Reviews
sexed BODIES, LIVED BODIES

MYRNA J. ALEJO REVIEWS ELIZABETH GROSZ' VOLTAGE BODIES. TOWARD A CORPOREAL FEMINISM.

Volatile Bodies is a cogently written and thought-provoking book on corporeal feminism. Each chapter unfolds with critical analysis of the selected theoretical works of Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, pointing out the phallocentric propensities of some of these Western theories and acknowledging the applicability of some of their propositions on reconstructing the feminist discourse on the body. With the inextricably related concepts of body, power/knowledge, desire, and signification as compository themes, Elizabeth Grosz reinvents the notion of body, i.e., the body as an "embodied subjectivity" and "psychical corporeality".

Grosz rejects the dualist notions of mind/body and of male/female where each is treated as mutually-exclusive, usually privileging the mind and the male (the symbol of rationality, thought, idea) over, respectively, the body and the female in binary relations. She also problematizes how this dualist treatment finds resonance in some of the predominant views within the feminist movement. Because of constant evasion of the question of female corporeality, some feminists tend to seek collective identity of women in "non- or extra-corporeal terms".

Feminism, especially the egalitarian or socialist breed, positions women's emancipation within the social realm and renders the female body, with its dichotomization of woman as a "mother" and as a "political/civic being", as an impediment to egalitarian ends. The misogynists also tend to look at the sexual differences between the male and the female in binary terms, specifically with their reference to the peculiar sexuality (e.g., the capacity for reproduction) of the female as "natural inequality," thus warranting the social and mental differences between the male and female.

I am particularly drawn to the author's constructive attitude towards disconcerting positions on what was commonly known or accepted. However, she critically noted how Deleuze and Guattari's assertion of the possibility of "man in the woman and woman in the man," as an outcome of the process of "becoming" (i.e., the overlapping nature or "double reciprocal dependency" between binary opposites), can implicitly undermine the fundamental differences between male and female bodies. Grosz, nonetheless, recognizes the transformative potential of their argument in relation to breaking some theoretical fixation/paralysis and recreating multiple ground for analysis.

Elizabeth Grosz views the body as a social construct, a site of various cultural representations. She argues that the pleasure and pain the body feel, and the fluids it secretes are mediated by society's ensemble of norms and institutions of organizing bodily expe-
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