

POWERLESSNESS INTO POWER: INTERSECTING GENDER, RACE AND REGION

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In her 1980 review of the work of Black feminist critics Deborah E. McDowell posed a question concerning the methodology of feminist criticism which was two-fold in nature: first she asked if white feminist critics would need “a different set of critical tools when studying Black women writers”; and secondly, if white women’s theories were “predicated upon culturally specific values and assumptions”¹. While a revision of the hermeneutics of both black and white feminist criticism reveals little difference in the “critical tools” employed², the implications of the second question are much more far-reaching and fundamental than at first meets the eye. Although certain feminist thinkers like Elizabeth Janeway have recognized the importance of “the existence of a structure of beliefs on which judgements can be based” because “without a doctrinal system there can be no positive statements”³, defining these values is an elusive question, sometimes relegated to more of a “feeling” than an actual statement of principle. Moreover, just as recent feminist studies in linguistics have revealed that the way women speak is not only determined by their sex, but also by their ethnic origin and their geography⁴, so the value system upon which women may base their critical assumptions is not necessarily gender specific.

Although Janeway recognizes the need for defining a “doctrinal system” as she puts it, her assumption is that it must be newly formulated:

There is an urge to *create* a new set of values that will suit the lives and purposes of women as seen by women: a system of authentic emotional relations and interconnected beliefs drawn from lived experience that will develop the force of social myth, and thus explain the workings of the world and direct appropriate behavior⁵.

To the contrary, Annis Pratt's *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction* documents a tradition of women whose basic value system has not altered even as, in the face of conquering male structure, it was driven "underground". She draws striking links between the rites represented by the Demeter/Kore and Ishtar/Tammuz archetypes, the feminine and androgynous elements in the Celtic grail legends, and the witch cult in Western Europe and women's fiction:

All three archetypal repositories express the desire of women for erotic autonomy, meaningful social roles, and celebration of femininity, which we have seen emerge in women's fiction as that cluster of values constituting totality of self. The rise of the novel, notes Carolyn Heilbrun, 'coincided with the denigration of women among the social classes that were its public'. Heilbrun is referring to the new wave of repression during the rise of the industrial era, ironically converse to its progressive technological advances. The tension between men and women in modern Western history...creates the discrepancy between expectations and reality underlying women's fiction. Thus, it became necessary, Heilbrun believes, 'that the feminine impulse seize upon some new and hitherto unknown outlet. No doubt this is an oversimplification; it is perhaps sufficient to say that the rise of power of the novel and the beginning of the most absolute fall in the power of woman occurred at the same time'. As Laurence Stone has suggested, the increasing volume of novels by women after the eighteenth century attests to rebellion against this new wave of patriarchal repression. The 'hitherto unknown outlet' of prose fiction, in my hypothesis, drew upon archetypal narratives that had been known to women since ancient times.

I believe that the novel performs the same role in women's lives as do the Eleusinian, dying-god, and witchcraft rituals—a restoration through remembering, crucial to our survival⁶.

In Pratt's view, then, women's fiction has become the more modern repository of values which were continually assaulted by the patriarchy once Zeus and company smashed their way across the continent, subjugating peoples whose principal deity was female. Hence the striking parallel in many mythologies of the ravishing (or attempt, anyway) of a local goddess by a god of the invading Achaeans, "a highly militarized, patriarchally structured culture" (Zeus and Europa, Apollo and Daphne, Alpheus and Arethusa, Pan and Syrinx, etc.), setting up a tension between "what Apollo intends and Daphne is willing to accept, between forces demanding our submissions and our rebellious assertions of personhood, (which) characterized far too much of our fiction to be incidental"⁸.

Though Pratt defends and documents many archetypes, the main characteristics which appear over and over in the works studied reveal values which are relegated to the female half of humanity: the association with Eros instead of Logos, intuition over objectivity; the close association with nature and the knowledge of natural "magic" ("the beloved green world providing a bridge to the

wider universe⁹); spirituality, the feeling of oneness with the universe¹⁰; the assumption of the role of giver and a life-long connectedness with others (to such a point that “a woman aspiring to selfhood is by definition selfish, deviating from the norms of subservience to the dominant gender”¹¹); aspiring to transcend gender to personhood and the physical and psychological frustrations that quest implies yet basically optimistic with a faith that one individual’s personal contribution makes a difference, and hopeful for change, based on a belief that things do not have to be as they are.

The subjugation of this value system consequently gave rise to a conflict born of restrictions imposed by a male-oriented culture and the rebelliousness of personal development. Eros is a case in point. An integral part of a woman’s psyche, Eros is an important key to her growth into adulthood. Both psychologically (her connectedness with others) and biologically (“sexuality is heightened for a woman around ovulation”, an obvious means of assuring the continuation of the species¹²), Eros is a driving force in a woman’s life and indeed the image of woman for man represents as much. Yet in her position as male property, a woman’s use of, indeed her very recognition of, her own sexuality is condemned and controlled by the patriarchy. Another example is woman’s “spirituality”. A woman’s “intuition” is publically derided yet secretly respected; somehow more in tune with nature and natural rhythms, she is often aware of things that escape the more objective mind. Her “way with plants and animals” is looked upon with benign eyes—until she knows too much, in which case she is marked by the patriarchy as a social deviant—a witch. Thus, a woman must learn to view herself through two lenses: what she is to herself and what she is to man.

Yet when compared with other culturally dominated factions of society, these characteristics begin to look not so much as if they pertained to a division in gender as to a division between the powerful and the powerless, power being defined in terms of physical or commercial force. “Double-consciousness”, a term which aptly describes the mental state of women exemplified above, was first coined by W.E.B. Dubois in *Souls of Black Folk* to describe the peculiar awareness which Black people must acquire in order to survive in a racist society—

...born with a veil and gifted with a second sight in this American world, a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels this twoness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder¹³.

—and is considered by Mary Helen Washington to be “closely akin” to the theme of the “divided self” found in women’s literature¹⁴. Barbara Johnson reiterates the point when she writes that

if ‘unification and simplification’ is the privilege and province of the male, it is also, in America, the privilege and province of the white. If the woman’s voice, to be authentic, must incorporate and articulate division and self-difference, so, too, has Afro-American literature always had to assume its double-voicedness¹⁵.

Elsewhere in the same article she is adamant: “unification and simplification are fantasies of *domination*, not understanding” (my emphasis)¹⁶.

Another comparison of Blacks and women in the literary terrain that is even more striking is the one Toni Morrison makes with respect to the rise of the novel in importance as a literary genre, though she gives Heilbrun’s version a new twist:

...it seems to me that the novel is needed by African-America now in a way that it was not needed before — and it is following along the lines of the function of novels everywhere. We don’t live in places where we can hear those stories anymore; parents don’t sit around and tell their children those classical, mythological archetypal stories that we heard years ago. But new information has got to get out, and there are several ways to do it. One is in the novel. I regard it as a way to accomplish certain very strong functions—one being the one I just described¹⁷.

The “information” that Black people get, according to Morrison, from “those classical, mythological archetypal stories” clearly coincides with Pratt’s concept of values found in the novel. For Morrison, then, the importance of the Afro-American novel has coincided with the divorce of a race from its roots in communal living, much as women in Pratt’s view were ousted from their primal role in society and relegated to a strictly domestic domain, out of touch with the community at large.

The comparison is remarkable not only on a social level but extends even unto the conceptualization of life and the universe itself. “Africa,” writes Vincent Harding, “is an absolute challenge to the white Western world. Indeed, it claims to be mother and shaper of human society. It claims to have insight toward the nature of human existence that is far more authentic than that which has been found in the truncated experience of the white Western world.”¹⁸ W.W. Nobles describes the African ethos as being “survival of the tribe” and “oneness with nature”. The cultural values associated with this world view are cooperation, interdependence and collective responsibility. In contrast, the Euro-American ethos emphasizes the “survival of the fittest” and “control over nature”. The cultural values associated with this world view are “competition”, “individualism”, and “independence”.¹⁹ The Afro-American view of the world, according to Rudine Sims, “emphasizes (1)

the harmony between things spiritual and material, (2) the hierarchical nature and cyclical rhythm of the universe, and (3) the harmony of opposites, the idea that ‘opposites’ such as the spiritual and the material are interdependent forces, both of which are necessary to existence.”²⁰

Clearly this echoes the plaint of women who protest the artificial division of human nature into male and female. Yet this time the protest is voiced from the point of view of a Western/African dichotomy. (Interestingly, in 1883, Alexander Crummel declared in his speech before the “Freedman’s Aid Society” that “Africa is a woman. Her races are feminine.”²¹) Nawal El Saadawi takes the analogy one step further when she states that “this split between the mind and body, the master and the slave, female and male, (is) reflected in the separation between science and art.”²²

Luisah Teish poses the comparison of Western Christian belief with African and Voodoo belief (shunted aside and feared by the white Western patriarchy in much the same way as the “witchcraft rituals” were) in the same terms of unity/disunity of man with the universe:

In Christian belief all good is posited in God and all evil in the Devil. Day is good and night is evil. Man is good and woman is evil. This western myopia is responsible for much of the insanity in our culture. We are out of sync with nature. We have placed morning in the middle of the night instead of at sunrise, put the New Year in the middle of winter instead of in spring, and have divided the beings of the Earth into rigid categories instead of recognizing our union and kinship as Her children.²³

The validity of subjectivity is another common point in the philosophy of Black people and women in general. James Baldwin has said that “although we do not wholly believe it yet, the interior life is a real life and the intangible dreams of people have a tangible effect upon the world.”²⁴ Josephine Donovan recognizes “interesting similarities” between Black knowledge and women’s knowledge²⁵. The importance of intuition as a way to knowledge is emphasized by Leopold Senghor in his essay on “African-Negro Aesthetics”

(The) Negro is (not)...devoid of reason...But his reason is not discursive; it is synthetic. It is not antagonistic, but sympathetic. This is another path to knowledge. Negro reason does not impoverish things. It does not mold them into rigid categories, eliminating the juices and the sap; it flows into the arteries of things...White reason is analytical through use. Negro reason is intuitive through participation.²⁶

— an intuition that not so suspiciously reflects that normally credited to women, considering the dichotomy of dominant/dominated proposed here. Indeed, Theodore Tilton, the editor of the New York *Independent*, made the same observation in a speech he gave at Cooper Institute in New York in 1863:

In all the intellectual activities which take their strange quickening from the moral faculties which we call instincts, intuitions, the negro is superior to the white man equal to the white woman. It is sometimes said...that the negro race is the feminine race of the world. This is not only because of his social and affectionate nature, but because he possesses that strange moral instinctive insight that belongs more to women than to men.²⁷

In the case of both white women and Black people, intuition has been a necessary survival tactic.

The insistence of the dominant culture on considering these values as inferior has been understood by James A. Snead as a simple power play based on an equivocal concept of culture, that is, “the persistent connection of physical and territorial suppression, attachment and extermination with cultural inadequacy.”²⁸ Yet, tellingly, Snead concludes that

the outstanding fact of late twentieth-century European culture is its ongoing reconciliation with black culture. The mystery may be that it took so long to discern the elements of black culture already there in *latent form*, and to realize that the separation between the cultures was perhaps all along *not one of nature, but one of force*. (my emphasis)²⁹

Just as Anna Julia Cooper wrote in *A Voice from the South* (1892)³⁰ of the necessity of reconciling and formenting the “masculine” and the “feminine” elements in each individual (“cultural androgyny” in modern feminist jargon), so Snead speaks of the cultural reconciliation of value systems divorced by force and not by nature.

This being so, it is now convenient to expropriate the tetrapolar graph Barbara Johnson sets out in order to illustrate the nonentity of the Black woman not only in the language (“women” is synonymous with “white women” while “Blacks” is synonymous with “Black men”³¹), but also in social considerations (“The black woman is both invisible and ubiquitous: never seen in her own right but forever appropriated by the others for their own ends.”³²):

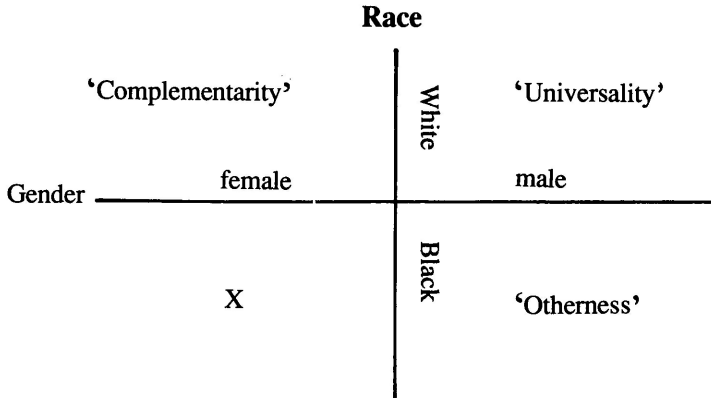


Diagram 1

However, if reinterpreted with the intention of localizing the greatest manifestation of “suppressed values”, it is precisely because of her condition of double jeopardy, the double oppression of race and sex, that the Black woman becomes “cultural receptor” par excellence. It is therefore logical to infer that the most intensive literary reflection of values rejected by the white Western patriarchy would come together in the work of a Black female writer, and it is here in Johnson’s “X” that we find the system of beliefs feminists believe are necessary to create a more natural, humane society at once in touch with individuals and with the universe at large. Here, in effect, resides the meaning of Alice Walker’s term “womanism”, a term she has coined from Black culture to reflect a specific set of cultural assumptions based on her condition as both black and female.

Nonetheless, there is another important element which cannot be ignored if a scholarly study of values in literature is to be honest—regionalism. Although the prevailing tendency is to classify writers into neat cubbyholes, this classification is overly strained when regionalism is complicated by race and gender. In the chapter on “Southern Fiction” in the *Harvard Guide to Contemporary American Writing*, Lewis P. Simpson relegates Black writers to the chapter on Black Literature in a footnote³³. Since of the five “highly talented” contemporary Black novelists which Nathan A. Scott mentions in his chapter (Paule Marshall, Al Young, Kristen Hunter, Toni Morrison, and Alice Walker) four are women, the actual discussion of Black women writers has been left to Elizabeth Janeway in “Women’s Literature”. Janeway ably integrates these authors into a theory of women’s literature yet makes little or no attempt to link any of these women to regionalist or even Black schools of literature, though, granted, space was obviously a primary factor in her brief overviews. (Nonetheless, had Walker’s *Meridian* not been specifically described as Black, there would be nothing in Janeway’s critical review that revealed the author’s race or her birthright.) However, a study of the implications of regionalism

reveals considerations which serve to complement the scheme set up heretofore in the present discussion.

Only one slender but highly valuable critical work has attempted to integrate Black novelists into the Southern literary tradition, yet Ladell Payne's astute analysis of the factors which make a writer, black or white, Southern have far-reaching implications for a comprehensive analysis of American literature:

Southern writers, black and white, utilize common sources and illustrate *common values*. Both literatures clearly draw upon a folk culture, grow out of evangelical Protestantism, and rely on oral narrative devices: both literatures characteristically emphasize a sense of locus, stress the importance of family, are concerned about the relationship between man and history and dwell on an individual's search for identity at a time of social chaos; finally, at their best, both literatures deal honestly with black-white relationships³⁴.

Although in 1975, Addison Galye, Jr., theorized on the "southern legacy,...a set of values which taught a people to endure with dignity"³⁵, he found this heritage in only *some* Black authors—

One turns to the works of Killens and Gaines, Alice Walker and William Kelley for partial answers. Visions of a moral universe are still found in their works, of a place where people retain moral imperatives...They possessed a love for life, a fidelity to the sanctity of the human spirit, a belief in the elevation of the human condition³⁶.

— yet it is clear not only from Payne's analysis but also in reading critical evaluation such as that contained in Peter Bruck and Wolfgang Karrer's *The Afro-American Novel Since 1960* that the Southern Black writer carries a structure of beliefs easily recognizable to those of a common heritage³⁷.

Moreover, some writers like Alice Walker have even written specifically on the values absorbed from their native region. In "The Black Writer and the Southern Experience" Walker speaks of a sense of community which the Black Southern writer "inherits as a natural right"³⁸, while for Cleanth Brooks the sense of community is not defined by race but by geography, finding it "most notable" in the South.³⁹ On the other hand, Toni Morrison (birthplace: Loraine, Ohio) defines community as a part of her own upbringing:

...And there was this life-giving, very, very strong sustenance that people got from the neighborhood...If they were sick, other people took care of them; if they needed something to eat, other people took care of them; if they were mad, other people provided a small space for them, or related to their madness or tried to find out the limits of their madness...

They also meddled in your lives a lot. They felt that you belonged to them. And every woman on the street could raise everybody's child, and tell you exactly what to do and you felt that connection with those people and they felt it with you.⁴⁰

Is not this sense of community, however, another expression of the "connectedness with others" (indeed, Morrison has used the word "connection" specifically, while Walker calls it "solidarity"⁴¹) that women find indispensable to their own value system?

The importance of the individual and his power to act in the face of overwhelming and debilitating social circumstances as opposed to faith in "movements" or political parties and defeatism before omnipresent oppression (be it racist or sexist) is not only found in Walker⁴², Charles Chesnutt⁴³, and innumerable other Black writers, it is integral to the vision of William Faulkner, Eudora Welty, Flannery O'Connor and many other Southern literary giants, and therefore qualifies as "Southern". Yet again the idea of "personal responsibility" (today's "personal politics") has long been echoed by women who have always focused on the individual. George Eliot, for example, repeatedly admonished that we are all responsible for our own acts even when society gives us many excuses for individual insufficiency.⁴⁴

Larry Neal writes of Zora Neale Hurston's "compassionate understanding of Southern black life": "the nature of love, the search for personal freedom, the clash between spiritual and material aspiration, the quest for more than a parochial range of life experience."⁴⁵ In addition, the Southern landscape so present in its literature is typically agrarian with an emphasis on close contact with nature, a marked contrast with the urban North. Writes Alice Walker,

Perhaps my Northern brothers will not believe me when I say there is a great deal of positive material I can draw from my 'underprivileged' background. But they have never lived, as I have, at the end of a long road in a house that was faced by the edge of the world on one side and nobody for miles on the other. They have never experienced the magnificent quiet of a summer day when the heat is so intense and one is so very thirsty, as one moves across the dusty cotton fields, that one learns forever that water is the essence of all life. In the cities it cannot be so clear to one that he is a creature of the earth, feeling the soil between the toes, smelling the dust thrown up by the rain, loving the earth so much that one longs to taste it and sometimes does.⁴⁶

Not only the imagery but the "feeling" Walker manages to convey are remarkably similar to those passages of Richard Wright and Thomas Wolfe that Payne so ably compares in his study.⁴⁷ So when Walker speaks of "a compassion for the earth, a trust in humanity beyond our knowledge of evil, and an abiding love

of justice,”⁴⁸ can one honestly distinguish between what is Black, what is womanist, what is Southern? Indubitably the relationship of these value systems is an undercurrent more profound than superficial.

When Gayle speculates on what might have been the status of Black literature had massive migration to the North not taken place, he in effect sets up a North/South dichotomy based on power:

Had men and women never forsaken the moral and ethical teachings of their southern ancestors, never become hypnotized by the *materialistic offerings of northern whites*, never lost that sense of morality and decency which served to distinguish the victim from the victimizer, would not our literature and our lot be better here among the barbarians? (my emphasis)⁴⁹

Migration ill-prepared Blacks for a new, more insidious form of racism. Lured by the promise of material wealth and the illusion of greater freedom migrating Blacks lost touch with their original value system and their sense of community dissolved. Indeed, Walker herself found that the most difficult thing for her in moving for a time to the North was to learn to *fear* other Blacks.

Michael Kreyling localizes the differences in Southern literature even more specifically:

For beneath the exotic Southern landscape, religious furor, and powerful family structure lies a fundamental difference which sets the South apart. ‘I’m speaking of a deep, serious difference that is hard to talk about. It is *political* in nature. It is the essence of Southern literature.’⁵⁰

Politically, the industrial, materialistic, urban North began to take precedence over the South and its values toward the middle of the 19th century, when the more “masculine” myth of wealth and power (material success as a sign of God’s favor, Manifest Destiny, and the Monroe Doctrine) began to contrast notably with and prevail over the more “feminine” myth of “love and generosity”, and union with community and the land⁵¹. Is it so curious, indeed, that the invasion of the South by Northern carpetbaggers totally anathema to her value system coincided with the rise of perhaps the most distinguished of all the American literary traditions? Prior to the subjugation of the South, Southern writers were generally of the aristocracy who wrote for their own personal pleasure and with little effort to publish or publicize their work. But the mid-19th century saw a shift to the South in the primacy of American letters and the establishment of a literary tradition whose renown and influence are practically inescapable for those writers born on the same soil. Even today as critics such as Kreyling announce the “Death of the Southern Literary Tradition”, perhaps coinciding with the recent rise in importance of the “Sunbelt” nationally, Southern writers are still bound by its limits.⁵² Moreover,

Janeway specifically equates certain preoccupations in Southern literature with those found in literature written by women:

The interest of southern writers of both sexes in eccentric characters corresponds to the social and economic circumstances of southern life at this time, "backward" in material matters and still shadowed by memories of defeat, occupations, and powerlessness. An analogy can be drawn between these conditions and the normal subordination that has been the ordinary lot of women and that was becoming, increasingly, the subject of literature.⁵³

As in the case of Heilbrun's observation of the coincidence of the rise of the novel with the degradation of women, and with Morrison's of the coincidence of the rise of the Afro-American novel with the migration of Blacks to urban centers and the loss of a sense of community, it is obviously an oversimplification to state that the rise of the Southern literary tradition coincided with the loss of power and the degradation of the South. Nonetheless, having favorably compared those value systems of women, Blacks and Southerners, and adopting Annis Pratt's view of fiction as the cultural repository of values no longer applicable in the dominant society, it seems logical to infer that the union of these three subjugated sectors (the South, Blacks, women) ought to manifest a system of values radically opposed to the Northern (Occidental), white male beliefs prevalent in patriarchal society. It is at this point, then, that I contend that Barbara Johnson's tetrapolar graph be more usefully converted into a cube each side representing a value center and each confronting its opposite—

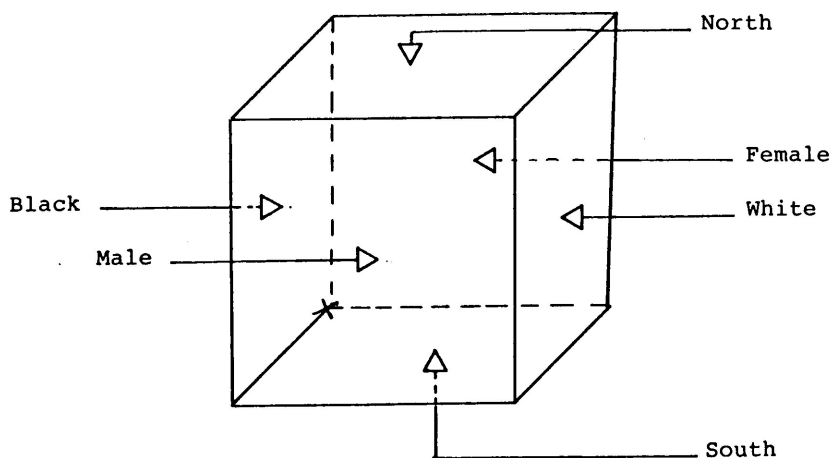


DIAGRAM 2

so that our point of reference (X) represents the convergence of the three systems in the work of a Southern, Black female. Diagramming only those systems of subcultural beliefs, the result is perhaps more obvious:

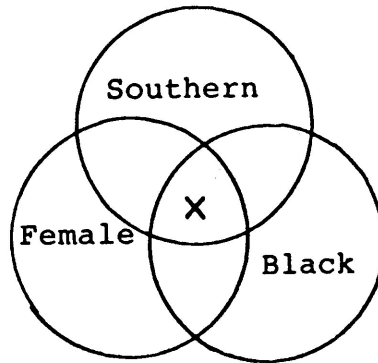


DIAGRAM 3

Eliseo Vivas, a critic whom Chester J. Fontenot, Jr., calls a “cultural formulist”, has elaborated a theory in which the evaluation of cultural values is an imperative for understanding a work of art. According to Vivas the term “culture” refers to

the interrelated constellation of activities of a social group, insofar as these activities, the social institutions through which they are carried on, and the physical instrumentalities that make them possible, embody values that enable the group to maintain itself as a purposive, distinctly human society; the meanings are the social structures as value carriers; the culture is the total pattern of values carried in the meanings.⁵⁴

Though perhaps not understood nor fully realized by the members of the culture, the meanings “subsist” in the culture. It is the work of the artist/author to “insist” on these values and by doing so, they come to “exist” openly in the culture and thereby become operational. This theory of subsistence-insistence-existence is not only compatible with but useful for the feminist critic who contends that the

female author and critic must direct their efforts toward a greater understanding of the female experience and toward reinforcing a value system that has been scorned for too long by the white Western patriarchy. It seems clear, however, that the implications of Deborah McDowell's question concerning the "culturally specific values and assumptions" of feminist theories of literary criticism cannot simply be limited to a discussion of gender. Just as it is impossible to divorce a writer from her/his biologically determined gender or race, so it is equally inviable to uproot an author from the community that nurtured those values and assumptions.

While Vivas speaks of "discovery" of these values, however, feminist critics believe they have been there all along, though perhaps these principles may be "rediscovered" by the white male reader or anyone too long divorced from his or her own nature. Bringing these values into "existence" in the society at large via literature, then, is a primary concern for relatively powerless groups—blacks, feminists and Southerners alike—, an assumption which may conceivably serve as a common denominator for an evaluation of their texts, especially when these three conditions coincide. A close reading of their works will reveal that writers such as Alice Walker, Zora Neale Hurston, Toni Cade Bambara, Maya Angelou and a long etcetera, have recongnized these values as fundamental to the human spirit, have consciously and explicitly employed these beliefs in their ficiton with the hope, the faith, that these "meanings" will take hold in the dominant culture as more and more readers recognize that what has been suppressed in themselves because of physical and commercial powerlessness may be regained and reaffirmed through a greater awareness.

Notas

¹ "New Directions for Black Feminist Criticism", *Black American Literature Forum*, vol. 14, no. 4 (Winter, 1980), p. 153.

² Justine Tally, "'Opening Up the Canon': Is a Black Feminist Criticism Necessary?", *Libro Homenaje a Dra. Dña. Inmaculada Corrales* (Universidad de La Laguna: Secretariado de Publicaciones, 1986).

³ "Women's Literature" in *Harvard Guide to Contemporary American Writing*, ed. Daniel Hoffman (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 390.

⁴ "This emphasis on diversity—which includes not just race and class, but sexual preference, religion, age, geographical region, and differences in physical abilities—is the 'most interesting new development for feminist theory', according to University of Colorado Professor Anna Tsing". Quoted in Carol Sternhell, "Questions of Difference: Three Challenges to Women's Studies", *Ms. Magazine* (October, 1985), p. 82.

⁵ Janeway, in Hoffman, p. 376.

⁶ (Brighton, Sussex: The Harvester Press, Ltd., 1982), pp. 169-70. Other critics have also interpreted women's fiction as an expression of women's powerlessness and alienation. Elsie Michie, for example,

sees in Gothic novels the “appealing release of women’s pent-up angers and sexual frustrations”. See “Novel Romances”, *Tulanian*, vol. 55, no. 2 (Summer, 1984), p. 11.

⁷ Pratt, p. 4.

⁸ Pratt, p. 6.

⁹ Pratt, p. 129.

¹⁰ This feeling of “oneness” is often repeated by women with respect to a large variety of considerations. May Sarton, for example, uses it to explain a more balanced understanding of sexuality: “But what is becoming tiresome now in the American ethos is the emphasis on sex, and especially on orgasm as an end in itself... (Sex) will have its day and its hour and the orgasm, should it occur, will come not as a little trick cleverly performed, but as a wave of union with the whole universe. The emphasis on orgasm per se is just another example of the devaluation of all that is human”. *Journal of a Solitude*, quoted in Pratt, p. 6.

¹¹ Pratt, p. 6.

¹² “Ovulo Erótico”, *Cambio* 16 no. 685 (January 14-21, 1985) p. 98.

¹³ Quoted in Robert Troy, “W.E.B. Dubois in Retrospect”, *New South*, vol. 25, no. 4 (1970), p. 27.

¹⁴ “Teaching *Black-Eyed Susans*: An Approach to the Study of Black Women Writers”, *Black American Literature Forum*, XI, 1 (Spring, 1977), p. 21.

¹⁵ “Metaphor, Metonymy and Voice in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*”, in *Black Literature and Literary Theory*, ed. Henry Louis Gates (New York and London: Methuen, 1984), p. 214.

¹⁶ B. Johnson in Gates, p. 218.

¹⁷ “Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation” in *Black Women Writers (1950-1980)*, ed. Mari Evans (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1984), p. 340.

¹⁸ “History: White, Negro and Black”, *Southern Exposure: No More Moanin’*, vol. 12, nos. 3 & 4 (Winter, 1974), p. 58.

¹⁹ “Africanity in Black Families” *The Black Scholar* (June, 1975), quoted in Janice Hale, “The Black Woman and Child Rearing”, in *The Black Woman*, ed., La Frances Rodgers-Rose (Beverly Hills and London: Sage Publications, 1980), pp. 81-82.

²⁰ *Shadow and Substance* (Rubana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1982, p. 50. On the theory of oneness, see also Luther X. Weems, “The Theory of Black Personality” *Southern Exposure: Southern Black Utterances Today*, III, 1 (Summer, 1975), p. 14 ff.

²¹ *Africa and America* (Miami, Florida: Mnemosyne Publishing Inc., 1969), pp. 60-81.

²² From “Out of Egypt: A Talk with Nawal El Saadawi” by Tiffany R. Patterson and Angela M. Gilliam, *Freedomways*, vol. 23, n° 3 (1983), p. 193.

²³ “Women’s Spirituality: A Household Act” in *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* (New York: Kitchen Table - Women of Color Press, 1983), p. 348.

²⁴ Quoted in Max Steele, “The Adidas Generation: Reflections on Student Writing”, *Southern Exposure: Festival*, IX, 2 (Summer, 1981), p. 75.

²⁵ “Subjectivities: A Theory of the Critical Process”, *Feminist Literary Criticism: Explorations in Theory*, ed., Josephine Donovan (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1975), p. 81 (footnote no. 11).

²⁶ Quoted in Donovan, p. 79.

²⁷ Quoted in Barbara Christian, *Black Women Novelists: The Development of a Tradition, 1892-1976* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980), p. 21.

²⁸ “Repetition as a Figure of Black Culture”, in Gates, p. 63.

²⁹ Snead, in Gates, p. 75.

³⁰ In Bell Hooks, *Ain’t I a Woman* (Boston, Massachusetts: South End Press, 1983).

³¹ B. Johnson, in Gates, p. 216.

³² Johnson, in Gates, p. 216. Graph is taken from p. 217.

³³ Hoffman, p. 156.

³⁴ *Black Novelists and the Southern Literary Tradition* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1981), p. 6.

³⁵ "Strangers in a Stange Land", *Southern Exposure: Southern Black Utterances Today*, III, 1 (Spring/Summer, 1975), p. 7.

³⁶ Gayle, "Strangers", p. 7.

³⁷ (Amsterdam: B.R. Grüner Publishing Co., 1982).

³⁸ *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens* (London: The Women's Press, 1984), p. 17.

³⁹ "The Current State of American Literature", *The Southern Review*, IX, New Series, 1 (Spring, 1973), p. 281.

⁴⁰ Robert Stepto, "Intimate Things in Place: A Conversation with Toni Morrison", *Chant of Saints*, eds., Michael S. Harper and Robert B. Stepto (Urbana, Chicago, London: University of Illinois Press, 1979), p. 214.

⁴¹ In *Gardens*, p. 19.

⁴² "In large measure, black Southern writers owe their clarity of vision to parents who refused to diminish themselves as human beings by succumbing to racism". *Gardens*, p. 19.

⁴³ "Chesnutt includes other truths of the heart which are familiar to students of Southern literature. Despite the evil of the southern caste system, despite the forces which act upon him, man lives with free will in a moral universe". Payne, p. 24.

⁴⁴ Patricia Spacks, *La Imaginación Femenina* (Madrid: Editorial Debate S.A.; translation: Paloma Albarca and Soledad Puértolas), p. 112.

⁴⁵ "A Profile: Zora Neale Hurston", *Southern Exposure: No More Moanin*, I, 3 & 4 (Winter, 1974), p. 163.

⁴⁶ *Gardens*, pp. 20-21.

⁴⁷ Payne, pp. 56-61, especially.

⁴⁸ *Gardens*, p. 21.

⁴⁹ Gayle, "Strangers", p. 7.

⁵⁰ Susan Matthews, "Death of Southern Literature", *Tulanian*, vol. 52, no. 2 (Spring, 1981), p. 66.

⁵¹ It is not uncommon for writers to imagine the South as a woman, yet Trudier Harris finds a negative connotation for this image in her analysis of James Baldwin's *Just Above My Head*. For Baldwin, a Northern Black (and I think it is pertinent to point out that he was homosexual), "the South is a territory to be avoided because of potential ability to destroy, and for those who have been unable to avoid it, it is a handicap to be overcome" (p. 90). "That role that the South plays in the book, as something which is unpredictable precisely because it is so destructively predictable, is comparable to the role frequently assigned to women in Baldwin's works and which also culminates in *Just Above My Head*. Women, like the South, have the potential to make good men lose control over themselves. In a way, that is the essence of the fear Northern black men feel going to the South; it is a place where they cannot give commands, a place where they have no power over their bodies. Through the body of a woman, a good man, like Rufus Scott in *Another Country*, can be destroyed; his destruction is not only by a woman who is the personification of the South, who is from the South, and who carries her history with her... Women, like the South, can destroy comradeship between men" (p. 91). See "The South as Woman: Chimeric Images of Emasculation in *Just Above My Head*", *Studies in Black American Literature*, vol. 1. *Black American Prose Theory*, eds. Joe Weixlmann and Chester J. Fontenot (Greenwood, Florida: The Penkeville Publishing Company, 1984). Harris' chapter lends itself readily to an analysis of the "masculine", "Northern" (though in this case not white) value system, and the fear of women=South (projected) which instigates the necessity of the "embodiment" of these sectors with "evil" and "deviance". One is reminded greatly of Leslie Feidler's thesis in *Love and Death in the*

American Novel which supports this theme as an undercurrent of American writing and points out homosexual attraction in the "male comradery" of the most famous male pairs of the literature.

⁵² In Matthews, p. 67.

⁵³ Hoffman, p. 156.

⁵⁴ "The Object of the Poem", in *Creation and Discovery* (New York: Scribner, 1973), pp. 1069-77, quoted in Chester Fontenot, Jr., "Angelic Dance or Tug of War? The Humanistic Implications of Cultural Formalism", in *Black American Literature and Humanism* (The University Press of Kentucky, 1981), p. 40.