

# Teaching Notes

*Intimate Intrusions: Women's Experience of Male Violence*, Elizabeth A. Stanko. Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul. \$7.95

In this book about women's lives in Britain and the United States, Elizabeth Stanko demands that her readers confront the vulnerability of women to men. Stanko's demands are relentless. She dissects the patriarchal ideology of female "respectability," a view which locates the cause of male sexual violence in the individual woman's behavior, thereby shifting the blame from the men who commit sexual assault to the women who experience it.

As Stanko analyzes rape, incest, wife-battering, and sexual harassment, the reader is forced to deal with the commonalities of women's experience of male violence and with the socialization process which teaches girls and women to accept male violence and indeed to interpret it as their "own fault." Stanko continues with a thorough analysis of the "rhetoric of protection" and women's experiences with "the second assailant"—the police and the judicial systems.

As a teacher, I find the confrontation exacted by Stanko exquisite. My students must question every one of their myths and stereotypes about rape, wife-battery, incest, and sexual harassment. The must also question their belief that we live in a just and equal society. The text simply does not allow one to compartmentalize and, therefore, dismiss violence against women.

Throughout the book, women's voices are present. The reader, often for the first time, hears without patriarchal bias the reality of the effect of sexual assault on the victim's body and mind and can no longer believe that women secretly desire and enjoy rape. Consistently, I am told that the most unforgettable thing about the book is what it teaches about the *physical* trauma of rape. My students (male and female) have reported that they wept, became nauseous, threw the book across the room. There can be no greater testimony to the value and necessity of *Intimate Intrusions*.

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"She Unnames Them," Ursula K. LeGuin. In *The New Yorker*, January 21, 1985, p. 23.

We have found that Ursula K. LeGuin's one-page essay/parable can spark a chap-

ter-length discussion. "Eve" begins this little tale by unnameing all the animals, wild and domestic, slicing away generic names and their Linnaean qualifiers as well as the pet names of dogs, cats and parrots. Without the names that stood as barriers between her and other species, Eve finds that animal tears, desires, smells, and warmth are like hers; and that, as a result, the hunted can no longer be distinguished from the hunter. The effect is so empowering that she gives her own name back to "Adam" and along with it the remaining remnants of hierarchy it contains. Adam dismisses Eve's nonsense without a thought. Hoping for some talk, a good-bye at least, Eve nevertheless hangs around for a while, but Adam takes no notice. Finally she leaves the garden with the unnamed and begins to contemplate the worlds her new, tentative, slowly forming words will construct.

In a few paragraphs, LeGuin offers a graceful entree into discussions of several complex epistemological ideas that usually frustrate undergraduates in courses in philosophy, sociology, communications, and women's studies: ideas like 1) social constructivism; 2) reification; 3) nominalism; 4) semiotics; 5) power-knowledge; 6) subject/object dualism; and 7) the gendering of language, knowledge, science, and moral reasoning.

However, by leaving these ideas unnamed, LeGuin creates a parable which permits students to put these epistemological concepts into the contexts of their own experiences. The boyfriend who never really listens is linked to Adam, and so is Dad's trivialization of Mom's concerns. The young woman who knows but cannot find words feels the adventure of ideas. Confucius' lesson—the first step in any social movement is to change the names—is brought home as word-play is conceived of as anything but frivolous.

The power of this little piece is attested to by the fact that we've found student-generated copies taped to classroom walls. Perhaps classes taught by Professor Adam? Moreover, some women students regard LeGuin's tale as license for finding their own voices, and perhaps some males will see it as a reason for listening to those voices.

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*Concessions and How to Beat Them*, Jane Slaughter. Labor Education and Research Project (P.O. Box 20001, Detroit, MI 48220), \$4.50. *Labor's Joke Book*, ed. Paul Buhle. Worker's Democracy Press (P.O. Box 24115, St. Louis, MO 63130), \$3.95.

These two inexpensive small-press publications are unusually helpful for initiating classroom discussion of political and cultural aspects of the contemporary U.S. labor movement.

Jane Slaughter's 150-page book at first appears to be simply an exposé of the "concession" strategy of U.S. employers, revealed as part of an overall "industrial policy" to bolster profits and compete in the world market. Within a short time, however, we find ourselves on an astonishing journey into the netherworld of ideological manipulation on behalf of class exploitation. With incisive examples and relentless documentation, Slaughter demonstrates convincingly that what business, media and some union officials have been selling as a "new" form of worker-owner co-operation is merely a disguised version of the forced "givebacks" and "take-aways" that unions had strongly resisted until the United Auto Workers established the precedent of agreeing to make "concessions" to the Chrysler Corporation in November 1979.

Moreover, Slaughter doesn't stop at a mere indictment of the ideological and political mechanisms that deceive workers into betraying their own best interests. *Concessions* also examines instances of worker resistance and Slaughter proposes a strategy that could lead to a revitalization of the U.S. labor movement as a potent force for social amelioration.

But if programs for resistance such as Slaughter's do exist, the question remains as to why such programs have failed to achieve widespread adherence. Part of the answer is cultural; not only are workers—not to mention the general population—bombarded with propaganda obscuring the authentic class relations responsible for their oppression, but they are also immersed in a culture of cynicism with the consequence that the revelations made by leftists about the corruption of bosses and union leadership only render workers less enthusiastic about the possibilities of change.

One way that such false consciousness and skepticism about radical alternatives can be undermined is through counter-hegemonic cultural struggle: the creation of songs, symbols, posters, and other forms of resistance art promoting unity among workers of both sexes and all races, build-