relations in society. Culture is what both makes us part of an ideology and helps us to understand our place in it.

In Pollock's view, understanding the role which both the making and the study of art play, as outlined in the other chapters of Vision and Difference, requires two things. The first is the establishment of the place of art in the struggles between classes, races and genders, and the second is the specific process of analyzing what is being produced, and how and for whom in any individual case. The means for doing this are provided by the study of sign systems and psychoanalysis, in short by the study of cultural practices, which are our chief means as human beings of understanding the world and surviving in it.

Contributions have also been made by women's studies, especially in confronting the political effects of the existence of boundaries between disciplines, and in breaking them down. We need to question whether such pairs of apparent opposites as man/woman, individual/family do not mean very different things in different circumstances, so that in talk of two women, one in seventeenth-century England and one in twentieth-century India, we do not assume that the two different sets of circumstances contain the same concept of woman. In short we need to establish the extent to which sexual differences are produced by social forms. For example, a visitor to the Royal Academy in London in the middle of the nineteenth century, seeing a painting of a woman choosing a sexual partner to whom she is not married would have classified her as a fallen woman, a disordered force, an animalized creature characteristic of the working classes and primitive peoples. One must ask whether the response would have been different if the viewer were a man rather than a woman, or if the artist had been a woman instead of a man. This in turn raises the question of the extent to which it was possible for a woman to paint seriously in the middle of the nineteenth century, especially if she intended to earn money from doing so, a question which cannot be discussed outside a consideration of the position of women in British society as a whole at the time.

Pollock argues that this sort of approach can radically transform existing accounts of the subject in question, so that a study of women Impressionists involving all these aspects will also challenge masculine assumptions behind conventional accounts of late nineteenth-century painting. The aim is to show that feminist intervention goes beyond a local concern with 'the woman question' and makes gender central to the terms of historical analysis.

Another area in which feminist approaches have a particular contribution to make is in that of genius, which in traditional art history is an exclusively male preserve. Indeed, it remains so even in the writings of scholars otherwise closely allied in their methods and aims to the feminists, including Marxists such as Clark (text 21, 1974), the art historian Harrison and the artists Baldwin and Ramsden (text 23, 1986) and the French Marxist theorist Louis Althusser. An analysis of the treatment of the history of Elizabeth Siddal in histories of Pre-Raphaelitism illustrates this in most texts Siddal appears only as the inspiration of the 'fascinating Victorian genius' Rossetti. Her history must therefore be rewritten in terms of the social conditions of working women, of milliners, models and teachers in the London of the time.

Feminist approaches can also be applied to the psychoanalytical analysis of texts. Rossetti again provides a useful example, with excerpts from his writings involving descriptions of women. Freudianism is considered an acceptable tool in this sphere if it is seen not as a prescription for a
A patriarchal society but as a description of one. Just as Manist theory explains the historical and economic situation, so can psychoanalysis provide an understanding of ideology and sexuality. Thus while the distinctions drawn in the nineteenth century between men and women are fundamental, they appear quite abstract when compared with the very specific distinctions maintained between classes (contrast, for example, ladies and women, with gentlemen and working-class men). All of these considerations and methods can be brought to bear on the texts selected from Rossetti to reveal the sexual ideology which conditions them. Psychoanalysis undermines the importance of the visual in the construction of sexual difference. Woman is a visual sign, so that feminist analyses focus on pleasure, as Manist ones focus on ideology. The works of Rossetti dramatize the excessive representation of women at this period. This analysis of visual codes and their institutional support stands in sharp contrast to traditional art-historical discussions of styles or movements such as Pre-Raphaelism, Impressionism, and so on.

The women's movement uses psychoanalytical analysis to break down the barriers between art making, art history and art criticism. The political point of feminist art history must be to change the present by means of the way in which we describe the past, which means that we cannot ignore living artists. Just as feminist art history confronts modernist art history, so feminist art practice confronts modernist art practice. Feminist art groups have helped attack the autonomous and apolitical position of modernism, which is still powerful in art education despite the belief that we live in a postmodern age. Their purpose is not merely to make a place for women artists in the contemporary art world, but to attack contemporary visual systems which have such a great effect on the social conditioning of sexual difference. These women artists are discovering means of addressing women in ways not conditioned by masculine desire, fantasy and hatred. Feminist artists therefore contribute to feminist art history and vice versa.

Pollock sums up her book as a contribution to the feminist intervention in the history of art. This intervention is practical, and is conditioned by the class, race and gender of those who produce it. Alliances with those criticizing modernism have helped shape feminist approaches while also revealing the institutional reasons for blindness on the part of some of these allies towards issues of gender and, in their ethnocentricity, of race. This suggests an agenda for future work focusing on the fact that our societies are not only middle-class but also imperialist and colonizing.

Pollock describes the community from which her book emerges and to which it is addressed as consisting of feminists across the world, as part of the intellectual contribution to the political struggle. The aim of feminism for Pollock is revolution, in the spheres of both theory and practice, which are indispensable to each other. What has art history to do with the struggle for liberation of women? Art history is now closely related to big business and major exhibitions are sponsored by multinational companies. When one asks what they hope to get in return for their support, the answer, at least for an exhibition like that on the Pre-Raphaelites in 1984, is in part the following: they want an assertion of the values and meanings by which women are oppressed, in which creativity is male, women provide the beautiful images for the male gaze, are denied the role of producers of culture, and are treated as signs within a narrative which is about masculinity.

There is now in Pollock's view a complete breakdown in communication between traditional art historians and those who are contesting the old model. The new model will rewrite all of cultural history. Feminist contributions to this rewriting are not part of a fledgling discipline like a 'new art history' aiming to make improvements or season the old with current intellectual fashions; they are part of a functioning women's movement set on changing the world.

Turning from summary to comment, this text can be described as a statement of commitment to action in support of the women's movement. Pollock expresses places herself outside art history and as intervening in it, so that another author commenting from within the discipline unavoidably sets her arguments in a different context. Thus, if I claim the introduction of women's art and the new ways of examining it as pure gain for the history of art, I am likely to be acting counter to Pollock's intentions.

This is the most polemical of the texts published here. Its mode of characterization can be illustrated by two of Pollock's comments on the pervasiveness of the exclusion of women from the category of genius. In the first, Pollock ascribes to modernist art history the view that women cannot be great artists because they lack the phallus, which is what constitutes the nugget of genius. A number of artists can readily be described as painting with their penises, such as Picasso and Alan Jones (though the second denies it), and some art historians have followed this lead in discussing their work. However, Pollock's description is not recognizable as a characterization of the literature on modern artists as a whole.

In the second, Pollock replies (by the insertion of the word sic) that authorship is presumed by writers in general to be exclusively male (the notion of a beautiful object or fine book expressing the genius of the author/artist and through him (sic) the highest aspirations of human culture...). While it is undeniably the case that the contribution of women artists to the visual arts has not been acknowledged, in literature there is in the late twentieth century little if any indication of an analogous exclusion of women from the 'canon of great writers.

The other issues that Pollock raises are discussed in the relevant entries in the glossary, in connection with the following questions. To what extent is it possible to conduct a political campaign by scholarly means? What advantage is gained from requiring that a subject is approached in only one way (see theory)? What are the gains and losses of using a language only easily accessible to a particular group (see vocabulary)? (See also 'feminism,' 'ideology,' 'semiotics,' 'psychoanalysis,' 'art' and 'art history.')

In conclusion it is worth noting that Pollock is as critical of the art-historical profession as Morelli was a century ago, except that she makes her criticisms from a diametrically opposite direction. Morelli castigated art historians for relying on reading and for thinking about their subject without the experience of the individual work of art, that is, for spending more time in the library than the gallery (text B, 1890). Pollock criticizes them for being too wedded to the individual work of art and the individual artist and for being unwilling to take up the challenge of theory and sociology, that is, for spending more time in the gallery than the library.

Is adding women to art history the same as producing feminist art history? Demanding that women be considered not only changes what is studied and what becomes relevant to investigate but it challenges the existing disciplines politically. Women have not been omitted through forgetfulness or mere prejudice. The structural sexism of most academic disciplines contributes actively to the production and perpetuation of a gender hierarchy. What we learn about the world and its peoples is ideologically patterned in conformity with the social order within which it is produced. Women’s studies are not just about women – but about the social systems and ideological schemata which sustain the domination of men over women within the other mutually inflecting regimes of power in the world, namely those of class and those of race.

Feminist art history, however, began inside art history. The first question was ‘Have there been women artists?’ We initially thought about women artists in terms of art history’s typical procedures and protocols – studies of artists (the monograph), collections of works to make an œuvre (catalogues raisonnés), questions of style and iconography, membership of movements and artists’ groups, and of course the question of quality. It soon became clear that this would be a straitjacket in which our studies of women artists would reproduce and secure the normative status of men artists and men’s art whose superiority was unquestioned in its disguise as Art and the Artist. As early as 1971 Linda Nochlin warned us against getting into a no-win game trying to name female Michelangelos. The criteria of greatness were already male-defined. The question ‘Why have there been no great women artists?’ simply would not be answered to anything but women’s disadvantage if we remained tied to the categories of art history. These specified in advance the kind of answers such a question would merit. Women were not historically significant artists (they could never deny their existence once we began to unearth the evidence again) because they did not have the innate nuggets of genius (the phallus) which is the natural property of men. So she wrote:

‘A feminist critique of the discipline is needed which can pierce cultural-ideological limitations, to reveal biases and inadequacies not merely in regard to the question of women artists, but in the formulation of the crucial questions of the discipline as a whole. Thus the so-called woman question, far from being a peripheral sub-issue, can become a catalyst, a potent intellectual instrument, probing the most basic and ‘natural’ assumptions, providing a paradigm for other kinds of internal questioning, and providing links with paradigms established by radical approaches in other fields.’

In effect, Linda Nochlin called for a paradigm shift. The notion of a paradigm has become quite popular among social historians of art who borrow from Thomas Kuhn’s Structure of Scientific Revolutions in order to articulate the crisis in art history which overturned its existing certainties and conventions in the early 1970s. A paradigm defines the objectives shared within a scientific community, what it aims to research and explain, its procedures and its boundaries. It is the disciplinary matrix. A paradigm shift occurs when the dominant mode of investigation and explanation is found to be unable satisfactorily to explain the phenomenon which it is that science’s or discipline’s job to analyse. In dealing with the study of the history of nineteenth- and twentieth-century art the dominant paradigm has been identified as modernist art history. (This is discussed at the beginning of Essay 2). It is not so much that it is defective but that it can be shown to work ideologically to constrain what can and cannot be discussed in relation to the creation and reception of art. Indeed modernist art history shares with other established modes of art history certain key conceptions about creativity and the suprasocial qualities of the aesthetic realm. Indicative of the potency of the ideology is the fact that when, in 1974, the social historian of art T.J. Clark, in an article in the Times Literary Supplement, threw down the gauntlet to a Marxist position he still entitled the essay ‘The Conditions of Artistic Creation’ [text 21, 1974].

Within a few years the term production would have been inevitable and consumption has come to replace reception. This reflects the dissemination from the social history of art of categories of analysis derived from Karl Marx’s methodological exegesis Grundrisse (‘Foundations’). The introduction to this text which became known only in the mid-1950s has been a central resource for rethinking a social analysis of culture. In the opening section Marx tries to think about how he can conceptualize the totality of social forces each of which has its own distinctive conditions of existence and effects yet none the less relies on others in the whole. His objective is political economy and so he analyses the relations between production, consumption, distribution and exchange, breaking down the separateness of each activity so that he can comprehend each as a distinct moment within a differentiated and structured totality. Each is mediated by the other moments, and cannot exist or complete its purpose without the others, in a system in which production has priority as it sets all in motion. Yet each also has its own specificity, its own distinctiveness within this non-organic totality. Marx gives the example of art in order to explain how the production of an object generates and conditions its consumption and vice versa.

‘Production not only supplies a material for a need, but also supplies a need for the material. As soon as consumption emerges from its initial natural state of crudity and immediacy ... it becomes itself mediated as a drive by the object. The need which consumption feels for the object is created by the perception of it. The object of art — like every other
product—creates a public which is sensitive to art and enjoys beauty. Production not only creates an object for the subject, but also a subject for the object. Thus production produces consumption, (i) by creating the material for it; (ii) by determining the manner of consumption; (iii) by creating the products initially posted as objects in the form of a need felt by the consumer. It thus produces the object of consumption, the manner of consumption and the motive of consumption. Consumption likewise produces the producing’s inclination by beckoning to him as an aim-determining need.

This formulation banishes the typical art-historical narrative of a gifted individual creating out of his (sic) personal necessity a discrete work of art which then goes on to privatize a place of creation into a world where it is to be admired and cherished by art lovers expressing a human capacity for valuing beautiful objects. The discipline of art history like literary criticism works to naturalize these assumptions. What we are taught is how to appreciate the greatness of the artist and the quality of art objects.

This ideology is contested by the argument that we should be studying the totality of social relations which form the conditions of the production and consumption of objects designated in that process as art. Writing of the shift in the related discipline of literary criticism, Raymond Williams has observed: ‘What seems to me very striking is that nearly all forms of contemporary critical theory are theories of consumption. That is to say, that they are concerned with understanding an object in such a way that it can be profitably and correctly consumed.’

The alternative approach is not to treat the work of art as object but to consider art as practice. Williams advocates analysing first the nature and then the conditions of a practice. Thus we will address the general conditions of social production and consumption prevailing in a particular society which ultimately determine the conditions of a specific form of social activity and production, cultural practice. But then since all the component activities of social formation are practices we can move with considerable sophistication from the crude Marxist formulation of all cultural practices being dependent upon and reducible to economic practices (the famous base—superstructure idea) towards a conception of a complex social totality with many interrelating practices constitutive of, and ultimately determined within, the matrix of that social formation which Marx formulated as the mode of production. Raymond Williams in another essay made the case:

‘The fatally wrong approach, to any such study, is from the assumption of separate orders, as when we ordinarily assume that political institutions and conventions are of a different and separate order from artistic institutions and conventions. Politics and art, together with science, religion, family life and the other categories we speak of as absolutes, belong in a whole world of active and interactive relationships ... If we begin from the whole texture, we can go on to study particular activities, and their bearing on other kinds. Yet we begin, normally, from the categories themselves, and this has led again and again to a very damaging suppression of relationships.’

Williams is formulating here one of the major arguments about method—propounded by Marx in Grundrisse where Marx asked himself where to begin his analyses. It is easy to start with what seems a self-evident category, such as population in Marx’s case, or art in ours. But the category does not make sense without understanding of its components. So what method should be followed?

‘Thus, if I were to begin with the population, this would be a chaotic conception of the whole, and I would then, by means of further determination more analytically towards ever more simple concepts, from the imaginary concrete to ever thinner abstractions until I had arrived at the simplest determinations. From there the journey would have to be retraced until I had finally arrived at the population again, but this time not as a chaotic conception of a whole but as a rich totality of many determinations and relations.’

If we were to take art as our starting-point, it would be a chaotic conception, an unwieldy blanket term for a diversified range of complex social, economic, and ideological practices and factors. Thus we might break it down to production, criticism, patronage, stylistic influences, iconographic sources, exhibitions, trade, training, publishing, sign systems, publics, etc. There are many art history books which leave the issue in that fragmented way and put it together as a whole only by compiling chapters which deal with these components separately. But this is to leave the issue at the analytical level of the thin abstractions, i.e. elements abstracted from their concrete interactions. So we retrace the steps attempting to see art as a social practice, as a totality of many relations and determinations, i.e. pressures and limits.

Shifting the paradigm of art history involves therefore much more than adding new materials—women and their history—to existing categories and methods. It has led to wholly new ways of conceptualizing what it is we study and how we do it. One of the related disciplines in which radical new approaches were on offer was the social history of art. The theoretical and methodological debates of Marxist historiography are extremely pertinent and necessary for producing a feminist paradigm for the study of what is proper to rename as cultural production ... While it is important to challenge the paternal authority of Marxism under whose rubric sexual divisions are virtually natural and inevitable and fall beneath its theoretical view, it is equally important to take advantage of the theoretical and historiographical revolution which the Marxist tradition represents. A feminist historical materialism does not merely substitute gender for class but deciphers the intricate interdependence of class and gender, as well as race, in all forms of historical practice. None the less there is a strategic priority in insisting upon recognition of gender power and of sexuality as historical forces of significance as great as any of the other matrices privileged in Marxism or other forms of social history or cultural analysis. In Essay 3 a feminist analysis of the founding conditions of modernism in the gendered and eroticized terrain of the modern city directly challenges an authoritative social historical account which categorically refuses feminism as a necessary corollary. The intention is to displace the limiting effects of such partial re-readings and to reveal how feminist materialist analysis handles not only the specific issues of women in cultural history but the central and commonly agreed problems.
There were, however, other new models developing in corresponding disciplines such as literary studies and film theory, to name but the most influential. Initially the immediate concern was to develop new ways of analysing texts. The notion of a beautiful object or fine book expressing the genius of the author/artist and through him (sic) the highest aspirations of human culture was displaced by a stress on the productive activity of texts—scenes of work, writing or sign making, and of reading, viewing. How is the historical and social at work in the production and consumption of texts? What are texts doing socially?

Cultural practices were defined as signifying systems, as practices of representation, sites not for the production of beautiful things evoking beautiful feelings. They produce meanings and positions from which those meanings are consumed. Representation needs to be defined in several ways. As Representation the term stresses that images and texts are no mirrors of the world, merely reflecting their sources. Representation stresses something refracted, coded in, rhetorical, textual or pictorial terms, quite distinct from its social existence. Representation can also be understood as 'articulating' in a visible or socially palpable form social processes which determine the representation and then are actually affected and altered by the forms, practices and effects of representation. In the first sense representation of trees, persons, places is understood to be ordered according to the conventions and codes of practices of representation, painting, photography, literature and so forth. In the second sense, which involves the first inevitably, representation articulates—puts into words, visualizes, puts together—social practices and forces which are not, like trees, there to be seen but which we theoretically know condition our existence. In one of the classic texts enunciating this phenomenon, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* (1852), Karl Marx repeatedly relies on the metaphor of the stage to explain the manner in which the fundamental and economic transformations of French society were played out in the political arena 1848–51, a political level which functioned as a representation but then actively effected the conditions of economic and social development in France subsequently. Cultural practice as a site of such representation has been analysed in terms derived from Marx’s initial insights about the relation between the political and economic levels. Finally, representation involves a third inflection, for it signifies something represented to, addressed to a reader/viewer/consumer.

Theories of representation have been elaborated in relation to Marxist debates about ideology. Ideology does not merely refer to a collection of ideas or beliefs. It is defined as a systematic ordering of a hierarchy of meanings and a setting in place of positions for the assimilation of those meanings. It refers to material practices embodied in concrete social institutions by which the social systems, their conflicts and contradictions are negotiated in terms of the struggles within social formations between the dominant and the dominated, the exploiting and the exploited. In ideology cultural practices are at once the means by which we make sense of the social process in which we are caught up and indeed produced. But it is a site of struggle and confusion for the character if the knowledges are ideological, partial, conditioned by social place and power.

Understanding of what specific artistic practices are doing, their meanings and social effects, demands therefore a dual approach. First the practice must be located as part of the social struggles between classes, races and genders, articulating with other sites of representation. But second we must analyse what any specific practice is doing, what meaning is being produced, and how and for whom. Semiotic analysis has provided necessary tools for systematic description of how images or languages or other sign systems (fashion, eating, travel, etc.) produce meanings and positions for the consumption of meanings. More formal analysis of sign systems, however, can easily lose contact with the sociality of a practice. Semiotic analysis, approached through developments in theories of ideology and informed by analyses of the production and meaning of subjectivities in psychoanalysis, provided new ways to understand the role of cultural activities in the making of meanings, but more importantly in the making of social subjects. The impact of these procedures on the study of cultural practices entirely displaces pure stylistic or iconographic treatments of isolated groups of objects. Cultural practices do a job which has a major social significance in the articulation of meanings about the world, in the negotiation of social conflicts, in the production of social subjects.

As critical as these ‘radical approaches in other fields’ was the massive expansion of feminist studies attendant on the resurgence of the women’s movement in the late 1960s. Women’s studies emerged in almost all academic disciplines challenging the ‘politics of knowledge’. But what is the object of women’s studies? Writing women back does indeed cause the disciplines to be reformulated but it can leave the disciplinary boundaries intact. The very divisions of knowledge into segregated compartments have political effects. Social and feminist studies in cultural practices in the visual arts are commonly ejected from art history by being labelled a sociological approach, if reference to social conditions and ideological determinations are introducing foreign concerns into the discrete realm of art. But if we aim to erode the false divisions what is the unifying framework for the analysis of women?

In their introduction to the anthology *Women and Society*, the collective responsible for the ‘Women in Society’ course at Cambridge University in the 1970s questioned the possibility of even taking the term women for granted:

"At first sight, it might seem as if concepts like male/female, man/woman, individual/family are so self-evident that they need no "decoding", but can simply be traced through various historical or social changes. These changes would, for example, give a seventeenth-century English woman a different social identity from a low-caste Indian woman today, or would ascribe different functions to the family in industrial and pre-industrial societies. But the problem with both these examples is that they leave the alleged subject of these changes (woman, the family) with an apparently coherent identity which is shuffled from century to century or from society to society as if it was something that already existed independent of particular circumstances. One purpose of this book, and of our course as it has gradually evolved, is to question that coherence: to show that it is constructed out of social givens which can themselves be subjected to similar questioning. This book, therefore, concentrates on themes that return to the social rather than to the individual sphere, emphasizing the social construction of sexual difference" [Pollack’s emphasis].
At a conference the artist Mary Kelly was asked to talk to the question ‘What is feminist art?’ She redirected the question to ask ‘What is the problematic for feminist artistic practices?’ where problematic refers to the theoretical and methodological field from which statements are made and knowledge produced. The problematic for feminist analyses of visual culture as part of a broader feminist enterprise could be defined in terms offered above, the social construction of sexual difference. But it would need to be complemented by analysis of the psychic construction of sexual difference which is the site for the inscription into individuals, through familial social relations, of the socially determined distinction which privileges sex as a criterion of power.

We do need to point out the discrimination against women and redress their omission. But this can easily become a negative enterprise with limited objectives, namely correlation and improvement. In art history we have documented women’s artistic activity and repeatedly exposed the prejudice which refused to acknowledge women’s participation in culture. But has it had any real effect? Courses on women and art are occasionally allowed in marginal spaces which do not replace the dominant paradigm. But even then there is cause for alarm. For instance in my institution on a four-year degree scheme students are exposed to feminist critiques of art history and a course on contemporary feminist artists for a period of twenty weeks, one two-term course. None the less the question was raised by an external assessor as to whether there was not too much feminism in this course. Indeed we should be deeply concerned about bias but no one seems unduly concerned about the massive masculinism of all the rest of our courses. The anxiety reflects something greater at stake than talking about women. Feminist interventions demand recognition of gender power relations, making visible the mechanisms of male power, the social construction of sexual difference and the role of cultural representations in that construction.

So long as we discuss women, the family, crafts or whatever else we have done as feminists we endorse the social givenness of woman, the separate sphere. Once we insist that sexual difference is produced through an interconnecting series of social practices and institutions of which families, education, art studies, galleries and magazines are part, then the hierarchies which sustain masculine dominance come under scrutiny and stress, then what we are studying in analysing the visual arts is one instance of this production of difference which must of necessity be considered in a double frame: (a) the specificity of its effects as a particular practice with its own materials, resources, conditions, constituencies, modes of training, competence, expertise, forms of consumption and related discourses, as well as its own codes and rhetorics; (b) the interdependence for its intelligibility and meaning with a range of other discourses and social practices. For example the visitor to the Royal Academy in London in the mid-nineteenth century carried with her a load of ideological baggage composed of the illustrated papers, novels, periodical magazines, books on class, sex, race, culture, manuals, medical conversations, etc., addressed to and consumed in distinctive ways by women of the bourgeoisie hailed through these representations as ladies. They are not all saying the same thing – the crude dominant ideology thesis. Each distinctively articulates the pressing questions about definitions of masculinity and femininity in terms of an imperialist capitalist system, in ways determined by its institutional site, producers and publics. But in the interconnections, repetitions and resemblances a prevailing regime of truth is generated providing a large framework of intelligibility within which certain kinds of understanding are preferred and others rendered unthinkable. Thus a painting of a woman having chosen a sexual partner outside marriage will be read as a fallen woman, a disordering force in the social fabric, an embodiment of mayhem, a contaminating threat to the purity of a lady’s womanhood, an animalized and coarsened creature closer to the physicality of the working-class populations and to the sexual promiscuity of ‘primitive’ peoples, etc., etc.

But will it be read differently if the viewer is a woman or a man? Will the representation be different if the producer is a woman or a man? This is a question I address in Essay 3. One of the primary responsibilities of a feminist intervention must be the study of women as producers. But we have problematized the category women to make its historical construction the very object of our analysis. Thus we proceed not from the assumption of a given essence of woman outside of, or partially immune to, social conditions but we have to analyse the dialectical relation between being a person positioned as in the feminine within historically varying social orders and the historically specific ways in which we always exceed our placements. To be a producer of art in bourgeois society in late nineteenth-century Paris was in some sense a transgression of the definition of the feminine, itself a class-loaded term. Women were meant to be mothers and domestic angels who did not work and certainly did not earn money. Yet the same social system which produced this ideology of domesticity embraced and made vivid by millions of women, also generated the feminist revolt with a different set of definitions of women’s possibilities and ambitions. These were, however, argued for and lived out within the boundaries established by the dominant ideologies of femininity. In that subtle negotiation of what is thinkable or beyond the limits, the dominant definitions and the social practices through which they are produced and articulated are modified – sometimes radically – as at moments of maximum collective political struggle by women or less overtly as part of the constant negotiations of contradictions to which all social systems are subject. In those spaces where difference is most insistently produced, as in define the eroticized territories of the modern city in Essay 3, it is possible to outline in larger characters the differential conditions of women’s artistic practice in such a way that its delineation radically transforms the existing accounts of the phenomenon. In Essay 3 on ‘Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity’ my argument is addressed to feminists engaged in the study of the women Impressionists, but equally it is a critique of both modernist and social art historians’ versions of the painting of modern life which exclusively consider the inescapable issues of sexuality from a masculine viewpoint. My aim is precisely to show how a feminist intervention exceeds a local concern with ‘the woman question’ and makes gender central to our terms of historical analysis (always in conjunction with the other structurations such as class and race which are mutually inflecting).

A particularly fruitful resource for contemporary cultural studies has been ‘discourse analysis’, particularly modelled on the writings of the French historian...
Michel Foucault. Foucault provided an anatomy of what he called the human sciences. Those bodies of knowledge and ways of writing which took as their object and in fact produced as a category for analysis - Man. He introduced the notion of discursive formation to deal with the systematic interconnections between an array of related statements which form a field of knowledge, its possibilities and its occlusions. Thus on the agenda for analysis is not just the history of art, i.e. the art of the past, but also art history, the discursive formation which invented that entity to study it. Of course there has been art before art history catalogued it. But art history as an organized discipline defined what it is and how it can be spoken of. In writing Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology (1981) Rozsika Parker and I formulated the issue thus: "To discover the history of women and art is in part to account for the way art history is written. To expose its underlying values, its assumptions, its silences and its prejudices is also to understand that the way women artists are recorded is crucial to the definition of art and artist in our society."

Art history itself is to be understood as a series of representational practices which actively produce definitions of sexual difference and contribute to the present configuration of sexual politics and power relations. Art history is not just indifferent to women; it is a masculinist discourse, party to the social construction of sexual difference. As an ideological discourse it is composed of procedures and techniques by which a specific representation of art is manufactured. That representation is secured around the primary figure of the artist as individual creator. No doubt theories of the social production of art combined with the structuralist assassination of the author would also lead to a denunciation of the archaic individualism at the heart of art-historical discourse. But it is only feminists who have nothing to lose with the desecration of Genius. The individualism of which the artist is a prime symbol is gender exclusive. The artist is one major articulation of the contradictory nature of bourgeois ideals of masculinity. The figure remains firmly entrenched in Marxist art history, witness the work of T.J. Clark, the Modern Art and Modernism course at the Open University, and even Louis Althusser on Cremonini. It has become imperative to deconstruct the ideological manufacture of this privileged masculine individual in art-historical discourse. In Essay 4 Deborah Cherry and I analyse the reciprocal positioning of masculine creator and passive feminine object in the art-historical texts which form the continuing basis for studies of Pre-Raphaelitism. The point of departure was an attempt to write Elizabeth Siddall and other women artists of the group back into art history. But they are there already, doing a specific job in their appointed guise. Any work on historical producers such as Elizabeth Siddall required at once a double focus. Initially it needed a critical deconstruction of the texts in which she is figured as the beloved inspiration and beautiful model of the fascinating Victorian genius Rossetti. Furthermore it involved a realization that her history lay right outside the discursive field of art history in feminist historical research which would not focus on individuals but on the social conditions of working women in London as milliners, models, in educational establishments, etc. In conjunction with an analysis derived from the model of Foucault's work we deployed the notion of woman as sign developed in an article by Elizabeth Cowie in 1978. Cowie combined models from structural anthropology's analysis of the exchange of women as a system of communication with semiotic theory about signifying systems. Cowie's essay still provides one of the path-breaking theorizations of the social production of sexual difference.

Complementing the task of deconstruction is feminist rewriting of the history of art in terms which firmly locate gender relations as a determining factor in cultural production and in signification. This involves feminist readings, a term borrowed from literary and film theory. Feminist readings involve texts often produced by men and with no conscious feminist concern or design which are susceptible to new understanding through feminist perceptions. In Essay 6 I offer psychoanalytically derived readings of representations of woman in selected texts by the Victorian painter D.G. Rossetti. Psychoanalysis has been a major force in European and British feminist studies despite widespread feminist suspicion of the sexist applications of Freudian theory in this century. As Juliet Mitchell commented in her important book challenging feminist critique, Psychoanalysis and Feminism, Freudian theory offers not a prescription for a patriarchal society but a description of one which we can use to understand its functioning. In her introduction she referred to the Parisian feminist group Psychoanalyse et Politique and explained their interest in psychoanalysis:

"Influenced, but critically, by the particular interpretation of Freud offered by Jacques Lacan, Psychoanalyse et Politique would use psychoanalysis for an understanding of the operations of the unconscious. Their concern is to analyse how men and women live as men and women within the material conditions of their existence - both general and specific. They argue that psychoanalysis gives us the concepts with which we can comprehend how ideology functions; closely connected with this, it further offers analysis of the place and meaning of sexuality and gender differences within society. So where Marxist theory explains the historical and economic situation, psychoanalysis, in conjunction with notions of ideology already gained in dialectical materialism, is the way of understanding ideology and sexuality."

Foucault has provided a social account of the discursive construction of sexuality and he argued that in some critical sense 'sexuality' is fundamentally bourgeois in origin. 'It was in the great middle classes that sexuality, albeit in a morally restricted and sharply defined form, first became of major ideological significance.' Foucault identifies psychoanalysis as itself a product of the will to know, the construction and subjection of the sexualized body of the bourgeoisie. The deployment of psychoanalytical theory by contemporary feminists is not a flight from historical analysis into some universalistic theory. Rooted historically as the mode of analysis (and a technique for relieiving the extreme effects) of the social relations, practices and institutions which produced and regulated bourgeois sexuality, psychoanalysis makes its revelation of the making of sexual difference. Foucault speaks of class sexualities but these fundamentally involved gendered sexualities. The making of masculine and feminine subjects crucially involved the manufacture and regulation of sexualities, radically different and hardly complementary let alone compatible, between those designated men and women. But these terms were ideological abstractions compared to the careful distinctions
maintained between ladies and women in class terms, and gentlemen and working-class men. The social definitions of class and of gender were intimately connected. But the issue of sexuality and its constant anxieties pressed with major ideological significance on the bourgeois. The case of Rossetti is studied not for an interest in this artist's particularity but in the generality of the sexual formation which provides the conditions of existence of these texts. To use Jacqueline Rose's phrase, we are dealing with bourgeois 'sexuality in the field of vision'.

For through psychoanalytical theory we can recognize the specificity of visual performance and address. The construction of sexuality and its underpinning sexual difference is profoundly implicated in looking and the 'scopic field'. Visual representation is a privileged site (forgive the Freudian pun). Works by Rossetti are studied not as a secondary version of some founding social moment, but as part of a continuum of representations from and to the unconscious, as well as at the manifest level through which masculine sexuality and sexual positionality was problematically negotiated by the mid-nineteenth-century metropolitan bourgeoisie. Woman is the visual sign, but not a straightforward signifier. If Marxist cultural studies rightly privilege ideology, feminist analyses focus on pleasure, on the mechanisms and management of sexualized pleasures which the major ideological apparatuses organize, none more potently than those involved with visual representation. The works by Rossetti dramatize precisely the drives and impediments which overdetermine the excessive representation of woman at this period. The term 'regime of representation' is coined to describe the formation of visual codes and their institutional circulation as a decisive move against art history's patterns of periodization by style and movement, e.g. Pre-Raphaelism, Impressionism, Symbolism, and so forth. In place of superficial stylistic differences, structural similarities are foregrounded.

In the final essay I consider the works of a group of feminist art producers in Britain in the 1970s and 1980s for whom psychoanalytical analyses of the visual pleasures is a major resource for their production of feminist interventions in artistic practice. There are significant continuities between feminist art practice and feminist art history, for those dividing walls which normally segregate artmaking from art criticism and art history are eroded by the larger community to which we belong as feminists, the women's movement. We are our own conversational community developing our paradigms of practice in constant interaction and supportive commentary. The political point of feminist art history must be to change the present by means of how we re-present the past. That means we must refuse the art historian's permitted ignorance of living artists and contribute to the present-day struggles of living producers.

There are other links which make it relevant to conclude this book with an essay on contemporary feminist art. If modernist art history supplies the paradigm which feminist art history of the modern period must contest, modernist criticism and modernist practice are the targets of contemporary practice. Modernist thought has been defined as functioning on three basic tenets: the specificity of aesthetic experience; the self-sufficiency of the visual; the teleological evolution of art autonomous from any other social causation or pressure. Modernist protocols prescribe what is validated as 'modern art', i.e. what is relevant, progressing, and in the lead. Art which engages with the social world is political, sociological, narrative, denouncing the proper concerns of the artist with the nature of the medium or with human experience embodied in painted or drawn gestures. Feminist artistic practices and texts have intervened in alliance with other radical groups to disrupt the hegemony of modernist theories and practices even now still active in art education in so-called postmodernist culture. They have done this not merely to make a place for women artists within the art world's parameters. The point is to mount a sustained and far-reaching political critique of contemporary representational systems which have an overdetermined effect in the social production of sexual difference and its related gender hierarchy.

Equally importantly they are discovering ways to address women as subjects not masquerading as the feminine objects of masculine desire, fantasy and hatred. The dominant pleasures of the patriarchal visual field are deciphered and disrupted and, in the gaps between, new pleasures are being forged from political understandings of the conditions of our existence and psychological making. Questions about how women can speak/represent within a culture which defines the feminine as silenced other are posed at the end of the third essay, about Mary Cassatt and Berthe Morisot, using a quotation from an article by Mary Kelly whose work is the major focus of Essay 7. This connection not only indicates the contribution of feminist practitioners in art to the development of feminist art history but expresses my concern to do immediately for living women artists what we can only do belatedly for those in the past — write them into history.

The essays collected here represent a contribution to a diversified and heterogeneous range of practices which constitute the feminist intervention in art's history. This is not an abstraction but a historical practice conditioned by the institutions in which it is produced, the class, race and gender position of its producers. No doubt the focus of my concerns is conditioned by the conversational community within which I work and to which I have access through the magazines, conferences, exhibitions and educational institutions which form the social organization of radical intellectual production in Britain. This community is a mixed one in which alliances are forged under the umbrella of common purposes contesting the hegemony of the dominant paradigms. This fact has both advantages and disadvantages. For instance, collaborative work on analyses of the institutions and practices of modernism and modernist art history and blindness towards gender issues evident in these enterprises has shaped my understanding of the objectives and political necessities of feminist interventions while giving me invaluable understanding of the dominant paradigms and their social bases which are indispensable to current feminist work. Moreover this work was not only Eurocentric but ethnocentric. The position of Black artists, men and women, past and present, in all the cultural and class diversity of their communities and countries needs to be analysed and documented. Race must equally be acknowledged as a central focus of all our analyses of societies which were and are not only bourgeois but imperialist, colonizing nations. This remains a shadowy concern within this body of writings. But confronted by those involved in struggles around this issue, we must undergo self-criticism and change our practices.

The major community from which this book emerges and to which it is
addressed is a dispersed one, composed of feminists working the world over researching, writing, talking with and for each other, in the construction of a radically new understanding of our world in all its horror and hope. The women who have inspired and supported me cannot be listed in their entirety. They are acknowledged throughout the texts which follow. This community is an academic one, benefiting from the privileged access to money and time to study and write. However compromised our activities sometimes seem within the bastions of power and privilege, and no doubt we are compromised and blinkered as a result, there remains a necessity for intellectual production in any political struggle. Some comfort can be gleaned from Christine Delphy's clear vision of feminist theory as a complement to the social movement of women: 'Materialist feminism is therefore an intellectual procedure whose advent is crucial for social movements and the feminist struggle and for knowledge. For the former it corresponds to the passage from utopian to scientific socialism and it will have the same implications for the development of feminist struggle. That procedure could not limit itself to women's oppression. It will not leave untouched any part of reality, any domain of knowledge, any aspect of the world. In the same way as feminism-as-a-movement aims at the revolution of social reality, so feminism-as-a-theory (and each is indispensable to each other) aims at a revolution in knowledge.'

Feminism-as-a-theory represents a diversified field of theorizations of at times considerable complexity. Their production and articulation is, however, qualified at all times by the political responsibility of working for the liberation of women.

What art has art history to do with this struggle? A remote and limited discipline for the preservation of and research into objects and cultures of limited if not esoteric interest, art history might seem simply irrelevant. But art has become a growing part of big business, a major component of the leisure industry, a site of corporate investment. Take for instance the exhibition at the Tate Gallery in 1984, The Pre-Raphaelites, sponsored by a multinational whose interests involved not only mineral, banking and property concerns, but publishing houses, zoos and waxworks, as well as newspapers and magazines. What were they supporting - an exhibition which presented to the public men looking at beautiful women as the natural order of making beautiful things? Reviewing the exhibition Deborah Cherry and I concluded: 'High Culture plays a specifiable part in the reproduction of women's oppression, in the circulation of relative values and meanings for the ideological constructs of masculinity and femininity. Representing creativity as masculine and Woman as the beautiful image of the desiring masculine gaze, High Culture systematically denies knowledge of women as producers of culture and meanings. Indeed High Culture is decisively positioned against feminism. Not only does it exclude the knowledge of women artists produced within feminism, but it works in a phallocentric signifying system in which woman is a sign within discourses on masculinity. The knowledges and significations produced by such events as The Pre-Raphaelites are intimately connected with the workings of patriarchal power in our society.'

There are many who see art history as a defunct and irrelevant disciplinary boundary. The study of cultural production has bled so widely and changed so radically from one object to a discourse and practice orientation that there is a complete communication breakdown between art historians working still within the normative discipline and those who are contesting the paradigm. We are witnessing a paradigm shift which will rewrite all cultural history. For these reasons I suggest that we no longer think of a feminist art history but a feminist intervention in the histories of art. Where we are coming from is not some other fledgling discipline or interdisciplinary formation. It is from the women's movement made real and concrete in all the variety of practices in which women are actively engaged to change the world. This is no 'new art history' aiming to make improvements, bring it up to date, season the old with current intellectual fashions or theory soup. The feminist problematic in this particular field of the social is shaped by the terrain - visual representations and their practices - on which we struggle. But it is ultimately defined within that collective critique of social, economic and ideological power which is the women's movement.