Victims of Sociology

The Woman Question in Classical Sociological Theory. TERRY R. KANDAL. University Presses of Florida, Gainesville, 1988. xx, 341 pp. Paper, $19.50.

The principal aim of this lively and readable book is to provide an examination of the place of women in the sociological systems of the "classical" theorists. The selection of thinkers the author considers here is generous; it includes the obvious choices—Comte, Spencer, Durkheim, Weber, Parsons—but also many lesser figures sometimes given short shrift in standard treatments of the classics: Mill, Pareto, Michels, de Tocqueville, Mannheim, Simmel, Tönnies, and C. Wright Mills. Terry Kandal performs his task with energy and insight. He effectively analyzes the role women play in the major works of the sociological tradition such as Comte's *System of Positive Polity* (1851), Durkheim's *Suicide* (1897), Spencer's *The Study of Sociology* (1873), and Tönnies's *Community and Society* (1887). But he also tracks down more focused treatments of the "woman question" in little-known essays or books written by these thinkers that have been overlooked previously, for instance, Michels's interesting study, *Sexual Ethics* (1911), and some of the fascinating semijournalistic pieces of Simmel.

Kandal prefaces his analyses with brief histories of the feminist movements in each European nation and the United States. These historical sketches vary widely in quality and depth of analysis, the best being the story of the multivalent German feminist movement, which reflected the whole spectrum of feminist opinion from liberal reformism to revolutionary militance. Kandal appears to want these historical introductions to serve as counterpoints to the predictably conservative, not to say sexist, portraits of woman's "nature" expressed by the classical theorists, in order to demonstrate that women may be less easily pigeonholed in reality than sociological schemata might have it. Kandal sympathizes in these narratives with radical or socialist varieties of feminism and in general is critical of the bourgeois feminist movements that did not formulate root-and-branch critiques of the patriarchal family or capitalist society.

It is this radical variant of feminist theory that informs the greater part of his analysis, summed up in the question he poses at the outset of his concluding chapter: "From a feminist perspective, how good are the classical theorists?" One might reasonably expect that an analysis based on such a question would yield results that would fully satisfy neither historians of sociology seeking explanations for the sexist orientations of classical theory nor sociologists hoping to understand how women figured in the overall system of any single theorist, and in general that expectation will likely be fulfilled.

Despite his own methodological injunction in favor of a more historically informed (and less functionalist) sociology of women, Kandal's own account of the development of sociological theory is not distinguished by a high degree of historical sophistication. He does not make very effective use of either biographical detail or general intellectual context to advance compelling explanations for antifeminist sociological theory, and he is sufficiently uninformed on the history of biology and physiological psychology that he often misrepresents the actual relationship of biological and social causation in the systems of many of the thinkers he discusses. This problem is nowhere more evident than in his many discussions of "functionalism," where the crucial question of whether woman's (and man's) nature is biologically determined or a product of a ramifying division of labor is never clearly addressed.

Sociologists, on the other hand, may conclude that by concentrating so closely on the "woman question" Kandal risks distorting how women and women's social roles articulate with a classic theorist's whole sociological *oeuvre*. This problem might prove to be more troubling in the short analyses Kandal devotes to Comte, Pareto, Michels, and Parsons than in the lengthier sections on Simmel, Spencer, and especially Weber, where his treatment of the overall architecture of their thought is more assured.

Despite these particular caveats, Kandal's survey of the "woman question" responds to a distinct need in the sociological tradition to come to terms with the lamentable inability of the founding fathers of the discipline to meet their own standards for an objective and value-free science of society. Kandal rightly indicts them for their tendency to divide the human and social world into a subjective, emotional, and "feminine" half and an objective, rational, "masculine" half and then to hypostatize the latter into a positivistic sociological method that confirms and justifies the bifurcation.

In his conclusion Kandal argues that sociological theory must renew itself by incorporating Marxist, Freudian, and "historical" perspectives and by employing the empathetic "insider knowledge" method employed by Simmel to create a "sociology that includes both sexes." Such pleas have been made previously on behalf of other victims of positivist social science: the poor, ethnic minorities, and colonized peoples. The merit of Kandal's book is to have exposed decisively the historic male sociological bias against a class of victims that constitutes half the human species.

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An Early Anthropologist

A Stranger in Her Native Land. Alice Fletcher and the American Indians. JOAN MARK. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1989. xx, 428 pp., illus. $35; paper, $16.95. Women in the West.

As an addition to the University of Nebraska Press series on Women in the West, this book has a ready readership in the fields of women's studies and western history, but it deserves a wider audience. It is a revealing, meticulously researched contribution to the history of anthropology, documenting the era dominated by F. W. Putnam, John Wesley Powell, F. W. Hodge, and others whose names as founders of American anthropology were to be overshadowed by those of Franz Boas, Alfred Kroeber, Robert Lowie, and others of their generation. Finally, the book discloses that scientists' all too human foibles not only make fascinating reading but are significant to historical understanding.

Fletcher was born in 1838, but her career as an anthropologist did not begin until she was about 40. Her professional life (she died in 1923) spanned the development of anthropology from an enterprise of largely self-trained archeologists and ethnologists whose home base was in museums into an academic discipline requiring formal degrees.

Mark writes sensitively and in an engaging style about Fletcher's enigmatic, touching, and exasperating personal traits underlying a very publicly oriented life. It was her public life as an anthropologist for which