

COMPARATIVE PATRIARCHY AND AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS

*The Language, Culture,
and Politics of Liberalism*

Edited by
Francis McCollum Feeley



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and American Institutions:
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CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS

P U B L I S H I N G

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Comparative Patriarchy and American Institutions

This book is dedicated :

to Howard Zinn (1922-2010), a world-class educator, whose life serves
as a template for intelligent compassion,

to Myriam Merlet (1953-2010), former Chief of Staff of the Haitian
Ministry of Women and an outspoken radical feminist, who lost her life
during the U.S. AID blockage following the January 12, 2010 earthquake
which has taken more than 200,000 lives,

to Medea Benjamin and the brave American women of *CODE PINK*,
whose proactive response to tyranny has been an inspiration to millions
of us women, men, and children who desire a new world,

and

to the *Viva Palestina Convoy* and British Member of Parliament
George Galloway, whose strong character in the face of pathological
violence without purpose has saved the lives of thousands.

FOREWORD

FRANCIS FEELEY

As this book goes to press in Cambridge, England, at the start of 2010, hate crimes, and particularly violence against women, is on the increase around the world. The current global economic crisis and the political fallout from this drastic destabilization has certainly contributed to the physical and psychological victimization of women and other vulnerable “power minorities.”

Toward the end of 2009, *The World Health Organization*, the coordinating authority for health within the United Nations system, issued a report in which it enumerated several of the problems related to violence against women:

- In a 10-country study on women's health and domestic violence conducted by WHO,
 - Between 15% and 71% of women reported physical or sexual violence by a husband or partner.
 - Many women said that their first sexual experience was not consensual. (24% in rural Peru, 28% in Tanzania, 30% in rural Bangladesh, and 40% in South Africa).
 - Between 4% and 12% of women reported being physically abused during pregnancy.
- Every year, about 5,000 women are murdered by family members in the name of honour each year worldwide.
- Trafficking of women and girls for forced labour and sex is widespread and often affects the most vulnerable.
- Forced marriages and child marriages violate the human rights of women and girls, yet they are widely practiced in many countries in Asia, the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa.
- Worldwide, up to one in five women and one in 10 men report experiencing sexual abuse as children. Children subjected to sexual

abuse are much more likely to encounter other forms of abuse later in life.¹

A recently concluded five-year study in the United States by the *Parents Television Council* reports that graphic depictions of violence against women on prime time television, between 2004 and 2009, has increased dramatically. Other major finding from this study are :

1. Incidents of violence against women and teenage girls are increasing on television at rates that far exceed the overall increases in violence on television. Violence, irrespective of gender, on television increased only 2% from 2004 to 2009, while incidents of violence against women increased 120% during that same period.
 - The most frequent type of violence against women on television was beating (29%), followed by credible threats of violence (18%), shooting (11%), rape (8%), stabbing (6%), and torture (2%). Violence against women resulted in death 19% of the time.
 - Violence towards women or the graphic consequences of violence tends overwhelmingly to be depicted (92%) rather than implied (5%) or described (3%).
2. Every network but ABC demonstrated a significant increase in the number of storylines that included violence against women between 2004 and 2009.
3. Although female victims were primarily of adult age, collectively, there was a 400% increase in the depiction of teen girls as victims across all networks from 2004 to 2009.
4. Fox stood out for using violence against women as a punch line in its comedies—in particular *Family Guy* and *American Dad*—trivializing the gravity of the issue of violence against women.
5. From 2004 to 2009 there was an 81% increase in incidences of intimate partner violence on television.²

¹ WHO Fact sheet N°239, *Violence against women* (revised November 2009), <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/>, visited on 7 January 2010.

² Tim Winter, "Women in Peril: A Look at TV's Disturbing New Storyline Trend," (October 2009): <http://www.parentstv.org/PTC/publications/reports/womeninperil/main.asp>, visited on 7 January 2010.

Tim Winter, President of Parents *Television Council*, and co-author of the PTC report, *WOMEN IN PERIL*:

A Look at TV's Disturbing New Storyline Trend," concludes from this study of violence in the United States that at the end of the first decade of this new century, America has become a country where more than 60% of children have been exposed to violence in their daily lives, according to recent research by Justice Department, [and that] we must take the utmost care not to normalize violent behavior – especially violence against women – through our television programming.”³

The essays in this book offer descriptions and analyses of gender relationships in the United States and abroad. It is the thesis of this collection of essays that patriarchal systems of various types are and have always been a largely unconscious part of social space. Gender relationships serve to reinforce the social stratifications of class and ethnic/race divisions. Like juggling three balls in the air at the same time, an essential balance is created by directing prejudices against “powerless minorities” –women, racial and ethnic groups, and ordinary working people—so that they are successfully kept separated, in a state of “organized disorganization.”

I would like to thank the faculty and staff at The University of Savoy for providing the encouragement and financial support for the international conference on “Patriarchy,” that was held on the Chambéry campus on April 18- 20, 2007, where the ideas in these essays were first tested on a French audience, with the professional assistance of a team very competent interpreters: Mss. Sylvie Guillocheau, Harriet Leeck, Vanessa Lucidi, and Ildiko Virag Patocs, who were brought together for this occasion with the help of Jean-François Druhen-Charnaux.

Also, a special recognition is due to M. Christian Guilleré, Professor of History and Director of the Social Science Research Laboratory: *Langages, Littératures, Sociétés*, at The University of Savoy; as well as to M. Frédéric Méni, of Albany, New York; and Ms. Catherine Brun, and Ms. Marie-Ange Mayoussier, of Chambéry, for their indispensable oversight of the publication of the French-language edition of this book, which first appeared in June 2009. The 2007 conference at Chambéry, from which these essays originate, was funded with the help Professor Guilleré’s *LLS* Laboratory at The University of Savoy and with the generous assistance of the Conseil Régional Rhône-Alpes, in Lyon.

³ *Ibid.*

I conclude this Foreword with a very hardy thank you to Amanda Millar and Carol Koulikourdi, our publishers at *Cambridge Scholars Publishing*, for their enthusiasm and continual encouragement to make these important essays available to an English-language audience with the present edition of this book.

—Francis Feeley
Ile Verte, 15 January 2010

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication	v
Foreword	xi
Introduction	1
 Part I: On the Re-Production of Traditions and the Shaping of Male/Female Consciousness	
Chapter One.....	10
The New Republican Man and the Role of Women in the New Republic	
Francis Feeley	
Chapter Two	39
Benjamin Franklin	
D. H. Lawrence	
Chapter Three	49
Black Women's Relations to White and Black Men:	
A Heritage of Slavery in America	
Louise Kamara	
Chapter Four	64
Envy in the Mind and Interpersonal Relationships:	
Toxicity of Patriarchal Culture	
Caroline de Pottél	
Chapter Five	79
People's Power in Gaza	
Ramzy Baroud	
Chapter Six	83
American Women in the U.S. Military	
Chems edine Bouchehma	

Chapter Seven.....	93
Women in US Prisons: Behind the Bars of the Patriarchy	
Rebecca Reviere and Vernetta D. Young	
Chapter Eight.....	111
Union Representation of Child-care Workers in the United States	
Peggie R. Smith	
Chapter Nine.....	129
Eco-cultural Devastation and Revitalization: Indigenous Women	
in Southern California	
Deborah Small	
 Part II: On Equality and Female Agents of Change	
Chapter Ten	144
Louise Michel in Algeria: October—December 1904	
Clotilde Chauvin	
Chapter Eleven	151
Louise Michel, From Yesterday to Today	
J.-Didier Giraud	
Chapter Twelve	164
Women and the Theater	
Monique Surel-Tupin	
Chapter Thirteen.....	173
Emma Goldman, Incendiary or Pioneer? (Traditional Constraints	
on Women as Agents for Social Change in the U.S.A.: Remembering	
Emma Goldman, A Woman Who “Defied Laws and Convention”)	
Candace Falk	
Chapter Fourteen	190
In The Penal Colony: The Body as the Discourse of the Other	
Anthony Wilden	

Part III: On Women against Reality and Strategies for Change

Chapter Fifteen	208
Globalization, Militarism and Terrorism: Making Connections with Patriarchy and Colonization	
Rhonda Hammer	
Chapter Sixteen	224
Teaching Social Literacy: Rethinking Humanism in Education	
Enrica Piccardo	
Chapter Seventeen	254
Dance and Feminism: Some Reflections on French and Anglo-Saxon Approaches	
Hélène Marquié	
Chapter Eighteen	274
The Feminine in Me (and in Some Others)	
Gilles Vachon	
Chapter Nineteen	288
Why Women Submit: A Criticism of Patriarchy and the French Anarchist Movement	
Hélène Hernandez	
Chapter Twenty	298
Concluding Remarks	
Francis Feeley	
Appendix A	305
The Participation of Women Artists at the Conference on "Comparative Patriarchy and American Institutions"	
Pascale Robert	
Notes on the Authors	310

INTRODUCTION

FRANCIS FEELEY

The 1961 unabridged edition of *Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, offers the following definition of the noun patriarchy: “[pā-trē-ār-kē] (1) social organization marked by the supremacy of the father in the clan or family in both domestic and religious functions, the legal dependence of wife or wives and children, and the reckoning of descent and inheritance in the male line.” The second definition is: “(2) a society so organized.” The etymology of the word itself dates from 1632, when the British monarch Charles I was beginning to have serious political problems with the Puritan merchant class in his kingdom. (This historic aspect of patriarchy is discussed in chapter 1 of this book.) In 2008, the *Merriam-Webster On-Line Dictionary* revised the 1961 meaning of the word to include as the first definition: “control by men of a disproportionately large share of power.” And to the second definition in 2008 is added: “a society or institution organized according to the principles or practices of patriarchy”. Thus we see between these two dates, 1961 and 2008, a shift in the definition from a narrow focus on the nuclear family and individual legal rights of inheritance, to an expanded definition which includes the governance of institutions other than the family.¹

My first conscious encounter with patriarchy dates back to my childhood experiences in South Texas. I grew up in a fatherless family and my mother, the youngest daughter of a small town newspaper editor, had herself never been successfully indoctrinated into accepting male supremacy. She became a high school librarian and was a fairly well-informed independent thinker, and when she died, at the age of 52, patriarchy had yet no meaning for me. In fact it was not even in my vocabulary.

An early and intense experience with patriarchal values came a few years later, in the summer of 1961. I was fifteen when I took a summer job

¹ See <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/patriarchy>, visited 15 January 2008.

working as a box handler in a packing shed in Rio Grande City, Texas. It was a life in the bowels of hell, and I remember it as if it were yesterday: the smell of the dusty shed, the feel of the dry cardboard boxes, the colors that the various work teams wore, and the sound of Mexican music that blended into the rhythm of the conveyor belts that moved the boxes from the stapling machine area, through the box-preparation and packing area, where they were filled with ripe yellow cantaloupes or green honeydew melons, and carried on to the train platform where they were loaded into boxcars, soon to be hitched to trains and heading for New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and all points north of the border. The train tracks ran adjacent to the packing shed, where boxcars stood day and night, waiting to be filled with boxes of melons grown in the fields of the Rio Grande Valley, only a few miles from Mexico.

The packing shed was managed by a hierarchy of older white men, who kept the younger men, the women, and older men of color in our places by a continuous rhythm of hard routine work. The stratification of the labor force was maintained during these long hours of low-paid, seasonal work by imposing the usual separations of race, age, and gender. Many of the workers were under the age of 18 (I was, I believe, the youngest), and we were relegated to the lowest paid and dirtiest jobs, like folding dusty boxes, washing muddy melons, and picking up trash from the floor. Typically, the women and the young men received the lowest pay in each job category. The work force was mostly Hispanic male.

Young white women and occasionally a young Hispanic woman worked in the clean, air-conditioned office areas with older white men. But standing along the conveyor belts winding through the entire area of the packing shed were mostly men—some young white men, like myself; more older Hispanic men—and a few women. It was in this area that boxes were built and prepared for shipping, then conveyed to packers further down the assembly line who, standing behind their wooden tables, removed the boxes from the conveyor belt one at a time and filled it as quickly as possible with selected melons before returning it to the conveyor belt where it continued its journey in rhythmic procession down the assembly line through the sealing area, where each box was labeled and closed, on to the final leg of its journey to the platform, where the train cars stood waiting to be filled. The melon packers were paid by piece work and earned a higher income than most of us working in this hot shed, but the Hispanic women performing the same job received a lower rate of pay than the non-Hispanic men and women, and they let everyone working in the shed know. (This use of piece work and different pay scales, of course, created divisions among the melon packers, as well as between the packers

and the rest of us. The packers, because they were paid by the box, set the tempo of work for the rest of us.) My job was to open the sheets of cardboard and fold them into boxes at a rate of 8 or 10 per minute. I would place each folded box on the post of a large stapling machine, and hold it in place until the older man standing beside me took hold of it and stitched the bottom of the box closed, threw it onto the conveyor belt, and reach rhythmically for the next box awaiting him, folded and held in place on the post of his stapling machine. It took several minutes for each empty box to be prepared for packing with soft paper and cardboard dividers introduced into the box as it moved from station to station, along the assembly line. The whole procedure took about 20 minutes: from the moment the box was built, then prepared, packed, labeled and sealed, and finally placed on the platform next to the train car. In this way a constantly flow of boxes passed through the shed, from daybreak to sunset, six days a week, provided that the weather was good and the farm trucks were bringing in the melons on time.

The managerial techniques employed to keep us working 12 and 15 hours a day that summer at a mind-numbing pace were rather simple. Getting up at the crack of dawn, eating a quick breakfast before the truck arrived to take us to work, a quick lunch at noon, and before you knew it you were on your way home after dark for a fast bite to eat (if you had the energy) before going to bed. I often skipped evening meals to get more sleep.

This pernicious routine of managing hundreds of exhausted male and female bodies and minds for hours on end, under a hot corrugated steel roof, was stabilized by a flow of energy that never got out of control. Over time (melon season extended from July to the end of August) we workers formed bonds with each other (sometimes with real affection, more often with loathing) but the nuances really didn't matter. The essential concern was that we got to work on time and that we worked at maximum productivity all day long. The managers were usually successful in maintaining a precarious equilibrium, and we never seriously thought of organizing ourselves to resist this system of intense exploitation.

The system that governed our energies at the Rio Grande City packing shed was put in place by a few white men. This method of being managed came as an early revelation in my life. I had never seen men treat other men and women like this before. The privileges enjoyed by the small group of white males in this enterprise came at the price of having to tolerate and at times actively collaborate with the sexist, racist, and ageist tactics that successfully divided us.

The essays in this book on patriarchy in the United States --and the language, culture and politics of liberalism which it promotes-- offer readers many insights into the male-dominated world of institutions that govern the lives of some three hundred million people living in the most powerful nation of the world. These essays will also provide readers with a deeper understanding of the effects such social relationships have on societies throughout the rest of the world.²

The first day of our conference was devoted to the subject of "The Reproduction of Traditions and the Shaping of Male/Female Consciousness." We begin this discussion with topics taken from early American history. The publication of the essay presented by Francis Feeley in chapter 1, describing the role of women at the inception of the new republic and comparing the new relationships between men and women to what had existed in England and America in the preceding colonial period. Chapter 2 is the re-publication of an essay by D. H. Lawrence, originally written in 1923, in which he analyzes one of the most influential "founding fathers" of the Republic of the United States of America, Benjamin Franklin. This American icon, a self-described representative of "the self-made man," has for generations been widely advertised as representing the essential

² Sexist violence is perhaps the most wide spread violation of the "Rights of Man" and the most tolerated by society. Its cost to women, their children, families and communities represents an important obstacle to the reduction of poverty, to equality between the genders and to the realization of millennial objectives for development (OMD). Violence is a traumatic experience for every man and every woman, but sexist violence in the great majority of cases is inflicted on women and girls by men. It reflects and at the same time reinforces the inequalities between men and women and compromises the health, dignity, security and autonomy of its victims.

It has been estimated that at the global level, one woman out of five in the course of her life will be the victim of rape or attempted rape. One woman in every three will have been beaten, forced to have sexual relations or victimized in some other manner, generally by a member of her family or by a person she knows. Most often, those responsible for these acts enjoy impunity. Each year, hundreds of thousands of women and children are victims of human trafficking and are reduced to slavery; thousands of others are subject of harmful practices. Violence kills and weakens as many women between the ages of 15 and 44 as does cancer. And the toll that it exacts on the health of women exceeds that of automobile accidents and malaria combined. Sources:

<http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2005/francais/ch7/index.htm>, visited 22 December 2007, and <http://lauraflanders.firedoglake.com/2009/11/26/turning-pain-to-power-change-in-the-congo-melody-gardot-indigenous-youth-delegation-to-palestine-2/>, visited 27 November 2009.

character traits of Americans, especially American men. Lawrence's acidic commentary on Franklin's famous formula for self-help brings into focus our subsequent discussions of gender relationships in American institutions, both past and present. In chapter 3, Louise Kamara, a graduate student at l'Université de Savoie à Chambéry (2006-2007), describes the relationships between slave women, on the one hand, and men, both black and white, on the other. Chapter 4, by San Diego, California psychoanalyst, Dr. Caroline de Pottél, describes her psychoanalytic studies of interpersonal relationships in the patriarchal society of Southern California, where the personal feelings of Envy are intensified in women sometimes causing deep anxieties and even passionate desires for revenge against the persons they believe to have admired traits or possessions.

Chapters 5 and 6 of this book concern the diversity of female responses to the reproduction process of patriarchal values in the context of everyday lives of ordinary women living in the Third World. Chapter 5 is a short essay by Ramzy Baroud, who teaches mass communication at Australia's Curtin University of Technology, Malaysia Campus and here describes the "heroic actions" taken by Palestinian women on January 22, at Rafah, Egypt, where they led what is becoming known as "the greatest jailbreak in history," demanding food, fuel and freedom in Gaza. In chapter 6, Chem edine Bouchehma, a graduate student at l'Université de Savoie à Chambéry (2006-2007), investigates the conditions facing American female soldiers in the patriarchal power pyramid of the United States military. He goes on to compare their tactics and strategies of survival with those adopted by third-world women, notably women living in Iraq and Algeria.

Chapter 7 is an essay by Howard University Professor Rebecca Reviere and Vernetta Young on fourth-world women in U.S. prisons and the effect male-oriented prison design has on these women during the time they spend in the institution and after their re-entry into society. In chapter 8, law Professor Peggy Smith, from the University of Iowa College of Law, discusses the American labor movement's ability to organize the working poor, despite apparent obstacles and she describes the long-term implications of this new wave of labor organizing for the economic empowerment of low-wage working women. And Professor Deborah Small of California State University at San Marcos reports in chapter 9 on the findings from her original fieldwork with Amerindian women in Southern California and northern Mexico. The indigenous people who occupy this region of North America represent cultural values that are directly dependant on the indigenous plants of the area. Today the very existence of their culture is at risk by urban development and the massive