

paintings produced by men, but still exposes truths about women that are lodged within artworks by Rembrandt, da Vinci, and Picasso. Though Cixous has been criticized for her frequent references to male authors and artists, these essays remain faithful to the *écriture féminine* Cixous was first to articulate.

From these meditations on painting, we move forward towards the five essays assembled in "Ringing in the feminine hour." Here, Cixous draws texts close in order that they might not get away. Inevitably though, as Cixous knows, these texts never quite arrive. This is the quality Cixous loves as well as the quintessential quality of love itself Cixous repeats throughout these essays that love is "[T]he letter that never gets there at our time, that gets there at some foreign hour." Lovingly, she reaches down towards the alterity that awaits us from the face of the other: father, book, and in one especially remarkable essay, even the wolf.

In the essay "Love of the wolf," Cixous shows us the strife and love between the lamb and the wolf in a fast-paced journey through the landscapes of Lispector, Tsvetaeva, Pushkin, and Pougatchov and back to our earliest recollections of the children's version of *Little Red Riding Hood*. She evinces the complications involved in love relations, here understood as modeling an economy of the gift rather than the limited economy that encases women in an exchange ruled by a desire for death.

Writing one's own body becomes the theme of the third section. Here, we uncover a way of escaping the problem of essentialism. In order to avoid reductionist explanations of the nature of sexual and gender difference, feminists remain cautious about naming bodies feminine and/or natural. Cixous paints the landscape of her own origins in Algeria and the problems over nationality that play themselves out on the bodies of all citizens. Ultimately, these essays avoid essentialism yet speak about the feminine body, by reserv-

ing theory for a time when writing from out of the body has been completed.

Each section of this collection folds in upon the other, holding us close to themes that repeat and speak to each other. In the fourth section, we confront the flesh of the non-human we first encountered in Rembrandt's painting of the slaughtered ox at the start of the book. This section that contains philosophy in its title belies Cixous's earlier description of the philosopher as the once wild man of the agile feet who puts his shoes on. The philosopher stands behind closed doors that used to open onto more texts that were once incapable of capture. Philosophers are text-catchers. That this need not be the case tempts Cixous, whose verbal connection with the non-human, even the most non-human, the divine, allows for the possibility that philosophy might shake off those tight shoes once more and speak of what Cixous calls "the origin of my philosophy." This origin embodies the principle, forgotten by many text-catchers, that the body comes forth first, then writing, and only then, theory.

Stigmata offers scholars in numerous fields—including philosophy, literary criticism, feminist theory, and environmentalism—Cixous's unique meditations on how we can remain open to the other in our current historical situation without performing either theoretical or physical violence upon the body of the other.

SACRIFICED LIVES: KRISTEVA ON WOMEN AND VIOLENCE

Martha J. Reineke. Indianapolis:
Indiana University Press, 1997.

BY AIDAN BAKER

A man comes home from a hard day

at the office. His dog greets him at the door. He kicks it. His wife tells him not to be mean to the dog. So he kicks his wife....

A common enough chain of events: Someone has a "bad day" and his feelings of powerlessness manifest in a display of violence against those physically less powerful. Why this is so is one of the central questions of *Sacrificed Lives*. Not so much the psychological patterns but the cultural and sociological; why is the female body so often the victim of this "substitutionary violence," as Reineke terms it, and why do women "accept" the brunt of this violence?

Reineke invokes Julia Kristeva's notion of sacrificial theory in order to answer this. This is not sacrifice in the classical sense of appeasing the gods, but the idea of sacrifice as a means of maintaining order in society. Women, through their "death-work" (Kristeva's term for bearing and dealing with loss), not only maintain the order of society but are also, paradoxically, it seems, the focus of the violence which keeps chaos at bay. To quote:

When the maternal body is marked in culture as *the* defining border of the intertextual practices that comprise social existence, the reproaches, threats, and fears which characterize this exercise make this body-border a site of contestation.

This is an intriguing and difficult idea and *Sacrificed Lives* is an intriguing and difficult book. Being unfamiliar with Kristeva's work, I initially welcomed Reineke's introduction and contextualization of Kristeva's ideas which make up the first section of the book. However, couched as it was in psychoanalytical terminology and Kristeva's own jargon (such as the aforementioned "death-work"), and written in a very formal style, I found it difficult reading. Moreover—and this applies to

the entire work—I found it difficult to determine what Reineke was actually claiming herself, as she is constantly referring to others; René Girard, Jacques Lacan, for example, as well as Kristeva. I understand Reineke is trying to contextualize Kristeva's theories, but what Reineke's own theories are is unclear.

I found myself looking forward to the second part of the book, which promised an application of Kristeva/Reineke's sacrificial theory to subjects with which I have more familiarity; the asceticism of the medieval mystics, the thirteenth- to sixteenth-century witch-hunts, and to modern feminism. However, while this section of the book was more interesting (or at least more accessible), I found myself disappointed as Reineke simply demonstrated how these women fit into the paradigm of sacrificial theory. Admittedly, these three topics are quite broad and could easily warrant a book each, but a little more analysis beyond mere pattern-placement would have been appreciated.

In her discussion of the medieval mystics, Reineke states:

Crucified in the contradictions they embodied, the faith of these holy women joined utter darkness and blinding light, total fulfillment and absolute emptiness.

Obviously, Reineke is cognizant that paradox goes hand-in-hand with the quest for total fulfillment—and perhaps paradox is a means to self-fulfillment. But it is certainly not easy to embrace paradox. And Reineke claims to end *Sacrificed Lives* on an “affirming note,” yet this affirming note seems as vague and as contradictory as the practices of the medieval mystics:

In invoking an ethic of uncanny strangeness, we yet might find ourselves more able to reside as strangers among strangers and

to do so less violently.

This is Reineke's solution to the problem of female-directed violence; women need to embrace their otherness, embrace “the stranger who is always already myself,” in order to actualize themselves, in order to cease being sacrificial commodities. But how does one embrace “uncanny strangeness?” Does such an abstract phrase even have a concrete reality? Does this “solution” really provide any answers? As a conclusion, this is rather vague. Despite the problems and difficulties I may have had with the rest of the book, it was interesting and thought-provoking. But the intangibility of the conclusion leaves me, as a reader, dissatisfied. A dissatisfaction which tempers my appreciation for all of *Sacrificed Lives*.

ECOFEMINISM: WOMEN, CULTURE, NATURE

Karen J. Warren, ed. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997.

BY NADIA STUEWER

Ecofeminism makes connections between the oppression of people—women, people of colour, and other marginalized groups—and the oppression of nature by the patriarchal, hierarchical structures of societies around the globe. It enriches both feminist thought and environmental thought, asserting that both need to understand their fundamental connections to be effective. Just as there is no one feminism, there is no one ecofeminism, and the essays in this collection demonstrate ecofeminism's diversity, addressing many different facets of ecofeminism from

a multidisciplinary perspective, both descriptive and critical.

This is a challenging book to review, as it contains 25 essays, each addressing different aspects of this rich and developing philosophy that is still very much being defined. It is impossible to do it justice in this space, but whether you approach ecofeminism from an ecological or feminist perspective, local or global, philosophical or practical, it has something to offer you. It exemplifies ecofeminism in its celebration of diversity. These 25 different takes on ecofeminism do not develop a comprehensive definitive work; rather they create a holistic picture; as Warren says, the book offers a “plethora of perspectives on ecofeminist theory and practice.”

These essays are grouped into three sections. “Taking Empirical Data Seriously” examines examples of the issues in women's lives which have sparked ecofeminism as a grassroots, women-initiated international movement and demonstrates the importance of connecting these grassroots issues with ecofeminist theory. In section two, “Interdisciplinary Perspectives,” researchers and scholars from across the disciplines examine the relevance of ecofeminism to their work. Section three, “Philosophical Perspectives,” presents the work of philosophers on a wide range of issues relating to mainstream thought, environmental ethics, and Kant and Wittgenstein.

The authors examine ecofeminism in our daily lives: leisure, work, children, weeding; across the disciplines: literary criticism, scientific ecology, chemical engineering, philosophy; they address the social issues of our time: peace, war, racism, ageism and other “isms;” development issues; indigenous peoples in North and South America. Common environmental issues such as the pollution of our water and air are given new dimensions when examined from an ecofeminist perspective. Although this volume has a strong American focus, stories and examples are used