

Summaries

Barbara Verdonck

Search for the woman

Sarah Kofman on Comte, discourse and sexism

Sarah Kofman's close-reading of Auguste Comte discovers that the most basic 'difference', organising the logic of his argument, is a 'sexual difference'. Each of Comte's writings is, in the last resort, struggling with the sexual position it is written from. Whereas the early Comte wants to write from a firmly 'masculine' position, the later Comte 'becomes a woman'. Kofman shows that both positions

must be linked to an 'undecided' bisexual position. Her 'search for the woman' (*cherchez la femme*) in Comte, eventually discovers the image of the 'mother' as the figure of an irrepressible difference. Essential to the 'construction' of Comte's reasoning, at the same time this kind of unmanageable difference never stops 'deconstructing' it.

Margot van Mulken

Under Wraps

The development of rhetoric in magazine advertisement

'Easily embarrassed? Wear a wotsit and no one will know you've got your thingy' is a nice example of a Tampax slogan, used in the mid nineties to sell tampons and to mock the taboo character of menstruation at an earlier stage. This slogan illustrates how rhetoric in magazine advertisements has evolved. On the basis of Phillips and McQuarrie (2002) one would expect that the need for rhetoric has diminished, since it is less difficult to 'speak the unspeakable'. Rhetorical figures in ads can be

employed to effectively convey a message that is otherwise problematic or unspeakable. However, the author shows by means of sample analysis that the frequency of the use of rhetoric does not decline. Visual and verbal rhetoric in advertisements for woman hygiene products has even evolved in complexity. Van Mulken has combined content analysis and qualitative interpretation in such a way, that semiotic classes could be used to quantify trends in rhetoric.

Veerle Draulans

Systems of care reproducing inequality

An interview with Joan Tronto

In this article, Veerle Draulans presents some basic ideas of Joan Tronto's *Ethics of Care* and discusses the importance of her viewpoints for the broader debate on care ethics. Joan Tronto, professor of Political Science, Hunter College, City University of New York, combines in her analyses of care practices such as systems that reproduce inequality, a gender approach, socio-economic dimensions and ethical ques-

tions. In a second part of this article, Joan Tronto herself gets the floor and presents her opinion on recently debated issues in *Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies*, such as main challenges for contemporary feminism, differences in gender approaches between Europe and the US.

Judith Vega

Stepford Wives. Here, to update your critique of patriarchy

In 2004, a remake was issued of the 1974 film *The Stepford Wives*, after Ira Levin's political thriller. The remake has recast the famous *Stepford* story by, partly, turning it into a narrative about our tv dominated media landscape and its popular shows for the masses. It has shifted Levin's perspective in moving from the initial critique of patriarchy and of ethically blind technological progress on to a commentary on present-day forms of emancipation and the power of a technologically pro-

pelled mass culture. In a trendy and ironic style, the film has unearthed the central motive of the *Stepford* story: employing the metaphor of the machine for describing modern life and modern forms of social and cultural domination. In a present-day climate of predominantly liberal feminist political theory, the film may hence be judged a welcome reminder of anti-humanist thinking about domination and suppression.