

**Libora Oates-Indruchová (ed.): Dívčí válka s ideologií. Klasické texty angloamerického feministického myšlení** [The Maid's War with Ideology. Classic texts of an Anglo-American Feminist Thinking]

Praha, SLON 1998, 304 pp.

While looking at the book under review it is worthy emphasising a commonly known, though often underestimated fact that the Czech intellectual context was isolated from the development of feminist and gender theory until early 1990s. Resistance to this stream of thought was perhaps one of the few points shared by both, the spokespersons of the various versions of Marxism dominating the so-called 'official' academia, as well as by the representatives of alternative intellectual circles. Books by Derrida, Habermas or perhaps Lacan were smuggled across the border into the country, but Kristeva, Irigaray, or Gilligan would have never been on the list of books secretly crossing the Iron Curtain.

Due to such a more or less *tabula rasa* situation, those, who later decided to introduce this significant part of the post-World War II Euro-American intellectual history to the local audience, were facing a following question: Where to start? To begin with translations of the 'classic' feminist texts from the early phases of the second wave of feminism which could locally sound like naive propaganda, or to try to introduce more advanced theoretical texts which, due to a different history of both thought and actions in this part of Europe, may hardly be understood at all. The "Maid's War" is one of the first attempts in the Czech language to find an answer to this question. Beyond a few monothematical issues of journals (i.e. *The Journal of Philosophy* 1992, *Labyrint* 1997, *Aspekt* in Slovak since 1993) there have not been any translated texts on gender and women issues published in a solid collection by any publishing house in this country. The fact that we have had to wait for such a basic collection until 1998 is, unfortunately, a symptomatic illustration of the current Czech intellectual context.

Oates-Indruchová, inspired by the ongoing requests she used to face as a former coordinator of the Prague Gender Studies Centre

some years ago, decided to choose samples of texts from the first wave and beginning of the second wave of English and American feminism, most of which originally emerged in 1970s. She has tried to identify those pieces which "left a significant trace in the history of feminist thinking within its own discipline or beyond: they either were the first ones or they provoked a massive response" (p. 9). The first wave is represented by samples of work by M. Wollstonecraft, J. S. Mill, and V. Wolf, in order to show to the local audience, as the editor claims in the introduction, that feminist ideas did not emerge in 1960s but have a long history on their own. In the second part, particular fields of social sciences and humanities are represented by key texts which made a major contribution to their development from mid 1970s onwards. Here we find Friedan's famous *The Feminine Mystique*, Millet's *Sexual Politics*, Kelly-Gadol's *Did Women have a Renaissance?*, Showalter's *Towards a Feminist Poetics* and Mitchell's well-known work on Lacan, just to name few.

Translating feminist texts is, due to the above noted Czech isolation from the development of feminist conceptual frameworks and methods, far from an easy undertaking. The Czech language does not even have an equivalent of the term 'gender'. The existing Czech word '*rod*' has not been exposed locally to the process of transformation from a term referring to a grammatical category to a theoretical concept. Moreover, many other terms used by feminist writers, such as 'oppressed' or 'marginalised', have until recently been related to other than gender identity. Such a demanding project needs not just translators fluent in English, but most importantly people with at least a minimal competence in feminist theory. It must have been very difficult not just to identify the right people but then to co-ordinate their work. With few exceptions, most of the texts are presented in consistent and cultivated language and even the most complicated points are to a great extent understandable.

Some of my reservations are, however, related to the editor's introduction, and to the title of the book. In a pioneering project of this kind one would have expected a more consistent historical study, explaining not just the