

women. The articles focus on the various problems faced by Mediterranean women, and specifically examine their status and roles within the private and public domains.

One of the most insightful articles in this respect is Mirjana Morokvasic's article on *Women in Yugoslavia*. Morokvasic argues that despite the fact that the state officially encourages women to work, get an education and keep a career, there still remains a gap between the achievement and recognition of women in public life and the position of women in the private domain. Yugoslavian women can have their own careers, be economically independent as well as socially active; but once they are in the domestic sphere, the man retains authority. Morokvasic argues that, as a consequence of the artificial distinction between the private and the public domain, the position of women in public life has evolved differently from that of women in the family.

Similarly, the article on Turkish women points out that although Ataturk in the 1920s introduced secularization of social life, as well as introducing a series of reforms that were to help women gain rights, very little practical change occurred regarding women's rights. The Civil Code in 1926 granted women certain rights, but at the same time stated that the man was the head of the family. There were many such contradictions, and the

Muslim patriarchal order remained. Likewise, the article on Tunisian women points out that although the Code of Personal Status established in 1956 gives women more rights, there still seems to be a gap between the rights on paper and those granted to women in practice.

The patriarchal order is so inscribed in the Mediterranean culture that women, and specifically older women, are still bound by the traditional stereotypes themselves. In rural Algeria it is not only the men who do not want the girls to receive an education, but also their mothers, grandmothers and aunts. The girls are encouraged to stay home and raise a family. At the same time, there are some changes taking place: more and more young women are questioning the authority that the men in their family have over them. In Algeria, many young women no longer want arranged marriages, and are determined to have a say in choosing their partners for marriage. Likewise, more Corsican women are questioning their traditional role as women and the authority men have over them.

The articles on Palestinian women discuss the important role women play in the fight for nationalism. Palestinian women's movements are strongly associated with the nationalist movement, and are dedicated to two main causes: national liberation and emancipation for women. Although the link between the nationalist

movement and the women's movement is obvious, the demands for feminist developments are not always possible. The women encounter opposition mainly from traditional women's organizations and from the Muslim Brothers. Likewise, in the examples of Lebanese and Algerian women, there is no guarantee that being active in nationalist movements will create emancipation for women.

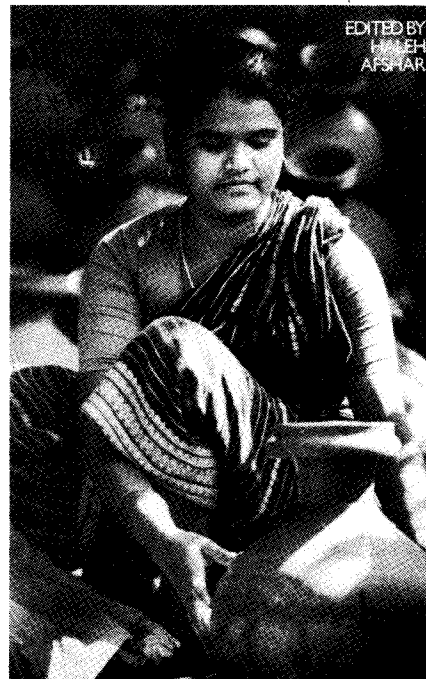
While the book is a welcome addition to the existing literature in the field, it does have some faults. First of all, since the articles cover such diverse cultures, and a variety of languages, one has to wonder what is missed in the translations from the original interviews, to the French, and then finally into English; in some sections of the book, the translation is a little rough. Secondly, the book deserves better editing. The introduction at times is not very clear, and the purpose of these articles being together is not always obvious: why, for example, was there an article on Iran included in a book about Mediterranean women? In some of the descriptive articles, such as the account of a birth in Algeria, an introduction or analysis would have been both welcome and useful. Finally, the book has a few printing errors. In spite of these flaws, the book is a valuable addition to the literature available on Mediterranean women.

## WOMEN, WORK AND IDEOLOGY IN THE THIRD WORLD

Edited by Haleh Afshar. London: Tavistock Publications/Methuen & Co., 1985.

*Anne Louise Currie*

One of the primary methodological innovations of feminist researchers has been an assertion of the validity and centrality of the life experiences of individual women. This perspective arose partly to compensate for the malestream concentration on abstract theoretical issues that have little direct reference to the life experiences of the vast majority. In the latter approach, people are measured and evaluated with reference to how they fit into elaborate theoretical frameworks. The series of articles that make up *Women, Work and Ideology in the Third World* are refreshing in that they explore preconceptions of what women's work does and should constitute, and examine them in light of documented examples of



the conditions of work for women in various countries of the world. Thus, theoretic

cal frameworks are evaluated with reference to documentary descriptions of real life situations. When perceptions and expectations are compared with the results of research and study, the dichotomy between perception and reality becomes evident. These articles underline the 'grain of truth' in the feminist insight that women's work, especially in the Third World, is still, for the most part, 'invisible.'

The articles that make up this collection came out of a series of meetings of the Women and Development study group of the Development Studies Association at the University of Liverpool. They are written in the format of case studies of the conditions, both social and economic, of women's work, in particular regions of the Third World. While they focus on specific problems — land rights or levels of fertility — the underlying agenda of the authors is to try to understand and explain the ways that ideology functions as a tool that shapes and legitimates women's subordinate status. All the articles discuss, though in different ways, how ide-

ologies of male dominance underline not only traditional religious values and social mores, but also the determination of the market value of female labour in a capitalist economy. They try to show how patriarchal beliefs, which are cornerstones of the Islamic and capitalist systems, combine to reinforce women's subordinate position. They raise fundamental questions about the long term impact of economic development policies and whether the movement of women into the paid labour market has had a positive or negative short term effect on women. The implied response after reading the book is that women's position is declining with the coming of industrialization to the countries studied.

The book, which is introduced by its editor Haleh Afshar, is divided into three parts: "Women in Rural Areas," "The Proletarianization of Women," and "Women, Resource, Wage and Industrial Employment." Part One discusses the experience of rural women whose work, though both productive and reproductive, is only recognized as contributing to society by reproducing and nurturing future generations. In her article "Farm and Hearth: Rural Women in a Farming Community," Lina Fruzzetti analyses the impact of mechanized agriculture on the

lives of female farmers in Sudan. She delineates categories of women's labour on these farms. She demonstrates that women's farm work is unacknowledged but nevertheless crucial. Women perform various farm chores during peak times in the production cycle. They initiate and participate in income-generating activities both in the agricultural and nonagricultural sectors. In addition, women's work in the home, which is generally disregarded, is shown to be of central importance in sustaining the rural economy in Sudan. Other articles discuss the role of the colonial state and of capitalist development strategy and how they have shaped the pattern of female land ownership in Malaysia; the position of women in rural Iran; and the effects that extremely high fertility rates have had on rural women in Bangladesh.

Part Two focuses on the lives of women in the wage labour market: from a case study of the increased influence of the cash-based economy in Avatime, Ghana; to the effect that the essentially ideological concept of a family-wage (paid to men) has had on the wage rates of female proletarians in Tanzania. There is also an informative and well-researched article on the ways that patriarchal norms and the need of capital for a docile labour force

has resulted in an "alliance" between Islamic leaders and the managers of industrial capital in Jakarta, West Java.

Part three contains three articles: "Working for Lipstick? Male and female labour in the clothing industry in Morocco;" "Gender, Pay and Skill: manual workers in Brazilian industry;" and "Resources, wages and power: the impact of women's employment on the urban Bengali household." They all attempt to compare the way that women are perceived (that women in the clothing industry in Morocco are working for 'lipstick,' i.e. luxuries) with the reality: that women are forced to work in order to support themselves and their families.

In sum, the articles hold little that is new for anyone who is well-read in the development field. At best, it contains a good standard collection of articles about specific regions and topics. The approach is balanced if not innovative. While they raise questions about the way that various ideologies affect the lives of women and they point the way towards an explanation of the dynamics of ideology and how different ideologies act on one another, they don't live up to their potential. The authors never quite come to terms with the theoretical questions that their studies raise.

## LIBERAZIONE DELLA DONNA: FEMINISM IN ITALY

Lucia Chiavola Birnbaum. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1986.

### *Franca Iacovetta*

Drawing together women from diverse backgrounds into campaigns for constitutional rights, including legal divorce and abortion, and in protest movements against sexual violence and nuclear arms, the contemporary feminist movement in Italy emerged out of the dramatic social and political changes of the sixties. Yet its roots lay far deeper, for Italian feminists drew on a vast history of peasant prechristian beliefs, franciscan and liberation theology, left catholicism, workers' movements, antifascism and the resistance, Gramscian marxism and Italian communism.

Birnbaum, an Italo-American woman, a new left feminist and a historian of beliefs, has written a compelling and provocative account of the history of Italian feminism. In the recent proliferation of studies on women and left politics in

Europe and North America, it stands as a model monograph expertly summarizing important theorists and party positions, documenting major political turning points, and bringing alive for us not only the leading personalities of the movement but the actions of rank-and-file women who spit at fascist soldiers, set up women's cultural centres, sign petitions and march in demonstrations.

Birnbaum begins with the premise that while feminism is global, culture largely determines the particular configuration of a specific woman's movement. For Italy, feminism must be understood as having developed within a country that is the seat both of Roman Catholicism and of the largest communist party (Pci) in the west. Only by exploring the dialectical relationship between the "world of catholicism" and the "world of communism," she notes, can we fully grasp the major shifts and turns in Italy's women's movement and its particular contemporary vision of a libertarian, self-managed socialist society marked by a diversity of interpretation and lifestyle and a respect for individual conscience. Italian feminism, she concludes, is both ancient and forward-looking in that its vision is grounded in lessons

learned from the past while it projects a new society in which abuse and violence, as well as rigid politics, give way to "respect for the beauty and diversity of human life."

It is also marked by an identification with marginalized "others" — the lumpenproletariat (Southern peasants in Northern industrial slums) and Jews, and later, nuns, lesbians and black migrant women. The lasting vitality of contemporary feminism is related to having tapped "subterranean" as well as rational beliefs. As Birnbaum writes, "Figures on the sash of this ancient and advanced feminism fuse into one another: the primordial earth mothers Graeco-Roman goddesses, early judeo-christian women, popular madonnas, familiar saints, persecuted witches and healers, peasant godmothers, peasant women socialists, feminist socialists, women marxists, antifascist women partisans — and contemporary feminists, who are a galaxy of different women from catholic matrons and housewives to prostitutes, lesbians, nuns, and others."

Employing Sicily as a quasi-case study, Birnbaum's early chapters deal with the historical relationship between the two worlds of catholicism and communism.