



Toward an Integral Feminism

Sarah Nicholson

This paper studies the development of some of the key schools of feminist thought, exploring the history of the definition of Woman. Ken Wilber's framework of Integral Feminism is then used to move toward the processual creation of a more adequately holistic understanding of women and subjectivity.

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Woman has been written as an object, rather than as a subject, in the discursive order. Feminist theorists such as Irigaray,¹ for example, have claimed that Woman is constructed against a “universal individual self” that is the normative male subject. Under these conditions the phallogentric symbolic system is incapable of representing Her as anything but a negative shadow of Man, his subordinated other. Irigaray suggests that the subjectivity of Woman is thus truly unrepresentable. Kristeva concurs that, “On a deeper level... a woman cannot ‘be’... In ‘woman’ I see something that cannot be represented, something that is not said, something above and beyond nomenclatures and ideologies.”² In this nebulous light the definition of Woman within feminist discourse has eroded; gradually slimming down to nothing in what has been described as a bad case of “critical anorexia” within feminist theory.³ Feminism appears to have encountered an impasse, for under the microscope of theory there appears to be no Woman.

To my mind the nothingness to which Woman has been condemned is a result of the confines of the Western tradition of philosophical thought. I believe opening to the field of nondualism provides the transontological possibility for a more conducive resolution to Her quandary. Nonduality refers to an understanding of the manifest world—itsself a holonic system of interrelated wholes and parts—as being directly sustained by the formless, creative ground of



being. The radical, unqualifiable openness of the formless that completely transcends all and includes all, is confined to nothing and embraces absolutely everything.⁴ In knowing the embrace of the formless, the bounds of duality are dissolved. Subject and object are radically open, interconnected and empty of independent being: “The Formless and the entire world of manifest Form—pure emptiness and the whole Kosmos—are seen to be not-two (or nondual).”⁵ The nondualist principles of interconnectedness, emptiness and codependent arising are akin to the ideas of postmodern and poststructuralism, yet are without their recourse to nihilism.

To begin the journey toward a definition of Woman requires a thorough examination of the twists and turns in the development of feminist attention to the question of subjectivity. This paper works toward an unthreading and rebuilding that honours the knowledge of each knot of development in an attempt to move toward a definition of Woman by exploring identity through an Integral Feminist framework. I believe the problem of defining Woman is one of finding an adequate framework to deal with the multiplicity inherent in feminism itself. Integral Feminism allows the dynamic interests of feminism to operate on a number of contiguous levels. It recognises the “inherent, mutually arising, inextricably bound influences” of our biology, psychology, spirituality, culture and the systemic, physical world.⁶ Pragmatically, an Integral framework addresses the constructivist impasse by facilitating a contextually discursive definition of Woman through which key feminist values can continue to be represented in the political and social spheres. On an ontological level, Integral Feminism, explicitly grounded in a nondualistic ontology, can facilitate a deeper exploration of the core question of self: where Woman rests beyond sex and gender, in deep fruitful emptiness.

A Brief History of Feminism

Before I address Integral Feminism, it is necessary to trace broadly the historical development of some of the key schools of feminist thought as they relate to the definition of Woman. By



unearthing the milestones and accompanying tensions and problematics that have developed, we will be able to look toward implementing an Integral approach.

Around 1850 the first wave of Anglo-American feminism, with its roots in a liberal ethics of autonomy and emancipation, began demanding equal rights under the law for women. Liberal feminism's primary goal was the full acknowledgement of a shared humanity for women. Women's bodies, while acknowledged as offering unique insight through different physical experience, were fundamentally considered to constrain access to the public sphere and thus to social equality. With the benefit of hindsight, we can see the distinction in first wave feminist thought between the biologically determined body and the sexually neutral mind. In unwitting agreement with patriarchal thought, they considered women's oppression "a consequence of their containment within an inadequate i.e., a female or potentially maternal body."⁷

Second wave feminism probed the question of to whom women were demanding equality with: "To men of the same colour, class, race, ethnicity and age?"⁸ Characterised by their praxis of social activism, this wave produced a plethora of subsets of feminist thought including: Radical, Marxist/Socialist, Cultural, Ecofeminist, Constructionist and Psychoanalytic (French) feminists. In the second wave of feminism key objectives of political reform were firmly established such as: women's control over women's bodies. A wide ranging examination of the historical, literary, and social frameworks found hierarchies of value that were clearly identified as male dominated and controlled. To counter this, emphasis was placed on a search for women's cultural presence and expression in history. Also in consciously developing space for the sharing of women's experience, second wave feminists (such as Marxist/Socialist, Radical feminists, Cultural feminists, and Ecofeminists) asserted the positive difference of women through the recovery and celebration of "the personal as political."

Differentiating between the public and private spheres, Marxist/Socialist feminists studied the techno-economic base of production and the manner in which the patriarchy and the capitalist



economic sphere intertwine, reinforce, and affect each other. Marx identified two interlocking spheres of work: production and reproduction. With the development of industrial capitalism these two spheres were separated into public and domestic arenas, with women being relegated to the domestic. Socialist feminists, conscious of class and patriarchal exploitation, originally argued that the key to women's emancipation was the socialization of the reproductive sphere, which would allow women to enter and participate fully in the productive sphere.⁹

Radical feminists characterized the patriarchy as a dominant hierarchy that physically oppressed women through the social construction of femininity characterized by: male control of procreation, the institution of motherhood, compulsory heterosexuality, and violence toward women. They asserted that the patriarchy needed to be dismantled through both institutional reforms and a cultural revolution of gender roles. The radical feminist cast their vote with the essentialists, emphasizing biological difference in development and espousing a separation into women only space.¹⁰

Ecofeminists and Cultural Feminists, with a fundamental belief in the need to reclaim positive identification with the female body, suggested that women's essential biological differences should be celebrated and indeed viewed in some ways as superior. Ecofeminists focused on the joint devaluing of women and nature, arguing that women are less valued because they are more closely connected to the natural through menstruation, childbirth and rearing:

By virtue of biological connections between women's menstrual cycles and the phases of the moon, pheromones which create menstrual synchrony among us, and our physical connections to the next generation via umbilical cords and lactation, women are more "in tune" with ourselves as part of, rather than distinct from, 'nature.'¹¹



Through this alignment they reinforced the male association with culture, as the physical and mental transcendence of nature.

The Ecofeminists asserted that reclamation and celebration of the woman and earth connection “in a woman/body/earth hating society” is an act of profound revolution.¹² They further asserted that women’s liberation could only occur in conjunction with ecological liberation.¹³ The core of the ecofeminist position is their advocacy of an immanent spiritual engagement with the planet. They suggest that examples of this can be found in “the everyday subsistence production of most of the world’s women.”¹⁴

The feminist struggle to define Woman split here into two camps of second wave thought. On one side, the Essentialists, who claimed the power for women to define Woman by reclaiming the female body through positive (self) identification; and on the other side Constructionists who emphasized the sex/gender divide.

The theorem of gender as a cultural overlay of sex is famously espoused in De Beauvoir’s statement in *The Second Sex*: “One is not born a woman, but rather becomes one.”¹⁵ Constructionist thought considered the liberal and Essentialist approach as forcibly constraining “a variety of women under a single unified identity—Woman—and dangerously espous[ing] a group polity that cannot accommodate such difference.”¹⁶ Cultural and Ecofeminists were considered to be problematically clinging to an Essentialism that continued to root Woman with the negative aspects of traditional binary divisions. Constructionist thought stressed that the female body (alone) does not make a woman, emphasising the imposition of socially constructed representation in producing gender identification. They suggest that biological factors are reworked through intersubjective cultural patterns that are constructed and maintained. Gender traits can then be transformed through socialization, such as the social reorganization of child rearing.



For example, Nancy Chodorow's 1978 canonical text *Reproduction of Mothering* examined existing social mothering relations and suggested that there were deep structural differences built into the psyche through socialization at an early age.¹⁷ She stressed the importance of the pre-Oedipal and the intensity of the child and mother bond in the shaping of the infant's gender identity. In the current order, to develop as a male, a child must differentiate himself from the original female self of the mother and must "reject, derogate, and negate all things feminine."¹⁸ Boys learn not to be mothers while girls learn to reproduce mothering. The solution to this inherently structural problem is, she suggested, in reworking gender stratification: "restructuring the division of labor by sex by having both women and men parent, by having both be equally responsible for child rearing from birth on."¹⁹

Kristeva, one of the groups of French Feminists known as *Psychanalyse et Politique*, formed in the wake of the revolutionary events of France in May 1968, argued for new discourses of maternity. The French Feminists asserted the need to analyze the very structures of the institutions to which women sought access. They utilized psychosexual analysis in examining the question of sexuality and articulating the concept of feminine difference.²⁰

Working from a poststructuralist base, these feminists examined the failure and inconsistencies of language, particularly in the representation of difference through hierarchies of binary oppositions. The work of poststructuralist theorists such as Barthes, Derrida, Lacan, and Foucault is characterised by the breaking apart of systems of representation and the rejection of singular meaning and grand narratives. These theorists have been fundamental to the development of poststructuralist (and postmodernist) feminist epistemology. Exposing concepts such as phallogentrism (the belief in unitary male values as a central transcendent truth) and deconstructing dualisms and binary structures, their focus has been on a text's struggle for meaning: on slippages, repetitions, absences, marginalities, the multiple, the ambiguous, and the contradictory.²¹



Psychoanalytic feminism primarily read the feminine through language and subjectivity. Kristeva, for example, utilized Lacan's theories on gender and the unconscious in which he posits that sexual difference is constructed through discourse. Kristeva worked with Lacan's idea that the acquisition of identity and subjectivity occurs in the mirror phase of development as the child breaks from the mother and enters into the symbolic order under the Law of the Father. It is with this language acquisition, which privileges the masculine, that the child "gains" sexual difference.²²

Kristeva asserts that in patriarchal cultures, where woman has been reduced to reproductive function, the maternal body must be abjected in order for the child to become a subject. Within such a culture, female identification with the mother ensures their exclusion from the patriarchal order, yet identification with the father reinforces and colludes with that abjection of women.²³ She suggests that "women must not refuse to enter the symbolic order, but neither should they adopt the masculine model of femininity."²⁴ Kristeva brings the body back into discourse in looking at the passage between sign systems, proposing that initially an infant has no separate subjectivity or sense of self from the mother and that this state can be characterized as the "chora," a moment of all encompassing connection which includes natural desires and drives that exist before language, representation and subjectivity. The chora she suggests is "the foundation of any signifying process [yet] continues to exist in language."²⁵ She terms the gestures and repetitive rhythmical sounds contained within this moment of the chora as the "semiotic." The semiotic in its association with the maternal body ("the law before the law") is repressed by the movement into the symbolic. And yet the semiotic remains as the "subterranean element of meaning within signification that does not signify."²⁶ Signification requires both the semiotic and the symbolic (the syntactic and grammatical element of signification), operating relationally in what she describes as a "dialectic oscillation."²⁷



One of the problems that has been identified with some of the psychoanalytic feminists is their grounding in Freud's clearly misogynistic theories of sexuality. Juliet Mitchell suggests that working with Freud's theories is not an unviable position for feminist theorists, if his work on the Oedipus complex is understood not as a static universal position but as a description of sexual development within a specific historical (and patriarchal) period.²⁸

Irigaray, another French feminist, based her work in *This Sex Which is Not One* on the fact that the theories of subjectivity developed by Freud and Lacan were bound to their theories of sexuality, female sexuality being defined in relation to or in opposition to male sexuality.²⁹ Irigaray argued that women were not adequately represented through a masculine gender based idea of subjectivity. Working with the premise that language is a masculine rational and linear construct privileged by patriarchal culture, her solution was a symbolic language system based on the touch of female sexuality which would privilege multiplicity and plurality, connection and flow: "a woman's language is filled with ebb and flow, multiple beginnings, and multiple paths."³⁰ Along with Kristeva and Cixous, Irigaray argues that "with new and multiple psychosocial, linguistic constructs we might release the repressed Other, or femininity, into culture."³¹

In the wake of the arrival of queer, transgender, and postcolonial theory at the end of the twentieth century, the third wave of feminism was born. They asserted that second wave attempts to define Woman were inherently unstable and exclusionary, particularly in their blindness to ideas of difference in terms of the experience of race, class, and sexuality. Third wave feminism, acknowledging that the same system caused numerous different oppressions, criticised the "white middle classness" of second wave feminist thought as hegemonic, stressing the need for diversity and plurality through the development of multiracial alliances. Postmodernists Fraser and Nicholson present this summary of their position:



Postmodern-feminist theory would be non-universalist. When its focus became cross-cultural or transepochal, its mode of attention would be comparativist rather than universalizing, attuned to changes and contrasts instead of to ‘covering laws’. Finally, postmodern-feminist theory would dispense with the idea of a subject of history. It would replace unitary notions of ‘woman’ and ‘feminine gender identity’ with plural and complexly constructed conceptions of social identity, treating gender as one relevant strand among others, attending also to class, race, ethnicity, age and sexual orientation.³²

The question, though, has been raised as to whether the third wave focus on difference through the embrace of plural ideologies effectively undermines the solidity of core (second wave) feminist values.

Looking to this problem, Rosi Braidotti, a radical postmodern feminist, has conjured the figuration of the Nomadic Feminist Subject. The Nomadic Feminist Subject is a hybrid being of transnational orientation through which the idea of female subjectivity continues to be infused with motion:

Nomadic consciousness consists in not taking any kind of identity as permanent. The nomad is only passing through: s/he makes those necessarily situated connections that can help her/him to survive, but s/he never takes on fully the limits of one national, fixed identity. The nomad has no passport—or has too many.³³

Braidotti, calling for an ongoing accountability for the female gender which looks to dodge the pitfalls of relativism, posits that the subjectivity of Woman needs to be plotted according to what she calls regulative variables: “social and semiotic ‘axes of identity,’” which include race, class, age, and sexual preference.³⁴ Her nomadic consciousness of identity rests



not on fixity but on contingency. The nomadic consciousness combines coherence with mobility. It aims to rethink the unity of the subject, without reference to humanistic beliefs, without dualistic oppositions, linking instead body and mind in a new set of intensive and often intransitive transitions.³⁵

One of the major theoretical movements of third wave thought is its analysis of the representation of the sexed body. Theorists of the third wave have read the rendering of the body in second wave constructionist thought as biologically determined, fixed and ahistorical: “a biological object whose representation and functioning is political.”³⁶ The body had been written as a precultural base for a social, cultural and historical mind that determined the meaning for biology.³⁷ The body returned in third wave analysis as a key means of deconstructing the construction and performance of “polymorphous and groundless difference: not a difference between men and women, but a continual and unstable difference.”³⁸

Postmodern feminists of the third wave established sex and gender as historically shifting cultural constructs. Sex, or the body, was exposed, not as an ahistorical biological given but as a lived and culturally constructed form. Stressing the contextual nature of identity, postmodern feminists emphasized anti-essentialism “to the point of questioning the existence of any core self at all.”³⁹

Judith Butler, a radical Postmodern Constructionist argued that identity does not exist before signification. Language—as a constructive and performative form—“always already mediates our knowledge of the body, of reality in general.”⁴⁰ Thus, in terms of the relationship between the idea of Woman and the body, the underlying semantic definition of these terms contain connotations which effect “a certain delimitation of what is taken as extra-linguistic reality.”⁴¹

Corporeal Feminists, such as Elizabeth Grosz and Moira Gatens, agree that the body cannot be adequately understood through a dominant discourse that posits it as “natural,” precultural, inert,



and unchanging. They argue that there is not a static biological sexed body over which cultural gender attributes are laid; sexed embodiment is a continual process of becoming. The body is not split between its material reality, as some pure thing in and of itself, and its various historical and cultural representations, as arbitrary cultural overlay.⁴² Grosz suggests that “the body is neither brute nor passive but is interwoven with and constitutive of systems of meaning, signification and representation.... The body cannot be understood as a neutral screen, a biological *tabula rasa* onto which masculine or feminine could be indifferently projected.”⁴³

They also assert that the sex/gender distinction reinforces a hierarchical opposition that has underpinned philosophy’s sexism.⁴⁴ Positing dualism as the belief in two mutually exclusive things, Grosz suggests that corporeality be used as a framework to rethink subjectivity. She argues that, in terms of the relationship between subjectivity and the body, feminist theory has been complicit with the tradition of classical philosophical thought in continuing to subordinate the body, through dichotomizing and privileging mind and purely conceptual knowledge, over the corporeal.

Grosz suggests that a corporeal feminism can heal the split binarization of the body’s association with an “animality and nature that needs transcendence.”⁴⁵ Grosz locates the emergence of meaning in the corporeal:

The body marks that peculiar site of transformation whereby the human becomes human, the body becomes sexed, and the subject emerges as its own... The body “becomes” in order for becoming in general to emerge. The body is the very passage from being to becoming.⁴⁶

Bodies are animately in conversation with the world and each other as “the centers of perspective, insight, reflection, desire, agency.”⁴⁷ Grosz maintains that developing alternative accounts of the body, in the terms of an embodied subjectivity and a non dichotomous pluralistic



understanding of the mind and body “may create upheavals in the structure of existing knowledges.”⁴⁸

Grosz tackles the deeper ontological question of “What is Woman?” using Spinoza’s philosophy as a means to bypass binary dualisms through providing a non-oppositional notion of difference. Spinoza closes the gap between subject and object through reconciling body and mind as two attributes of one inseparable substance, countering Descartes foundational claim for two irreducibly different and incompatible substances. Clearly psychological interiority and corporeal exteriority are interdependent in an ongoing movement of body becoming mind, mind becoming body: “Bodies and mind are not two distinct substances or two kinds of attributes of a single substance but somewhere in between these two alternatives.”⁴⁹

Spinoza’s model of the body is non-essentialist; it is a contextual continually becoming body that, being without a “true nature,” cannot be definitively known.⁵⁰ The expression of identity is seen “as an activity of a particular being’s becoming.... The body, here, is neither ground (immediate given) nor limit (radical beyond).”⁵¹ This ontological position yields a new way of orienting to identity with respect to body-mind.

The idea of becoming harks back to De Beauvoir who marked an early shift in thinking about gender from constitutive, as part of one’s being, to the realm of doing and being. She emphasised that it is through the body that we relate to the world.⁵² Although her work has been read as establishing the sex/gender divide, Toril Moi reads De Beauvoir’s emphasis as embodiment—being and becoming. She presents the disclaimer that “any given woman will transcend the category of femininity, however it is defined.”⁵³ Woman, she suggests is an embodied lived experience in relationship to the world, an open-ended process of being and becoming: “The woman I have become is more than just gender, she is a fully embodied human being whose being cannot be reduced to her sexual difference, be it natural or cultural.”⁵⁴



The Ontological Question

“The torsion of the one into the other, the passage, vector, or uncontrollable drift of the inside into the outside and the outside into the inside.”⁵⁵

We begin to see, through Grosz, the drift of body and mind. Extending our awareness, we can watch this drift flow beyond body and mind: through culture and language; to intermingle with history; to drift back through social institution; to arrive, fall, and return again in the natural world. Where in this drift is there one thing that exists without reference to all other? Where in this drift could we find a Woman, separate and alone?

In process philosophy the subject is understood as an ongoing enactment of evolving emergence, born of, and contributing to, the multiple becomings of others.⁵⁶ Process philosophy

comprehends people and things as intercontextual events or processes, continuously created by and in turn furthering the creation of their cultural, ecological, and spatiotemporal contexts. The paradigm of the simply located subject leaves the impression that the human realm is not profoundly affected by, nor has any great effect upon, the more-than-human world, and so only cultural-linguistic events are believed to have significance.⁵⁷

While connected through interbeing, diversity and difference between subjects occur due to their partial or limited nature and the characteristics of “endurance and reiteration,”⁵⁸ which allow for specific types of subjects to arise. In this way, Woman could be identified as an intensity of form in specific relationship; this form could function as a part in the larger whole of the (ongoing-becoming) matrix of personal identity.

The demise of the classical view of the human subject as pure mind, “independent of, and hence ultimately separable from, the body’s flesh, the terrestrial environment...,” enables a shift in



feminist theory from its singular preoccupation with the formation of subjectivity through language.⁵⁹ The majority of feminist academic thought renounced the male God of monotheism: “the supreme instance of the ‘phallogentrism’ of Western metaphysics... the centre and source of all truth.”⁶⁰ With the rejection of God and His inscription of Woman, the feminist majority split itself from the possibility of a spiritual engagement with subjectivity. While some feminist thinkers have sought to recast a feminist spirituality and a “woman’s way of knowing,” much of the canon of the feminist academic thought has maintained its blindness to forms of knowing beyond the conceptual. Woman, as subject, has often been left afloat (or not) on a sea of language.

Buddhist feminists, such as Anne Klein, have advocated expanding the feminist engagement with subjectivity to include transconceptual knowledge. Mindful subjectivity, such as that experienced by the silent subject of nondual contemplation, relates body-mind to an open unlanguage state, invoking a dimension of knowing which “is not primarily linguistic or conceptual, and yet... is capable of being cultivated.”⁶¹ Klein, like Grosz, sees the relatedness of physical and mental processes as, “not two halves of a whole, but two avenues of access” into the complex of subjectivity.⁶² She describes the state or activity of mindfulness as viscerally connecting with a subjective space that “need not entirely be localized inside the body, because to go deep enough ‘inside’ is also sometimes to touch a point that connects with a vast neither-external-nor-internal-world.”⁶³

The transontology of nondualism posits a non-oppositional notion of difference. Nondualism shatters the illusory nature of solidified self by acknowledging the interpenetration of all things, and dissolves the radical separatism of dualism, which has seen woman cast as subordinated other. The idea of “not two” posits a dynamic interplay and balance of two extremes of one phenomenon. It brings the fractured parts of postmodernism back into the sustaining embrace and ground of formlessness. Here, we can see the truth of Woman as a constantly becoming



form, arising moment to moment in the matrix of interbeing; interwoven of other sexes, of culture, of history, of consciousness, of earth and social systems.

I believe it is possible to resolve the “epistemological split between subject and object” by helping Woman understand her subjectivity with respect to trans-ontological nondualism, such as that of Buddhism.⁶⁴ Irigaray’s insightful suggestion that it would be through healing this bifurcation that sexual difference could be reconceived.⁶⁵ Here, in an understanding of the creative matrix of co-dependent arising, in which no form exists independent of causes or conditions (emptiness), we might find such a space.

Integral Feminism

Looking once again to the struggle of defining Woman, the notion of definition itself appears problematic. The classic Aristotelian understanding of definition entails metaphysical, not purely linguistic, commitments and thus is fundamentally linked to notions of essence. When the definition is understood as being a discursive linguistic practice, relating linguistic subject to social context, the commitment to commonalities as timeless characteristics of an essential or universal nature is removed.⁶⁶

Woman needs to be able to be spoken of within social and political contexts to allow the work of social change to continue, and yet this needs to be balanced with and framed within the broader context of theory in which Woman (Man, and all things) is known as empty. I believe Integral Feminism forms a framework adequate to the task of bringing together a definition of Woman. This approach addresses the need to be linguistically discursive, adequately complex in addressing multiple axes of identity, and philosophically nuanced.

Ken Wilber’s Integral Theory suggests that in order to furnish a more adequately holistic vision of a subject, (whether it be consciousness, evolution, or indeed Woman), it is necessary to look at each of the four quadrants or perspectives: the interior-individual, exterior-individual, interior-



collective, and exterior-collective. Integral Feminism provides additional tools of the level of complexity required to plot the subjectivity of Woman on multiple axes. We can then examine the subject in greater depth by plotting levels, types, and points of transition.

Without the expectation of arriving at an ultimate or absolute conclusion we can work toward furnishing increasingly more adequate answers to this question. Utilising Integral's skillful means, we can bring together and analyse the sophisticated insights of academic forebears and peers in an interdisciplinary manner. An Integral feminism attempts to collect the orienting generalizations of the major feminisms as partial truths with the idea that, "in acknowledging the truly different perspectives of a dozen or so different feminist schools, [we] might actually find a scheme that would be more accommodating to all of them."⁶⁷ Seen individually the different perspectives of each wave of feminism can appear at odds, even contradictory. The Integral approach would seek to include all of these truths.

With Integral feminism we seek to bring together the important insights of seminal feminist theorists, such as those drawn upon in this paper, to look toward finely examining and organising this body of knowledge. Yet we do not hold fast to this codification. In acknowledging that our understanding can not but deepen and evolve within the changing context of history, the Integral Feminist approach is unafraid to acknowledge the contextual and contingent nature of its position. Importantly, while orienting itself via the sophisticated insights garnered by feminist theorists, Integral Feminism is grounded in terms of a transontological position. We explicitly include in our analysis an exploration of the unquantifiable open formlessness from which the sexed, gendered, and bound self arises and into which it dissolves.

If we turn to the quadrants, viewing Woman through the Upper Right, or the exterior-individual quadrant allows us to examine from a scientific perspective the (seemingly) objective biological definition of Woman. This is where physicality and materiality in the definition of the embodiment of womanhood are played out. Here we speak of chromosomes, hormones,



anatomical structure, and statistical norms. We examine the boundaries and breakdowns of these definitions, the historically charged and changing nature of this attribution of biology, and the concrete forms of historical and cultural inscription on the body's flesh.

The Upper Left, or interior-individual quadrant, is the sphere of "I." Here, through the self identification of memory and thought, we conceive what being a woman means to us. This is the intentional sphere, consciousness itself, where spiritual and moral development takes place.

The Lower Left, or interior-collective, is the cultural sphere of worldviews, which includes socialization, as sex (female/man) is reworked into gender (Woman/Man). Here our various cultural definitions of "normality" in gender brew. Social and cultural issues such as values, language, social equality in the terms of history and the literary canonical hierarchies, and the possibilities for transformation and cultural r/evolution dwell in this realm.

The Lower Right, or exterior-collective quadrant, deals with the material, techno-economic base of society and the physical manifestations of our world. Here we examine the relationship of Woman to social institutions: legal definition, access to education and the public sphere (the structural issues of child raising), reproductive technologies, and our relationship to the earth.

The holistic and contextual nature of this approach means that Integral Feminism can hold a productive discursive position, which allows a discussion of Woman that affirms varying feminist values as partial, historically contextualized truths. Within this framework we acknowledge the biological differences of women and the need for equality of rights under the law amongst diverse human subjects; equal access to the public productive sphere; reproductive control for women by women; and the reorganization of parenting roles. It allows us to investigate the cultural construction of gender and the effect of capitalism and the patriarchy on women, nature, and others. Within this framework we can create an ongoing space for feminist social praxis and the academic examination and celebration of Woman, whoever she may be.



Finally, Integral Feminism is also in many ways a proposal for an ongoing collaborative project, which seeks holistic collective answers to the collective problem of Woman. We draw on and include many voices and truths: strong against each other, entwined, multiple. We bring the bodies and minds of women—and our ungendered radical openness—as the primary tools with which to set out our investigation. Our journey is to remap and creatively recast the name of Woman in an ongoing manner, working toward deeper understandings and transformations on all fronts.

Acknowledging that language fails us, we can still engage in the pleasure of the process. Moving toward Woman, circling her, holding her lightly with skillful means as she continues to slip from reach into a realm beyond definition. Woman and Not Woman—interconnectively melting into the fruitful dark of emptiness, constantly co-arising under new conditions—are not one, and yet not two.



Endnotes

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SARAH NICHOLSON is a Ph.D. candidate in the School of Social Ecology at the University of Western Sydney, Australia. She is currently writing her dissertation, "Inanna: The perennial philosophy of the goddess," which explores the fertile ground of the heroine's journey in mythology. She has been a Visiting Scholar at York University (Canada) and the Australian National University, and has published and presented research internationally. Sarah teaches contemplative writing practice, and, as a published poet, was awarded the Ian Potter Cultural Trust Fellowship for Literature in 2004.