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Feminist utopia and the new fathers: from matrifocal monotropism to biologically grounded universal father hunger

Erika Haubold
University of Wollongong

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**FEMINIST UTOPIA AND THE NEW FATHERS:
FROM MATRIFOCAL MONOTROPISM TO BIOLOGICALLY GROUNDED UNIVERSAL
FATHER HUNGER**

ERIKA HAUBOLD

**A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy in the Department of Sociology
at the University of Wollongong**

September 2002

I, Erika Haubold, hereby declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of a Doctor of Philosophy, in the Department of Sociology, University of Wollongong, is my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other University or Institution.

Erika Haubold



ABSTRACT

From the early fifties, the defining control over 'the best interest of the child' has developed into the perhaps most powerful tool in sexual politics. An essential part of this ongoing process of redefinition is the men's movement's declaration of the emotionally absent father as psycho- and social pathology and the son's demand for his restitution into their lives. This rhetoric transforms mid-century maternal deprivation into paternal deprivation and almost imperceptibly transmutes the exigencies of the fathers into the essentialized needs of the child. After this 'reinvention' of fatherhood, the relevant literature attests a potential for radical social transformation to those functions and modes of parent-child interaction which have traditionally been marked as the provenience of 'the feminine'.

The new masculinist theorists of need construction have joined feminist theorists in their challenge to the normativity of orthodox parental functions. Both disciplines have used the critique of Enlightenment's dichotomous polarities as the theoretical framework for their reinventing of fatherhood and motherhood respectively. But despite their shared subject matter, there are few similarities between the two discourses. Whilst the fatherhood literature argues that Enlightenment's emphasis on the 'Maleness of Reason' has severed the father's connection to his children, feminist theorists maintain that the same phenomenon has secured their conjugal and sex specific parental functions within the family. This thesis explores the discrepancies between masculinist theories of loss and feminist theories of acquisition. It highlights the aggravated tension between complementary and sex transcendence produced by a politics of fatherhood which lays claim to qualified sameness of and radical difference between female and male parenting potentials and functions.

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