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Quite contrary: Mary Daly within and without women's studies

By Kathryn Telling¹

Abstract

Recent scholarship in the historiography of feminism has sought to challenge certain received histories of the movement which seem likely to obscure the social, intellectual and political complexity of the past, and indeed of the present. With good reason, such research has often preferred to focus on general intellectual currents rather than individual cases. This paper, however, focuses on some common constructions of one feminist in particular: philosopher and theologian Mary Daly (1928-2010). I hope to demonstrate that an analysis of one individual's positioning within feminism's history, as well as in relation to a conception of correct intellectual practice for women's studies, can prove useful for broader attempts to make more complex our conceptions of feminist chronology, as well as for scholarship seeking to interrogate the institutional factors feeding into such stories. Through readings of both Daly's own texts and those of her critics, this paper seeks to understand Daly's positioning both in a common history of feminist progression, and in a concomitant story about the type of intellectual work appropriate to women's studies. The central claim is that, in the constructions of Daly I examine, she is positioned as spatially *external* to the community and conversation of women's studies as academic discipline, as well as temporally *behind* that conversation. This positioning is not unilateral, but itself feeds off as well as into Daly's *own* self-positioning in relation to women's studies. The constructions of Daly I am figuring are therefore not impositions but rather works of communal construction to some extent, since both Daly and her critics are intellectual agents who produce, maintain and modify stories about feminist history as well as women's studies as discipline.

Keywords: Mary Daly, women's studies, historiography

Since the publication of her first book, *The Church and the Second Sex*, in 1968, feminist theologian, philosopher and polemicist Mary Daly has been causing controversy and dividing opinion. Through career-long difficulties with her Catholic employer, Boston College, arguably increasing belief in universal patriarchy as the fundamental axis of oppression in the world, and deeply problematic critiques of transgendered women, Daly emerges as a polarising figure, within feminism and without. In this paper I do not seek to redeem Daly, but rather to interrogate some of the processes which feed into both Daly's own intellectual productions, and some common responses to her work in the women's studies field. I am interested, firstly, in the way in which Daly comes to represent or be considered paradigmatic of a particular set of positions associated with American radical feminism of the 1970s; and, secondly, how both Daly and her feminist critics come to position her as *outside the dialogue* of contemporary women's studies debates. Here I do not mean to imply that Daly is sometimes considered or considers herself exterior to feminism itself, but more specifically, as exterior to the academic discipline of women's studies. It is specifically

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academic mores of scholarliness and intellectual community-building which Daly is considered to have eschewed in the types of criticisms I address myself to here, and there are particular kinds of (institutionally understandable) academic boundary-policing going on in those exclusions.

In this paper I want to think about what intellectual work Mary Daly *does* as well as what ‘Mary Daly’ *means* in the field of academic women’s studies. In particular, I seek to understand how she is constructed through feminist engagements with her texts, and how she comes to construct herself in relation to such engagements. My ambition is to avoid two counter narratives which seem (almost) inevitable when we want to talk about Daly. The first is a story which marks her as the epitome of an ethnocentric and insular radical second wave – the 1970s incarnate. The second story is what Clare Hemmings has recently called a corrective reading, in which we seek to right the misconceptions of the first story by showing, for instance, that Daly *was really* interested in the experiences of women of colour, or asserting that those who tell the first story have under- or misread her (*Why Stories Matter* 12-16). Although there are points when I will argue that a particular reading of Daly can be challenged, the main task is to seek to understand *what it means* for Daly to be constructed in feminist history in the way that she sometimes is, and what effects such positioning might have on her own self-perception.

The aim of the paper, then, is to show that the works of Daly’s critics no less than those of Daly herself construct her as ultimately outside the conversation of women’s studies. When feminists repeat claims that Daly’s later work is self-indulgent and insular, for example, they reinforce an exclusion of her from a particular conception of women’s studies as a site of common, indeed sisterly, intellectual endeavour. Daly concomitantly positioned *herself* outside of women’s studies, coming to understand the vast majority of academic feminism produced in the 1990s and 2000s as irrelevant and unconnected to the world of ‘real’ feminism in which she placed herself. These mutual works of feminist construction, then, place Daly outside the conversation and the community of women’s studies. In doing so, they tend to obscure both the complexity and variety of the community itself, and the specific institutional factors which have some bearing on Daly’s intellectual engagements.

My claim is not that Daly’s works are not sometimes insular and self-indulgent, nor that her writings are not open to critique, but rather that we should seek to *understand* both what it means for her to have produced particular kinds of intellectual work, and what is going on when feminists appear to be policing the boundaries of women’s studies in this way. Such a reading of women’s studies practitioners’ positioning of Daly as both spatially *outside* and, connected to this, temporally *behind* the complexities and subtleties of the contemporary discipline, may help us in our attempts to achieve more nuanced accounts of feminism and its history, more generally. Recent scholarship in feminist historiography – defined by Hemmings as a “concern... with the contested politics of the present over the ‘truth of the past’” (Hemmings, 2005: p. 118); that is, as a desire to reveal what is at stake on the contemporary intellectual scene when we construct histories, especially very stable or familiar ones – seeks to unpack and problematise formulations of the recent feminist past which seem a little too ‘neat’.² This theoretical endeavour can be aided by specific reference to those feminists who seem to bear the weight of those feminist histories.

After briefly distinguishing women’s studies from feminism more broadly conceived, I will go on to trace some ways in which both Daly and her critics come to exclude her from contemporary women’s studies: through a contention that she is representative of only one

² See also Ahmed; Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter*; Rees; Wiegman, *Object Lessons*; and various essays in Graham *et al* and Hewitt.

historical moment; through increasing self-reference in her work, and critics' responses to that self-reference; and through Daly's construction of a utopian 'women's community' from which many women may feel excluded, and her critics' responses to that construction. These exclusions and self-exclusions should be understood within the context of the struggles women's studies has had attempting to legitimate itself as an academic discipline, as well as Daly's own institutional history.

The field of academic women's studies is distinct from what might be referred to as the feminist field in a number of ways. Women's studies is an academic discipline which comprises most of the features of a conventionally defined field of study, including a university presence (including some departments and, increasingly, research centres), journals and associations. Unlike feminism or the women's movement, women's studies, then, is *specifically* academically oriented, takes place in university spaces, and is affected by the restrictions of scholarly rigour even while consistently critical of institutionalised forms of knowledge.

However, unlike other academic disciplines, women's studies is not only quite self-consciously *inter-disciplinary* – that is, it does not claim for itself an intellectual space with little or no overlap with other fields of study – but is also sometimes conveyed as *only* inter-disciplinary: as a conglomeration of academics from discrete disciplines with a particular shared interest rather than a disciplinary focus. Nonetheless, feminists have argued that women's studies does constitute a discrete field, since approaching phenomena with an explicit interest in the experiences of women can radically alter research outcomes and produce entirely new objects of study (Bowles and Klein, 1983: p. 3). Further, Eloise Buker has compared the disciplinary, methodological and theoretical debates within women's studies (over, for instance, whether the discipline should identify most closely with the approaches of the humanities or the social sciences), with those of political science. Showing the remarkable similarities between the two fields in this and other respects, she argues that women's studies is hardly unique in its intellectual contestations, and that such disputes should not be considered fundamentally anathema to the development of a demarcated academic discipline (Buker, 2003: pp. 75-82). Indeed, intellectual, political and institutional disagreements between academic feminists might instead be seen as a healthy or at least necessary aspect of the discipline's functioning, since they work to prevent stagnation of the field (Wiegman, 2002: pp. 2-3; Jakobsen, 2005: pp. 126-28).

In this article, then, I take women's studies to mean an intellectual community of scholars working in conversation with one another on the basis of largely unspoken disciplinary common-places. I will be using 'women's studies' to refer to a disciplinary and intellectual community of academics, then, which is considerably narrower than the broader feminist community. This is not because women's studies scholars represent or can stand in for that broader movement, but rather because, in the specific types of criticisms of Daly looked at here, she is considered to have placed herself outside this intellectual and scholarly community, rather than the broader one of the feminist movement itself. How, then, is Daly *constitutive of* as well as *constituted by* this academic field?

When thinking about the construction of Daly in women's studies, it is almost impossible not to talk about Audre Lorde. This is because, from the perspective of the history of feminism, it is quite possible to argue that the most extraordinary and important thing about Daly is Lorde's 1979 'Open letter' to her. The eloquence, poignancy and, arguably, *timeliness* of that letter means that it is known to almost every Western feminist as a crucial marker in feminist movement away from the white-centric, essentialist, radical feminism of

the 1970s.³ Equally important, perhaps, is that the open letter is a response to 1978's *Gyn/Ecology* rather than another of Daly's books: as I will argue below, it is often *Gyn/Ecology* specifically which is taken to hold the place for 1970s radicalism's worst excesses.

Gyn/Ecology marks a move away from Daly's earlier writings, which primarily focused on religious and theological concerns: *The Church and the Second Sex* (1968) and *Beyond God the Father* (1973). In this later, rather wide-ranging book, Daly argues for the connections between disparate social practices, explained by a theory of universal patriarchy. Lorde's letter, which she sent to Daly personally in 1979, is a response to *Gyn/Ecology* which conveys Lorde's respect for that work as well as her misgivings about a number of its elements. In Lorde's reading, the book does necessary work in seeking to synthesise analyses of apparently disparate oppressive practices, and in its attempts to create positive feminist mythologies through a discussion of female goddesses. However, Daly's work remains limited because all these goddess images come from the European traditions; and because Daly has used the work of women of colour, including Lorde herself, to bear witness only to the historically and geographically varied nature of female *victimhood*. Such a division in her use of white and non-white sources, Lorde's analysis maintains, illustrates Daly's blindness to differences between women's experiences of patriarchy, which cannot be alleviated simply by appeals to global sisterhood:

The oppression of women knows no ethnic nor racial boundaries, true, but that does not mean it is identical within those differences. Nor do the reservoirs of our ancient powers know these boundaries. To deal with one without even alluding to the other is to distort our commonality as well as our difference. For then beyond sisterhood there is still racism. (70)

It is the case that, in *Gyn/Ecology*, Daly develops an understanding of gender relations in which patriarchy is read, firstly, as a *global* force for ill; and, secondly, as the primary axis of domination upon which all other oppressive structures (including colonialism and racism) model themselves. In fact, Daly is quite unambiguous about these points: the passage from which Lorde paraphrases includes the statement that "[t]hose who claim to see racism and/or imperialism in my indictment of these atrocities [including *satī* and female genital cutting] can do so only by blinding themselves to the fact that the oppression of women knows no ethnic, national, or religious bounds. There are variations on the theme of oppression, but the phenomenon is planetary" (111).

It would be difficult to attempt a corrective reading of *Gyn/Ecology* in order to claim that Lorde had misread the work, then. But it *is* quite possible to question the uses to which this letter has been subsequently put in the women's studies field. As Amber Katherine has argued, the letter is born of a particular set of *continuities* as well as differences between Lorde and Daly, including commitments to woman-identification, goddess imagery, and the concept of sisterhood. For Katherine, Lorde's analysis is so remarkably considerate, careful and balanced because it sought to *engage* Daly in a series of discussions which were at this time still only just being formed in the minds of black women in the second wave: concerns about the blindness to inequalities between women in the mainstream feminist movement. Rather than simply condemning Daly, Katherine argues, we should try to understand how the

³ I suggest the letter's timeliness here because, as Hemmings argues, it is the *1980s* which are coded as the decade of black (and lesbian) identity politics in the feminist imaginary (*Why Stories Matter* 5).

specifics of that moment made it difficult for her to respond in kind, or even really to understand what Lorde was trying to articulate about the complex relation between gendered and other forms of oppression (Katherine, 2000: pp. 287-94).⁴

Yet for some feminists, it is possible to argue, Lorde's letter can instead come to *speak for* the movement toward difference after the feminist seventies. Instead of the intimate request for engagement with complex formulations of intersectional oppression and privilege which Katherine detects, the letter is read in oppositional terms: through Lorde we come to understand ourselves as on the side of complex, racially-sensitive *right*, as against Daly's simplistic and privileged wrong. Rosi Braidotti, for instance, argues that Lorde's "objection" to Daly helps us to see the latter's "utter indifference to the sensitive issue of racial differences" (207): we could argue that Braidotti seems to miss the subtlety of Lorde's argument in an account which locates racial blindness quite squarely and *specifically* at Daly's door.⁵ Such arguments serve not only to reduce the complexities of *this* debate: they arguably come to bolster a much more general progress narrative, from the myopia of 1970s radicalism to the subtlety of third-wave *difference* (Hemmings, 2011: pp. 42-48). Katherine relates the impulse to give women's studies undergraduates the letter as a 'sign-post' to help them get to grips with recent feminist history, and those students' concomitant understandings of the radical 1970s as "just racist" (Katherine, 2000: p. 267). Lorde's letter, then, seems to come to do important work for a feminist construction of the feminist past, and the positioning of Daly in particular.

Further, it is interesting that Lorde's letter is used in these ways because I argue that it is specifically *Gyn/Ecology* which comes to be understood as representative of the racial privilege of the mainstream 1970s movement. Whilst clearly Lorde *was* responding to that book in particular, what is sometimes maintained in feminist readings of Daly through Lorde is that *Gyn/Ecology* marks an unacceptable break with the ideas of her first two books, *The Church and the Second Sex* (1968) and *Beyond God the Father* (1973). Certainly Daly does go through enormous changes in the period between *The Church and the Second Sex* and *Gyn/Ecology*, but this change is ambiguous. Her conception that gender is the primary axis of oppression in the world, for instance, and her attendant lack of reflection on how this impacts on women experiencing complex forms of domination, is present in *Beyond God the Father*:

there is danger of settling for mere reform, reflected in the phenomenon of 'crossing,' that is, of attempting to use the oppressor's weapons against him. Black theology's image of the Black God illustrates this. It can legitimately be argued that a transsexual operation upon 'God,' changing 'him' to 'her,' would be a far more profound alteration than a mere pigmentation change. (19)

⁴ In the course of researching her biography of Lorde, Alexis De Veaux in fact discovered a reply from Daly amongst the former's papers, belying Lorde's claim that no response was ever received (De Veaux 246-88). We will never know Lorde's reasons for this and it would be deeply problematic to suggest, as Daly did herself in her final book *Amazon Grace*, that the discovery of the response somehow vindicates the latter's position (24-26).

⁵ Ellen Armour makes the point that Braidotti's brief discussion of Lorde's letter is in fact the only reference to racially-specific difference in the entirety of her *Patterns of Dissonance*. There is an especial irony in this, since one of Lorde's speculations was that Daly had merely flicked through the former's books in order to find suitable epigraphs (Armour 23).

There is an evident hierarchy here between gender as a “profound” marker of social differentiation, and race as “mere pigmentation”. Clearly Daly’s ideas and especially her style develop over time, but the dividing lines are rarely clear, and *Gyn/Ecology* is not always or simplistically the site for a radical disjuncture in her work. Yet there is the spectre of precisely this reading in many feminists’ engagement with Daly. Susan Henking, for instance, has recently argued that *Gyn/Ecology* contains a substantive modification of *Beyond God the Father*’s earlier conception of ‘authentic’ feminist being (2010: p. 520); and Meaghan Morris focuses almost entirely on *Gyn/Ecology* in her critique of Daly’s later thought (1988: pp. 27-50). What such readings of Daly tend to reinforce is a division between the ‘good’ (early, rigorous, disciplinarily circumscribed) and the ‘bad’ (late, sloppy, universalist) work – and, further, between the Daly which women’s studies should accept, and the Daly which it shouldn’t.

As part of her argument that Daly’s style ultimately excludes many women, Morris relates an anecdote in which Daly is giving a talk in Sydney. Whilst recounting some of her *Gyn/Ecological* ideas, she is challenged by a member of the audience who interjects, “Mary, you’re not speaking to *me*...” (Morris, 1988: p. 39; emphasis in original). Daly’s response is straightforward: the speaker has the choice either to stay and listen, or to leave. For Morris, this dichotomy represents Daly’s basic separation of herself “not just from men, not just from most women, but also *from other forms of feminism*” (ibid. 45; emphasis in original). Problematised here is Daly’s us-and-them mentality, understood as a barrier to genuine dialogue between feminists. Similarly, Jane Hedley formulates a teleology of Daly’s work in which her system becomes increasingly closed to feminist heterogeneity, such that it comes to obey only its own internal logic. She suggests, firstly, that there is a steady progression (or regression) in this direction, so that “as we proceed through Daly’s writings chronologically we can ... see [Daly and Jane Caputi’s 1987 book] the *Wickedary* coming” (Hedley, 2005: p. 110); and, secondly, that such internal reasoning means that in the end Daly’s conception of ‘women’s community’ is essentially a figment of her imagination: a fiction (ibid. 111). These understandings of Daly *place her outside the dialogue of women’s studies by the very moves which insist that she has placed outside that dialogue*. The criticisms certainly do not precede the problems of insularity and self-reference in Daly’s work, but they do *maintain* Daly’s position as outside of women’s studies. How does Daly come to frame her thought in ways that are taken to exclude other feminists as well as deflect potential criticisms; and how, in turn, does such a framing position her as a consistently marginal figure in the women’s studies field?

One of the central conceits of Daly’s later work is reference to *herself*, sometimes in the third person. This tendency is often alluded to by those that criticise the generally inwardly-looking nature of her work, as well as those who more straightforwardly consider her a bad writer. In her 1975 ‘Feminist postchristian introduction’ to the second edition of *The Church and the Second Sex*, for instance, Daly discusses the writer of the original text in the third person, offering a review of the book from the perspective of 1975 AF (After Feminism). This technique leads to a series of slightly odd and reasonably amusing juxtapositions:

The biographical data accessible to me concerning the author indicates that she was not an overly modest person, so I don’t think she would mind my saying that she helped to build a tradition in which I now participate. I would be less than just if I failed to acknowledge this. (47)

Daly manages to temper the degree of narcissism in this passage with self-reflexivity and humour. She makes an appeal to the importance of her work, but she does so in a way which suggests that she does not wish simply to tell the reader how important it is; and, connected to this, in a way which probably deflects criticism from the act.

We begin to get a sense of Daly's self-referentiality in an epigraph to the chapter 'The final cause' in 1973's *Beyond God the Father*. Here, amongst tributes to Herbert Marcuse and Sylvia Plath, we read a quote succeeded simply by 'Myself' (179). Whilst this self-inclusion is no doubt unusual for a theological work, it remains a fairly modest act of self-reference. In the 'Feminist postchristian introduction' two years later, as we have just seen, Daly develops a more sustained mode of discussing herself, but, unlike in later works, such self-reference is modified by self-reflexivity as well as irony. She takes a step back at one point, noting that she "must not be carried away with this fantasy conversation" (22).

No such reservations by the time of *Quintessence* (1999). Almost half of the book is given over to 'Cosmic comments and conversations in 2048 BE' (Biophilic Era) regarding each chapter, in which Daly travels to a gynocentric otherworld in the near future. Here she converses with a variety of women about the dire state of things in 1999, about the utopic future in Lost and Found Continent, and, crucially, about the meaning and importance of her own books. The idea is that these sections constitute commentaries for the fiftieth anniversary edition;⁶ indeed, this idea of writing 'reintroductions' for later editions of her books, in which she often engages with herself in the third person, is quite characteristic of her work. A number of feminist responses to *Quintessence*, however, relate the sense that these self-reflections serve to diminish the quality of Daly's work, producing a theoretical flatness, and a relation to the world with which it is difficult to engage. Lee Reilly, for instance, discusses the time-travel conceit as the mark of a failed utopian novel (Reilly, 1998: pp. 176); Lise Weil, who notes she finds aspects of *Quintessence* deeply enjoyable, nonetheless criticises its forays into the future as often both contrived and self-indulgent (1999: p. 22).

What these feminist critiques often point to is what is taken to be Daly's attempt to resist analysis and criticism by constructing a self-referential world impervious to outside investigation. As in Morris's anecdote in which Daly urges a dissenter from the audience either to sit and listen or to leave, we get an image of Daly, first, as *intentionally* unsisterly and indifferent to the feminist formulations and experiences of others; and, secondly, as thereby out of step with the prevailing feminist mood. Daly is thus placed outside dialogue with others in the women's studies field by the very move which asserts that she has placed *herself* outside of this dialogue. This is not to claim that the criticisms precede the problems in Daly's work, but rather that her marginal position in the field is maintained by a broadly held belief in her theoretical closure, self-referentiality, and self-indulgence. In particular, the implied notion that Daly *intentionally* produces such theory might serve as a block to a fully engaged stance with regard to her work: one in which the particularity of her social, educational and cultural circumstances are taken into account. If Daly increasingly fails to relate to other feminist scholars in her writings, it seems deeply important to ask why such a change may have come about. Daly's friend Adrienne Rich suggests just such a fruitful engagement with the more problematic aspects of her work in a letter to Audre Lorde, asking the latter to understand that Daly's theoretical defensiveness stems in part from a class-bound intellectual vulnerability (qtd in De Veaux, 2004: p. 248). What Rich might be referring to here is Daly's experiences as a first-generation university student who battled extremely hard to attain distinction in the misogynistic structures of Catholic education in the 1940s, 50s and

⁶ Interestingly, my university library catalogue does in fact list the publication date for *Quintessence* as 2048 BE.

60s, and was treated badly throughout her career on the theology faculty at Boston College.⁷ The point is not to excuse Daly for problematic aspects of her work, but rather to seek to understand the different, not always fully volitional factors which fed into her intellectual production.

The disciplinary exclusion (and self-exclusion) that I have been tracing here is often complemented by an appeal to notions of feminist history and time: that is, the spatial exclusion is married to a temporal exclusion, which keeps Daly in a specific past (the radical 1970s). In Morris's literary reading of *Gyn/Ecology*, she focuses particularly on Daly's later use of language, which she holds to be elitist, circular and, in the end, hermetically sealed to any pollution from other women's linguistic formations:

It is a drama of discourse as an Anti-communication: a celebration of the State of Complete Closure constituted by the *Gyn/Ecological* speaking position But ... it is the function of a largely untransformed romantic discourse on meaning which concerns me most: a romantic speaking-position, and a romantic position on speaking. (40)

Certainly there are problematic aspects of Daly's writing at this stage. Nonetheless, in Morris's analysis we might also get to the nub of a particular positioning of Daly in the women's studies field: the notion that Daly's speaking position is *untransformed*. Clearly, Morris is alleging a *specific* failure to transform here: that is, Daly's continuation of a romantic or idealist mode of speech. Such a criticism of her language could be communicated in a way which does not appeal to historical narrative: in Morris's formulation, however, the notion of *transformation* holds Daly to account, in part, for maintaining a relation to language which is not of the moment. The straightforward problematisation of Daly's language is, then, supplemented by an appeal to theoretical timeliness. Daly's thought is untransformed, with repercussions of 'unreconstructed', 'anomalous' and 'anachronistic'. Although it may appear that I am overburdening this word, I believe it points to something much broader about the way we deal with the feminist past, and Daly's position within it. Further, such understandings of feminist chronology (and her own 'anachronistic' status) ultimately feed into Daly's understanding of women's studies and herself.

Ending an interview with her in 2000, Catherine Madsen points to the curious anachronism of Mary Daly, still somehow remaining oblivious to the lessons of recent theoretical history:

What struck me most frequently about her quickness of mind, her unassuming charisma, her mild, immovable purpose, was her essential innocence: it does not occur to her, it cannot be made to occur to her, that words may have consequences the writer doesn't intend. If, for myself, I consider that innocence well lost, there's still something moving about seeing someone who has it. (Daly, 'Thin thread of conversation')

⁷ See her autobiography, *Outercourse*, for an account of Daly's upbringing in a working-class Irish Catholic household in New York State, and ongoing struggles with Catholic education systems; and Janice Raymond's 'Mary Daly: a decade of academic harassment and feminist survival' for an early depiction of Daly's struggles with Boston College. Daly was at odds with the College administration throughout her career and, despite repeated attempts, never made full professor.

Daly's relation to this notion of non-timeliness is ambiguous. Her later work (in particular 1999's *Quintessence*, with its subtitle *Realizing the Archaic Future*, and 2006's *Amazon Grace*) very explicitly plays with notions of correct and incorrect time and, in particular, problematises the idea that feminists must progress through time in a linear fashion (see, for instance, *Quintessence* 27). She defines 'outercourse', for instance, as the spinning out of feminists into a new conception of time resistant to any straightforward linearity:

It is the Time Travel of those who are learning to become Counterclock-Wise, that is, knowing how to Live, Move, Act in Fairy Time/Tidal Time. It is the direction of Sibyls and Crones who persist in asking Counterclock Whys, Questions which whirl the Questioners beyond the boundaries of clockocracy and into the flow of Tidal Time. (*Outercourse* 2-3)

In such moments, then, the feminist positioning of her as an inhabitant of the past will simply wash over Daly and her own formulation of time which refuses narratives of progress or loss. Yet elsewhere she sets out a very familiar narrative of feminist and more broadly political progress and decline, comparing the 1980s and 90s to the 40s and 50s as troughs of consciousness either side of a great peak (*Outercourse* 23). Although such a narrative is in contrast to feminist stories about movement toward theoretical sophistication as a chronology of progress, it nonetheless feeds into a similar account of the unambiguous theoretical and political *content* of feminist decades. In such instances, Daly works with her critics to reinforce the notion that she remains somehow 'of' the 1970s.

Daly's constructions of Tidal/Untidy Time do some work to position her outside accusations of feminist irrelevance. At the same time, however, they place her even more squarely outside the discourse of contemporary women's studies, and therefore in a position of extreme marginality in the field. In many feminist engagements with her work, as well as in her own later texts, Daly is positioned and positions herself *outside* dialogue with other actors in the women's studies field. This positioning is simultaneously the work of Daly and of her would-be interlocutors: rather than concluding either that Daly's readers in academic feminism intentionally exclude her (for instance because she is deemed unfashionable), or that Daly intentionally excludes herself through obscurantism (for instance in order to forestall reasonable criticism of her ideas), this reading has tried to show how various actors in the field, including Daly, act to produce, modify and maintain her position.

As women's studies has become increasingly cohesive as a discrete disciplinary field since the 1970s, so it has had to deal with the contradictions arising from the cohabitation of critical and often anti-institutional politics with the police work necessary for disciplinary maintenance (Brown, 1997: p. 85). The discipline's scholarly rigour and institutional pertinence have been consistently impugned, and it has sometimes seemed necessary to enforce norms of good scholarship which we might expect feminists to question in other contexts (Messer-Davidow, 2002: pp. 81-213). Scholastic bad form is excluded from the legitimate practice of women's studies, partially because of the field's relative precariousness in institutional spaces.

Criticisms of Daly's lack of scholarly good form, beginning with critical responses to *Gyn/Ecology* in 1978, place her outside the dialogue of women's studies proper, even though it is difficult to account for the orientation of that book unless we allow for a discrete field of endeavour for academic feminism, due to the sources that Daly cites, and its otherwise rather eclectic interdisciplinarity. Such an exclusionary process is not unilateral: Daly comes to construct *herself* as outside women's studies (and in the rather more difficult to place realms

of 'real world feminism'), and rather defensively seems to reject the whole notion of academic feminism, despite the fact that she remains an academic writing feminist books. By 1999's *Quintessence*, Daly's penultimate work, she has developed a relation to women's studies as an academic discipline which is heavily ironic and *external*: she speaks as one who is not in any straightforward way an actor in that field, but rather a commentator from the 'real world' of feminism proper, exterior to the games and concerns of academic women's studies. She is particularly vocal here in her dismissal of what she terms 'postmodern feminism', and in the institutionalisation of feminism more broadly. Yet she remained an academic until her enforced retirement, and it is upon the specifics of her academic training that she often draws.

Daly's position on the margins of women's studies gives way finally to her estrangement altogether from the field. This is not to say that women's studies scholars no longer engage with her texts, but rather that she is *constructed* as a relative outsider, temporally (she is an unreconstructed 1970s feminist, an anachronism), politically and intellectually. Daly does indeed come to position herself outside academic women's studies, through the development of writing less committed to norms of scholarly rigour and through her criticisms of recent developments in that field, but this self-positioning works symbiotically with the constructions of other feminists. Often Daly is positioned outside the conversation of women's studies by the very move that insists that she has placed herself in just such an exterior place: by pointing to the internal logic and the self-indulgence of her later works, or to the idea that she was finally anachronistic, critics maintain and reinforce her position outside of women's studies. Daly and her critics to an extent work together to produce her writings as the site for 'bad feminism'.

The problem which an analysis of Daly's intellectual trajectory helps us to untangle is that of the relations between (especially radical) feminist politics and academic disciplines, both traditional and new. If Daly comes to position herself and to be positioned outside of or at least peripheral to such disciplines, this is the result of a particular institutional and intellectual biography rather than some consistent and deeply felt opposition to them. Like all academic feminists, Daly shouldn't be considered a free-floating sister intellectual impervious to institutional constraints, any more than a self-interested collaborator in academic privilege. The development of problematic aspects in her work, and indeed that of all feminist academics, must be interrogated for the specific institutional and intellectual factors which feed into them.

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