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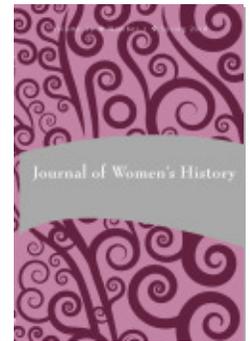
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FROM RADICALISM TO PERSPECTIVALISM: *US Feminist History, 1970–2010, and the Example of Linda Gordon*

John Pettegrew

*This article examines the scholarship of the women's historian Linda Gordon and argues that she has developed a sophisticated mode of historical analysis that maintains allegiance to objectivity while supporting her feminist commitment to women's equality and related democratic goals. Gordon's perspectivalism can be traced to 1970s socialist feminism and its attempt to mediate criticism of gender relations and criticism of the inequalities of economic class. From dual systems theory came a more deliberate effort in the 1980s to identify and move between several subject positions within the same analytical frame; amid postmodern relativism and poststructuralist linguistic determinism, Gordon stressed the virtues of (a qualified) objectivity, which included an effort to identify one's own interests and biases while at the same time pursuing instrumental value between historical scholarship and democratic politics. Perspectivalism came into full bloom in Gordon's two leading books, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction* (1999) and *Dorothea Lange* (2010).*

What happened to the radical feminist orientation of academic women's history in the United States? This question has been asked and answered many times over. Beginning in the 1990s, journal forums, oral histories, state-of-the-field conference sessions, and historical association newsletter articles forwarded the same two-part truth.¹ First, women's historians have been hugely successful since the early 1970s in establishing themselves in the US history profession and reorganizing (if not completely transforming) its institutional practices as well as its historiographical assumptions, content, and boundaries through decades of immense scholarly production. Second, success has come at the price of women's history losing its political and politicizing edge. Women's history clearly moved from margin to center during the last fifteen to twenty years of the twentieth century as, in one index of integration, leading universities hired senior historians as endowed chairs and peers elected them as presidents of the largest professional associations. "Ownership, for those who began as revolutionaries," as the historian Joan Scott draws out the point, "is always an ambiguous accomplishment. It is at once a victory and a sell-out, the triumph of critique and its abandonment." It marks, Scott adds, the end of women's history "as a campaign."² While historians new to the

field may not put it the same way, few of any generation would deny that women's history has experienced a protracted transition from insurgency to institutionalization.

Political declension is hardly the full story of women's history, however. Concentrated assessment of the field over the past fifty years divulges critical continuities with its radical origins, including the tenet that women's history should be practiced with respect to feminism, the social movement that helped give it birth.³ Does feminism primarily seek equality between the sexes or emphasize women's distinctiveness from men? Has agency or subordination been women's predominant personal and social experience? Is "women" itself a coherent and justifiable category for historical analysis? What is the relationship between scholarship and politics, and how should such goals be fulfilled? These fundamental issues prompted fierce divisions and passionate debate *within* the field, a net effect of which is a rich and reflexive theoretical discourse that continues to inform research in women's history. A constant amid this multifaceted scholarship has been a central concern with power relations between the sexes and, with that, the instrumentalist conviction that critical examination of the past can unsettle the present and reshape the future.

Both feminist continuity and institutional change in the practice of women's history are exemplified in Linda Gordon's career and writing. Gordon's first years as an academic historian were greatly shaped by her sudden connection in 1969 to the women's liberation movement and her consequent turn from Russian history to US women's history.⁴ From that point forward, Gordon's scholarship took on a transparent feminist purpose in its selection and treatment of such subject areas as birth control, domestic violence, and social welfare policy. Starting out as a socialist feminist—a self-avowed new-leftist radical committed to revolutionary change—Gordon's politics adopted a more progressive social-democratic cast by the late 1970s, the same time when she began stressing the need for women's historians to meet disciplinary standards of fairness and objectivity. This new phase of Gordon's career still featured feminist history—in unabashed fashion.⁵ Full disclosure of political orientation became a key first step in balancing her goal of using history to oppose male supremacy and other power structures with the methodological and analytical demands of a profession with which she increasingly identified.

Combining subjective interest with historical objectivity is hardly peculiar to Gordon. One could argue that it is an assumptive obligation of modern historiography overall.⁶ Early twentieth-century progressive historians sharpened this combination by creating "usable pasts" without abandoning methodological rigor. And Gordon has capitalized on the dynamic: along with her effort to balance social advocacy with fair-minded

scholarship, Gordon started to consider the difference between the two positions as an opportunity, one that calls for alternating analytical modes or, in drawing near the optic metaphor, changing cognitive frames of interpretation, thereby allowing for multiple points of view on the same historical material while underlining the adoptive and relational nature of subjectivity and objectivity.

Free movement between viewpoints would become a distinct although unnamed feature of Gordon's scholarship by the mid-1980s. Working amid the high tide of postmodernism, Gordon recognized the "situatedness" of knowledge and the unending multiplicity of perspectives, while resisting the exaggerated skepticism and relativism so endemic to that cultural moment. Different perspectives do delimit understanding and correspondence between them; their incommensurability makes Truth (a single unified understanding of reality, past and present) an impossibility. But different perspectives can also mobilize a certain type of historical imagination. Gordon has described it as a "liminal" mode of historical consciousness that takes up various subject positions and realizes critical dimension by comparing and contrasting their content and perspectives. The long arc of Gordon's career divulges such interest in perspective that we can designate a democratic-generated, pragmatist-based *perspectivalism* as that which succeeded her socialist-feminist radicalism.⁷

Within Western philosophy, perspectivalism stems from Friedrich Nietzsche's surprisingly straightforward insistence that objective knowledge is within reach if it is clearly distinguished from neutrality. Objectivity ought to be "understood not as 'contemplation without interest' (which is a nonsensical absurdity)," Nietzsche wrote, "but as the ability to have one's For and Against *under control* and to engage and disengage them, so that one knows how to employ a *variety* of perspectives and affective interpretations in the service of knowledge." Rather than consider diverse perspectives to be an epistemological problem, Nietzsche urged the knower to seek multiplicity: "There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective 'knowing'; and . . . the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can lend to the thing, the more complete will our 'concept' of this thing, our 'objectivity,' be."⁸ Objectivity, for Nietzsche, is nothing more or less than broadening one's perspective by adopting other views of the world. Objectivity's decentering impulse is broadly consistent with feminism and women's history's democratic underpinnings, radical and otherwise.

A seldom-recognized constellation of ideals and practices, perspectivalism is at once in keeping with the working principles of most professional historians while also presenting a theoretically compelling way to develop history's critical capacity. The equation between seeing and historical understanding can be located in the Enlightenment's spectator theory of

knowledge and the scientific ideal of objectivity; the historian Carlo Ginzburg traces it all the way back to Augustine and Christianity's early accommodation of Jewish history and identity.⁹ Today, optical metaphors trip off professional historians' tongues (and are all but impossible to avoid). "Like the visual gaze," as Gordon demonstrates, "historical perception originates from a particular vantage point, creating a line of sight from present to past."¹⁰ While self-conscious recognition and use of historical perspectivalism as a way to augment interpretive rigor is a far rarer phenomenon, this article will show that such an analytical mode indeed has a history: its composition and potential come into view in the work of Linda Gordon, a leading scholar for almost fifty years in US women's history.

Gordon's influence on other women's historians is of less concern here, however, than the crystallization of perspectivalism in her scholarship. With close attention to her theoretical writings and research, I will examine historical perspectivalism's democratic predilections and argue that it supports politically committed scholarship while circumventing the pitfalls of relativism. Perspectivalism is not at odds with Gordon's early radicalism. The idiom of revolution has less purchase today (inside and outside the US academy). And the goal of approximating objectivity through a multiplicity of perspectives may delimit the didactic feminist effect of earlier, more programmatic scholarship. But, as modeled in Gordon's recent work, perspectivalism is still conducive to the rich legacy of feminist history—defined here as the production of historical knowledge instrumental to the dynamic and multifaceted social movement for equality between the sexes.

One originary point of modern historical perspectivalism can be found in the women's liberation movement and the immediate hold it had on a group of young US historians in the late 1960s and early 70s. It is an unlikely starting point, in one sense, given the certainty of, as the historian Mari Jo Buhle describes, "this incredibly enlightening liberatory moment." Virtually every figure in the first generation of academic US women's historians attests to the complete and sudden nature of feminist transformation. Linda Kerber remembers it as a "click moment."¹¹ Minds changed or rather minds cohered to feminism instantaneously. "I was immediately and very, very suddenly hit by the women's liberation movement," Gordon recalled at the end of 1968 in Boston: "The moment I heard a feminist, I knew everything she was saying was true. I had no resistance."¹² Women's history began amid this feminist revelation. For many, women's history and the women's movement happened as one: "The two I can't tease apart in my mind," Buhle said; and, as Sara Evans recounts, "We just started taking the questions from our own activism and applying them to the past."¹³ After Gordon joined a consciousness raising group and the Bread and Roses feminist organization

in spring of 1969, she approached her History Department colleagues at the University of Massachusetts-Boston about teaching a new course in women's history. She started meeting regularly with other young historians in the Boston area—Buhle, Kathryn Kish Sklar, and Ellen Carol DuBois, among others—who also felt drawn to women's history via the feminist movement. Gordon took up a new research project on women in US history; and, with four other women, she presented a paper at the 1970 American Historical Association conference on “sexism” in mainstream historical literature.¹⁴

If US women's history reflected the force and fervency of a full-fledged social movement, it also based itself on the discernment, representation, and mediation of different claims on the past. A foundational point of women's history involves perspective: men dominated the production of historical knowledge by representing it as transparent and comprehensive while omitting whole realms of human experience and perception; history would need fracturing; and women's subjectivity, agency, and power would be an axis of that remedial division. At least one line of 1970s US women's history started in a particularist “Thompsonian” vein.¹⁵ Following E. P. Thompson's book *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), Herbert Gutman's work, and the new social history, some women's historians sought to recover the lived daily experiences of distinct groups of women while paying close attention to female culture and consciousness—that is, the shared values and self-understanding that, at certain times and places, could foment political consciousness and mobilization.¹⁶ Relations between the sexes were seen as just that: relational—continually changing and in tension with each other.¹⁷ As the word *gender* replaced *sex roles* in the late 1970s and 1980s, historical understandings of women and men, womanhood and manhood, and femininity and masculinity became even more relational; Joan Scott tied gender to the poststructuralist concept of difference and its computation that any positive utterance, position, or identity depends on the negation or subordination of something else.¹⁸

The 1970s effort to integrate feminist criticism of male dominance with other interpretive frameworks also contributed to the perspectivalist bearing of academic women's history. Leading figures in the new field emphasized choosing from a multiplicity of methods, theories, and forms. In her introductory comments to a 1974 Berkshire Conference of Women's Historians panel on the “Effects of Women's History upon Traditional Concepts of Historiography,” Gerda Lerner suggested that the new field's “complexities . . . made all models inadequate”; she added that “no single framework, no single factor, four-factor or eight-factor explanation can serve to contain all that the history of women is.” The roots of Lerner's 1970s resistance to all-inclusive theory lay in the recognition that economic class—the “old Marxist single-factor explanation of history”—could not fully comprehend

the historical dynamic and detail of women's subordination.¹⁹ Lerner's contemporary Natalie Zemon Davis—who in college and graduate school during the late 1940s and early 50s embraced a Marxist focus on class conflict and the relationship between thought and the material world—came to disavow mechanistic models of historical development. "Now I don't believe in inevitable stages and I don't believe in automatic evolution," she explained in 1981. "As for change," Zemon Davis continued, "I just don't see it as part of a fixed world scheme." This is not to say that she would drop class analysis altogether. Zemon Davis, like Lerner, wanted to pick from a "range of typologies, a range of styles of change, alternate paths to the future." Rather than having "to worry about stuffing my people into a single scheme," she elaborated, "I am eclectic in the theories I accept."²⁰

This multifaceted approach to historical interpretation would be developed by younger historians like Buhle, DuBois, Evans, and Gordon—women whose politics were forged in the new left and who, by the mid-1970s, called themselves socialist-feminist historians. Compared to Gerda Lerner, for instance, who came to women's history in the early 1960s as a self-described "post-Marxist," many socialist-feminist historians began with Marxism or at least with a sharper critique of capitalism and therefore more deliberately combined feminism with attention to economic class. Deciding not to decide between focusing primarily on sex or class became a formal feature of socialist-feminist history. Zemon Davis's theoretical eclecticism evolved into the strategy of moving between two different lines of interpretation. In conceptualizing this critical mode, socialist-feminist historians often adopted an optical metaphor, as in the Renaissance historian Joan Kelly's "doubled vision of feminist theory."²¹ No matter the metaphor, "refusing to yield to unnecessary 'either-ors'" became the principle idea, as DuBois put it: "Socialist-feminists reside at the point of the hyphen, tolerating the tension between socialism and feminism and making of it a creative and powerful progressive politics."²²

Gordon embraced socialist feminism as much as any US historian in the 1970s. Having worked in the anti-Vietnam War movement and with Friends of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, Gordon's socialism grew stronger after engaging with London's Marxist new left while doing research in the late 60s and after joining the staff of the journal *Radical America* in 1971. "Despite everything," Gordon said in referring to the dynamic mix of 1970s leftist politics, "Marxism remains the single most important intellectual influence on my work." At the same time, she resisted the mechanistic version of Marxism's materialist dialectic. "Intellectually," as Gordon described her radicalism, "I was never committed to a dogmatic Marxism. It was never a problem for me to say about Marx, well, he was wrong about this, although I have known a lot of people for whom that

seems to represent an enormous difficulty." Above all, Marxism needed to be integrated with feminism. So while she could not "grasp how one can learn to think historically without reading Marx," Gordon wrote in 1978 that "the most penetrating new analyses" have come from those connecting economic class conflict with the social systems that subordinate women.²³

For many US feminists of the 1970s, women's equality would only come by subverting the male-dominated system of heterosexuality; amid this political imperative, Gordon published *Woman's Body, Woman's Right: A Social History of Birth Control in America* (1976). Researched and written during the successful fight to legalize abortion in the United States, Gordon's study modeled socialist-feminist historical scholarship, first, by detailing how women's reproductive autonomy and liberation overall had been integrally tied to power relations between the economic classes during industrial and corporate capitalism and, second, by engaging its subject matter from the interest of extending the women's liberation movement, trying self-consciously to have her history serve "those who are grappling with the political problems of creating a liberated human sexuality." Writing in the introduction that "the poses of neutrality or relativism are available only to those who already have power," Gordon, by then a tenured professor, fashioned *Woman's Body* as not only a feminist polemic but also a direct challenge to the proprieties of academic history.²⁴ The establishment responded accordingly: "This book illustrates the dictum that theory can be a treacherous substitute for fact," David Kennedy stated in the *Journal of American History*; while Stanley Lemons said in the *American Historical Review* that Gordon's work "enslaves" history to contemporary politics. With Elizabeth Fox Genovese penning a rejoinder to the critical reviews, the publication and reception of *Woman's Body* marked a high point of feminist insurgency into the history profession.²⁵

The book is driven by the historical prospect of sexual liberation unfolding through opposition to "male dominance." In Marxist fashion, *Woman's Body* depends on "ideology" as the means by which men oppress women. Women had to win birth control over and against the diffuse "ideology of motherhood," Gordon explains, "Male supremacy gradually transformed" female responsibility for child raising (which originated in the sex's biological nexus to newborns) "into the basis for a systematic division of labor that assigned to women the least prestigious work, most of it without any biological reason to be women's work (such as cooking, housework, service work, and so forth)." A vast ideological superstructure built through religion, literature, law, and the family itself "further institutionalized" mothering as the essence of womanhood, branding as "immoral" any "separation of childbearing from child-raising."²⁶ The socialist-feminist project involved, then, showing the historical contingency of women's roles

as care givers, attacking the division of labor's social and political basis, and raising the consciousness of women (and eventually men) to achieving equality between the sexes.

Socialist-feminist history faded in the 1980s. The term itself always carried a conceptual flaw by challenging Marxism solely on the basis of sexual difference—"socialist feminism" suggested that women's identities had been separated only by class; as "difference" and "diversity" became watchwords of the postmodernist 1980s, historians could no longer ignore or sustain this shortcoming by tacking on race as a secondary concern.²⁷ Race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and region—and later the "border crossings" among these differences—gained greater attention from socialist-feminist historians, as they tried to mediate those differences with class and what started to be called "gender." Women's history, overall, produced more subjects, identities, and frames of analysis. "Only such a multifaceted perspective will be sufficient to 'illuminate the interconnections among the various systems of power that shape women's lives,'" wrote DuBois and Vicki L. Ruiz in the preface to their edited volume *Unequal Sisters: A Multi-cultural Reader in US Women's History* (1990). Citing the "growing demands for 'difference,'" their emphasis on "the diversity of women's experiences" is highly emblematic of the shift away from socialist feminism during the 1980s.²⁸

Gordon certainly followed this line, keeping her commitment to feminism, while steadily increasing attention to race and developing the critical value of perspectival multiplicity. She all but dropped socialist-feminist radicalism. Her two monographs following *Woman's Body* are models of politically motivated scholarship. Researched and written on subject areas of utmost concern to late twentieth-century feminists, *Heroes of Their Own Lives: The Politics and History of Family Violence* (1988) and *Pitied but Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare* (1994) both resist the us-against-them power dynamics found in *Woman's Body*. In the revised edition of that book, *The Moral Property of Women: A History of Birth Control Politics in America* (2002), Gordon toned down her class politics, substituting the first edition's language of revolution and ideology with gender analysis.²⁹ The post-socialist feminist years brought Gordon professional success. She moved as a full professor in 1984 to the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where Gerda Lerner had established a top PhD program in women's history; in 1990, Gordon was named Florence Kelly Professor of History, and the Vilas Distinguished Research Professor followed in 1993.

During this period, a sustained sidebar of theoretical discussion accompanied her research. Starting from her critique in *Woman's Body* of male historians' putative neutrality, Gordon took up a distinctly moderate position in the late twentieth-century battles over the place of poststructuralism

and “the linguistic turn” in historical practice. This involved questioning Joan Scott’s extension of Michel Foucault’s discourse theory into women’s history and her over reliance, as Christine Stansell charged, on “articulative practices” in lieu of the material reality of human behavior and social relations.³⁰ Gordon’s 1990 exchange with Scott in the journal *Signs* crystallized their differences over language’s primary determination of experience.³¹ Gordon never rejected the value of linguistic theory in historical analysis. In 1992, for instance, Gordon supported a “weak program of Poststructuralism” at an Organization of American Historians conference session on Bryan D. Palmer’s book *Descent into Discourse: The Reification of Language and the Writing of Social History* (1990) and its attack on history’s linguistic turn, in which she defended Scott or at least criticized Palmer’s criticism of her work. “On this issue I seem to be entirely a creature of context,” Gordon explained her own position, insisting that she’s “holding a steady course, and the others are tacking far more widely than is necessary.”³²

Gordon came to her epistemological middle-groundedness over time, as she moved from joining other Boston-area historians in the late 1960s in “imagining ourselves propagandists for the women’s liberation movement”; to a 1975 prescription “to see ourselves forthrightly and unpretentiously as the academic wing of the women’s liberation movement”; then, three years later, after the publication of *Woman’s Body*, to the expressed need for “a more complex relationship of commitment to the feminist movement, with a relative autonomy as scholars”; and, finally, to pursuing that balance in her monographs and theoretical essays.³³ Her purposeful shift toward greater “methodological and critical rigor” happened only after contributing to feminist historians’ attack on the close functional relation between male supremacy in the history profession and the self-serving reliance on unexamined positions of objectivity and neutrality. “Those who accept the traditional academic assumptions,” Gordon wrote in 1975, are “as political as those who reject them”; and, in fact, the traditionalists are more dangerous since they are in one way or another “misleading people.” Gordon went on to point out that “seek[ing] neutrality is to surrender any critical distance on one’s own culture,” the exact opposite of what women’s historians aim to do. As she started to reappraise the radicalism of early feminist history, Gordon still emphasized the value of “those ill-founded early polemics about women in history.” She continued: “That kind of world-turned upside down thinking, suggesting that everything was really its opposite, has been characteristic of many powerful social movements. This turning of reality inside out is a way of supplying the vision of a changed future, even if it is described in fantasies about the past.” Gordon used these comments in 1978 as a turning point, an epistemological pivot from which she cautioned that feminist scholars should no longer “serve up history upon demand or

produce heroines, inspirationals, or laments for victims to serve immediate tactical needs." Warnings about the acknowledgment of professional standards of truth seeking followed shortly thereafter, with Gordon saying in a 1981 interview, "Advocacy or non advocacy, it is the responsibility of historians to tell the truth." This is not just "a needless moralism": some on the left had rationalized the intentional slippage of historical accuracy for the sake of political good; moreover, the obligation of truth telling is not always easy and its particulars are therefore worth enumeration.³⁴

Historians need to be scrupulous, Gordon emphasized, in the gathering, selecting, and interpreting of evidence once inside a topic. "We are not at ethical liberty to pick and choose among the shards available," Gordon wrote in 1986; "Our equivalent of the Hippocratic oath enjoins us to present all, or a representative sample, of the evidence relevant to a given inquiry; to search hard for the same; to seek out bits of evidence that might defeat our argument." Gordon emphasized that "these are neither outmoded nor unrealizable standards; nor are they standards inappropriate for feminists." Indeed, feminists should insist that "there are better and worse pieces of history."³⁵ Women's historians have facts on their side, Gordon suggested, and therefore want to honor value-neutral practices for getting at and evaluating them. After an initial radical stage, Gordon realized that the feminist project would be effectively served by historians who maintained the authority that came with objectivity.

Pairing academic work with the political and social goal of achieving equality between the sexes brought Gordon to a partial reappraisal of objectivity. That unrealizable ideal upon which professional history had been founded certainly needs to be scrutinized and relativized, Gordon believed; but it also offers grounding for correcting past mistakes and injustices—scholarly, political, and patriarchal. Objectivity serves, as the historian of science Donna Haraway has said, the feminist "insist[ence] on a better account of the world."³⁶ And, as Haraway also suggested, objectivity leads to perspectivalism. While a purely objective "view from nowhere" is impossible, historical analysis, judgment, and argument benefit from imaginative detachment—a critical standpoint that depends on (necessarily incomplete) self-overcoming and, with that, the (always transitory) adoption of different subjects' thoughts, values, feelings, and range of choices. Gordon articulated the basic idea quite early, in 1975, while discussing socialist-feminist history: "To represent women's interests against the establishment requires gaining enough detachment from our own personal situations to comprehend the situation of all women. We can gain this detachment," she continued, "by recognizing our own class and political position as scholars, striving toward objectivity by understanding and accepting our historical place rather than by denying it."³⁷ Objectivity begins and ends with subjectivity: deliberate

isolation and scrutiny of one's identity places the historian in a position that is conducive to free and unbiased evaluation; and with that self-reflexivity in place, one is able to pursue feminism or other preexistent interests with more legitimacy. Full disclosure makes way for self-directed analysis and partisan argument. "Objectivity," as the historian Thomas L. Haskell stated succinctly, "is not neutrality."³⁸

While growing out from the dual-systems approach of socialist feminism, Gordon's perspectivalism found support in 1980s postmodernism and postcolonial theory. The Mexican American author and activist Gloria Anzaldúa, for instance, spoke in 1986 of traversing geographic and psychological borderlands; *mestizaje* (cultural mixing) creates "new angles of vision" that see and work "between and among" closed systems of thought, identity, and being. Haraway built her influential standpoint theory of "situated knowledges" on perspectivalism and the simultaneity of recognizing the "radical historical contingency for all knowledge claims and knowing subjects" while making "a no-nonsense commitment to faithful accounts of a 'real' world, one that can be partially shared and friendly to earth-wide projects of finite freedom, adequate material abundance." For her, "feminist objectivity" does not involve transcendence. Rather, it appreciates the "elaborate specificity and difference" in all the individual "pictures of the world" and fosters the "loving care people might take to learn how to see faithfully from another's point of view."³⁹ Anzaldúa and Haraway highlighted, in the literary historian Chela Sandoval's words, a type of "tactical subjectivity"; and it is this critical, "differential consciousness" that fits so closely with Gordon's perspectivalism.⁴⁰

Concerned with the cognitive nature of historical sensibility, Gordon created a pattern of locating, engaging, and relativizing different standpoints and then valuing mobility of focus over any particular frame, including subjectivity. "History needs a subjective, imaginative, emulative process of communication," Gordon wrote characteristically in 1981; "but," she continued, "one can never and should never completely put oneself in the place of one's historical subjects." The goal, as Gordon explained, is to move between "historical empathy and rootedness in one's own present." Or, in another example, in contributing to an *American Historical Review* forum on Peter Novick's criticism of objectivity in the profession, Gordon described "a continuum between objectivity and interpretation"—a long-standing analytical plane that allowed and encouraged historians to adopt different epistemological positions within the same discussion.⁴¹

In perhaps her most complete theoretical essay, "What's New in Women's History?" (1986), Gordon advanced perspectivalism via "liminality," a certain cognitive style that structures self-reflexive indeterminacy into historical analysis. The practice of women's history, for Gordon, sits

between "two poles of philosophical assumption and self-consciousness." The first "pole of energy," not unlike the compulsion of "most history writing," draws women's historians to material facts, "directing us to rectify past errors." Positivism serves the feminist need for accountability. "Women's historians sought to proclaim a truth heretofore denied, disguised, distorted, defamed," she continued, "and thereby to expose the meretricious lies of earlier mandarins. This goal," Gordon added straightforwardly, "presupposed the possibility of a truth, achieved through historical objectivity." It is never fully realized, however, because the other equally compelling pole "reject[s] the possibility of objectivity and accept[s] the humanistic and story-telling function of history."⁴² Objectivity, in this formulation, goes to empirical truth (informed by perspectival multiplicity), while subjectivity suggests storytelling from perhaps a more unified point of view.

Refusing to choose between these two poles, Gordon privileges the position of being "in between," deriving intellectual agency from the continued life of the dualism. "This in-between," Gordon elaborated, "would not imply resolution, careful balance of fact and myth, or synthesis of fact and interpretation. My sense of liminal method is rather a condition of being constantly pulled, usually off balance, sometimes teetering wildly, almost always tense." She emphasized that "the tension cannot be released. Indeed, the very desire to find a way to relax the tension is a temptation to be avoided." With neither goal "surrendered," the historian is at once free to "create new myths to serve our aspirations" and obligated to seek truth to the best of her ability.⁴³ The historian, for Gordon, is of two minds and with two overarching modes of analysis. Objectivity and subjectivity intertwine. Both contribute to feminist scholarship and women's history.

In turning back to Gordon's monographs, we can now appreciate how perspectivalism and objectivity facilitated her politics by freeing up aspiration and argument after coming clean with particular points of view. In *Heroes of Their Own Lives* (1988), Gordon set up her feminist examination of family violence by trying to be as clear as possible about the assumptions, interests, and goals informing that analysis: "Doubting that any scholar can achieve 'objectivity,' if that means detachment from prevailing cultural norms, I think one can move closer to that goal by consciousness of what one's own values and biases are. Here are some of mine." She then spoke of breaking up the prevailing historical view of family as a homogeneous unit, for instance. Gordon also unsettled any positivist notion about the truth value of her primary sources—the social workers' case records. "Their status as historical documents does not make them infallible," Gordon wrote, "their truth must be gathered from among the varied and often conflicting stories they contain." Historical meaning accrues only through interpretation, Gor-

don recognizes, and therefore her engagement with the once-confidential agency files necessarily moves toward scholarship's subjective pole: "The interpretation of such case records involves the historian's creativity, even imagination." Rather than muting or embedding her creative take on the material at hand, Gordon enunciates it as something that *is* made up. She organizes her discussion into "whole stories" of individual cases "in order to maximize the reader's opportunity to 'see' my interpretation and to argue with it."⁴⁴ Her primary goal, then, becomes one of persuasion, convincing the reader that her politically directed analysis holds merit rather than having one believe that this or that is how it was.

Gordon's perspectivalism comes through in her historical understanding of feminism as multifaceted, open-ended opposition to male supremacy. Both *Heroes of Their Own Lives* and *Pitied but Not Entitled* embrace as feminist otherwise conservative, elite women whose positive, women-centered contribution to domestic social policy involved narrow-minded views regarding the impropriety of single-parent families. "In labeling them feminists," Gordon acknowledged, "I am making a historical claim with which some disagree."⁴⁵ She made this comment at a high point of women's historians' effort to refine the meaning of feminism and its relation to historical practice. Should scholars employ the term retroactively (in discussing periods before the word came into use)? What, if any, composite terms replace the historian William O'Neil's flawed dichotomy of "social" and "hard-core" feminism? For some time, Gordon had stressed the need to dissolve the many schisms in feminist theory and politics.⁴⁶ In 1979, for instance, she told women's historians that "it is extremely important to avoid the use of feminism as if it were a moral category, an imprimatur to bestow upon those we agree with. The tendency to use the term in that way is sectarian," she added, "(like the similar disputes about what is truly socialist, Marxist, or communist) and ahistorical." In response, Gordon offered a number of "working definitions" of feminism. Most valuably, in 1986, she defined it as "a critique of male supremacy, formed and offered in the light of a will to change it, which in turn assumes a conviction that it is changeable."⁴⁷ Circumventing hardheaded tests of true feminism, privileging action over essence, Gordon's approach "allows us," as she says in *Pitied but Not Entitled*, "to understand a wide variety of advocacy for women as part of a feminist legacy."⁴⁸

Gordon's study of single mothers and welfare in the twentieth-century United States clearly illustrates her move beyond socialist feminism. While continuing to examine gender as a crucial although hidden factor in social policy—her book argues that strong cultural biases regarding women's work and deep misunderstanding of single motherhood combined to stigmatize the pivotal Aid to Dependent Children program as "welfare" rather than

"entitlement"—Gordon responds directly to the charge that socialist feminism homogenized women's experience by devoting a significant portion of her book to black feminist thought. "By taking the standpoint of this network of black women activists," Gordon wrote in a distinct perspectivalist vein, "we gain a different view of the possible shape of a welfare system."⁴⁹ Overall, the welfare state's stratification between "independent" citizens who benefit from such items as home mortgage assistance and those poor Americans "dependent" on "welfare" bases itself more on race than gender, Gordon contends, although scholars must closely consider those two factors along with economic class.

Gordon's perspectivalism comes into full critical bloom in *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction* (1999), a close study of early twentieth-century white vigilantism in two small mining boomtowns and of the way that local episode offers up "universal knowledge" about the construction of racial boundaries and hierarchies through gender, the family, maternalism, and, finally, the failure to resist forces that divide and weaken all. Winner of the Bancroft and American Historical Association prizes, Gordon's work is at once unorthodox and scholarly, speculative and exact, compelling to professional historians and a general readership. She seems to have built it upon her 1986 essay's "two poles of energy" model. Replete with a "cast of characters" in its first pages, the book revels in plot, setting, drama, and "tragedy" when a posse of "Anglo" men forcefully removed some forty New York City-born Irish Catholic foundlings from their new "Mexican" homes after the towns' leading Anglo-women expressed both concern over the propriety of mixed-race families and their desire to adopt the young children themselves. Opposite this intricate narrative are elaborate treatments of such historical abstractions as economic class structure, the copper industry, Mexican immigration, the labor movement, child welfare organizations, the concept of race, and Catholicism in the Southwest. Gordon takes the two poles of subjective storytelling and objective historical summary and structures the monograph around their difference as the book alternates between time-specific, nearly cinematic scenes of the four-day crisis—for example, "October 2, 1904, Night: Clifton Hotel"—and tightly wound chapters on multifaceted and long-term economic, social, and institutional processes. Keeping her readers off balance, Gordon's analysis takes form in the movement between these two historical modes.

The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction is a study in perspectivalism—a more mobile analytical frame would be hard to imagine. Gordon constantly shifts back and forth between the past and the present, highlighting her own perspective by speaking regularly in the first person and contrasting the views of "historians writing today" and "academic outsiders" with those of the "daily participants" in the turn-of-the-century Arizona mining towns.

Recognizing that the orphan children were either “stolen or rescued, depending on one’s point of view,” Gordon triangulates the subject positions of the Anglo-vigilantes, the Mexican would-be adoptive parents, and the Catholic priests and nuns who sent the children from New York City and received them in Arizona.⁵⁰

A good deal of imagination goes into this work. Gordon had virtually no sources from which to draw, for instance, in getting at the Mexican women’s motivation for adopting the children. So she speculates, while carefully marking it off as nothing more than that, child labor certainly came into play. However, the “orphans were just toddlers, many years from being able to work.” In addition, amid high infertility and infant mortality rates, the “children were a blessing”—they could satisfy one’s “yearning” for motherhood without having to “star[e] death in the face”—and then there was the orphans’ “lightness.” While sympathetic to the “terrible injustice” of the abduction and the subsequent court rulings supporting that action, Gordon proposes that—given the towns’ rigid caste system based on the amalgam of ethnicity, race, and color—the Mexican women may very well have understood that they would gain socially from adopting a light-skinned child. “Such a child might make the whole family whiter,” Gordon writes subjunctively. “Such a child might become a true *americano*,” she continues, “If so it would be an achievement accomplished by mothers.”⁵¹

Like so much of Gordon’s scholarship, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction* concentrates on women and motherhood and, in this case, the force of competing iterations of those identities and interests in policing cultural and racial boundaries. The book’s most sustained analytical line follows the Anglo-women’s alarm over the children’s well being and then their capacity for doing something about it. Perhaps wanting to find moral turpitude, Gordon makes every attempt to understand the women as they saw themselves and to take seriously the belief that “they were acting not only properly but nobly” as “child savers.” She casts their concern for the children as “assuming a responsibility of citizenship”—the “performing” of “a public duty”; their willingness to breach Mexican women’s homes must be judged relative to intrusive practices by child welfare activists overall.⁵²

The Anglo-women’s motivation and blameworthiness, for Gordon, comes down to their “unique stakes in racial power structures—in whiteness.” Again, striving for objectivity, she gives them the benefit of the doubt, observing that “the leaders of Anglo female society did not seem to be chasing power” and they “could not rival men’s power in the [mining towns’] economic and political processes.” Still, “little power is not the same as no power,” Gordon recognizes, “Anglo women took some significant and effective initiatives in developing the white culture.” Race and class-based women’s clubs—visiting one another in the afternoons with white gloves,

calling cards, formal teas, and games of progressive while all done under the mantle of "pioneering" the mining towns—assumed responsibility for civilizing the West in an "inescapably racialized" manner. "Pioneer talk," as Gordon writes, "inverted the power relations of US conquest of western North America, representing the eastern migrants as victims, the native westerners as aggressors."⁵³ It was in this highly racialized context of "internal colonialism" that the Anglo-women pushed for abducting the adoptees from the Mexican families.

Just how effective is Gordon's criticism of their action and the reasons they had for taking it? The Anglo and Mexican would-be mothers did have choices, she emphasizes: "The orphan story makes visible the often unacknowledged force that women have exerted in constructing and defending race lines." But without the primary sources allowing her to isolate a particular Anglo-woman and scrutinize the decision she made within a moral framework, Gordon largely settles for criticizing pioneering discourse and racial identity's invidious and self-perpetuating nature: "The categorizing work of race seems always to involve power, subordination and superiority, inclusion and exclusion, and frequently gain"; the Anglo-women, like "everyone" else in the two mining towns, "found race, used it, experienced it as irresistible and, by not resisting it, reproduced it and, in reproducing it, sometimes changed it." Gordon is more flatly critical of the male mine managers who "may have felt powerless to resist the evolving racial hierarchy, although there is no evidence that they tried."⁵⁴ Gordon's perspectivalism ends with the Anglo-men: on the empowered side of race, class, and gender, their motivations go unexamined.

A year before publication of *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction*, Gordon moved from Wisconsin to New York University, where she started new research on the documentary photographer Dorothea Lange. The resulting book, *Dorothea Lange: A Life Beyond Limits* (2009), winner of the Bancroft Prize, marks the apotheosis of Gordon's perspectivalism and its democratic proclivity. In choosing the well-known photographer as a historical subject, Gordon focused on a woman who herself heralded what Lange called the "visual life"—a social ethics of empathic understanding, triggered by seeing and driven by an obligation to act on the world as one sees it.⁵⁵ Seeing, for Lange, was an active undertaking, one that sought out a multiplicity of perspectives and identities. "Her photographs enlarged the popular understatings of who Americans were, providing a more democratic visual representation of the nation," Gordon writes. "Lange's America included Mormons, Jews, and evangelicals," she continued, "farmers, sharecroppers, and migrant farmworkers; workers domestic and industrial, male and female; citizens and immigrants not only black and white but also Mexican, Filipino, Chinese, and Japanese, notably the 120,000 Japanese

Americans locked in internment camps during World War II.”⁵⁶ Hers was a “democratic eye”—Gordon’s term and the organizing principle of the whole Lange biography.

Extraordinary convergence between author and subject occurs in *Dorothea Lange*. Gordon does not drop her critical distance on Lange. In this long biography, Gordon finds Lange to have been, at times, imperious and manipulative, a careerist who “made some dubious decisions” in motherhood. However, she also develops a great deal of respect for Lange’s person and photography. And, most crucially, Gordon conflates Lange’s photographic eye with historical perspective. Gordon writes in the introduction, “As I studied Dorothea Lange I began to feel an affinity with her work through the concept of ‘documentary’”—its twin goals of “revealing the truth and promoting social justice . . . fit my historical work.” The historian and photographer are similarly limited, however, in their capacity to realize these goals of truth and justice. “Neither photography nor history simply reports facts,” Gordon explains in a now familiar vein; “Historians and photographers choose what to include and exclude in the pictures they shape, frame their subjects so as to reveal, emphasize, relate, or separate different elements, and use interpretive techniques to do this.” Photographers, like historians, work from and try to advance particular perspectives. “Some will argue, of course,” she elaborates, “that historians and documentarists have no business promoting their opinions, but that argument rests on the false assumption that it is possible to avoid doing so.” They can do no other, Gordon emphasizes: “History and documentary photography necessarily proceed from a point of view shaped by social position, politics, religious conviction, and the thousands of other factors that mold every human being.”⁵⁷ Those thousands of factors are the rich stuff of photographic and historical study, something more freely and fully achieved after recognizing the fact of one’s own perspective.

While examining Lange’s work through historical perspectivalism, Gordon uses documentary photography to comment upon writing history. “Like an historian,” as Gordon describes both Lange and herself, “she wanted her photographs to emphasize what she saw as the main point and to prevent her viewers from being distracted by details.” Gordon’s address is transparent and direct. When discussing particularly tragic events in Lange’s life and their impact on her, she interrupts the narrative and counsels that with “traumas there is no one reality, no objective way to understand what happened, since what happened takes place partly in the psyche.” When using Lange’s own words to appraise an event, Gordon pauses and says that “a cautionary word to readers is now required. . . . She was, without doubt, a self-dramatizing person—so be on guard, reader.”⁵⁸ Like *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction*, the Lange biography is an unusually

self-reflexive book. "As I present these facts," Gordon writes in discussing Lange's disturbing step of placing her children in foster homes, "urging listeners to consider them in a historical context, I become worried that I am being perceived as too cool about it, too matter of fact." She continues, "I frequently reshuffle my points, trying to find a perfect balance among my historian's consciousness of the customs of that time, my emotional understanding of the abandoned children's suffering, and my perception of Dorothea's pain and guilt. There is, of course, no perfect balance, only oscillation."⁵⁹ As we have come to understand, Gordon wants that imbalance and oscillation: critical analysis, for her, depends on moving between incommensurate perspectives.

Mobility of perspective takes on a literal quality in the Lange biography. Indeed, Gordon may very well have been drawn to Lange as a historical subject because of the mobility so crucial to her documentary photography. Starting her career as a studio portrait photographer in San Francisco, Lange took to the road between 1935 and 1939 when she worked with the New Deal Farm Security Administration photography project. Having placed her children in the care of others, Lange left the Bay Area for migrant farm camps and agricultural fields across California, eventually branching out as far as Texas and Alabama. Gordon entitled three central chapters in the biography "On the Road" in California, the Dustbowl, and the South. Traveling by car and with three cameras and a notepad in hand, Lange was a master interviewer, engaging her subjects in warm inquiring conversation while slowly setting up her shots. "The point of this photography," Gordon writes in approval and identification, "was to show people in their contexts."⁶⁰ Work conditions and living conditions drew Lange's closest attention, while she also portrayed her subjects' human complexity and strength. Advancing the popular front aesthetic of social realism, Lange "represented the people who worked the land as model citizens," Gordon summarizes: "They worked hard, deserved respect, and merited the rights and power of a citizen in a democracy." Lange believed, in her own words, that "a photograph should be above all a promoter of consequences."⁶¹ Her greatest achievement, in her biographer's view, was learning how to take photographs that tell stories of class conflict, dispossession, and hard work amid adversity. Central to Lange's "visual democracy," in Gordon's term, are still-picture narratives that promote social justice.

In *Dorothea Lange*, historian and subject diverge in one crucial way: feminism. The biography, like all of Gordon's work, has the certain bearing of women's history, including a distinct feminist sensibility. "But Dorothea was no feminist," as Gordon points out matter of factly: "Too young for the first-wave women's movement, she died before the birth of second-wave feminism."⁶² Gordon finds Lange to have been "hostile" to feminism as a

formal social movement.⁶³ Lange rejected the feminist appellation so central to Gordon's person. Notwithstanding this divergence, Gordon examines Lange's personal and work life as operating under the "burden of womaness"—the primary feature of which is the zero-sum relationship between work and family. Extremely attentive to the price her subject's children paid for their mother's career, Gordon at the same time condemns the "dominant family ideology" into which Lange was born and did little to oppose. She pays considerable attention to Lange's two marriages. Although they were full and rich relationships with (in many ways) admirable, accomplished, and caring men, both marriages nevertheless carried the stark double standard of husband and father unquestioningly enjoying freedom from childcare, cooking, cleaning, and other domestic work. Gordon does not represent Lange as a victim, however. In part, enabled by her husbands' support, Lange "transcended" (while not opposing) the bonds of early to mid-twentieth century American womanhood.⁶⁴ Lange was a "transgressive woman," Gordon concludes, creating through her photography and mobility "a life beyond limits."⁶⁵

Gordon is, finally, more interested in the democratic effects of Lange's work than her biographical storyline. The last chapter in *Dorothea Lange*, entitled "Photographer of Democracy," begins with an epigraph by John Dewey: "The moral function of art itself is to remove prejudice, do away with the scales that keep the eye from seeing, tear away the veils due to wont and custom, perfect the power to perceive." And, indeed, the spirit of Deweyan democracy vivifies Gordon's book as a whole.⁶⁶ Lange, for Gordon, fulfilled art's moral function by helping others to see the enduring racism in America, the exploitation of farm workers, and the injustice of Japanese American internment during World War II (as Lange was hired by the government to document life in the camps). Gordon also finds democratic purpose in the respect with which Lange treated her subjects; her portraits never demean or denigrate for the sake of making a politically gratuitous point. Her work does not overreach: it recognizes the medium's inability to know a human being in a full or complete way. "That final, impermeable layer of unknowability," Gordon concludes, "is the basis of mutual respect and in turn, the basis of democracy."⁶⁷

Dewey's interest in "tear[ing] away the veils due to wont and custom" is also an apt description of Gordon's scholarly intent and purpose overall—from revealing the economic and sex-based determinism of birth control, to estimating the different meanings the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program had for white reformers and poor black recipients, to evaluating the life and work of a social documentary photographer who studied the difficulties and integrity of Americans dispossessed during the

Great Depression. As Gordon wrote of Lange, Gordon too "believe[s] that pictures can imbue respect and open-mindedness, qualities necessary for democracy." But Gordon speaks little of photography's shortcomings. And she says nothing about the differences between the medium and written historical scholarship. Seeing is an imperfect mode of perception, one given to sensationalism and too easily mistaken for knowing.⁶⁸ Dewey himself broke with the spectator theory of knowledge. He instead privileged knowing through doing and, in *The Public and Its Problems* (1927), a theory of knowing modeled after hearing, with conversation being the ideal democratic experience. Gordon's perspectivalism does not consider the limitations of the optical metaphor in historical practice.

That seeing *is* a metaphor for attention to a given topic or figure does redeem the equation between optics and historical analysis, however. Gordon has most effectively used it to express and enact the cognitive movement between multiple human subjects for the sake of new and more rounded and objective historical interpretation. Gordon helps redefine objectivity from a unified point of view to perspectival multiplicity: a decentering impulse integral to feminist history's opposition to male-dominated understanding of the past as well as to recognizing the socially specific identities and interests within feminism and the category of women itself. Gordon is not the only contemporary historian to develop perspectivalism. For James T. Kloppenberg, perspectivalism is central to pragmatic hermeneutics, a method of intellectual history that features "incessant movement" between texts and contexts and among many other analytical frames. Kloppenberg describes the hermeneutic practitioner as the "restless historian," whose interpretive dynamism engages one's "own experiences and cultural frameworks" as part of an explicit effort to produce historical scholarship that informs present critical concerns.⁶⁹ Perspectivalism needs further formulation in both theory and practice. To that end, Linda Gordon's fifty-year trek from radicalism provides a good example of a historian using perspectivalism in remaining politically determined while moving toward historical objectivity, an ideal that warrants considerable imagination in the interpretation of the past.

NOTES

¹See for example, Joan W. Scott, "Feminism's History," *Journal of Women's History* 16, no. 2 (2004): 10–29; Anne Firor Scott, Sara Evans, Elizabeth Faue, and Susan Cahn, "Women's History in the New Millennium: A Conversation across Three Generations: Part I," *Journal of Women's History* 11, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 9–30; Anne Firor Scott, Sara Evans, Elizabeth Faue, and Susan Cahn, "Women's History in the New Millennium: A Conversation across Three Generations: Part II," *Journal of Women's History* 11, no. 2 (Summer 1999): 199–220; Susan Pedersen, "The Future of Feminist

History," *Perspectives: American Historical Association Newsletter* 38 (October 2000): 1, 20–25; and Linda Gordon, "How Far We've Come," *Radical Historians Newsletter* 71 (November 1994): 1, 13; "Tidal Waves? U.S. Feminist Historians Talk Back (and Forth) Across the Generations (A Session in Honor of Sara M. Evans) Roundtable" (Fifteenth Berkshire Conference on the History of Women, Minneapolis, Minnesota, June, 2008); "State of the Field Session: History of Women/Gender/Sexuality" (Annual Meeting of the Organization of American Historians, Washington, DC, April, 2010). The two points about the successes and institutionalization of women's history are also embedded in virtually every interview within the Living US Women's History Oral History Project, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, MA (hereafter "Living US Women's History Project").

²Scott, "Feminism's History," 12–13.

³This essay distinguishes between the beginning of US academic women's history as a concerted enterprise in the late 1960s and the writing of American women's history since at least the nineteenth century.

⁴Along with personal interviews and email correspondence, Linda Gordon's biographical material stems from published interviews in Henry Abelove, ed., and et. al., *Visions of History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), 71–96; and Linda Gordon, Living US Women's History Project.

⁵Very helpful in conceptualizing the relationship between academic women's history and feminist politics is Judith M. Bennett, *History Matters: Patriarchy and the Challenge of Feminism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006). Also valuable are Bonnie G. Smith, *The Gender of History: Men, Women, and the Historical Practice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); and Judith P. Zinsser, *History and Feminism: A Glass Half Full* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993).

⁶Carlo Ginzburg explicitly makes this point in "Distance and Perspective: Reflections on Two Metaphors," in *Historians and Social Values*, ed. Joep Leersen and Ann Rigney (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2000), 30.

⁷That perspectivalism is integral to *pragmatism* and that philosophy's influence on progressive American historians is a point that has driven my thinking on Gordon and feminist history since I first presented it at the American Historical Association conference in 1997. Pragmatism and feminism share a basic democratic concern for cultivating moral responsibility and social cooperation through the mobility of consciousness and the cross fertilization of perspectives. The dynamics of communication, consciousness raising, and changing minds are crucial to both pragmatism and feminism. Although pragmatist history is rarely mentioned below, this article does develop the congruencies between feminism and pragmatism through perspectivalism.

⁸Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufman (1887; New York: Vintage, 1968), 3:12 (emphasis in original). Very helpful in understanding the relevance of Nietzsche's perspectivalism to writing history is Thomas Haskell, "Objectivity: Perspective as Problem and Solution," *History and Theory* 43, no. 4 (October 2005): 341–59.

⁹Ginzburg, "Distance and Perspective," 22–25.

¹⁰Linda Gordon, *The Great Arizona Orphan Abduction* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 315.

¹¹Mari Jo Buhle interview transcript, Living US Women's History Project, 59; and Linda Kerber interview transcript, Living US Women's History Project.

¹²Gordon interview, *Visions*, 79.

¹³Buhle interview transcript, Living US Women's History Project, 59.

¹⁴Gordon interview, Living US Women's History Oral History Project.

¹⁵Nancy Cott spoke of a first Thompsonian stage in the "State of the Field" session on women's history at the 2010 Organization of American Historians conference, Washington DC.

¹⁶E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: V. Gollancz, 1963). See, for example, Herbert Gutman, *Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America* (New York: Knopf, 1976).

¹⁷Joan Kelly, "The Social Relations of the Sexes: Methodological Implications of Women's History," *Signs* 1, no. 4 (Summer 1976): 809–23.

¹⁸Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *American Historical Review* 91 (December 1986): 1053–75.

¹⁹Lerner, "Introductory Comments" presented at the Second Berkshire Conference on the on the History of Women, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1974, The Berkshire Conference Collection, Schlesinger Library of Women's History, Harvard University.

²⁰Interview with Natalie Zemon Davis in *Visions*, 114.

²¹A leading theoretical essay on socialist-feminist history is Joan Kelly, "The Doubled Vision of Feminist Theory," *Feminist Studies* 5 (Spring 1979): 216–27. For a historiographical overview, see Elizabeth Fox Genovese, "Socialist-Feminist American Women's History," *Journal of Women's History* 1 (Winter 1990), 181–210.

²²Ellen Carol Dubois, "Woman Suffrage and the Left: An International Socialist-Feminist Perspective," *New Left Review* 186 (March–April 1991): 20–45, 22.

²³Biographical information and response to feminism from Gordon interview in *Visions*, 83; Gordon, "What Should Women's Historians Do: Politics, Social Theory, and Women's History," *Marxist Perspectives* (Fall 1978): 133; Gordon, *Visions*, 79; and Gordon, "What Should Women's Historians Do," 133.

²⁴Linda Gordon, *Woman's Body, Woman's Right: A Social History of Birth Control in America* (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), xviii.

²⁵David Kennedy, review of *Woman's Body, Woman's Right*, by Linda Gordon, *Journal of American History* 64, no. 3 (December 1977): 823–24, 823; J. Stanley Lemons, review of *Woman's Body, Woman's Right*, by Linda Gordon, *American Historical*

Review 82, no. 4 (October 1977): 1095; and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "Comments on the Reviews of *Woman's Body, Woman's Right*," *Signs* 4 (Summer 1979): 804–8, 805.

²⁶Gordon, *Woman's Body*, 10–11.

²⁷See Heidi Hartman, "The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union," in *Women and Revolution: A Discussion of the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism*, ed. Lydia Sargent (Boston: South End Press, 1981), 1–26; Iris Young, "Socialist Feminism and the Limits of Dual Systems Theory," *Socialist Review* 10 (March–June 1980): 169–88; and Gloria Joseph, "The Incompatible Menage a Trois: Marxism, Feminism, and Racism," in *Women and Revolution*, 91–107.

²⁸Ellen Carol Dubois and Vicki Ruiz, eds., *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader*, 2nd edition (New York: Routledge, 1994), xi–xii.

²⁹Linda Gordon, *The Moral Property of Women: A History of Birth Control Politics in America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002).

³⁰Christine Stansell, "A Response to Joan Scott," *International Labor and Working Class History* 31 (Spring 1987): 224–29, 227.

³¹Joan Scott, review of *Heroes of Their Own Lives: The Politics and History of Family Violence*, by Linda Gordon, *Signs* 15, no. 4 (1990): 848–52; and Linda Gordon, review of *Gender and the Politics of History*, by Joan Scott, *Signs* 15 (Summer 1990): 848–59.

³²Linda Gordon, "Comments," delivered at the annual meeting of the Organization of American Historians, Chicago, March 1992, in author's possession. Bryan D. Palmer, *Descent into Discourse: The Reification of Language and the Writing of Social History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990).

³³Linda Gordon, "A Socialist View of Women's Studies: A Reply to the Editorial, Volume 1, Number 1," *Signs* 1, no. 2 (1975): 559–66, 565; and Linda Gordon, "What Should Women's Historians Do: Politics, Social Theory, and Women's History," *Marxist Perspectives* 1 (Fall 1978): 129.

³⁴Linda Gordon, "A Socialist View of Women's Studies," 565; "What Should Women's Historians Do?," 129; and Gordon, interview in *Visions*, 85. Emphasis in original.

³⁵Gordon, "What's New in Women's History?," in *Feminist Studies/Cultural Studies*, ed. Teresa de Lauretis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 20–31, 22.

³⁶Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Situated Knowledge," *Feminist Studies* 14 (Autumn 1988): 575–99, 579.

³⁷Gordon, "A Socialist View of Women's Studies," 565.

³⁸Thomas L. Haskell, "Objectivity is Not Neutrality: Rhetoric v. Practice in Peter Novick's *That Noble Dream*," *History and Theory* 29, no. 2 (1990): 129–57.

³⁹Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands, La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987); and Haraway, "Situated Knowledges," 579–80.

⁴⁰Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 31–33.

⁴¹Gordon interview in *Visions*, 77; and Linda Gordon, "AHR Forum: Peter Novick's *That Noble Dream: The Objectivity Question and the Future of the Historical Profession*," *American Historical Review* 96 (June 1991): 683–87, 685.

⁴²Gordon, "What's New In Women's History?," 22–24.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Gordon, *Heroes of their Own Lives: The Politics and History of Family Violence* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988), v, 16–17.

⁴⁵Linda Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 8.

⁴⁶Leading essays in this discussion include, Nancy Cott, "What's In a Name? The Limits of 'Social Feminism'; or, Expanding the Vocabulary of Women's History," *Journal of American History* 76 (December 1989): 809–29; and Linda K. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *Journal of Women's History* 75 (June 1988), 9–39.

⁴⁷Linda Gordon, "The Struggle for Reproductive Freedom: Three Stages of Feminism," in *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*, ed. Zillah R. Eisenstein (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979), 107; and Linda Gordon, "What's New in Women's History?," 29.

⁴⁸Gordon, *Pitied But Not Entitled*, 8.

⁴⁹Ibid., 111.

⁵⁰Gordon, *Great Arizona Orphan Abduction*, 11.

⁵¹Ibid., 120–21.

⁵²Ibid., 159–60.

⁵³Ibid., 160, 180, 165.

⁵⁴Ibid., 318.

⁵⁵Linda Gordon, *Dorothea Lange: A Life Beyond Limits* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2009), xv.

⁵⁶Ibid., xiv.

⁵⁷Ibid., xvi–xvii.

⁵⁸Ibid., 152.

⁵⁹Ibid., 167.

⁶⁰Ibid., 213.

⁶¹Ibid., 219.

⁶²Ibid., 48.

⁶³Ibid., xvi.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ibid., 295.

⁶⁶Ibid., 423–24.

⁶⁷Ibid., xix.

⁶⁸Yaron Ezrahi, “Dewey’s Critique of Democratic Visual Culture and Its Political Implications,” in *Sites of Vision: The Discursive Construction of Sight in the History of Philosophy*, ed. David Michael Levin (Cambridge, MA: Michigan Institute of Technology Press, 1997), 315–36.

⁶⁹James T. Kloppenberg, “Pragmatism and the Practice of History: From Turner and Du Bois to Today,” *Metaphilosophy* 35 (January 2004): 202–25; and James T. Kloppenberg, “Thinking Historically: A Manifesto of Pragmatic Hermeneutics,” *Modern Intellectual History* 9 (April 2012): 201–16.