncommodified labor parallels the emergence of the division between public and private spheres of social life in capitalism).

A gender division of labor has historically been fundamental to the relations of social reproduction; one could say that the organization of social reproduction is the ground on which the institutional, cultural, bodily organization of gender—gender relations—are constructed. How these gender relations work, what kinds of power and resources they confer, how gender identities are understood and experienced, and so forth place limits on and shape the possibilities for how production is organized and how surplus labor is extracted. And, similarly, how production is organized and how surplus labor is extracted, constrains the organization of social reproduction.

Without trying to establish cause and effect, we can say that the relations of production and the relations of social reproduction are mutually constituted. As Huag points out, in *Capital Vol I*, Marx noted that the maintenance and reproduction of the working class as a condition for the reproduction of capital could be left “to the labourer’s instincts of self-preservation and of propagation” She adds, except for social “forms of care for the poor and “social welfare.” Let us look at this a bit further.

Rather than working to reproduce the labor force, there is a consistent tendency within capitalism to undermine the conditions of life of the working-class and to threaten the reproduction of the labor force. This is primarily because individual

capitalists, in competition with each other, cannot take responsibility for the children of their workers, since there is no way they can capture for themselves the fruits of this investment. Instead, demands of accumulation push in the opposite direction—downward pressure on wages, contingent workforce, etc. The ability of the working-class to reproduce itself therefore depends on levels of class struggle. But what shape does this struggle take? What demands are put forward? What institutions emerge within which the working-class is able to reproduce the next generation of workers? Here, gender relations, embedded in the organization of social reproduction, play a significant role. Gender relations shape the dispositions and identities, the particular interests and needs that men and women bring into working-class organizing, whether in the community or the workplace. Gender relations also, even more crucially, shape the abilities of women to inhabit the political spaces within which the direction of working-class struggles is decided. While Haug may be right to say that “The state...ensured that the economy did not destroy its own foundations,” (p. 299) we have to account for the emergence, growth and decline of the welfare state. The forms that the welfare state has taken in different capitalist social formations have to be understood as a product of class and gender struggles (including those of the middle as well as working-classes). One of the more interesting aspects of the contemporary situation is that in many capitalist countries, women have essentially been refusing to reproduce the future generation of workers, as birth-rates sink below replacement levels. This can be read, at least in part, as a strategy women are adopting to relieve themselves of the hardships of the double shift. Rather than expansion of the welfare state, we see the increasing commodification of care, as a growing underground labor force of immigrant women do the care work that mothers (for children) and daughters (for elders) formerly supplied. The rise of the welfare state represented a shift in the organization of social reproduction, removing many tasks from the family/household and creating them as public functions. However the welfare state may have met the needs of capital, its rise cannot be explained in terms of this function.

Similarly, we ought not expect that declining birth rates will force the capitalist state to expand investments in future labor. Capitalist employers may very well meet their need for future workers through outsourcing production and through importing labor—the world is awash in surplus workers. The struggle to make social reproduction a public (social) rather than private (household) responsibility is open-ended and will depend, not on the needs of capital, but on the political self-organization of women, especially working-class women, within the context of a revived working-class movement to challenge capital.

### **5. Erica Burman (Great Britain)**

HISTORICAL LESSONS, CULTURALLY-LOCATED POLITICAL ENGAGEMENTS AND TRANS-NATIONAL FEMINIST DEBATES? SOME COMMENTS ON FRIGGA HAUG'S 'GENDER RELATIONS'

Haug's analysis of gender relations as relations of production, as a largely historical review of Marxist thinking and resources informing understandings of gender and class relations, is an informative and educational piece that should function as a major intervention. If I read the argument correctly, Haug challenges the traditional erasure or subordination of analysis of gender relations within Marxist analysis by showing, firstly, the ways in which this was present in Marx's own writings, secondly, by highlighting the precise intellectual sources of his ideas on gender, and thirdly by meticulously documenting variations in reception, re-citation and re-working to shift analytical attention away from gender relations. The outcome of this close reading of sources amounts to a major claim of the continuing, if covert, understandings of gender relations that permeates Marx's own, and subsequent, analysis – both in its achievements and inadequacies. Of particular interest to me was the careful tracing of the sources of his ethnographic writings, whilst also seeing presented the sustained

formulation of over two centuries of analysis of gender relations from Olympe Marie de Gouge's radical writings from the context of the French Revolution onwards. These offer refreshingly contemporary resources for current feminist debates.

It seems to me that the achievement of this dictionary entry demands appreciation and respect from feminists, especially since it drives home how marxists and socialists only at their peril ignore gender as a productive axis of social relations. Haug's account resonates with and intervenes within longstanding feminist debate concerning the analytical usefulness of a focus on gender relations (rather than on gendered identities, gendered (in)equalities or even on 'women', for example) that clearly warrant further elaboration. But since I am not a scholar of marxist thinking, my comments will hereon be concerned with the latter part of the essay – in particular, to elaborate further challenges for feminists and marxists attempting to engage in adequate ways with the complexity of gender and class relations. My focus is unashamedly on current problematics, but doubtless there would be equivalent genealogical analysis to undertake too.

My orientation is inevitably structured by my own cultural-political contexts – which, as both Haug (and Haraway (1991) writing a few years earlier for a similar project) point out, structure the very concept of 'gender'. Indeed the first book I turned to after reading Haug's essay, and re-reading Haraway as its predecessor, was the (2004) book, *Gender*, in the new Keywords series. Significantly subtitled, *For a Different Kind of Globalization*, this book (and the three others – so far – in the series) present essays on their theme (with the other books addressing 'Truth', 'Identity' and 'Experience') from 'Africa, America, the Arab World, China, Europe and India' (from the book covers). The books seem to explicitly resist the generation or application of a metanarrative (which would of course imply a specific viewpoint which is precisely what is at issue), being composed only of 'essays' from each region, so that the dialogue and debate between them occurs (within the reader) through their juxtaposition. And

indeed I would hesitate to impose such a metanarrative in attempting a review of the volume or its characterisation of the changing treatment or significance of gender across these contexts – partly because, without detailed analysis and narrative exegesis of the book it is hard to get beyond the rather vacuous truism that gendered agendas are – for profoundly important historical and political reasons – profoundly different across different parts of the world. Yet this is indeed what this little volume does show, with what I think must be genuine and far-reaching challenges for any project of a general theory of gender relations.

Let me reiterate that my comments here are offered by way of response to and reflections upon Haug's essay, rather than direct engagements with such matters. Indeed reading it prompted me to reflect upon resources informing my own current preoccupations – largely concerned with the intersections of racialised and gendered positions structured through post-colonial relations and particularly the ways gendered and national identities are racialised by the state (through immigration law, to take a key example). In presenting the following comments, then, I am conscious that feminist debate over such questions has taken different forms in different countries – for significant reasons – and I am too ignorant of the landscape of feminist and related political movements in Germany to hazard any specific query or explanations for such differences. Doubtless Germany's different history from Britain (and France) in relation to colonialism, slavery and imperialism – connected to two so-called 'world wars' - accounts for some of this. At any rate, British feminists have spent the past (at least) 20 years or so trying to comprehend the ways structures of racialisation permeate, inflect and otherwise conjugate with gender – with core consequences for the reformulation of Marxist analysis of the family, of work, of sexuality and reproduction – even of ideology (see e.g. Mirza, 1997; Bhavnani, 2001).

The key British feminist journal, *Feminist Review*, was from its inception socialist-feminist in orientation. The journal has recently celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary, and significantly the collective devoted much of the commemoration issue to reviewing the history of contestation around the

unproblematised whiteness of the collective and of 'second wave' (and later) feminist theory and activism (which led to some black members withdrawing from the collective for a period). Interventions published in this journal changed, or certainly reflected the change within, the face of British feminist debate - from Amos and Parmar's (1984) issue on 'Challenging imperial feminism' onwards (giving rise to Barrett and McIntosh's (1985) re-evaluation of their key feminist critique of the family, which in turn was roundly criticised as insufficient by Bhavnani and Coulson (1986))<sup>1</sup>. Re-reading something of the history of these British feminist debates, and juxtaposing it with my own personal and political history - which is inevitably intertwined with this in complex ways - seemed to offer some clues to the structuring of such preoccupations. Significantly in (at the time I write this) the current issue of *Feminist Review*, Gail Lewis (2005) reflects on this focus on 'race' and racism - in which she herself was a protagonist - and now wonders about how and why it is that the journal seemed less able to address issues of class.

So from where I am, then, it seems to me that there is a key issue facing current theorists and activists seeking to articulate gender and class relations, at a political moment of advancing neoliberalism/high capitalism. *How do we understand and challenge globalization/neo-imperialism's dealings in gendered and racialised bodies as ever more marketable arenas for exploitation of labour power and commodification?* Labour migration is now being acknowledged as a gendered issue as much as a class one, and both are structured by racialisation - marked both by post-colonial legacies of inequality and de-development and differential nation state immigration policies (and their 'harmonisation' to become even more punitive crossnationally, as with the EU legislation). Equally, we know that reproduction and the family are as much racialised as they are classed and gendered, as exemplified not only within the different stakes for black or minoritised and white women in debates about abortion and

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<sup>1</sup> Interestingly the authors preface the reprinted article by expressing their reluctance to see this article republished, but (claim, slightly ambiguously) '*Feminist Review* has persuaded us that the climate is now different' (Barrett and McIntosh, 2005: 64)

contraception, but also by the ways poor women from poor regions of the world are now leaving their children to care for the children of professional middle class women in Europe and North America (Hochschild, 2000), while child labour is only just beginning to be theorised as a gender issue (see Burman, 2005).

British and North American feminist studies have largely moved away from monolithic frameworks for understanding gender and gender relations to always ask the question: which women? How and why *which women* occupy such positions cannot only be reduced to class, nor can their relationships with each other be understood only in terms of class – though classed it clearly is as well. Sex tourism and the trafficking of women are examples of contrasting geographical trajectories that rely upon particularly classed and racialised as well as national and gendered positionings (as Tanya Ostojic's performance piece 'Looking for a husband with an EU passport' explores – see Milevska, 2005). The examples just go on and on.

So in my view, one key question for an adequate analytic of gender relations has to be how these are articulated by and through colonialism, and more recently neo-colonialism and (or, I should say, as) globalization. Here discussions of the strengths and limits of such concepts as 'intersectionality' (e.g. Yuval-Davis, 2004) are useful to address structural and situation as well as experiential problematics posed by the joint configurations of gender, race and class (with important consequences for the definition and regulation of women's sexualities, Yuval-Davis, 1998). In terms of the historical analysis of the emergence of Marx's own and later 'marxist' renderings of gender relations, and in parallel with other feminist historical re-evaluations of the interaction between gender and colonialism (e.g. Ware, 1991), are there possible re-readings of the early ethnographic sources he drew upon (that were surely broadly conducted under such conditions) that could offer further illumination on the process of the construction of their mutual constitution?

Moving onto my second key area, which also arises from current dilemmas, I wonder how the analysis of gender relations put forward would engage with current discussions of 'feminisation'. This term has acquired widespread but diverse and rather imprecise current use – inspired originally by discussions of the 'feminisation of poverty', used to describe the particular ways poverty affects women, but has migrated to such diverse arenas as 'feminisation of the third world' (signifying the rendering of poor countries as helpless and passive), or even the 'feminisation' of certain professions (signifying the devaluation of a discipline or profession by virtue of the increasing presence and seniority of women in it!), or beyond this (gaining a more apparently positive hue) the ways in which major (and increasingly multinational) companies want women as senior managers, and male managers to acquire 'women's' negotiating and people-oriented skills (in order to regulate them more efficiently). Clearly this diverse collection of uses blurs together some crucial distinctions – not least between feminism and femininity, between gender and labour positioning, and between men and women who are now occupying the positions formerly associated with women). Not least of the problems is the return to a universalised gendered description used to interpret the positions of specifically classed and racialised men and women – that also precisely threatens to elide the complexity of actual gender relations. Clearly home-working (whether of the professionalised or sweatshop variety) is another instance where class and racialised positions are implied as well as gender. But beyond this, and in relation to other uses of 'feminisation' indicated above, what analytical purchase does such concepts as 'emotional labour' (with obvious gendered associations here) offer for an analysis of the ways gendered positionings (whether valued or devalued) can migrate between some differently gendered parties (but with significant racialised and class positionings)?

I see feminist projects as both progressivist (in drawing on current frameworks and traditions – notably marxism, and being committed to programme of social transformation), and as deconstructionist (in questioning and redefining received

knowledges in the light of a gender-sensitivity (see e.g. Burman, 1998). It seems to me that Haug's essay on 'gender relations' is a clear instance of how we need and can use both aspects, and I look forward to its further transformations and applications - in particular to addressing how current contexts elaborate such different positions for men and women, and especially between women, that give rise to major conflicts of interest (based on systems of privilege organised around 'race' as well as class and gender) to prevent coalition and collective action.

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## 6. Cynthia Cockburn (Great Britain)

Dear Frigga,

I read the essay on gender relations for the historical critical dictionary of marxism with great interest. I had a lot to learn from it, so do not think that I can add anything very useful.

It is definitely German oriented, and I suppose that is what you want. For instance the attention given to the plural and singular uses of gender relations is strange to us, but no doubt your readers will expect it and find it necessary.

Because the focus is Marxist thought and the feminisms that have flowed from it, there are certain choices you have made. And so I am not sure, if I mention several below, they are omitted because they dont fit the Marxist framework, or because you have simply overlooked them. Anyway, I mention them just in case...When I think back to the books that most influenced me and women around me a few years back, the things that seem to me to be missing from the review are:

Ann Oakley, Sex and Gender - 1972, because this was really the first time the important distinction was made between sex and gender (later to be overturned by Butlerians). - Jean B. Elshtain and others on the mythical public / private distinction.

Also Dorothy Smith's work (The Everyday World as Problematic, relations of ruling etc.) and that of Sandra Harding (The Science Question in Feminims, standpoint theory etc.)

And I think the book by Bob Connell, Gender and Power, which came before his work on masculinities was also important - stressing gender as a power relation (which is often missed).

But thank you for giving me a chance to read it. I think it is a deep and thorough and interesting piece of work.

Cynthia.

**7. Hester Eisenstein (USA)**

Hi, Frigga.

I finally wound up reading the essay on the computer as none of the versions you sent me will print out properly. They only print every other page. Infuriating!

I think it is an excellent essay, very original. But of course the literature is massive, and I am not at all an expert on the anthropological literature, for example. Someone like Rayna Rapp at NYU would have this at her fingertips. (By the way Eleanor Leacock is no longer alive, for your information.).

I don't know how much time you have to work on this. But some omissions that occurred to me as I was reading were:

Mary Wollstonecroft (18<sup>th</sup> century)

On Marxism and the oppression of women: Lise Vogel

Debate over race, class and gender: Patricia Hill Collins, bell hooks, Angela Davis, Cherrie Moraga, Maxine Baca Zinn and many others.

Also: I think you could make it clearer how you see gender relations integrating with relations of production as women's role in production changes, from the 19th to the early 21st century. The point you made in your essay for Socialism and Democracy was that the "erasure" of gender as women are integrated into all levels of capitalist production is functional for late 20th century service sector capitalism. I missed this clear outline of historical changes in women's gender roles.

Anyway trust this is helpful.

All best wishes,

H.

**8. Ann Ferguson (USA)**

Dear Frigga:

Your paper looks very interesting, although I have only had time to skim it briefly. I note that you have no references to my later work on the subject (cf. 1989 <Blood at the Root: Motherhood, Sexuality and Male Domination>, Unwin/Hyman; 1991 <Sexual Democracy: Women, Oppression and Revolution>, Westview). Also you really need to refer to Sylvia Federici's 2004 book <Caliban and the Witch: Capitalism, Patriarchy and Primitive Accumulation>, Autonomedia, which is a brilliant book on the subject.

At any rate, I would be happy to send you detailed comments since we are working in the same area although I still maintain a socialist-feminist dual or multiple systems theory (taking racism into account) whereas you want an integrative Marxist Feminism. And I would be happy to be a part of your ongoing discussion group.

But my comments will have to wait until I have time to start responding.

In solidarity,

Ann

**9. Anna Jonasdottir (Schweden)**

(this is not in the alphabetical order, but Ann Ferguson is answering to Annas letter, so she will come back in again after this.)

Dear Frigga,

Finally I could take the time to read through your paper, and here is a couple of short comments.

1. I think you manage well to show the points you are making about the importance of discussing relations of production and modes of production "as always also gender relations" (p. 15). However, I would say: yes, if "always" means empirically, historically, in the concrete, but no, if you include also all analytical thought, i. e. the most abstract levels of analysis.

2. I do not agree with you on the main points of your argument, that the "greatest barrier /to comprehend gender relations as relations of production is /the tendency to think of gender relations as relationships between men and women" (p 15). You are also wrong in saying that "gender relations as relations of production has never been discussed internationally" (your letter below). This is exactly what I do in my texts (some of which I think I sent you a couple of years ago). I conceptualize gender relations as relations of production - not as an economic production per se, or as a value-creating process through the use and control of labor power - but as a production of people through the use and control of what I name "love power". My use of Marx's method (not Engels!) does not imply that the perspective you defend and think should be better elaborated (I agree with you on that!) "is obscured" ( see p.1). My theory is not a "phenomenology of men and women", and it does not focus on "relations between particular individuals, as if these were able to be founded upon themselves".

But I do claim that precisely by using Marx's method in a way nobody else has done I manage to "found" gender relations with their particular "productive force" (a mode of production of people) as an analytically specific dimension of society, theoretically significant as such. From a totality point of view this sociosexual mode of production means, of course, an analytically partial perspective precisely as Marx's socioeconomic perspective is partial.

3. Finally, therefore, I wonder why you exclude my work in your reviewing of other theorists dealing with Marx? As I'm sure you understand my intention is not to be unfriendly or egocentric, but I must say I am a bit tired of so often being excluded in so-called "international" discussions on gender theory.

I wish you all the best with your work

Anna

P.S. following your quest to distribute your letter widely, I also "feel free" to distribute my comments to two persons in the US who know my work well.

**10. Ann Ferguson (USA, 2. letter)**

Dear Frigga and Anna:

I would like to agree with Anna in her critique of your claims about the analysis of gender relations, and to point out that I too have developed an approach similar to Anna's which I did quite independently of her but which overlaps almost completely with hers. You do not mention my books on the subject, <Blood at the Root>, published by Unwin Hyman in 1989 or <Sexual Democracy> in 1991 or the paper where I first develop my socialist-feminist theoretical approach "Women as a New Revolutionary Class in the U.S" in Pat Walker, ed. <Between Labor and Capital> (1979, South End Press). I argue that patriarchy is based on a semi-autonomous system of what I call "sex-affective production", which is the production and reproduction of people, sexuality, and nurturance/affection. This is a development of Gayle Rubin's concept of sex/gender systems of kinship but made more historically materialist by me. I think that sex-affective production has different historical forms, earlier based on forms of the male-dominated family/kinship networks (father patriarchy, husband patriarchy) and then in 20th c. capitalism shifting to public patriarchy with welfare state capitalism. These different modes of sex/affective production interact with different forms of economic production and involve the exploitation of women's sex-affective labor (their production of nurturance/love and sexual satisfaction) so that men as a sex-class can be said to be exploiting women's "love" labor, in Anna's terms. I had not seen Anna's work when I wrote my article or books but I have since read it and agree with it as a very interesting dual systems feminist materialism that can be historically specific. I hope that she and I can compare notes and see in what ways our theories are similar and what different. In any case, I think you, Frigga, ought to engage critically with feminist materialist approaches that take Marx's method and apply it in different ways than the standard Marxist feminist approach: otherwise your work will look quite outdated. Another person whose views you should consider is Sylvia Walby.

Best, Ann

### **11. Montserrat Galceran (Spanien)**

Comentarios al artículo de Frigga Haug: Geschlechterverhältnisse.

El artículo hace un repaso realmente impresionante a la cuestión de las “relaciones de género”, a su prehistoria en la teoría marxista, a los primeros estudios etnológicos y al debate dentro del feminismo. Desde este punto de vista es un artículo muy completo y creo que es un acierto el que no divida entre una parte histórica y otra temática sino que las integre en una estructura “neutra”, sólo articulada por la sucesión de los apartados marcados solamente con un número. Aún así el final del artículo – punto 9 – reúne demasiadas cosas y trata temas que son dispares.

1.- La tesis fundamental del artículo – a mi modo de ver correcta – es que las “relaciones de género” son “relaciones de producción”, para lo cual es preciso entender que no son relaciones entre “hombre y mujer”, o sea relaciones sexuales/de género en el sentido individual, sino que a pesar de su apariencia, son relaciones sociales y en este marco, no específicamente “culturales” sino de “producción”. Obviamente, tratado así el tema, exigiría una clarificación de la relación entre “producción” y “cultura” pues de lo contrario, si bien se escapa al “culturalismo” del feminismo anglosajón más a la moda, no se acaba de aclarar en qué sentido esa producción lo es también de “cultura” ( valores, roles, discurso, posición, etc). Políticamente esta aserción supone que la cuestión de género no queda relegada a un segundo plano, sino que es absolutamente simultánea de cualquier transformación de las relaciones de producción, en tanto que es una de ellas y que, a su vez, cualquier análisis de las relaciones de producción implica el de las relaciones de género.

El punto central de su carácter productivo radica en la “reproducción humana”, en el que la existencia y unión de ambos géneros/sexos es imprescindible para la reproducción de la especie, razón por la cual parece que pudiera pensarse una complementariedad entre “reproducción de la especie” basada en la reproducción sexual y producción de los medios de subsistencia y mantenimiento de las estructuras sociales, ligadas al sistema productivo. De hecho el texto de Marx y

Engels en la I.A., parece indicar ese “carácter doble” de la producción humana (social).

Sin embargo “complementariedad” no implica de suyo “igualdad” o “equiparación”. El problema mayor es que de la asunción de que los sexos son complementarios en la reproducción sexuada de la especie no se deduce que los dos “valgan como iguales”. Más bien al revés, el discurso histórico de legitimación de la desigualdad de la mujer insiste en privilegiar el aporte masculino en la reproducción, de tal modo que si bien, ésta no sería posible sin el aporte de cada una de las dos partes, la semilla masculina y el receptáculo femenino, su importancia respectiva queda inscrita en viejos parámetros como el del principio activo y el pasivo que privilegia claramente el primero. Por tanto, a mi modo de ver, puede pensarse una “complementariedad desigual” que valora desigualmente ambos elementos y que los subordina el uno al otro, en este caso el pasivo al activo, la mujer al hombre. A nivel de discurso la subordinación se ha recubierto con analogías de diverso tipo, por ej. la ya nombrada de la causa activa y pasiva, o con las referencias al trabajo (masculino) y la naturaleza (femenina), etc. El punto, a mi modo de ver, es que debe pensarse la complementariedad como desigual y no como integrada por elementos de igual validez. Esta cuestión remite a la del surgimiento o existencia desde siempre de la desigualdad y la subordinación. En la teoría feminista se encuentran ecos diversos de una concepción según la cual históricamente se ha roto una primitiva equiparación de géneros, propia de sociedades prehistóricas, de algunos grupos indígenas o de culturas antiguas. Las ilusiones sobre un hipotético matriarcado en los orígenes de la humanidad, el papel de la madre y la extremada importancia de los espacios de mujeres, puestos de relieve de modo espectacular durante los años 70 y 80, ocupan poco espacio en el artículo por razones que desconozco. Se destaca el papel de Bachoffen en toda esa discusión, pero se presta poca atención a cómo ésta ha sido recogida en el feminismo de los últimos decenios o incluso actúa todavía hoy en autoras de otras culturas (V. Shiva, por ej.). No me parece una laguna, simplemente creo que hay dos líneas de distinción importantes a

trazar: “complementariedad” como ya he señalado anteriormente no equivale a “equiparación”, sino que puede haber complementariedad entre desiguales y, por otra parte, las relaciones de individuos/as de un mismo sexo tampoco tienen por qué estar marcadas por la igualdad, pueden incluir altos niveles de desigualdad y de opresión. El ensueño de una sociedad de poder femenino sin subordinación de las mujeres se olvida de que incluso en esta primera etapa, en el caso de que haya existido, pudo haber relaciones de subordinación de unas mujeres a otras y que por tanto el “matriarcado” tampoco es igualitario. Quizá lo característico del “patriarcado” haya sido reducir las diferentes líneas de desigualdad a una línea de género, desdibujando o reduciendo las otras líneas de subordinación. El problema entonces no sería el surgimiento del patriarcado como ruptura de una sociedad de iguales, sino la codificación de desigualdades de diverso tipo a lo largo de una frontera de género.

Ahora bien, ¿porqué justamente la marca de género se convierte en uno de los ejes centrales de distribución de la desigualdad? Gerda Lerner en *The creation of patriarchy* sostiene que la clave está en la “apropiación por los hombres de la capacidad sexual y reproductiva de las mujeres”, y eso ocurre “antes” de la formación de la propiedad privada de tal manera que el uso de las mujeres como mercancía precede a la institucionalización de la propiedad privada y supone la apropiación por parte de los varones del grupo de la capacidad productiva y reproductiva de las mujeres con la consiguiente división entre ellas que son sometidas a diversos grados de dominación ( la esposa reconocida, la esclava, la prostituta, etc (p 25 y ss., ed. cast.) Según esta autora este proceso se refuerza con la aparición de las religiones monoteístas cuya figura central o Dios todopoderoso es siempre una figura masculina y la consiguiente devaluación filosófica de la mujer que queda teóricamente estructurada en Aristóteles. Creo que esta perspectiva sería enriquecedora para el artículo pues permitiría entender que la capacidad productiva y reproductiva de las mujeres es vehículo de su dominación y, por otra parte, me parece absolutamente congruente con los textos de la D.I, que citas aunque se distancia de los textos finales quizá demasiado

cercanos a los resultados de las investigaciones de Morgan que actualmente no han sido confirmados.

2. El segundo punto que me parece interesante tiene que ver con el carácter destructivo del capitalismo. Si sostenemos que las relaciones de género son relaciones de producción y las relaciones de producción en el sistema capitalista están marcadas por un alto nivel de destrucción de los recursos, quizá podamos pensar a partir de ahí en unas relaciones de género profundamente marcadas por la violencia y la auto-destrucción no en virtud de argumentos psicológicos y/o antropológicos sino en virtud de la extensión de los caracteres distintivos de dichas relaciones. Se me ocurre que en consecuencia hay que introducir dimensiones de contradictoriedad en las propias relaciones de género de tal modo que interpretemos algunos de los problemas actuales como la violencia contra las mujeres, no sólo como restos de patriarcalismo ni tampoco como respuesta angustiada de los varones ante la emancipación de la mujer, sino como resultado del carácter capitalista de las relaciones de género en las sociedades actuales, en las cuales por tanto la capacidad productiva de placer puede ser pensada sin rubor como fuente de renta, la capacidad de procrear puede ser mercantilizada, etc. Se trataría de analizar como el discurso moralizador pierde legitimación y es sustituido de forma abierta por un discurso de mercantilización y de gestión al ser éste a su vez el discurso dominante. Por otra parte la separación y en muchos casos puesta en peligro de las estructuras vitales que acompaña el desarrollo del capitalismo acompaña también las relaciones de género, no sólo con una profunda separación entre deseo y reproducción sino con la puesta en cuestión de la reproducción misma a la vez que se intensifica y expande en proporciones gigantescas todo el ámbito del deseo y de obtención de placer. La cuestión de la subjetividad pertenece a este complejo y precisa nuevas formas de construir los géneros. También por ahí podría prolongarse la reflexión que presenta el artículo.

## 12. Sandra Harding (USA)

Hi Frigga,

What an ambitious and valuable project your essay is. As you know, I am not much of a scholar of Marxism. Here are just a few comments, mostly on authors or topics which could be included or expanded.

1) The issue of gender in global contexts is addressed in the feminist ethnography section. However, there is also the discussion by marxist feminists of the oppositional role of women and families in contexts of imperialism in, for example, Angela Davis' "The Black Women's Role in the community of Slaves", The Black Scholar 2 (1971) and Mina Davis Caulfield, "Imperialism, the Family, and Cultures of Resistance", Socialist Revolution 4 (no 2 (1974)). These were influential in the U.S., at least, in creating an understanding of the different ways in which women's situations in families were shaped by class/imperialism issues--to overgeneralize a bit, oppression in dominant families, heroic resistance in dominated groups. More recently, the marxian feminist critics of Third World development, such as Maria Mies and her co-authors, have been arguing for a reformulation of marxian understandings of capital expansion into the Third World as the continuation of "primitive accumulation" through the appropriation of women's and peasants' labor and land rights. And critics of "structural adjustment" have provided detailed accounts of how it is women's paid labor and state services to families which are the first to be cut to enable repayment of World Bank loans. These various kinds of gender and imperialism accounts have been influential in U.S. feminist studies of development, globalization, etc.

2) You raise "the man question" with the Gramsci and Connell discussions (and by implication earlier when you note again and again the failure of theorists to see anything wrong with the lack of a discussion of women or women's issues). I would have liked to see the "man question" posed earlier in one of the critical summary sections (a splendid format) as a pervasive limitation to this day in thinking about "gender relations." All too often "gender" is considered a relevant topic only when women enter the factory or the boardroom. The politics

of gender is usually considered a range of issues about what to do about women's conditions, but without taking up how to change men and "men's worlds" (apart from inserting women into the latter).

3) I think this lack is a residue, in part, of the way gender is presumed to have a biological basis (as you report). But the history of androcentric biology of course saw man as the ideal human form and women as immature or deviant "men." Therefore reform of "gender relations" requires only that women's situation be improved, leaving men's untouched. Only women have gender issues, such thinking goes.

Were I authoring this essay, I would want to leave open, unsettled, whether or not there is, in fact, a biological basis to gender. I don't see the issue as settled. The phrase "sex/gender system" comes from Gayle Rubin's hugely influential attempt to link the insights of Marx, Freud, and Levi-Strauss in her 1975 "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," in Toward an Anthropology of Women ed. Rayna Rapp Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press). Yet recently, on the one hand, Butler appears completely to detach gender from biology (as you note) and even, some would say, show that sex differences are in significant respects already constituted by cultural gender preferences. (The biologist Anne Fausto-Sterling [who comes from an important parental Marxian lineage!] has certainly shown that at least the preference for only 2 sexes is a cultural phenomenon. See her "The Five Sexes" and her 2000 Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality (Basic Books)) Of course, in a different way, many (most?) of us feminists in the 1970s-90s insisted that gender has no biological basis. The literature on cross-cultural variance in gender ideals and practices, and on the extremely low intensity of gender differences in many cultures, seems to demand this. On the other hand, contemporary trans-sex and trans-gender theorists are brilliantly both advancing and muddying the waters of that kind of clean separation. (Why can't Trans folk be whatever gender they wish, regardless of their biology?)

4. Finally, were I authoring the essay, I would early on identify more clearly how gender today is treated as both “out there”, a phenomenon to be studied in the material world, and also an analytic lens, like class and race theories, through which any aspect of nature and social relations may be examined. Moreover, as a phenomenon “out there,” it is a property of three distinctive kinds of phenomena. You focus here and there on the difference between concerns only for individual gendered persons vs. social structures. I would put it that each “has gender,” the intensity or extent of which can be contrasted and compared. Moreover, lurking throughout your essay, is a third referent of gender, namely symbolic systems. Gender is also totemic. This issue emerges with discussion of the morality issues, gender stereotypes, “ideology”, and “social constructions” of gender, etc., but never really comes together. I made the tripartite distinction in an offhand way in my 1986 The Science Question in Feminism Chapter 2. It’s not perfect, but it does help to organize a mass of confusing data and force thinkers to get clear about just what it is that they are looking at. I introduced it because there are many cases in history in which the intensity of the gender presence differs between social structures, individuals, and symbolic systems. For example, gender stereotyping and “backlash” anti-feminist rhetoric frequently peaks just when women’s structural situation is improving (as Carolyn Merchant noted in writing about 16th and 17th C. Scientific rhetoric, and as has been clear in recent decades.)

Finally, as a property “out there,” in all three respects it is always “intersectional” (as the Critical Race theorists have put the point) with race, class and any other macro social forces. When race or gender relations change, so does the other, etc. Thus gender is always dynamic, not static or fixed, and hierarchal (even in those cultures in which it is conceptualized as complementary). Marx and Engels were the first to identify this “intersectional” character as they pointed out how gender relations vary with class formations. The Critical Race theorists are continuing this tradition, but without always prioritizing class as the only motor of history.

That's it. A splendid project.

Cheers,

Sandra

### **13. Inez Hedges (USA)**

Dear Frigga,

Here are three thoughts I had when reading your "Gender Relations." Perhaps they could be of help.

Inez

#### 1. Ernst Bloch

Bloch regarded woman, especially, as an unfinished project, since her struggle for equality is constrained by capitalism:

"Insgesamt liegt der Unterschied der Geschlechter auf einem anderen Feld als die künstlichen Unterschiede, welche die Klassengesellschaft produziert hat; so verschwindet er mit dieser nicht. Der Geschlechtsunterschied verschwindet so wenig, dass das Weibhafte erst im Sozialismus offenbar werden kann." (Ernst Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*. Werkausgabe Band 5 (1959; Suhrkamp Verlag 1985, Seite 695).

"Eine Gesellschaft ohne zuweisbare Schattenseite des Lebens gibt der Weiblichkeit zweifellos erst Bewährung wie Freibrief. Und die Frau als Genossin wird derjenige Teil der Gesellschaft sein, der sie in jedem Bezug subjektiv und unversachlicht erhält." (Ernst Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*. Werkausgabe Band 5 (1959; Suhrkamp Verlag 1985, Seite 698).

#### 2. Wedekind

[This is a section from my new book, FRAMING FAUST:]

As a play about a Faustian woman, Wedekind's *Franziska* (1911) shows an awareness of the limitations to self-realization that society imposed upon women

in his time. It is all the more remarkable that he explores this theme not because of any sympathy with feminism but because of a prescient awareness of the relation of power, gender, and sexuality. Wedekind points us to an understanding of gender identity as a discursive practice. He understands gender identity as theater, and masculinity and femininity as roles that Franziska can embrace or discard. Even though gender is essentialized in Wedekind (men strive for control, women are willful and passionate), he presents the decision to assume one gender or another as a matter of choice. In Nancy Fraser's words: "To have a social identity, to be a woman or man, for example, just *is* to live and to act under a set of descriptions [...] To understand anyone's feminine or masculine gender identity...one must study the historically specific social practices through which cultural descriptions of gender are produced and circulated." [Nancy Fraser, "Structuralism or Pragmatics? On Discourse Theory and Feminist Politics" in Nancy Fraser, *Justice Interruptus. Critical Reflections on the "Postsocialist" Condition* (New York: Routledge, 1997) p. 152].

### 3. Language

For gender and language, see *Language and Gender: A Reader*, ed. Jennifer Coates. This book has many essays, including the following:

"Communities of Practice: Where Language, Gender, and Power all Live" (Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnell); "Female Speakers of Japanese in Transition"(Katsue Akiba Reynolds); "How and Why Women are More Polite: Some Evidence from a Mayan Community"(Penelope Brown); "'Women's Language' or 'Powerless Language'?"(William M. O'Barr and Bowman K. Atkins); "Gossip Revisited: Language in All-Female Groups" (Jennifer Coates); "Girl Talk/Boy Talk: Sex Differences in Adolescent Speech" (Edina Eisikovits).

I haven't read this book, but it seems to cover many aspects of the gender/language question: differences that are built into the language (Japanese), social constraints (same sex/mixed sex groups, different age groups), as well as language evolution and change. The point is that a lot of what passes as a "natural" gender role is tagged by linguistic markers that reinforce convention.

All languages are affected by this, though in some (Japanese) it is more marked than in others. Thus, a change or evolution of gender roles has to be accompanied by linguistic change.

All this is related to the work of Benjamin Lee Whorf who pioneered the field of sociolinguistics in *Language, Thought and Reality* (1956) and his work on the Hopi Language (1956).

#### **14. Barbara Herrnstein-Smith (USA)**

Dear Frigga,

I enjoyed having the chance to look over your entry on gender relations for the encyclopaedia. It brought back good memories of you and of old causes. Since I am at some distance now from the scholarship and, as you know, from the Marxist perspective, I can only give some general impressions, which I hope are useful.

The entry is impressively thorough in its scrupulously detailed reports and fine summaries of the history of Marxist analyses of gender relations, and tells an exceedingly interesting and instructive story of evolving views. It is also, as I would have expected of you - admirably sharp-eyed, fair-minded and, as necessary, critical.

There were many revelations for in it for me: for example, the existence of the work of Olympe Marie de Gouges and Meillassoux and the significance of Bachofen and Morgan. I was also increasingly struck, however, by the domination of the Marxist intellectual tradition in this area by (a) rather stubbornly confined, fundamentally essentialist and biological-determinist views of gender/sexual difference, and (b) the central ideas of 'modes' and 'relations' of 'production' and 'reproduction', the repetition of which in virtually every detail, at every scale, of explanation by many of the theorists you examine had

the effect, for this reader, of gradually emptying out those ideas of any explanatory power: they began to sound, in effect, incantatory.

You observe at the beginning that “Complementarity in procreation is the natural basis upon which what has come to be regarded as ‘natural’ has been socially formed in the historical process. In this way genders emerge from the social process as ‘unequal’”. This seems unclear as stated since “complementarity” itself would not predict social-political “inequality”; it would predict only “difference”. There may very well be a ‘natural basis’ for the historical emergence of male dominance and female subordination, but it cannot be the simple fact of complementarity in procreation. Nor, I think, can the ‘social formation’ or ‘historical process’ involved here be reduced to a single linear history of the operation of modes and relations of production.

I missed any discussion of current challenges to sexual/gender binarism apart from those of Judith Butler (see, for example, Anne Fausto Sterling, “Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality” [2000]). I would note in particular work in so-called queer theory, which observes the crucial “repetition” of the male/female binary in the development and operations of a homosexual/heterosexual binary (see, esp., Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, “Epistemology of the Closet” [1992], which analyzes the significance of the latter opposition for gender relations more generally and for Western intellectual-ideological formations more broadly). These ideological and social-political phenomena really cannot, I think, be explained by modes or relations of “production” (Valorizations of biological “reproduction”-- what in the USA are currently enshrined as ‘family values’, meaning precisely anti-abortion and anti-gay--are of course involved; but it’s not clear in which direction the arrow of causality points here.) Perhaps all this is discussed in another entry in the “Encyclopaedia”. If not, something should be noted somewhere about the connection of patriarchy to homophobia (you note the quite late emergence of the recognition of /patriarchy/ itself as a force comparable to capitalism) and about the more general psychological and social-political operations of patriarchal (not

always and only capitalist) formations in relation to the bio-physiologically quite "material" and experientially quite significant fact of the diversity of human sexualities.

My general sense of the narrowness and sometimes severe "historical" myopia of Marxist accounts of gender relations was reinforced by a book I recently came across (you'll recall I'm currently working on the science/religion nexus): David Noble, "A World Without Women. The Christian Clerical Culture of Western Science" (1996; paperback, 2005). Here is an excerpt from a review of it the web: 'Starting with the relatively wide range of educational and leadership roles available to women in first-century Christianity and working his way through the centuries, Noble demonstrates how human value, education, and opportunity are linked with developments within the church. He spends a great deal of time covering the evolution within the church that led to the subjugation of women. He points out that the Reformation, the Great Awakening, and most heretical movements appealed strongly to women and that within these movements women gained educational opportunities and leadership roles. Noble also describes how Western universities and scientific societies were based on monastic models, leading them to be male-dominated communities.'

What struck me was that none of these evidently crucial developments in the history of Western gender relations seems to be noted or examined in the Marxist tradition (though materials for a Marxist analysis abound in the historical record and in Noble's own account). So, the question arises: shouldn't Marxist theory, even if belatedly, address them; and if, as appears, such developments cannot be – altogether - explained via the all-purpose model of "modes of production" shouldn't that model be revised accordingly?

A word on style: In its present (generally unidiomatic and, I'm afraid, often pretty opaque) English version, the language of the entry appears exceedingly heavy, abstract and, for long stretches, rather mechanical-sounding. I know how it is with encyclopaedia entries: I've written several myself, under the usual constraints. But it would be worthwhile, I think, to go over this one with a view

to – lightening - the language and to increasing the sense (there are happy flashes of it here and there) of a flesh-and-blood authorial presence.

I must end, dear Frigga, by repeating how impressive and indeed magnificent the entry is. I am sure that no one else in the world could have produced an encyclopaedia essay on this topic with such historical scope and richness or with such insight, rigor and intellectual responsibility. It will be, I am also sure, a major resource for scholars and readers for many years to come.

With, as always, much admiration and affection,

Barbara

### 15. Eva Palomo (Spanien)

*Comments on the document “Gender Relations”*

These are some suggestions or ideas I noted down as I read your text, most of them consist of information that could be added if limitation of space allows it.

In the first paragraph of page 2, when you refer to De Gouges and her ideas about a “discourse of the victim” as well as Brecht’s comments on the matter, it might be interesting to mention **Pierre Bourdieu**’s views too. In his book *La domination masculine* (Ed. du Seuil, Paris, 1998) he deals with this issue and other aspects of gender relations –can also be applied to other parts of the text (pg 13)-.

Maybe before starting point 2, you could refer to **Flora Tristan**. Obviously she did not use the term but operated with the concept. I think her contribution to socialism and feminism is important, creative and not always recognized.

Another author who might also be worth mentioning is **Anna Jónasdóttir**. As a materialist of the 90’s, in her book *Love Power and Political Interests. Towards a Theory of Patriarchy in Contemporary Western Societies* (1993) she addresses gender relations in terms of oppression similar to class oppression –talks about a gender surplus value...-. I first thought of her book when in page 8 in the 2<sup>nd</sup>

paragraph you say Engels applies the concept of class to the man-woman relationship.

### **16. Hilary Rose (Great Britain)**

Dear Frigga,

First I hugely enjoyed this. Your as always insightful reflections on feminist theorising made a fascinating read.

However you asked readers to be critical so here is my two pennyworth.

First the text at times reads like notes of various feminist theorists moving from one to another in time, without the connections/disconnections between them always being spelt out. It needs smoothing and what I think of as 'signs posts' telling the reader where they are and where they are going. This is crucial for a relative beginner.

Second having read it I found myself wondering what is all this stuff – however brilliant - doing in an MF encyclopaedia topic of gender relations. So I looked through the introduction again and saw my problem flagged in the fourth line where you speak of 'structural role'. So is the kind of gender theory being elaborated in the later part of the text anything to do with 'gender relations' where I think I hear an echo of class relations.

In my reading today's brilliant feminists such as Haraway and Butler have given up on the structural project - yes there are fragments of structure still left in Haraway even after she becomes post structuralist but fundamentally she and totally so Butler, are poststructuralists. The idea that there is a potential structural solidarity of the one class the one gender or even some structured combination of class, gender and race has I think been entirely abandoned. They and many others see solidarity as something to be built – in short hand terms as 'a rainbow coalition'. You lay this out elegantly but don't connect this to the opening stuff.

Now this may not matter for what the text is aiming to do but this reader is not quite clear what that is (hence my appeal for signposts For me the piece ranges between being an exegesis of feminist thought (rather like an academic lecture) and a FM critical exegesis of feminist thought.

Thus your opening account of Olympe de Gouges elegantly celebrates her attempt to explain the actuality (though non existent concept) of gender relations in the structural terms of the time. Great (though be nice to see Mary Woolstonecraft getting a mention as her language of rights is seamless with that of Gouges) Then immediately we are into the classical accounts of the formation of a Marxist feminism and its double productions... But you need to spell out a bit more slowly and clearly how that becomes “ the women’s question’ and what is wrong with that.

You then go directly onto Gramsci ...but does Gramsci actually do this (I don’t remember him doing so) or are you here telling us here how later feminist were able to use Gramscian tools.

Oh yes wasn’t Woolfe on target..... these new horrible corporate women... Those monsters our feminist movement helped bring into existence...

Then we jump to French anthropology in the sixties – maybe more about why they got into this?

Then to 70s onwards FM it self - This is marvellously rich but while you appreciate what Butler Haraway are trying to do there is little sense that this is about structure. So a sense of the left as socially progressive lives - but Marxism has been so diluted as to be non existent. Take for example the theoretical fate of the standpoint theorists (and as one I know this all too well). We took the Marxist view that it is labour that defined human transformative practices in the world so we looked at the caring labour of women to provide a new approach most excitingly to the making of scientific knowledge and to ethics... Most also wanted to defend a constrained essentialism, to admit embodiment. Reproduction involves material bodies etc etc. Alas we know the problem was here wasn’t ‘one’ unified standpoint - so that theoretical project in all its generous ambition

failed.. But my point is that I suspect that was the end of the road for Marxist feminism theorising as such. Today there are standpoints ... still useful but no longer a child of the enlightenment and Marx.

Incidental I used to love Bob Connell's work, but I now see him as writing wonderful macro agenda then settling down to study half a dozen gay working class men in Sydney. The gap is to me huge...

Then Fraser Habermas and Pateman just appear the text is smart but doesn't connect. Make the links for me and even dopier readers.

Lastly where are gender relations today. Capital and early Marx for me remain useful but need rethinking in the context of a brutal liberal globalisation. (Globalisation is a bit more than the super highest stage... or is it?) And where are gender relations in the context of war and terror. I feel you need to go on even if the feminist thinking isn't there (though I like the non feminist Susan George and Attac on an alternative globalisation) and all you have is your own formidable intelligence

Well that's my two penn'oth- hope it's useful

Love Hilary

### **17. Hortense Spillers (USA)**

Dear Frigga,

Because I am going out of town in a matter of hours and do not plan to return until 19 January, I would like to give you some initial impressions now of your paper on "Gender Relations." I might have more to say after the 19th, but having read a good deal of the essay (and plan to finish), I think I have a fairly substantial sense of where it is headed: let me say right away that it is, to my mind, a very impressive piece of "archaeology" on the "woman question" and the problematics of the gender relations; I like it a good deal and would recommend that you publish it. The piece posits a narrative of plausible and coherent origins

of a question whose roots are too often lost in emphasis on female sexuality and the body; some of the latter is attributable, I think, to the prestige of Freudian/Lacanian psychoanalytic theories and the thorough penetration of post-modernist persuasions that seem to cast the historical aside; this piece maintains the historicity of the question by reviewing certain source texts from Bachofen to Marx and updates the temporal progression by following it out to the contemporary period. In other words, the essay engages the conceptual foundations of gender and the place of gender in the emergence of human society and traces its implications, step by step, through the transitional moments of thinking about it. I find the piece instructive (I've underlined several key passages) and thoroughgoing in its attempt to locate the moments where the argument undergoes various transformations. If I have other thoughts about the piece, I will finish them out on my return. But what I have seen so far inspires me to keep reading!

H.

**18. Rosemary Hennessy. On Frigga Haug's "Gender Relations" in *The Historical Critical Dictionary of Marxism***

One of the valuable contributions of the mammoth undertaking of *The Historical Critical Dictionary of Marxism* is the network of conceptual threads traversing it that foreground gender and sexuality as core concerns in historical materialism. As editor and contributor, Frigga Haug has left her intellectual mark on this endeavor. Among the most significant entries is the one on "Gender Relations." Tucked into the middle of this essay is a comment on the way gender features in history in general and in the genealogy of historical materialism specifically. It can serve as a gloss on the mode of reading Haug employs. She writes: "A more sophisticated version of gender relations in the development of humanity remains almost invisible in historiography if female labour in the context of total social

labour and the participation of women in politics and administration are not searched for with the attentive eye of a detective.” In the entry on “Gender Relations” Frigga Haug does that detective work, tracing the appearance of the concept of gender relations in Marxism while at the same time making a case for an interpretive framework that maintains the historical and materialist integrity of its meaning over the course of its history. In part because the condensed nature of the dictionary form forecloses extensive elaboration of the debates that punctuate the history of gender in Marxist theory, several conceptual knots remain. While at times the entry glosses too easily over some of these strains and contradictions, and even re-enacts some of them, these gaps also point to areas where further work remains to be done. They may provoke future generations of readers to continue the work-in-progress that is Marxist feminism.

The salient theoretical point that emerges from “Gender Relations” is the importance of thinking gender in terms of relations of production. This is an important concept no less for feminism than for Marxism as it is precisely the veer away from this starting point that has fractured both traditions and led to analyses that are partial in their political and theoretical reach. When Haug refers to ‘relations of production’ she makes it clear that her point of reference is the basic premise of historical materialism, that is, that social relations depend on both the reproduction of life and the production of the means of life. As she traces the genealogy of gender relations in Marxism, Haug makes visible the interplay between what was known and what was forgotten, between flashes of insight that are followed by blindness to gender as a fundamental aspect of the reproduction of life and the means of life as well as their relation.

What emerges is a profile of historical materialism as a set of discourses haunted by gender relations. Nowhere is this more evident than in the work of Marx and Engels. Haug contends that Marx and Engels comprehend gender relations as relations of production just as much as they abandoned this view (288). Crucial here is the question of how production of life in the totality of production is related to the production of the means of life, how gender features in both, and

how gender is shaped differentially. Haug points out that Marx had a “flash of inspiration” when he stated that gender relations come about via a mode of production outside capitalism; he also recognized that gender relations are relations of reproduction, while in his ethnological research he depicted gender relations as outside relations of production. Engels names both the making of human beings and the production of the means of life [food etc. ] as “production,” and so offers production as a starting point for any analysis of social life, even though his analysis does not lead to comprehension of gender as relations of production but rather to a separation of the production of life and production of means of life.

It is this separation that would remain a fault line in Marxist theory and in feminism. The workers’ movement forgets that the production of life and the means of life are connected when it makes gender secondary and subordinate to class or considers domestic labor and the family as secondary concerns. And feminism, too, would tend to think gender relations in terms of men’s oppression of women or of women’s rights and abandon the connection to relations of production. Haug revisits some important debates and contributions to Marxist feminism that aimed to redress this divide by treating capitalist domination of women in the home and capitalist exploitation. One of them was the so called “dual systems theory” of the 1970’s that posited two systems of domination, patriarchy and capitalism. While it raised the important question of how the two interact, Haug concludes that the dual systems debates were not resolved – how to put capitalism and patriarchy together again remains a question.

Indeed for the reader of this entry the relation between family and total social labor still remains to be explained. While Haug identifies a longstanding theoretical knot in historical materialism’s treatment of gender relations, and offers an important starting point for thinking the materiality of gender—“the standpoint of the reproduction of society”—one comes away from this entry with no clear view of how the production of life and of the means of life are related nor of how gender relations feature in both under capitalism. While offering an

extended argument is not the task of a critical dictionary, the might provide more openings or leads into a where a more adequate answer to the question raised by the dual system debates might go. One fruitful avenue that is not addressed is theories of ideology. Are gender relations ideological? Would theorizing them as such help us think through the relation between the production of life and the means of life under capitalism? If not, why not? If the reproduction of life includes the reproduction of the means to life and gender relations feature in both when gender relations are thought only in terms of the family, domestic labor, or divisions of labor in the job market, this fragmented way of thinking is itself a historical effect. Might we say it is also an effect of ideology?

For all of the importance of the position on gender as basic to social reproduction, the entry on “Gender Relations” also reiterates some of the historical effects of this fragmentation of the reproduction of life as they have registered in social theory in western modernity, including Marxism and feminism. The entry’s consideration of gender principally examines two archives: western ethnology and philosophy. Attention to gender relations is more prominent within the archive on ethnology, especially in terms of its examination of kinship systems. One of the great unsaids underscoring both, however, is the history of colonialism. That 500 year long project helped shape the disciplining of knowledge, what is visible and knowable. Haug’s entry on “Gender Relations” does not acknowledge this historical effect, even as it traverses it. One is not invited to think gender in terms of how it features in capitalism’s ongoing imperial relations, how gender in those modes of production “outside capitalism” still disciplines neo-colonial subjects and history, or how here, too, as with the family in industrialized sectors, we need to think through relations between capitalism’s inside and outside.

Beginning the entry on “Gender Relations” with Marie de Gouges, a feminist of the French Revolution, Huag provides a frame of reference and suggests a trajectory for its political standpoint that is at odds with the theoretical stance that emerges from the genealogy of gender thinking in Marxism. While de Gouges is

thinking gender relations in terms of “total social reproduction,” in Haug’s reading it is gender relations that are determinate here—a stance that is more akin to radical feminism than Marxist feminism. The political issues Haug highlights in de Gouge pertain to equality between the sexes under the law. While this is the premise of feminist social movement that has prevailed in capitalist class society, it has been critiqued by Marxist feminists as a partial view. That Haug would begin here, followed by a survey of ethnological studies of gender seems to re-enact the fragmented double consciousness that posits two sorts of gendered subjects: the European enlightenment subject of democratic societies, of rights and citizenship and the anthropological subject of kinship groups. There is a history of gender relations that the entry remains blind to, that frames its organization, and that derives, perhaps, from some of the very same historical contradictions that produce the fault lines Haug’s essay traces in historical materialist theory.

The treatment of recent developments in capitalism and their impact on gender relations, among them the impact of reproductive technology, would benefit from a perspective that takes into account the ways global capitalism’s gender relations play out differently and unevenly for women and men in its various sectors, and their impact on the reproduction of life. To name only one example: the gender relations of the assemblers of pharmaceutical products vs those of the consumers of them.

Finally, while Marxist feminism has been so extremely embattled that the archive of recent Marxist feminist work in sociology and other disciplines is small, there are examples beyond the few German ones Haug ends with, among them Teresa Brennan, Harriet Fraad, Lindsey German, Miranda Joseph, Teresa Ebert, Rosemary Hennessy, Joanna Brenner, Kevin Floyd.

Undoubtedly there are important contributions here. In addition to the emphasis on beginning analysis of social life with social reproduction as a starting point, there is a directive that reading Gramsci’s work on Fordism is crucial to a theory of gender (another instance of Haug’s provocative and astute detective work).

There is an initial formulation of gender that resonates for its elegance: “Complementarity in procreation is the natural basis upon which what has come to be regarded as natural has been socially constituted in the historical process” (279). And there is a closing reminder that capitalism’s penetration of the very chemistry of procreation pressures any separation of the natural and the social. As one of the latest strategies of capital accumulation, this encroachment on nature makes even more urgent analysis that begins with the reproduction of life. Here the Marxist feminism Haug outlines is more timely than ever.

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Sorry, if I lost someone’s commentaries.

There will be my summarizing answer as a continuation of the discussion in the next issue of *Feministische Beiträge*, April 2006 in German. And there will be a documentation of most of the debate including a summary by myself in the last issue of *Historical Materialism* 2006.

Frigga Haug

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