

exaggerated or denied, and has prevented women from integrating their bodies with their conceptualizations of self. She argues that the splitting or the 'dichotomy in which the female body is simultaneously seen as attractive/sexuctive and horrifying/dangerous maintains women's separation of body and self'.

The book attempts to present a wider analysis of the psychology of the female body than is usually considered by contemporary psychologists and this is done with great clarity. This text is essential reading for anyone interested in female reproduction, hormones and behaviour, women's studies, the psychology of women and/or feminist literature. Ussher intends the book to appeal to a wide audience and it is written in a style that both academics and those with a more general interest can relate to. The notes and the bibliography at the end of the text are an indication of the vast amount of research and attention to detail which has gone into its preparation, and the sources range from historical and contemporary medical research to anthropology and sociology as well as psychology.

The book not only provides an excellent overview and critique of the research and methodologies employed in this area, but also reflects the way in which women's bodies and their reproductive cycles have been understood and explained, and how these explanations have contributed to women's identity. Jane Ussher has tried to go some way towards deconstructing the privileged position of science itself, through examining the way in which supposedly objective, quantitative research provides a biased version of women's experiences while excluding women's own discourse. However, in deconstructing the present framework, the author recognizes that she is not providing a complete substitute explanation for women's distress. She has examined the 'splitting' between the woman and herself and that this 'splitting' can be associated with particular stages in the development of the woman's identity throughout her life cycle. However, in not examining this theoretical argument in more detail, the author exposes a weakness in the content of an otherwise well presented and researched book.

This area of psychology deserves, and is now receiving, greater attention from contemporary psychologists, and this book has the capacity to interest and enthuse students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. It is unfortunate that the majority of current psychology courses in the UK give little time in their curricula to the study of women, even though our students are predominantly female.

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Carol J. Adams: *The Sexual Politics of Meat*. Oxford: Polity, 1990. 256pp. £9.95. John Stoltenberg: *Refusing To Be a Man*. London: Fontana, 1990. 240pp. £3.99.

The connection between these two books is that they are both saying something hugely unacceptable. Both books have received vicious reviews, especially from those 'lefty' alternative types that you might have expected to be sympathetic to them. The thought crimes the authors have committed are, in the case of Adams, postulating a connection between meat-eating and patriarchy, and in Stoltenberg's case wanting to break down the sexual identity of maleness that has been con-

structed from the abuse of women. Suzanne Moore in *City Limits* (a London left-wing magazine), for instance, attacks Adams's 'mish-mash of moral puritanism, unassimilated literary jargon and radical feminist dogma' which would 'send anyone reaching for a Big Mac' (*City Limits* 31 May–7 June 1990). Clearly, Moore is outraged.

The *City Limits* review of Stoltenberg's book is equally angry. Graham Caveney says the book is made up of 'guilt-inspired confessionals, supercilious lectures and evangelical rhetoric' and that Stoltenberg does not only 'think like a horse's ass, he also writes like one'. He concludes his review with 'Pass me a bucket. *Refusing to be a Man* is Stoltenberg's pathetic attempt to get laid. I doubt he will be successful.' This is not a measured response. Nick Hornby, in the British media magazine *The Listener*, was outraged too. He says one part of the book has 'great cogency and power', but 'The rest of it, though, is insane to an almost terrifying degree'. When reviewers lose control of themselves to this extent then we must assume that something very important indeed is being defended.

Stoltenberg explains that sexual identity is not natural but a 'political idea' (p. 18), in the same way as 'racial' identity is a political idea, so that the 'idea of the male sex is like the idea of an Aryan race' (p. 37). 'The male sex' he says is 'socially constructed' through the inferiorizing of women:

It is a political entity that flourishes only through acts of force and sexual terrorism. Apart from the global inferiorization and subordination of those who are defined as 'nonmale', the idea of personal membership in the male sex class would have no recognizable meaning. (p. 38)

Because sexual identity is not natural it requires considerable effort to sustain it. Maleness constantly threatens to evaporate, for instance, unless effectively reinforced. The most effective reinforcement, Stoltenberg says, is fucking:

For many people, for instance, the act of fucking makes their sexual identity feel more real than it does at other times, and they can predict from experience that this feeling of greater certainty will last for at least a while after each time they fuck. (p. 39)

This is the part of Stoltenberg's message which has caused the most anger. Any critical political analysis of sexual practice is presently bound to bring head-on conflict with sexual libertarians on the left. Stoltenberg is naughty enough to suggest that the desire to fuck, seen by sexual revolutionaries as the desire for 'freedom', can arise from a man's need to put a woman or another man down in order to feel more like a man. This does not help us to understand why male supremacy is so obsessed with the need for constant fucking.

Stoltenberg delineates the political difference between those I would call sexual libertarians and who he calls sexual liberationists excellently in his section called 'What is good sex?' Sexual liberationists, he explains, would answer quantitatively 'in terms of erections, orifices, ejaculations, orgasms, hunkeness, hotness — and in terms of how far the anatomical experience can be removed from any context of social meaning' (p. 106). But today, he says, the answer must come from a political framework which understands the relationship between sexual practice and male supremacy, 'at how sexual action in private can reflect and keep intact

larger social structures of dominance and submission, at how hated or “the other” can be sexualised until it no longer feels like hate because it feels so much like sex’ (p. 106).

One thing that Stoltenberg’s reviewers claim to find dubious is the way he presumes to speak as a ‘radical feminist’, as if he has overcome his own conditioning as a man and risen to a higher plane. Caveney comments that he reads as though ‘gender, sexuality and years of socialisation can be eradicated through a sheer effort of will’. They cannot, of course. I did not get the impression that Stoltenberg took such a ‘holier than thou’ approach or became angry that a man should so presume. It cannot hurt feminism if a man wants to apply feminist theory in a critique of masculinity as profound as this. I suspect that Stoltenberg’s crime is actually to have shown up the male gender and to have broken ranks very effectively. He does not allow excuses. Male readers will be aware that their commitment to being pro-feminist (I do not think men should be calling themselves feminists) is only skin deep if they find they cannot accept the total deconstruction of masculinity and its perks that Stoltenberg demands. They will not want to give up so much and must therefore excoriate the messenger.

Adams’s subject is ‘ethical vegetarianism’ which she defines as ‘vegetarianism arising from an ethical decision that regards meat-eating as an unjustifiable exploitation of the other animals’ (p. 16). Like Adams I am vegetarian, and like her I do see a connection between meat-eating and male supremacy. In explaining the interconnectedness of vegetarianism and feminism Adams points to the way that meat-eating is seen as virile and women are in many societies not permitted to eat meat or only in a very restricted way. Adams shows how the word meat has gained status so that we have phrases such as the ‘meat of the matter’ or to ‘beef up’, whereas the word vegetable has come to mean ‘a person who leads a monotonous, passive, or merely physical existence’ (p. 36). Women and plants, then, are seen to have a connection as the word vegetable becomes a synonym for women’s passivity. She considers that animals are oppressed in ‘our [sic] culture’:

We live in a culture that has institutionalised the oppression of animals on at least two levels: in formal structures such as slaughterhouses, meat markets, zoos, laboratories, and circuses, and through our language. That we refer to meat-eating rather than to the eating of animals is one example of how our language transmits the dominant culture’s approval of this activity. (p. 66)

The very brutal ways in which animals are treated by meat-eaters derives, according to Adams, from the way they must be downgraded and seen as objects so that they can be turned into meat. The brutality of the slaughterhouse is likely to colour all our attitudes to the dignity and rights of animals. She makes an analogy between male violence towards women and human violence towards animals by showing how women are made into objects, often described as pieces of meat, in order to create the necessary sense of distance which will allow men to abuse us.

Unfortunately Adams’s writing style, which seems to be influenced by the more unintelligible schools of literary criticism, makes it difficult for me to pick out quotations which will convey to you the justice of the book’s argument or its power. The subject is enormously important. If we consider it right that all human animals should be treated with respect then I think we make a fatal mistake in excluding non-human animals from our analysis just because we want to be able to eat dead

lambs and piglets. Meat-eaters tend, Adams argues very well, to call the animals we eat lamb and pork to distance us from the cuddly creatures who delight us. I hope that other feminists will be tempted to write more approachable books on this subject so that we can effectively combine our activism on behalf of women with that on behalf of other animals.

Could it be that the reason Adams and Stoltenberg arouse such outrage is that they each attack a fundamental value of male supremacy? Meat-eating and a male sexual identity constructed around sexual violence both offer sensual pleasure. If such bastions of pleasure are attacked, they fear, then nothing will be left to excite people. The bad reviews these books have provoked teach us something about the malaise of much leftist philosophy in the late twentieth century. Left-wing philosophy is supposed to be based upon an acceptance of social constructionism and to be hostile to naturalism. But where the pleasures of the body are concerned all understanding of social construction tends to dissipate. Suddenly, we are back to being asked to accept that this is just 'the way it is'. People simply do eat meat and they simply do get sexual pleasure from sadomasochism. Writers who bring such pleasures into question and say that they can be subjected to political analysis are met with ridicule.

Critics of meat-eating and of male sexual aggression are both accused of moralism. The left's understanding of what is political does not generally extend to what human beings find pleasurable. Only external things which do not stir our sense can be subjected to political analysis. An objection to anything else is personal and therefore based on an individual morality. But this is dangerously short sighted. Hatred, whether it is sexual hatred, racial hatred or of homosexuals, does afford visceral delight to its hosts. A political analysis which does not seek to understand how both the practice and, in some cases, the experience of oppression can afford sensual satisfaction cannot seriously challenge the oppression of women, or any other kind of political oppression.

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Lynne Segal: *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men*. London: Virago, 1990. 396pp. £6.99 (pbk).

Contrary to popular 'common sense', feminists have always written books about men. In psychology, Phyllis Chesler's *About Men* (1978) is an obvious example. Writing about women has often also addressed issues relevant to men and masculinity, such as Angela Davis's *Women, Race and Class* (1983). Such texts have not only been about women and men, but about the construction and reproduction of femininities and masculinities, just as they have (sometimes) examined relations around 'race', class and age as well as sex and gender.

In *Slow Motion*, Lynne Segal looks at how 'the problem of men' has been addressed in Western cultures since the 1950s. The book illustrates the diverse set of issues which have been reflected in popular and academic texts about men and masculinity. At just under 400 pages, this is not a small book, although it is reasonably priced in paperback and written in an accessible style.