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CRITICAL THEORY, UTOPIA AND FEMINISM

by Michelle Renaud, B.A., M.A.

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

**Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario
October 25, 1995**

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CRITICAL THEORY, UTOPIA AND FEMINISM

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in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Chair, Department of Sociology and Anthropology

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1995

ABSTRACT

This dissertation contributes to the dialogue between Habermas and feminism, and to the reconfiguration of the debate between critical theory and postmodernism by enlisting Derrida's work on metaphor. It argues that feminism should situate itself in relation to Habermas's conceptualization of the project of modernity as the development of solidaristic public spheres, an alternative relation to tradition and the emancipatory potential of art. Feminism can then be considered to be both a fulfillment of this project and its transfiguration through its aesthetic dimension.

Yet Habermas holds the production of art to take place in an autonomous sphere split off from the lifeworld; and to deal only with beauty, to the exclusion of truth and morality. He concedes emancipatory potential only to art's reception. The poetry of women of colour and lesbian feminists radically challenges this. They claim their production of poetry takes place in the lifeworld; has to do with cognition and morality as well as beauty; and is vital to their struggles against racism and sexism. The dissertation provides a theoretical framework which does justice to their claim by expanding the project of modernity to take into account the Romantic critique of Enlightenment.

The dissertation argues that Habermas's theory of communicative action and his early model of the bourgeois public sphere are each an indispensable resource to the feminist search for a theory of the public. This is demonstrated by several creative

feminist appropriations of his work, which reveal that the ideal of the public has been historically rejuvenated by marginalized groups.

The dissertation concludes that the emerging model of a woman-friendly postmodern community constitutes the most emancipatory rejuvenation of the ideal of the public. It unmaskes the gender and class distortions of the bourgeois model and proposes a vision of solidarity which cuts across lines of ethnic and racial difference. It also revitalizes the Romantic utopia of art as a social-revolutionary force, since art is the vehicle for travelling cross-culturally and cross-racially, which is the poets' claim.

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INTRODUCTION: FITTING WOMEN'S POETRY WITHIN THE PROJECT OF MODERNITY

My contention is that contemporary feminism is best understood as the fulfillment and transfiguration of Habermas's project of modernity, especially in its aesthetic dimension.¹ To argue this, I construct a dialogue between critical theory and feminist theory and show their utopian affinity

Mainstream social science pursues knowledge that is putatively value free. Critical theory, in contrast, uses the methods and findings of social science to develop an explanatory-diagnostic analysis of the structural dynamics of society. It wants to examine the tendencies to crisis and the kinds of conflict characteristic of society, with a view to promoting emancipatory social change. It wants, in effect, to study the existing order from the standpoint of a utopian-anticipatory vision of a better and more humane society.²

The origins of critical theory lie in Marx's uncovering of the historically oppressive character of society's apparently natural economic structures. Feminist theory has found Marx's analysis most useful in its own attempt to develop an explanatory-diagnostic analysis of women's subordination. But it has become increasingly uneasy with the primacy of place of the relations of production in Marxian analysis, because the only vision of the future it allows as the basis for collective emancipation is the utopia of labour. Feminist theory challenges that view with the idea of a feminist "minimal utopia"

of social life, characterized by nurturant, caring, expressive and nonrepressive relations between self and other, and self and nature (Benhabib and Cornell 1987: 4).³

As heir of Marx, the Frankfurt school of critical theory has not generally dealt with questions of gender. It does, however, put emphasis on issues of subjectivity, everyday life and cultural phenomena, and Habermas has now shifted from the Marxian paradigm of production to that of communication. These dimensions of critical theory offer feminists radical new potential for a feminist reframing of the traditional Marxian problematic in a gender sensitive way.

Not so long ago Canadian sociologist Marshall urged socialist feminists to enter into dialogue with critical theory as a means to counter what she saw as the threats to the feminist movement of the neoconservative, antifeminist movements and the "fashionable relativism" of postmodernism (1988: 223).

In effect, a coherent and collective effort toward that dialogue had already taken place a year earlier with the appearance of the collection *Feminism as Critique* (Benhabib and Cornell 1987).⁴ Among the contributors were feminist theorists such as Benhabib, Cornell, Fraser and Young. The main line of their agenda was to engage the various configurations of twentieth century Marxism with a view to displacing its paradigm of production.

Since then, however, with “Marxist theory worldwide on the retreat,” feminists appear largely to have abandoned their attempt to rescue their “unhappy marriage” with Marxism; they now seem more interested in the possibilities of an alliance with dazzling postmodernism (Benhabib 1995a, 17).

The construct of a diametric opposition between critical theory and postmodernism, of the kind Marshall makes, however, is not really useful.⁴ Nor to my mind is the radical differentiation Habermas wants to make in “Modernity -- An Incomplete Project” ([1981] 1991a) between an emancipatory critical theory and a regressive postmodernism. Increasingly, theorists situating themselves in the tradition of critical theory, such as Bernstein (1993), Calhoun (1993) and Fraser (1995a, 1995b), call for us to move beyond the critical theory versus postmodernism debate. It is a debate which has become sterile. Postmodern thinkers do have insights to contribute to a deeper critical sociological understanding of modernity.

That said, however, I do not want to make a radical shift from Marxism to the postmodern paradigm, because in my view any such attempt presents two serious problems from a feminist perspective. The first is that postmodern thinkers, like Derrida, Foucault and Lyotard, do not really offer the sociological tools for understanding the structural dynamics of advanced capitalist societies. For all that they may be able to deconstruct the ideals of the tradition of the Enlightenment --reason, autonomy, liberal democracy--from the vantage point of those who are excluded from that tradition, such

as gays, nonwhite people and women. Therefore they offer little that is directly useful to feminist theorists wanting to develop an explanatory-diagnostic analysis of women's oppression with emancipatory potential.

There may be some basis to Lyotard's (1979) well-known contention that the "great" narratives of the Enlightenment, Hegelianism and Marxism, are in the final analysis narratives of mastery, but this is not to say that all the great discourses of modernity are necessarily discourses of domination and terror. Great social theory merits more than an undifferentiated attack.⁶ It does have something to say to help women illuminate their situation and prospects in late capitalist societies, especially the large and differentiated theory of Habermas. Such theory, it needs to be said, does not pretend in a dogmatic way to have all the questions and answers. One of the core characteristics of critical theory is that it is inherently open to criticism and dialogue.

The other problem with the postmodern hegemony is a tendency towards the erasure of the history of utopian socialist thinking and practice. That erasure presents the risk of the occlusion of the multidimensional and nonlinear links between May 68, the student movement, the so called "new" social movements and the earlier utopian and Romantic social movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These earlier movements were more or less directly related to wider working-class and labour movements and women quite often played an important role in them.⁷ In their eagerness to turn to postmodernism, feminists are, in my view, too quick to abandon their attempt

to renew the Marxist problematic in a gender sensitive way. They may well be jeopardizing the possibility of a feminist appropriation of the utopian socialist heritage.

Consider, for example, the recent hot debate among several of the former contributors to *Feminism as Critique* (Benhabib and Cornell 1987) over their divergent conclusions on the advantages and disadvantages of an alliance between feminism and postmodernism from the standpoint of its utopian potential (Benhabib et al. 1995).

One of the protagonists, Benhabib (1995a; 1995b), who situates herself squarely within the Habermassian school of critical theory, shares the postmodern critique of some utopias of the Enlightenment as blueprints rationally worked out in advance by some, which others are then somehow to put into practice. However, defining utopia instead as the hope for the "wholly other," and thus as a "practical-moral imperative," she contends that postmodernism has produced a "retreat from utopia" in feminist thinking (1995a: 29-30).

As she sees it, this retreat has expressed itself in the rejection as "essentialism" of the feminist endeavour to articulate a "feminist ethics, a feminist politics, a feminist concept of autonomy, and even a feminist aesthetic" (1995a: 30). While recognizing that the authors of these attempts have tended too often to be white, middle-class and heterosexual, she wonders what women have to gain by depriving themselves of such utopian hope.*

Cornell (1995a; 1995b), another of the protagonists, also holds to the imperative for feminists to think the utopian "wholly other." In the importance she accords to the aesthetic in feminist politics, however, she parts company with Benhabib (1995b: 148). At one level Benhabib does acknowledge that the formulation of a feminist aesthetics is one of the necessary components of a feminist thinking of the "wholly other," but at a deeper level she is skeptical of any claim, such as Cornell makes, that the aesthetic could have an ethical and political dimension to it as well. Following Weber and Habermas, Benhabib conceives of modernity as the differentiation of the logics of the spheres of the cognitive, the ethical and the aesthetic. To be sure, in a vital culture, these differentiated spheres will be in continuing and critical interaction with each other, but Benhabib sees no advantage on either the theoretical or political plane of "blurring" their boundaries (1995b: 116).

Cornell considers that the direction of Benhabib's thinking takes her, in the end, to a position that is not utopian at all, and even "inherently conservative" with respect to feminism (1995b: 148-49). Referring to utopia as "the aspiration to a nonviolent relationship to the Other," she points out that under the name of "mimesis," this utopia is present in both early critical theorists such as Benjamin and Adorno and in postmodern thinkers such as Derrida and Levinas (1995b: 149). It is above all in the nonviolent mimetic relationship to Otherness exemplified in metaphoric-poetic writing that the utopia of mimesis finds its model. Considering the emancipatory use made by feminist

writers of this type of writing, Cornell contends that an alliance between postmodern thinkers such as Adorno and Derrida is crucial to the development of feminist ethical-utopian thought (1995a; 1995b).

Like Benhabib, Fraser (1995b) considers that the Habermassian framework offers feminism an indispensable resource. But she considers it one-sided. It is exclusively oriented to issues of the who and how of participation in public deliberation, and therefore neglects the "passive, constituted side" in communicative practice (1995b: 161). Further, Benhabib's contraposition of critical theory and postmodernism is a false antithesis because Habermas himself is postmodern, in postmodernism can be taken to be, above all the "problematization of language....an epochal shift in philosophy and social theory from an epistemological problematic, in which mind is conceived as reflecting or mirroring reality, to a discursive problematic, in which culturally constructed social meanings are accorded density and weight" (1995b: 157)

Fraser too shares the commitment of Benhabib and Cornell to ethical-utopian thinking, but not of the sort that Cornell appropriates from Derrida since, in her view, Derrida has not completely severed his links with foundationalism, the belief in ultimate foundations of an ontological or transcendental-philosophical nature. Thus, a utopia drawing on his thinking, of the kind Cornell proposes, will be open to the charge that it is situated outside history. It is, in other words, not accessible as a historical possibility. And because of its transcendental character, it risks perpetuating the kind of

homogenizing essentialism that has been undermining cross-class and cross-ethnic solidarity among women. Fraser's conclusion is that feminism should adopt an eclectic, pragmatic approach which recognizes the variety of perspectives from which sociocultural phenomena can be approached: "Which is best will depend on one's purposes" (1995b: 166).⁹

I come to this debate between Benhabib, Cornell and Fraser from the perspective of someone who has wanted to make sense of the ethical-political dimension of a feminist aesthetics within the parameters of Habermas's project of modernity. My several unsuccessful attempts to do this led me to the conclusion that the ethical-political dimension of feminist aesthetics can be made to make sense in the context of Habermas's conceptualization of the project of modernity only if feminist aesthetics is taken to be the feminist transfiguration of that project—in effect an expansion of Habermas's conceptual parameters.

I will argue along with Benhabib and Fraser that an alliance between feminism and Habermas is crucial to the development of feminist utopian thinking. And I will argue along with Cornell that there is a utopian affinity between feminism and the thinking of Adorno and Derrida. Putting these two lines of argument together leads me to dispute the claim put forward by Habermas and Benhabib that Horkheimer and Adorno's utopia of mimesis based on the aesthetic model has been successfully replaced by the utopia of communicative rationality.

Habermas tells us in “Modernity—An Incomplete Project” ([1981] 1991a) that we should see ourselves as the contemporaries of nineteenth century aesthetic modernity, which first delineated itself in the work of Baudelaire and culminated in the early twentieth century avant-garde movements such as Surrealism and Dadaism. Central to aesthetic modernity is an altered consciousness of time which articulates itself in the spatial metaphors of the vanguard and the avant-garde: “The avant-garde understands itself as invading unknown territory, exposing itself to the dangers of sudden, shocking encounters, conquering an as yet unoccupied future. The avant-garde must find a direction in a landscape into which no one seems to have yet ventured” ([1981] 1991a: 5).

This consciousness of the new and the future should be understood as the dream of an “immaculate and stable present” ([1981] 1991a: 5). It is this that explains aesthetic modernity’s relation to tradition. On the one hand, it revolts against the normalizing function of tradition; on the other, it seeks an alternative relation to tradition. It is in Benjamin’s model of the appropriation of ancient Rome by the French Revolution—a model which also expresses the spirit of Surrealism—that Habermas finds the best articulation of this alternative relation: “This is Benjamin’s concept of the *Jetztzeit*, of the present as a moment of revelation; a time in which splinters of a messianic presence are enmeshed. In this sense, for Robespierre, the antique Rome was a past laden with momentary revelations” ([1981] 1991a: 6).

From the vantage point of the 1980s, as Habermas sees it, the notion of an aesthetic avant-garde appears as something irredeemably of the past, while an emerging post-avant-garde art testifies to the failure of the avant-garde movements. The question this raises for him is whether post-avant-garde art signifies a shift to the wider phenomenon of postmodernity.

To develop an answer, Habermas first considers the position of the American sociologist Bell. According to Habermas, Bell contends that the contradictions of advanced capitalist societies are rooted in a split between culture and society. The hedonistic spirit of modernist culture, with its emphasis on "unlimited self-realization" and "hyperstimulated subjectivism," has so permeated everyday social life that it radically impedes the moral ideal of the Protestant ethic which is necessary for the survival of capitalism. However, while Bell concedes the current dominance of modernist culture, he considers that its creative spirit is exhausted. He wants now to find the solution to the contradictions of capitalism in a religious revival that would reestablish the ethic of discipline and work ([1981] 1991a: 6-7).

What worries Habermas in an analysis such as Bell's is that it promotes an intellectual and political hostility towards cultural modernity. As he sees it, the problem resides in a theoretical weakness which leads Bell to confuse societal rationalization and cultural development. As a result, Bell attributes to modernist culture the pathologies which are, in fact, brought about by the penetration into the lifeworld of an economic and

administrative rationality that is destructive of the communicative rationality the lifeworld depends on. So it is, for Habermas, that Bell and other neoconservative thinkers distract us from seeking to uncover both the real economic and social causes of contemporary protests and the emancipatory potential of cultural modernity ([1981] 1991a: 7-8).

At the same time, however, Habermas wants to stress that, quite apart from the contradictions of societal rationalization, cultural modernity itself is not without its own contradictions, serious enough in themselves to put into question the very project of modernity. He locates their origins in the early formulation of the project by the thinkers of the Enlightenment. As he reads Weber, cultural modernity emerges as a result of the rationalization of religious-metaphysical world views (their disenchantment) and of their falling apart, following which their residual elements are differentiated into three autonomous spheres, each having its own rationality: science and technology with a cognitive-instrumental rationality, law and morality with a moral-practical rationality, and art and literature with an aesthetic-expressive rationality. Each of these cultural spheres is the province of experts who have mastered its logic.

Thinkers of the French Enlightenment, such as Condorcet, wanted each of the three spheres to develop autonomously, according to its own logic. At the same time, they wanted to use these specialized cultures for the enrichment of everyday social life, that is, "not only the control of natural forces but also understanding of the world and of the self,

moral progress, the justice of institutions and even the happiness of human beings" ([1981] 1991a: 9). This ideal has not been attained: quite the contrary, instead of contributing to the enrichment of everyday social life, the autonomous development of the spheres has resulted in the specialized cultures being split off from the hermeneutics of everyday communication, with the consequence of a general impoverishment of everyday life. In light of this, Habermas asks whether we should still hold on to the intentions of the thinkers of the Enlightenment, however fragile they may be, or relinquish the project of modernity altogether. It is by reflecting on the emancipatory aspirations of aesthetic modernity that he seeks to develop an answer.

He underlines that in the history of aesthetic modernity, the central phenomenon has been the tendency towards increasing autonomy, by which he means that writers and artists have increasingly eradicated cognitive and moral elements from their work in order to concentrate uniquely on its aesthetic aspect. This tendency became a self-conscious project in the nineteenth century movement of Art for Art's Sake. An avant-garde movement such as Surrealism should be situated in this context. Its attempt to politicize art should be seen in continuity with Schiller's programme in his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education*, in which art plays an emancipatory social role. By the time of Baudelaire, however, art had retreated into the "untouchableness of complete autonomy," and it is out of this dynamic that emerged the Surrealist attempt to bring art back into life

([1981] 1991a: 10-11). Thus, in Habermas's view, avant-garde movements are the continuation of the intentions of the Enlightenment thinkers.

Habermas considers that Surrealism failed for two major reasons. First, in declaring everything to be art and everybody to be an artist, it succeeded only in radically undermining the achievements of aesthetic modernity. There was nothing left to be saved and used for social change. Second, its attempt to release only one of the specialized knowledge complexes (art) to enrich everyday life was not in itself sufficient, for the very reason that the lifeworld can be enriched only by creating unconstrained interaction of the cognitive with the moral-practical and the aesthetic-expressive elements: "Reification cannot be overcome by forcing just one of those highly stylized cultural spheres to open up and become more accessible" ([1981] 1991a: 11-12). That failure notwithstanding, Habermas finds there is a good deal to be learnt from the kind of reception of art advocated by the avant-garde movements, which he sees as pointing to the possibility of holding on to the project of modernity.

He wants to recall, first of all, that in the Enlightenment the reading and critical appreciation of cultural works played an important sociopolitical function in the emergence of the bourgeois public sphere. "Bourgeois art had two expectations at once from its audiences. On the one hand, the layman who enjoyed art should educate himself to become an expert. On the other hand, he should also behave as a competent consumer

who uses art and relates aesthetic experiences to his own life problems" ([1981] 1991a: 12).

Habermas, however, rejects as a "confusion" the pretension of laypersons becoming experts. As he puts it: "artistic production would dry up, if it were not carried out in the form of a specialized treatment of autonomous problems and if it were to cease to be the concern of experts who do not pay so much attention to exoteric questions. Both artists and critics accept thereby the fact that such problems fall under the spell of what I earlier called the 'inner logic' of a cultural domain" ([1981] 1991a: 12).

At the same time, he contends that the exclusive concentration on one aspect of validity alone, to the exclusion of aspects of truth and morality, applies only to the production and professional criticism of art. Drawing on Wellmer, Habermas considers that the Enlightenment's ideal of culture illuminating everyday praxis can still be found in the reception of art by everyday experts. Their appropriation of art is an experience which they use to illuminate their life history and its problems, and when that happens, the reception of art becomes a language game which is no longer that of the expert. Aesthetic reception, then, serves as a means for reinterpreting our needs which, in turn, shape our perception of the world. Aesthetic reception also transforms our cognition and our norms, so that the differentiation of the dimensions of reason which characterizes cultural modernity are brought back together.¹⁰

Here, in contrast to the Surrealist attempt, is a true reconciliation of art and everyday praxis. That there is still the possibility of such an appropriation of autonomous art from the standpoint of the lifeworld is evidence for Habermas that the project of modernity remains to be completed. Artistic reception, however, is only one of the components of the project. There are two others: an alternative relation to tradition, because the hermeneutics of everyday communication cannot do without vital heritages, and the development of solidaristic institutions drawn out of the lifeworld and able to set limits to the dynamics of the economic system and state administration.

Now, I think that feminism, as the development of new forms of moral-political communities, can be considered to be the fulfillment of Habermas's project of modernity. I want, however, to go beyond this. I dispute Habermas's proposition that the production of art has to do only with the aspect of beauty, to the exclusion of the aspects of cognition and morality, and that all art takes place in an autonomous sphere split off from the lifeworld. I argue instead that feminism represents a transfiguration of Habermas's conceptualization of the emancipatory potential of art within the project of modernity.

The principal evidence that Habermas adduces (at the suggestion of Wellmer) for an emancipatory use of art is *The Aesthetics of Resistance* by the German-Swedish writer Weiss. In this novel, Weiss tells the story of a group of young workers in the Berlin of 1937, politically engaged and starved for culture. They find a way by means of evening

education to integrate the social history of European art into their everyday life to the point that they are able to illuminate each with the other. To be sure, this is a narrative of the emancipatory reception of art. But to my mind, Habermas fails to appreciate that this very work is itself a powerful example of the emancipatory production of art.

Weiss is an *expert*, not a layperson, to speak in Habermas's terms. He does not, however, obey the inner logic of the sphere of art with its supposed exclusive concentration on the aspect of beauty and its sharp exclusion of aspects of truth and morality. He barely escaped the Holocaust and as such is deeply concerned with the aspects of truth and morality. Weiss (1983) calls his aesthetics an aesthetics of resistance, and has said that only through the production of novels and plays has he been able to find a way to survive the self-destruction of anger and hatred. As such, his use of art for survival represents a message of hope for all those who have a history of oppression. It has a deep ethical and political dimension.

I maintain that there are deep affinities between Weiss's aesthetics of resistance and the emancipatory use of art that contemporary experts in the production of black and lesbian feminist poetry claim for themselves. To whom should we listen then? To Habermas, who asserts the thesis of the radical autonomy of the three spheres, which transforms the production of poetry into a "luxury" that has nothing to do with the serious business of truth and morality; and that this thesis cannot be challenged because it is "documented in the division of Kant's three *Critiques*" (1985: 199)? Or to the black

lesbian poet, Lorde, who tells us that the writing of poetry is central to the struggles of women's daily lives against sexism and racism? As she puts it

When we view living in the european mode only as a problem to be solved, we rely solely upon our ideas to make us free, for these were what the white fathers told us were precious

But as we come more into touch with our own ancient, non-european consciousness of living as a situation to be experienced and interacted with, we learn more and more to cherish our feelings, and to respect those hidden sources of our power from where true knowledge and, therefore, lasting action comes

At this point in time, I believe that women carry within ourselves the possibility for fusion of these two approaches so necessary for survival, and we come closest to this combination in our poetry. I speak here of poetry as a revelatory distillation of experience, not the sterile word play that, too often, the white fathers distorted the word *poetry* to mean—in order to cover a desperate wish for imagination without insight

For women, then, poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence....The farthest horizons of our hopes and fears are cobbled by our poems, carved from the rock experience. ("Our daily lives" (1984: 37))

It is in the process of seeking to resolve this question that I have come to realize that if sense was to be made of women's poetry, it would be necessary to expand the parameters of Habermas's conceptualization of the project of modernity so as to take into account the phenomenon of Romanticism, with its emphasis on art, imagination and community. With this expansion, I think it becomes possible.

- 1 to see the continuity between contemporary social movements with strong aesthetic-expressive and communitarian dimensions, such as the women's movement and the peace and ecology movements, and the wide variety of

utopian socialist movements which flourished in the nineteenth and early twentieth century and were more or less influenced by Romanticism;

2. to understand the development of critical theory from Marx to Habermas as more or less successful attempts to find solutions to the problematic set in place at the end of the eighteenth century by the dialectical and critical interaction between Romanticism and Enlightenment;
3. to throw light on the Romantic dimension of postmodernism, and
4. to move beyond the controversy between Benhabib, Fraser and Cornell and open the way for a new configuration of the critical theory/postmodernism debate.

It is important to stress at this point that the dissertation presents the overall theoretical argument that feminism should be understood in relation to the three components of the project of modernity: solidaristic public spheres, alternative relation to tradition and emancipatory art. However, the dissertation should not be thought to be an attempt to prove the emancipatory potential of feminist aesthetics and of the feminist appropriation of the past as expressed in contemporary feminist poetry. Rather, it should be considered as the attempt to set in place the necessary theoretical and conceptual framework for such an empirical investigation into feminist poetry.¹¹

So it is that in the first chapter, I challenge Habermas's tendency to reduce modernity to the thinkers of the French Enlightenment. Right from the outset, Enlightenment was linked with Romanticism in deep and complex ways. Following the communitarian thinker Taylor ([1979] 1988), I propose that it makes more sense to see ourselves as the contemporaries of the first Romantic generation of the late eighteenth century, rather than as contemporaries of nineteenth century aesthetic modernity as Habermas would have it. By ourselves I mean people who have ties with contemporary social movements with strong aesthetic-expressive and communitarian aspects such as feminism and the peace and ecology movements

Accordingly, Hoelderlin and Schiller become the reference point of modernity rather than Baudelaire ¹² Now, at this reference point, aesthetic modernity had not yet divorced itself from the lifeworld and eradicated from itself all cognitive and moral elements. There was then an alternative open for art to have a political and ethical dimension giving it emancipatory potential. This alternative, I contend, is now in the process of being fulfilled by contemporary feminism

Romanticism, of course, is more than Romantic art. It can be characterized very broadly by the attempt to effect a synthesis of these two ideals: individual autonomy and a communal or solidaristic link of the individual with her fellow human beings and nature. This problematic is still with us. It is, in effect, the problem of modernity viewed from the Romantic vantage point.

Now, Romanticism has frequently been accused, especially from Marxist quarters, of being inherently reactionary and escapist because of its turn to precapitalist formations in the search for models of communal life. Sayre and Lowy (1982) have made a sociological enquiry into Romanticism which makes clear that there have been a wide variety of types of Romanticism in play over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Some, to be sure, have been regressive, in the sense of wanting to return to the past. This is not so for others, however, especially the utopian socialist types of Romanticism. Utopian socialist Romanticism maintained a critical attitude towards the past while drawing on some of the values of precapitalist societies to create anticipatory images of the future.

Two core themes hold all the various types of Romanticism together. One is a deeply critical attitude towards the negative effects throughout the social fabric brought about by the mercantile rationality of industrial capitalism. The solution to this disenchantment is often conceived as a reenchantment of the world through imagination. The other theme is the loss of fundamental ethical, social and cultural values which are opposed to the capitalist ethos and are perceived as having existed earlier, in a precapitalist past. These values can be grouped around two poles: the development of individual subjectivity to the full measure of its affective and imaginative capacities and the aspiration to unity with nature and the human community. The Romantic individual is engaged in a relentless quest for these values (Sayre and Lowy 1982: 54-59).

Most of the variants of Romanticism share with Enlightenment the commitment to modern individual autonomy, but they differ from it in adopting art rather than science as the model for both the individual and society. Rationalist Enlightenment, however, does not totally dismiss imagination. It is fully deployed in that genuine child of the Enlightenment that is utopia.

Utopia, it is generally agreed, consists in the creation of alternative cities or societies, which both critique the existing order and anticipate the dreamed-of future. However, on closer look, there is more to utopia than just any critical-anticipatory vision of the good society. The vision also has to be radiant and robust enough to mobilize people to action. Utopia has to be able to convince people that the new Jerusalem can be built in the here and now of the complex structural dynamics and crisis situation of modern societies.

Moreover, if in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, utopian imagination can be said to have been most alive at the intersection of Romanticism and socialism, I contend that today it is most active in feminist theory's search for models of nonsexist moral-political communities. In this search, feminists have much to gain by allying themselves with Habermas's work. Because, however, feminist aesthetics is an indispensable dimension of feminist communities, Habermas's work cannot be fully appropriated by feminists unless his rejection of the Romantic aesthetic utopia can be successfully challenged.

Thus, in the second chapter, I turn to *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (1987b) to begin to develop an understanding of this rejection. In that work, Habermas clarifies the presence in his project of modernity of a component with a clear Romantic origin. This is the component of an alternative relation to tradition on the model of Benjamin's concept of time. If following Hegel, modernity is characterized above all by a radical opening to the novelty of the future, Benjamin's Romantic solidaristic approach to the oppressed of the past stands as the countertendency to the risks involved in an exclusive orientation to the future.

In *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, Habermas situates Marx, Horkheimer and Adorno, and himself in relation to Hegel's understanding of modernity. Hegel was the first thinker to realize that modernity had to ground itself out of itself on the basis of the very divisions brought about by the emergence of modern subjectivity, without recourse to exemplary models from the past such as found in the unifying power of religions.

Habermas tells us that ultimately Hegel's philosophical solution to the problem of grounding modernity could not work because he only had access to the subject-object model of instrumental rationality which is oriented towards domination of nature. Habermas himself considers that the solution lies in the larger concept of communicative rationality based on the subject-subject model and oriented towards the reaching of an understanding.

He also tells us that Marx's solution of a utopia of labour could not work for similar reasons. In effect, Marx attempted to ground modernity out of itself by way of the normative concept of labour based on the model of the artistic praxis of the craftsperson. He also, however, remains caught within the conceptual problematic of instrumental rationality, and thus unable to think intersubjectivity.

Faced with the same problem as Hegel and Marx, and entangled within the same conceptual limitations, Horkheimer and Adorno proposed the solution of an alternative, nonviolent relation to nature and to Otherness which they called mimesis. For Habermas, however, it is only by turning to the linguistic paradigm of communicative rationality that it becomes possible to do justice to the utopia of mimesis, otherwise condemned to irrationality.

I disagree that Habermas can do justice to the utopia of mimesis within his framework, because this is a utopia which is based on the ethical dimension of the metaphorical dimension of language; and Habermas's framework insists on taking art and poetry to be devoid of cognitive and moral dimensions. My attempts to do justice to the ethical dimension claimed by contemporary feminist aesthetics led me to the conclusion that the parameters of the project of modernity have to be expanded to take into account the phenomenon of Romanticism, because in Romanticism is to be found an art which is modern, but at the same time not yet emptied of its cognitive and moral aspects.

Before moving on to enquire into the reasons for Habermas's dismissal of the alternative Romantic aesthetic utopia, I present in the third chapter his solution to the problem of modernity of a utopia of communication. For this, I provide a synthesis of the two massive volumes of *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1984; 1987a). This synthesis, it must be said, focuses on those aspects of the theory related to cultural modernity. It does not pretend to be exhaustive.

To develop a sociological definition of communicative rationality, Habermas reconstructs the process of the rationalization of world views with the help of Piaget's developmental psychology. He suggests that what happens in the transition between the mythical, religious-metaphysical and modern ways of thinking is something similar to the cognitive development of the child through the "decentration of an egocentric understanding of the world" (1984: 69).

Habermas characterizes the mythical understanding of the world as a "confusion between nature and culture" (1984: 48). Accordingly, the demythologization of world views is a process of the "desocialization of nature" and of the "denaturalization of society" (1984: 48). With this demythologization, the weight of tradition in the lifeworld diminishes, making it possible for actors to coordinate their actions through "communicatively achieved understanding," rather than through "normatively ascribed agreement" (1984: 70).

Building on Weber's studies of world views, Habermas conceptualizes that the modernization of society is the combination of, on the one hand, the penetration into everyday practice of the potential of the cognitive, ethical and aesthetic rationalization of world views (rationalization of the lifeworld) and, on the other, the emergence of a market-regulated economic system and a complementary state apparatus (societal rationalization).

He criticizes Weber, however, for conceiving of modernization as only a process of societal rationalization. He argues that with the Protestant ethic certain structures of consciousness were institutionalized at the expense of others, which were available at the level of a rationalized lifeworld, but not suited to the needs of a capitalistic economic ethic. The institutionalization of this still untapped potential is, for him, central to the project of modernity.

Communicative action is for Habermas intimately linked to communicative rationality. It is the action which takes place when actors coordinate their actions through "acts of reaching understanding" (1984: 285-86). However, it is only when such action is situated within the lifeworld that the link is established between social theory and the theory of communicative action. On the one hand, it is the lifeworld that provides the resources for communicative action, while on the other, it is through communicative action that the symbolic structures of the lifeworld are reproduced.

With the concept of the lifeworld, society is viewed from the perspective of the actors themselves. The material substratum of the lifeworld, however, is reproduced through economic and administrative processes which escape their intentions. Therefore, a two-level concept of society is needed: society as viewed from the internal perspective of the participant, and society as viewed from the perspective of the observer of a social life conceived of as a functional complex of institutions that can be grasped from the outside as objective interrelations of action (1987a: 153-55).

With his concept of communicative rationality and his two-level concept of society combining both the lifeworld and system paradigms, Habermas proposes a diagnosis of the problems of modernity in terms of two distinct phenomena, colonization and cultural impoverishment. The "pathological" phenomenon of the colonization of the lifeworld is a result of the penetration of the instrumental imperatives of the economy and the state into the communicatively structured domains of action of the lifeworld (1987a: 355). Accordingly, it is no longer in class conflict that Habermas locates the potential for resistance in late capitalist societies, but in new social actors—such as the women's movement and the ecology movements—who situate themselves in the interstices of these communicatively structured domains of action (1987a: 392-93).

The phenomenon of cultural impoverishment, that results in large part from the specialized cultures being split off from everyday life, is to be situated in relation to the end of the "structural violence" of ideologies made possible by the increased reflectivity

of the modern rationalized lifeworld (1987a: 354). As Habermas sees it, late capitalist societies have found a functional equivalent to ideology in the "fragmentation of everyday consciousness," by which he means the difficulty the participants in the lifeworld have in gaining access to its implicit knowledge in a way that would be "sufficiently coordinated" to enable them to see its colonization by the imperatives of the state and the economy (1987a: 355). It is in light of this that he stresses that his theory of modernity needs to be completed by an analysis of cultural modernity which would investigate the conditions for the fulfillment of the project of modernity. It is to such an analysis that I want to contribute in this dissertation by situating feminism with respect to the three components of the project of modernity.

Having provided an outline of Habermas's *The Theory of Communicative Action* as a solution to the problem of modernity, I then present Fraser (1987) and Benhabib's (1992b) feminist critical appropriation of it. Although they find in Habermas's utopia of communication some crucial tools for feminism, they are critical of the way he holds on to dichotomies, such as between the private and the public, which serve to legitimize women's oppression. Fraser reconstructs the subtext of gender relations underlying the social-theoretical framework of *The Theory of Communicative Action*; Benhabib assesses the discourse model of the public sphere which can be found in it.

Building on Fraser and Benhabib, I argue that the utopia of communication can only be a partial solution to the problem of modernity. The reason for this is that, although this

utopia both critiques the present order of things and offers an anticipatory vision of the good society, in its abstractness and formalism it can hardly be seen as radiant and robust enough to meet the demands of the heart and imagination and mobilize people to action. This is in sharp contrast to Habermas's early solution of the historical public sphere which gave primacy of place to the aesthetic-expressive dimension. That was a solution so vibrant that it played a major role in the student movement of the 1960s and the New Left movements of the 1970s.

Before examining that early solution to the problem of modernity, I continue to enquire, in the fourth chapter, into the reasons for the limitations of Habermas's conceptualization of the emancipatory potential of aesthetic modernity. I turn first to Buerger ([1974] 1987) and Wellmer (1991) who throw light on how the modern nonorganic work of art provides a model for a nonviolent relationship to Otherness and provide grounds for building the case of the ethical-political dimension of modern art. I then develop this idea by situating it in relation to the Romantic view of art as a model of community. Now, however, the model is that of a nonorganic community, respectful of difference and heterogeneity.

I then challenge Habermas's contention that he can equate the utopia of mimesis with communicative rationality, and I turn again to *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* to consider, this time, the critiques he advances against the Romantic aesthetic utopia and the use made of metaphor by Adorno and Derrida. Habermas is as irritated as

he is by their use of metaphor because it blurs the division between the autonomous spheres of science, morality and art. It is, however, precisely this rigid division that in the final analysis precludes women's poetry from finding place in his conceptualization of the project of modernity. I challenge that division at the end of the fourth chapter by arguing the case for the ethical-utopian dimension of Adorno and Derrida's use of metaphor.

With that elucidation of the limitations of Habermas's conceptualization of the emancipatory potential of aesthetic modernity within the framework of his theory of communicative action, I turn in the fifth chapter to Habermas's early model of the bourgeois public sphere. This, in effect, can be said to be his quasi-Romantic solution to the problem of modernity, because of the important role that art plays in it. Accordingly, I provide an account of *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* ([1962] 1992a) that focuses on the relationship between the literary and political public spheres. With the new perspective made possible by *The Theory of Communicative Action*, it becomes possible to revisit the thesis of the disintegration of the public sphere in late capitalist societies. I do so by questioning two problematic aspects of that thesis, which Habermas inherited from early critical theorists: the decline of the family, and the all-pervasively negative influence of mass culture. In this light, the case can be made that the thesis of the disintegration of the public sphere is obsolete and that the utopian potential of the historical model remains to be tapped.

In the sixth chapter, then, I develop some of the feminist revisitation that has been made of the early model as a basis for the conceptualization of an alternative, woman-friendly postbourgeois public sphere. I begin with Landes's (1988) argument that the historical bourgeois public constituted itself by putting into place the very public/private dichotomy which has since served to define women as second class citizens by restricting their political function to that of virtuous mothers.

Landes throws light on the gendered symbolic politics of the bourgeois public sphere, but I do not think she does justice to the utopian dimension of Habermas's early work. There are masculinist and elitist biases in that model, to be sure, but these should not blind us to its success, both in grounding modernity out of itself and in fulfilling the Romantic aspirations for communal life. In the moral and political ideal it presents of solidaristic public life based on modern urban life. It is this, to my mind, that is its radical novelty and accounts for its great appeal for contemporary social movements in search of alternative models of public life.

To make my argument, I turn first to Ryan (1990; 1992) who provides a counternarrative to Habermas's narrative of the bourgeois public sphere as she documents the ascension of women into politics in nineteenth century North America. In it, we see women making strategic political use of the possibilities available to them in the new open spaces of the modern city. We also see the outline of a much more plural and decentered concept of the public sphere than that proposed by Habermas

Building on Landes and Ryan, Fraser (1992) offers a fruitful conceptualization of a postbourgeois public sphere in which the experiences, values and needs of women and other emerging movements of the last decades are taken into account. Here I introduce the concept of multicultural literacy seen as a means to cut across racial and cultural difference in the counterpublic sphere.

The question of whether it is possible to cut across lines of racial and cultural difference in feminist counterpublic spheres is one that Young (1987, 1990) addresses directly in the feminist appropriation she makes of both Habermas's early and later models of the public sphere. Although her model of an alternative heterogeneous counterpublic sphere built on city life is of great interest, it insists too much on the impossibility of dialoguing across racial and cultural difference to be truly utopian.

To go further than Young, I then present two conceptualizations of multicultural literacy: one from the perspective of dominant culture and the other from the perspective of nondominant culture. Multicultural literacy conceived from the standpoint of the dominant culture remains skeptical of the possibility of cutting across racial and cultural difference, but multicultural literacy from the standpoint of a nondominant culture—or *mestiza consciousness*—offers a different prospect. Because it is aware of the interlocking of oppressions (racism, sexism, classism, and so on) within social groups, it retains the hope that differences are not so irreducible that it becomes impossible to hold on to the utopia of solidaristic communication with Others.

1. ROMANTICISM, MODERNITY AND UTOPIA

1.1 THE ROMANTIC CRITIQUE OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT

According to Taylor ([1979] 1988), the principle sources of Romanticism are two opposed but not conflictual currents of thought which arose in late eighteenth century Germany in reaction to mainstream French Enlightenment. Borrowing from Isaiah Berlin, Taylor calls the first current of thought "expressivism." It has its roots in the literary movement known as Storm and Stress. Authors in this movement, such as Herder, the young Goethe and Schiller, reacted against mainstream Enlightenment. Because it takes human beings to be essentially calculating and egoistic and society to be atomistic, Enlightenment considers that the only way to bring about individual and social happiness is through the organization of the individual and society according to the principles of scientific social engineering ([1979] 1988: 1).

In contrast to the Enlightenment's objectifying view of the human being as constituted of separated components, the Storm and Stress writers insisted on the living, expressive unity of reason and sensibility, soul and body, reason and feeling. They also criticized the objectifying scientific outlook of the Enlightenment, not only for severing the unity of the human being, but also for cutting the links uniting her to society and nature.

Instead of science, Herder and many others turned to art as an alternative ideal. They likened the living, expressive unity of the human life to the expressive unity of a harmonious work of art, in which each part has signification, not in isolation, but in relation to all other parts. As Taylor underlines, this is when the conception of artistic activity as the model of the highest fulfillment of the individual came into being, a conception which has been influential in shaping the development of the thought and sensibility of modernity.

Related to this conception of human beings as expressive beings is the notion of community. As Taylor points out, Herder's view was that human beings can be expressive beings only to the extent that they belong to a unique and irreplaceable community. Expressivism, moreover, was not only an alternative to modern individualism, but also an alternative to the Enlightenment's relationship to nature as object of domination. It sought instead an expressive, communal interchange between the individual and the whole universe.

The second current of thought and sensibility at the root of Romanticism is the idea of radical freedom. This was an idea directed against the utilitarian determination of the morally right according to various and contingent desires and inclinations. It is best formulated in Kant's attempt to have the morally right determined by a purely formal law, so as to give the moral subject a radical freedom with regard to the contingent nature of objects of desire. Such a radical autonomy of reason, however, proves difficult to

achieve in practice and in the end Kant considered moral life to be a continuous struggle against nature.

Kant's idea of radical freedom "turned the head of a whole generation" ([1979] 1988: 5). On the one hand, there is a deep affinity between expressivism and Kant's view of subjectivity as self-clarity and self-possession in reason. Both sought the highest fulfillment of the individual in the radical freedom of self-determination. On the other, there is a deep clash between radical freedom and expressivism, because radical freedom severs the individual from inner and outer nature, and, further, isolates her from other subjects who can have no share in her radically autonomous decision-making.

So it was that the main goal of the first Romantic generation, such as Schiller, the young Hegel, and Hoelderlin, was to combine the two ideals of autonomy and communal links with the social and natural environment. They wanted to think through and beyond "the opposition between thought, reason and morality on one side, and desire and sensibility on the other, the opposition between the fullest self-conscious freedom on one side, and life in the community on the other; the opposition between self-consciousness and communion with nature; and beyond this the separation of finite subjectivity from the infinite life that flowed through nature" ([1979] 1988: 8).

According to Taylor, Hegel shares with his Romantic contemporaries the attempt to combine radical autonomy and expressive unity, but differs from them in that he wants to achieve the synthesis through reason, rather than through either the medium of art or an

intuitive communion with nature or God. This conflict, as Taylor underlines, is still unresolved. It continues to influence the thinking and sensibility of contemporary society in a fundamental way.

In my view, to understand the problematic of modernity in terms of the attempt to reconcile Kant's ground-breaking shift from uncritical acceptance of tradition to individual self-determination and the aspiration to communal links between self, others and nature is to throw new light on the dynamics of contemporary thinking and practice. For example, the great appeal of the notion of community in the women's movement, and the intense controversy surrounding it, can be understood in light of the Romantic critique of the Enlightenment. So also can Habermas's trajectory from the early model of the public sphere to his later theory of communicative action. I return to these two points later.

Now, for all that Romanticism can be used to shed light on contemporary social phenomena, it has to be acknowledged that it has been little used for that purpose. As Sayre and Lowy point out, because Romanticism eludes the usual conceptual grid of social science, such as Left/Right, conservative/liberal, progressive/reactionary, it has tended to be generally ignored as a perspective. It can be said to be the "lost continent on the map of the social sciences" (1982: 59). In their sociological enquiry into Romanticism, Sayre and Lowy propose to remedy this. By offering an analytic definition of Romanticism and a typology of its various types, they want to show that "this little-

studied and ill-understood world view has in fact played an absolutely crucial role in many different respects, on a worldwide scale and over the course of two centuries" (1982: 60). They go beyond the usual treatment of Romanticism as a purely literary and artistic phenomenon, and see Romanticism as a world view informing various domains, like philosophy, sociology, political theory and economics, and exemplified by writers and thinkers as diverse as Vigny, Novalis, Burke, Proudhon, Marcuse, Simmel and Weber.¹³

Like Taylor, Sayre and Lowy trace the origin of Romanticism to the latter half of the eighteenth century, especially to Rousseau and to the thinkers and writers of the Storm and Stress. Although Romanticism starts as a reaction to the Enlightenment, it should not be conceived as its opposite because, right from the outset, Romanticism is linked with the Enlightenment in deep and complex ways:

rather than simply turning away from the far-reaching cultural critique undertaken in a rationalist vein by the philosophers of the *Aufklärung*, many 18th-century Romantics can be seen as *extending* this critique—widening and developing it further in a new register. Thus, for instance, to the Enlightenment's indictment of aristocratic privilege—judged in the light of Reason—is added a revulsion of the whole affective being against the bourgeois mentality and the capitalist social relations that are increasingly predominating. In this period we often find a subtle admixture of classic Enlightenment attitudes, along with something quite new and different that later comes to be called Romanticism; and in certain cases the two elements do not coexist in contradictory juxtaposition, but rather the second represents a kind of radicalization from within the Enlightenment nucleus (1982: 53).

In their view, no matter how contradictory Romanticism may appear to be across its range of manifestation, it is unified in its reaction against the conditions of life in

capitalist society, especially the mercantile rationality of exchange value. The primary characteristic of Romanticism is a hostility towards the existing order of things, which tends to be quasi-total and deeply emotional. All Romantic themes have to be understood in relation to this revolt against a reality perceived as disenchanting. Consequently, a crucial dimension of Romanticism is a desire for the reenchantment of the world through imagination. Moreover, the reality which is rejected takes the form of the concrete and historical negative effects of modern capitalism as they are worked throughout the social fabric. A society based on money and competition can only divide individuals into selfish atoms antagonistic, or at best indifferent, to each other (1982: 54-55).

Related to the theme of revolt in Romanticism is the theme that fundamental human values, which are perceived as having existed earlier, in a precapitalist past, have been lost. Because of that, the Romantic individual feels alienated, homeless, in exile in the existing order of things. The Romantic longs to return home, conceived as a variety of idealized models of the past, some having historical reality and others being entirely mythical, such as Eden, the Golden age, lost Atlantis, primitive societies, ancient Greece, the medieval era, and the French Ancien Regime. These idealized past models, as Sayre and Lowy underline, become transformed into utopian-anticipatory images of the dreamed-of future. Allied to the sense of loss is a relentless quest for what has been lost, which can take place in either imagination or reality. It can be directed at discovering paradise in the present or at building a New Jerusalem in an actual future (1988: 55-58).

Sayre and Lowy group the ethical, social and cultural values which Romanticism considers lost with capitalism into two opposed but dialectically related poles: individual subjectivity and unity or totality. At the pole of individual subjectivity, understood as the development of the self to the full measure of its affective and imaginative capacities, are values which are often conceived as lost, but which are in fact a fundamental modern phenomenon, a phenomenon, moreover, which constitutes a radical challenge to the conditions of life in capitalist society:

Capitalism calls forth the independent individual to fulfill certain socio-economic functions; but when this individual transforms itself into a full-fledged subjectivity, and begins to explore the internal universe of its particular constellation of feeling, it enters into contradiction with a system based on quantitative calculation and standardization. And when it begins to want to freely exercise its powers of fantasy it comes up against the extreme mechanization and platitude of the world created by capitalist relations. Romanticism represents the revolt of the repressed, manipulated and deformed subjectivity, and of the "magic" of imagination banished from the capitalist world (1982: 58).

At the pole of unity, understood as unity with the universe of nature and the human community, are values that represent a true return to the precapitalist past, although sometimes the return is in the form of the "recreation of past unity on a higher level" (1982: 58).

In the context of this definition of Romanticism, Sayre and Lowy offer a typology of the various tendencies that can be distinguished in Romanticism, organized around the criterion of their attitude towards capitalism. I present it here in outline, because it provides two insights that are useful to my purpose.

They call their first ideal type restitutionist Romanticism. It is characterized above all by the attempt to reconstitute precapitalist social formations, most often those found in traditional agrarian societies and in the medieval past (1982: 63-67).

Conservative Romanticism is close to restitutionist Romanticism. It is largely the province of political thinkers, and is especially exemplified in the work of Burke. Burke wanted not so much to reestablish the precapitalist past, as to enrol tradition in the defense of England against the French Revolution (1982: 67-69).

Fascist Romanticism is a particularly sinister ideal type. While Sayre and Lowy dissociate themselves from the general tendency to associate fascism and Romanticism, and stress that Romanticism and fascism are in many respects fundamentally different, they nevertheless cannot deny that this sort of Romanticism was an important tendency which still survives. It is characterized by the rejection of capitalism, parliamentary democracy and Communism, by anti-Semitism, and by the transformation of the Romantic value of subjectivity into irrationality to the point of the erasure of the individual (1982: 69-71) It found its idealized models of the past in "a prehistory peopled with barbarous, instinctive and violent savages, Greco-Roman antiquity in its elitist, slaveowning and martial aspects, the Middle Ages...and the rural *Volksgemeinschaft*" (1982: 71).

The type of resigned Romanticism appears in the second half of the nineteenth century, when capitalist industrialization had advanced so far as to render impossible any

dream of the reestablishment of precapitalist social formations. Resigned Romanticism is close to the conservative type in its grudging acceptance of capitalism, but differs from it in its robust social criticism of industrial civilization. It is best exemplified by German social scientists at the turn of the century, such as Tonnies, Weber, Simmel and Mannheim. Sayre and Lowy see this type as having a deeply tragic dimension to it. All return to precapitalist social and cultural values is illusion. Social decadence is unavoidable (1982: 72-74).

Liberal Romanticism does not hold decadence to be unavoidable. It is critical of capitalism, but believes that improvements are possible through reform rather than through radical change. It is distinguished from pure liberalism by its critical attitude towards capitalism. Michelet, Lamartine, and Hugo are representative of this combination of Romantic social criticism and acceptance of the status quo (1982: 74-77).

Finally, there is revolutionary and/or utopian Romanticism, by far the type with the greatest emancipatory potential. It wants neither to return to precapitalist organic communities, nor to accept bourgeois capitalism. Rather, it aims at the transfiguration of the present order and the building of a utopian future which would embody some of the values of precapitalist societies. Several variants can be distinguished. Among these are utopian-humanist socialism, anarchist Romanticism and Marxist Romanticism.

Thinkers of utopian-humanist socialism seek to construct alternative models to industrial-bourgeois civilization by using selected precapitalist ethical and religious

values and social formations. Fourier, Cabet, Enfantin and a large number of Saint-Simonians are thinkers of this sort. Not all thinkers of utopian-humanist socialism are Romantic in orientation. Owen and Saint-Simon, for example, can be held to be "above all men of the Enlightenment, favoring industry and progress" (1982: 82).

Libertarian or anarchist Romanticism criticizes both industrial capitalism and the centralized state. It draws on precapitalist values and traditions to formulate the utopia of a federation of small communities comprised mostly of peasants and artisans. Its apogee was at the turn of the century. It is exemplified by Proudhon, Bakunin and Kropotkin (1982: 83-84).

The origin of Marxist Romanticism can be traced back to the work of Morris at the end of the nineteenth century. It became further developed in the work of the British historians Thompson and Williams. Its summit, however, is in German culture, in the work of the young Lukács, Bloch, and the thinkers of the Frankfurt School, particularly Benjamin and Marcuse. It remains committed to the central themes of Marxism: sociological analysis of the economic system, the importance of working class and labour movements, and the emancipatory potential of modern forces of production. But it is also characterized by a deep Romantic sensitivity to the cost of industrial capitalism to both the free development of individual subjectivity and solidarity (1982: 85-87)

Sayre and Lowy's typology of Romanticism illustrates the way in which modernity can be seen to be a deep and complex nexus of both the Enlightenment and

Romanticism. What holds the different dimensions within Romanticism together is that they share in the larger common theme of the conflict between modern individual subjectivity and the longing for communal links with society and nature. What lends diversity to Romanticism is the historical context of its search for the solution to that conflict.

Romanticism emerges in the context of the capitalist economy, which progressively eradicates precapitalist communal forms of life, and of cultural modernity, in which recourse to religion or mysticism is progressively less acceptable as a solution. New directions of resolution come to be explored. The directions of some types of Romanticism are uncritical toward tradition and want to regress into the past. The directions of others, especially the revolutionary and/or utopian types, are critical towards the past, while drawing on some of the precapitalist values to create alternative visions of the future.

The Sayre-Lowy typology is a good map of the directions in which Romanticism's quest has taken it. What I find problematic about this map, however, is that ultimately Romanticism is defined in negative terms according to its orientation to the past and its critique of capitalism. What this occludes is that Romanticism should also be defined positively according to the crucial importance it accords to art and the free play of the imaginative capacities of the individual. This phenomenon is a thoroughly modern one. In my view, Sayre and Lowy appear to share the view of Taylor (and also of Habermas

and Benhabib) that art has relatively little emancipatory potential. Taylor exemplifies this point of view in this comment on the attempt by Hegel's contemporaries to solve the Romantic dilemma: "Either they held to the vision of an unboundedly free creative subject, but at the cost of exile in a God-forsaken world; or they sought unity with the divine beyond reason, but at the cost of abandoning their autonomy to a larger order beyond their comprehension" ([1979] 1988: 48).

I can agree with the rejection of mysticism as a solution, but it is not at all evident to me why the free creative subject should necessarily be in exile in modernity. I want to argue instead, with Marcuse ([1955] 1974: 172-96), that in Schiller's Romantic programme of an aesthetic state the free creative subjects can directly challenge the capitalist order of things. They can find a home in modernity. They can do this by using the power of art to reshape human needs and desires, as the basis for a more humane society.

Implicit in Taylor is the dismissive view that art, in the words of the feminist poet Rich, "is powerless, or that it can have nothing to do with the kinds of powers that organize us as a society, as communities within that society, as relationships within communities" (1993: xiv). Rich herself, from the vantage point of the lifeworld, makes a very different claim: "I have never believed that poetry is an escape from history, and I do not think it is more, or less, necessary than food, shelter, health, education, decent

working conditions. It is as necessary" (1993: xiv). My purpose, it will be recalled, is to make sense of this claim in the context of modernity as conceptualized by Habermas.

To make such sense of feminist poetry, I argue that the parameters of Habermas's project of modernity have to be expanded to take into account the problematic set in place by the dialectical and critical interaction between Romanticism and Enlightenment. In this context, I provide an assessment of the cogency of Habermas's rejection of the Romantic aesthetic utopia in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* as well as of his own solution to the Romantic dilemma. However, while the belief in the emancipatory power of imagination is central to Romanticism, this should not lead us to suppose that imagination is absent from the rationalist tradition of the Enlightenment. In fact, imagination plays a central role in utopia, that fascinating hybrid of art and politics which is squarely rooted in the Enlightenment. I turn next to the relationship between utopia and modernity.

1.2 UTOPIA AND MODERNITY

Utopia, a pun coined by Thomas More signifying both *no-place* and *good-place*, has above all to do with the creation of alternative ideal cities or societies. As such, utopia both criticizes the existing order of things and anticipates an emancipatory image of the future.¹⁴ At the beginning of modernity, utopia took the form of the literary genre of a

voyage to an imaginary place where reigned the good life, as in More's *Utopia*, Campanella's *City of the Sun*, and Bacon's *New Atlantis*.

With the advent of democracy, brought on by the French Revolution, and the concretization of the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity, albeit more in principle than in practice, the thinkers of utopian socialism (of Romantic orientation or not) like Saint-Simon, Fourier and Owen were no longer confined to situating their dream on an imaginary island. They could now set about devising alternative social systems to remedy the imperfect social conditions of their own times. In that capacity, they were to an extent the forerunners of contemporary social scientists.¹⁴ They, however, did not stop in the realm of thought. They went beyond it, to foster many actual utopian communitarian experiments, a lot of which took place in North America. Women, it needs to be recalled, often played a crucial role in these communities.¹⁵

Marx and Engels ([1848] 1965, [1880] 1965), for their part, much admired the great utopian socialists and were much influenced by them. For strategic political reasons, however, they chose to denigrate their solutions to social problems as abstract and idealist, inefficient fantasies which can only make us smile.¹⁶ It may well be that it was also for strategic political reasons that Lenin nipped in the bud the fascinating feminist utopian experiments that took place in early postrevolutionary Russia, such as those initiated by Kollontai and Zetkin.¹⁷

The British socialist feminist Rowbotham (1984) argues that the Marxist project may have paid a very high price for this early denigration of utopian socialist thinking. The great strength of Marxism has been its capacity to grasp the potential for change in a given historical situation, how to get there. Its great weakness may prove to be that the reason it proposed for wanting to get there and the vision it offered of how it would be there failed to encompass the utopian aspirations of the wide variety of movements of resistance which have flourished in modernity. Amputated from utopian imagination, Marxism has in the long run simply been unable to propose any other image of the future than the "utilitarian earthly paradise of economic growth" (1984: 9).

Where, however, can the vision of a better and more humane society be drawn from? To what extent can images of the past be used as utopian-anticipatory images of the future, without falling into the trap of representing a refusal of history and a nostalgic regression to the mythical past? As has been seen, Sayre and Lowy argue that the use of the past by utopian socialist Romanticism does not represent a true return to the precapitalist past, but the recreation of past unity on a higher level.

Yet Goodwin¹⁹ contends in *The Politics of Utopia* (1982), that a utopia situated in the past, while it may well furnish grounds for critical thought, can do little more than foster quiescence and fatalism, since it can offer no programme nor any immediate hope for improvement now (1982: 26). To make her case, she provides a typology of the

various hypothetical devices that political theorists have used in their critique of the existing order, against which the temporal orientation of a utopian model can be tested:

- Criticism of the present through idealization of the past (the Golden Age, Arcadia, Eden, Rousseau's Noble Savage);
- Justification of the present by reference to a hypothetical past (Locke, Hobbes);
- Justification of the present by reference to a hypothetical present (Rawls, Nozick);
- Inversion of the present for critical purposes, the world turned upside down (Swift);
- Justification of the present by reference to a future that is worse (Orwell's *1984*, Huxley's *Brave New World*); and
- Constructive criticism of the present through the formulation of an ideal alternative situated either in the present or the future (1982: 22-28).

In her view, only the last of these hypothetical constructs properly corresponds to a utopia.

The analysis Goodwin makes of utopia is useful in that it reminds us that there is more to utopia than just a critical-anticipatory vision of the good society. The vision has

to have enough radiance and robustness to mobilize people out of passive acceptance and into emancipatory action. As another theorist of utopia, Bauman, puts it:

The utopian imagination cannot remain content with far-off bliss and perfection. It is characterized by an insatiable effort to pull heaven down to earth by a violent effort. It not only wants to effect a radical change here, it also wants it now, if possible. Therefore a utopia generally presents a picture of an imaginary society whose standard, in the author's opinion, ought to or might be reached by the young reader's generation within their own lifetime (1976: 22).

Utopia has to be able to convince people that heaven can be built in the here and now.

That is fine as far as it goes, but to reduce utopia to an alternative vision necessarily situated in the present or the future, as Goodwin does, is to deny the concept much of its radical emancipatory change. From a feminist perspective now aware that there is a solid tradition of women's alternative thinking and practice going back at least to the early medieval era, it will not do to preclude a priori the drawing of emancipatory images from the past.²⁰ That said, however, the fact remains that for an anticipatory image of the dreamed-of future to be sufficiently radiant and robust, it has to present itself as a viable solution to the problem generated by the structural dynamics and the crisis tendencies of late capitalist societies.

In light of this, I want to propose that, if in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, utopianism can be seen to be very much alive at the intersection of Romanticism and socialism, it is today in feminist political theory that utopian imagination is to be found at its most active.²¹ Accordingly, I want to build on Goodwin's

idea that utopia represents the creative and constructive dimension of political theory and as such an indispensable element of progressive political thinking. I see feminist political theory as inherently utopian, since it involves no less than the creation of a new paradigm of a nonsexist political life. As I will show, in the search for this new paradigm, it has gained much from entering into dialogue with Habermas's alternative model of public life in both his early and later work.

However, given the importance of Romantic aesthetic-communal dimensions in the feminist models of public life, Habermas's work cannot be fully appropriated unless his rejection of the Romantic aesthetic utopia can be successfully challenged. To begin to develop an understanding of this rejection, I turn in the next chapter to *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (1987b). In that work, Habermas situates Hegel, Marx, Horkheimer and Adorno and himself in relation to modernity's requirement to find its normative grounding out of itself without having recourse to exemplary models of the past. He also throws light on the apparently puzzling presence in his project of modernity of Benjamin's Romantic orientation to the past; and he presents an alternative to the dichotomy between a reactionary regression to the past and an exclusive orientation to the future.

2. HABERMAS AND THE PHILOSOPHICAL DISCOURSE OF MODERNITY

2.1 BENJAMIN AND THE PROJECT OF MODERNITY

On the one hand, Habermas claims that we should hold on to the project of modernity as formulated in the eighteenth century by Enlightenment thinkers such as Condorcet. On the other, in his critical reformulation of the project, he includes a component with a strong Romantic dimension. This is an appropriation of tradition on the model of Benjamin's concept of *Jetztzeit*. Before attempting to make sense of this apparent contradiction in Habermas's project of modernity, I want first to look at Benjamin's Romantic orientation to the past, as he explains it in his "Theses on the Philosophy of History" ([1940] 1988).

In his "Theses," written shortly before his suicide to escape death in a concentration camp,²² Benjamin criticizes the concept of progress held by the German Social Democrats of his day as "first of all, the progress of mankind itself (and not just advances in men's ability and knowledge). Secondly, it was something boundless, in keeping with the infinite perfectibility of mankind. Thirdly, progress was regarded as irresistible, something that automatically pursued a straight or spiral course" ([1940] 1988: 260). For Benjamin, such a concept implies a "progression through a homogeneous, empty time" ([1940] 1988: 21). In contrast, central to his own concept of time is the idea that:

History is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogeneous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now [*Jetztzeit*]. Thus, to

Robespierre ancient Rome was a past charged with the time of the now which he blasted out of the continuum of history. The French Revolution viewed itself as Rome reincarnate. It evoked ancient Rome the way fashion evokes costumes of the past. Fashion has a flair for the topical, no matter where it stirs in the thickets of long ago; it is a tiger's leap into the past. This jump, however, takes place in an arena where the ruling class gives the command. The same leap in the open air of history is the dialectical one, which is how Marx understood the revolution ([1940] 1988: 261).

Benjamin's concept of time is oriented towards the tradition of oppressed groups. It gives them the potential to challenge the dominant group's linear history of progress by articulating the past historically, which is

to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger. Historical materialism wishes to retain that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to man singled out by history at a moment of danger. The danger affects both the content of the tradition and its receivers. The same threat hangs over both: that of becoming a tool of the ruling class. In every era the attempt must be made anew to wrest tradition from a conformism that is about to overpower it ([1940] 1988: 255).

Revolutionary groups are, for Benjamin, characterized, as were the French revolutionaries, by their recognition that they are in a position to explode the homogeneous continuum of history, because they understand the "secret agreement" which exists between their specific situation and some past situation of emancipatory potential. These groups "have retroactive force and will constantly call in question every victory, past and present, of the rulers. As flowers turn toward the sun, by dint of a secret heliotropism the past strives to turn toward that sun which is rising in the sky of history" ([1940] 1988: 255).

What sense should be made of Benjamin's Romantic messianic concept of time within Habermas's secular project of modernity? In *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (1987b), Habermas tells us that any understanding of modernity has to start from Hegel because it is he who articulated the first clear concept of modernity. For Hegel, modernity is above all characterized by a radical opening to the novelty of the future: "it is the epoch which lives for the future" (1987b: 5). Deeply influenced by the sweeping break from the past brought about by the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, modernity acquires a sense of excitement and dynamism expressed by emerging words such as "revolution, progress, emancipation, development, crisis and *Zeitgeist*" (1987b: 7). It is as if modernity lives with the heightened sense that the sweeping break has to be made over and over and that each moment should lead to a "glorious sunrise" (Hegel quoted in Habermas 1987b: 7).

Because of its radical orientation to the future, modernity can no longer find the normative foundation it needs in the unifying power of religion, it requires a new normative foundation: "Modernity can and will no longer borrow the criteria by which it takes its orientation from the models supplied by another epoch; *it has to create its normativity out of itself*" (1987b: 7).²¹ It is in this spirit that the young Hegel wrote: "Apart from some earlier attempts, it has been reserved in the main for our epoch to vindicate, at least in theory, the human ownership of treasures formerly squandered on

heaven; but what age will have the strength to validate this right in practice and make itself their possessor?" (Hegel quoted in Habermas 1987b: 7-8)

Habermas stresses that it is aesthetic criticism that is first led to confront the challenge of the self-grounding of modernity. Drawing on Jauss, he points out that this challenge is at the core of the well-known *querelle des anciens et des modernes* in which the moderns set their model of a "relative or time-conditioned beauty" up against French classicism's ideal of "timeless and absolute beauty" (1987b: 8). He gives particular attention to the poetry and art criticism of Baudelaire, which should be understood as the continuation of the *querelle*. With Baudelaire, however, the problem of the self-grounding of aesthetic modernity takes a new turn: by mid-nineteenth century, the artist has taken a radical distance not only from the imitation of past models but also from the conventions of everyday life. Detached from these conventions, Baudelaire's "idler" becomes free to discover a strange new beauty in the ephemerality of everyday life. As Habermas puts it: "In this way, modernity is rescued, not from its infirmity, surely, but from triviality" (1987b: 9). In the modern work of art, eternal beauty can only appear "in the guise of the costume of the times" (1987b: 9).

Benjamin later takes up Baudelaire's idea of the kinship of poetry and fashion in order to find a solution to the self-grounding of modernity. He establishes a parallel between the French Revolutionaries' appropriation of ancient Rome and the way the creator of fashion deals creatively with costumes of the past. He does this through his

concept of a now-time which posits a messianic correspondence between the emancipatory potential in the present and the unredeemed injustices of the past. Benjamin's concept of time enables modernity to "constantly take its normativity from mirror images of pasts whose services are *enlisted* for this purpose. They are no longer perceived from the outset as exemplary pasts" (1987b: 11).

Still, Habermas acknowledges that it is hard to make sense of Benjamin's consciousness of time, a curious hybrid of Surrealism and Jewish mysticism that informs Benjamin's thinking. He considers this consciousness as important, however, because it can be counterpoised to the teleological view of history inherent in the modern notion of progress, which tends towards closing off the sense of the future as source of energy for radical change.

Habermas points out that, apart from Benjamin, the tendency of modernity's time consciousness to lose its vitality has been offset by a recurring process of revitalization through radical historical thinking, such as that of Marx, Nietzsche and Heidegger. Through such thinking, modernity's orientation to the future is also directed towards the past from the vantage point of the horizon of expectations in the present: "Inasmuch as we appropriate past experiences with an orientation to the future, the authentic present is preserved as the locus of continuing traditions and of innovation at once" (1987b: 13).

Habermas sees Benjamin as going much beyond the "secret narcissism" of an appropriation of the potential of the past by a present motivated by the problems of future

generations (1987: 15). With Benjamin's "profane insight" of an anamnestic solidarity between the oppressed of the past and those born after them: "It is no longer only future generations, but past generations as well, that have a claim on the weak messianic power of the present. The anamnestic redemption of an injustice, which cannot of course be undone but can at least be virtually reconciled through remembering, ties up the present with the communicative context of a universal historical solidarity" (1987b: 15).

With this (partial) clarification of the significance of the Romantic component of Benjamin's alternative relation to the past in Habermas's project of modernity, I turn next to his treatment of Hegel's solution to the Romantic dilemma.

2.2 HEGEL'S SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF MODERNITY

Here I present my account of Habermas's account of Hegel's attempt to find a solution to the problem of modernity. That problem, at risk of oversimplification, is the problem of the modern individual's search for communal links with others and nature without regressing to a premodern organic fusion of the individual with her natural and social environments. The young Hegel, along with his friends Hoelderlin and Schelling, early on proposed an aesthetic utopia as a solution. Later Hegel abandoned this. Habermas himself dismisses the idea that art can make any contribution to the solution other than in its reception by the nonexpert.

Later, I will challenge that dismissal. Here I want to set out—as background to that challenge—Habermas's treatment of Hegel, and also of Marx, Horkheimer and Adorno, from the vantage point of the Romantic aesthetic utopia. To anticipate some of the argument, I suspect that the reason why Habermas dismisses the Romantic aesthetic utopia is because ultimately he considers us to be the contemporaries of avant-garde art, and not of Romantic art which for him is art at a stage when it had not yet achieved its pure autonomy and emptied itself of all cognitive and moral admixtures. It is because he has predecided, predetermined that the logic of modern art is to attain that pure autonomy, "foreseen" by Kant, that in the end he does not accord more attention to the Romantic view of the emancipatory potential of art.

According to Habermas, Hegel is the first thinker to realize that a modernity without exemplary models in which to ground itself has somehow to ground itself on the basis of the very divisions that the emergence of the subjectivity of the modern individual brings about. Any understanding of modernity, therefore, has to start with him. For Hegel, the principle of modernity is above all subjectivity, a structure of self-relation taken to encompass the connotations of individualism, the right to criticism, autonomy of action and idealistic philosophy itself (1987b: 17). Subjectivity comes into existence as the Reformation, the Enlightenment and the French Revolution effectively undermine the authority of tradition. As Habermas points out, the structure of the principle of subjectivity found its expression in the philosophy of Descartes and Kant: it is the

structure of a subject looking at itself as though it were an object in order to grasp itself as in a mirror image.

Further, Kant replaces the substantialist notion of reason of traditional world views with the notion of a reason "that divides up into its moments, the unity of which now has only a formal character. He separates the faculties of practical reason and of judgment from that of theoretical knowledge, and he places each of them on its own foundation" (1987b: 18). In rough correspondence to the three *Critiques* of Kantian philosophy, the principle of subjectivity also determines the later differentiation of cultural modernity into the three autonomous value spheres of science, morality and art. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, science, morality and art also became institutionalized as autonomous realms of action, each falling under a specific aspect of validity.

According to Habermas, the problem Hegel sees in Kant is that the latter "does not perceive as diremptions the differentiations within reason, the formal divisions within culture, and in general the fissures among all those spheres. Hence he ignores the need for unification that emerges with the separation evoked by the principle of subjectivity" (1987b: 19). In other words, Hegel raises the question of whether the structure of the modern self-relating, knowing subject, which is responsible for the diremptions of modernity to start with, can at the same time furnish the "source of normative orientations" necessary for replacing the unifying power of religion (1987b: 20). Hegel's answer to this question is that the principle of subjectivity is too one-sided to be able to

do this; while it succeeds in forming autonomous and critical individuals, as the source of oppositions such as between nature and mind and I and non-I, it cannot replace religion in the medium of reason (1987b: 20-21).

However, Hegel thinks that he himself can succeed in replacing the unifying power of religion through the medium of reason. As Habermas tells us, through his critical assessment of thinkers of the principle of subjectivity such as Kant and Fichte who had assigned reason supreme authority, Hegel becomes persuaded that they had made the mistake of using too narrow a concept of reason—that of understanding or reflection instead of the larger one of reason itself—and thus gave to something finite the status of an absolute (1987: 23-24).

Habermas maintains that the reason why Hegel assumed the possibility of an absolute power of unification in reason has to be understood in the light of the crisis experiences of his Romantic youth and his friendship with Hölderlin and Schelling. Like many of his contemporaries in the seminary at Tübingen, the young Hegel was a partisan of the freedom movements of his time and was deeply influenced both by Kant's view of morality and religion and by the emancipatory ideas of the French Revolution. As a result, he was also critical of the tightly structured rule of life in his seminary and of the kind of Protestant Orthodoxy he was studying. This configuration of events and ideas leads Hegel to a complex position vis-à-vis both the Enlightenment's religion of reason and the religion of his time. On the one hand, he agrees with Kant that religion is "the

power to act upon and to establish the rights which reason has bestowed" (Hegel quoted in Habermas 1987b, 25). On the other, he also takes from Rousseau the idea of a popular religion which, while grounded in universal reason, would also satisfy the demands of the heart and imagination. According to this alternative vision, "the public actions of the government are joined to all needs of life" (Hegel quoted in Habermas 1987b, 25).

The young Hegel considered that his times were characterized by a "positivity" of ethical life. By positive, he meant above all the religions founded only on authority and detached from the spirit and morality of the masses of human beings and from public life. However, while Hegel agrees with the Enlightenment critique of religions, he also thinks that the religion of reason is "no less an abstraction" because it is severed from the institutions of public life (1987b, 26). The young Hegel also considered the political conditions and the governmental institutions of his day to be positive. Thus, for him the sundered ethical totality can only be reestablished through the combination of freedom and a popular religion manifesting itself in public through celebrations, myths and cults.

The problem the young Hegel confronted, then, is to demonstrate that modernity can eradicate positivity and reestablish the disintegrated totality through a solution that is not borrowed from exemplary past models, but is instead rooted in a modernity, the principle of which is a subjectivity that in itself generates positivity. This concept of subjectivity is the same as that expressed in the philosophy of reflection of Fichte and Kant: the model

of a subject that makes itself an object. Such subjectivity is a subjectivity of the domination of the subject over the object. It cannot, therefore, replace the reconciling power of religion.

Yet, in his early writings, as Habermas points out, Hegel was able to go beyond the concept of a subjectivity based on the subject-object model by conceiving subjectivity as the intersubjectivity of mutual understanding. He was not, however, able to pursue this line of thought, because it was based on the presupposition of an ethical totality, which is nowhere to be found in modernity, that he borrowed from the idealized models of the primitive Christian community and the Greek polis. In the end then, Hegel abandoned both the idea of a popular religion and these traces of communicative reason and instead developed the solution for the self-grounding of modernity that has come to be associated with his name.

Habermas introduces this solution by first taking a look at another solution to the problem of replacing the unifying power of religion in modernity which is to be found in the young Hegel: the Romantic utopia of "art as a power of reconciliation indicative of the future" which he shared with his friends Schelling and Hoelderlin (1987b: 31). In this utopia, reason would enlist the services of art because of art's capacity to satisfy the demands of the heart and of the imagination and mobilize people. As the young Hegel himself put it: "Before we make the ideas aesthetical, i.e. mythological, they have no

interest for the *people*; and on the other hand, before mythology is rational, the philosopher must be ashamed of it" (Hegel quoted in Habermas 1987b: 32).

Habermas wants to emphasize that right from the outset Hegel himself questioned the validity of the aesthetic utopia because he saw in the Romantic art of his time that same subjectivism that was the cause of modernity's divisions. Romantic poetry, being a "poetry of diremption," was thus not fit to be the "schoolmistress of mankind" and to rule over philosophy (1987b: 32).

Rather, Hegel thought it was through the philosophy of reflection, and thus reason, that modernity had to attempt to achieve its need for unification. Habermas describes Hegel's conceptual strategy as follows:

If the true identity is in turn supposed to be developed from the approach of the philosophy of reflection, reason does have to be thought of as the relation-to-itself of a subject, but now as a reflection that does not merely impose itself upon another as the absolute power of subjectivity; rather it finds its existence and movement in nothing else but resisting all absolutizing, that is, in doing away again with every positive element that it brings forth. In place of the abstract antithesis of finite and infinite, therefore, Hegel puts the absolute self-relation of a subject that attains self-consciousness from its own substance and has its unity within itself as the difference between the finite and the infinite (1987b: 33).

With this strategy, the mature Hegel thought he could heal the wounds of modernity through the principle of subjectivity immanent in it.

The young Hegel and his friends had not been alone in placing their hopes in the emancipatory potential of art. As Habermas notes, basing himself on Jauss, Schlegel and

Schiller took on the problematic of the French debate between the ancients and the moderns, which they conceived as an opposition between the natural and the artificial, the naive and the sentimental, the classical imitation of nature and the modern expression of freedom and reflection. And it is Schiller's notion of the "reflective" art of Romanticism that becomes integrated into Hegel's concept of the absolute spirit:

In art in general the spirit is said to catch sight of itself as the simultaneous occurrence of self-externalization and return-to-self. Art is the sensuous form in which the absolute is grasped *intuitively*, whereas religion and philosophy afford higher forms in which the absolute already *represents* [*vorstellt*] and *conceives* [*begreift*] itself. Art therefore discovers an inner limit in the sensible character of its medium and finally points beyond the boundaries of its mode of presentation to the absolute (1987b: 35).

In other words, because the artist works through a medium which is sensual and not conceptual, the reconciliation of the divisions emerging with modernity can be recognized as a problem by modern art but not resolved through it. This is the reasoning underlying Hegel's conclusion that Romanticism is essentially "decadent" and represents the "completion" of art (1987b: 35).

The same reasoning underlies Hegel's conclusion that religion has been sublated into philosophy. He abandons religion which, with the atheism of the Enlightenment, he considers to have reached the same stage of decadence and completion as art. Philosophy's task now is to salvage the content of faith by transforming it into conceptual knowledge, while discarding its religious form. Much the same reasoning underlies Hegel's view of the sublation of civil society into the state.

The Hegelian sublation of civil society has to be understood in light of the need to find a conceptual replacement to the Aristotelian concept of politics as comprehending both state and society. In the nineteenth century, the Aristotelian concept could no longer do justice to the novelty of modern societies in which the two functionally complementary systems of action—a depoliticized economy and a bureaucratized state—become differentiated from the social system. According to Habermas, with his view of a civil society as separated from the political sphere of the state, Hegel incorporates in his theory of society the same opposition between the normativity of antiquity and the gains in freedom and reflection of modernity which he found in the theory of art.

Thus, Hegel sees civil society as characterized by the strategic pursuit of selfish interests, while, however, everyone remains mutually interdependent. Despite the fact that civil society is an “ethical life split into its extremes and lost,” Hegel considers that the individual’s gain of freedom in modern society is emancipatory (Hegel quoted in Habermas 1987b: 38). What now becomes necessary is to “educate” the subjectivity of the individual in its “particularity” so as to reestablish, under the conditions of social modernity, the ethical ideals of the ancients which he had earlier wanted to achieve through his idea of a popular religion (1987b: 38).

For Hegel, the reestablishment of the ethical ideals of the ancients is to be achieved through the sublation of civil society into the state. For Habermas, however, it is not at all obvious why the sphere of the ethical should be “concentrated” in the state (1987b: 39).

Habermas considers that this solution only makes sense because Hegel works with the concept of an "absolute" based on the model of the knowing subject which relates to itself as to an object:

If the absolute is then thought of as infinite subjectivity that is eternally giving birth to objectivity in order to raise itself out of its ashes into the glory of absolute knowledge, then the moments of the universal and the individual can be thought of as unified only in the framework of monological self-knowledge: In the concrete universal, the subject as universal maintains a primacy over the subject as individual. For the sphere of the ethical, the outcome of this logic is the primacy of the *higher-level subjectivity of the state* over the subjective freedom of the individual (1987b: 40).

As Habermas sees it, Hegel, in his attempt to solve the problem of how to overcome the divisions of modernity by means of its own driving forces, succeeds but succeeds "too well" (1987b: 42). With his concept of reason turned into "absolute knowledge" Hegel neglects historical, sensual existence and abandons his earlier critical attitude (1987b: 42-43).

One need only compare the richness of Hegel's early notion of a popular religion, Habermas says, to what remains after the sublation of art and faith into philosophy to make sense of the resignation of the late Hegel. The most that philosophy can accomplish is a "partial reconciliation," without the satisfaction of the demands of the heart and the imagination which alone could arouse the enthusiasm of the people (1987b: 36). For Hegel, philosophy is thus an "isolated sanctuary," and philosophers an "isolated order of priests" without concern for what is going on in the world (1987b: 36). In this light, it is not difficult to understand why Hegel represents the end of the traditional form of

philosophy, and why his successors will have to attempt to solve the problem of modernity through a reduced concept of reason (1987b: 43).

As will be seen, Habermas's solution to Hegel's problem is the model of "the higher-level subjectivity of an uncoerced formation of will within a communication community existing under constraints toward cooperation" (1987b: 40). With this model, the avenue is open for the democratic self-organization of society instead of the authoritarianism of a strong state.

Before turning to this model, however, I want to consider Habermas's treatment of Marx's solution of a utopia of labour and its later transformation by Horkheimer and Adorno into a utopia of mimesis, since this sheds light on Habermas's dismissal of the Romantic aesthetic utopia as well as on the related difficulty his own solution has in meeting the demands of the heart and imagination.

2.3 MARX'S UTOPIA OF LABOUR

Habermas begins his presentation of Marx's solution to the problem of modernity's finding its source of normativity out of itself by quoting the famous passage in the *Communist Manifesto* in which Marx describes how the time-consciousness of modernity has now permeated the totality of the lifeworld and contributed to the "sweeping away," "melting" and "profaning" of everything "fast-frozen," "solid" and "holy" (1987b: 60).²⁴ This passage reveals that the young Hegel and the young Marx agree that the authority of

tradition has to be challenged. It also demonstrates that, if for Hegel what was positive was fetishism and rigidity, for Marx positivity arises out of the "revolutionizing" of all life conditions "without consciousness" (1987b: 61). For Marx, only the mobilization of an emancipatory social movement taking charge of the yet unconscious revolutionizing can eradicate positivity.

Another difference, which Habermas notes between the young Hegel and the young Marx, is that Marx, because of the emancipatory potential that he sees in the progress of industry, replaces the utopian solution of a popular religion by the model of civil society. Critical of the religious solution of the young Hegel, Marx is equally critical of the sublation of civil society into the state because he considers the state as mainly having the function of maintaining the domination of the bourgeoisie.

Habermas points out that Marx, like the young Hegel, had to abandon his model of a utopian community of communication as a solution to the divisions of modernity. He did so because, like Hegel, he was burdened by the conceptual limitations of the philosophy of the subject. With his concentration on the technical-scientific forces of production, Marx then seeks to ground the new principle of modernity in the praxis of a producing subject, as opposed to the reflection of a knowing subject. Contrary to the philosophy of reflection, praxis philosophy considers labour, not knowledge, to be the principle of modernity.

According to Habermas, Marx, in his dialectic of Enlightenment, needs a concept with a normative content in order to be able to distinguish between emancipatory and alienated labour. He develops such a concept by drawing on the model of artistic production and equating the nonalienated worker to the creative artist "who in his works externalizes his own essential powers and appropriates the product once again in rapt contemplation. Herder and Humboldt had sketched out the ideal of the all-round self-realizing individual; Schiller and the Romantics, Schelling and Hegel had then grounded this expressivist idea of self-formation in an aesthetics of production" (1987b: 64) With this normative-aesthetic content, Marx can propose that it is alienated labour that is the ruptured ethical totality, which can be reestablished through a social praxis viewed as the utopian image of an association of free producers.

Habermas stresses that this solution to the divisions of modernity cannot work either. This is because praxis philosophy remains caught within the conceptual problematic of the philosophy of the subject. It situates reason in the purposive rationality of the acting subject, rather than in the reflection of the knowing subject, but it still cannot think intersubjectivity. For Habermas, it is the lack of reflection of praxis philosophy on its normative foundations that is responsible for its problem

the formative process of the species is marked by the tendency for laboring individuals, in proportion to their domination of nature, to gain their identity only at the cost of repressing their own inner nature. To dissolve the self-entrapment of a subject-centered reason, Hegel opposed the absolute self-mediation of the spirit to the absolutization of self-consciousness. Praxis philosophy, which abandoned this route with good reason, is not spared from a corresponding problem; it is even more acute

for it. For what can it oppose to the instrumental reason of a purposive rationality puffed up into a social totality, if it has to understand itself in materialist fashion as a component and result of this reified relationship—if the compulsion toward objectification invades the citadel of critical reason itself? (1987b: 67-68)

This is the problem which Horkheimer and Adorno confront in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, for which they advance the solution of the utopia of mimesis.

2.4 FIRST REFLECTIONS ON THE UTOPIA OF MIMESIS

In their variant of the dialectic of Enlightenment, Horkheimer and Adorno oppose to the relation of domination between the subject and inner and outer nature, an alternative nonviolent relation to nature and to Otherness in general which they call mimesis. Habermas cites this definition of the utopia of mimesis from Adorno's *Negative Dialectics*: "The reconciled condition would not annex what is other, but would find its happiness in the fact that this other retains its distance and its difference within the permitted intimacy, that it remains beyond heterogeneity and sameness" (Adorno quoted in Habermas 1987b: 68). As Habermas sees it, in so far as the mimetic capacity has to be thought with concepts "that make it possible for a subject to control external and internal nature but are not up to endowing an objectified nature with a language to tell us what is being perpetrated upon it by human subjects," it necessarily turns into the "opposite" of reason (1987b: 68). He sees Adorno in the *Negative Dialectics* as attempting to delineate what cannot be delineated discursively, and in the *Aesthetic Theory*, as ceding the capacity of cognition to art.

Habermas contends that all that Adorno succeeds in opposing to instrumental reason is the aesthetic experience which is rooted in Romantic art, surreptitiously incorporated in Marx's concept of labour, and radicalized in avant-garde art. The reason for this is that the rational core of what Adorno meant by mimesis can only be delineated by relinquishing the paradigm of the philosophy of the subject—based on the subject-object model—and moving into the paradigm of the philosophy of language—based on the intersubjective model—which situates the cognitive-instrumental dimension of reason as part of the larger concept of communicative rationality.

I think that with his move to the linguistic paradigm, Habermas succeeds in overcoming the divisions of modernity by locating its emancipatory potential in the very rationalization of the structures of communication of the lifeworld. In the next chapter, I present his solution as it can be found in the two massive volumes of *The Theory of Communicative Action* and discuss its advantages and disadvantages from a feminist perspective. However, in my attempt to do justice to the feminist aesthetic utopia within Habermas's conceptual framework, I have come to disagree strongly with his claim that he can lay open the core of mimesis within it.

The reason for that is that he devalues the metaphorical, expressive, playful dimension of language which is the real core of the utopia of mimesis. For Habermas art is not serious; it has nothing to do with cognition and morality. Adorno, in the *Negative Dialectics*, contends the opposite: "In despising rhetoric, philosophy atoned for a guilt

incurred ever since Antiquity by its detachment from things, a guilt already pointed out by Plato....It is in the rhetorical quality that culture, society, and tradition animate the thought; a stern hostility to it is leagued with barbarism, in which bourgeois thinking ends" (1973: 55-56).

Later, I will argue that the only way to do justice to the ethical-utopian dimension of women's poetry is to listen carefully to postmodern thinkers like Adorno and Derrida who I consider to have appropriated the heritage of the Romantic aesthetic utopia.

3. HABERMAS'S UTOPIA OF COMMUNICATION

3.1 *THE THEORY OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTION*

THE OVERALL STRUCTURE

As Habermas explains in the preface to *The Theory of Communicative Action*, the work is comprised of three interrelated themes:

1. the development of a concept of communicative rationality that is sufficiently "skeptical" but irreducible to cognitive-instrumental reason.
2. the development of a two-level concept of society bringing together the lifeworld and system paradigms; and
3. a theory of modernity that explains emerging social pathologies through the thesis of the subordination of the communicative structures of the lifeworld by the imperatives of the autonomous systems of action of the economy and the state (1984: xl)

While Habermas thinks that philosophy and social theory have to be amalgamated, he also rejects foundationalist philosophies, that is, philosophies with ultimate foundations of the type of an Absolute Spirit. As was seen in the previous chapter, he considers such philosophies to have come to an end with Hegel. Thus, Habermas combines chapters presenting historical reconstructions of classical social theories with chapters dealing with postfoundationalist philosophical discussions of concepts such as

action, meaning and speech acts. He then puts his historical reconstructions and his philosophical discussions together in his conclusion in which he presents his diagnosis of the times (1984: xl-xli)

Habermas finds the normative standard for critical social theory in the rationality inherent in language, or more precisely in action oriented to mutual understanding. The treatment of substantive questions, while "belonging inseparably together" with the development of the concepts, is articulated in a theory of modernity understood as a process of rationalization. Having found its own standard in a theory of communicative action, critical theory becomes a theory of modernity because the "most efficient" way to proceed is to "enter the rocky part of immanent critique of science and obtain the desired standard from a self-reflection that reaches down into the lifeworld foundations, the structures of action and the contexts of discovery, underlying scientific theory-construction or objectivating thought in general" (1984: 375). In his earlier attempt to ground critical theory in a theory of knowledge, Habermas had conceived of critical theory as a theory guided by an emancipatory knowledge-constitutive interest (1971: 314). In *The Theory of Communicative Action*, this emancipatory interest can be said to reside in the process of modernization understood as a release of communicative rationality.

COMMUNICATIVE RATIONALITY

Habermas starts his conceptualization of a rationality which has broken free from the spell of the hypostatization of a scientific rationality limited to knowing and mastering external nature by first looking at the common sense use of the expression *rational* and stressing above all its cognitive nature, since he considers there to be an intimate link between rationality and knowledge. Specific to knowledge is that it can take the form of statements. Apologies and surgical interventions are rational because the knowledge embodied in the speech act and in the goal-directed action can be criticized and argued for, whereas a storm or a win in a lottery are not rational because they cannot be so criticized.

Habermas then distinguishes two aspects in the concept of rationality he is developing: cognitive-instrumental (or monological) rationality and communicative rationality.

If we start from the noncommunicative employment of knowledge in teleological action, we make a prior decision for the concept of *cognitive-instrumental rationality* that has, through empiricism, deeply marked the self-understanding of the modern era. It carries with it connotations of successful self-maintenance made possible by informed dispositions over, and intelligent adaptation to, conditions of a contingent environment. On the other hand, if we start from the communicative employment of propositional knowledge in assertions, we make a prior decision for a wider concept of rationality connected with ancient conceptions of *logos*. This concept of *communicative rationality* carries with it connotations based ultimately on the central experience of the unconstrained, unifying, consensus-bringing force of argumentative speech, in which different participants overcome their merely subjective view and, owing to the mutuality of rationally motivated conviction, assure themselves of both

the unity of the objective world and the intersubjectivity of their lifeworld (1984: 10).

Both cognitive-instrumental rationality and communicative rationality have to do with the same stock of knowledge but in different ways: the telos inherent in cognitive-instrumental rationality is instrumental mastery; the telos of communicative rationality is the reaching of an understanding among participants in communication

There are two distinct views that can be taken in the analysis of rationality depending on which aspect of rationality is under consideration. If one focuses on cognitive-instrumental rationality, one adopts the realist view. This view starts from the ontological supposition that the world is the sum of what is, and it wants to understand the conditions for rational behaviour in that world. In this view, rational actions are goal-oriented actions in the objective world. If one focuses on communicative rationality, one adopts the phenomenological view. This view starts from the reflection that those who behave rationally suppose a commonly perceived world, and it clarifies how a unified object world comes to be constituted for the members of a community "only through *counting* as one and the same world *for* a community of speaking and acting subjects" (1984: 12-13).

In the phenomenological view, the world constituted by a community of acting and speaking subjects is the lifeworld. To conceptualize the rationality of the lifeworld, the phenomenologist needs to inquire into mundane reasoning, the background knowledge used in a nonproblematic way by a community of acting and speaking subjects. Since the

realist view deals with the same world problematized by the phenomenological view, it follows that cognitive-instrumental rationality is part of the larger phenomenological concept of communicative rationality.

Participants in communication raise five validity claims which they presuppose can be justified with good reasons when challenged: the comprehensibility of symbolic expressions, the truth of propositions and the efficacy of teleological actions; the rightness of norms of actions; the adequacy of standards of values; and the truthfulness of the speaker's intention. When these presuppositions are challenged, the general procedure for the noncoercive settling of controversial validity claims is to engage in argumentation through which validity claims are submitted to discussion with a view to arriving at a rationally motivated consensus on them.

Ultimately, the practice of argumentation is the means by which critical theory can validate its own normative standards: "The rationality proper to the communicative practice of everyday life points to the practice of argumentation as a court of appeal that makes it possible to continue communicative action with other means when disagreements can no longer be repaired with everyday routines and yet are not to be settled by the direct or strategic use of force" (1984: 17-18)

For Habermas, then, the best way to define the concept of communicative rationality is by way of a theory of argumentation. He distinguishes five different forms of argumentation corresponding to the particular validity claim in controversy: in the case of

the comprehensibility of symbolic expressions, explicative discourse; in the case of the truth of propositions and of the efficacy of goal-directed actions, theoretical discourse; in the case of the rightness of norms of actions, practical discourse; in the case of the adequacy of standards of values, aesthetic criticism; and in the case of the truthfulness of the speaker's intention, therapeutic critique.

However, he sees only the comprehensibility of symbolic expressions, the truth of propositions and the rightness of norms of actions as constituting validity claims that are universal. In the case of the speaker's intention, it is only the consistency of the actions of that particular speaker which will ultimately prove her truthfulness. Similarly, the adequacy of standards of values cannot be considered universal since they are "located within the horizon of the lifeworld of a specific group or culture. And values can be made plausible only in the context of a particular form of life" (1984: 42)

THE RATIONALIZATION OF THE LIFEWORLD

As Habermas points out, the definition of rationality so far developed cannot be used directly by social theory. To develop a sociological definition of rationality, it is necessary to investigate the structures of a rationalized lifeworld by examining their systems of cultural interpretation—or world views—which mirror the background knowledge of social groups and join together the orientations of their actions. More specifically, Habermas proposes to look into the conditions that the structures of world

views must satisfy if they are to permit a rational conduct of life, and he thinks that a comparison between the mythical and the modern ways of understanding the world is a good way to start.²⁵

Basing himself on anthropologists from Durkheim to Levi-Strauss, Habermas characterizes the mythical understanding of the world as a "confusion between nature and culture" (1984: 48). Accordingly, the demythologization of world views takes place first through a process of "desocialization of nature" and of the "denaturalization of society" (1984: 48). This brings about a conceptual differentiation between the object domains of nature and of culture, and a parallel differentiation between "basic attitudes toward worlds" (1984: 49). As object domains, nature and culture are worlds of facts about which true statements can be made. But as soon as explicit distinctions are to be made between things and people, causes and motives, occurrences and actions, it becomes necessary to go beyond the differentiation of object domains, to differentiate between a basic attitude towards the objective world of what is the case and a basic attitude towards the social world of what is to be legitimately expected or commanded (1984: 48-49).

To the extent that a conceptual differentiation is established between an objective world of an existing state of affairs and a social world of norms, it becomes possible for the complementary concept of "internal world," or of "subjectivity," to arise to which corresponds a third basic attitude towards the world: the expressive attitude of a subject

who reveals something about her inner subjectivity or expresses wishes or desires (1984: 51-52).

Habermas next addresses the question of whether the modern understanding of the world can claim universality.²⁶ Against the relativist position, he argues that the Western tendency towards a one-sided fixation on cognitive-instrumental rationality is particular to that culture, but that it is nevertheless the case that the modern understanding of the world is founded on general structures of rationality. And he argues that the best context-free standard for comparing the rationality of world views is Horton's use of the Popperian distinction between closed and open mentalities and forms of life. Accordingly, features of closed world views are "lack of awareness of alternatives, sacredness of beliefs, and anxiety about threats to them" (Horton quoted in Habermas 1984: 61). Features of open world views are "awareness of alternatives, diminished sacredness of beliefs and diminished anxiety about threats to them" (Horton quoted in Habermas 1984: 61).

Habermas maintains that the systematic transformation of world views cannot be explained only by recourse to external factors. The transformation also has to be considered as happening through an internally reconstructible process. Learning processes too have to be explained not only in terms of external factors, but also as open to systematic evaluation in terms of internal validity claims. Thus, the process of the rationalization of world views should be conceived of as occurring through a learning

process, a process which he reconstructs with the help of Piaget's developmental psychology in which cognitive development takes place through the "decentration of an egocentric understanding of the world" (1984: 69). With this decentration, the child gradually develops its intelligence by moving away from its original egocentrism and by differentiating between the two external worlds of the existing state of affairs and of social norms and the internal world of subjectivity.

Habermas suggests that something similar happens as new structures of world views come about.²⁷ In the transition between the mythical, religious-metaphysical and modern ways of thinking, the system of basic concepts underlying the corresponding modes of thought changes. As a new stage occurs, the interpretive systems of the earlier stage are "categorially devalued" (1984: 68). It is not the content of the interpretive systems which is devalued but the "kind" of argument which can be advanced to justify them (1984: 68). There takes place a devaluation of the explanatory and justificatory power of the entire earlier tradition. So in the modern age, the earlier religious, cosmological and metaphysical figures of thought have been dissolved. These "devaluative shifts" seem to be related to socioevolutionary shifts to new stages of learning which present new possibilities for the learning processes of objectivating thought, moral-practical insight and aesthetic-expressive ability (1984: 68).

Habermas holds that only in so far as the "formal" reference system of the three worlds – the objective, the social and the subjective – becomes differentiated, does it

become possible for us to form a reflexive concept of "world" and "open up access to the world through the medium of common interpretive efforts, in the sense of a cooperative negotiation of situation definitions" (1984: 69). Subjects who cooperatively negotiate the definition of a situation always do so within the horizon of a lifeworld, which is at all times the preinterpreted background store of everyday practice and common sense knowledge on which participants rely, implicitly and in a nonproblematic way. With the decentration of world views, the weight of tradition in the lifeworld diminishes which then makes it possible for actors to coordinate their actions through "communicatively achieved understanding" rather than through "normatively ascribed agreement" (1984: 70).

Habermas continues his development of a sociological definition of rationality by turning to Weber's studies on religions, because in them he finds Weber using a complex, but largely unclarified, concept of rationality which is broader than the concept he uses to examine processes of societal rationalization. Habermas, it should be noted, is here interpreting Weber within the framework of his own theory of communicative action.

THE RATIONALIZATION OF WORLD VIEWS

Habermas underlines that it is from the implicit vantage point of the Neo-Kantian distinction between facts and values that Weber studies the disenchantment of religious-metaphysical world views, combining a historical-empirical description of the social

forms of life and a reconstruction of the ideas and values embodied in them. For Weber, the rationalization of culture only becomes effective when it becomes actualized in the rationalization of the life conduct of individuals and groups and in social forms of life; and this actualization of culturally stored knowledge takes place through an interplay between ideas and interests.

Ideas are linked to the world views and interests to the social strata which carry them. In his introduction to *The Economic Ethics of World Religions*, Weber describes the relationship between interests and ideas in these terms: "Not ideas, but material and ideal interests directly govern men's conduct. Yet very frequently the 'world images' created by 'ideas' have, like switchmen, determined the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamic of interest" (Weber quoted in Habermas 1984: 193). As Habermas points out, this passage implicitly reverts to Marx's preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*.

One of the principal questions Weber was concerned with was the question of how anything new could emerge in the world from within, as distinct from without, in the sense of the exterior contextual circumstances of life. He sees newness from within as arising from charismatic individuals with a special ability to generate new values and ideas. The creators of the great religions were such as these. Once that newness had emerged, clerics went to work intellectually to turn the new ideas and ways of life into dogma and rationalize them into a doctrine which could be disseminated as tradition. It is

at the level of dogma and doctrine that the themes and ways of interpreting the world of earlier mythological world views are handled intellectually.

Weber links the process of rationalization to a question found at the core of all world religions: how to justify the unequal distribution of goods. This basic ethical problematic stems from the requirement to provide a religious explanation for a suffering that is considered to be unjust. Individual suffering has to be revalorized, because it can no longer be taken as the manifestation of some secret guilt, as it is in tribal societies, which are in any case oriented to handling collective problems, as distinct from individual ones. What is new about the basic ethical problematic of world religions is the idea that individuals could experience misfortune they did not deserve, and could hope to be delivered from this evil through religion.

Habermas tells us that Weber offers a sociological explanation for the emergence of the basic ethical problematic. It arises out of learning processes that are put in place when the idea of justice prevailing in tribal societies collides with the new reality of class societies. All world religions emerged in class societies characterized by modes of economic production and types of economic exploitation different from tribal-kinship systems.

World religions, then, have their origin in the same basic problematic: the need to make sense of an obviously unequal distribution of earthly goods. World religions fulfill this need by offering a global conception of world order in which the cognitive, moral

and expressive elements blend together. Weber distinguishes between two fundamental conceptual strategies: the Occidental conceptual strategy of a transcendent personal creator to which the faithful relate as instrument (theocentric religions); and the Oriental strategy of an impersonal, noncreated cosmic order to which the faithful relate as vessel (cosmocentric religions). Weber then explains the different contents of world religions by recourse to external factors. These factors are principally the interests of the social strata which historically were the carriers of the world views in the process of their formation. Those are the interests which tend to regulate the dynamic and scope of the process of rationalization, as well as the choice among available contents of the religion.

Not only does Weber distinguish between theocentric and cosmocentric religions, he also makes a distinction between religions which teach people to reject the world as a whole or to affirm it. He considers that religious rejection of the world only becomes possible with the dualism characteristic of the religions of salvation. A negative attitude towards the world is only possible when a sharp distinction is established between the world as it appears and some authentic reality lying behind it as the ideal to be strived for. For Weber, religions which affirm the world are religions in which magical thinking is still present and which are not yet capable of dualism. Habermas, himself, is doubtful about this. He would have wanted Weber to have explored the possibility of the combination of a dualistically structured world view and an affirmative attitude towards the world.

Weber evaluates the rationalization of world views according to two criteria, the extent of their eradication of magical thought (disenchantment) and the extent of their systematic organization (dogmatism). He is more concerned with the first of these than the second, because he is most interested in the "ethical" rationalization of world views: "The transformation of the cognitive elements that religious world views inherit from myths is less relevant for the rationality of life conducts than the transformation of the technical-practical and, above all, the moral-practical elements" (1984: 205).

Habermas himself considers it equally important to investigate the transformation of the cognitive elements of world views and their ethical transformation. By focusing both on the ethical and cognitive aspects, he wants to show that disenchantment can be understood not only as the disappearance of superstition and belief in miracles, but also as the differentiation of the fundamental attitudes towards the world distinguished by Weber: the objectifying, the norm-conformative, and the expressive.

Looking at the moral-practical aspect, Weber discovers that religions which reject the world, such as Judaism, Christianity and Hinduism, have a positive influence on the process of rationalization. This is because the attitude of rejection gives rise to a "sharp" distinction between moral norms and consciousness and the world itself (nature and society), which is then taken to be much inferior to the quest for salvation (1984: 206). An evaluation of the world as inferior, however, does not of itself produce an ethical rationalization of the individual's way of life. That has to be combined with an active and

ascetic mode of living, oriented towards mastery of the devalued world, rather than mystical withdrawal from it. Only in the Occidental religions of salvation did Weber find this combination (1984: 208).

As Habermas points out, in considering religions which accept the world, Weber looked only at Confucianism and Taoism, in which the attitude of acceptance is combined with an orientation of practical adjustment to the world, and because he gave primacy of place to ethical rationalization, he evaluated these world views as having less of a positive influence on the process of rationalization than the Occidental religions of salvation. Habermas observes, however, that there is a good deal of research on which to conclude that theoretical knowledge and its practical application (in technology) was, until the Renaissance, considerably more advanced in China than in Europe

On this basis, he argues that if one were to look at the process of rationalization from the perspective of cognitive rationalization, one would arrive at a different evaluation from Weber's. He makes the point that in the Chinese world views, "the dualistic world view structure is sufficient to put the world of appearances at such a distance that it can be objectivated under *one* of the aspects (which are not yet differentiated at the level of principles), indeed under the cognitive aspect of being and becoming" (1984: 210).

He goes on to compare the Chinese world views with the world view of Greek metaphysics in which he sees a combined attitude of acceptance and contemplation, rather than of practical adjustment. It is the contemplative attitude, he suggests, that

"permits a more extensive decentration of those world views that are predisposed to cognitive rationalization" (1984: 211). Correlatively, it is an active and ascetic mode of living, oriented towards mastery of the world, which "permits a more extensive decentration of world views that are predisposed to ethical rationalization" (1984: 211). However, in order to arrive at a modern rationalization of the world, it is necessary for ethical and cognitive rationalization to penetrate into everyday practice. The Protestant sects were instrumental for this in the matter of ethical rationalization, and the thinkers and scientists of the Renaissance in the matter of cognitive rationalization.

Habermas is now in a position to articulate his understanding of what the ethical and cognitive rationalization of world views consists of before their falling apart and their penetration into the profane world. With respect to ethical rationalization, "a world view can count as rationalized to the degree that it distills out 'the world' (the temporal realm or the realm of appearances) as the sphere of moral testing under practical principles and *separates this from all other aspects*" (1984: 206). With respect to cognitive rationalization, world views can count as the more rational, the further the world of appearances can be conceived of, at an abstract level, as the sphere of the existing or the useful, and purified of normative and expressive aspects. Finally, with respect to aesthetic-expressive rationalization, world views are the more rational, the more the world of inner nature (the expressive-subjective dimension) can be conceived of as a sphere of self-experiment which is purified of other aspects. Habermas then proceeds to

reconstruct Weber's conception of the role of the Protestant ethic in societal rationalization and to further clarify the concept of communicative rationality from a sociological perspective

THE PROTESTANT ETHIC

Habermas points out that the full impact of the cognitive potential of rationalized world views first became released in modern societies, and it is the carrying out of this process of release that signifies the modernization of society. As he sees it, this modernization "involved a combination of external factors, which prompted the differentiation of a market-regulated economic system and a complementary state apparatus, with those structures of consciousness that had emerged from the tension-filled syntheses of the Judaeo-Christian, Arabic, and Greek traditions and were, so to speak, available at the cultural level" (1984: 216)

As has been seen, Weber maintained that both ideas and interests have to be taken into consideration, and that the process of modernization has to be explained taking into account both the embodiment of structures of consciousness and the influence of the dynamics of interest. However, when Weber studies the process of modernization — the emergence and development of the capitalist economy and the bureaucratic state — he is primarily concerned to explain the institutionalization of the structures of consciousness which came about as the consequence of the ethical rationalization of world views. As

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Habermas underlines, because Weber approaches the process of modernization from the perspective of the relationship between the Protestant ethic and the purposive rationality of capitalist entrepreneurial activity, he conceives of the process as solely a process of societal rationalization—the rationalization of the capitalist economy and the modern state

Habermas is of the view that Weber's perspective is too narrow since he gives primary importance to societal rationalization and does not inquire systematically into "the counterfactually projected possibilities of a rationalized lifeworld" (1984: 222). In effect, Weber studies the modern culture of work from the vantage point of the specific process through which an ethic of conviction came to provide the normative regulation for the instrumental rationality of the actions of entrepreneurs in a way that was functional for the development of capitalism

It is in the teaching of the Puritan divines that Weber finds the model of an ethically motivated methodical conduct of life, a model which, once institutionalized in the Protestant sects and their families, comes to permeate the profane world of work

The conduct of life that Weber calls "methodical" is characterized in particular by the fact that the vocational sphere is "objectified" (*versachlicht*), this means that it is morally segmented *and* morally superelevated. Interactions *within* the sphere of labor in one's calling are morally neutralized to the degree that communicative action can be detached from norms and values and switched over to the success-oriented pursuit of one's own interests. At the same time, success in one's calling is connected with the individual's redemptory fate in such a way that labor in one's calling, *taken as a whole*, is ethically charged and dramatized (1984: 224-25).

These characteristics of the methodical conduct of life of the Protestant ethic can be said to have an elective affinity with the spirit of capitalism, because they enable capitalist entrepreneurs to pursue their activities in a systematically instrumental way in a field which has been ethically neutralized and in which interpersonal relations are objectified.

Habermas points out that for Weber the transition from traditional, normatively secured interpersonal relations to post-traditional ones could occur only by way of a strategic objectification of interpersonal relations. He, however, disagrees with Weber and argues that, with the Protestant ethic, certain structures of consciousness were institutionalized at the expense of others which were available at the level of a rationalized lifeworld, but not suited to the needs of a capitalist economic ethic

Habermas thinks that, in the final analysis, Weber could only see societal rationalization from the perspective of instrumental rationality because his typology of action is so limited that it can only conceive of social action as instrumental and thus cannot grasp the larger concept of rationality which underlies his cultural investigations. To further develop the larger concept of rationality which he sees inherent in Weber's cultural studies, he proposes to build upon speech act theory. This will furnish him with a conceptualization of noninstrumental social action, namely, communicative action.

COMMUNICATIVE ACTION AND THE LEFWORLD

Habermas starts with a typology of social action distinguished according to whether the coordination of action takes place through positions of interest or through normative agreement. The type of social action called communicative action is to be understood as that taking place

whenever the actions of the agents involved are coordinated not through egocentric calculation of success but through acts of reaching understanding. In communicative action participants are not primarily oriented to their own individual successes; they pursue their individual goals under the conditions that they can harmonize their plans of action on the basis of common situation definitions. In this respect the negotiation of definitions of the situation is an essential element of the interpretive accomplishments required for communicative action (1984: 285-86).

From the perspective of a theory of action, what, concretely, acts of reaching understanding would look like can only be approached by an examination of the concept of reaching understanding and such an examination is not possible without the model of speech.

Basing himself on Austin's speech act theory, Habermas argues that language employed with an orientation to reaching understanding represents the original mode of language use. With her speech act, ego always raises a potentially criticizable validity claim which alter has the choice to accept or reject with an explicit or implicit yes or no position. Both ego and alter "base their decisions on potential grounds or reasons... Reaching understanding is the inherent telos of human speech" (1984: 287).

In order to arrive at a sociological definition of the concept of communicative action, it is important to recognize that communicative action always occurs within a lifeworld that stands at the back of the participants in communication. It is, therefore, necessary to investigate the nature of the implicit knowledge of the lifeworld. This background knowledge "is a *holistically structured* knowledge, the basic elements of which intrinsically define one another; and it is a knowledge that does not *stand at our disposition*, inasmuch as we cannot make it conscious and place it in doubt as we please" (1984: 336).

Habermas holds that it is this implicit knowledge of the lifeworld that constitutes the link between social theory and the theory of communicative action:

It is only with the turn back to the context-forming horizon of the lifeworld, from within which participants in communication come to an understanding with one another about something, that our field of vision changes in such a way that we can see the points of connection for social theory within the theory of communicative action. The concept of society has to be linked to a concept of the lifeworld that is complementary to the concept of communicative action (1984: 337).

On the one hand, it is the lifeworld that provides the background and resources for communicative action, while on the other, it is through communicative action that the symbolic structures of the lifeworld are reproduced and that its three functions of cultural reproduction, social integration and socialization are fulfilled.

While Weber overlooked the lifeworld aspect of rationalization, for Habermas it is precisely this dimension of rationalization which constitutes the emancipatory potential

of modernity. The rationalization of the lifeworld is a process through which the explicit knowledge of experts—developed according to argumentative practices—filtrates into the communicative practice of the everyday world and replaces the authoritarian and prereflective reliance on tradition with the nonviolent and reflective mechanism of argumentation

A TWO-LEVEL CONCEPT OF SOCIETY

As has been seen, in order to understand the sociological dimension of communicative action, it has to be linked to the complementary concept of the lifeworld. Now, institutions fulfilling the functions of cultural reproduction, social integration and socialization, such as families, neighbourhoods and voluntary organizations, are in the province of the lifeworld. And the lifeworld is socially integrated through the mechanisms of mutual understanding. To understand the lifeworld sociologically, society has to be apprehended from the perspective of the actors themselves. Habermas warns, however, against the danger of an hermeneutic idealism which would reduce society to the lifeworld. Such idealism would be blind to the fact that while the symbolic structures of the lifeworld are reproduced through communicative action, its material substratum is reproduced through systemic processes which escape the intentions of the actors. Accordingly, he considers that a two-level concept of society combining both lifeworld and system paradigms is needed.

The institutions of the economy and state administration are in the province of the system. The system is not socially integrated but systemically integrated by the steering of nonnormative self-interested individual decisions which are not subjectively coordinated. To understand the system from a sociological perspective, society has to be apprehended from the perspective of the observer of a social life seen from the outside as objective interrelations of actions.^{2*}

Now that he is equipped with a concept of communicative rationality and a model of society as composed of lifeworld and system, Habermas thinks that he can formulate a more adequate diagnosis of modernity than those of Marx, Weber and Horkheimer and Adorno.

HABERMAS'S DIAGNOSIS OF MODERNITY

Historically, the development of the formally organized domains of action of the economy and the state has been accompanied by the painful eradication of traditional forms of life. In reaction to early capitalist modernization, there emerged a variety of movements of resistance culminating in the nineteenth century with the labour movement. Nevertheless, Habermas maintains that, despite the suffering occasioned by capital accumulation and state formation, "the capitalist mode of production and bureaucratic-legal domination can better fulfill the tasks of materially reproducing the

lifeworld...than could the institutions of the feudal order that preceded them" (1987a: 321)

The pathological phenomenon of the colonization of the lifeworld occurs when the effectiveness of the formal organization of the material reproduction of the lifeworld is no longer able to compensate for the negative effects of the eradication of traditional forms of life. As the lifeworld becomes increasingly rationalized, it becomes more dependent on, yet uncoupled from, the formally organized domains of action. This dependency is to be seen in the mediatization of the lifeworld by system imperatives, and that mediatization turns into "the sociopathological form of an 'internal colonization' when critical disequilibria in material production—that is, systemic crises amenable to systems-theoretical analysis—can be avoided only at the cost of disturbances in the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld" (1987a: 305)

With a model of society as composed of lifeworld and system, Habermas thinks that he can clarify the relationship between capitalism and democracy, which he characterizes as one of "indissoluble tension" (1987a: 345). On the one hand, the basic principles of democratic constitutions give primacy to the lifeworld with respect to the functional requirement of systemically integrated domains of action. On the other, the inner dynamics of the capitalist economy require the least possible restraining interference of the lifeworld, and the least possible requirement for legitimation directed to the state.

It is in this light that Habermas explains the "pacification" of class conflict in late capitalist societies through the welfare state (1987a: 347). Since 1945, the tools of Keynesian economics have been used to pacify class conflicts. This means that the conflicts over distribution generated by the private economic form of accumulation, which gave rise to the working-class and labour movements, are kept in check by the monetary rewards and legally guaranteed securities offered by the welfare state. In this pacification of class conflicts, the social antagonism fed by the private ownership of the means of production loses the "historically palpable shape" of class structure (1987a: 348). It is not that the old sources of inequality have disappeared, but that the interference of the welfare state has created other sources of inequality: "The more the class conflict that is built into society through the private economic form of accumulation can be dammed up and kept latent, the more problems come to the fore that do not *directly* violate interest positions ascribable on a class-specific basis" (1987a: 348-49).

What is of special concern for Habermas here is the emergence, with the welfare state, of a new kind of reification which is not class-specific, but has a particular effect on communicatively structured domains of action. This is the new reification that occurs when the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld, along with its material reproduction, is taken in charge by formally organized domains. Consequently, it is no longer in class conflicts that Habermas locates the potential for successful resistance in late capitalist

societies but in new social actors who situate themselves "in communicatively structured domains of action" (1987a, 349)

Having reformulated Weber's thesis of the loss of freedom as the colonization of the lifeworld, Habermas then proposes to also reformulate Weber's thesis of the loss of meaning by connecting it with Marx's theory of ideology developed on the model of the utopian-ideological double character of eighteenth century bourgeois culture. On the one hand, the utopia of reason arises out of the emancipatory process of cultural rationalization. On the other, in pretending to represent the interests of all, this utopia provides an idealistic transfiguration of the particular interests of the bourgeoisie. For Habermas, this utopian-ideological character of bourgeois culture is typical of the structures of consciousness under the conditions of a modern form of understanding.

He argues that while ideology is a characteristic of the modern form of understanding, that form of understanding is at the same time responsible for the contemporary state of the end of ideology. To elucidate this seemingly paradoxical proposition, it is necessary to go back to his "Intermediate Reflections" on the differentiation between system integration and social integration, where he underlines that it cannot be presupposed that there is any built-in dependency of social integration with regard to system integration, or vice versa: "the institutions that anchor steering mechanisms such as power and money in the lifeworld could serve as a channel *either* for the influence of the lifeworld on formally organized domains of action *or*, conversely, for

the influence of the system on communicatively structured contexts of action" (1987a: 185)

Both directions of dependency have been worked out in political and social theories. The theorists of bourgeois political economy hold that the capitalist economy is ultimately dependent on the norms of the lifeworld. Marx denounces this bourgeois view as ideological illusion in his critique of political economy and shows how capitalism can sustain itself only through the exploitation of workers. Methodologically, however, Marx's approach is that of an outside observer, not an inside participant in the lifeworld, and, as Habermas emphasizes, because the mediatization of the lifeworld actualizes itself within the structures of the lifeworld, this mediatization is neither part of the intuitive knowledge of the participants, nor can it be grasped from the standpoint of an observer. A conceptual grasp of it can only be arrived at "counterintuitively," through an examination of the formal conditions for communicative action (1987a: 186)

As has been seen, the uncoupling of system and lifeworld makes possible a greater efficiency in the material reproduction of the lifeworld, but it does so at the cost of an "increase in social inequality, wholesale economic exploitation, and the juridically cloaked repression of dependent classes" (1987a: 188). Therefore, the exploitation and repression by dominant groups in the process of material reproduction has to be occluded as much as possible. In his study of world religions, Weber threw light on the ideological

function of religious world views inasmuch as they served to justify an unjust distribution of goods

Habermas argues that it was possible for world views to maintain this ideological function, despite the blatant evidence of barbarism, because of their inherent systemic constraints on communication. These constraints are there because, in the basic concepts of religious world views, the ontic, normative and expressive dimensions of validity are still undifferentiated and therefore cannot be tested in discourse, they are immune to criticism. In other words, in the sacred domain of religion, communication is systematically constrained due to the formal conditions of the sacred form of understanding. A form of understanding should be understood as "a compromise between the general structures of communicative action and reproductive constraints unavailable as themes within a given lifeworld. Historically variable forms of understanding are, as it were, the sectional planes that result when systemic constraints of material reproduction inconspicuously intervene in the forms of social integration and thereby mediatize the lifeworld" (1987a: 187). Thus, religious world views were able to maintain their ideological function because of a "rationality differential" between the domains of the sacred and the profane (1987a: 353).

Habermas describes the eighteenth century bourgeois culture, which Marx uses as the model for his concept of ideology, as a transition to a truly post-traditional form of understanding. In it, the authority of religion, and of tradition in general, is subject to a

radical critique, but the sacred still survives in a secularized way in the contemplative relation to "auratic" art, a religious ethics of conviction, rational natural law and civil religion. With the development of modernity, however, this secular sacredness vanishes too, and so, in consequence, also does the potential for the formation of ideology (1987a: 353).

That vanishing process, of course, takes a long time, and Habermas still sees in the modern radical-democratic and bourgeois-socialist movements, which have their orientation rooted in nineteenth century mass movements critical of modernization's deleterious effects, the structural violence of ideology, notwithstanding the emancipatory aspect of their attempt to build alternative forms of life without having recourse to world views. This structural violence is to be found in "the *form* of totalizing conceptions of order addressed to the political consciousness of comrades and partners in struggle" (1987a: 354). Accordingly, it is this form of totalizing conception of order that disappears with the rationalization of the structures of communication of the lifeworld: "when the auratic traces of the sacred have been lost and the products of a synthetic, world-picturing power of imagination have vanished, the form of understanding, now fully differentiated in its validity basis, becomes so transparent that the communicative practice of everyday life no longer affords any niche for the structural violence of ideologies" (1987a: 354)

Now if the structural violence of ideology is no longer possible, how is it that the functions of exploitation and repression fulfilled by dominant groups in the process of

material reproduction have not become visible and accessible to explanation”

Habermas contends that late capitalist societies have found a functional equivalent to ideology in the “fragmentation of everyday consciousness” or, in other words, in the impossibility of the participants in the lifeworld having access to its implicit knowledge in a way that would be “sufficiently coordinated” to enable them to see its colonization by systems imperatives (1987a: 355).²⁹

In my view, the thesis of the fragmentation of consciousness throws light on an aspect of Habermas’s diagnostic of the time which tends to be occluded. In effect, it is easy to read Habermas as attributing the problems of modernity one-sidedly to the colonization of the lifeworld by systems imperatives. What this reading occludes is that, in his view, cultural modernity generates its own aporias as well, principally in the form of a general “cultural impoverishment” resulting from specialized cultures being split off from the lifeworld (1987a: 355). This is why he considers that his theory of modernity needs to be completed by an analysis of cultural modernity which would investigate the conditions for reintegrating a rationalized culture with an everyday communication dependent on vital traditions. As was seen earlier, along with the search for the use of specialized cultures for the enrichment of everyday life and for an alternative relation to tradition on the model of Benjamin’s *Jetztzeit*, Habermas wants also to pursue the third component of the project of modernity: the building of solidaristic democratic institutions out of the lifeworld.

In this thesis, I contribute to the kind of analysis of cultural modernity which Habermas considers so necessary by situating the feminist movement—for which art, the revision of tradition and the search for alternative models of community are central—in terms of the three components of the project of modernity.

Habermas himself, in his conclusion to *The Theory of Communicative Action*, in which he sets out the tasks he sees for a contemporary critical theory of society, provides some fruitful indications of how to proceed with an analysis of cultural modernity. He takes each of the object domains which early critical theory investigated and shows how they can be renewed by a critical theory grounded in a theory of communicative action. One of these topics is central to my thesis: the potential for resistance. I turn next to his treatment of this.

THE POTENTIAL FOR RESISTANCE

Reflecting on Horkheimer and Adorno's pessimism about the potential for resistance in late capitalist society, Habermas stresses that with the theory of communicative action, the social pathologies of the lifeworld no longer appear as predecided processes that can be abstracted from some monolithic global concepts, such as the idea of a total administration of Horkheimer and Adorno or the idea of unidimensional man of Marcuse. Above all, he considers that if the thesis of the colonization of the lifeworld is correct, we should not expect the potential for resistance to be located in the movements

of the working class and labour which have been more or less pacified in welfare state mass democracies.

Rather we should expect "new conflicts" to arise in the domains of cultural reproduction, social integration and socialization over issues such as quality of life, equal rights, individual self-realization, and public participation (1987a: 392). Habermas stresses that historical parallels with this contemporary potential for resistance are to be found not so much in the bourgeois movements of emancipation or the labour movement, but rather in the "social-Romantic" movements of early capitalism, whose membership included craftspeople, plebeians and workers, as well as in "defensive" and "escapist" movements, whose membership included middle-class critics of contemporary civilization (1987a: 393). Then, looking at the wide, heterogeneous range of contemporary potentials for resistance, he distinguishes between those which are offensive and defensive. Only the women's movement does he consider to be situated in the "offensive" tradition of bourgeois-socialist movements of liberation:

The struggle against patriarchal oppression and for the redemption of a promise that has long been anchored in the acknowledged universalistic foundations of morality and law gives feminism the impetus of an offensive movement, whereas the other movements have a more defensive character. The resistance and withdrawal movements aim at stemming formally organized domains of action for the sake of communicatively structured domains, and not at conquering new territory. There is an element of particularism that connects feminism with these movements: the emancipation of women means not only establishing formal equality and eliminating male privilege, but overturning concrete forms of life marked by male monopolies (1987a: 393).

I agree with Habermas's assessment that the most promising emancipatory potential lies in the women's movement. However, his view that contemporary women's struggles are a "new conflict" hardly does justice to the long tradition of contemporary feminism which stretches back at least to the French Revolution. Moreover, his reference to "bourgeois-socialist" and "social Romantic" movements notwithstanding, overall the way he presents the new conflicts, to my mind, contributes to the erasure of the memory of the heritage of utopian socialist thinking and practice. As has already been discussed, such erasure risks occluding the multidimensional and nonlinear links between so-called new social movements and the wide variety of utopian and Romantic social movements which flourished throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in which women quite often have played an important role.³⁰

I next present the feminist appropriations that Fraser and Benhabib make of Habermas's theory of communicative action. As will be seen, they find crucial tools for feminism in his theory, but are critical of the way he continues to hold on to oppositions such as between universalism and particularism, and the private and the public, since such dichotomies contribute to the legitimization of women's oppression.

3.2 A FEMINIST CRITIQUE OF *THE THEORY OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTION*

Fraser's (1987) critical appropriation of Habermas's sociotheoretical framework is directed at bringing to light the gender subtext of his model of the private and the public

spheres in bourgeois capitalism, and at challenging his diagnosis of the problems of welfare state capitalism. Her main argument is that Habermas's distinction between system and lifeworld, and his related distinctions between the symbolic and the material reproduction of societies and between socially integrated and system-integrated contexts of action, tend to be blind to women's subordination and, indeed, contribute to their relegation to the private sphere.

As has been seen, in Habermas's conceptual framework, it is the rationalization of the lifeworld which makes possible societal rationalization, that is, the uncoupling of the subsystems of the economy and the state from the lifeworld. These formally organized domains of action are no longer socially integrated; they are systemically integrated. In modern societies, the function of material reproduction is carried out by the economy and the state; the function of symbolic reproduction (cultural reproduction, social integration and socialization) is carried out by the lifeworld.

Now, Fraser can agree, from a feminist perspective, that it is useful to stress the symbolic dimension of childrearing practices, which are devalorized in our societies as "merely instinctual, natural and ahistorical" (1987: 33). But it is inadequate and even dangerous to characterize them as being only symbolic. They are also deeply material since they interact with physical nature in the form of milk, germs, excrement and so on. Childrearing practices contribute both to the formation of children's social identities and to their biological survival, and so too to the biological survival of society. To classify

women's unpaid work as symbolic reproduction only is to relegate it to the private sphere, a relegation which is one of the main features of women's subordination.

Fraser then turns to Habermas's distinction between the socially integrated action contexts of the lifeworld (to which the nuclear family belongs), in which agents coordinate their actions on the basis of some form of intersubjective consensus about norms, values and ends, and the system-integrated action contexts of the economy and the state, in which actions are determined by "self-interested, utility maximizing calculation" and coordinated by the "functional interlacing of unintended consequences" (1987: 34). As can the distinction between the symbolic and the material reproduction of societies, this distinction can be interpreted as one of either absolute or relative difference. While Habermas has stated that he considers the distinction to be one of degree only, Fraser argues that, in fact, he tends to treat them as absolute in a way which is potentially dangerous for women.

Consider, for example, the way he contrasts the socially integrated family and the system-integrated economy. This is a contrast that suggests that the male-headed nuclear family only has an external and accidental relation to money and power. It occludes that families also constitute "sites of egocentric, strategic and instrumental calculation as well as sites of usually exploitative exchanges of services, labour, cash and sex, not to mention sites, frequently, of coercion and violence" (1987: 37).

She does, however, consider Habermas's distinction between normatively secured and communicatively achieved socially integrated action contexts to be fruitful for an understanding of the dynamic of male dominance in modern, male-headed nuclear families. Basing herself on recent research on patterns of linguistic, bodily and gestural communication between husbands and wives, Fraser makes the case that such families are normatively secured rather than communicatively achieved action contexts. In these families, "actions are (sometimes) mediated by consensus and shared values, but...such consensus is suspect because prereflexive or because achieved through dialogue vitiated by unfairness, coercion or inequality" (1987: 38). Such action contexts can be said to be regulated by "domestic-patriarchal" power, a power that other aspects of Habermas's theoretical framework tend to render invisible (1987: 38).

Fraser also sees critical potential in Habermas's conceptualization of the interrelationship between the public and the private spheres in bourgeois capitalism. His model conceptualizes the relations between the private and the public at two levels: there is one private-public distinction between the economic and state systems and there is another between the private lifeworld sphere (the family) and the public lifeworld sphere. In this model, the family is linked to the economy through the role of workers and consumers and the medium of money; the public sphere of the lifeworld is linked to the state through the role of the citizen and the medium of power.

Fraser maintains, however, that Habermas's categories are not, as he would have it, neutral, but gender categories: "feminine and masculine gender identity run like pink and blue threads through the areas of paid work, state administration and citizenship as well as through the domain of familial and sexual relations" (1987: 45). The worker's role is clearly masculine; the consumer's is feminine; and while Habermas's model does recognize the family as providing the economy with appropriately socialized labour, it is silent on the question of the childrearer's role, the role which connects the four institutions by producing the gendered subjects necessary to the institutional structures of capitalist societies.

Similarly, the citizen's role is also clearly masculine, as evidenced by the many studies which have shown that the patriarchal dynamic of public dialogue denies full exercise of citizenship to women; and there is also the "soldiering" aspect to the role of the citizen as protector of those in need of protection, which further confirms its masculine subtext. This "masculine citizen-soldier-protector role" is not only the link between the private and the public spheres of the lifeworld, but also the link between the family and the economic system, as can be seen in the "protective" legislation that frames women's access to the workplace" (1987: 44-45).¹¹

In light of her own conclusion that the emancipation of women cannot be accomplished without a transformation of gendered roles and of the institutions which they link together, she challenges Habermas's diagnosis of the dynamics of welfare state

societies as being the “negative” and “one-sided” thesis of the colonization of the lifeworld (1987: 52).

She does agree with Habermas’s thesis that, with the emergence of the welfare state, there is growth in the role of the consumer and diminution in the role of the citizen, and the emergence of the new role of the client, a role that is for the most part the lot of women. Welfare programs, however, are not gender neutral. Rather, they reproduce male domination in that they are of two types: masculine ones conceived for primary labour-force members in order to benefit principal breadwinners; and feminine ones designed for what are considered to be domestic failures. And while she also agrees that welfare measures are ambivalent, in the sense of offering protection to individuals while reducing their freedom, she argues that their ambivalence extends beyond that inasmuch as they tend to reproduce the conditions of women’s subordination: in the role of the feminine client, there is a shift from private patriarchy to public patriarchy.³²

Fraser also calls into question Habermas’s contention that symbolic activities such as childrearing and care giving cannot be system-integrated without pathological consequences. That proposition, in her view, vindicates the relegation of women to the private domestic sphere, and their exclusion from the official economic sphere. Given the combined symbolic and material aspects of childrearing practices, and the fact that the lifeworld is also permeated by economic, political, and patriarchal power, she contends

that there is no valid reason for assuming that system-integrated childrearing would produce more child pathology than does childrearing in male-headed nuclear families.

Accordingly, she rejects as inadequate, because of its negativity and one-sidedness, Habermas's view that a "new social movement" such as feminism is a reaction to the threat of the colonization of the lifeworld. Surely, the experience of the millions of women who entered the official economy in the postwar period, so gaining relative economic independence and a potential for emancipation while continuing to be unpaid domestic workers and childrearing in the private sphere, cannot be reduced without qualification to a crisis in symbolic reproduction.

Fraser then wants to argue that just as colonization is inadequate as an interpretation of contemporary feminism, so "decolonization" can hardly represent an adequate emancipatory solution. By decolonization, she means three things: "first, the removal of system-integration mechanisms from domains of symbolic reproduction; second, the replacement of (some) normatively secured contexts by communicatively achieved ones; and third, the development of new democratic institutions capable of asserting lifeworld control over state and (official) economic systems" (1987: 49).

Now, to my mind, only the first one of the three components of what she calls the negative thesis of decolonization can properly be conceptualized as such. The other two should rather be understood as part of the emancipatory potential of the rationalization of the lifeworld. Thus, on the one hand, I do agree that there is a one-sidedness in

Habermas's *The Theory of Communicative Action* in the sense that it locates emancipatory potential in the lifeworld and neglects the emancipatory potential which can be found in the domains of the economy and state administration.¹⁴ But I think that Fraser overlooks that Habermas's diagnosis of modernity is not restricted to the thesis of the colonization of the lifeworld. As has been seen, quite apart from the contradictions of societal rationalization is the altogether different phenomenon of a general cultural impoverishment due to the expert cultures being split off from the lifeworld and to the devaluation of tradition. Thus, along with a search for an alternative relation to tradition and a relinking between expert cultures and everyday life, Habermas's project of modernity seeks the development of solidaristic counterpublic spheres out of the lifeworld. As opposed to Fraser, I argue that feminism should be understood as the fulfillment and transfiguration of the project of modernity.

Nevertheless, Fraser does see a strong affinity between feminism and Habermas's project of modernity. She considers that the fruitfulness of *The Theory of Communicative Action*, despite its problems, resides in the replacement of normatively secured contexts of interaction by communicatively achieved ones which would allow women's needs to be expressed and reinterpreted in a dialogic process. Here she makes reference to the component of public sphere, since the communicatively achieved contexts of interaction, also represent the outline of a discursive public sphere.

I next explain the advantages from a feminist perspective of the discursive public sphere which can be found in Habermas's theory of communicative action by turning to a recent essay by Benhabib (1992b). In that essay, she compares three different models of the public sphere representing three major tendencies of Western political thought: Arendt's agonistic model, Ackerman's legalistic model and Habermas's discourse model. With this, she also mounts a feminist critique of Habermas's opposition between the universalism of morality and law and the particularism of forms of life.

3.3 FEMINISM AND THE DISCOURSE MODEL OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Benhabib starts by counterposing Arendt's classical model of the agonistic space against her modern model of the associational space. The agonistic space is found in the political life of the Greek polis: "the public realm represents that space of appearances in which moral and political greatness, heroism, and preeminence are revealed, displayed, shared with others" (1992b: 77-78). This competitive and homogeneous public space, she stresses, is based on the exclusion of large groups of individuals, including women, slaves and labourers, whose labour nonetheless supports it.

Arendt's associational model is modern, and can be found in either private or public realms. A forest clearing as much as a private dining room can become public space whenever and wherever individuals act together in concert. Far from being morally and politically homogeneous, the modern associational public sphere does not restrict access

to itself, nor does it predetermine the agenda of discussion. Indeed, since the French and American revolutions, the public has been progressively extended as new groups have entered it. Property relations became a public political issue with the emancipation of workers; family and the so-called private sphere, with the emancipation of women, cultural questions of collective self and other representations, with the attainment of rights by nonwhite and non-Christian peoples.

Benhabib, however, finds the relationship between power, legitimacy and public discourse to be not entirely clear in Arendt's models, and she turns for clarification to the liberal concept of public space found in the work of the political theorist Ackerman. In his model, when different citizens do not share the same conception of the good, the solution is "conversational restraint": nothing ought to be said in public about the disagreement, although it can be the topic of discussion in private contexts. As Benhabib puts it:

Ackerman understands liberalism as a way of talking about power, as a political culture of *public dialogue* based on certain kinds of *conversational constraints*. The most significant conversational constraint in liberalism is *neutrality*, which rules that no reason advanced within a discourse of legitimation can be a good reason if it requires the power holder to assert that his conception of the good is better than that asserted by his fellow citizens, or that regardless of his conception of the good, he is intrinsically superior to one or more of his fellow citizens (1992b: 81).

From a feminist perspective, however, there are at least two problems with the liberal model. One, not surprisingly, is that it is, in effect, far from neutral. It vindicates the relegation of the needs and concerns of nondominant groups to the private. Indeed, how

can different individuals or groups know they disagree about an issue before they have engaged in public dialogue about it? As Benhabib underlines, it is only by radically opening public dialogue to all issues that we can ensure that the concerns of nondominant groups are not being excluded.

The other problem is that it conceptualizes political relations by basing itself too closely on the model of juridical relations centred on the ideal of dialogic neutrality. One of the cornerstones of the modern legal system is that it can be, and is, neutral with respect to fundamental assumptions about the good life. Unlike ancient and customary law, which sought to ethically shape character, modern promulgated law seeks to furnish space within which autonomous individuals can pursue different conceptions of the good life. The liberal model of the public space, however, is, in effect, far from dialogically neutral. The distinction between the good and the just, between the private and the public, which underlies the assumption of neutrality, is the result of social and historical struggles and compromises of power.

Benhabib assesses the liberal model of dialogic neutrality to be more sterile, in its lack of imagination, participation and empowerment, than the Arendtian view of public life. In her estimation, however, neither Arendt's models nor the liberal model of public life can do justice to the struggles for the redefinition of the private/public distinction of groups such as the women's movement, the ecology movements and the new ethnic-identity movements. Habermas's discourse model of the public space, on the other hand,

can, as Benhabib argues, be a most fruitful model for the understanding of a transformed politics in advanced capitalist societies because of its “radical indeterminacy and openness” (1992b: 84)

As she points out, Habermas has vindicated the development of an autonomous public sphere of political discussion as a key element of the project of modernity since as far back as his early *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. In his theoretical framework, political participation in modern democratic societies is conceived as the reflective effort and creative contribution of individuals in the three domains of institutional life, personality formation and cultural tradition. Accordingly, Habermas’s view of political participation is not narrowly limited to the political realm as such, but takes place in the social and cultural spheres as well. Habermas shares with Arendt a view of authentic politics as based on “spontaneity, imagination, participation, and empowerment” (1992b: 81). But he differs from her in his “procedural” conceptualization of the public sphere, which is “viewed democratically as the creation of procedures whereby those affected by general social norms and collective political decisions can have a say in their formulation, stipulation, and adoption” (1992b: 87).

Moreover, while Habermas shares with a liberal thinker like Ackerman the view that legitimation in democratic societies can only be established by public dialogue, dialogue for him is not centred on the ideal of neutrality but on the model of a “practical discourse”. “The public sphere comes into existence whenever and wherever all affected

by general social and political norms of action engage in a practical discourse, evaluating their validity. In effect, there may be as many publics as there are controversial general debates about the validity of norms" (1992b: 87). Contemporary democratization can thus be conceptualized as the development of a plurality of public spheres.

It is, however, the case, as Benhabib stresses, that in Habermas's later work, the discourse model of the public sphere is increasingly articulated in terms of his moral theory of communicative or discourse ethics, rather than in terms of his critical social and political theory. As a result, the model inherits some of the problematic distinctions inherent in the tradition of moral and political theory, such as between "generalizable interests" and "culturally interpreted needs," and "justice" and the "good life," to which correspond the distinction between the "public" and the "private" (1992b: 88). From a feminist perspective, these distinctions detract from the emancipatory aspirations of Habermas's theory of modernity.

The reason why these distinctions are so problematic is that in Western patriarchal societies, private and particular questions of the good life have been associated with the women's sphere and considered outside the realm of the public-moral domain reserved to questions of justice and generalizable interests. As Benhabib puts it, "these distinctions have served to confine women and typically female spheres of activity like housework, reproduction, nurture and care for the young, the sick, and the elderly to the 'private'

domain. These issues have often been considered matters of the good life, of values, of nongeneralizable interests" (1992: 89-90). It is because these distinctions have contributing to the silencing of women's private issues and to their exclusion from public discourse, that undermining them is at the core of women's struggles.

Benhabib acknowledges that Habermas has recently presented the counterargument that the conceptual distinction between issues of justice and the good life is different from the sociological distinction between the private and the public domains. She can agree with this in principle, but still maintains that, from the very beginning of modern moral and political theory, questions of justice are dealt with through public discourse, while questions of the good life are left to the privacy of individual consciousness and not brought into the public-moral discourse. As a result, even today, moral and political theory overlooks the issue of the different experiences of men and women in almost every domain of life and stays blind to the existence of power relations in the private sphere.¹⁴

Benhabib stresses that her goal is to enter into a critical and dialectical alliance with Habermas's theory of the public sphere so that it becomes aware of the necessity to reconceptualize the traditional opposition between the private and the public on the basis on the massive transformations of the private and public lives that our societies have undergone. The way Benhabib does this is by radicalizing the proceduralism of Habermas's model. It is an ideal speech situation which stipulates the formal properties

required of practical discourse for arriving at a consensus which is neither false nor apparent:

The procedural constraints of the ideal speech situation are that each participant must have an equal chance to initiate and to continue communication; each must have an equal chance to make assertions, recommendations, and explanations; all must have equal chances to express their wishes, desires, and feelings; and finally, within dialogue, speakers must be free to thematize those power relations that in ordinary contexts would constrain the wholly free articulation of opinions and positions (1992b: 89).

She then points out that when the discourse model is interpreted in such a radically proceduralist way, distinctions such as between justice and the good life, and public interests and private needs begin to dissolve. Indeed, such radical opening of the agenda of conversation means that the topics of discussion are not predefined as being about justice or the good life before they come to be discussed.

In Benhabib's view, then, it is the radical proceduralism of Habermas's discourse model of the public sphere which makes it the model that is the more compatible with the emancipatory aspirations of the women's movement, provided always that its unexamined distinctions continue to be challenged. This is the model that can serve the requirement in feminist theory for a critical model of public space and public discourse that is capable of differentiating between a patriarchal bureaucratic administration of women's needs, which frequently disempower women by predetermining the agenda of public participation, on the one hand, and collective democratic empowerment which

allows these needs to become the object of debate and of moral-political transformation on the other.³⁵

As Hohendahl (1992) argues in his assessment of Benhabib's treatment of the discursive model, the reason she finds this model so much more attractive than Habermas's early historical model of the bourgeois public sphere is that it does not rule women's needs out of the public sphere. That women's needs have been, and are still, so ruled out is, for her, not a problem to be dealt with through historical narrative, but rather a problem that can be resolved through a better theory of the public sphere based on the philosophical arguments she finds in Habermas. The effect of this approach, however, is that in "stressing the procedural aspect of the public sphere, she also formalizes its structure: the ideal public sphere should be stripped of all those particular historical aspects that discriminate against individuals or groups in a given society" (1992: 104)

So it can be argued that Benhabib idealizes her procedural model out of the historical and cultural contexts in which any theoretical or empirical public sphere has inexorably to be rooted. What is important for my purpose is the argument Hohendahl makes that, whatever the merits of the procedural model, the usefulness of Habermas's early historical model for the theorization of an alternative political life is far from exhausted. Moreover, as Hohendahl also points out, besides its historical dimension, Habermas's early model brings into focus the aesthetic dimension of the public sphere: "the intensive and sometimes decidedly polemic argument about the history, present state

and future of the public sphere has always been at the same time a discussion about the conditions and possibilities of culture in an advanced capitalist society" (1979: 89).

Before turning to Habermas's early model of the public sphere, a model of particular importance because of the primacy of place it gives to the aesthetic dimension as compared to his later work, I want to clarify what the theory of communicative action has to say about the emancipatory potential of contemporary art; and explain why ultimately I was not able to fit women's poetry within that framework. I had, instead, to turn to the work of Adorno and Derrida.

4. THE EMANCIPATORY POTENTIAL OF AESTHETIC MODERNITY

4.1 THE NONORGANIC WORK OF ART AS A MODEL OF COMMUNITY

In this chapter, I take a closer and more critical look at Habermas's conceptualization of the emancipatory potential of aesthetic modernity. To do this, I first turn to Buerger's (1981; [1974] 1987) work on the avant-garde and Wellmer's (1991) transposition of Adorno's theory of art into the terms of the theory of communicative action. These two critical theorists of art are concerned with the modern nonorganic work of art which, as will be seen, can stand as model for a nonviolent relationship to Otherness. I use this idea to illuminate the ethical dimension of modern art; and I then further develop the idea by situating it in relation to the Romantic view of art, where there is to be found a model of an organic community. That model is now available to us as a model of nonorganic community, respectful of difference and heterogeneity.

Next, I challenge the claim made by Habermas and Wellmer that the core of Adorno's utopia of mimesis can be successfully explicated in terms of the theory of communicative action. I use Habermas's discussion of Nietzsche, Adorno and Derrida in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* for this purpose. I confront his criticism of Adorno and Derrida that they blur the division between "serious" language and metaphor. I argue instead for the ethical dimension of metaphor and establish its link with the utopian aspirations of feminism.

At the end of *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas draws on a crucial methodological insight found in Marx's *Grundrisse*. This is that the level of development of the conceptual apparatus used in scholarship is dependent on the level of development of the field being investigated. So it was that only in industrially advanced England did it become possible for Adam Smith to identify labour as the source of wealth; while in France, which was less industrially advanced, the Physiocrats were limited to identifying agriculture as its source. In Habermas's view, the same methodological insight holds for the use of the concept of communicative action to decipher the pathologies of the lifeworld: it is precisely because society is now at a stage where the penetration of systems imperatives poses such a "provocative threat" for the lifeworld, calling its symbolic structures as a whole in question, that these structures have become accessible to us through the use of this concept (1987a: 402-03).

In his *Theory of the Avant-Garde* ([1974] 1987) Buerger applies the same methodological approach to theories of art and literature: it is only with the doctrine of Art for Art's Sake that the full development of the sphere of art is achieved; and it is only with the countermovement of the historical avant-garde, which sees this radical autonomy of art as a challenging threat, that it becomes possible for us to have a special entry into the development of the sphere of art itself. For this reason, he contends that a theory of the avant-garde should be the standpoint from which to investigate the development of art in modern society ([1974] 1987: 19).³⁶

Notwithstanding the autonomy of art's development—its tendency to detach itself from the praxis of life—the sphere of art had until the middle of the nineteenth century retained considerable cognitive and moral elements, as exemplified in the literary genre of the novel with its function of portraying bourgeois self-understanding.” With the doctrine of Art for Art's Sake, however, these cognitive and moral elements are radically eradicated, as artists came to focus exclusively on specific aesthetic experiences. Avant-garde movements emerged as a reaction to this radical rupture of art from life: they sought to use the aesthetic experiences achieved in the autonomous sphere of art to transform everyday practice ([1974] 1987: 47-49). Although their project failed, they left an emancipatory legacy for contemporary art, which it is crucial to grasp

If it is possible today to think about free productivity for everyone, then it is certainly due to the fact that the avant-gardists questioned the legitimacy of the term “great art work.” The *écriture automatique* still contains possibilities for the development of a free productivity which goes far beyond the surrealists' own endeavors. Finally, without the avant-gardist notion of montage numerous realms of contemporary aesthetic experience would be inaccessible (1981: 22)

Thus the avant-garde can be credited for having radically put into question the humanist notion of the “great” artist as the creator of “unique” works of art. The avant-garde puts the individuality of aesthetic production into question not by returning to the collective production of art of medieval times, but by radically negating the category of the individual creator. So it is that at the beginning of the twentieth century, the French Surrealist painter Marcel Duchamp signs a mass-produced urinal, which he then sends to an exhibition in New York to deride the idea of the Genius. When, however, that urinal is

given place among other "great" works of art in a museum, the critique which Duchamp intended for it, is coopted. This is why, Buerger contends, the avant-garde is now dead ([1974] 1987: 109 n. 4).

In Buerger's view, the most important contribution of the avant-garde is to be sought in the liquidation of the traditional organic work of art and its replacement by the nonorganic work. As the term suggests, the organic work of art has the appearance of nature, in the sense that the artist who produces it takes care to remove all those features which might indicate to the recipient that it is an artificial construct ([1974] 1987: 72). In contrast, the nonorganic work signals clearly to the recipient that it has been constructed from heterogeneous fragments of reality. Buerger finds the first manifestations of the nonorganic work of art in the montages which Picasso and Braque created early in the century ([1974] 1987: 73).³⁸

With this, the avant-garde can also be credited for challenging the individuality of aesthetic reception. Indeed, at that time, the recipients of nonorganic works discovered with "shock" that they could not make sense of this type of art with the traditional mode of reception.³⁹ This, Buerger underlines, was precisely the revolutionary goal of the avant-garde movements: that with such a shock recipients would start to problematize the lives they had up to then taken for granted, and begin to conceive of the possibility of changing them ([1974] 1987: 80). The use of shock, however, is problematic for a number of reasons. To start with, it runs the risk of giving rise to the opposite effect:

instead of shocked recipients changing their lives, they may be reinforced in their conventional patterns. Also, nothing can more easily be coopted than the newness of shock. Pulp fiction and “commodity aesthetics” provide abundant evidence of this ([1974] 1987: 54).

In my attempt to go beyond Habermas’s view of art as without an ethical-political dimension, I find particularly important Buerger’s analysis of the nonorganic work of art. As was seen earlier with the communitarian thinker Taylor, the Romantic critique of mainstream Enlightenment proposed art as an alternative to science as the model of human activity. The living, expressive unity of the human life was likened to the expressive unity of a harmonious work of art in which each part takes its signification not in isolation but in relation to all others. And related to this conception of the human being as an expressive being was the notion of community, which because it was conceived on the model of a harmonious work of art, was itself harmonious.

Now, there are deep problems with these related models of the harmonious, organic work of art and the harmonious, organic community. As Friedman (1989) has argued, the kinds of communities, like families, neighbourhoods and nations, often proposed by communitarian thinkers are “troubling paradigms of social relationship and communal life,” because they can too often be seen to be characterized by the exclusion and elimination of nongroup individuals, especially those of different ethnicity or sexual orientation (1989: 279).

Basing myself on this argument, I want to contend that there is a strong ethical-political dimension to the challenge of the nonorganic work of art to the exclusion of Otherness, and this alternative model of art points to nonorganic models of community which are open to Otherness. To do this, I build on Wellmer's (1991) interpretation of Adorno's theory of art in the context of Habermas's conceptual framework of communicative action.

Wellmer begins his interpretation of Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* by noting that it has to be linked to *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* to be properly understood. In that earlier work, Horkheimer and Adorno conceive of reason only as instrumental reason. Because of this, they become caught in an aporia in which they are unable to locate an emancipatory potential within society, no matter how committed they are to the process of enlightenment. As Wellmer puts it:

It follows from this that the process of enlightenment would only be able to transcend and perfect itself within its own medium, that of the spirit controlling nature. The process of enlightening enlightenment about itself (the "mindfulness (*Eingedenken*) of nature in the subject") is only possible within the medium of conceptual thought, the necessary condition being that the concept itself is turned against the reifying tendency of conceptual thought, as Adorno will go on to postulate in *Negative Dialectics* when he speaks of philosophy striving "by means of the concept, to transcend the concept" (1991: 4).

For Adorno, the way for the concept to transcend itself is through mimesis, which is the name for those forms of activity which are "sensually receptive, expressive and communicative" (1991: 4). And throughout the process of civilization, it has been art that has been the privileged receptacle of mimetic forms of activity.

Accordingly, the process of enlightening enlightenment about itself has to take place in the two spheres of art and philosophy through an intimate interaction between rationality and mimesis: "this interaction takes a contrasting form in either case: in art it is the mimetic principle which assumes the appearance of the spirit, while in philosophy the rational spirit becomes muted to a mimetic and reconciliatory force" (1991: 5). This reconciling spirit is to be conceived of, simultaneously, both as the medium shared by art and philosophy and as their utopian goal:

the concept of the reconciling spirit stands not only for the "nonviolent synthesis of the disparate" both in the beauty of art and in philosophical thought, but at the same time it stands for a nonviolent unity of the diverse in the reconciliation of relations between all living things. This reconciliation of all living things is prefigured in the cognitive modes of art and philosophy, where a nonviolent resolution is achieved between intuition and concept, between the particular and the universal, between the part and the whole (1991: 5).

Wellmer underlines that for Adorno the relation between the reconciling spirit and an unreconciled world takes the form of an aporia: philosophical and aesthetic cognition (or discursive and nondiscursive cognition) each strives for the totality of knowledge, while having access to only a fragment of it, access to the totality of knowledge would only be possible if the complementary modes of philosophical and aesthetic cognition could be combined together, which they never could be in an unreconciled reality. In art, truth presents itself in the sensual medium. As we try to seize this truth, it disappears virtually instantaneously. Adorno believes it possible to extract the truth content of works

of art through philosophical interpretation, but since philosophy is limited to conceptual discourse, it could never do real justice to the sensual splendour of the work of art.

In Adorno's view, art imitates natural beauty and is conceived as a "cipher" of a reconciled nature which points also to a reconciled humanity (1991: 7). Wellmer, however, points out that the relationship between truth, semblance and reconciliation is as aporetic as is the relationship between art and philosophy. In order to further clarify Adorno's dialectic of aesthetic semblance, Wellmer first examines Adorno's notion of the truth of art. It is a "single" truth which, however, can only divulge itself as a particular truth (1991: 8). What is true in the content of a particular work of art, considered in its specificity, is the extent to which it does not falsify the reality it proposes to make manifest. There are two dimensions to such a truth and they are dialectically connected. They can, however, be analytically distinguished as truth #1, the aesthetic rightness or validity of the work, and truth #2, the truth of the representation of reality that the work deals with. The unity of these two moments of truth would then imply, in the first instance, that only through aesthetic synthesis can art convey cognition of reality, and, conversely, in the second instance, that aesthetic synthesis can only occur when it serves to make reality manifest.

On the one hand, then, if art is to be true to itself it has to represent reality as it is, that is, in its unreconciled state. On the other, it can only do this through the nonviolent

aesthetic synthesis (the sensual splendour) which makes reality appear “in the light of reconciliation” (1991: 9). And yet, if it wants to be faithful to truth #2, the work of art must refuse aesthetic synthesis. This is how Adorno interprets the nonorganic work of art: “negation of synthesis becomes a principle of aesthetic figuration” (Adorno quoted in Wellmer 1991: 10). However, this negation of synthesis has to remain faithful to truth #1. It cannot escape doing so because it is only through aesthetic rightness that reality can be made manifest.

According to Wellmer, it is because Adorno does not have a concept of communicative rationality at his disposal that he is caught in this dilemma: he can only conceive of mimesis as outside of conceptual thought, and for him, the encounter between mimesis and rationality points to a utopia which is condemned to remain forever outside of this world. The way out of the dilemma is, of course, to switch to the theory of communicative action, within which the utopia of mimesis becomes an inherent moment of historical reality.

If we think of unimpaired intersubjectivity as a condition which permits a multiplicity of subjects to come together, without coercion, making it possible for individuals to exist at one and the same time in proximity and distance, in identity and diversity, then this represents a utopian projection, constructed by discursive reason out of elements which are rooted in the nature of language. This utopian projection is not the Other of discursive reason, but the idea which discursive reason has of itself. Since this utopia is rooted in the conditions of language, the utopia in question is of this world, and in this sense a “materialistic” one (1991: 14).

With Habermas's thesis that the rationalization of the lifeworld and societal rationalization influence each other in a way which is not predetermined, the potential for emancipation within society becomes an empirical and historical question

Wellmer starts to set Adorno's aesthetics in motion by reexamining the relationship between his categories of truth, semblance and reconciliation: "the sense of these categories in Adorno is inseparable both from the idea that art exists *a priori* in a polemical relationship to reality, and also from the perspective of a 'redeemed' world of nature" (1991: 15-16). If either one of these ideas is dispensed with, a new constellation of the relationship between truth, semblance and reconciliation becomes possible. In building his argument, Wellmer draws on several theorists of art who have each reworked a partial aspect of this new constellation: the emancipatory potential of aesthetic experience, the utopian splendour of aesthetic semblance and the connection between art and truth. He himself, however, maintains that these distinct aspects of Adorno's aesthetics can be kept together.

He turns first to the emancipatory potential of aesthetic modernity—which he characterizes in terms of its openness—and shows how its subversion of the harmonious work of art corresponds to a subversion of the humanist notion of subjectivity. What the open work of art radically submits to critique is

a *type* of unity and meaningful whole...a type which was represented in the era of great bourgeois art by the unity of the closed work of art as well as by the unity of the individual ego. Aesthetic enlightenment discovers something violent, unreflected and inauthentic in the unity of the traditional work, as in the unity of the bourgeois subject, namely a type of

unity which is only possible at the price of suppressing and excluding that which is disparate or cannot be integrated, that which remains unarticulated or repressed. It is the inauthentic unity of a fictitious totality of meaning, one which has remained analogous to a divinely created cosmos (1991: 19).

In this light, the open character of the modern work can be seen as a process of including the Otherness which had been excluded or repressed in the traditional work.

Adorno too holds that, corresponding to the open character of the post-traditional work of art, there is as well an opening of subjectivity "which no longer corresponds to the rigid unity of the bourgeois subject, but which displays the more flexible organizational form of a communicatively fluid ego-identity" (1991: 20). Wellmer, however, argues that within the theory of communicative action, it becomes possible to establish a stronger link than Adorno's between the openness of modern works of art and the expansion of the boundaries of the "receiving" subject (1991: 20). For this purpose, he draws on the work of Schwab who examines the potential of modernist works of art (Woolf, Joyce, Beckett) from this perspective

Schwab's idea is that the reflexive opening-up of literary forms of representation triggers a playful to and fro between identification and differentiation on the part of the reader, which effectively works towards a genuine expansion of subjective boundaries. In this sense one might also say that new forms of aesthetic synthesis in modern art point toward new forms of psychic and social "synthesis." This is the *emancipatory* potential of modernism: a new type of "synthesis" comes into view—in an aesthetic, moral-psychological, and social sense—in which that which is diffuse and unintegrated, that which is "meaningless" and split off could be gathered together in an arena for nonviolent communication which would encompass the opened forms of art as well as the open structures of a no longer rigid type of individuation and socialization (1991: 20).

Wellmer considers that the related phenomena of the expansion of the boundaries of the work of art and of the subject should be conceived of as a real utopia of nonviolent communication. This utopia is no longer, as in Adorno, a utopia of some future reconciliation taking place outside of historical reality, but a process which begins with the transposition of aesthetic experience into communicative action.

The link between art and philosophy, accordingly, is not as conceived by Adorno. Aesthetic cognition is no longer deficient in comparison to philosophical cognition, "for works of art which point toward an expansion of the boundaries of communication by virtue of their *effect* and not their *being* do not fulfil their enlightening, cognitive function at the level of philosophical *knowledge*, but on that of the subjects' relationship to themselves and to the world, where works of art intervene in a complex network of attitudes, feelings, interpretations and evaluations" (1991: 22). Indeed, the kind of cognition achieved in aesthetic experience can go beyond that of theoretical knowledge since it includes not only a purely cognitive dimension, but also affective and moral-practical dimensions.

With aesthetic cognition so redefined, Wellmer wants to clarify further the relation between art and truth by taking a closer look at Adorno's concept of the truth of art. He does this in light of Habermas's pragmatic differentiation of the everyday concept of truth in which cognitive meaning (truth), moral expectations (normative rightness) and subjective expressions and evaluations (truthfulness) must relate to one another. "these

three concepts of truth represent the dimensions of validity for everyday speech, and thus a preconception of 'truth' which is available to every speaker" (1991: 22). This enables Wellmer to see the relation between art and truth in terms of the contribution that art can be said to make to a breach in the experience of reality, a breach which holds the potential of subsequently revising and extending reality.

Further, with the additional validity claim of aesthetic rightness, there is an intervention of art in the three validity domains of the everyday concept of truth in a complex way that makes it impossible to reduce this intervention to any one of them: "there is something about art which leads us to view works of art themselves...as vehicles of truth-claims; and these claims to *truth* that are made by works of art are connected with their *aesthetic* claim to validity" (1991: 24). The reason we have this view, Wellmer contends, is because the central intuition underlying the objective concept of the truth of art (cognitive meaning) can be captured by the metaphor of the work of art as "showing" reality; the relationship of the work of art to objective truth can only be 'metaphoric' because in the work of art "reality can only be shown, and not put into words" (1991: 25).

What Wellmer is getting at here is this: the claim raised by the work of art to represent reality as it is would have to be argued for at the level of objective truth through empirical-theoretical discourse, which he holds to be impossible. If it is difficult to conceive how the claim of the work of art to manifest reality could be argued for in empirical-theoretical discourse, it is, however, easier to conceive how the claim to

aesthetic rightness could be argued for through aesthetic discourse in a way which, as

Wellmer puts it, ultimately leads to an illumination of everyday experience:

Such aesthetic discussions...refer back to the aesthetic experience itself, both correcting and expanding it. The aesthetic sense of "rightness" must, in the final analysis, be *perceived*; and in so far as the aesthetic rightness is connected with the showing of reality, the work of art must also be perceived *as* a reality being shown in the medium of showing, and reality must be *recognized* as showing itself. It must be recognized not in the sense that the truth of a statement, but in the sense that a face is recognized only with the difference: when we "recognize" reality in an aesthetic experience...then what we have known diffusely, experienced vaguely and apprehended implicitly acquires the firm outlines of a sensual experience for the first time (1991: 25-26).

The previous experience we have had of the reality represented in the work of art does not, however, have ontological priority with respect to the work of art, because that previous experience is itself transformed by art. In the presence of the work of art we now experience the previous experience in retrospect and differently. Art not only unveils reality, it opens our eyes and ears and thus transforms our perception. It heals us of a partial blindness and deafness in our capacity to perceive reality. Through the medium of aesthetic reception, we experience reality more completely (1991: 26).

Wellmer underlines that in the aesthetic discourse which arises when there is controversy about the aesthetic rightness of a work of art, a work which is at the same time a symbolic formation with an aesthetic validity claim and an object of the lifeworld experience, the participants have to rely on their personal experience which is situated in

their everyday life, and they, therefore, have to bring together the three aspects of truth, truthfulness and moral-practical rightness in a nonmetaphorical way.

Thus Wellmer holds that aesthetic experience can be grasped as the “‘point of entry’ of forces which, in their nonaesthetic usage, might restore a continuity between art and living praxis” (1991: 29). In this light, semblance is still related to truth and reconciliation, but in a way which enables Adorno’s aesthetic theory to be fruitfully appropriated for the analysis of contemporary art: utopian splendour is now situated within reality, not outside of it

Wellmer concludes by reflecting on modern mass culture. Taking into account both Adorno’s negative evaluation of mass culture and Benjamin’s positive evaluation of it, Wellmer considers that there is in mass culture as much potential for democratization as there is for cultural regression. He then suggests that an analysis of modern mass culture should investigate “the explosive mixtures of aesthetic and political imagination” found in protest movements since the 1960s, because he thinks that “it is only in the new political forms of action, and in the alternative and resistance movements, that artistic ‘actions’ and ‘happenings’ have found the context in which they can develop their aesthetic explosive force” (1991: 34). In his view, such a “politicization of aesthetics” is quite different from the fascist “aestheticization of politics” since it represents “the appropriation of politics by a mass population grown conscious of its own power” (1991: 34).

Now, my enquiry into the most explosive mixture of aesthetic and political imagination—namely, that of the women's movement—has led me to the conclusion that its emancipatory potential can only be made partial sense of within the conceptual framework of the theory of communicative action. I applaud Wellmer for the ingenuity with which he makes the case for the cognitive and moral-practical dimensions of the reception of art, but I claim that this is not enough and that the production of art should also be allowed an ethical-utopian dimension. It is my contention that neither Habermas nor Wellmer can accept this possibility because they have already predecided that the autonomous sphere of art is concerned with the aspect of beauty alone.

For all that he may have predecided the question, it is Wellmer himself who signals the direction for moving beyond the limitations of Habermas's conceptual framework. He does this in his illumination of the openness to Otherness of the nonorganic work of art. That artistic openness points to nonorganic models of social relations and communal life. What I see in the model of the nonorganic work is the continuation of the Romantic idea of art as a model of human activity and community, but stripped of what was violent, unreflected and inauthentic in the harmonious traditional work of art as well as in the harmonious *Gemeinschaft*.⁴⁰ As will be seen later, Wellmer's idea can help in the thinking of alternative feminist political communities.

Now, if the open character of the modern work of art can be seen as a process of including Otherness, I do not see why the possibility of the ethical-utopian dimension of

the production of art should be denied. Surely the artist, in her deep concern for Otherness, can be concerned with more in her work than just the aspect of its beauty. Let me reiterate that I think Habermas and Wellmer hold to their position because they have, in effect, predecided that modernity is characterized by the differentiation of the logics of the realm of science, morality and art. If indeed this characteristic of modernity is held to be immune to critique and transformation, it may be that it has passed into the order of the Myth. And maybe it ought to be challenged on that ground.

I next challenge the contention of Habermas and Wellmer that Adorno can only conceive of the utopia of mimesis as something “outside” of conceptual thought, and therefore as something irrational. For this purpose, I turn to Habermas’s discussion of Romanticism and aesthetic modernity in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*.

4.2 ROMANTICISM, AESTHETIC MODERNITY AND POSTMODERNISM

NIETZSCHE AND THE DIALECTIC OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Habermas’s discussion of Nietzsche has to be situated in the context of his own specific understanding of myth. In *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas tells us that as “members of a modern lifeworld” what “irritates us” about the mythical understanding of the world is its lack of the differentiations which are crucial to our modern understanding of the world (1984: 48).⁴¹ In *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, Habermas again clearly states his position against myth:

In the tradition of the Enlightenment, enlightened thinking has been understood as an opposition and counterforce to myth. As *opposition*, because it opposes the unforced force of the better argument to the authoritarian normativity of a tradition interlinked with the chain of the generations; as *counterforce*, because by insights gained individually and transposed into motives, it is supposed to break the spell of collective powers. Enlightenment contradicts myth and thereby escapes its violence. (1987b: 107)

If, for Habermas, no thinker is more dangerous than the first postmodern thinker, Nietzsche, it is because with Nietzsche there is no solution to the problem of the divisions of modernity, only a regression to the premodern, undifferentiated mythical state. For Habermas, postmodernity is premodernity.⁴²

The attempts of Hegel and Marx to ground modernity out of itself—through the unifying power of an absolute spirit and through a concept of praxis with an aesthetic-normative dimension—had failed in Habermas's view. Nietzsche then comes on scene. Like Marx, he denounces the sterility of a modern culture divorced from life and confined to the realm of interiority; and since he thinks it impossible to reconcile modernity through its own driving forces, he turns instead to myth as a solution.

Modern time-consciousness, Habermas underlines, makes it impossible for a thinker as serious as Nietzsche to simply regress to the mythical past; he radicalizes time-consciousness by turning his gaze to the future as the horizon of the birth of a new mythology. This utopian perspective oriented to the future, as Habermas stresses, does differentiate Nietzsche's solution from those of reactionary "Back to the origins!" movements (1987b: 87). Moreover, influenced by Wagner's programme for an

aesthetically transformed religious festival taking place in a culturally revitalized public sphere, Nietzsche sees in modern art the bridge between modernity and the new mythology.⁴³

To be sure, the idea of a new mythology is of Romantic origin. It was, after all, a solution to the problem of modernity tried by the young Hegel and his friends Schelling and Hölderlin: through an alternative mythology, art would again become a public institution and reestablish the sundered ethical totality. Habermas wants to make two assertions about the early Romantic aesthetic utopia. First, the new mythology was to be a collective and not an individual creation. Second, the young Hegel had wondered whether art might not even replace philosophy because of the unique capacity of aesthetic intuition to represent "the highest act of reason" (Hegel quoted in Habermas 1987b: 89). However, while Schelling and Hegel had believed in the intimate relationship of the true and the good with the beautiful, for Schlegel only the beautiful characterizes art: "for that is the beginning of all poetry, namely, to overcome the operation and laws of rationally thinking reason and transpose us again into the lovely confusion of phantasy, into the primordial chaos of human nature, for which I know of no more beautiful symbol than the abundant throng of the classical gods" (Schlegel quoted in Habermas 1987b: 90).

Habermas emphasizes that Schlegel's view of art corresponds to autonomous modern art in which the dimensions of truth and morality have been eradicated, and

basing himself on Schlegel, he is then able to assert that: "modern art alone can communicate with the archaic sources of social integration that have been sealed off within modernity. On this reading, the new mythology demands of a dirempted modernity that it relate to the 'primordial chaos' as the other of reason" (1987b: 91).

Let me open a parenthesis here to help set the use Habermas makes of Schlegel in context. At this point in his account of the evolution of the Romantic aesthetic utopia, Habermas has a choice available for the point of inflection of his analysis. He can take it to be the young Hegel, and Schelling, and their belief in the intimate relationship of the true, the good and the beautiful, or he can take it to be Schlegel, and his belief in the loveliness of the transposition to primordial chaos. Habermas ultimately wants to dismiss the possibility of a modern aesthetics with emancipatory potential. He is being highly selective, to say the least, in hinging that dismissal on Schlegel, rather than on the young Hegel and Schelling. I return to this later, when I round out my argument that in Romanticism there is an alternative open to autonomous nonethical art that is now being fulfilled by feminist aesthetics.

Having, with Schlegel, established a relation between the primordial chaos of myth and a modern art devoid of cognitive and moral dimensions, Habermas turns to the strong appeal of the cult of Dionysus in early Romanticism, drawing on Frank. Frank's proposition is that the cult's appeal is to be attributed to its links to ancient religious traditions, and thereby to a source of social solidarity lost in the Christian West. The

equation of the “frenzied wine-god,” the “God who returns,” with Christ is found throughout the entire early Romantic reception of myth, and Habermas underlines that it should be seen as a “rejuvenation” of and not as a “departure” from modernity.

The new mythology was supposed to restore a lost solidarity but not reject the emancipation that the separation from the primordial mythical forces also brought about for the individual as individuated in the presence of the One God. In Romanticism, the recourse to Dionysus was supposed to open up only that dimension of public freedom in which Christian promises were to be fulfilled in a this-worldly manner, so that the principle of subjectivity—deepened and at the same time authoritatively brought to dominance by the Reformation and the Enlightenment—could lose its narrowness (1987b: 92).

According to Habermas, the emancipatory dimension of the myth of Dionysus in Romantic messianism disappears with Nietzsche. Nietzsche pursues the (Schlegel-like) Romantic process of voiding art of all theoretical and practical associations and shifts into the cult of Dionysus all modern aesthetic “experiences of self-disclosure of a decentered subjectivity, liberated from all constraints of cognition, and purposive activity, all imperatives of utility and morality” (1987b: 94).⁴⁴ As a result, the only solution that Nietzsche can propose to mythless modern human beings is the elimination of all mediations and the reduction of everything to the aesthetic dimension, which is then “hypostatized” into the other of reason (1987b: 95-96).

This hypostatization happens with Nietzsche, Habermas maintains, because Nietzsche does not recognize the rational moment present in the inner logic of the avant-garde, at which the critical capacity of aesthetic judgment can take a yes or no position on questions of taste. In Nietzsche’s radical critique of modernity and reason, that

unrecognized rational moment of modern autonomous art becomes an anonymous and all-pervasive will to power: "behind apparently universal normative claims lie hidden the subjective power claims of value appraisals....Nietzsche enthrones taste, 'the Yes and No of the palate,' as the organ of a knowledge beyond true and false, beyond good and evil" (1987b: 95-96).

This account of what Habermas has to say about Nietzsche, Romanticism and aesthetic modernity helps in making sense of his reading of Horkheimer and Adorno's *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* as well as of his dismissal of the utopia of mimesis. As will be seen, Habermas's negative appraisal of where Nietzsche takes Romanticism and aesthetic modernity informs his treatment of Adorno and Derrida.

HORKHEIMER AND ADORNO'S DIALECTIC OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Habermas tells us that much of his concern for the contemporary situation of society is rooted in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*. What he wants to do is understand and counter the very negative appraisal of the potential of modernity in that work, a work deeply influenced by Nietzsche's radical critique of reason. In contrast to Habermas, who opposes the positive counterforce of Enlightenment to the authoritarianism of myth, for Horkheimer and Adorno: "myth is already enlightenment; and enlightenment reverts to mythology" (Horkheimer and Adorno quoted in Habermas 1987b: 107). They develop their dialectic through Homer's *Odyssey*, which they take to be the original narrative of

them not what “the fascist would falsely present as homeland,” but the maze from which individuals have to extricate themselves in order to survive (Horkheimer and Adorno quoted in Habermas 1987b: 108).

Habermas, however, notes that the relation of myth to origin is ambivalent “The myth of origin involves the *double meaning* of ‘springing from’: a shudder at being uprooted and a sigh of relief at escaping” (1987b: 108). He considers that this ambivalence remains present throughout all of Horkheimer and Adorno’s dialectic. On the one hand, they are aware of Durkheim’s work on the power of mythic ritual to revitalize social solidarity. On the other, they recognize “the sheerly illusionary character of the return to origins, from which at the same time the member of the tribal collectivity has to escape by being formed into an ego” (1987b: 108). Accordingly, because mythical forces are at one and the same time both sanctified and outwitted, they “already occupy a first stage of enlightenment in the primal history of subjectivity” (1987b: 108).

For Horkheimer and Adorno, while the disengagement of individuals from mythical forces ought to constitute the first stage of their authentic enlightenment – leading to their emancipation – it turns into its opposite. The price paid by human beings for the acquisition of identity is the domination of outer nature as well as inner nature. The Sirens’ song is for them the symbol of the happiness once experienced in the “bliss of archaic union with internal and external nature” (1987b: 109). This is why, in their

diagnostic of modernity, they contend that enlightenment backslides into mythology, that the modern, rationalized world is only in appearance disenchanted.

Habermas asserts that the reader who takes "seriously" the philosophical nature of *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* and "resists being overwhelmed by the rhetoric" will discover that Horkheimer and Adorno are aware of the similarity of their diagnostic with that of Nietzsche (1987b: 110). Unlike Nietzsche, however, they constantly try to ground their critique of modern culture in the name of an emancipatory ideal (the utopia of mimesis), but at the cost of a gross over-simplification of the very emancipatory potential present in cultural modernity.

Their error is in taking all of modern science, morality and art to be the product of instrumental reason. Habermas can appreciate that Horkheimer and Adorno are seized with the propensity inherent in the growth of the capitalist economy and the modern bureaucratic state for all questions of validity to be integrated within the narrow framework of purposive rationality, a rationality characteristic of individuals selfishly concerned with their own self-preservation and their self-maintaining systems. But as he never tires of repeating, modernity's "specific dignity" resides in the differentiation of value spheres so that questions of truth, morality and taste can develop according to their own autonomous logic; and it is this that gives modernity its emancipatory potential (1987b: 112-13).

What is to account, then, for the radical approach of these two Enlightenment thinkers to the project of modernity. Habermas thinks the answer can be found by situating Marx's critique of ideology in the overall process of Enlightenment. He notes first that the nonemancipatory distancing of the individual from primordial powers is not the only dimension of thinking about myth and Enlightenment in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*. There is another dimension, not as extensively treated, which has to do with demythologization, conceived as the differentiation of basic concepts. As has been seen, the fundamental characteristic of mythical thinking is the naturalization of language and the socialization of nature. Myth owes its unifying power to its capacity to incorporate into basic concepts the multiplicity of phenomena through a network of correspondences, analogies and oppositions in a way that is radically different from modern understanding. In myth, the linguistic world view can be said to be indissolubly linked with the existing order of things (1987b: 114)

This is why, Habermas underlines, myths cannot be changed without jeopardizing both the order of the world and the identity of the collectivity. Demythologization brings about the desocialization of nature and the denaturalization of the human world. It starts with the process of the rationalization of world views, which results in a differentiation of the objective, social and subjective worlds. This process of rationalization continues in the differentiation of the three value spheres. As was seen earlier in the account of *The Theory of Communicative Action*, it is within this process of rationalization that the

critique of ideology should be situated. It is only with the differentiation of the three spheres that a theory can become suspect of being tied to particular interests and power claims.

Therefore, ideology critique "advances the process of enlightenment by showing that a theory presupposing a demythologized understanding of the world is still ensnared by myth" (1987b: 116). With ideology critique, as first practiced by Marx, Enlightenment becomes self-reflective. Horkheimer and Adorno start out with this kind of critique, but then carry it to the point where ideology critique itself becomes suspect of being incapable of yielding truth. This happens when they radicalize Marx's critique of the norms of reason embodied in bourgeois ideals by making reason itself the target of suspicion. With this, critical theory itself is put into jeopardy.

Habermas thinks that the radical break Horkheimer and Adorno make with critical theory's original programme of collaboration between philosophy and social sciences and its commitment, until 1941, to the emancipatory potential of bourgeois ideals, has to be understood in the context of their times. With the cooption of the working class in the West, the hold of Stalinism in the East and the triumph of fascism in Europe, it is not difficult to appreciate how they could arrive at the conclusion in the darkest years of the Second World War, that reason had left civilization.

The central difference between Nietzsche and Horkheimer and Adorno is that they want to invalidate Enlightenment with Enlightenment's own tools. So, in denouncing

reason as purely instrumental and incapable of critical insight, they continue to employ the very critique they claim is dead. According to Habermas, no one was more aware of this paradox than the Adorno of the *Negative Dialectics* which "reads like a continuing explanation of why we have to circle about this *performative contradiction* and indeed even remain there; of why only the insistent, relentless unfolding of this paradox opens up the prospect of that magically invoked 'mindfulness of nature in the subject in whose fulfillment the unacknowledged truth of all culture lies hidden'" (Adorno quoted in Habermas 1987b: 119-20). The grandeur of Adorno, for Habermas, is his refusal to overcome in any easy way the painful paradox in which he is caught.

I now turn to the parallel Habermas makes between the totalizing self-critique of reason of Adorno and Derrida and to his fundamental disagreement with them about the metaphorical, expressive, and playful dimension of language.

HABERMAS'S CRITIQUE OF DERRIDA'S USE OF METAPHOR

Habermas recognizes deep affinities between Derrida's and Adorno's totalizing critique of reason. Both thinkers "meet in a negative extremism, finding the essential in the marginal and incidental, the right on the side of the subversive and the outcast, and the truth in the peripheral and the inauthentic" (1987b: 187). Nor, for Habermas, does the parallel stop there. Like Adorno's negative dialectics, Derrida's deconstruction seeks to demolish "foundational relationships and conceptual relations of domination, such as

those between speech and writing, the intelligible and the sensible, nature and culture, inner and outer, mind and matter, male and female. Logic and rhetoric constitute one of these conceptual pairs" (1987b: 187).

Now, Habermas experiences considerable intellectual irritation with what he terms Derrida's project of "standing on its head" the subordination of rhetoric to logic, which has been in authority since Aristotle (1987b: 187). Derrida is concerned with the metaphorical basis of philosophical texts, rather than the network of discursive relationships on which their arguments are built. Habermas contends that Derrida is merely doing literary criticism, and blurring the distinction between philosophy and literature. It is this which, to his mind, explains the "lively reception" of deconstruction by departments of literature in prestigious American universities (1987b: 191). It is a way for them to seem to upgrade their activity to the critique of metaphysics. Not surprisingly, he finds that Derrida has not understood the differentiation of the spheres of science, morality and art that characterizes modernity. The form of argumentation corresponding to the claims to propositional truth of science and philosophy is theoretical discourse. The form of argumentation corresponding to art's claims to beauty and authenticity is literary criticism.

Habermas does not deny that literary criticism has an important role to play. It has the crucial function of mediating between expert cultures and everyday world:

It brings the experiential content of the work of art into normal language; the innovative potential of art and literature for the lifeworlds and life histories that reproduce themselves through everyday communicative

practice can only be unleashed in this maieutic way. This is then deposited in the changed configuration of the evaluative vocabulary, in a renovation of value orientations and need interpretations, which alters the color of modes of life by way of altering modes of perception (1987b: 208).

Derrida is undermining that mediating function by blurring the distinction between philosophy and literary criticism. True, the two domains each have a strong rhetorical dimension, but the similarity ends there. Moreover, in each domain of activity, rhetoric is subordinate to logic, albeit to two different logics, each pertaining to its own sphere. Both philosophy and literary criticism are damaged when literary criticism turns into a critique of metaphysics, such as practiced by the literary disciples of Derrida. Philosophy loses its seriousness and productivity. And the distinction between autonomous experimental language and the normal everyday use of language oriented towards mutual understanding becomes blurred.⁴⁵

I disagree with Habermas that because Derrida is concerned with the metaphorical basis of philosophical texts rather than by the network of discursive relationships of which arguments are constructed, he can be accused of merely practicing literary criticism and not serious philosophy. Of course, this accusation is based on Habermas's belief that modernity's specific dignity resides in the differentiation of value spheres in accord with their own logics. However, after my own unsuccessful attempts to make sense of women's claim that their poetry has a serious, ethical dimension in itself (and not merely in the eyes of its readers), I have come to see the deep affinities between their claim and Adorno and Derrida's defense of metaphor.

ADORNO AND DERRIDA'S DEFENSE OF METAPHOR

In *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, Habermas argues that thinkers such as Adorno, Heidegger and Derrida, with their totalizing self-critique of reason, have not yet broken with the claim of metaphysics to ultimate foundations: "they all still defend themselves as if they were living in the shadow of the 'last' philosopher, as did the first generation of Hegelian disciples" (1987b: 408 n. 28). What they fail to recognize is that "the fallibilist consciousness of the sciences caught up with philosophy, too, a long time ago" (1987b: 408 n. 28).

As I read him, Derrida (1967b; 1981; 1982a; 1982b; 1982c) would answer that he does indeed reject the metaphysical claims to ultimate foundations, but nevertheless remains skeptical of the possibility of a radical break—on the plane of philosophical discourse—with the conceptual framework of traditional foundationalist Western philosophy, while Habermas, for his part, claims to have been able to make such a break.⁴⁶ Accordingly, to the extent that we are still using the very concepts coined by Greek philosophers, we are still caught into Eurocentric hierarchical conceptual dichotomies, such as those between the intelligible and the sensible, culture and nature, mind and matter, male and female, light and darkness, logic and rhetoric, *logos* and *mythos*. To think that we have radically broken with *mythos* is "white mythology;" it is the failure to acknowledge that Western philosophy was, and still is, based on the exclusion of Otherness, all that is sensible, natural, female, dark and metaphorical. This

is "metaphysics—the white mythology which reassembles and reflects the culture of the West: the white man takes his own mythology, his own *logos*, that is the *mythos* of his idiom, for the universal form of that he must still wish to call Reason.... White mythology—metaphysics has erased within itself the fabulous scene that has produced it, the scene that nevertheless remains active and stirring, inscribed in white ink, an invisible design covered over in the palimpsest" (Derrida 1982a: 213).

And, as I read him, Derrida would also reply that his project is not, as Habermas would have it, about "standing on its head" the subordination of rhetoric to logic, but about putting into question the kind of radical differentiation that Habermas wants to establish between the metaphorical basis of philosophical texts and their network of discursive relationships. Let me read a reply along these lines into Derrida's "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy" (1982a).

Derrida starts from Aristotle's definition of metaphor which, as he points out, any discourse on metaphor is bound to start from. Metaphor consists in giving a thing a name that pertains to another thing, the transference being either from *genus* to *species*, from *species* to *genus*, from *species* to *species*, or by analogy. That definition, as he reads it, can be interpreted either as a philosophical discourse on metaphor or as a metaphysics worked out through a philosophical discourse. The philosophical discourse is part of a chain of signification including the following terms: "*metaphora, mimesis, logos, physis, phone, semainein, onoma*" (1982a: 232).

Derrida notes that Aristotle discusses metaphor as part of his theory of *lexis*, as distinct from his theory relating to thought (*dianoia*). *Dianoia* is taken to encompass "the range of that which is given to language, or of what one is given to think through language, as a cause or an effect or content of language, but not as the act of language itself (statement, diction, elocution, *lexis*)" (1982a: 232). And he stresses that the difference between *dianoia* and *lexis* is that the first is not made manifest by itself.

Thus, metaphor for Aristotle is the medium in which a previously hidden thought is concretized: "thought stumbles upon metaphor, or metaphor falls to thought at the moment when meaning attempts to emerge from itself in order to be stated, enunciated, brought to the light of language" (1982a: 233). This then raises the question for Derrida of the possibility of any distinct philosophical discourse on metaphor as a theory of meaning, since meaning only appears through metaphor.

Drawing on Aristotle's observation in his theory of *lexis* that the noun—or rather the *nominalizable*—is the element by excellence of metaphor because of its capacity to signify both something independent of itself and something identical to itself, Derrida stresses the impossibility of dissociating the value of metaphor from the values of the metaphysical chain constituted by

logos, phone semantike, semainein, onoma, mimesis, homoiosis. The definition of metaphor is in its place in the *Poetics*, which opens as a treatise on *mimesis*. *Mimesis* is never without the *theoretical* perception of resemblance or similarity, that is, of that which always will be posited as the condition for metaphor. *Homoiosis* is not only constitutive of the value of truth (*aletheia*) which governs the entire chain; it is that without which

the metaphorical operation is impossible: "To produce a good metaphor is to see a likeness" (1982a: 237).

To see in Greek is *theorein*. It follows that *mimesis*, that which discloses *physis*, is not "animalistic aping" or "gesticular mimicry," but the very condition for meaning and truth (1982a: 237). That activity in which *physis* is disclosed is, therefore, the activity that is the most "proper" to human beings, since they get their first knowledge from imitation and take much pleasure in it (1982a: 237). Thus, for Aristotle, *mimesis*—the origin of poetry and metaphor—is a serious means to knowledge, almost as serious as philosophy (1982a: 237-38).

Derrida draws particular attention to the metaphor of the sun sowing its flame, that Aristotle chooses to illustrate the surpassing metaphor, the metaphor of transference by analogy. The analogy of this metaphor is obviously not based on the seeing of an empirical likeness (between the sun and its rays and the act of sowing and seeds); it is created entirely within language. Derrida calls this the "wandering of semantic," set in motion by metaphoric displacement; and he explains the subordinate status of metaphor in the philosophical tradition in terms of the threat to philosophy represented by this wandering:

If the sun can "sow," its name is inscribed in a system of relations that constitutes it. This name is no longer the proper name of a unique thing which metaphor would *overtake*; it already has begun to say the multiple, divided origin of all seed, of the eye, of invisibility, death, the father, the "proper name," etc. If Aristotle does not concern himself with this consequence of his theory, it is doubtless because it contradicts the philosophical value of *aletheia*, the proper appearing of the propriety of what is, the entire system of concepts which invest the philosopheme "metaphor," burden it in delimiting it (1982a: 244).

Derrida then examines the notion of the proper in Aristotle. A noun is proper to the extent that it has a single meaning. This ideal of "univocity" has never been abandoned by philosophy (1987a: 247). To be sure, a word may have several meanings, but language is language to the extent that it can master polysemia. Thus, for Aristotle, the eventuality in which polysemia cannot be mastered is an eventuality outside of language and humanity (1982a: 248).

Allied to the notion of the proper in Aristotle is— to put the matter very simply—the distinction Aristotle makes between the essence of a thing or subject, such as for example the humanity of Socrates, and the particular properties which can be attributed to it, such as Socrates's ability to read and write, *logos* and *mimesis*. Metaphor does not deal with the essence of the thing, but only with the attributed properties.

Derrida is struck by Aristotle's commentary on heliotropic metaphors: that because it is difficult to know what is proper to the "sensory" sun, this type of metaphor will not yield clear knowledge (1982a: 250). Derrida stresses, however, that the very recourse to the criteria of clarity and obscurity to evaluate knowledge constitutes proof that the entire philosophical discourse is constructed of, and worked by, metaphors, the metaphor of light being the first of these, the "one indispensable to the general system in which the concept of metaphor is inscribed" (1982a: 253).⁴⁷

That it is impossible to think without metaphors, and especially without visual metaphors, proves to Derrida that the proposition of a radical separation between

philosophy and metaphor cannot be held on to. And to the extent that it is held on to, it serves to perpetuate the violence towards what is natural, female, Other, which has been at work in philosophical discourse at least since Plato.⁴⁸ For Derrida, as for Adorno, metaphor represents and gives access to what is Other in language. As such, it offers the way to open a breach, so to speak, in Western thinking, through which to develop an ethical relationship to Otherness, with "ethical" here understood in Cornell's terms of "the aspiration to a nonviolent relationship to the Other and to otherness in the widest sense possible" (1995a: 78). As Cornell (1991; 1992; 1995a; 1995b) contends, it is this ethical aspiration which animates Derrida's deconstruction; and is also at the core of Adorno's utopia of mimesis. I turn briefly now to Adorno's *Negative Dialectics* (1973) to argue that that utopia is situated, not outside conceptual thought, but is, instead, a confluence of concept and metaphor.⁴⁹

As has been seen, Habermas considers that Adorno's utopia of mimesis cannot work because he remains caught within the limitations of the philosophy of consciousness, and cannot get beyond the subject-object model of cognitive-instrumental rationality, with its necessary domination of nature by the human being. As is known, the solution, for Habermas, is to shift to the paradigm of communication and its subject-subject model.

As I read Adorno, however, he does not really consider the relationship of the individual to inner and outer nature as necessarily one of domination and appropriation. He holds to the possibility of a utopian reconciliation of the modern individual with

nature conceived as Otherness. This is the crucial difference between Adorno and Habermas, in whose thinking (outer) nature can only be an object of manipulation and mastery.⁵⁰ Adorno thinks the reconciliation can be effected by letting nature and Otherness speak through language by means of the metaphorical dimension of language.

I read the *Negative Dialectics* (1973) as the continuation of the Romantic attempt to think beyond the oppositions between thought and desire, reason and sensibility, modern autonomy and communion with nature. In this work, Adorno reflects on Hegel's failure to do justice to what is heterogeneous by means of philosophical concepts. He does not think that such dialectical thinking should be dismissed because dialectical thinking is aware "that objects do not go into their concepts without leaving a remainder" (1973: 5). The solution, however, is for the concept to enlist the services of the playful, mimetic, metaphorical side of language so that the objects can start talking, so to speak. As he sees it:

The fact that all approved traditional philosophy from Plato down to the semanticists has been allergic to expression, this fact accords with a propensity of all Enlightenment: to punish undisciplined gestures....Dialectics—literally: language as the organon of thought—would mean to attempt a critical rescue of the rhetorical element, a mutual approximation of thing and expression, to the point where the difference fades. Dialectics appropriates for the power of thought what historically seemed to be a flaw in thinking: its link with language, which nothing can really break (1973: 56).

My contention is that the revalorization of the playful, metaphorical side of language which Derrida and Adorno effect points the way beyond the rigid separation of the cognitive, moral and aesthetic-expressive moments. In so doing, they open space in

Habermas's conceptual framework for the claim made by feminist poets like Lorde and Rich that, for women, poetry is not a luxury, but a vital necessity of their existence.

My contention is also that the elimination of women's oppression is not limited to political (in the narrow sense) and economic emancipation. It has to encompass a mythical and metaphorical dimension as well. In a sociopolitical order which is also a system of gender representations that lock women into being either loving mothers or nagging bitches, the Virgin Mary or the whore, good girls or bad girls, it becomes an ethical-political task for women to challenge the power of old symbols, myths, and fantasies and to propose new stories which go beyond the tired scripts of male domination.⁵¹

That task, to be sure, is open to the attack that any attempt to resymbolize women can only succeed in reifying them in an essentialist way (the discovery of the true essence of Woman), thereby erasing differences of class, race, and sexual orientation, among others. Cornell addresses this problem. Basing herself on Derrida and Adorno, she argues that to propose new metaphors for women is not necessarily to seek to grasp the truth of women in some construct. It is, rather, to open the possibility of challenging the power of what is through the utopian imagining of alternative gender representations:

imagining as imaging still rests on representation; representation is tied to the pre-given as representation. Images, in other words, are rooted in the pre-given world. Images, of course, and the imagination allow us to refigure the pre-given through metaphor. The imagination, in other words, does not just reflect. The process of refiguration through the imagination implies the slippage inherent in language that allows the defining of what is to give way, as well as to be reconsolidated (1991: 171).

In other words, the remetaphorization and resymbolization of women does not mean the telling of the ultimate truth of women, because there is always more to write and to imagine.

Having thrown some light on the limitations of Habermas's later work with respect to the aesthetic component of the project of modernity, I next examine his early solution to the problem of modernity in the model of the bourgeois public sphere. This model is of particular importance to my purpose because of the primacy of place it accords to the aesthetic-expressive dimension.⁵² It is on this dimension that I focus in my account of *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.

5. HABERMAS'S QUASI-ROMANTIC SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF MODERNITY

5.1 THE EARLY MODEL OF THE BOURGEOIS PUBLIC SPHERE

There is a paradox surrounding *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* ([1962] 1992a). The model, both historical and utopian, of public life which it offers is radiant and robust enough to meet the demands of the heart and imagination and mobilize people to action; it played a crucial role in the student movement of the 1960s and the New Left alternative movements of the 1970s;⁴¹ and now, with its recent translation into English, is being seized by English-speaking feminist scholars searching for a woman-friendly theory of the public. Yet, its subject is the emergence, transformation, and finally, the disintegration of this model of public life. There is a strong suggestion in this that the thesis of the disintegration of public life in contemporary societies is deeply problematic and ought to be revisited, especially from a feminist perspective. In the next chapter, I present some feminist revisitation of the model which I then develop further.

Even before such revisitation, there are a number of reasons why this work, in itself, is clearly indispensable for the development of utopian feminist thinking. One crucial reason is that it better accommodates the feminist claim of the ethical and political dimension of feminist aesthetics than does Habermas's later work. If in his project of modernity, he argues that art is an autonomous sphere and has no ethical and political

dimension except in its reception and appropriation by the layperson, in this early work, as will be seen, there is not yet a sharp differentiation between art and the lifeworld and indeed literature plays an important political function, both in its production and reception. This is why I call Habermas's early work his quasi-Romantic solution to the problem of modernity.

Indeed, it is in this early work that is to be found a solution to the problem of providing a model of communal or solidaristic public life without going back to precapitalist, premodern social formations. This model is based on forms of public life which emerged with the modern cities. It offers a promising avenue for investigating modern urban life for models of solidaristic public life which until now has tended to be overlooked. As Ryan has underlined, the public stages of modern cities are far more expansive than has generally been recognized by political theory: "when the city is seen as the testing ground for the viability of the public sphere, urbanism assumes a particular meaning often overlooked in historical historiography, which paints the city as space where teeming social problems meet the beleaguered forces of political and administrative containment" (1990: 175). Indeed, right from the outset the various social geographies of modern cities provided spaces open to women and Otherness in general.⁵⁴

In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* ([1962], 1992a), Habermas defines the bourgeois public sphere as "the sphere of private people come together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public

authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor" ([1962] 1992a: 27). He points out that the medium in which this confrontation with the sphere of public authority was articulated—that is, people's public use of their reason—was historically new and should be understood sociologically as stemming from the "subjectivity" discovered and explored in the private experiences of the bourgeois conjugal family ([1962] 1992a: 28).

Accordingly, it is not surprising that the letter soon became the literary form of the eighteenth century, since the early bourgeois individual could through letter writing communicate her newly discovered subjectivity. Habermas underlines the public character of the letter, which was from the beginning oriented towards an audience: "Letters by strangers were not only borrowed and copied, some correspondences were intended from the outset for publication....An idiomatic expression current at the time described the well composed letter as 'pretty enough to print'" ([1962] 1992a: 49).

It is the letter which gave rise to the most important literary innovation of the eighteenth century: the psychological novel in autobiographical form, such as *Pamela*, originally conceived by Richardson as a popular model for letter writing. Unintentionally then, his novel became a most popular model not for letter writing but for novels written in the form of letters. Later, Rousseau with *La Nouvelle Héloïse* and Goethe with *The Sufferings of Young Werther* gave the character of *lettres de noblesse* to the novel written

in this form. The rest of the century, as Habermas observes, basked in a world of subjectivity, for all that that world had only recently been discovered.

So it was that the literary public sphere emerged as an expansion and completion of the intimate sphere of the conjugal family and its habits of reading and writing oriented towards the exploration of subjectivity: "the subjectivity that had become fit to print, had in fact become the literature appealing to a wide public of readers. The privatized individuals coming together to form a public also reflected critically and in public on what they had read, thus contributing to the process of enlightenment which they together promoted" ([1962] 1992a: 51). The publication of *Pamela* was soon followed by the foundation of the first public library, book clubs, reading circles and subscription libraries. Literature became accessible as a matter of course not only to a wide strata of the middle class, but also to some members of the working class.

This new literary public can be seen as a democratization of the earlier literary public of salons, coffee houses and other societies, comprising both nobility and bourgeoisie, that can be traced back to the seventeenth century. Habermas sees these early institutions as having three criteria in common. First, they gave their highest esteem, not to social hierarchy, but to the egalitarian authority of the better argument. Although this egalitarian idea was then far from being fully realized, it was nonetheless the case that "as an idea it had become institutionalized and thereby stated as an objective claim" ([1962] 1992a: 36).

Second, the discussion submitted to critical scrutiny philosophical, literary and artistic questions, which until then had been the exclusive province of the state and the church for their interpretation. To the extent that philosophical and literary works came to be produced for the market and became widely accessible as commodities, they became "profaned" because private people had themselves to interpret their meaning "by way of rational communication with one another" and in so doing to "verbalize explicitly" what it was that for so long had enabled the works to assert their authority implicitly ([1962] 1992a: 37).

Third, such commodification of culture gave rise to the fundamentally inclusive character of the early literary public sphere since, in principle at least, all could have access to the objects being discussed and could thus pass judgment on them.

At this time, there was little split off between everyday experts and cultural experts. However, "if the public acknowledged no one as privileged, it did recognize experts. They were permitted and supposed to educate the public, but only inasmuch as they convinced through arguments and could not themselves be corrected by better arguments" ([1962] 1992a: 259 n. 32). Cultural experts, as spokespersons for the public, began to use the new printed periodicals as a medium for publicizing their critical views on philosophy, art and literature; and these periodicals soon became constituents of the intimate life of the coffee houses and other institutions of the literary public sphere, as evidenced by their regular publication of a selection of the abundance of letters they

received from the public. Thus, these periodicals became the privileged medium of a process of individual and collective enlightenment: "The public that read and debated...read and debated about itself" ([1962] 1992a: 43).

If the habits of reading and writing developed in the bourgeois conjugal family gave rise to the literary public sphere, the latter in turn gave rise to the political public sphere as discussions of art and literature began to encompass economic and political issues as well. By means of critical public opinion, the political public sphere "put the state in touch with the needs of society" ([1962] 1992a: 31).

Like the literary public sphere, the political public sphere was in principle egalitarian in its recognition of the power of the better argument. That this was far from being really the case, however, constituted from the outset a disintegrative potential within the bourgeois public sphere.

The public sphere had its origins in a clean separation between the private sphere of civil society (the realm of commodity exchange and social labour) and the family, and the public sphere of the state. Over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, however, a number of factors—including the great depression that started in 1873, a shift in trade policy towards protectionism and the pressure of groups unsatisfied with the mechanisms of the free market—contributed to the demise of the liberal era and the rise of welfare state society.

The growing interventionism of the welfare state transformed the private sphere, which now became reduced to the family alone. Further, the family was progressively dispossessed, not only of its functions in capital formation (through family property), but also of “the functions of upbringing and education, protection, care, and guidance—indeed, of the transmission of elementary tradition and frameworks of orientation” ([1962] 1992a: 155). Its role became limited to that of consumer of income and leisure time, and of recipient of public compensations and support services.

With the increasing influence of the mass media from the middle of the nineteenth century on, the habits of critical reading and writing were lost, and with that was also lost the function of the family as a circle of literary propaganda. As this proceeded, leisure activities no longer included public discussions. Instead, there was a proliferation of public debates as “radio stations, publishers and associations...turned the staging of panel discussions into a flourishing secondary business” ([1962] 1992a: 164).

In Habermas’s view, these public debates only appear to be rational-critical, since he considers them to be entirely permeated by the laws of the market. It had been the experience of privacy made possible in the context of the liberal relationship between the public and private spheres, which in turn made possible the emergence of a bourgeois public that was able to cultivate a subjectivity linked to literature and oriented to the public sphere. Now, to the extent that the mass media permeate the public sphere and coopt questions of subjectivity, the public sphere becomes a pseudopublic sphere in

which public issues are privatized and personalized to the point where the real issues are thoroughly disguised; and the family becomes a pseudoprivate sphere in which the illusion of autonomous subjectivity is maintained even though the conditions of such autonomy have long since eroded. As a consequence, there arises an interest in biography, now more sentimental than reflective, and a cynical attitude towards political matters which much diminishes the potential for rational criticism of public authority.

The audience-oriented intimate sphere of the family appears now to Habermas to be irretrievably in the past, destroyed largely by the pervasive influence of the culture of integration of the mass media. He considers that, to the extent that the private and public realms become indistinguishable, the model of the bourgeois public sphere loses its explanatory power for the contemporary situation, which is now characterized by a politicized intermediate sphere in which the state and the economy merge, without calling forth any critical-rational debate among the public about the needs of society. Although private people do, of course, still have scope for decision-making power as consumers and voters, they are increasingly discharged of the responsibility of critique by the emergence of other institutions, such as special-interest associations, political parties and public administration, which purport to carry the discussion.

In the account that Habermas gives of the disintegration of the bourgeois public sphere, one of the major forces of disintegration is the one-sided influence of the mass media and mass culture which he, as did Horkheimer and Adorno, considers to be

entirely permeated by the laws of the market and without emancipatory potential.

This view of the process of disintegration, however, raises two central questions: do individuals really have as little potential for resistance to such external influences as is implied; and is mass culture really so thoroughly negative in its influence?

I deal with these questions next, in the first of several revisitations I make of Habermas's early model of the public sphere and his related thesis of the decline of public life in contemporary societies.

5.2 THE EARLY MODEL REVISITED FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF *THE THEORY OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTION*

One of the main reasons why individuals are thought to have so little capacity for resistance in Habermas's early model is to be found in the influence on his thinking of the thesis of the early critical theorists that the individuation of the person takes place through the internalization of paternal authority. Benjamin (1978) has made a feminist critique of this thesis.

Benjamin points out that Horkheimer and Adorno borrow from Freud the theory of internalization—the creation of the superego in response to the external pressure of the authority of the father—and maintain that in parallel to the ascendancy of instrumental rationality in capitalist societies there was a disappearance of internalization. This disappearance they link to the devaluation of the role of the father due to his loss of

economic independence and public authority. As the functions of the family now come to be performed by impersonal, extrafamilial forms of authority, such as the state and peer groups, there is, in their view, a shift from individuation through internalization of (paternal) authority to individuation through fear of external authority. Internalization of authority becomes replaced by conformity. They contend that the potential for critical consciousness and individual resistance is undermined by the new fatherlessness, because they think that the prevailing socialization of individuals soon after early childhood by impersonal institutions and peer groups can only lead to a search for approval and conformity.

As Benjamin underlines, the most problematic aspect of Horkheimer and Adorno's thesis is its equation between father, internalization and critical consciousness. This is a view based on the assumption that child and mother have a symbiotic relationship which fosters the dependence of the child and threatens her individuation; and it underlies much of psychoanalysis. The father is necessary for the wrenching away of the child from the symbiotic mother, which has to occur if the child is to become an autonomous individual. The difficulty with this view is that, in the first instance, it refuses the possibility of maternal nurturance coexisting with the fostering of autonomy and, in the second instance, posits that freedom can be gained only at the price of isolation.

Benjamin's overall assessment of Horkheimer and Adorno's thesis from a feminist perspective is that because early critical theory lacks intersubjective categories, it is only

able to conceive of subjectivity as constituted by external forces and, by the same token, as readily erased by these forces. As has been seen, in his later work, Habermas abandons the paradigm of the philosophy of consciousness which had limited early critical theory and shifts to the paradigm of communicative action, which does indeed conceive of subjectivity as intersubjectivity."

Further, with his twofold concept of society as comprised of lifeworld and system paradigms, Habermas can theorize the transformation of the contemporary nuclear family as part of the emancipatory dynamic of the rationalization of the lifeworld: "if we see that, in egalitarian patterns of relationship, in individuated forms of intercourse, and in liberalized child-rearing practices, some of the potential for rationality ingrained in communicative action is 'also' released; then the changed conditions of socialization in the middle-class nuclear family appear in a different light" (1987a: 387). Indeed, in *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas offers an interpretation of the structural changes in family, education and personality development that is quite different from his predecessors.

The empirical evidence suggests to Habermas that the socialization of the middle-class family is increasingly occurring through processes of communicative action which are largely free of systemic dependencies. This new process of socialization, free from rigid models of socialization, is not, however, without its own kind of threat, as is evidenced by the decreasing importance of the Oedipus complex and the increasing

importance of narcissistic disturbance. Rather than interpreting this phenomenon as symptomatic of the decline in paternal authority, Habermas wants to understand it in light of the demanding and fragile conditions for socialization in the family that arise with the release of communication structures.

In *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas also revises the early critical theorists' monolithic view that the public sphere is annihilated in late capitalist societies, because as they see it: "the communication flows steered via mass media *take the place of those communication structures that had once made possible public discussion and self-understanding by citizens and private individuals*" (1987a: 389). He now sees this thesis as ahistorical and as ignoring the complexity of the structural changes in the bourgeois public sphere. He proposes a more nuanced diagnosis of the emancipatory potential of the mass media and mass culture.

Habermas distinguishes two kinds of media which develop to relieve the fragile and demanding coordinating mechanism of reaching understanding: delinguistified steering media of money and power, which are untied from the lifeworld; and generalized forms of communication, such as the mass media, which continue to be tied to the lifeworld. As to the generalized forms of communication, they liberate the process of communication from the limitations of spatiotemporal contexts and make possible the emergence of public spheres "through establishing the abstract simultaneity of a virtually present network of communication contents far removed in space and time and through keeping

messages available for manifold contexts" (1987a, 390). There is, however, an ambivalence in the mass media: their lifting of spatiotemporal limitations on communication has emancipatory potential; but, their one-sided flow of communication from centre to periphery and from above to below is authoritarian. Habermas does not think that the early critical theorists' critique of culture has lost its thrust; only that the emancipatory potential of mass media and popular culture should not be underestimated.

Here I have provided a first revisitation of Habermas's early model of the public sphere. In 1962, when Habermas presented the model of the bourgeois public sphere, he considered that it had disintegrated under the pressure of several forces, including in particular the growth of mass democracy and of the culture industry. Seen from the vantage point of his theory of communicative action and diagnosis of modernity, twenty years later, it appears that Habermas had considerably overestimated the disintegrating effect of these forces. What this signifies is that the utopian potential of Habermas's early historical model remains to be tapped from the perspective of the present. It is to this that I want to contribute next by presenting some feminist revisitation of the bourgeois public sphere as a basis for the conceptualization of a woman-friendly model of the public sphere in which the experience, values and needs of the women's movement and other new social movements which have emerged in the last decades are taken into account

6. TOWARDS A WOMAN-FRIENDLY MODEL OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE

6.1 THE GENDERED SYMBOLIC POLITICS OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE

In *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (1988), Landes makes the case that the turn of the eighteenth century is also a turning point in the constitution of modern gender identity. Public/private oppositions were established that served to bar women from the (relative) freedom which they had previously enjoyed in the street, in the market place and in the public spaces of the court and aristocratic households. During the seventeenth century, there also emerged the social institution of the salon, where elite women "exercised a considerable degree of power—unmatched in subsequent or prior eras" (1988: 22). That earlier alternative woman-friendly public sphere flourished for two centuries and then disintegrated with the rise of the mass media and modern industry. As seen with Habermas, the salon had many similarities with the later bourgeois public sphere. Landes, however, contends that they were fundamentally in conflict.

Salons, which were neither strictly bourgeois nor aristocratic, facilitated the assimilation of new individuals into the social elite. They were cosmopolitan and part of a wide urban culture. Here were to be found spirited and pleasing conversation, politeness, and playfulness. The salonnières were influential public personages outside the institution of marriage, and had little enthusiasm for maternal functions. Thus, they

provoked opposition from male nobility who complained that the "reign of women" was responsible for the disintegration of the traditional social order (1988: 27). Male aristocrats looked to ancient Rome and found there an attractive ideal of womanhood, one of chastity and simplicity, which they advocated for contemporary moral and social regeneration. In that ideal, women's proper place was as virtuous wives and mothers in a depoliticized domestic realm. Many of the themes of the early aristocratic opposition to women, Landes observes, were later to be appropriated by the revolutionary bourgeoisie and rearticulated in the symbolic politics of the emerging bourgeois public sphere

Drawing on Habermas, Landes sees the bourgeois public sphere as largely the product of the new patterns of cultural and political communication in the nascent cosmopolitan culture and economic infrastructure of cities. These new communication systems played a crucial role in the emancipation of political discourse and the emergence of a revolutionary climate. Right from the outset, however, the utopia of impartial discourse of the bourgeois public sphere, with the ideal of universal reason on which it rested, constituted itself in ways that would ultimately silence the discourses of women and locate their interests, associated with particularity, outside the realm of truth and reason. Diderot had women undermining the power of reasoned argument: "women accustom us to discuss with charm and clearness the driest and thorniest subjects. We talk to them unceasingly: We listen to them. We are afraid of tiring or boring them. Hence we develop a particular method of explaining ourselves easily that passes from

conversation into *style*" (Diderot quoted in Landes 1988: 45). Rousseau never tired of accusing the "stylized discourse" of the salons as contributing to social decadence (1988: 45)

The new symbolic politics of the bourgeois public sphere opposed the ideal of reason to femininity understood as pleasure, play, eroticism, and style. In particular, transparent and natural social relations were opposed to the feminine and artificial culture of the salons. In the natural order of social relations, each sex should occupy its rightful place on one or the other side of the divide between the private and public spheres. Like the nobility, the oppositional bourgeoisie harked back to ancient Rome for an ideal of noble, public men and domestic women.

Women of the time were active in the struggle for a democratic public sphere. They participated in fraternal societies open to both sexes, contributed to newspapers, attended the legislature, and lobbied for justice for women. For all that, however, Landes contends that they conceived of their political involvement in terms of the logic of the republican ideal of female domestic virtue, and sought to convince men of the advantages of granting rights to women on those grounds. Feminist Palm, leader of the women's section of the *Confédération des amis de la vérité*, for example, proposed a model of female citizenship in which women would be the "supervisors of public education" and the "teachers of patriotic values," in direct opposition to the ethos of the salonnières (1988: 120).

Again, when the liberal Constitution of 1791 denied women the franchise, the counterattack by feminists like de Gouges and Wollstonecraft was similarly couched in republican and gendered symbolic politics. De Gouges accused elite women of contributing to moral decadence and foresaw an ideal society in which women under the “powerful empire of nature” would renounce their depraved ways (1988: 126).

Wollstonecraft presented a vision of virtuous motherhood attained through rational and austere education of women, as opposed to the artificial, superficial behaviour of women in the Ancien Regime. She was especially wary of the influence of “novels, music, poetry, and, gallantry” on the character of women, since these tend to “intoxicate” them (1988: 132). She exalted the superiority of reason and utility over women’s flowery diction and “language of passion [which] in affected tones slips for ever from their glib tongues...[producing] those phosphoric bursts which only mimic in the dark the flame of passion” (Wollstonecraft quoted in Landes 1988: 138)

The adoption by many feminists of the logic of republican motherhood which had as its “political” function the raising of patriotic subjects was, as Landes points out, deeply beset by contradictions:

Feminists strived to alleviate the tension between a theory of natural rights with egalitarian implications and a gendered construction of sexual difference, but the potential for providing women with a route into the public sphere by way of republican motherhood was undermined by the claims of nature.... Thus a demand for citizenship based primarily on woman’s performance of her maternal duty was easily refuted. If woman’s service to the community was viewed as a function of her mothering role, the most likely consequence was to offer women political representation in a *mediated* fashion (1988: 138).

The ideology of motherhood, however, was not at the time the only avenue to citizenship and the public sphere accessible to women. The Society of Revolutionary Republican Women, founded in 1793, and comprising, among others, Léon, a confectioner and Lacombe, an actress, had as its goal not the defense of women's rights, but the mobilization of radical democratic women "armed to rush to the defense of the Fatherland" (1988: 140). Dressed in the uniform of the Phrygian cap of liberty, a tricolour ribbon and trousers, and carrying pistols and daggers, these revolutionary women "took to policing the markets to root out hoarders and to insure the passage of grain supplies to the cities. They engaged actively in surveillance, identifying suspects guilty of possible revolutionary infractions to be brought before the revolutionary tribunals" (1988: 141). They governed their conduct according to the norms of publicity, systematicity and democracy set by the revolutionary bourgeois public sphere.

The Society found special meaning in the idea of a uniquely identifying mode of dress for women revolutionaries, and campaigned actively to enforce the wearing of the Phrygian bonnet by all women. However, the women of the market revolted against their interventions and complained to the Convention. In the end, the Convention answered by denying all women all political rights of association, on the grounds that the civic duty of women was to be good mothers and daughters, not "des filles émancipées, des grenadiers fer-elles" who only bring disorder and passion into the public conduct of affairs (1988: 143).⁵⁶

As the Revolution opened, then, some women were near-full participants in the emerging public sphere, but their presence there occasioned as deep anxieties among bourgeois revolutionaries about proper female conduct, language, and attire, as had elite women among men of the nobility in prerevolutionary times. By the time the turmoil of the Revolution settled, women were squarely excluded from the public sphere. According to Landes, even though they would subsequently reenter the public sphere, they would never cease to have a problematic relationship to it.⁵⁷

Landes starts her historically oriented critique of the bourgeois public sphere by noting the extreme difficulty of women dissociating themselves from domestic life to "imagine a world in which women's proper place is in the public sphere" (1988: 1). Her goal is to show that this is to a large extent because feminism's problematic has been constituted by changes in the political and cultural orders of representation at the time of the French Revolution which are deeply ambivalent about the public presence of women. As Landes sees it, from a feminist perspective, the incomplete project of modernity "can never be redeemed" because women cannot "'take possession' of a public sphere that has been so enduringly reconstructed along masculinist lines" (1988: 202).

To my mind Landes's work is important in that it illustrates historically how the relationship between culture, discourse and gender relations cannot be separated from political questions. But in her conclusion that women will never be able to take possession of a public sphere so thoroughly permeated by masculinist values, she has not

caught sight of the utopian dimension of Habermas's early model of the public sphere. It has its masculinist and elitist dimensions, to be sure, but this should not blind us to its radical novelty: a public sphere situated in the open spaces of cities and in modern civic culture. I now turn to Ryan's development of Habermas's early model from a North American feminist perspective.

6.2 FEMINISM AND URBAN PUBLIC LIFE

As Ryan stresses, there has been a radical transformation of public life since the early 1960s when *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* appeared, brought about by the civil rights, antiwar and student movements (1992: 259). The rejuvenated view of politics based on the model of participatory democracy promoted by these movements makes the political and intellectual project at the core of Habermas's early work more crucial than ever. At the same time, the reemergence of feminism in this historical context serves to illuminate the strong constraints on participation in the public sphere, from the eighteenth century through to the welfare state, while giving new impetus to its utopian dimension.

Ryan explains that in the theoretical vacuum in which feminist scholars were trying to locate women in public, using mountains of voting research and administrative analyses of political scientists, Habermas's 1964 "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article" quickly became a key text (1992: 261). It was the first conceptualization of the

public to liberate politics from the iron grasp of the state, a state which, considering women's very recent access to it through the franchise and their virtual exclusion from positions in it, is almost entirely shaped by masculine values. Further, it was a conceptualization of the public sphere so permeated by a "spirit of openness" that "not only could women find access to a sphere so constructed, but once there, they seemed to be promised a hearing, whatever their concerns" (1992: 261).

When, however, English-speaking feminist scholars were able to enter more fully into Habermas's conceptualization with the publication of the English translation of *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* in 1989, they discovered that Habermas had not foreseen the critiques that could be addressed to it on the grounds of the concepts of abstract rationality and idealized conjugal family which subtend it, even though he shows an awareness of the historical fluidity of the border between private and public. What Ryan proposes, in light of this, is a counternarrative to Habermas's thesis of the structural transformation of the (idealized) bourgeois public sphere based on the ascension of American women in politics over the course of the nineteenth century. From a feminist perspective, the history of public life in North America supplies an account substantially different from that of Habermas's European account. It is an account that starts from different premises, develops through a more problematic relationship to the public sphere, and offers a "distinctive projectory into the future" (1992: 263).

Ryan sees the American public sphere as being built around political problems and possibilities different from the European experience investigated by Habermas. For example, the stronger forms of American public life occur later, in the 1820s and 1830s, rather than earlier in the eighteenth century, as in Europe. Also, public life expresses itself more in the open spaces of the cities, along the boulevards, at street intersections and in public squares, rather than in literary and political clubs, cafes and salons. As well, American public life is active, unbounded and festive, spilling out of the bounds of rational-critical discourse. Finally, this urban public life is characterized by the heterogeneity of its associations along lines of ethnicity, race, class, issue and party affiliation. Yet for all that the American public is different from its European counterpart, they share two commonalities: the normative endorsement of open discussion of issues of general interest, and the exclusion of women and the underlying occlusion of gender differences.

In Ryan's counternarrative, women in the United States do not wait passively for structural transformations or liberal reforms to get into public life. To be sure, here as in Europe, Republican ideology results in a separation of male and female, private and public, but that separation has to be seen as a shifting, fluid and deeply politicized border, rather than as a rigid and unchanging divide. Women—excluded from the public, democratic and masculinist sphere—build for themselves another sphere in which they can express the full range of their energies.

Women first began to assert their role in the American public by means of the very ideology of virtuous motherhood that was defining them as second class citizens. Thus, bourgeois wives affirmed themselves "with alacrity" to be experts in moral education and so invested the socialization of children with political significance (1992: 267). True, they were thereby contributing to the consolidation of the patriarchal stereotype sequestering them from the market economy and politics. But in actively claiming a role for themselves, they were to an extent empowering themselves and readying themselves to seize the political possibilities open to them in the multiple, playful democratic public spheres that were to emerge in the open spaces of American cities in the decades preceding the Civil War. In the event, this early attempt by women was met with much hostility. The more plebeian and democratic era that was emerging wanted to define itself in terms of sharply defined male roles such, as the militiaman, the voter and the worker. Women then shifted their ground from expertise in the moral education of children to expertise even more ambivalent from a feminist standpoint—in the moral education of all, expressed in female Moral Reform Societies

The female moral reformers had some success in changing laws and influencing public opinion, but they soon were forced by the pressure of political opposition to abandon social activism and leave the public scene. They then retreated into the private, with the rallying point of a general mothers' magazine providing counsel on how to raise sons according to the highest standards of sexual purity. In this, Ryan points out, women

"frantically" putting their energy into investing their homes with social functions, were also contributing to the redefining of the border between public and private life: "as early as the midpoint of the last century the elaboration of private space had begun to eat away at the commonweal" (1992: 273-74)

In the aftermath of the fundamental transformations brought about by the Civil War, American public life by the turn of the century had begun to exhibit some of the characteristics of the shift from a democratic public life to a bureaucratized style of politics that Habermas has associated with welfare state mass democracy. This did not, however, constitute a decline of public life in America. A "crazy quilt of social groups" took over the open public spaces of the cities as sites of political resistance, while the elites retreated behind the scenes in their exercise of power (1992: 275-78). This new configuration, again, provided fresh political possibilities to women, even though they still remained caught in the ideology of virtuous motherhood. They now actively involved themselves in founding a "private system of public welfare" (1992: 279). This required them to enter into direct dealings with city councils and states legislatures. However, these bourgeois women operated their system of welfare behind a veil of privacy, and the class and ethnic hierarchies which permeated their system were not at the time submitted to open discussion.

Moreover, it was not until the end of the nineteenth century that women began to become concerned with the issue of sexual inequality. The first true mobilization of

women in America over an issue that is squarely gender-centred was over the issue of the regulation of prostitution in the 1860s and 1870s. The women who became politically involved in the issue opposed regulation on the grounds that it sanctioned the traffic in women and constituted an intrusion of the state in the private lives of women. They contested this through the wide array of tactics of resistance they now had at their disposal, including public meetings, petitions to state legislatures, appearances at city councils and private networking.

With such public engagement, women began to develop a sense of a political gender identity of their own pointing beyond divisions of class and race. This sense was much strengthened in the mobilization of women against slavery in the National Women's League, in which they linked the liberties for African-Americans and liberties for women. Its successor, the Equal Rights Association, became the "crucible" out of which emerged an autonomous women's movement that would claim the ideal of a woman-friendly public sphere concerned with issues of general interest for black and white women, extending beyond suffrage to include issues of marriage reform, equal pay, sexual freedom and reproductive rights (1992: 282)

In Ryan's counternarrative of North American gender politics can be seen a much more plural and decentered concept of the public than the one proposed by Habermas. In contrast to Landes, who locks women within the ideology of domesticity and virtuous motherhood, Ryan shows how the many ways women were able to turn the gender

constraints on their political involvement to their own advantage "are stocked with meaning for those who cherish the public....the tenacious efforts of women to subvert these restrictions and to be heard in public testify to the power of public ideals, that persistent impulse to have a voice in some space open and accessible to all where they could be counted in the general interest" (1992: 284).

The history of women's navigation in the politics of nineteenth century North America also serves to remind us that the public ideal has been successively rejuvenated through its appropriation by politically and socially marginal groups. And to remind us further that the ideal of a perfect rational-critical discourse has been a "chimera," even at the apogee of the bourgeois public sphere as it has served rather to silence the voices of women and marginalized or insurgent social movements (1992: 286). As Ryan concludes: "In the late twentieth century, women's historically problematic relationship to the public has been transformed into a public asset, both a practical and theoretical boon to the utopian aspirations that Jürgen Habermas set before us twenty-five years ago" (1992: 286).

The availability in English of *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, almost thirty years after its first publication in German, generated an important renewal of interest in Habermas's early model as exemplified in the publication of *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (1992). Among the feminist contributors to this collection is Fraser who now considers Habermas's early model of the public sphere to be an indispensable

resource for those committed to critical social theory and democratic political practice. I turn next to her essay "Rethinking the Public Sphere" in which she sets out a feminist critique of the early model and offers a fruitful outline of a postbourgeois model of the public sphere which I will then develop further.

6.3 A POSTBOURGEOIS MODEL OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE

For Fraser, Habermas's early model of the public sphere is especially fruitful because it circumvents two major problems: the problem in socialist and Marxist thinking of conflating the apparatus of the state and the public arenas of the discourse of the citizenry; and the confusion in contemporary feminism over the use of the term public. When public is, as often, taken to mean "everything that is outside the domestic or familial sphere," it conflates three distinct domains: the state, the economy, and arenas of public discourse (1992: 110). This confusion around the term has important political consequences in that it contributes to erasing the question of the extent to which welfare state capitalism can promote the emancipation of women.

Fraser understands Habermas's model of the bourgeois public sphere as

the space in which citizens deliberate about their common affairs, and hence an institutionalized arena of discursive interaction. This arena is conceptually distinct from the state; it is a site for the production and circulation of discourses that can in principle be critical of the state. The public sphere in Habermas's sense is also conceptually distinct from the official economy; it is not an arena of market relations but rather one of discursive relations, a theater for debating and deliberating rather than for buying and selling (1992: 110-11).

participate on a par with men in all types of social interaction. There it is as well that subaltern counterpublics can engage in a dialectic between public discussion and the “formation and enactment of social identities,” a dialectic which is central to their emancipation (1992: 125).

There is merit to multiple publics even in hypothetical egalitarian, multicultural societies, in Fraser’s view. She wants us here “to take a closer look at the relationship between public discourse and social identities” (1992: 125). As she puts it:

Participation means being able to speak in one’s own voice, and thereby simultaneously to construct and express one’s cultural identity through idiom and style. Moreover...public spheres themselves are not spaces of zero-degree culture, equally hospitable to any possible form of cultural expression. Rather, they consist in culturally specific institutions, including, for example, various journals and various social geographies of urban space. These institutions may be understood as culturally specific rhetorical lenses that filter and alter the utterances they frame; they can accommodate some expressive modes and not others (1992: 126).

Since rhetorical lenses can never be made culturally neutral, public life in nonstratified societies ought not to take the form of a single public, as this would entail translating various modes of cultural expression into a single, and therefore privileged, mode. The operation of multiple publics, does not, however, preclude the possibility of a larger public space in which members of narrower publics can discuss questions of concern to all across lines of cultural difference. Of course, as Fraser points out, such communication requires “multicultural literacy” (1992: 127).

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If, however, this liberal bourgeois model of the public is to be made truly fruitful from a contemporary democratic perspective informed by the thinking and experience of feminism and other new social movements, it has, in Fraser's view, to be subject to a critical reflection, especially with respect to four suppositions which it subtends

1. that the public sphere is open to all and amenable to everyone's discourse;
2. that a comprehensive single public sphere is to be preferred to a multiplicity;
3. that it is a space where only matters of common concern are to be discussed,
and
4. that a strong separation between civil society and the state is to be desired on grounds of good democratic practice (1992 117-18)

Fraser turns to recent revisionist historiography, such as seen with Landes and Ryan, to examine the proposition that the bourgeois public sphere is in principle open to all. She finds this to be a much idealized view which does not take into account that the public sphere, in effect, constituted itself through the very process of excluding many, especially working-class people, racialized groups and women. Such exclusion gives rise to new norms of gender and behaviour, ordaining feminine domesticity and distinguishing the bourgeoisie from lower social strata.

It is also an idealized view in that it overlooks the potential of other public spheres, which are nonliberal and nonbourgeois. In nineteenth century North America, for example, women participated in an array of alternative public spheres, women-only

voluntary associations, male-dominated working-class protest activities, street protests, parades, and so on. The bourgeois public never really constituted "the" public. From the beginning, there were counterpublic spheres, including nationalist publics, popular peasant publics, elite women's publics, and working-class publics, which constituted themselves largely in the context of struggles with the bourgeois public.

With this historiography, a less idealized view of the bourgeois public sphere emerges: "we can no longer assume that the bourgeois conception of the public sphere was simply an unrealized utopian ideal; it was also a masculinist ideological notion that functioned to legitimate an emergent form of class rule" (1992: 116). If we are to hold on to the utopian dimension of Habermas's model, its masculine and bourgeois assumptions have to be unmasked.

Fraser challenges the related supposition that the bourgeois public sphere is amenable to everyone's discourse. Examination of the process of discursive interaction within the public sphere belies this, inasmuch as "discursive interaction within the bourgeois public sphere was governed by protocols of style and decorum that were themselves correlates and markers of status inequality" (1992: 119). Contemporary feminist research amply demonstrates that that condition is far from gone. As many feminist theorists have made clear, public deliberations which are supposedly receptive to everyone, can instead serve as a subtle mask for domination which goes beyond gender relations to include class and ethnic relations as well. As Fraser argues, it is not enough

just to bracket social inequalities. Quite the contrary, one of the tasks of critical theory is to make transparent the inequalities that are present in arenas which make a formal claim to be inclusive, and show how these operate to distort discursive interaction

She also questions the supposition that a single, comprehensive public sphere is more democratic than a multiplicity of competing publics. She does this by examining how the single and the multiple models might operate in two types of modern societies: stratified societies, understood as societies whose basic institutional framework generates unequal social groups in structural relations of dominance and subordination; and nonstratified societies, understood as hypothetical societies whose institutional framework would generate structural equality

In stratified societies, to be sure, dominant groups will tend to have pride of place as participants in public debate. It is, therefore, crucial for members of nondominant groups to have their own alternative arenas of discursive interaction where they can speak in their own voice and articulate their own needs, goals and strategies. Borrowing terminology from feminist theorists Spivak and Felski, Fraser calls these alternative public arenas "subaltern counterpublics" (1992: 123). A striking illustration of such an alternative is to be found in the feminist subaltern counterpublic: its journals, bookstores, publishing companies, meeting places, festivals, and so on. There it is that feminists have been able to reinterpret their needs and identities, so forging the possibility for women to

participate on a par with men in all types of social interaction. There it is as well that subaltern counterpublics can engage in a dialectic between public discussion and the “formation and enactment of social identities,” a dialectic which is central to their emancipation (1992: 125).

There is merit to multiple publics even in hypothetical egalitarian, multicultural societies, in Fraser’s view. She wants us here “to take a closer look at the relationship between public discourse and social identities” (1992: 125). As she puts it:

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Since rhetorical lenses can never be made culturally neutral, public life in nonstratified societies ought not to take the form of a single public, as this would entail translating various modes of cultural expression into a single, and therefore privileged, mode. The operation of multiple publics, does not, however, preclude the possibility of a larger public space in which members of narrower publics can discuss questions of concern to all across lines of cultural difference. Of course, as Fraser points out, such communication requires “multicultural literacy” (1992: 127).

Now, her concept of multicultural literacy is close to the concept of *mestiza* consciousness, which has been explored by other feminist theorists. In my view, this is an important idea because it speaks to a highly creative and emancipatory dimension of counterpublic life in late capitalist societies to which I return later. Here I want, parenthetically, to offer a preliminary exposition of the idea, drawn from the feminist poet and theorist, Rich.

For Rich, multicultural consciousness should be understood as “the consciousness of being of no one geography, time zone, or culture, of moving inwardly as well as outwardly between continents, landmasses, eras of history; or, as Chicana poet Gloria Anzaldúa expresses it, in being in a ‘constant state of mental nepantlism, an Aztec word meaning *torn between ways*’” (1993: 139). This alternative consciousness has been articulated mainly by poets from marginal groups, “by American Indians moving between the cities and the reservations, by African-Americans, Caribbean-Americans, by the children of the internment camps for Japanese-American in World War II, by the children of Angel Island and the Chinese Revolution, by Mexican-Americans and Chicanos with roots on both sides of the border, by political exiles from Latin America” (1993: 139). As such it represents “a multicultural literature of discontinuity, migration and difference. Much of this new literary flowering is also lesbian or gay, feminist, and working-class” (1993: 140). Later I return to this concept.

Fraser goes on to challenge Habermas's supposition that the public sphere is an arena where only matters of common concern are to be discussed. She argues, as we have seen Benhabib (1992b) doing, that this presupposes some a priori definition of what is of concern to all. In the contemporary view of democratic practice informed by feminism and other new social movements, there can be no such a priori definition. Good democratic practice must provide assured latitude for minorities to participate in the debate, and, in the first instance, this means latitude for them to persuade others that what was heretofore not of common concern, ought now to be so.

Finally, Fraser examines the assumption she finds implicit in Habermas's model that a well-functioning democratic public sphere needs a strong separation between civil society, understood as the complex of public associations that are neither economic nor administrative, and the state. Inherent in this assumption, for her, is the notion of "weak publics," publics which are concerned in their practice only with the formation of opinion, and not with decision-making (1992: 134). In contrast, in the democratically more advanced societies which emerged with parliamentary sovereignty, it is possible to discern "strong publics," concerned to combine both the formation of opinion and decision-making (1992: 134). This is not to say, however, that the weak publics should be disregarded. There is a need, in her view, for a reassessment of the particular, respective roles that both civil society and the state can fulfill in a democratic and egalitarian society.

Fraser's critique, to my mind, makes an important contribution to the articulation of what a new postbourgeois model of the public sphere might look like. In it

1. social inequalities are not bracketed but eradicated;
2. a multiplicity of publics coexist;
3. there are no restrictions on what can be a topic of public discussion; and
4. both weak and strong publics are allowed and their interaction is theorized

(1992: 136-137).⁵⁸

I now want to build on that model by presenting some new and imaginative aspects to it that I find in other feminist theorists. I start with Young (1987, 1990), a feminist theorist who wants to combine both critical theory and the postmodern orientation represented by thinkers such as Adorno, Derrida, and Kristeva. She also appropriates both Habermas's early model of the public sphere and his later model of communicative ethics.

Young puts emphasis on the constitution of the bourgeois public sphere through the exclusion of nature, the body, passion, sensuality—all that may be said to be impure and threatening about Otherness. In contrast, she looks to accounts of life in the expanding urban centres of eighteenth century Europe, where she finds a "wild, playful and sexy" public life which to an extent "mixed sexes and classes, mixed serious discourse with play, and mixed the aesthetic with the political" (1987: 64).

She sees associated with the later rise of the impartial universalistic state the successful attempt to eliminate this impure, differentiated public through the

reorganization of social life according to the principle of a sharp distinction between private and public, and male and female. Young thinks that the redefinition of the boundaries between the public and the private requires an alternative notion of normative reason, a notion which does not exclude needs, affects and desires. She considers Habermas's communicative ethics to be the best point of departure:

Reason in such a model does not mean universal principles dominating particulars, but more concretely means giving reasons, the practical stance of being reasonable, willing to talk and listen. Truth and rightness are not something known by intuition or through tests of consistency, but only achieved from a process of discussion. This communicative ethics eliminates the authoritarian monologism of deontological reason. The dialogic model of reason supplants the transcendental ego sitting at a height from which it can comprehend everything by reducing it to synthetic unity (1987: 68).

In her view, however, Habermas does not radically challenge the dichotomy between reason and desire, because of his inclination to neglect the affective and bodily dimensions of communication. To overcome this limitation, she proposes to turn to Kristeva's psychoanalytic theory of language which explodes the unity of the subject presupposed by Habermas: "The subject is in process, positioned by the slipping and moving levels of signification, which is always in excess of what is grasped or understood discursively" (1987: 72).

Young considers that the rejuvenation of contemporary public life needs a model of a heterogeneous civic public which she starts to develop by offering a nonexclusionary definition of politics:

democratic politics...means two things: there must be public spaces and public expression. A public space is any indoor or outdoor space to which

any persons have access. Expression is public when third parties may witness it within institutions that give these others opportunity to respond to the expression and enter a discussion, and through media that allow anyone in principle to enter the discussion. Expression and discussion are political when they raise and address issues of the moral value or human desirability of an institution or practice whose decisions affect a large number of people (1987: 73).

In contrast, the private should be conceived as those dimensions of an individual's life from which she has the right to exclude other people. In this light, the feminist slogan "the personal is political" is not the refusal of a difference between public and private, but rather a recognition that no social institution or practice should be barred a priori from public discussion and no individual or dimension of an individual's life should be coerced into privacy.

She sees a return of the "heterogeneous public of passion, play and aesthetic interest," which she saw in the moment of eighteenth century modernization, in the contemporary women's movement and the emerging ethnic-identity movements such as those of American Indians, African-Americans, and Chicana/os, which claim the right to foster and demonstrate in public their specific cultures and lifestyles: "Liberating public expression means not only lifting formerly privatized issues into the open of public and rational discussion which considers the good of ends as well as means, but also affirming in the practice of such discussion the proper place of passion and play in public" (1987: 75).

She wants above all to differentiate her heterogeneous public from the concept of community as a normative ideal of social relations. In her view this concept is deeply problematic because it belongs to what Adorno and Derrida call the logic of identity, the tendency of Western thought to bring into unity the multiplicity of reality through the notion of a universal essence. Such unity is always attained by eliminating difference. The result is that this tradition is beset by a whole series of hierarchical dichotomies: universal/particular, reason/nature, mind/body, and so on (1990: 303).

The logic of identity, however, is doomed to failure because, in the process of seeking to form unity, it can succeed only in creating a pure inside and an impure outside that is forever threatening. For all that the ideal of community has arisen as a response to the individualistic and fragmented view of social relations found in liberal bourgeois political theory, Young argues that it cannot work as an alternative vision because it constitutes itself through the oppositions separated self/shared self and individualism/community, and ultimately defines itself in the hierarchical relation of the second term to the first, so remaining within the horizon of modern political theory.

She holds that the ideal of community refuses difference in two ways: the difference "within and between subjects," and the difference in social relations "mediated by space and time distancing" (1990: 305).⁴⁹ It is an ideal which can have critical thrust as a mode of analysis of existing social relations, but it cannot in the final analysis constitute a true alternative because of its denial of difference:

Liberal individualism denies difference by positing the self as a solid, self-sufficient unity, not defined by or in need of anything or anyone other than itself....Community, on the other hand, denies difference by positing fusion rather than separation as the social ideal. Community proponents conceive the social subject as a relation of unity composed by identification and symmetry among individuals within a totality ...the opacity of persons tends to dissolve as ends, vocabulary, and practices become identical (1990: 307).

Now, some radical critics of liberal individualism have recognized this problem and have sought to develop a more dialectical concept of community which goes beyond the sharp opposition between sociality and individuality (1990: 320). As Young sees it, however, even a more dialectical concept of community, such as the one underlying Benhabib's conception of the concrete other presents at least two problems.⁶⁰ One is that Benhabib's conception of the concrete other supposes that one understands the other person as one understands oneself whereas in actuality people from different social groups can never really understand each other completely. She calls this the irreducibility of differences between people. The other problem is that this conception is based on a view of the self as a "unified subject of desire and need," a view which is blind to the fact that the subject is a "heterogeneous process," a "play of differences that cannot be comprehended," and, therefore, no more transparent to itself than it is transparent in its social relations with others (1990: 310).⁶¹

To my mind, the problems that Young has with the ideal of community, and the way she deals with them, in turn present problems of their own. To deal first with her conception of the irreducibility of differences among people: certainly there are such

differences, but to give them too much importance can serve to deny the commonalities among people. I hear the voice of the black feminist poet, Lorde, telling us what she hears in the women's movement: "'I can't possibly teach Black women's writing—their experience is so different from mine' ... Or another, 'She's a white woman and what could she possibly have to say to me?' Or, 'She's a lesbian, what would my husband say, or my chairman?' Or again, 'This woman writes of her sons and I have no children'" (1984: 44). Too much postmodern emphasis on the irreducibility of differences ultimately leads us to lose sight of the fact, as Lorde puts it, that "it is not our differences which separate women, but our reluctance to recognize those differences and to deal effectively with the distortions which have resulted from the ignoring and misnaming of those differences" (1984: 122).

In light of Lorde's observations, I find deeply troubling Young's contention that "the desire for mutual understanding and reciprocity underlying the ideal of community is similar to the desire for identification that underlies racial and ethnic chauvinism" (1990: 311). True, it is important to subject notions such as community and identity politics to critical scrutiny, but the way Young goes about this, I find politically devitalizing. It tends to the conclusion that the feminist communal utopia of social life characterized by nurturant, caring, and nonrepressive relations between self and other is no more than another avatar of racism.⁶²

It is perhaps because she is, at least implicitly, aware of the difficulties inherent in her conceptions of the irreducibility of differences and of the self as a "play of differences that cannot be comprehended," that Young changes tack to critique the ideal of community from the standpoint of the model of the hypothetical unoppressive city. As she sees it, the theorists of the model of community idealize face-to-face relations understood as "relations of co-presence in which persons experience a simultaneity of speaking and hearing and are in the same space, that is, have the possibility to move close enough to touch" (1990: 314). The problem she has with the ideal here of immediate presence is that it ignores difference in the sense of time and space distancing and in the sense of the contradictions and ambiguities of social life.

She wants to take modern urban life, rather than the face-to-face community, as a starting point for a vision of the good society, the utopian model of the "unoppressive city," where ideally 10,000 or 20,000 people live, there is, it is supposed, "a productivity level in the society that can meet everyone's needs, and a physical urban environment that is cleaned up and renovated. ...everyone who can work has meaningful work and those who cannot are provided for with dignity" (1990: 318). Difference is at home, so to speak, in the unoppressive city in terms of temporal and spatial distancing and in terms of social differentiation. Life in this city, with its various social geographies, gives rise to a sense of aesthetic pleasure and wonder: "dwelling in the city means always having a

sense of beyond, that there is much human life beyond my experience going on in or near their spaces, and I can never grasp the city as a whole" (1990: 318).

For all that the utopian dimension of the unoppressive city may be of interest, irreducible differences are still present and Young remains caught in them. In the public spaces of this city, people

are externally related, they experience each other as different, from different groups, histories, professions, cultures, which they do not understand....In such public spaces the diversity of the city's residents come together and dwell side by side, sometimes appreciating one another, entertaining one another, or just chatting, always to go off again as strangers....People belong to distinct groups or cultures and interact in neighborhoods and work places. They venture out from these locales, however, to public places of entertainment, consumption, and politics. They witness one another's cultures and function in such public interaction, without adopting them as their own (1990: 318-19—my emphasis).

Recognizing, in her conclusion, that the unoppressive city is a hypothetical model, and that interaction across lines of cultural difference in existing late capitalist societies is fraught with racism and sexism, the only solution she can offer to the problem of the erasure of difference is to ensure that every group is given political representation and that the specific cultures of different groups are "celebrated" (1990: 319).

I can understand why in her commitment to the struggle against racism and sexism, Young is eager to stay away from traditional, organic models of community with their exclusion of difference and turns instead to the nonorganic model of the unoppressive city and its "openness to unassimilated difference" (1990: 319). What is problematic with

Young, however, is that she can envisage her own life in her ideal city as a life of continuously encountering people from different racial and cultural backgrounds, but relating to them only "externally," and "always going off again as a stranger" (1990: 318-19). To explore this problem, I turn to Martin and Mohanty (1986) who examine the problem of communication across lines of racial and cultural difference from a feminist perspective.

6.4 MULTICULTURAL LITERACY FROM THE STANDPOINT OF THE DOMINANT CULTURE

In an essay entitled "Feminist Politics: What's Home Got to Do with It?" (1986), Martin and Mohanty take as the object of their examination the autobiography of the American feminist poet Pratt, and through this provide a critical scrutiny of the notions of home, identity and community as these relate to the women's movement. As Young does, they focus on social relations in the context of city life, but unlike her, they do not want to dismiss the concept of community altogether. Rather, they want to look for alternative conceptualizations of the concept which do not deny its attraction and centrality.

According to Martin and Mohanty, in her autobiography, Pratt, a white, middle-class, southern feminist, "sets out to explore... the exclusions and repressions which support the seeming homogeneity, stability, and self-evidence of 'white identity,' which is derived from and dependent on the marginalizations of differences within as well as 'without'" (1986: 193). As she goes about this, Pratt is able to move beyond the sterile

opposition between a self-centred, transparent, humanist self and a decentered, indeterminate, antihumanist self which "implicitly, when not explicitly, denies the critic's own situatedness in the social, and in effect refuses to acknowledge the critic's own institutional homes" (1986: 194).

Martin and Mohanty recognize that Pratt's autobiography would be considered "conventional," and "therefore suspect" from a postmodern standpoint, "because of its collapsing of author and text, its unreflected authorial intentionality and its claims to personal and political authenticity" (1986: 194). However, while it is the case that Pratt does employ some of the conventions of the traditional realist autobiography, what is singular about her narrative is that it "calls into question the notion of a coherent, historically continuous, stable identity and works to expose the political stakes concealed in such equations" (1986: 195).

In the early part of the autobiography, Pratt explores the relationships between the geography, architecture and demography of the various cities in which she has lived and the local and often occluded histories of oppression and resistance that were to be found there:

Pratt speaks of being "shaped" in relation to the buildings and streets in the town in which she lived. Architecture and the layouts of particular towns provide concrete, physical anchoring points in relation to which she both sees and does not see certain people and things in the buildings and on the streets. However, the very stability, familiarity, and security of these physical structures are undermined by the discovery that these buildings and streets witnessed and obscured particular race, class and gender struggles. The realization that these "growing up places" are home towns where Pratt's eye "has only let in what I have been taught to see"

politicizes and undercuts any physical anchors she might use to construct a coherent notion of home and identity in relation to it (1986: 196).

With the security of a stable self and of being home in a nonproblematic way now lost, Pratt finds herself living "at the edge between [her] fear and outside" in her new home, a neighbourhood of Washington, D.C. where she is one of only a few white women (Pratt quoted in Martin and Mohanty 1986: 198). As Martin and Mohanty comment:

The salience of demography, a white woman in a black neighborhood, afraid to be too familiar and neighborly with black people, is acutely felt. Pratt is comforted by the sounds of the voices of black people, for they make her "feel at home" and remind her of her father's southern voice, until she runs into Mr. Boone, the janitor with the downcast head and the "yes ma'ams," and Pratt responds in "the horrid cheerful accents of a white lady." The pain is not just the pain of rejection by this black man; it is the pain of acknowledging the history of the oppression and separation of different groups of people which shatters the protective boundaries of her self and renders her desire to speak with others problematic (1986: 198).

Pratt is not content just to narrate her personal interaction, but wants to situate it in the larger geographical and political context of the history of race relations and struggles of resistance such as "the breaking up of Klan rallies by Lumbee Indians, the long tradition of black culture and resistance, Jewish traditions of resistance, anti-Vietnam protest, and lesbians' defiance of military codes" (1986: 206).

It is the street, with its "constant movement, change and temporality," that is the public space where Pratt explores her sense of identity, as she tries to make sense of her

reactions in encounters with people of different social, racial and sexual characteristics: "when I walk out in my neighborhood, each speaking to another person has become fraught for me, with the history of race and sex and class; as I walk I have a constant interior discussion with myself, questioning how I acknowledge the presence of another, what I know or don't know about them, and what it means how they acknowledge me" (Pratt quoted in Martin and Mohanty 1986: 199). She does not, however, try to shape her various reactions into a continuous narrative in which a coherent and stable self encounters otherness from the nonproblematic standpoint of the dominant culture. It is a narration of her political development as "consisting of fits and starts," which Martin and Mohanty consider more fruitful than the many feminist narratives of political awakening in which the heroine typically progresses in a linear way from unenlightened consciousness to feminist consciousness (1986: 206, 212 n. 10).

There is, however, a dimension of Pratt's life which provides some coherence and continuity in her life on the edge of things. This is her lesbianism, her deep love for women. At the same time, it is also this that has forced her to question and then recreate her sense of self and home, which, until her involvement with another woman, she had taken for granted as the white, middle-class, married mother of two boys: "in Pratt's narrative, lesbianism is that which exposes the extreme limits of what passes itself off as simply human, as universal, as unconstrained by identity, namely, the position of the white middle class. It is also a positive source of solidarity, community, and change.

Change has to do with the transgression of boundaries, those boundaries so carefully, so tenaciously, so invisibly drawn around white identity" (1986: 203).

It is, then, from the vantage point of lesbianism that Pratt challenges the white feminist consciousness as providing a nonproblematic sense of home, identity and community:

Raised to believe that I could be where I wanted and have what I wanted, as a grown woman I thought I could simply claim what I wanted, even the making of a new place to live with other women. I had no understanding of the limits that I lived within, nor of how much my memory and my experience of a safe space to be was based on places secured by omission, exclusions or violence, and on my submitting to the limits of that place (Pratt quoted in Martin and Mohanty 1986: 207).

She is crucially aware, as a feminist from the dominant culture, that there is no easy relation to the Other feminist. Martin and Mohanty especially admire her for refusing the white women's answer to the problem of racism, the response of guilt and of cultural impersonation, of attempting to appropriate the other's culture:

When...I groped toward an understanding of injustice done to others, injustice done outside my narrow circle of being, and to folks not like me, I began to grasp, through my own experience, something of what that injustice might be....
But I did not feel that my new understanding simply moved me into a place where I joined others to struggle *with* them against common injustices. Because *I* was implicated in the doing of some of these injustices, and I held myself, and my people, responsible. (Pratt quoted in Martin and Mohanty 1986: 208).

Oscillating between despair and hope in the emancipatory potential of the women's movement, Pratt comes to an understanding of what her contribution might be:

In this city where I am no longer of the majority by color or culture, I tell myself every day: In this *world* you aren't the superior race or culture, and never were, whatever you were raised to think: and are you getting ready to be *in* this world? And I answer myself back: I'm trying to learn how to live, to have the speaking-to extend beyond the moment's world, to act so as to change the unjust circumstances that keep us from being able to speak to each other; I'm trying to get a little closer to the longed-for but unrealized world, where we each are able to live, but not by trying to make someone less than us, not by someone else's blood or pain: yes, that's what I'm trying to do with my living now. (Pratt quoted in Martin and Mohanty 1986: 210).

As Martin and Mohanty read her autobiography, what Pratt has developed out of her experience in no way constitutes an answer to the problem of identity and community within the women's movement. Rather, it is a device for asking questions. And, indeed, they themselves have used Pratt's feminist self-critique of her political awakening to motivate their own students to imagine alternative conceptualizations of feminist moral-political communities cutting across lines of racial, ethnic, gender and class difference.

Now, while I am in general agreement with their insightful reading of Pratt, it is not entirely without problems, and this, it seems to me, is due in no small part to the strong influence of postmodernism on their thinking. Consider their critique of an essay written collaboratively by Spelman (a feminist of the dominant culture) and Lugones (a feminist woman of colour). As they put it, Lugones plays the role of "educator/critic" and Spelman that of "guilty and silent listener" (1986: 199). Martin and Mohanty criticize Lugones for sharing "the tendency on the part of some women of color to assume the position of ultimate critic or judge on the basis of the authenticity of their personal

experience of oppression" (1986: 199). This raises the question: can Lugones not speak on the basis of her experience as an outsider to the dominant culture?

It is, to be sure, the case that along with concepts such as identity and community, the notion of experience has been a prime target of postmodern attacks, and it can be admitted that these have had positive as well as negative impacts. On the positive side, they radically challenge the humanist conception of experience as uncontested evidence of authentic knowledge; on the negative side, however, they undermine a category which is at the very core of feminism. As de Lauretis puts it: "feminism defines itself as a political instance, not merely a sexual politics but a politics of experience, of everyday life, which later then in turn enters the public sphere of expression and creative practice, displacing aesthetic hierarchies and generic categories, and which thus establishes the semiotic ground for a different production of reference and meaning" (1986: 10).

As we have seen with Pratt, the concept of identity should be understood, not as the essential nature of Woman, but rather, to quote de Lauretis again, as "the point of departure of the process of self-consciousness, a process by which one begins to know that and how the personal is political, that and how the subject is specifically and materially en-gendered in its social conditions and possibilities of existence" (1986: 9). In the same way, the concept of feminist experience can be understood not as a crystalline and natural evidence, but as a complex process through which "women's

embodied experiences" can point out "the way for the transformations of consciousness and subjectivities" (Canning, 1994: 594).

Why then would Martin and Mohanty refuse Lugones the right to speak "on the basis of the authenticity of [her] personal experience of oppression" as a woman of colour, while they applaud Pratt's autobiography for "its unreflected authorial intentionality, and its claims to personal and political authenticity" (1986: 199, 194)? Could it be that they remain too indebted to the postmodern view of the subject as dispersed, indeterminate and contradictory to conceive of the possibility of a nonfragmented and yet heterogeneous subject? Let us hear Lugones in her own voice on the question of mestiza consciousness, a conceptualization of the idea of multicultural literacy seen from the standpoint of a nondominant culture. To my mind, she provides a fruitful answer to the questions raised by Young, Pratt, Martin and Mohanty.

6.5 MULTICULTURAL LITERACY AS MESTIZA CONSCIOUSNESS

My subject here is an essay by Lugones entitled "Purity, Impurity, and Separation" (1994). It follows along the same lines of the feminist critique of the public/private distinction which has so far been seen, but with the difference now that the critique is elaborated "within a hybrid imagination, within a recently articulate tradition of latina writers who emphasize mestizaje and multiplicity as tied to resistant and liberatory possibilities" (1994: 458). The object of her essay is to investigate the politics of purity and how they affect

the politics of separation. As did Young, she emphasizes that the modern civic public constitutes itself through the exclusion of individuals and groups associated with the body, passion, wild nature, irrationality. Through this process, women, the poor and the nonwhite are excluded from the universal and impartial realm of reason and relegated to the private.

As Young underlined, that process is far from successful. The impure elements of society forever threaten the purity of the homogeneous civic public. Lugones builds on Young by establishing a link between impurity and resistance through the example and metaphor of *mestizaje*. She defines *mestizaje*, prosaically enough, by comparison to the phenomena of the pure separation of the white from the yolk in an egg which is well broken, and the impure separation of ingredients when a mayonnaise curdles:

When I think of *mestizaje*, I think both of separation as curdling, an exercise in impurity, and of separation as splitting, an exercise in purity. I think of the attempt at control exercised by those who possess both power and the categorical eye and who attempt to split everything impure, breaking it down into pure elements (as in egg white and egg yolk) for the purposes of control. Control over creativity. And I think of something in the middle of either/or, something impure, something or someone *mestizo*, as both separated, curdled, and resisting in its curdled state. *Mestizaje* defies control through simultaneously asserting the impure, curdled multiple state and rejecting fragmentation into pure parts. In this play of assertion and rejection, the *mestiza* is unclassifiable, unmanageable. She has no pure parts to be "had," controlled (1994: 460).

She uses Rosaldo's critique of the concept of culture in classical anthropology to further clarify the meaning of *mestizaje*. Rosaldo draws attention to the fact that "full citizens lack culture, and those most culturally endowed lack full citizenship" (Rosaldo quoted in Lugones 1994: 461). Undeniably, the only people to have a culture are the

Others, since people from the dominant culture never refer to their culture as culture. They are postcultural, in the sense that their culture, *the* culture, is invisible as *a* culture. The irony is that postcultural people insist that people with a culture give theirs up and assimilate into the nonexistent, invisible dominant culture. It is resistance to this assimilation that characterizes the mestiza consciousness:

So, it's a particular status: I have "culture" because what I have exists in the eyes of those who declare what I have to be "culture." But they declare it "culture" only to the extent which they know they don't know it except as an absence that they don't want to learn as a presence and they have the power not to know. Furthermore they have the power to order me to cease to know. So, as I resist and know, I am both visible and invisible. Visible as other and invisible as myself, but these aren't separable bits. And I walk around as both other and myself, resisting classification (1994: 462).

Another aspect of the concept of culture in classical anthropology that Rosaldo attacks is the notion that "*if it's moving it isn't cultural*" (Rosaldo quoted in Lugones 1994: 462). Culture is perceived by postcultural people as static and fixed, as exemplified by the cultural stereotypes sold to the "anglo consumer of the picturesque" (1994: 471). It is, however, precisely when cultural people start moving—doing something creative—that there is the beginning of mestiza consciousness: "it is and it isn't culture. It's in the middle, anomalous, deviant, ambiguous, impure. It lacks the mark of separation as purity" (1994: 462).

In her critique of modern political and moral theory from the standpoint of those who until now have been nonrepresentable in dominant discourses, she draws attention to

something which Young neglects: the unification of the self of modern political theory is a process both of fragmentation and of domination. In order for the fiction of a unified, pure subject to be possible at all, it is necessary that his needs be satisfied by people who are invisible to the public eye and that he accord little importance to the fulfillment of his sensual, affective and bodily self:

Since his embodiment is irrelevant to his unity, he cannot have symbolic and institutionalized inscriptions in his body that mark him as someone who is "outside" his own production as the rational subject. To the extent that mastering institutional inscriptions is part of the program of unification, there cannot be such markings of his body. His difference cannot be thought of as "inscriptions" but only as coincidental, nonsymbolic marks. As his race and gender do not identify him in his own eyes, he is also race and gender transparent (1994 466)

Yet, the culture, race and gender transparency of the modern subject places him in irreconcilable contradictions, since he must at one and the same time both affirm and deny his own and others' gender, race, culture:

He is a fiction of his own imagination, but his imagination is mediated by the labor of others. He controls those who produce him, who to his eyes require his control because they are enmeshed in multiplicity and thus unable to occupy the vantage point of control. They are marked as other than himself, as lacking the relevant unity. But the lack is not discovered, it couldn't be, since the unity is itself assumed. The lack is symbolically produced by marking the producers as gendered, racialized, and "cultured." The marking signifies that they are enmeshed in multiplicity and thus are different from the lover of purity. But he must deny the importance of the marking that separates them (1994. 467)

The culture, race and gender transparency of the modern subject can only be achieved by a pure separation from his own sensuality and affectivity; and from those impure others tainted by desire, passion, and sensuousness.

What the modern subject cannot do, Lugones stresses, is to see, understand, and tame the resistant and liberatory potential of individuals and groups considered impure, because "they are split over and over in accordance with the relevant dichotomies of the logic of unity. As anomalous, they remain complex, defying the logic of unity. That which is multiplicitous metamorphoses over and over in its history of resisting alteration" (1994: 468). Mestiza consciousness, then, can be defined as the capability of seeing at the same time the logic of control and unity and the logic of resistance and complexity, an "against-the-grain creativity" (1994: 469).

As an exemplar of mestiza consciousness, Lugones offers the rural Chicano. From the standpoint of the logic of control and unity, and of the anglo imaginary, the rural Chicano is Mexican/American, someone who is cleanly separated into two parts which do not touch. There is the authentic Mexican self and the American self: "in this notion, there is no hybrid self. The selves are conceptually different, apparently contradictory but complementary; one cannot be found without the other. The anglo philosophy is that mexican/americans should both keep their culture (so as to be different and not full citizens) and assimilate (so as to be exploitable), a position whose contradictoriness is obvious" (1994: 470).

The reason why the rural Mexican/American in the Anglo conceptualization can assimilate without becoming a full citizen is that he can never become "postcultural," inasmuch as the "theatrics of racism" has reified him into a mythical portrait:

A simple but stoic figure who will defend the land no matter what....The authentic mexican is a romantic figure, an anglo myth....fiercely conservative and superexploitable....The portrait does not lack in appeal. It makes one feel proud to be raza because the portrait is heroic. It also makes one stilted, stiff, a cultural personage not quite sure of oneself, a pose, pure style, not quite at ease in one's own cultural skin, as if one did not quite know one's own culture, precisely because it is not one's own but a stereotype and because this authentic culture is not quite a live culture: it is conceived by the anglo as both static and dying (1994: 470-71).

From the perspective of the logic of resistance and impurity and of mestizo/a consciousness, however, the picture is quite different. According to this logic, Mexican/Americans are not split selves, but Chicanos/as, hybrid, complex, creative selves who refuse either to be relegated to the private in the public/private dichotomy, or to take part in public life only "ornamentally in the dramatization of equality" (1994: 471). Lugones concludes that the refusal of the culturally split self entails "that we declare our communities public space and break the conceptual ties between public space and monoculturally conceived anglo-only concerns: it requires that the language and conceptual framework of the public become hybrid" (1994: 471).

She then turns to inquire whether Young's conceptualization of an alternative public might not meet the need for a hybrid, impure, heterogeneous public. As has been seen, Young believes that people from different social groups can never completely understand each other, and sees the solution to this to be a politics of difference that ensures that each social group is given political representation. In her view, these social groups should

not be seen as homogeneous, since individuals can at one and the same time belong to several social groups.

Along with her conceptualization of a heterogeneous public, Young sees the need for an alternative vision of subjectivity which, drawing on postmodern thinking, she conceptualizes as a play of differences that cannot be comprehended. Now, Lugones thinks Young has clearly seen the problem, but not the solution, because her conception of multiple subjectivity is also a conception of a fragmented subjectivity derived from the logic of identity and purity. She argues that this logic is intimately linked to group oppression and that

we need a solution to the problem of walking from one of one's group to another, being mistreated, misunderstood, engaging in self-abuse and self-betrayal for the sake of the group that only distorts our needs because they erase our complexity. Young lacks a conceptual basis for the solution because she lacks a conception of a multiple subject who is not fragmented. I think she does not see the need for such a conception because she fails to address the problem of the interlocking of oppressions. Fragmentation is conceptually at odds with seeing oppression as interlocked (1994: 473).

To conceptualize a nonfragmented multiplicity, Lugones first has recourse to the concepts of thickness and transparency:

Thickness and transparency are group relative. Individuals are transparent with respect to their group if they perceive their needs, interests, ways, as those of the group and if this perception becomes dominant or hegemonical in the group. Individuals are thick if they are aware of their otherness in the group, of their needs, interests, ways, being relegated to the margins in the politics of intragroup contestation. So, as transparent, one becomes unaware of one's own difference from other members of the group (1994: 474).

She offers the title *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave* (Hull, Scott and Smith 1982) as a metaphor to illustrate this logic of erasure. White women are transparent with respect to the women's movement; and black men are transparent with respect to the black movement; but black women are thick with respect to both the women's movement and the black movement; their specific needs and values are conceived as an addition to those of the transparent members.

For Lugones, fragmentation, understood as the lack of recognition of the interlocking of oppressions, contributes to the logic of the exclusion of members of oppressed groups from the public sphere. As she sees it, it is not enough in Young's model that every group be given political representation for there to be communication across cultural lines, because this does not recognize that those voices which are given public representation will (tend to) be only the voices of the transparent members. The reason for this is that Young's model, even though it strives for multiplicity, replicates, in its emphasis on the irreducibility of differences, the fragmentation of society and of individuals into pure, homogeneous parts

It is in the logic of mestiza consciousness that Lugones, then, wants to find the point of departure for the conceptualization of a nonfragmented multiplicity which recognizes the interlocking of oppressions. According to this logic, "groups in a genuinely heterogeneous society have complex, nonfragmented persons as members, that is, they are heterogeneous themselves. The affiliative histories include the formation of voices in contestation that reveal the enmeshing of race, gender, culture, class, and other differences that affect and

constitute the identity of the group's members" (1994: 475). Mestiza consciousness holds out the hope that the unsettling situation of being outsiders to society—"transitionals, liminals, border/dwellers, 'world'-travelers, beings in the middle of either/or"—can yield resistant and liberatory possibilities (1994: 469).

It can now be seen that there are strong affinities between Pratt's sense of identity as being on the edge and the mestiza consciousness of living in a borderland, in a constant state of transition. There is, however, a crucial difference between their alternative subjects. Pratt, like Young, remains to an extent caught in the logic of fragmentation and exclusion, since she remains skeptical about the possibility of communicating and sharing with others across cultural lines: "but I did not feel that my new understanding simply moved me into a place where I joined others to struggle *with* them against common injustices" (Pratt quoted in Martin and Mohanty 1986: 208).

In contrast, Lugones, because she sees a logic other than the logic of fragmentation, trusts that mestiza consciousness can enable communication across class, culture, race and gender: "so we find our people as we make the threat good, day to day, attentive to our company in our groups, across groups. The model of curdling as a model for separation is a model for worldly separation—the separation of border-dwellers, of people who live in a crossroads, people who deny purity and are looking for each other for the possibility of going beyond resistance" (1994: 477). Her concept of the subject as nonfragmented multiplicity provides new insight into the identity of subjects who until now have been nonrepresentable

in dominant discourse. This, to my mind, is her important contribution to the conceptualization of an alternative concept of political community.

But this is not her only contribution. Her art of curdling illuminates how feminism rejuvenates the Romantic utopia of art playing an important function in the construction of moral-political communities. It enlists the services of art and imagination in order to create a solidarity cutting across lines of ethnic, racial and cultural differences in the feminist counterpublic sphere. To be sure, the art of curdling is not autonomous art as conceptualized by Habermas. Rather, it consists in complex and highly creative skills which members of politically and socially marginal groups can use for playing the codes of nondominant cultures against those of the dominant culture in a "practice of festive resistance" (1994: 478).

Lugones points to some of the carnivalesque techniques border-dwellers can enlist for the purpose of revolutionizing the social order.

Bi- and multilingual experimentation;
 code-switching;
 categorial blurring and confusion,
 caricaturing the selves we are in the worlds of our oppressors, infusing
 them with ambiguity;
 practicing trickstery and foolery;

 announcing the impurity of the pure by ridiculing his inability
 at self-maintenance;
 playful reinvention of our names for things and people, multiple naming;
 caricaturing of the fragmented selves we are in our groups;
 revealing the chaotic in production;
 revealing the process of producing order if we cannot help producing it;
 undermining the orderliness of the social ordering;
 marking our cultural mixtures as we move;

emphasizing cultural mestizaje;
crossing cultures;
etc. (1994: 478).

Outsiders to the mainstream culture develop such art out of necessity. It is an expression of their habits of continual acts of self-creation in their constant travels (in real or imaginary fashion) between countries, time zones and cultures. It should not be thought, however, that the impure art of curdling can be reduced to an art of resistance at the disposal of members of nondominant cultures. There is more to it than this. In another essay entitled "Playfulness, 'World'-Traveling, and Loving Perception" (1989), Lugones explains how the multicultural literacy achieved by outsiders to mainstream "white/Anglo" social order can also be fruitfully used by feminists who are "at ease in the mainstream" but want to "travel" cross-culturally and cross-racially (1989: 275).

According to Lugones, the prerequisite for achieving proficiency in multicultural literacy is playfulness, but not, however, conceived in an "agonistic" way as having "to do with contest, with winning, losing, battling" (1989: 287). Such warlike sense of play, which Lugones sees as being in the end imperialist and Western, is of no use for crossing racial and ethnic boundaries. Rather, playfulness means to be open "to surprise....to being a fool, which is a combination of not worrying about competence, not being self-important, not taking norms as sacred and finding ambiguity and double edges a source of wisdom and delight" (1989: 288). Open to surprise, one may encounter Others not as

objects constructed by the dominant culture, but as "really subjects, lively beings, resistors, constructors of visions" (1989: 289).

There is much to be learned in these mestiza visions. Through them it becomes possible creatively to expand Lugones's conceptualization of multicultural literacy. This, to my mind, is the most promising orientation for those who want to hold on to the vision of cross-racial and cross-cultural solidarity in the feminist counterpublic sphere.³

CONCLUSION

I consider contemporary feminism to be the most emancipatory social movement and the work of Habermas, the most illuminating conceptual framework. The goal of this dissertation has been to explain the social, political and cultural significance of contemporary feminism by situating it within the critical social-theoretical framework of Habermas. Feminism, however, is not without a theoretical voice of its own. It has a lot to gain from Habermas, but it is also the case that Habermas has a lot to learn from it. That the dialogue between feminist theory and critical theory has up to now been little developed is due to external factors (theoretical difficulties, lack of a national tradition, tenure strategies, etc.), rather than to internal factors. Both are inherently utopian. Both seek to understand the existing order of things from the standpoint of a critical-anticipatory vision of a better, more humane society.

My contention is that contemporary feminism can best be understood as both the fulfillment and the transfiguration of Habermas's project of modernity. Far from believing that we have entered into a postmodern era, Habermas wants to hold on to the intentions of those who first conceptualized the project of modernity, the thinkers of the French Enlightenment. Cultural modernity emerges out of the falling apart of religious-metaphysical world views, following which their residual elements are differentiated into the three autonomous spheres of science, morality and art, each obeying its own logic and each being the province of experts specialized in this logic.

The project of modernity of the thinkers of the French Enlightenment was to let each of the three spheres develop autonomously, and at the same time use these specialized cultures for the enrichment of everyday life. That the specialized cultures have become increasingly split off from the lifeworld does not mean, for Habermas, that the project of modernity is doomed to failure. Rather, he thinks that the emancipatory potential of cultural modernity can still be released and brought to fulfillment provided that the early project of modernity is critically appropriated.

The great initial appeal for me of Habermas's conceptualization of the project of modernity was the important place he appears to accord to art. Indeed, he turns to aesthetic modernity to find the direction for a way out of the problem of modernity. Reflecting on the failure of the turn of the century avant-garde artists to reintegrate the autonomous sphere of art into the lifeworld, he establishes a link between their attempt and the emancipatory use of art by everyday experts to solve their own life problems in the Enlightenment era. In so doing he is, in effect, harking back to his own early work on the bourgeois public sphere. He takes care, however, to clarify what he considers to be the confusion over the relation of the everyday experts of the Enlightenment to art—the belief that not only could they use art to solve their life problems, they could also educate themselves and become experts of art in their own right. That ambition Habermas rejects categorically, because he considers that artistic production would die, if it were not based on the treatment by experts of autonomous problems.

I did not myself at first accord too much importance to Habermas's categorical rejection of this aspiration of the nonexpert, which after all is quite legitimate. Later, however, it became clear that this rejection is a crucial point of inflection in his analysis which in effect sets serious limits on the possibility of any contemporary emancipatory use of art.

Drawing on Wellmer, Habermas proposes Weiss' *The Aesthetics of Resistance* as the model of an emancipatory *reception* of art. In that novel a group of politically engaged young workers find a way through after hours schooling to become so acquainted with European art that they are able to use it to illuminate their life-historical situation and their life problems. Such a repoliticization of autonomous art—reappropriating it from the standpoint of the lifeworld—is one of the components of Habermas's reformulation of the early project of modernity. There are also two others: an alternative relation to tradition, on the model of Benjamin's redemption of the oppressed past, and the building of solidaristic democratic counterpublic spheres out of the lifeworld.

Now, considering, a) the importance for women of reappropriating their oppressed past, b) the centrality of the development of alternative communities in the women's movement, and c) the influential role that feminist aesthetics has played in the shaping of these moral-political communities (much on the model of Weiss), I propose that the sociopolitical significance of contemporary feminism is best grasped as the fulfillment of the project of modernity with respect to the three components proposed by Habermas. I

want, however, to go beyond that, since my enquiry into the phenomenon of feminist aesthetics convinces me that feminism does more than bring the project to completion, it is also its transfiguration.

If, however, feminism is to constitute such a transfiguration the problem that has to be addressed is this: Habermas's conceptualization of the emancipatory potential of aesthetic modernity can accommodate the reception of feminist art, but it cannot do justice to the emancipatory dimension of the production of feminist art. For Habermas, poets and artists are busy with *esoteric* questions and have little time for *exoteric* concerns; they concentrate on beauty and authenticity alone, to the exclusion of aspects of truth and morality. It is only at the level of the reception of art by the nonartist that Habermas concedes that the cognitive and normative moments come into play again.

Now, this is not at all what I hear in women's poetry, and I see a big problem in telling black and lesbian women poets that their production of poetry, which they claim to be a powerful way of fighting their oppression, has nothing to do with cognition, ethics and politics. sorry ladies, your domain is the domain of beauty and authenticity. truth and morality are serious questions to be dealt with by serious people Does there have to be so rigid a divide between art and politics, art and morality, and art and cognition, a divide which can only serve to trivialize art and perpetuate the selective pattern of rationalization in our societies which Habermas himself so deplores? And even if this divide corresponds to what is going on at an institutional level, do we have to accept that

institutional divide as corresponding to what is really at stake in the poetry of black women, women of colour, lesbian women?

It is through the process of seeking an answer to these questions within the framework of Habermas's conceptualization of the project of modernity that I come to the position that the parameters of the project have to be expanded if feminist aesthetics and politics are to be made sense of within its framework. And, indeed, it is Habermas himself, in the very context of his project of modernity, who provides the direction for such an expansion, albeit unwittingly.

Recall that while Habermas approves of the desire of Enlightenment's nonexperts to relate art to their life problems, he disapproves of their aspiration to educate themselves to themselves become experts. Now it is not at all self-evident why that ought to be rejected. Women's poetry puts into radical question the elitist dichotomy that Habermas wants to maintain between cultural experts, who are unable to gain access to the lifeworld, and culturally impoverished everyday experts, who are entirely dependent on the cultural production of those experts for illuminating their life problems. As feminist poet Rich points out, the best of contemporary poetry is hardly being written by people with Ph.D.'s in comparative literature or members of recognized intellectual elites: "it's a lie that poetry is only read by or 'speaks to' people in the universities or elite intellectual circles; in many such places, poetry barely speaks at all. Poems are written and absorbed, silently and aloud, in prisons, prairie kitchens, urban basement workshops, branch

libraries, battered women's shelters, homeless shelters, offices, a public hospital for disabled people, an HIV support group" (1993b: 206-207).

I contend that these people, writing their good poetry in prisons and women's shelters, are far closer to the Enlightenment nonexpert aspiring to become an expert than they are to the avant-garde artist producing esoteric art within its own autonomous sphere. Why then not expand the project of modernity to accommodate the aspiration of the early modern individual to both emancipatory production and emancipatory reception of art? This alternative avenue was at one time open to aesthetic modernity; there was not just the avenue towards increasing autonomy which became chosen.

What became clear through my exploration of an alternative ethical-political modern art is that the course of the Enlightenment cannot be fully understood without taking into account the current of thought and sensibility called Romanticism. The two traditions are ineluctably linked. From the standpoint of feminist aesthetics, then, the major problem with Habermas's project of modernity is that it wants to reduce the project to the Enlightenment, discarding Romanticism as being somehow an avenue which leads out of modernity. Habermas holds that the specific dignity of modernity's consists in the differentiation of the autonomous spheres. Because Romanticism challenges this, it has to be discarded, much the same as postmodern thinkers such as Nietzsche and Derrida have to be dismissed. For Habermas, Romantic thinkers and artists, and their postmodern

heirs, accord far too much importance to art and fail to realize that art's "proper" place is in its autonomous sphere.

This dissertation, to be sure, does not pretend anything so ambitious as settling a question as complex as that of the relationship between Enlightenment and Romanticism; or reconciling Habermas with postmodern thinkers. More modestly, what it attempts is to expand the parameters of Habermas's conceptualization of the project of modernity so as to take into account the phenomenon of Romanticism with its emphasis on art, imagination and community. This expansion allows us to understand the development of critical theory from Hegel to Habermas and contemporary feminist theory as more or less successful attempts to find utopian solutions to the problematic set in place at the end of the eighteenth century by the Romantic critique of the Enlightenment. Moreover, it is not only critical theorists and feminism that can be understood in light of this problematic, but also a postmodern thinker like Derrida

Briefly stated, the Romantic problematic lies in the attempt to effect a synthesis of two ideals: modern individual autonomy and communal links between individuals and their social and natural environment. Those trends of Romanticism that can be said to be progressive share with Enlightenment a commitment to modern individual autonomy, but they differ from Enlightenment in taking art, rather than science, as the model for both the individual and society. Yet Enlightenment does not dismiss imagination out of hand.

The Romantic sense of the power of the imaginative capacity is to be found in that genuine child of the Enlightenment that is utopia.

A hybrid of artistic imagination and politics, utopia sets out alternative societies which both critique the existing order and anticipate a better, more human future. Utopia's goal, however, is not to devise mere castles in the air, but rather to build them in the here and now. But to have real impact the utopian vision of the good society has to be radiant and robust enough to shake people out of the status quo and mobilize them to action. Nothing less will do for utopia than to be seen to be wrenching heaven down to earth.

Habermas himself makes clear in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* that the search for utopia can be said to be the most important problem of modernity. In his view, it was Hegel, a thinker with deep links to Romanticism, who first realized that modernity had to find its normative orientation in the very divisions brought about by the emergence of the modern subjectivity—without having recourse to exemplary models from the past, such as the unifying power of religions. Hegel, however, was enough of a Romantic to recognize that to be able to mobilize people to action, the solution to the problem of modernity had to meet not only the demands of reason but also those of the heart.

Habermas tells us that if Hegel, Marx and the early critical theorists like Horkheimer and Adorno were not able to find an adequate solution to the problem of modernity, it was because they were confined to a narrow concept of rationality based on the subject-

object model and directed towards instrumental mastery. For him, the solution to the problem of modernity lies in expanding the concept of instrumental rationality into the larger concept of communicative rationality based on the subject-subject model and directed towards the reaching of understanding.

On the one hand, I think that the understanding of modernity which Habermas provides in *The Theory of Communicative Action* constitutes the best set of conceptual tools available to feminists for a sociological analysis of the situation of women, so long as its tendency to be gender blind is overcome. On the other, I argue that his utopia of communication can only be a partial solution to the problem of modernity, because its abstract and formal character cannot mobilize people to action. I argue too that his paradigm of communicative rationality is unable to do justice to Horkheimer and Adorno's aesthetic solution to the problem of modernity, their utopia of mimesis. Since that is a utopia very close to the claims made by contemporary women's poetry, it is important to clarify the reasons underlying the limits Habermas puts on the emancipatory potential of aesthetic modernity.

This I do in three stages. First, I build on Buerger and Wellmer to propose that the nonorganic modern work of art has an openness to Otherness which can serve as a model for alternative moral-political communities. Second, I go back to *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* to show how Habermas, because he has predecided that modern art is necessarily nonethical, dismisses the other model of emancipatory art that is

available in early Romanticism. Third, I reply to Habermas's criticism that Derrida's use of metaphor blurs the division between the autonomous spheres. I argue for the ethical-utopian dimension of Adorno and Derrida's challenge to that division and then establish a link between their thinking and feminist aesthetics.

Now it needs to be said that this dissertation should not be thought to be an attempt to *prove* the emancipatory potential of feminist aesthetics or of the feminist appropriation of the past as these are expressed in contemporary feminist poetry. Rather, it should be considered as the attempt to set in place the necessary theoretical and conceptual framework for such an empirical investigation into feminist poetry.

While I argue that Habermas's later work represents only a partial solution to the Romantic problematic, this is not the case with his earlier work on the public sphere, which I take to be Habermas's quasi-Romantic solution to the problem of modernity because of the important sociopolitical function that aesthetics plays in the development of an emancipatory political community. In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Habermas proposes a utopian model of public life which both meets the demands of the heart and the imagination and satisfies modernity's need to ground itself out of itself. The appeal of the model is that its historical stage is modern urban public life, a stage which has from the outset proven itself open to women and Otherness.

As is well-known, Habermas's quasi-Romantic model of public life has been of much inspiration to the student movement and the New Left and alternative movements

of the seventies; and it is now being appropriated as an indispensable resource by feminist scholars in search of a woman-friendly theory of the public. In this light, a continuity can be seen between the earlier socialist-Romantic tradition—with its stress on art and community—and contemporary movements with strong aesthetic and communal dimensions like the student movement and feminism.

While Habermas's early work on the public sphere presents the thesis of the contemporary demise of public life, recent feminist historical research reveals that the bourgeois public sphere never really constituted the entire public. From the beginning there existed counterpublic spheres as well, which constituted themselves largely in the context of struggles with the bourgeois public sphere. The history of the public sphere reminds us that the ideal of the public has been successively rejuvenated through its appropriation by politically and socially marginal groups.

In my view, the feminist development of a woman-friendly postbourgeois political community now represents the most promising rejuvenation of the ideal of the public. It not only unmask the gender and class biases of the bourgeois model, but goes beyond that to propose a vision of solidarity cutting across lines of cultural, ethnic and racial difference. Further, in the woman-friendly public sphere, the Romantic utopia of art playing a social-revolutionary role in the construction of the community is revitalized. Indeed, in the feminist community it is art itself which permits cross-cultural and cross-racial communication.

To be sure, this is not autonomous art split off from the lifeworld as conceptualized by Habermas. If anything, it is art which has more to do with the carnivalesque culture so well investigated by Bakhtin (1968). This art which crosses cultural and racial lines—art of curdling or mestiza consciousness—is largely elaborated by poets of nondominant cultures who think their situation as border-dwellers, outsiders to the mainstream social order, can yield resistant and emancipatory potential. Expertise in this kind of multicultural literacy is not, however, the sole province of members of nondominant groups. It can be achieved by members of dominant groups who are willing to adopt the nonagonistic attitude of playfulness—understood as openness to surprise and relinquishment of a specific construction of self-identity—in order to encounter Others as constructors of visions. The hope is that by learning from these utopias, it will become possible to revitalize even further the ideal of solidaristic public life. Is there any other alternative?

ENDNOTES

1 I have appropriated the concepts of the fulfillment and transfiguration of the project of modernity from Benhabib who situates the notion of utopia within the tradition of critical theory in terms of the tension she sees between two models of emancipation: a model of fulfillment which is the culmination of the present order, and a model of transfiguration which entails a radical rupture and the emergence of new values.

The politics of fulfillment envisages that the society of the future attains more adequately what present society has left unaccomplished. It is the culmination of the implicit logic of the present. The politics of transfiguration emphasizes the emergence of qualitatively new needs, social relations, and modes of association, which burst open the utopian potential within the old. Within a critical social theory the articulation of norms continues the universalistic promise of bourgeois revolutions—justice, equality, civil rights, democracy, and publicity—while the articulation of utopia continues the tradition of early socialist, communitarian, and anarchist movements—the formation of a community of needs and solidarity, and qualitatively transformed relations to inner and outer nature (1986: 13).

While Benhabib associates utopia with transfiguration, she wants at the same time to recognize that a neat distinction between fulfillment and transfiguration is hardly possible.

Critical philosophy is a philosophy of the present, but one which conceives of the present as a radical future. The present must generate its own radical negation from within itself. This insistence upon the present as a radical future necessarily vacillates between the perspectives of continuity and break, the completion of the old and its transfiguration. Since the radical future must be a task of the present, it appears as the continuation and fulfillment of the present. Since the present contains this radical future in itself, it appears as its own transfiguration and as a rupture (1986: 61).

It follows from the dialectical oscillation between the perspectives of continuity and break that the difference between transfiguration and fulfillment in any projection of the future based on the present can only be one of degree. Only the future will be able to determine where the radical break with the present took place.

2 This definition of critical theory is based on that found in Benhabib (1986: 226).

3 On the theoretical and political problems of the feminist attempt to appropriate orthodox Marxism, see Barrett (1988), Hartsock (1983), Marshall (1988), Nicholson (1987), Nye (1988), and Sargent (1981).

4 To my knowledge, the beginning of that dialogue in North America can be traced back to the publication of Habermas's "The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article" in 1964. As American historian Ryan (1992) notes, this article became a key text in the feminist search for a theory of the public.

5 Marshall (1988) refers to "poststructuralism," not "postmodernism." I use the two terms more or less as synonyms.

6 On this see Bronner and Kellner (1989).

7 On this see Albistur and Armogathe (1977).

8 Benhabib refers in particular to Chodorow (1978), Gilligan (1982) and Ruddick (1982).

9. She develops this approach in Fraser and Nicholson (1990).

10. Since then Wellmer (1991) has gone somewhat further than Habermas and has argued that the different moments of reason are also present in the reception of art by the professional critic. I present his argument in chapter 4.

11. My interest in feminist aesthetics goes back to the summer of 1986 when I took an undergraduate course in "women's literature" given by Professor Francoise Kay at University of Ottawa. I did some mind-opening research in the context of this course on women's literature in the medieval era. Since then, my fascination for women's literature has never diminished and has led me to a wider involvement with feminism. The following is a list of some selected primary sources of contemporary feminist poetry I have worked with: Agosin (1994), Allen (1986), Brossard (1980, 1985, 1987), Chrystos (1988), Cixous (1980, 1982, 1989), Cixous and Clement ([1975] 1987), Cixous, Gagnon and Leclerc (1977), Herrera-Sobek and Viramontes (1988), Hoffman and Howe (1979), Hogan (1985), Irigaray (1974, 1978, 1984, [1977] 1985, 1987, 1989a, 1989b, 1991), Jordan (1977, 1980), Levertov (1973, 1976), Lorde (1982, 1984, 1986, 1988, 1993), Moraga and Anzaldúa (1983), Olsen (1978), Pratt (1990, 1991, 1992), Rich (1978, 1979, 1981, 1986a, 1986b, 1993a, 1993b), Rukeyser ([1949] 1968, 1978) and Walker (1974). I have included Irigaray's theoretical works because I consider them indispensable for an understanding of women's poetry.

12. For a similar argument see Lacoue-Labarthe (1983: 7).

13. Sayre and Lowy use the sociological approach developed by Goldmann (1959).

14. On utopia see Alexander and Gills (1984), Bauman (1976), Geoghegan (1987), Kolakowski (1983), Levitas (1990), Rowbotham (1984), Goodwin and Taylor (1982), Kumar (1991), Manuel and Manuel (1979) and White (1955).

15. On this see Goodwin (1978), Levitas (1979) and Taylor (1982).

16. On this see Albistur and Armogathe (1977) and Taylor (1983).

17. On this see Geoghegan (1987), Lowy (1981) and Lukes (1984).

18. On this see Kollontai ([1909-48] 1977), Nye (1988: 31-72), Mullaney (1982) and Lenin (1966). Also fascinating is Goldman's vision of anarchist feminist utopia. On this see Falk (1990).

19. Goodwin is the author of the first part of *The Politics of Utopia* (1982), and Taylor of the second.

20. On this see Albistur and Armogathe (1977), Kelly (1984) and Noble (1992).

21. Of course there is today a proliferation of utopian feminist science-fiction novels depicting imaginary nonsexist societies. On this see Bartkowski (1989) and Mellor (1982). It also needs to be said that the tradition of women's writing of literary utopias goes back at least to the nineteenth century, on this see Gilman ([1915] 1978) and Kessler (1984). However, my view of utopia is that it is more a social science with imagination than a literary phenomenon. Therefore, I still think that it is in feminist political theory that there is the more utopian imagination to be tapped. As Jones mentions, however, much of what is the most innovative in feminist political theory is still in a "fragmentary" form which remains "to be synthesized and developed into a coherent alternative perspective" (1980: 785). It is from Jones that I borrow the term of a "woman-friendly" public sphere.

22. On this, see Witte (1988).

23. Some further precision of the crucial concept of the normative foundation of modernity is in order. The concept refers to the philosophical search, such as pursued by Kant at the beginning of modernity, for a theoretical justification on which to support ethical and cognitive positions. As White puts it, "a foundationalist position in philosophy is one which claims that philosophy can, by some method, demonstrate the absolute, universal validity of some conception of knowledge or morality. This view that

there are ahistorical conceptual or moral frameworks existing, as it were, above the heads of concrete historical actors, is one which has increasingly fallen into general disrepute" (1988: 129). Like postmodern thinkers, Habermas rejects foundationalist philosophies, but unlike them, he believes in the possibility of finding the normative foundation for critical theory, while escaping the pitfalls of foundationalism, through his theory of communicative action based on language, an avenue discovered but abandoned by Hegel. To do justice to the debate surrounding the question of foundationalism and to whether Habermas can still be accused of remaining caught in it is a question which is beyond the scope of this thesis. On the question of foundationalism, critical theory and postmodernism, see Benhabib (1986), Roderick (1986), Rorty (1985) and White (1988). This said, I want to stress that, from a feminist perspective, I endorse Cohen's position that "no critical theory can do without criteria with which to defend partisanship for particular social movements and goals" (1982: 223). I am thus in complete disagreement with the position of a postmodern thinker such as Foucault (1986). Foucault would dismiss Cohen's position because he thinks that all what the theorist can do is to produce one more master discourse above the head of the oppressed. In his view, since May 68, the theorist has "discovered that the masses no longer need him to gain knowledge: they *know* perfectly well, without illusion, they know far better than he and they are certainly capable of expressing themselves" (1986: 207). In my view Foucault seriously contradicts himself. On the one hand, he rejects under the formula of the "indignity of speaking for others" the right of the intellectual to use her status to defend her conception of the good. On the other hand, it is only because of his status as a prestigious intellectual that Foucault can succeed in undermining the tradition of the engaged intellectual and promote, albeit implicitly, his own conception of the good, which is to say, his refusal to identify himself openly with any emancipatory ideal or movement. Against Foucault, I would argue that intellectuals cannot ignore the fact that they have more influence than those who are without voice in society and that if intellectuals promote the idea that to speak in the name of the other is something deeply wrong, they succeed, ironically, in leaving unchallenged a powerful system of exploitation and oppression called patriarchal capitalism.

24 This passage reads as follows: "All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind" (Marx quoted in Habermas 1987b: 60).

25 Habermas's evolutionary-developmental scheme and his treatment of non-Western societies are problematic. Indeed, despite the fact that he stresses that the process of evolution should not be understood as taking place in a linear, predetermined way, he can be read as assuming that Western civilization is the logical and ineluctable end of evolution. As Benhabib argues:

Much like Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* in Habermas's account, too, the cultural evolution of modernity becomes a representative tale in which "we," the subjects of the present, are to discover ourselves. What is objectionable in this procedure is twofold. First, who is the we in the present such that reconstruction presents a process of development with which all can identify? Why is it assumed that one is already facing a collective singularity—mankind as such? The shift to the language of an anonymous species-subject preempts the experience of moral and political activity as a consequence of which alone a genuine "we" can emerge. A collectivity is not constituted theoretically but is formed out of the moral and political struggles of fighting actors (1985: 96).

I think, however, that I can bracket this problem and, as Benhabib suggests, make use of Habermas's evolutionary-developmental models with a view to "their empirical fruitfulness in generating further research, their viability to serve as models in a number of fields, and their capacity to order and explain complex phenomena into intelligible narratives" (1986: 269)

²⁶ It is far beyond the scope of this thesis to do justice to the debate over whether communicative rationality is limited to our Occidental understanding of the world or can lay claim to universality

²⁷ In an earlier essay, "Historical Materialism and the Development of Normative Structures," Habermas stresses that there can be no question of a "global comparison" between the development of the individual and that of collective world views. All that can be done is "to sharpen particular, abstract, reference points of comparison. Thus, there might be a process of decentration of world views that corresponds to ego development, and for cognitive development in the narrower sense, we can look for isomorphisms in the fundamental concepts and logical connections of collective interpretive systems" (1979: 103)

²⁸ Habermas finds in the Marxian analysis of labour as a commodity a theoretical approach combining both the perspectives of the lifeworld and of the economic subsystem. Indeed, Marx's analysis of the double character of labour as a commodity traces the stages through which concrete labour power is neutralized with respect to the lifeworld and transformed into abstract labour ready to be used by the economic subsystem. The problem that Habermas sees in Marx's analysis of labour as a commodity is that, although it is possible to recognize in it the interconnected paradigms of lifeworld and system, it does not clearly separate the two paradigms. Caught in Hegelian "totality-thinking," Marx cannot see that the uncoupling of system from lifeworld is not intrinsically negative, but rather represents a higher stage of structural differentiation which no modern society can avoid. This theoretical blindness of Marx is reflected in his theory of revolution which has as its goal the reintegration of the economic process into the lifeworld (1987a: 338-340)

²⁹ The full text of the passage in which Habermas describes the late capitalist functional equivalent to ideology formation is as follows:

In place of the positive task of meeting a certain need for interpretation by ideological means, we have the negative requirement of preventing holistic interpretations from coming into existence. The lifeworld is always constituted in the form of a global knowledge intersubjectively shared by its members, thus the desired equivalent for no longer available ideologies might simply consist in the fact that the everyday knowledge appearing in totalized form remains diffuse, or at least never attains that level of articulation at which alone knowledge can be accepted as valid according to the standards of cultural modernity. *Everyday consciousness* is robbed of its power to synthesize, it becomes *fragmented*.

Something of this sort does in fact happen, the differentiation of science, morality, and art, which is characteristic of occidental rationalism, results not only in a growing autonomy for sectors dealt with by specialists, but also in the splitting off of these sectors from a stream of tradition continuing on in everyday practice in a quasi-natural fashion. This split has been repeatedly experienced as a problem. The attempts at an "Aufhebung" of philosophy and art were rebellions against structures that subordinated everyday consciousness to the standards of exclusive expert cultures developing according to their own logics and that yet cut it off from any influx from them. *Everyday consciousness* sees

itself thrown back on traditions whose claims to validity have already been suspended, where it does escape the spell of traditionalism, it is hopelessly splintered. In place of "false consciousness" we today have a "fragmented consciousness" that blocks enlightenment by the mechanism of reification. It is only with this that the conditions for a *colonization of the lifeworld* are met. When stripped of their ideological veils, the imperatives of autonomous subsystems make their way into the lifeworld from the outside—like colonial masters coming into a tribal society—and force a process of assimilation upon it. The diffused perspectives of the local culture cannot be sufficiently coordinated to permit the play of the metropolis and the world market to be grasped from the periphery (1987a: 355).

30. Although Melucci (1989) tends, in contrast to Habermas, to throw more light on the positive aspects of the "new" social movements, the same charge of erasure of memory can be made of him. On this see Calhoun (1993).

31. Since then, Fraser, while still critical of the concept of citizenship, has thrown light on its emancipatory potential in Fraser and Gordon (1992).

32. On this see Fraser and Gordon (1994).

³³ On this see Berger (1991) and Calhoun (1993).

34. She develops this argument in Benhabib (1987).

35. On the welfare state and the politics of women's needs see Fraser (1989: 144-87).

36. The avant-garde movements analyzed by Buerger are Dadaism, early Surrealism and the Russian avant-garde. He also considers cubism to be part of the avant-garde, even though it does not seek the reintegration of art into life. On the avant-garde movements, see Benjamin ([1929] 1987), Calinescu (1987), Foster (1991), Huyssen (1981, 1986), Perloff (1986) and Suleiman (1984).

37. Buerger reminds us that Hegel "referred to the novel as the 'modern middle-class epic'" (Hegel quoted in Buerger ([1974] 1987: 113 n. 15)).

38. This is how Buerger describes the technique of montage:

A theory of the avant-garde must begin with the concept of montage that is suggested by the early cubist collages. What distinguishes them from the techniques of composition developed since the Renaissance is the insertion of reality fragments into the painting, i.e., the insertion of material that has been left unchanged by the artist. But this means the destruction of the unity of the painting as a whole, all of whose parts have been fashioned by the subjectivity of its creator. The selection of a piece of woven basket that Picasso glues on a canvas may very well serve some compositional intent. But as a piece of woven basket, it remains a reality fragment that is inserted into the painting *tel quel*, without substantive modification. A system of representation based on the portrayal of reality, i.e., on the principle that the artistic subject (the artist) must transpose reality, has thus been invalidated. The insertion of reality fragments into the work of art fundamentally transforms the work. The artist not only renounces shaping a whole, but gives the painting a different status, since parts of it no longer have the relationship to reality characteristic of the organic work of art. They are no longer signs pointing to reality, they *are* reality ([1974] 1987: 77-78).

39. In *The Autobiography of Alice Toklas*, Stein comments as follows on the "shock" which characterized the reception of avant-garde paintings in early twentieth century Paris: "It is very difficult now that

everybody is accustomed to everything to give some idea of the kind of uneasiness one felt when one first looked at all these pictures on these walls Gertrude Stein and her brother were so accustomed to this state of mind in a guest that they paid no attention to it" ([1933] 1990 9-10)

40 In fact, as Adorno (1983) has shown, it is the "Romantic" Hoelderlin who first subverts the organic work of art and inaugurates the tradition of the nonorganic work

41 Giddens provides a useful synthesis of Habermas's understanding of myth

Myths, Habermas argues, are concretized modes of thought, which integrate many different aspects of life within a single intellectual domain. They express the organization of societies which have not generated separate intellectual domains, or arenas of discourse, within which argumentation may be carried on Since in the more traditional cultures the productive forces are undeveloped, social life tends to be dominated by the hazards of nature The need arises to check the "flood of contingencies" They cannot be checked in fact, so they are interpreted away, in myth Myths merge the worlds of nature and culture and attribute to elements in nature powers superior to those of human beings Myths are anthropomorphic, since they draw into the network of human relations features of nature, and they reify culture by treating it as the operation of autonomous forces (1985 100)

42 It should be noted that besides Habermas's reading of Nietzsche, other readings stressing his emancipatory potential are possible It is, however, beyond the scope of this thesis to deal with them On the emancipatory potential of Nietzsche from a feminist perspective, see Irigaray (1991)

43 Habermas underlines that Nietzsche "turned away in disgust from the world of the Wagnerian opera" (1987b 88)

44 To repeat the point made earlier it is by basing himself on Schlegel that Habermas can make the argument that Romanticism started what modern art has brought to its fulfillment, namely, the radical eradication of the cognitive and moral dimensions As he puts it in another text

the purification of the aesthetic from admixtures of the cognitive, the useful, and the moral is mirrored in the reflections of the early Romantic period (especially in Friedrich Schlegel), in the aestheticism of Baudelaire and the symbolists, in the program of *l'art pour l'art*, in the surrealistic celebration of illumination through shock effects, with its ambivalence of attraction and repulsion, of broken continuity, of the shudder of profanization, of agitated disgust in short, in the reflection of those moments in which the bewildered subject "transgresses his boundaries," as Bataille puts it (1985 200-01)

45 Habermas bases his critique of Derrida on arguments found in the work of his literary disciples, which is not entirely fair to Derrida As Norris underlines, it is deconstruction's association with literary criticism which has given rise to the deep-seated prejudices against Derrida and given him the reputation of a playful rhetorician without concern for the serious "'philosophic' protocols of reason and truth" (1987 22) Norris himself considers Derrida to be part of the tradition of enlightened rational critique in his rigorous endeavour to think the limits of the principle of reason by seeking to uncover its repressive aspects and sees many "signs of convergence" with Habermas's project, although recognizing the absurdity of any "simple equivalence" between the two thinkers (1987 169) For a similar argument see Bernstein (1993)

46 Cornell supports this argument "Derrida himself is careful to remind us that deconstruction is neither anti-foundationalist nor foundationalist" (1991 28)

47 On the violence to Otherness inherent in the metaphor of light, see Derrida's reading of Levinas (1967a)

48 On Plato's negative attitude towards metaphor, see Derrida (1981) On the function of metaphor in philosophy, see Cossutta (1989: 99-138)

49 I am aware that there is a deep ambivalence in Adorno's work with respect to the relation between concept and metaphor. It is certainly beyond the scope of this dissertation to do justice to that problematic. That said, however, given the fact that it is well recognized that Adorno's work has the qualities of a work of art, I feel justified to present my interpretation of it in order to support the underlying argumentation of my dissertation, while recognizing that other readings are possible

50. On the problem of nature in Habermas see Benjamin (1988), Murphy (1994) and Whitebook (1979)

51. I build here on an argument made by Benhabib (1987: 95)

52 On the importance of the cultural dimension in the early model, see Hohendahl (1979)

53 On this see Hansen (1991: 8), Hohendahl (1979) and Holub (1991)

54. On this see Friedman (1989) and Young (1987)

55. In her interesting *Bonds of Love* (1988) Benjamin takes Habermas's concept of intersubjectivity as the theoretical standpoint from which to criticize the exclusively intrapsychic conception of the individual in psychoanalysis and to formulate a psychoanalytic and sociological explanation of the problem of the subordination of women to men

56 The Society of Revolutionary Republican Women is part of a long tradition of women's political and military power going back at least to the medieval era, which we are only now beginning to rediscover. Identifying modes of dress and the use of weaponry by women have at times necessitated strong measures to eradicate them. Feminist historian Kelly reports that James I of England "ordered the bishop of London to instruct all clergy 'to inveigh vehemently against the insolencies of our women, and their wearing of broad brimmed hats, pointed doublets, their hair cut short or shorne and some of them stilettos or poniards'" (1984: 89). Culture in form of "poems, plays, ballads, sermons, and pamphlets warned women to desist from the offending modes of dress and behavior now designated as 'masculine'" (1984: 89)

57. Thus, Landes argues that despite the efforts in the nineteenth century of feminist utopian socialist Tristan to open an alternative public space to women, ultimately she could not overcome the dominant bourgeois ideology of domesticity (1988: 189-200). On Tristan, see Albistur and Armogathe (1977)

58 For a critique of Fraser's model of a democratic postbourgeois public sphere see Postpone who, while recognizing that it represents an important contribution to critical political theory, sees its major weakness to be that it overlooks "the severe constraints imposed on any sort of democratic decision-making process by the imperatives of capital accumulation with their enormous social, political, economic, ecological, and geographic effects—imperatives that appear to be quasi-natural, unavoidable features of modern life" (1992: 175). Postpone remarks that any discussion of the public sphere in late capitalist societies has to be aware that the state-interventionist form of postliberal capitalism appears to have ended, and that we have now entered a new, although still unclear, phase. This has been an overarching question in my thinking in the course of the development of this dissertation, but cannot be treated within its scope

59 For example, Young assesses Gilligan's work (1982) on the two complementary ethics of rights and ethics of care in this light, and considers that it replicates the same opposition between the relatedness of the ideal of community and the atomistic formalism of modern political theory

60 Benhabib counterposes the standpoint of the generalized other and the standpoint of the concrete other which moral and political theory, since Hobbes, has kept entirely separate from each other. On the one hand, to take the standpoint of the generalized other is above all to "abstract from the individuality and concrete

identity of the other" and to view her as having the same rights and duties that we ourselves have "the norms of our interaction are primarily public and institutional ones. In treating you in accordance with these norms, I confirm in your person the rights of humanity, and I have a legitimate claim to expect that you will do the same in relation to me" (1986: 340). The moral categories associated with this type of interaction are rights, obligation, and entitlement, the associated moral feelings are respect, duty, worthiness, dignity, and the ideal of community is one of rights and entitlements. On the other hand, to take the standpoint of the concrete other is above all to consider every individual as having "a concrete history, identity, and affective-emotional constitution." This standpoint implies that "we abstract from what constitutes our commonality and seek to understand the distinctiveness of the other. We seek to comprehend the needs of the other, their motivations, what they search for, and what they desire" (1986: 341). The norms of interaction here are those of solidarity, friendship, love, and care, they are private and noninstitutional, and authenticate both the humanity and the human individuality of the other. The moral categories associated with this type of interaction are responsibility, bonding, and sharing, the related moral feelings are love, care, sympathy, and solidarity, and the ideal of community is one of needs and solidarity.

61 In my view, Young's criticism of Benhabib is to an extent justified in that she, like Habermas, tends to neglect the dimension of the unconscious. Benhabib's concept of community, however, is less simplistic than Young would have it. In her recent *Situating the Self* (1992a) Benhabib responds to Young by way of a rethinking of the Enlightenment tradition in moral and political theory from the perspectives of feminism, communitarianism and postmodernism.

62 For a critique of identity and community politics, see Alcoff (1988), Fuss (1989), Haraway (1990) and Martin (1988).

63 For a fruitful appropriation of Lugones's conceptualization, see Sylvester (1995).

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