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In the opening editorial of *Hecate*, the editors profess their commitment — “as feminists and socialists”, and in some of the articles printed in the first and subsequent issues, an academic style, implying objectivity, tends to be undercut by the author’s unexamined socialist/feminist orientation. By no means all contributions present this difficulty for the reader, but she or he is not likely to realize the distinction at first, since all items necessarily appear under the editors’ political umbrella. An uneasy confrontation between scholarship and polemics therefore seems to be the major fault of the journal at present.

This confrontation must mean a narrowing of the readership to a small proportion of an elite group — to well-educated feminists, and to scholars, particularly those with a special interest in the sociology and history of Queensland, who are willing to ignore political bias for the sake of gaining information. The majority of educated readers do not accept feminist principles lightly, and are likely to be alienated by the overtly polemical cast of *Hecate*.

Thanks mainly to the activity of the neo-feminists of the late sixties and the seventies, most people in tertiary institutions are now aware that vast areas of knowledge about women, particularly in the fields of history, sociology, psychology and literature, remain to be explored. The task of feminists at present seems to be to ensure that the needed research is carried out, not to prescribe feminist attitudes in the researcher. Journals of women’s studies, even when run by feminists, can afford to be politically neutral, since it is reasonably certain that independent research into matters long neglected will support the feminist position, and an objective approach is necessary in order to convince the predominantly male academic establishment of the proper significance of women’s studies within the existing disciplines. This does not mean, of course, that the *Hecate* editors’ professed feminism is incomprehensible. If they believe that the ideal of women’s liberation is not expressed often or forcefully enough in Queensland, they are undoubtedly right.

This single criticism of editorial policy must, in justice, be mitigated by the recognition that most of the articles so far to appear in *Hecate* are competent and that several are illuminating; that many of the poems and short stories are emotionally and intellectually rewarding; and that, taken together, the reviews comprise a useful survey of the significant books about women published in Australia in the past two years.

The articles on women in Australian history — two by Carmel Shute dealing with the first World War (I,i,6–22; II,ii,6–22), and the

third by Raymond Evans, entitled "Prostitution and Society in Colonial Queensland" (I,ii,6-24) exploit a considerable advantage of the journal article form, which is to encourage detailed study of a limited subject. They avoid two faults - reliance on secondary sources and unsupported generalisation - which have been found in recent books on the history of women in Australia, notably in those by Summers and Dixon. (Shute's first article in *Hecate* was, in fact, the main source of Summers' discussion of World War I - *Damned Whores and God's Police*, pp.380-386.)

Of the articles dealing with contemporary society, Claire Williams' study (II,i,7-20) of working class women in a Central Queensland mining town is the most original, the most carefully researched, and the most objective. The conclusion, that the full-time working class housewife is more politically isolated than other women, flows incontrovertibly from the data presented. Others of the sociological studies, for example those on rape and on sex segregation in jobs, document these abuses without offering many new insights. Janet d'Urso's article, "The Social Construction of Woman: Western Mythic and Religious Stereotypes" (I,i,23-30) merely re-shapes earlier analyses of western myths by women, is riddled with embracing, doubtful statements, and contains some minor errors of fact. (For instance, Chaucer did not, as d'Urso states, write the *Legend of Good Women* in the fifteenth century, and his reason for leaving it incomplete may not have been that he was tired of it. Furthermore, although the *Legend* derives its form from the Church's calendar, it retells the stories of women from classical literature who were faithful in love - Cupid's saints, not Christ's, as d'Urso seems to think.)

The literary articles often deal with authors already adopted by the feminist movement - Doris Lessing, Diane Wakoski, Janet Frame, and Christina Stead, and there is a (useful and comprehensive) bibliography of Sylvia Plath. Volume 2, No. i, however, contains a comparative study, by Susan Gardner, of Andre Breton's relationship with Nadja and of Freud's with Dora. It demonstrates that the attitude of the men in both cases was exploitative to the point of increasing the instability of the women - Nadja was an incipient schizophrenic, Dora an hysteric - and questions whether a similar psychological pattern is not to be found also in the relationships of other male culture heroes. Gardner is determinedly fair-minded, pointing to occasions when both Freud and Breton showed a proper compassion towards the insane. The same issue contains Carole Ferrier's review of a recent collection of essays on feminist critical theory, edited by Josephine Donovan. This is a subject deserving far more attention from literary scholars than it is at present receiving.

Of the articles dealing with psychology, Merle Thornton's (I,2, 79-86) contains a just assessment of Juliet Mitchell's *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (1974), and advertises the value of this work as a counter to the anti-Freudian prejudice of the feminist movement.

Most of the short stories focus on the subjectivity of central women characters. Those by Lorna Tracy and Lillian Rosser deal with the hazards facing the independent woman - mainly emotional in the case of Lorna Tracy's middle class character, mainly economic in the experience

of Lillian Rosser's working class women. The stories reflect a common internal conflict of women in our society, and although the final consensus, perhaps predictably in this context, is that the independent state is preferable, it is not reached by any facile optimism or revolutionary euphoria. These two writers' stories are of comparable standard with those printed in the prestigious Australian literary journals, such as *Southerly* and *Westerly*.

The poems, too, deal exclusively with women's experience, usually from a subjective standpoint (as in Diane Wakoski's poems) but occasionally making use of external exemplars — well-known historical figures such as Joan of Arc ("La Pucelle" by Peggy Clarke, 11,i,52–57), Virginia Woolf ("a kind of exit" by Joanne Burns, 1,ii,63) and George Sand ("Aurore Dupin . . ." by Belinda Yuille, 11,i,91) and working women ("the lady at the pastry shop . . ." by Carol Lee Kelly, 1,ii,61). Despite this uniformity of subject matter and approach, the poetry in *Hecate* gains sufficient variety by expressing the considerable range of feelings which induce women to adopt a feminist stance. The emotion may be one of fury at the biological reductiveness of a wolf whistle:

Little Red Riding Anger
marches round the corner
with her hood full of hate
hoping to avoid the whistles
but the wolves are rarely late
(Joanne Burns: "Poem for the Streetboys")

of despair at the restrictions of the traditional rôle:

A gestation machine, she grows
while her head cries for things she will never know. Impatiently
she waits to exist giddily on a mortgage and a budget account
until the relief of aspirin and tea reduces the vision of her
adult child escaping.
And now
he lies across my day
crushing my nipple in his small mouth
I am told
the incest of motherhood is
embarrassing.
(Carolyn van Langenberg: "Maternity, a Poem")

or of an uncomplicated longing for freedom:

outside the kitchen window
tissue-thin sunstrips await your flight
unwind the apron that restricts
the crisp contour of your wings
you too were meant to taste flowers
and experience the sky
(Carol Lee Kelly)

These extracts are a reasonable sampling of the verbal skills of the *Hecate* poets. The passage from Carolyn van Langenberg is an example of the most frequent fault — that of sacrificing form to feeling. The poems' strength lies in their faithfulness to experience. There are few which possess only intellectual or formal craftsmanship.

The following quotation from Merle Thornton's essay on Juliet Mitchell will allow a return to the discussion with which this review opened:

Consciousness raising is the first level concern of the [women's] movement: the central strategy of the movement is to change the world by changing the mind.

(I,ii,79)

Although the editors of *Hecate* might not agree that consciousness raising should have first priority, it seems to have been a part of their aim in starting the journal:

We need consciousness, not just of the kind which enables us to recognize sexism in ourselves and our society, but the consciousness which comes from having a solid basis in theory — of history, literature, art, all aspects of culture — which explains and gives us the personal, moral and ideological strength to take part in revolutionary struggles.

(Editorial, I,i,5)

It is true that most of the items in *Hecate* are capable of raising consciousness in the sense intended by the editors. Nevertheless, there is a distinction to be drawn between contributions having consciousness raising as a primary aim and those whose main purpose is to inform, to examine some problem from a number of viewpoints, or to evoke an emotional response. The editorials themselves fall into the former category as does, for instance, the assessment by Paddy McCorry of the 1974 Status of Women Enquiry (I,i,53–61). McCorry's essay 'raises the consciousness' in that it exposes the merely conciliatory measures of the Queensland government *vis a vis* the expectations of a committed radical. Most of the contributions already discussed in this review belong to the second category. An examination of contents does, in fact, confirm the presence of the two contradictory purposes enunciated at the beginning — whether to indulge in polemics (raise the consciousness) or to contribute to scholarship and literature (in the hope of ensuring acceptance for women's studies and their proper place within the educational system)? Through trying to serve two purposes at once, *Hecate* is in danger of alienating readers — to their loss, since much of the material presented is informative or inspiring.