Newcomb and Hirsch see it, these meanings or cultural values are examined, maintained and transformed through the public "conversation" of television. Taylor follows this interpretation in arguing that TV in the 1970s "reworked and commented on the political and social discourses of critics, social scientists, and policymakers within the frame of its own discourse, raising and then reworking political and social troubling issues of its time and place." And in keeping with her belief in the capacity of television to serve as "public forum," she deplores scenes obviously and simplistically promote "traditional values" and calls for the more disruptive ones that allow "public ventilation" of social concerns.

There are some inherent problems with this approach, however. The radicalism that Taylor sees as best mild, usually compromised, and at worst spurious. She argues that the intent of the 1950s"shows was not to propagate new ideas but to demonstrate that they are just as much the formula for most of the 1970s shows she analyzes. In fact, there is some internal contradiction. Taylor herself demonstrates that these shows are loaded with double messages to ensure that they will appease the dominant culture. If Archie Bunker is a bigot, he is also the central focus and hero of his show. If Mary Richards is an independent woman, she is simultaneously catering to the homemaker stereotypes.

Taylor does notice that authority figures are still always male, but she finds them acceptable because they represent "a progressive and和ogous rather than autocratic patriarchy." She applauds the improvements of MTM shows, for instance, over its eleven-year tenure, toward less caricature and greater "humanization" of its characters as the show progresses. The loopy and irresponsible Colonel Blake is replaced by Colonel Potter, whom Taylor praises as "the kind of doctor, the kind of leader and the kind of father anyone [she] might wish for"; the incompetent Frank Burns fades away and Winchester, the arrogant scientist in M*A*S*H, is replaced by the larger figure of B. J. Littleton. Klinger accepts being in the army and appears no more in the feminine attire that marked his early appearance.

Yet I would argue that the early caricatures...
mora Machel, Mozambique's president, declared women's emancipation a national priority and a precondition for victory. At first the gains for women were very real. Women became equal before the law and in the constitution. Somehow enough money was found in a sorely strapped budget to run a national women's organization and to guarantee women a share of development aid. Frelimo devoted special energies to the creation of communal villages with shared water pumps and taps, schools, health clinics and adult education classes, innovations especially for women. Moreover, Frelimo has won a reputation for sincerity in its campaigns to halt lobolo (bride price), initiation rites, forced marriage and polygamy, and for encouraging women to enter traditionally male jobs.

Nevertheless, Urdang's book gives sobering poignancy, particularly for women, to the lines from Pontecorvo's famous film on the Algerian war of independence, The Battle of Algiers: "It is difficult to start a revolution, more difficult to sustain it. But it's later, when we've won, that the real difficulties will begin."

**MUCH OF THE POWER and importance of And Still They Dance derives from Urdang's refusal to pursue the commonalties of Mozambique's smooth soup. Rather, she allows the reader to feel the conflicts and contradictions in the stories women tell of their own lives. Certainly, as elsewhere in the third world, much of the women's plight can be traced to the legacy of colonialism. After independence, thousands of demoralized white settlers scurried from the country (in what white Rhodesian dubbed "the chicken-run"), leaving behind a nation without foreign exchange, without people trained to perform the tasks abandoned by the fleeing whites, and an illiteracy rate for women of close to 100 percent. The settler exodus acted as a kind of economic Agent Orange, defoliating the country of its technical and commercial resources—empire's last mean blow.

Frelimo responded desperately by turning the huge settler estates into badly conceived state farms—while neglecting the family farms traditionally run by women. As Urdang notes, had Frelimo favored the women farmers, who after all produce the vast bulk of the nation's food, Mozambique might have been better able to fend off the MNF when it appeared.

A killer army notoriously vacant of political goals or coherent policies, the MNF's favorite targets are the rural services whose loss is most calamitous for women: water pumps, clinics, schools, irrigation schemes. The sabotage of a water-pump in a village can mean a walk for women through bandit-infested country to a stream miles from the village. Urdang tells anecdotes of women and children kidnapped in the middle of such ordinary journeys, women viciously raped, then stripped and used as naked beasts of burden till they die of fatigue and starvation; thousands of children dragged into war and forced to mutilate or murder their own kin; pregnant women sliced open at the tips of bayonets; one woman forced to plow a field with her bare hands. One of the most heart-breaking features of the war is that the MNF is very much an army of children who have been press-ganged into war, child-killers who are mostly under the age of fifteen.

Yet the women who spoke to Urdang also bear witness to the fact that not all the blame for their plight can be laid at the door of the colonial past or South Africa's presence to the south. Urdang's book echoes with the angry clamor of women protesting the tenacity of men insisting on their traditional patriarchal privileges. Women complain of being abandoned to starve by their husbands because they do not bear children, of domestic battery, the bad infinity of housework and childcare, of sexual violence and economic disadvantage—the familiar global litany. As in many countries, national policy has favored cash cropping and surplus, a predictable pattern where men are given the training, the international aid, the machinery, the seeds, the loans and cash, despite the fact that it is women who continue unpaid the bone-breaking work of feeding the nation's families. As Urdang asks, given that women are the primary producers of food, should it not be the women who make the decisions about economic policy?

Despite all this, Urdang's moving yet restrained narrative recounts dizzying achievements and courage. If And Still They Dance seems at times structurally patchy, this is in part due to Urdang's efforts to blend the women's own intimate testimonies of struggle and re- fuse with the longer history of the nation. Much of the strength of the book is her attention to contradiction and nuance. The vexed issues of polygamy and lobolo, for example, can only be seen in context, and above all, as Urdang urges, it is the women themselves who must decide the changing direction of their lives.

The MNF and South Africa's predations, however, have been so catastrophic that Frelimo has recently been forced to renounce Marxism and consider shaking hands with the bandits. Mozambique is in every sense a country on its knees. What might have been a socialist showdown in Angola and triumph for women has instead been turned into the killing-fields of Southern Africa, where women's emancipation has been postponed to cloud-cuckoo-land.

**AROUND THE GLOBE the Women's Decade has been the decade of dreams decimated. As Sonia Kruks, Rayna Rapp and Marilyn Young's ground-breaking collection of essays, Promissory Notes: Women and the Transition to Socialism testifies, for women the promise of socialism has also been a history of hope postponed. Much of this massively informative book's contribution is in bringing together two-covers-of the sprawl of so many different socialisms and feminisms—the Soviet Union, China, Cuba, Nicaragua, Mozambique, Vietnam, South Yemen, Bengal, the German Democratic Republic and Hungary—respecting historical variation while at the same time allowing the lineaments of continuity to be gleaned from change. The case studies that form the bulk of this collection, each scrupulously researched and important in its own right, are flanked at either end by theoretical essays—frankly arugumentative pieces which fling open many of the shut, and sometimes foetid, closets of Marxism and feminism's unhappy marriage.

Together, the essays suggest that socialism's fidelity to feminism has been fitful, to say the least. In a few cases such as Bengal (Amrita Basu), women's concerns were at best paid lip-service, worst greeted with hilarity. More often than not, however, as in Nicaragua (Maxine Molyneux) and Cuba (Ofelia Del Carpio), real efforts have been made to transform the lives of women. But nowhere is feminism in its own right allowed to be more than the maid-servant to socialism.

In South Yemen (Molyneux) and China (Marilynn Young, Christina Gilmartin), for example, women could mobilize for change in so far as they helped spread the political base of the party, swell the labor force and march against the withered family elites and warlord regimes. In the process, the nose of traditional patriarchy was bloodied, and dramatic changes for women were won. But most socialist countries have been unenthusiastic about granting gender conflict (or racial conflict for that matter) as fundamental a role in history as class conflict, and feminism for its own sake has either been scoffed at or unceremoniously squelched.

Yet I doubt that any of the contributors would deny that women have generally fared better in socialist nations. In most of the countries explored, new laws, literacy and health campaigns, welfare and maternity benefits have dramatically expanded women's livelihoods, for example, women hold 31 percent of responsible political posts, compared with the wretched world average of twelve percent. After the US's fit of thuggery in Grenada, by contrast, welfare programs were disbanded, the women's organization was collapsed and unemployment surged. By and large, the contributors to Promissory Notes defend the dramatic boons for women which were won by the sundry socialist revolutions, but chafe at the tardiness of change and the betrayal of promises.

For good or ill, Engels left his mark virtually everywhere. The founding fathers of socialism decreed that capitalism has been its ruin, with patriarchy merely a nasty second cousin destined to wither away when the real villain finally croaks. The ill of women will vanishing into air once the entire female sex is working hard in public industry. Yet as...
No place to go?

by Ann Withorn


K AThLEEn Hirsch is a journalist who spent three years observing and listening to homeless women in Boston, a city with at least 5000 homeless people. In Songs from the Alley she tries to challenge, not shock, a popular audience by showing women who live on the streets and the people who try to help them. Her goal is to enter the subculture of homelessness as completely and with as few misconceptions as possible and, by earning the trust of the women who moved in on it, to arrive at an intimate understanding of their pasts, self-perceptions and current preoccupations, and the institutional resources they could draw on in solving their individual crises.

Over half the book recounts in detail the lives of two homeless women, Amanda and Wendy. Hirsch felt a “special connection” with both women and saw in their lives “invaluable windows onto two worlds of vitally important contrast: between those homeless who accept the system of service society currently offers ... by using the shelters; and those who refuse, or have been refused by, our system.” Amanda and Wendy are both white women from middle-class back- grounds. Both are victims of the physical, emotional and probably sexual abuse that Hirsch mentions, but does not fully ana- lyze, as a “common thread” among homeless women.

We see a waiflike Amanda who grew up struggling to find love from an increasingly detached mother and to escape from an even more violent father. An old friend of Amanda’s mother Renata recalls visiting the family and seeing Amanda slumped near Renata’s feet while the other children played. One of the mothers saw Renata pick Amanda up. The little girl was completely immobile, tensed in the same semi-seated posture, and her face was oddly wrinkled, as if she regularly stayed for hours in the same position.

We gain a less sharp, though still moving, sense of Wendys’ insecure childhood, full of illness and empty of loving attention. (That her story is much less vivid than Amanda’s may be due to her alcoholism, which may have dulled her memory in her conversa- tions with Hirsch.)

Amanda is homeless on and off. She enters shelters, which offer her the only anti- dote to an excruciatingly lonely existence, as marginal jobs disappear or become unbearable. For Wendy shelters offer no haven. Even the least judging places are too con- fining for her, too restraining of her uncontrol- led behavior. (I found Wendy an attrac- tive figure, for all her difficulties. Hirsch has a good journalistic eye and captures her spirit well. One day, for instance, pursued by guards and stared at by petitioners, she wanders imperturbably into a fountain at Boston’s upscale urban mall Copley Place, barefoot and in blue jeans, to fish for pennies.) While Hirsch is good at individual por- traits she makes no attempt to evaluate pro- grams or to diagnose women’s problems.

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this volume vividly and painfully testifies, most women in the world are already up to their elbows in public industry, bent double in field and factory, and then bent double again in the household.

Much of the value of the collection de- rives from its stress on how many different socialisms, feminisms and patriarchies there indeed are. Yet striking patterns emerge. Essay after essay affirms that the chief fetor to women’s freedom is the gen- dered division of labor. If women have come to do men’s work as well as their own, men have not come to share women’s work.

Indeed, in parts of Vietnam, for example, as Christine White’s excellent essay shows, women now do the work of women, the work of men, and also the work of buffer- loes. This is a cruel parody of Engels’ formu- lation that the road to public industry would be the road to emancipation. Certainly, women in Vietnam have been admitted to the army. As one male Vietnamese poet put it: “In the assault you command a hundred squads. Night returns, you sit mending fighters’ clothes.” But as White asks wryly, who other than a woman general would be praised for staying awake after battle to mend her soldiers’ uniforms?

The notorious double duty cuts a swath across countries, classes and cultures. Cer- tain socialist countries such as Nicaragua and Cuba have gone further than any other state by writing into the law the equal shar- ing of housework and inventing ingenious tactics such as radio announcements during meal-times urging men to help. But in the absence of sustained campaigns, the weight of male self-interest and the undertow of patriarchal Catholicism, Confucianism and fundamentalism of all kinds prove over- whelming. The Mozambican women’s or- ganization is told, for example, to urge women to work even harder and thus shame their men into helping, as risible and futile a strategy as could be imagined.

Promissory Notes also reveals, however, how often socialist attempts to transform women’s lives have been stalled by wars of aggression. The US, for one, has bred death squads and proxy armies around the world, turning entire nations into military camps. Countries like Vietnam and Mozambique have been made to pay a frightful price for embracing Marxism. How can one talk of day care, literacy or women’s health in coun- tries permanently mobilized for national defense? At the same time, how can one talk of global sisterhood when women who have strangled for the right to wear khaki end up servicing male wars of aggression against women in other countries? Indeed, one is forced to wonder whether any feminist the- ory of socialist development can ignore the prospect of permanent war with unkink powers like the US.

This raises the vexed issue of the relation between relatively privileged women in the West and other embattled women around the world. There were times, as well, when reading this superb collection I felt the im- mediacy of women’s lives was being bleached out by acronyms and swelled up in statistics. Unlike Urdang’s book, Promissory Notes does not echo with the voices of women in different countries speaking for themselves. Perhaps this is un- avoidable, but one is forcibly reminded of the Algerian feminist Marnie Lazreg’s cau- tion to Western feminists to be wary of the borrowed authority of academic interpreta- tion. This issue is broached somewhat be- yond the round-table discussion at the end of Promissory Notes, where some wel- come passion is generated.

One unaccountable omission in Promis- sory Notes is that not a jot of interest is shown in the appalling plight of lesbians (and gay men for that matter) in many so- cialist countries. The metaphor of the “un- happy marriage” of Marxism and feminism betrays a lurking heterosexism within so- cialist feminism itself that urgently needs to be tackled. Finally, then, contributor Delia Aguilas’s angry call to white women to lis- ten should serve as a timely warning that Western feminists honor their own promis- sory notes, not only to women in the third world, but to minority and beleaguered women in their own countries, if sisterhood is indeed ever to become global.