

stories are the content. So rather than reading about women's struggle for equality from the top down, we read about it from the bottom up. Here we discover the leading edge of religious scholarship. The only disappointment was that the stories by Church of England and Catholic writers echo those of our sisters in Canada and America. While the Anglican Church in Canada and Australia have stepped ahead of the English and ordained women, these ordained women still have to cope with protests and blocks. Oddly enough, Catholic women are not pushing for women to be ordained the way many are in North America. In some respects these churches are still tied to their home base in England or Rome and are not yet indigenous. The Uniting Church, native to Australia, was formed in 1977 and has ordained women since its founding. Over all, this book is worth reading for an insight into current Christian struggle for women in Australia and New Zealand.

Sisters in Spirit is another collection of essays, but by Mormon women about Mormon women. Edited by Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson, these essays are the culmination of monthly breakfast meetings of modern day Mormon women struggling to be faithful and feminist. It begins by establishing the distinctions of Mormonism from mainline Christian churches. Mormon women have suffered dearly. The basic tenet that distinguishes

Mormons from Christians is the rejection of the doctrine of original sin (humanity fell out of paradise by disobeying God's commands). Now while this alternative theology implies that no one is technically to blame for human sin, women in Mormonism are saddled with the curse of Eve. Christ redeemed Adam, but Eve's status remains troublesome. This contradiction creates a major problem for contemporary Mormon women who feel the need to reform their temple. They realized that there was merit in the ERA, yet their church publicly condemned it. These essays provide a fascinating ground-breaking study of Mormon history in America. One essay describes women's roles as healers, a vocation that today is controlled exclusively by men. These essays are the kind that can only be written from within. And for that reason the book also has its limitations. I hoped that these women would go one step farther and really challenge the system that oppresses them rather than just naming it. I was also surprised that none of these women saw that they were suffering or could link that suffering with that of Christ.

Martha Long Ice made an extensive study of 17 clergy women from 12 denominations before writing *Clergy Women and their Worldviews*. She let the women tell stories about their childhood, call to ministry, their work, ethics, theology and worldviews within a sociological construct. Ice recognizes that her small group

by no means provides the means of a comprehensive study of women clergy. What they do have in common is their gender, and that they are all Americans. They are women who struggle to maintain their integrative theology within a patriarchal culture. In other words, their ethics and theological views surface in practice and not just at a head-level. They are not feminists, yet they clearly are aware that their womanly gifts for ministry do distinguish them from male clergy. They all like being both women and clergy. What does that say about their worldviews?

Simply by their presence they are a challenge to the norm. I wish Ice had said this. As it is she quotes Thomas Kuhn's work on worldviews at length, and other male scholars on the subject, with little reference to women's sources.

I had some real difficulties with this work. I was inundated with huge quotes that I personally find visually annoying as much as disruptive to the narrative. Ice does not challenge the male definitions of reality, but uses standard sociological language and models. Ironically, the women clergy in her study are pioneers, who see their survival in male terms, although they know they have uniquely female gifts for ministry.

These three books provide a rare look at women on the edge of their traditions, and are of particular interest to those struggling with traditional western religious values and assumptions.

THE CHALICE AND THE BLADE: Our History, Our Future

Riane Eisler. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987.

Hoke Holcomb

Riane Eisler is a woman with a message, and she delivers it with passion and verve in this synthesis of several areas of scholarship. Her message is that within our history there have been long periods when cultures functioned as a partnership of members with an ethic of cooperation, nurturing, and support; cultures of the chalice. Over a period of several millennia, these cultures were replaced by invading tribes that operated from a basis of male dominance, power and fear; cultures

of the blade. She believes that we have reached a point where we can shape our future by reestablishing partnership cultures.

To establish her case, Ms Eisler draws from several areas that are sociological in nature, utilizes current scientific work in the dynamics of change, and introduces her own terminology and cultural transformation theory. Her work would, indeed, be a grand synthesis if she were consistently rigorous in her treatment of these diverse elements, but she is not. Most of the material is well presented, some is even uplifting, but she falls short of some of her more scholarly goals.

Her strongest suit is the summary she gives of several key studies in archeology. She presents a convincing case that for several millennia BCE there was "a long period of peace and prosperity when ... all the basic technologies on which

civilization is built were developed in societies that were not male dominated, violent, and hierarchic."

Her foci in the archaeological portion of the work are the cities of Hacilar and Catal Huyuk in what is modern day Turkey, areas in central and southern Europe that are referred to as the Old European culture, and excavations of Minoan sites in Crete. These cultures flourished at different times in the period between about 7,000 BCE and 3,000 BCE. They were primarily Neolithic and agrarian societies, although the Minoan culture extended into the Bronze Age. The subjects of these archaeological studies are brought to life as she describes the activities in cities made up of hundreds and in some cases thousands of people working in harmony.

She argues that these cultures "had a well developed religious system that in-

cluded the worship of goddesses as the primary deities." Associated with this religion of the goddess was a culture characterized by "qualities such as caring, compassion, and nonviolence." There is evidence of division of labour, but not of male dominance. She writes that "there is no evidence of women associated with men in inferior positions," and that "warfare is conspicuous by its absence." Finally, she proposes that "social relations are primarily based on the principle of linking rather than ranking."

After centuries of peace and stability there "appeared on the prehistoric horizon invaders from the peripheral areas of our globe who ushered in a very different form of social organization." After several waves of invasions, these agrarian, partnership societies began to undergo rapid change and the culture in all three areas was replaced by "the warlike, hierarchical, male dominated social structure that is still prevalent."

After establishing the case for the existence of the partnership societies, Eisler makes the following observation:

Yet even when confronted with the authority of new research, with new archeology, and the corroboration from social science, this truly huge block of new knowledge about millennia of human history so contradicts all we have been taught that its hold on our minds is like

a message written in sand.

She uses the central portion of the book to explain why our new knowledge of these early, peaceful societies is so difficult to retain.

She starts by pointing out that there are innumerable traces of the earlier culture in written history, which are not identified as such. For example, she argues that "the story of Cain and Abel in part reflects the actual confrontation of a pastoral people (symbolized by Abel's offering of his slaughtered sheep) and an agrarian people (symbolized by Cain's offering of 'the fruits of the ground') rejected by the pastoral god Jehovah."

Eisler then shows how all aspects of the cultures of dominance and force became woven into the entire social fabric, for example, the way a deity is originally viewed as an all powerful woman, then, over a period of time, her husband or son gradually becomes more powerful, and eventually only a remnant, such as the Madonna, is left of the original deity.

Throughout history there were resurgences of the partnership ethic only to be suppressed or co-opted by the prevailing culture. Her treatment of the message of Jesus, and the subsequent alteration of his basic message by a hierarchical church, is particularly strong.

It is difficult to know if *The Chalice and The Blade* should be viewed as a populari-

zation of current research or a scholarly work. Eisler seems to lean toward the latter, and viewed this way the book has several shortcomings.

Archaeological research that does not support her case tends to be minimized and she over-interprets results that do. She also introduces a lot of unnecessary terminology. Her claim that work done in the fields of physics, chemistry, and biology on the dynamics of change is applicable to her more general cultural interpretations is not substantiated in the few pages she gives to this subject.

One can go to other works for a more scholarly approach. Two books that cover much of the same material are: *Beyond Power: On Women, Men and Morals* by Marilyn French (Summit Books, New York, 1985), and *The Creation of Patriarchy*, by Gerda Lerner (Oxford University Press, New York, 1986).

The Chalice and the Blade is better viewed as a popularization of current research and a rallying cry for much-needed change. In this light it is a very positive work. It contains a good summation of evidence that there have been partnership societies in the past, and convincing arguments that our knowledge of these societies and attempts to return to them have been systematically and sometimes invisibly suppressed; and it offers hope that we can take an active part in making decisions for a better future.

THE WOMEN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH: Hitchcock and Feminist Theory

Tania Modleski. New York: Methuen, 1988.

Kay Armatage

Tania Modleski teaches film and literature at the University of Southern California. Her first book, *Loving With A Vengeance*, was the first really thorough treatment of popular romance novels utilizing semiotic, psychoanalytic, structuralist, and feminist methodologies. Her second, *Studies in Entertainment*, was a collection of articles by some of the most original figures on the feminist cultural theory scene. It charted up to the minute the most currently provocative issues in

feminist theory, notably a cluster about the feminine body: the carnival monster body (after Baudrillard); the perils of the postmodern body for feminism; the subversive meanings of the shrieking body of punk fashion; and the potential subversion of fashionable sartorial systems through an invocation of the masochistic male body and a self-conscious masquerade of the feminine body through vintage dressing.

This particular constellation, all related more than tangentially to the theory of the masquerade, issues in a virtually unbroken trajectory from a dual source in Claire Johnston's work on femininity and the masquerade, and Laura Mulvey's work on the gaze and the gendered spectator, from nearly fifteen years ago.

The masquerade as a metaphor for the female spectator position, articulated some years later by Mary Ann Doane, joined Mulvey's and Johnston's work through a

breath-takingly literal reading of Freud's model of the differences in the ways that the two sexes acquire the capacity for fetishization or the mastery of knowledge. In Doane's reading, the female subject is doomed to a masochistic overidentification with the body — a closeness to the body, desire and lack — because she cannot reproduce the 'distance' between self and other which is the prerequisite for the (male) capacity for sadistic mastery. The masquerade, then, is the way out for the female subject, and in later treatments of the notion, such as those found in Modleski's *Studies in Entertainment*, it would be theorized as the means by which, through an excessive display of conventional feminine signifiers, the cultural constructions of femininity could be parodically subverted.

Along the way, as this argument was formulated, the satellites in the orbit came to veer further and further from Mulvey's