

/Feminist theories of patriarchy considered
in the light of their usefulness or otherwise
as a mobilising force for political struggle
against women's oppression.

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*"Theory allows you to think about new possibilities,
Strategy grows out of the possibilities."*
(Zilla Eisenstein)

I. INTRODUCTION

Kate Millett is usually credited with the first major use of the concept of patriarchy in her important analysis of women's oppression, Sexual Politics, first published in 1969. Even today, however, there is no unanimity on the exact meaning of this concept among the different feminist theories of patriarchy which have been developed since then. It is also true, as H. Eisenstein has pointed out in Contemporary Feminist Thought, that the legitimacy of the concept of patriarchy has been questioned by feminists like Gayle Rubin, who would restrict its use to discussions of actual patriarchal societies in the strict sense, such as "Old Testament-type pastoral nomads...", (Rubin, p. 168, 19--), or like Sheila Rowbotham, who doubts the usefulness of the term at all. (Rowbotham, 1979). Nevertheless, as Eisenstein and others have noted, the use of the term 'patriarchy' is so universal by now as to have passed into standard feminist vocabulary.

For the purposes of this paper, theories of patriarchy are considered in the light of their usefulness or otherwise as a mobilising force for political action. This is in the belief that the most important function of any feminist theory is in its *ultimate* use to the women's struggle. A theory of patriarchy seen in this light must obey certain criteria, particularly because of the universal and deep-seated nature of patriarchy; they are as follows:-

- i) it must help to unify women rather than divide them,
- ii) at the same time, it must do this in a realistic way without covering up differences between women,
- iii) it must be rooted in women's actual experiences and by analysing these and using them as evidence, be accessible to women in terms of mobilising them against their oppression, > experiences
- iv) it must be capable of drawing men into alliance with women or at least not alienating them permanently from the women's struggle,
- v) it must be able to link in with other oppressions to succeed,
- vi) it must include the possibility of consciousness raising for women (and men) against patriarchy.

In this essay, I am taking the work of four feminist theorists of patriarchy- Kate Millett, Christine Delphy, Zilla Eisenstein and Heidi Hartmann. Each of them has looked at male/female relations, utilising the concept of patriarchy in a systematic and analytical way. Together they represent trends in both radical feminism and Marxist/socialist feminism. Firstly, their main ideas on patriarchy will be described and secondly, each writer's ideas will be examined as to their usefulness or not as theories which could enable successful political action by women against patriarchy.

II. REPRESENTATIVE THEORIES OF PATRIARCHY.

Kate Millett

Millett's theory of patriarchy is most fully developed in Sexual Politics (1969) and mainly in Parts One and Two of this volume. * At the beginning of Part One of Sexual Politics, Millett, through brief excerpts from the writings of Henry Miller, Norman Mailer, and Jean Genet, argues that the violence and hatred towards women (or, in the case of Genet, towards homosexual men) implicit in their writing on sexuality, indicates the authors' own 'sexual/literary motives, in spite of the fictional mode they choose to communicate in. For Millett, these writers are engaged in what she names as 'sexual politics', arguing that the political is not merely the "relatively narrow and exclusive world of meetings, chairmen, and parties", but rather "power-structured relationships, arrangements whereby one group of persons is controlled by another." (Millett, p. 24).

* In Part Three of Sexual Politics, Millett provides a more lengthy literary criticism of the novelists already covered briefly in Chapter One of Part One (with the addition of D.H. Lawrence).

Millett then develops her theory of patriarchy, in which she makes the following main points:

i) The sexual domination by men of women is the most fundamental oppression of all the 'power relationships' pervading interaction between individuals and groups, whether classes, races, castes, or sexes, => ?

ii) This is because society itself is a patriarchy in which men dominate women and younger men are dominated by older men.

iii) The patriarchal system perpetuates itself by means of the conditioning of children along stereotyped gender lines in the interests of the dominant group, i.e. older males.

iv) In this process, girls are encouraged to be passive, boys to be aggressive and each to take on appropriate sex roles, the females to serve, the males to "adopt roles of mastery".

iv) Female roles are arrested by this process at the "level of biological experience" as Millett puts it, but this does not mean that masculine and feminine traits are biological in origin because 'core gender identity' is established as the baby develops.

v) Millett argues that even sexual behaviour is almost entirely learned and that the male's greater physical strength, although biological in origin, is today most effective because it is culturally encouraged. It is in any case is no longer relevant as a reason on which to base male supremacy.

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vi) The chief institution of patriarchy is the family whose head, an older male, acts as an agent of the patriarchal state by teaching family members to conform to the appropriate sex roles which perpetuate the patriarchal system. => a lot of time in the classroom

vii) Class, as well as other divisive factors such as age, beauty, etc., that set women against one another is mainly the result of conditioning and not as important as what women have in common. => ?

viii) Women's roles outside the family are determined by whether or not they are regarded as a threat to patriarchy. In the workplace, for instance, it is middle-class women who are most under threat because working class women's cheap labour in factories poses no threat to patriarchy either financially or psychologically. Women's education is also designed to be non-threatening to patriarchy, e.g. the predominance of the humanities in women's higher education, which carry less prestige than the male-dominated sciences.

ix) Millett emphasises the importance of the conditioning process in the continuation of patriarchy and the role of marriage and the family in this. For women, patriarchal control is mainly experienced in relation to sexuality and also through language. As a result, women internalise patriarchal messages of inferiority or biological determinism and despise themselves and other women.

x) Patriarchy has an even greater hold on society than class because it passes itself off as natural. It must therefore be exposed and questioned if it is to change.

=> class also was seen as "natural"

In Part II of Sexual Politics- the Historical Background, Millett discusses the history of sexual politics during the period from 1830 to 1960. In so doing she examines not only social and political developments in relation to the situation of women in western society, but also the intellectual and literary ideas of the time as they pertain to patriarchy. In her analysis, Millett makes a clear historical division between the period 1830-1930, which, she argues, was a time of sexual revolution, and the period 1930-1960, which she argues was one of political, social and intellectual reaction against the gains made by women.

In analysing what she describes as the First Phase of the Sexual Revolution, 1830-1930, Millett argues that historians have deliberately glossed over the considerable social reforms made during the Victorian period to alleviate women's oppression, which amounted in many ways almost to a sexual revolution. She notes, for instance, that when the period began, women were forced by law to relinquish all their human rights upon marriage, whereas by the time the period ended, women had attained the vote as well as the right to divorce and to own property.

The failure to complete the sexual revolution by moving beyond reforms was due not only to the underestimation by reformers like John Stuart Mill and the women's movement itself of the resilience and deep-seated nature of patriarchy, but also to the concentration by the movement on votes for women. This Millett argues was not only a *red herring* in relation to the real needs of women, but exhausted the resources of the feminist movement of the period. Another factor in the failure to go beyond reform, according to Millett, was the bourgeois character and leadership of the movement.

Millett next discusses what she refers to as the counterrevolution 1930-1960, during which a massive political and ideological reaction to women's liberation occurred on several fronts.

On the political and social fronts, Millett points to events in Nazi Germany and in the Soviet Union which reversed earlier gains by women or prevented nascent possibilities from taking place. In Weimar Germany, a considerable woman's movement had sprung up, which was regionally and even nationally based and which boasted several million members. Such a movement was anathema to Nazi ideology, which embodied a fanatically patriarchal concept of women's role in society as one of its central precepts. The women's movement was coopted by the Nazis and became a bastion of anti-feminist ideology. In the Soviet Union, for economic reasons, but also because of a failure of Marxism to appreciate fully the "historical and psychological strength of patriarchy", post-revolutionary reforms in the situation of women were not carried through. By the 1940s, the situation of women in Russia was no different from that in other western countries, even including Nazi Germany.

Millett, when discussing the intellectual ideas of the counter-revolutionary period, makes her most concerted attack upon Freud and particularly upon his followers in the United States. The influence of such Freudian theories as 'penis envy' have had, according to Millett, a devastating effect on the position of women. She makes the point that if it has any validity at all, 'penis envy' should only be seen within a more general theory of conditioning and culture, not as the result of biology, i. e. if girls do envy their brothers, it is not so much their penis that is envied, but the male supremacy that possession of such an organ gives social pretensions to. In other words, Millett concludes that the answer lies not in anatomical differences, but in the social ideology of patriarchy.

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Christine Delphy

Christine Delphy, a French feminist writer, has had particular influence in relation to her work on theorising the centrality of women's unpaid work in the household to an understanding of patriarchy, as well as in her exposure (like Millett) of patriarchal ideology. An integral part of Delphy's work is the materialist basis of her theory, which uses Marxist terminology and concepts. Finally, one cannot overlook when examining Delphy's main body of writing, her criticisms of Marxist and Marxist/Feminist analyses of the woman question.

For the purposes of this paper, relevant essays and parts of essays contained in the collection published as Close to Home, A Materialist Analysis of Women's Oppression are examined.

In her Introduction to the collection, Delphy describes the essence of her theory of patriarchy in these words:-

Since 1970, then, I have been saying that patriarchy is the system of subordination of women to men in contemporary industrial societies, that this system has an economic base, and that this base is the domestic mode of production," (p.18)

She then goes on to make three main points about the *domestic mode of production* as she sees it. Firstly, she makes the point that in the family, (the domestic mode of production), it is easy to distinguish between the consumption of the exploiter and the exploited because the exploited, i.e., women, are not paid and therefore free to choose what they consume, but are rather maintained and 'given' what it is considered they need by the head of the family. Secondly, Delphy states that in the domestic mode of production, circulation of goods is conducted through patrimony, e.g. in the agricultural world, women and younger siblings work unpaid for their husbands and inheriting brothers. Finally, she argues that although the domestic and capitalist modes of production are autonomous, they are also closely linked and support one another in the interests of patriarchy. For instance, it is not their status in the family that leads to women being exploited in the labour

market, but the capitalist labour market itself that by paying women inadequate wages, forces them to seek marriage.

Delphy like Millett rejects biology as the source of women's oppression, asking why if it has been thrown out of discussions of class and race it should continue in relation to women. She also notes that naturalist explanations in any case tend to change according to the times. She therefore prefers to designate the sexes as classes in order to keep explanations of their relations in the social sphere.

> what about the overlap
between class? is
sex struggle? or is there
sense that class struggle?

It is in her essay, The Main Enemy, that Delphy sets out the details of her materialist theory of women's oppression. She first criticises the Marxist line on women's liberation for two basic reasons :-

- it does not account for the oppression common to all women,
- it concentrates not on the oppression of women but on the consequences this oppression has for the proletariat.

Delphy argues that this is detrimental to the women's movement, which needs to analyse the structural reasons why the abolition of capitalism does not free women, and to build an autonomous women's movement if patriarchy is to be defeated.

She then sets out her ideas for a materialist analysis of the oppression of women, drawing on the work of other radical feminists and making the following main points:-

1. The relations of production entered into by women are in the family, chiefly concentrated upon domestic work and child rearing. The family itself is the site of economic exploitation of women.

2. The exploitation of women that takes place in the family is primarily that of a) the non-remuneration of their work, whether it is child rearing and domestic services, or even where it applies to products produced within the family, but destined for the market; and b) the fact they do the most menial work.

3. Any economic independence won by women by working outside the home has been limited by the fact that they then usually have a double workload.

4. Delphy distinguishes the capitalist mode of production from the domestic or patriarchal mode and maintains that women constitute an economic class of their own, working within the patriarchal mode for nothing and in the wage labour mode for very little. The reason Delphy believes women are a class of their own is because virtually all are at some time married and united in the appropriation of their labour. Thus, women, in spite of class and other differences, are united in their common oppression.

all are at some
time married?

5. Delphy then goes into the implications of her theory for the women's liberation movement. She insists that the overthrow of patriarchy must be total if women are to be liberated and that the struggle must therefore include all women and emphasise their common oppression. In order to achieve unity within the women's movement, there must be a concerted attack on the 'false consciousness' of women's so-called class positions, showing how these merely serve the interests of patriarchy.

despite class?

is capitalism
different aspect?

Apart from her ideas in The Main Enemy, Delphy makes important points in other essays. For example, in her essay on Women in Stratification Studies Delphy criticises the practice by sociologists of classifying women in the same social class as their husbands. This stems from the dependency of women on their husbands in the domestic or 'patriarchal mode of production'. Again, in her essay Sharing the Same Table: Consumption and the Family, Delphy criticises existing sociological accounts of consumption within the family, which she says conceal the main fact about the household that it is where class relations of servants and master are exercised. She goes on to study food in this connection and from various descriptive studies and personal knowledge, illustrates that food consumption varies considerably according to the status of the family member and that generally speaking, women eat less well in quantity and quality than everyone else, but internalise the reasons to the extent that they believe they want less. She notes too that food distribution is not based on any rational division of food by activity, but rather the activity is designated as light or heavy according to the status of the worker.

In her essay, Our friends and ourselves: the hidden foundations of various pseudo-feminist accounts, Delphy attacks some men (in France) on the left, whose support for the women's movement is characterised by paternalism and authoritarianism and by blaming 'anti-feminist women' and bourgeois women. This leads Delphy to the conclusion that men, even with good will, cannot simply throw off their patriarchal traits. This is made almost impossible because of the self-interest they have in continuing to possess "the institutionally and materially established authority they already have". (p.114). She also reflects that anti-feminism in women and in men is not at all the same thing. In women it is due to false consciousness and applies to all women more or less- it is the 'common enemy'- in men it is part of the 'oppression they exert'. Nevertheless, in her essay Patriarchy, feminism and their intellectuals Delphy stresses the difficulty all women have in facing up to their oppression.

all men?

- is men the main enemy?
- is men included in the struggle?
- how does she consider the feminist struggle in relation or amongst other social movements?
- is feminism the unique social struggle?
- at the beginning Delphy agree with the existence of capitalism, does she also consider the class struggle?

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Zilla Eisenstein

Eisenstein writes consciously as a 'socialist feminist' and as a critic of radical feminism. In this paper, her contributions to Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism, are examined.

In her Introduction as editor, Eisenstein calls for a synthesis between socialist and feminist theory in the interests of both, but she emphasises that it is particularly important that patriarchy should be

analysed, since Marxist/socialist theory is already well developed. She states that in her own writings, she brings a marxist historical and dialectical method and a feminist commitment to bear on the task of formulating socialist feminist questions.

In her article, "Developing a Theory of Capitalist Patriarchy and Socialist Feminism", Eisenstein makes the following main points.

1. Patriarchy is "male supremacy". Although it has existed both before and after capitalist societies, *"it is the present relationship that must be understood if the structure of the oppression is to be changed,"*

2. The complexity of women's oppression cannot be understood by posing dichotomies between, say, domestic *or* wage labour, the private *or* public realms, the family *or* the economy, etc., since women are implicated on both sides.

3. She criticises radical feminism for falling into the trap of patriarchal ideology and locating the roots of patriarchy in women's reproductive functions because this makes it impossible to deal with the complexity of women's lives. The way forward is to analyse how women's sexuality has *differed* through history, in spite of the general pervading rule of patriarchy.

4. For socialist feminists, it is important to distinguish between *exploitation*, which is an economic reality of capitalist class relations affecting both women and men, and *oppression*, which refers to women and minorities, defined within capitalist patriarchal relations.

5. Both radical and socialist feminists believe that patriarchy preceded capitalism, but socialist feminists would want to argue, unlike some radical feminists, [although not Millett or Delphy] that it arose from ideological and political interpretations of biological differences, rather than biology itself.

6. In relation to the sexual division of labour, capitalism and patriarchy feed off one another. Thus, even in advanced capitalist societies, women's role in the workplace is circumscribed by the need to maintain the sexual hierarchy of society. Thus, when one asks the classic question, 'who gains?', the answer is both the bourgeoisie as a class and individual men in terms of labour done for them in the home.

7. Eisenstein then discusses the question of how class relates to women and concludes that the assignment of women to their husbands's class raises interesting questions. For instance, what does it mean to say that a middle class woman's life is easier than a working-class woman's, when her status is significantly different from that of a middle-class male. And how does the life of a middle-class dependent woman compare to that of a single woman in a low-paying job?

3. Eisenstein considers strategy a vital part of feminist theory and believes that it is the daily struggles of women at home and on the job that provide the impetus for revolutionary activity. She also maintains that in spite of the real differences that exist between women, it is in the things we have in common under patriarchy that the struggle must begin. There are many everyday and unifying issues on which to organise - abortion, health-care, rape, and child-care are some which not only cut across class lines but also break down women's isolation in the home.

Finally, in her article, Relations of Capitalist Patriarchy, Eisenstein discusses the origins of patriarchy and concludes that even if it began in the biological differences and biologically defined roles of men and women, there is no longer any reason for it to continue to do so. Like Millett, Eisenstein argues that the notion of men's physical strength is very limited. Men's real power derives from a dominant position in society, which allows them to express their power on a daily basis.

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Heidi Hartmann

Hartmann's work is examined with reference to two essays, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a more progressive Union" in Women and Revolution- A discussion of the unhappy marriage of Marxism and Feminism, and "Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Job Segregation by Sex", published in Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism.

Hartmann argues like Eisenstein that both Marxism and Feminism need each other, feminism to bring out the 'systemic' relations between men and women, Marxism to supply an historical and materialist analysis. Her main points are as follows:-

1. Hartmann states that although a sexual division of labour seems pretty universal, it was not always so hierarchical as it is today. Patriarchy was probably first established in settled agricultural societies with the control of women and children within the family.
2. She defines patriarchy as "*a set of social relations between men, which have a material base, and which, although hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women*". Through this solidarity, even the most exploited man is thereby bought off by patriarchy because he is allowed to control at least one or more women.
3. Thus, early Marxists, who expected capitalism to destroy the sexual division of labour, failed to recognise the vested interests men have in women's continued subordination. And contemporary Marxists, like Zaretsky, who argues that women act as reproducers of the capitalist system by being forced to stay at home and service the male worker,

should ask why it is women rather than men who remain in the private sphere. Only patriarchy can explain this.

4. For Hartmann, the materialist base of patriarchy is men's control over women's labour power in the family, which is accomplished by their control over women's sexuality.

in the family?

5. This bargain between male workers and capitalism has had divisive effects on the whole working class. "It is not feminism", she points out, "but sexism that divides and debilitates the working class."

6. Hartmann concludes that men will have to be forced to give up their privileges in the sexual division of labour not only in the interests of women's equality, but also in their own class interests. Women must not only struggle against patriarchy but also against capitalism, in spite of the difficulties involved.

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Theories of 'patriarchy as a mobilising force against women's oppression

The theories of patriarchy described in the previous part of Section II of this paper, will now be examined for their usefulness or otherwise as a mobilising force for political action against women's oppression. This will be done in the light of the criteria described in Section I, page -

Kate Millett

Perhaps the most important aspect of Millett's work as a force for political change, lies in the fact that she 'named' the source of women's oppression - patriarchy- in an illuminating and readable way. In her pioneering analysis of the patriarchal nature of the work of some of the most cherished cultural and intellectual masters of western civilisation, she not only exposed their sexism, but also by implication cast doubts on all western cultural and political institutions. For her readers, D.H. Lawrence and the other writers analysed in Sexual Politics will never be read again without an awareness of the way patriarchy pervades their work. Even more importantly perhaps, in terms of the way women see themselves, in her attack on Freud and his successors, Millett empowers women to reject the feelings of biological inferiority which Freudians are at least in part guilty of inflicting on women. This contribution cannot be underestimated, even if, as Cora Kaplan has argued, Millett is sometimes unfair in the techniques with which she conducts her critique on Freud's work. (Kaplan 1982).

The second most important contribution Millett has made to the women's movement is in highlighting the conditioning process which forces children of both sexes to take on masculine and feminine traits and roles. By doing so, she not only lays bare the mechanisms of how patriarchy is installed in each new individual, but also by implication, she indicates how this conditioning may be overcome, i.e. by de-conditioning. This is a important step forward in the struggle against 'biologism'. It also offers hope for an alliance between women and men

against the conditioning which both are subjected to. And of course it shows the need for consciousness-raising among women and men.

Thirdly, Millett identifies the family as the main place where patriarchy is installed in individuals and makes the link between the family and the patriarchal state for which the family head acts as an agent.

Fourthly, Millett pinpoints the commonality of all women in spite of class, race, and other differences.

There are however, limitations in Millett's analysis of patriarchy as a mobilising force for political action. She ignores much that stands in the way of a unified political struggle by women with men as allies and is therefore too idealistic. In other words, Millett has an overly optimistic perspective, believing that once women are aware of their oppression all will be well. (Kaplan 1982). This is borne out in the lack of concrete strategies for action in Sexual Politics.

In particular,

i) She is unrealistic in her assumptions of women's unity because she gives insufficient attention to real conflicts of interest between women, such as class and race. Generally speaking, her analysis is directed towards middle-class and educated women and although Millett notes the importance of class and economic forces in Sexual Politics, her non-materialist analysis does not allow her to explain these in any helpful way.

ii) Millett's emphasis on the conditioning process as the main mechanism of patriarchy, while useful, is also too optimistic. For instance, although she notes that force is the ultimate sanction available to patriarchy, her main message, as she puts it, is that "superior physical strength is not a factor in political relations" (p.27). As a result, she is in danger of encouraging women to believe that all that is needed for the total victory she herself sees as necessary is for them to undergo a psychological de-conditioning. The extent of the opposition to women's liberation is almost completely ignored.

iii) Although in principle there is nothing in Millett's writings which would make it impossible for men to join women as allies to overcome patriarchy, there is also little to encourage them.

Christine Delphy

Like Millett, Delphy's analysis of patriarchy is important as a mobilising force for women's liberation because:-

- she rejects biology as the source of women's oppression,
- she insists that any struggle to overcome patriarchy must be total if it is to succeed, and

What does she mean by total?

- that it must include all women regardless of class, or other divisions,

> ?

- Like Millett, Delphy also stresses the importance of consciousness-raising to deal with what she refers to as the 'false consciousness' imposed on women under patriarchy.

In contrast to Millett, Delphy's theory of patriarchy does have a materialist base in her analysis of women's unpaid work in what she calls the 'domestic sphere'. This analysis is based on actual study and personal experiences of the economic situation of women, e.g. French rural households, and thus provides evidence on which to press for change. Her theory is therefore more accessible to a larger number of 'ordinary' women than Millett's and is particularly important as a mobilising force for that reason.

The limitations of Delphy's theory of patriarchy as a mobilising force for political action are as follows:-

i) Delphy, as she herself states, does not include sexuality in her analysis of patriarchy and thus ignores an important aspect of women's subordination to men, which is vital to understand if women are to be liberated.

ii) Her analysis is very pessimistic in relation to the possibilities for men to be drawn into alliance with women in the struggle against patriarchy, e.g. she denies that any personal initiative by an individual man can undo or even mitigate the oppressive structure of patriarchy and she offers no suggestions as to the role of men in her strategies for change.

iii) Because she sees patriarchy and capitalism as two autonomous spheres, Delphy overlooks some of the ways in which the class struggle and the women's struggle are linked. This means she leaves out any discussion of alliance with men in her strategies for change. It is hard to imagine therefore that her call for a total overthrow of patriarchy could ever succeed.

iv) Like Millett, Delphy's notion of women's unity is overly optimistic and tends to underplay class and other differences. As Barrett and McIntosh point out in their critique of Delphy's work, *"Delphy offers no contribution to one of the most pressing political problems the movement faces- forging solidarity between women of all classes. Solidarity must overcome, rather than deny, these differences,"* (1979, p.101).

For instance, while Delphy does specifically offer some solution to these differences, i.e. working to overcome false consciousness, and she is right to attack some male leftists' abuse of bourgeois women, nevertheless, she goes too far when she states that there is no such thing as a bourgeois woman at all.

1a. Eisenstein and Heidi Hartmann

These two Marxist/Socialist Feminist writers are considered together since they have so much in common.

- i) They both see the way forward as a synthesis between feminism and socialism and thus underplay the importance of neither.
- ii) They both stress the need for an autonomous women's movement which would influence the left as well as seek its support.
- iii) Neither denies the complicity of men in the establishment of patriarchy and its continuation and even intensification under capitalism. At the same time, they note the loss to non-ruling class men that this collusion has brought about. The way is left clear therefore for an alliance between women and men to overcome both capitalism and patriarchy.

In addition, each raises particularly interesting individual points of relevance to the women's movement.

Eisenstein stresses the need for women to develop the vocabulary and conceptual tools to deal with the differences between women if women are to change society and she seems to bridge the gap between Millett/Delphy and Barrett/McIntosh when she argues that

"although our differences divide us, our likenesses cut through to somewhat redefine these conflicts," (p.33, 1979)

In any case, she considers it vital for a successful strategy to try to reach all women.

Hartmann's particular contribution is to describe the collusion in patriarchy by men, including those on the left, in a bargain struck between male workers and capitalism, which has resulted in divisions within the whole working class. She thus insists that feminists must never give in to pressure from men on the left to put socialism first because as she puts it, *"it is not feminism, but sexism that divides and debilitates the working class."*

III. CONCLUSION

In looking at theories of patriarchy in the light of their usefulness or otherwise as a mobilising force for political action against women's oppression, two writers in the radical feminist tradition were examined (Kate Millett and Christine Delphy) and two Marxist/Socialist Feminists (Zilla Eisenstein and Heidi Hartmann). (It should be noted that the terms Marxist Feminist and Socialist Feminist are used synonymously here.) They all, explicitly or implicitly, shared important ideas about the nature of women's oppression -

- that patriarchy is the systematic oppression of women by men as a class or group,
- that the central importance of a feminist analysis of patriarchy is as a mobilising force for the woman's struggle,
- that the family is an important locus of patriarchal oppression of women,
- that conditioning is an important mechanism by which women are induced to accept patriarchal oppression.

There were also important differences between the approaches of Millett and Delphy and the Marxist/Socialist Feminists to strategies for change. In particular, the latter offered a more realistic analysis of the differences between women which need to be faced up to if the woman's struggle is to succeed. They also put forward a potentially more fruitful approach to the possibility of mobilising men in the struggle against patriarchy, by showing how it affects the class struggle.

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