



Miller, Nancy K. "Women's Secrets and the Novel: Remembering Mary McCarthy's 'The Group.'" *Social Research* 68.1 (Spring 2001): 173-199.

Reproduced with permission of The New School (www.socres.org).

www.nancykmler.com

Women's Secrets and the Novel: Remembering Mary McCarthy's *The Group*

BY NANCY K. MILLER

I have never put a toothbrush in a poem.
—Sylvia Plath, "A Comparison"

GET yourself a pessary" was how it began.

In 1954, Mary McCarthy published a story about a girl and a diaphragm in *Partisan Review*. The attention-grabbing story about a young woman's visit to a birth-control clinic, "Dottie Makes an Honest Woman of Herself," ultimately became a chapter in McCarthy's 1963 best-selling novel, *The Group*.¹ Other chapters later ran in *The New Yorker* but this one captured the popular imagination and launched the novel's reputation well in advance of publication. The Dottie story, the *Newsweek* reviewer of the novel recalls, "was saluted by one ironical commentator as an ambitious attempt to do for the female contraceptive what Herman Melville did for the whale" ("Review," 1963a).² If this was the first time that a diaphragm appeared in a literary work, it was not to be the last. While not on Melvillian scale, Philip Roth's prize-winning 1959 novella, *Goodbye, Columbus*, turned explicitly on McCarthy's use of the device. When Neil Klugman urges Brenda Patimkin to visit a Margaret Sanger clinic in New York in order to be fitted for a diaphragm, his girlfriend resists, thinking that she must be just one in a series of women—some "whore"—he sent there. No, Roth's hero protests, it was from reading Mary McCarthy that he acquired his knowledge; from books, not sordid experience. Still Brenda resists. Going to the clinic would make her "feel like

SOCIAL RESEARCH, Vol. 68, No. 1 (Spring 2001)

someone out of *her*” (1993 [1959]: 82). It would mean “something affairish,” a slightly seamy adventure that ended badly, rather than her very own private drama whose plot she planned to have a say in; not a summer romance but something more like marriage. By 1959, McCarthy had sufficiently blurred the lines between private life and public scandal, autobiography and fiction, to give a nice fifties Jewish suburban girl like Roth’s heroine pause—as well as an education in birth-control alternatives.

There was nothing new about getting a diaphragm in 1954; Margaret Sanger had been dispensing them in her clinics since the 1930s.³ What *was* new was reading about it in fiction, where to many women—single women, that is, often eager to lose their burdensome virginity—the information seemed an important, even vital revelation. Reminiscing about her college years (Radcliffe, 1955), Nora Sayre reconstructs the ambient ignorance that coexisted with a desire to pierce the mysteries of sexual technology: “But we still had far too little information about birth control: some believed that a Pepsi-Cola douche was sufficient. Philip Roth was correct in *Goodbye, Columbus*: I did read the excerpt from Mary McCarthy’s *The Group* in *Partisan Review* in order to learn more about diaphragms, and women students told each other where to find the magazine in Widener Library. But literature and myth did not suffice, nor did the foam of the Fifties; among my private word association tests, when someone says ‘Radcliffe,’ I think ‘pregnant’” (1995: 174-175).

Certainly, it took more daring to get fitted for a diaphragm in the reality of 1954—the year the story was published—than in the fiction of 1933, the year in which McCarthy’s cautionary tale is set. On the other hand, it happened. In *Minor Characters*, her memoir about coming of age in the 1950s, Joyce Johnson recalls the tension that surrounded the acquisition of this item: “I’ve got it!’ a girl screams down from a third-floor window in Hewitt Hall my senior year at Barnard. ‘Come on up! I’ve got it!’” (1990 [1983]: 84-85). In 1954 at Barnard College (ahead of Radcliffe in this domain), “this illicit thing” is “contraband.” Getting a diaphragm

in the 1950s, if you were not married, was an enterprise that entailed a mix of daring and embarrassment. It was as though public and sexual were two concepts that could not be combined in single women (hence the shock embedded in the very title of Helen Gurley Brown's 1962 bestseller, *Sex and the Single Girl*). Single girls bought a fake wedding ring at Woolworth's and gave a false married name at the Margaret Sanger clinic.⁴ Joyce, who could never quite make herself take the trip to the clinic, ends up predictably pregnant instead, and has a classic fifties backstreet abortion. "It's odd," she notes, looking back, "what you have the courage for and what you don't" (97).

This was not, of course, the first time McCarthy had gone public with her brand of female realism—or maybe naturalism would be the better literary term. In her notorious 1941 story, "The Man in the Brooks Brothers Shirt," which also appeared in *Partisan*, McCarthy's Margaret Sargent has sex with a stranger on a train. Like Roth's heroine, women readers tended to take McCarthy's revelations to heart. It is indeed the impact of this story on one such reader that gave Elizabeth Hardwick the lead for an enthusiastic essay in *Harper's*: "'Mary McCarthy! 'The Man in the Brooks Brothers Shirt!' That's my Bible!' I once heard a young woman exclaim" (1962: 33). Talking with Doris Lessing in her autobiography, *Flying*, about the effect *The Golden Notebook* had on women readers because it committed to fiction what had not been there before, Kate Millett invokes "The Man in the Brooks Brothers Shirt" to make her point about Lessing's famous tampon scene: "There's a passage in Mary McCarthy where the heroine so-called does the sublimely stupid thing of getting drunk on a train and spends the night in a berth fucking some character she's picked up. It's the sort of harebrained thing we've all done and hated ourselves for afterwards. But she had the guts to admit it. Was honest enough" (1990: 357). Hardwick had expressed similar sentiments in a 1962 *Esquire* profile of Mary McCarthy, set up to publicize *The Group*. Commenting on her friend's "intense scrupulosity," Hardwick prefigures Millett in more ladylike prose:

“Lots of women had taken up with a man on a train before—or at least they’d *thought* about doing it—but this was the first time anybody ever *wrote* about it. . . . I was absolutely bowled over” (63). In a recent meditation on reading novels about women writers to find oneself, as well as instruction about being in love, Vivian Gornick recalls in much the same vein the impact of reading McCarthy’s early stories. “Oh god! we moaned over ‘The Man in the Brooks Brothers Shirt,’ that is *just* the way it is” (2000: 136).

When Lessing responds to Millett’s admiration for recording women’s experiences with the kind of unexpected detail that compels both recognition and admiration, she laughs in complicity about the bathroom scene, another first. “Of course that is just the sort of thing one blushes to write” (1974 [1962]: 357). And yet the embarrassment has its rewards: “But the most curious thing is that the very passages that once caused me the most anxiety, the moments when I thought, no, I cannot put this on paper—are now the passages I’m proud of. That comforts me most out of all I’ve written. Because through letters and readers I discovered that these were the moments when I *spoke for other people*. So *paradoxical*,” she concludes her thought, “*because at the time they seemed so hopelessly private*” (357; emphasis added). Lessing here identifies one of modern privacy’s greatest contradictions: the more you cross the accepted boundaries cordoning off the private from the public, the more you erode the difference between them; the more you reveal what seems impossible to share the more you . . . connect.

Or not. Some readers are repelled by the revelation of these bodily moments; still others made nervous. To simplify, we might say that for every Millett there is a Mailer—though to be sure, if gender is key to the nature of the material, gender does not always tell the whole story about its effect in print. Nonetheless, the intimate experiences that writers and readers historically have seemed most concerned with protecting and exposing bear the mark of gender, for they are located, concrete, enfolded. As Peter Brooks observes succinctly in *Body Work*, “Intimacy is of the

body, and the body is private" (1993: 51). In the 1950s—the era to which, despite the early-1960s date, *The Group* and *The Golden Notebook* belong—the category of intimate, female experience was perceived to be a zone of propriety, a domain meant to be protected from the public eye. McCarthy's and Lessing's novels challenged what literary types interested in critical reception like to call the "horizon of expectations." They surprised and even shocked readers by their experimental form and by the unexpected appearance on the page of objects from that domain: private information dispensed by women writers.⁵

I want to look briefly now at some of the responses to *The Group* triggered by exposure of—and to—this new material.⁶

What did McCarthy feel about leaking secrets, making these private women's things public? When asked by an interviewer for *Vogue* just before *The Group* came out whether "being a woman" inhibited her from writing about sex, and whether there was "any other aspect of emotional life" she might find "tricky to write about" as a woman, McCarthy answered airily: "I'm afraid I'm not sufficiently inhibited about the things that other women are inhibited about for me. They feel that you've sort of let the side down, you know, that you've given away trade secrets, if you write very candidly about certain things" (1963: 143). Louise Bogan, the poetry reviewer for *The New Yorker*, describes in a letter to a friend her largely favorable impressions of *The Group* in terms of betrayal and exposure of those "certain things": "Women's secrets again," she sighs excitedly, "told in clinical detail" (1973 [1963]: 353). What is coded by women as "women's secrets" invariably references the bodily, the sexual, and rings another familiar change on the paradoxes of privacy: women's "secrets" are both a revelation and completely commonplace. As Millett says about the Lessing bathroom event: it "happens every month of adult life to half the population of the globe"; but it is a shock to that same population when it happens *in print*: "In a book!" (1990: 357).⁷

And that was exactly McCarthy's aim: to make it happen in a book—a novel. In that gesture McCarthy was participating in a

long history of secret telling that Michel Foucault famously described in the first volume of his *History of Sexuality* (1980), whose French title literally translated is: “The Will to Knowledge.” When Foucault looks for a fable to ground the project of his essay, the historian—being French—turns naturally to the French eighteenth-century novel, to a tale by a *philosophe* called *The Indiscreet Jewels*. The fable of the fable, we might recall, is tied to a magic ring that an inquisitive sultan is given to test the loyalty of his harem; when the ring is aimed at a woman’s genitals, they start to talk, to give up their secrets—unwittingly—against their will. The novel as a genre never quite abandons that project of trying to find out what women do in private, looking to discover—and uncover—their secrets. To be sure, Foucault never worried about the role gender played in the power vectors of bodily knowledge, but McCarthy did (although I freely admit to hijacking her novel into a feminist version of the enterprise).

When in 1959 McCarthy applied—successfully—for a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship to finish the novel she had started in the early fifties, she staked out just this territory in her application: “No male consciousness is present in the book; through these eight points of view, all feminine, all consciously enlightened, are refracted, as if from a series of pretty prisms, all the novel ideas of the period concerning sex, politics, economics, architecture, city-planning, house-keeping, child-bearing, interior decoration, and art. It is a crazy quilt of *clichés*, platitudes, and *idées reçues*. Yet the book is not meant to be a joke or even a satire, exactly, but a ‘true history’ of the times despite the angle or angles of distortion” (Gelderman, 1988: 253). It is interesting, even instructive, to revisit McCarthy’s project through the prism of seventies feminism and nineties postfeminism for another look at the alignment made between “true history” and a “feminine” point of view. What would a pessary say about its intimate experiences if it could talk? Or a nursing breast?

What in turn did the critics have to say about history rendered through the perspective of those “pretty prisms” rather than the

clear lens of male consciousness, to stay within McCarthy's authorial metaphors?⁸ Crudely but not atypically, a reviewer for the *Times Literary Supplement* complained that "at the end we know much more about Dottie's vagina than ever we do about Dottie" ("Review," 1963b: 901). (This argument by metonymy echoes the famous remark by novelist François Mauriac that, after reading *The Second Sex*, "Beauvoir's vagina no longer held any secrets for him" [Moi, 1994: 180]).

By 1963, McCarthy was a well-established—not to say feared—literary figure, and the power of her persona to damage others shapes all the rather nervous reviews of the novel.⁹ Even Norman Mailer hesitates briefly before going for the kill in the *New York Review of Books*. What is one to make of this novel by "our First Lady of Letters" that has garnered such a mass of accolades, he wonders aloud. A new novel by Mary McCarthy will not be ignored—but it will also be trivialized by being demoted to the "lady-book" (1963: 1).¹⁰

The Group takes as its central subject the entangled question of ambition and sexuality in the lives of eight young women who, like McCarthy, graduated from Vassar in 1933. *The Group* is about what Mailer disdainfully but also with an ambivalent recognition of her "method" called the "profound materiality of women" (1963: 3). Mailer was not the only reviewer to be impressed by the sheer mass of detailed information McCarthy provides—both about the thirties and women's domestic lives—but in the end for him the book failed as a novel. "It will continue to exist as a classic in sociology long after it is dim and dull as a novel, it will survive in Soc Sci I at every university and junior college: the specific details are to be mined by the next twenty-five classes of PhD" (3). Had women's studies courses existed in 1963, Mailer would have no doubt predicted the novel becoming their Bible. Our bodies, ourselves, *avant la lettre*. The American way of life after the speculum.

“Get yourself a pessary.”

Like Nora Sayre, readers in the 1950s automatically replaced the word pessary with the more familiar diaphragm, as Roth did in his story. Pessary is indeed an odd word, and sounds archaic, as though it belongs to another era. But it is there for a reason, beyond the fun of local color, even if McCarthy milks it thoroughly for the punning opportunities it offers. McCarthy’s story, I want to suggest, is also an important document in the record of women’s struggles for control over reproduction, and by that token, the domain—discursive and physical—of their private lives.

The first sentence startled McCarthy’s audience in the 1950s but it was more than a one-liner. McCarthy spins a tale from her lead. “Dick’s muttered *envoi*, as he propelled her firmly to the door the next morning, fell on Dottie’s ears with the effect of a stunning blow” (1989 [1963]: 58). On the moment, the poor girl is linguistically challenged.¹¹ “Get yourself a peccary?” Perplexed, Dottie conjures up a piglike animal studied in zoology class. Was this a joke? Had she, like Ophelia, been sent off to a nunnery? Finally, confronted with her tearful face, Dick explains harshly: “A female contraceptive, a plug” (59). And he waves her off to consult her friend Kay, a married woman, about finding a lady doctor. And not just any doctor. McCarthy sends her heroine to the source, to the most famous distributor of pessaries in the 1930s, the Margaret Sanger Bureau.

In *Woman of Valor*, her biography of Margaret Sanger, Ellen Chesler claims that McCarthy’s novel offers an accurate portrait of Doctor Harriet Stone, the legendary woman doctor who presided over the Margaret Sanger Bureau. “Stone is perhaps best captured,” Chesler writes, “in a transparently autobiographical scene from *The Group*, Mary McCarthy’s comic and yet poignant novel about the rites of passage of American college women in the 1930s” (1992: 88-89). Whether or not Dottie’s pessary is really Mary McCarthy’s matters less, I think, to the history of contracep-

tion, and hence to the history of privacy, than the fact of its existence in print. Though I doubt very much that this is how McCarthy would wish to be remembered, as speaking, in Lessing's terms, "for other people," the scene remains, we might say, one for the books.¹² Educating us through Dottie, McCarthy furnishes a description of the "new device" recommended by the birth-control bureau; discovered by Margaret Sanger, it combined "the maximum of protection with the minimum of inconvenience . . . a rubber cap mounted on a coiled spring, came in a range of sizes and would be tried out . . . for fit, wearing comfort, and so on, in the same way that various lenses were tried out for the eyes" (1989: 64). The description is straightforward and didactic, including the use of Latin terminology (*labia majora*) for high seriousness, that seems intended, the *Newsweek* reviewer complains, "for burial in a time capsule against the day when sex is a forgotten activity" ("Review," 1963a: 80). When we open the time capsule almost half a century later, there is an unexpected pay off.

In her quest to obtain reproductive freedom for American citizens, Margaret Sanger arranged for a shipment of contraceptive supplies to be sent from Japan to Harriet Stone "so as to stage a clear case on medical exemption"; this was done in conjunction with "recent judicial reconstruction of the Comstock provisions on obscene literature and interstate transport of contraception" (Chesler, 1992: 372). A case on the part of Dr. Stone was "filed in the United States District Court for the Southern District in Manhattan" in 1933 and it was called, wonderfully, *United States v. One Package Containing 120 more or less, Rubber Pessaries to Prevent Conception*. It would have been hard to miss the publicity the case generated. In 1936, while McCarthy was first living in New York, Augustus Hand ruled that "contraception had become a safe and essential element of modern medical practice" (373). Sanger was saluted in the pages of *Time* magazine and *Life* featured her in a "four-page photo spread" (374). "But now mothers can be told!" she triumphed in the pages of *The New Republic* (1938: 324).

Critics often admired the accuracy of *The Group's* depictions of thirties culture. *One Package* provides an interesting example of its documentation. The landmark case is not named but it is referred to clearly in the novel. Kay, the married woman who is supposed to be helping Dottie, worries about the risk her single friend is running by using her real name in making an appointment, "not even 'Mrs.'" (72). By contrast, the fifties with the fake wedding band seem a significant step backward in the progress narrative. Sleeping with a man is one thing, Kay thought; getting the equipment is another. "The things you did in private were your own business, but this was practically public!" (72). The danger in Kay's mind has to do with the risk of exposure. Someone might see you "from a passing bus or a taxi" (73). But worse than that, "Why, the office might be raided and the doctor's records impounded and published in the papers . . ." (73). Having your real name in the paper would "kill Dottie's family" (73). Dottie took a calmer view, having "insisted that birth control was perfectly legal and above board, thanks to a court decision that allowed doctors to prescribe contraceptives for the prevention or cure of disease" (73). That is an accurate description of *One Package*. The memory of raids had attached themselves to the popular imagination, and McCarthy's invocation of them gives the measure of the anxiety entailed in the very question of publicly acknowledged sexuality for women, and especially, in the case of contraception, single women, as well as the feminist struggle that Sanger's crusade had joined: "you could almost see Mrs. Panhkurst in [Dottie's] resolute eye" (73). In telling this story in 1954 about contraception in fiction, McCarthy makes public, literally broadcasts, however mockingly, the same news about so-called women's secrets that the women confessional poets like Sexton and Plath would soon be putting into poetry.

One Package or no, Mailer, ever the self-appointed arbiter of ethics and aesthetics, is predictably dissatisfied with McCarthy's female realism. McCarthy has not written the novel of social vision Mailer deems she should and could have written. The great

detester of contraception, as he was to make clear in *An American Dream*, Mailer probably did not appreciate the detail involved in the high point of the scene when the pessary, slippery with contraceptive jelly, jumps out of her heroine's grasp and springs across the room. It is apropos of this comical moment that Elizabeth Hardwick comments with a certain glee: "This story, *memorable* to put it mildly, could not have been written by anyone except Mary McCarthy" (1962: 37). But Mailer, deploring the invasion of language by the feminine, is revolted by the leakage of female excess into punctuation itself: "the Eggs Benedict and the dress with the white fichu, the pessary and the whatnot, sit on the line of the narrative like commas and periods, semicolons, italics, and accents."¹³ The pessary was hard to take. Reminiscing in 1975, Bellow complained that Mary McCarthy's *The Group* had "too many pessaries" (Atlas, 2000: 438)—though he himself had a diaphragm doing double duty, as it were, in *Herzog*, which he published in 1964, the year following *The Group* and which Roth recalled recently in an admiring essay in *The New Yorker*.¹⁴

In a *Newsweek* feature when the book came out, McCarthy argued glamorously over Campari and soda that the book was really about "technology and the mirage of political and social progress which misled the young in the 1930s." The idea of the book is to show the failure of those notions, "to see the tails of these ideas disappearing down these little ratholes" ("Review," 1963a: 81). But the magazine also reports the "shock of intellectual leaders at the book's heavy cargo of womanish inconsequence" and predicts disapproval from the "highbrows" (81). McCarthy was being condemned for having written the novel for which she had received a prestigious grant.

"The pessary and the whatnot."

For Mailer, McCarthy had turned out the "best novel the editors of women's magazines ever conceived in *their* secret ambitions"

(1963: 3).¹⁵ More secrets, perhaps more dangerous because a writing ambition that made money and conferred celebrity. Yes, the readers of *The Group* read women's magazines; they also bought books and made the novel a bestseller. But the association with the category of women's magazines was the official kiss of death on the level of high culture pronunciamiento. Another woman writer, one who was fatally and famously to lock horns with McCarthy in a fractious lawsuit, Lillian Hellman, adopted the Mailer position: "I think Miss McCarthy is often brilliant and sometimes even sound. But, in fiction, she is a lady writer, a lady magazine writer" (Kiernan, 2000: 540). In other words, when the details of the private female world are revealed in literary texts, their authors are suddenly marked as belonging to an inferior realm of literary production. Nevertheless, whatever highbrows might have felt about McCarthy's representation of 1930s political culture, in 1963 there was a vast audience of women readers with a different set of experiences and expectations ready for their point of view to be brought into public.¹⁶

At the end of the 1950s, Philip Roth contributed to the literary posterity of the McCarthy scandal by making it the key to the shape of his novella. When his heroine goes off to school she leaves her diaphragm behind, and when her mother finds it in one of her drawers, the secret of virginity lost is out and Brenda, not wanting to displease her parents, ends the relationship. But Roth had problems of his own with responses to the circulation in fiction of this contraceptive technology. Although the story finally appeared in *Partisan Review*, it had been rejected by *The New Yorker* because of the prominent role played by the offending object, even though the magazine was eager to have Roth's work in its pages. A magazine that could not deal with the words "balding," "pimples," and "dandruff," was not going to be able to handle *diaphragm* (Yagoda, 2000: 296). Was it the word or the thing? Both.¹⁷

Let us return to Doris Lessing's conversation with Kate Millett in the 1970s, at the height of second-wave feminism, on the place

of these discomfiting matters in fiction and their effect on readers. Lessing, we saw, generalized as a writer about what is private and public when she observed that, by revealing what is most private, silent embarrassment is transformed into information; the ineffable of the personal becomes public document; autobiography, fiction; and readers find their private experience figured in your revelation.¹⁸ But Millett specifically drew her examples from women's lives and not from universal experience—even if using a tampon when you have your period and picking up a man on the train are common occurrences. They are common to women, and women's points of view on them have not been part of the record of intimate experience as rendered in literature. That is exactly how McCarthy justified the originality of her project in writing *The Group*: giving voice to history lived in the feminine.

As *One Package* clearly shows, contraception and sexual autonomy are highly regulated rights in the organization of private life in America. As a result, and largely because of the historical linkage of contraception and obscenity, *One Package* did not go unchallenged. This is because beyond the power of that association, the resistance to sexual and reproductive autonomy is particularly freighted for *women* in this country—especially unmarried women; the resistance to “decisional autonomy” for women in matters of contraception and then abortion is relentless, not to say unending.¹⁹ Even after *Griswold v. Connecticut* (1965) granted married couples the constitutional right to use birth control in their own home, it took *Eisenstadt v. Baird* in 1972 for the “right of contraceptive practice” to be extended “to the unmarried” (Chesler, 1992: 376). The latest installment to this saga turns up in the radical transformation of these experiences posed by a drug that recently made headlines; a drug that can—through new technology—in fact redefine the meaning both of contraception and abortion and has been described by its creator as “the moral property of women” (Pollitt, 2000: 9). With this drug, RU-486, abortion “would,” Katha Pollitt writes, “finally become what *Roe v. Wade* said it should be: a *private medical matter*

between a woman and her doctor" (9; emphasis added). Unfortunately, if the FDA has its way, access to the drug will be limited to doctors trained in performing abortions²⁰—in other words, this so-called private matter will remain subject to government control, and private moral property, a publicly legislated one.²¹ Eventually, one television commentator observed, women could have abortions "in the privacy of their home" (Borger, 2000). A headline in *The New York Times* used the same language: "Woman Will Be Able To End Early Pregnancy in Her Own Home" (Kolata, 2000: 1)—the home, perhaps, in which women had the privacy to conceive. Given all the restrictions on taking the drug, however, the likelihood of women gaining complete control of their privacy and their bodies any time soon is slim—and far from legislative reality. Still, the word privacy is the word that women cling to when they want to express their freedom to choose.²²

And so we arrive at yet another paradox in the privacy dramas that attend, even structure women's lives: women's privacy often needs to be both protected *and* exposed. The issue is: by whom and when—and whose interests are served? It is, perhaps, the founding dilemma of privacy in women's lives that women sometimes need to have the details of their intimacy revealed to protect themselves against a much wider injustice: the ignorance and vulnerability produced by silence. As we have also seen, however, when intimate objects enter the precincts of literary discourse, we are quickly reminded that privacy historically has depended on old hierarchies of sexual difference; and that exposure, pace Foucault, incites calls for repression. *The Group*—a novel with no internal "male consciousness" to authorize its representations—was seen by many commentators to have gone too far in its archaeologies of the feminine.

Since privacy is often represented as a space or zone protected by the law, written or unwritten, its infringement is also often coded as a boundary violation, a boundary that is cast as a personal preference about what or how much you would like to know about certain subjects. As Katharine White, her former editor at

The New Yorker remarked, for her there were “several places” in *The Group* where McCarthy crossed that “thin line of taste ‘between candor and shame’”; and like Mailer, she could have done with less information—finding the novel “too much a social document”—and wanting more about the character of the girls.²³ The stakes of this information are very high, however, and more than a matter of taste or aesthetic choice or novelistic technique: they have everything to do with politics.

With her representation of the diaphragm, McCarthy, we might say, did for women in the 1950s what Bob Dole did for men in the 1990s when he promoted Viagra on television. Although Viagra is not, strictly speaking, a part of contraceptive technology, its fate has been linked with contraception through the labyrinthine logic of health care plans. A recent article in the *The New York Times* reported a suit brought in Seattle under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act for “sex discrimination in health coverage.” “‘The defendants may say that they’re not excluding contraception for women only,’ New York University law professor Sylvia Law argued; ‘they’re excluding contraception for everyone, and it just happens that the only prescription contraceptives available in this country are for women’” (Levin, 2000: A27). But—and here is the connection—“many employers who do not pay for contraception moved quickly to provide coverage for Viagra” at nearly \$10 a pill.²⁴

Because McCarthy persisted in seeing feminism as a question of “envy and self-pity” on the part of women, the movement generated by these questions of inequity bored her; she admitted in 1985 that she rather enjoyed belonging to a very small group of “exceptional women” in her generation who had benefited from the “fact that women in general were rather looked down on.”²⁵ But it is a nice irony that if an argument against the injustices of what we today call gender asymmetry would have irritated her by its very language, the suit brought in her hometown borrows in spirit from her very own fictions of female entitlement—the “outrageous thing,” as she told an interviewer “about the Dottie-going-

to-the-doctor chapter,” that she had “betrayed feminine secrets.”²⁶

Even in post-Pill female culture, the memory of this intimate betrayal lingers like the recycled melody of another era. McCarthy’s “outrageous thing” has inspired more than one woman writer in subsequent generations. In her review of *Writing Dangerously*, Carol Brightman’s biography of McCarthy, novelist Marianne Wiggins describes her precursors this way: “Two she-condors dominated my pass into literary adulthood in the mid-1960s—one of them was Lillian Hellman, the other Mary McCarthy. McCarthy’s *The Group* hit the bestseller lists soon after it was published in August 1963 and remained on them for nearly two years; by the time I was composing my college application essay to Vassar in the fall of 1964, I had read the bits about the famous pessary several times and was lubricating my prose style (I thought) with plenty of killing derivatives from McCarthy’s tube (if not her pen)” (1992: 569). Is a pen a metaphorical pessary?²⁷

Roth’s citation of McCarthy’s pessary outing gets recirculated in Gish Jen’s novel *Mona in the Promised Land*, the story of a Chinese girl from an immigrant family who comes of age in Scarsdale, post-’68. When Callie, the heroine’s older sister, comes home for a visit during her freshman year at Harvard, the two girls and their mother sit up at night and talk about sex. Callie explains that “she learned to spell *diaphragm* from reading *Goodbye, Columbus*. A serious book, she maintains, although under questioning she admits that she originally only read it because the movie version was being filmed over at the high school. And because it had a diaphragm in it” (Jen, 1997 [1996]: 39). Later in the novel, when Mona is fooling around with her boyfriend, she tells him that she “read a book about it, sort of. Not about how to spell *diaphragm*. A book with a diaphragm in it” (111). But when Mona and Seth finally proceed to the next stage, it is after a joint visit to the birth-control clinic and a cycle of pills. In the late 1990s, a novel about the social life of girls can revisit the fraught history of

contraception and virginity lightly and as a vocabulary problem for the SATs—with a knowing smile.

McCarthy, *New Yorker* critic Brendan Gill remarked in a 1983 interview with biographer Carol Gelderman, “was a firebrand . . . a pioneer taking big chances, and by so doing, increasing the range of permissible subject matter” (Gelderman: 1988: 252). This also means redefining what constitutes the proper separation of private acts and public chronicle. True, the shock value of certain words and things fluctuates with the times. An object that once required a court case just to get into the mails becomes part of the museum of sexual history for women. What was threatening to decorum in the past becomes a joke in the present, and the violation of taste an intertext of obsolescence good for spelling challenges. Nonetheless, to bring certain kinds of information into print, even *as fiction*, is ultimately to rework the public/private divide and to redefine national propriety with its attendant unself-consciously universalist claims.²⁸ It is also to suggest that history written from the “feminine sphere”—the so-called private sphere—remains to be told in public scenes.

What is important, finally, about the destiny of McCarthy’s dare is the persistence of the word and its referent for the world of readers—indeed, voters. We want to attend to the things of women’s private domains, the overwhelming importance these little objects tend to have, and their always rather sticky implications—literal and metaphorical—because they give us a way to measure women’s dominion (or lack of it) over the protection and exposure of our intimate lives.

Notes

¹A footnote to the story’s title announces the novel—“A chapter from a novel, *The Group*, which takes place in the ‘30s”—that McCarthy subsequently set aside for several years (1954: 34).

²The comparison in question—“the story does for contraception what *Moby Dick* did for whaling” appears in an earlier magazine interview by Brock Brower (McCarthy, 1962: 64). But perhaps credit should go to Elizabeth Hardwick, who in her essay “Mary McCarthy,” was slightly less

facetious. "There is an air of imparting information—like whaling in Melville or, more accurately, the examination of dope addiction in Gelber's play, *The Connection*" (1962: 37).

³"Under the leadership of Margaret Sanger, birth control had gained a significant amount of liberal support during the twenties and thirties, with roots in feminism and socialism" (May, 1988: 149). But as May shows, birth-control devices were promoted to strengthen family life—family planning—not to support female sexual autonomy or the pleasure and freedom of single women (150).

⁴The issue of virginity or premarital sex per se never comes up as an issue in Roth's novella; for Brenda the stumbling block is "lying to some doctor" about being married (82). The role played by McCarthy's fiction as a primer for illicit sex recurs later in the story when Brenda registers for the two of them at a Boston hotel as "Mr. and Mrs. Neil Klugman." This time the joke is reversed. Neil asks Brenda whether she's done this before; she answers: "I read Mary McCarthy" (125). Reading novels from the 1950s unsettles the post-sixties view of the period as sexually contained and wedded, so to speak, to female chastity.

⁵On the "horizon of expectations," see Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*. As Peter Brooks puts it in *Body Work*, revisiting *Roe* and *Griswold* in the context of the rise of the novel: "In the examples I have cited from Rousseau and other eighteenth-century novelists, 'privacies' were becoming 'sacred,' although they could be known as sacred, come to consciousness as inviolable rights, only by publication of images of their violation, including writing constituted as an invasion of privacy" (51). It is in this sense that we can understand privacy as performative: we know privacy by the acts that unveil or reveal its sheltered zones.

⁶In emphasizing the responses to the perceived infringement of privacies, I am underscoring the performative and relational aspects of privacy—what happens when a line is crossed, especially by women writers. The response at this point in history is all the more surprising, given the obscenity trials provoked and threatened by the publication of books like *Lolita*, *Naked Lunch*, and most famously, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Perhaps we need to focus not only on the gendered aspect of bodies and objects, but also the sex of the writers who put these representations before the public—who has permission to expose what. Deborah Nelson argues, following Jennifer Nedelsky's "Reconceiving Autonomy: Sources, Thoughts, and Possibilities," that "privacy is always a relational right, . . . although permission maybe granted in ways so invisible or so deeply accustomed that we fail to see them" (Nelson, 1999: 306, n. 31).

In "Privacy, Privation, Perversity: Toward New Representations of the Personal," Debra Morris emphasizes the importance of the relational as a fundamental condition for justice and what she calls "rational political judgment" (328).

⁷Here Millett is slightly wrong in her memory of *The Golden Notebook*: "And the blood is running down her legs while she struggles with toilet paper. Kleenex. That sort of thing. In a book! Happens every month of adult life to half the population of the globe and no one had ever mentioned it in a book" (357). Menstruation, of course, was notoriously described in Molly Bloom's monologue (thanks perhaps to Nora Joyce); what is new literarily in Lessing's novel is the combination of the tampon—the technology—and the problem of dealing with it in a public place, with men are in the area. Lessing writes: "I examine myself and change the tampon and pour jug after jug of warm water between my thighs to defeat the sour musty smell. Then I scent my thighs and forearms, and remind myself to come down in an hour or two. . . ." A moment later a male colleague remarks: "'You smell lovely, Anna,' and at once I feel at ease and able to manage everything" (1994 [1962]: 322). What is remarkable is yes, the object, but also, as generations of women readers have attested, the entire psychological surround, the anxiety about smell. What is even more interesting is a meditation that comes slightly earlier in this section where Anna worries about how to *write* about having her period. The fact is "of no particular importance," but when she writes "the word 'blood,' it will be giving a wrong emphasis." She then goes on to comment on the "shock" of Joyce's describing "a man in the act of defecating, it was a shock, shocking. Though it was his intention to rob words of their power to shock" (318). Anna recalls a review in which "a man said he would be revolted by the description of a woman defecating" and concludes that the issue is "not basically a literary problem at all." The man would be revolted because it ruins his "romantic image" (319). Part of Lessing's accomplishment in this novel is the recording of her resistance to the power of that image to distort accounts of women's experience—which *is* a literary problem!

⁸In her biography of McCarthy, Grumbach refers to this voicing as "ventriloquism": "a narrative device . . . apparently so ingenious that it was missed by many critics" (1967: 197).

⁹Randall Jarrell's characterization perhaps captures the McCarthy effect best: "torn animals were removed at sunset from that smile" (1986: 65). Granville Hicks put it more blandly in the *Saturday Review*: "No one argues that she is either a great novelist or a great critic, but she is somehow surrounded by an aura of eminence. She is the highbrows' high-

brow, and she gets to be the lowbrows' highbrow, too. . . . She has built her reputation in part on the ruins of the reputations she has destroyed" (1963: 19). No one, in a word, wants to mess with Mary. So it is not surprising that despite what Hicks himself calls an "ungracious introduction," the review that follows morphs into an enthusiastic account of *The Group*, which he likens to "social history."

¹⁰"Not since Elizabeth Janeway wrote *The Walsh Girls* has any lady-book been given such praise by people such as these" (1963: 1). The other Norman—Podhoretz—will chime in with the same tune: "a trivial lady writer's novel" in *Doing and Undoings* (1964: 93). Mary herself weighed in on being called a "woman novelist" in the *Vogue* interview: "I don't mind being called a woman novelist. After all, I am one. But I know what you mean. I think it's just a piece of feminism" (1963: 98). Can you be a woman novelist without being deemed a lady writer? That was McCarthy's gamble. In "Our Leading Bitch Intellectual," Beverly Gross argues that Mailer himself made the distinction and refrained from "lady writer," thus paying McCarthy, "a backhanded tribute" (1996: 32).

¹¹McCarthy's sentence provides the example for the second meaning of the literary term *envoi*, "parting words," thus earning her posterity in *Webster's Third New International Directory* (1966).

¹²But whose side is she on as a novelist when she reports on women? If Lessing takes pleasure in finding herself on a continuum of experience with her readers, McCarthy in her public remarks and interviews deliberately sets herself apart. It is as though as a writer she informs the world about women's experiences, offering in her place a heroine who bears a certain relation to herself. Candor is her best disguise, and the effect of her detachment is . . . educational. The *Esquire* profile recasts the McCarthy gift for scandal as school: "there's been a kind of hidden lesson book in . . . her better stories. Here (O Mistress Mary!), here's how a girl takes up with a steel man on a train, . . . goes for a 'fitting,' . . . decides on an abortion, and finally suffers remorse for all these things, great or small" (1962: 64). The girl's remorse, not the author's, that is—whose trade, precisely, is *the giving away of other people's secrets*. McCarthy, who will probably remain best known as the author of autobiography, notably, *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood*, protected herself in fiction through her alter ego, cannily preserving her privacy by flirting in print with characters resembling those from her real life. As readers of her stories and novels, we remain in the dark about *her* abortions (although in the course of interviews she freely confessed to having had many), *her* modes of contraception. As Randall Jarrell put it in his thinly veiled por-

trait of McCarthy in *Pictures from an Institution*, "Gertrude, unlike many writers, really did have a private life, one that she never wrote a word about" (1986: 190) We can guess and gossip, but with this writer we cannot know for sure.

In *Intellectual Memoirs*, the last and posthumously published installment of her autobiography, however, McCarthy, almost 50 years after the event, reveals the name of the man who wore the Brooks Brothers shirt. Or as novelist Marianne Wiggins rudely describes it, challenging McCarthy's confessional ethics: "she 'outs' the married man who was The Man who fucked her on a train in her *histoire à clef* Not only does she tell us this gent's name, she tells us where he lived and which club he was a member of. For all we know, he's still alive, has a wife, a life, a son, a daughter" (1992: 569). Wiggins touches here on a fundamental issue of literary privacy—one that dates back at least to our exemplary modern autobiographer, Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Taking her distance as a woman writer from her precursor, George Sand self-righteously exclaimed in the preface to her life's story, "Who can forgive him for having confessed Mme de Warens while confessing himself?" (1970, 1:13; my translation). Whether explicit autobiography or autobiographical fiction, the problem remains the same: what do you owe to the other when you confess yourself? What happens to the privacy of the other when you put your stories out into the world? These matters did not seem to concern McCarthy any more than they did Rousseau. As Philippe Lejeune puts the matter: "private life is almost always a co-property" (1986: 55) (with thanks to John Eakin for reminding me of Lejeune's formulation).

Like the earlier stories and novels, *The Group* did not go unnoticed. In great part the frisson caused by the work was tied to its apparent confessionality—and its biographical traces. But if that titillated the readership, it is not primarily what captured the critics' attention.

¹³Mailer's particular animus against the diaphragm would be expressed explicitly as an impediment to his hero's ultimate pleasure in *An American Dream*: "Do you want to now?" but from an instinct I did not question, I said, 'No, I don't want to I can't so long as you have that thing in you,' which I never said before, and she shifted, I was out, the shock comparable to banging one's head on a low beam, and then I searched for that corporate rubbery obstruction I detested so much, found it with a finger, pulled it forth, flipped it away from the bed" (1996 [1965]: 121-22).

In his review of the Kiernan biography, A. O. Scott cites the Mailer diatribe and takes up the question of McCarthy's realism, which leads

him to make a hefty counterclaim about McCarthy's ability as a novelist to chronicle social change. Accepting the comparison to Stendhal that Edmund Wilson offered, and one that Mailer pays tribute to by imagining "where society will end if the heroine of *The Company She Keeps* should encounter Julien Sorel" (1963: 3), Scott puts into the same hopper as "Fabrizio del Dongo in *The Charterhouse of Parma* stumbling into the Napoleonic wars, Dottie with her pessary, the girl on the train with her safety-pinned knickers" as well as other characters from McCarthy's fiction, in order, it almost seems, to counter Mailer by giving McCarthy credit for producing a "chronicle" of a transformation in the private lives of men and women (2000: 24).

¹⁴I thank Louis Menand for the reference to Bellow on McCarthy in the Atlas biography. Celebrating Saul Bellow's career as a novelist and his "engagement with women," Roth conjures up the object in *Herzog*. Comparing Bellow's focus on masculine suffering with that of Anna Karenin or Charles Bovary, Roth wonders how far his analogy can really go: "(Not that one easily envisions Karenin, à la Herzog with Gersbach, handing over to Vronsky Anna's diaphragm.)" (2000: 87). In these matters of taste, it depends on who draws the line. Bellow is quoted in John Leonard's review of the James Atlas biography as saying that reading Nadine Gordimer was "like gagging on Kotex" (2000: 11). Again, the object draws the disgust into its orbit.

¹⁵The *TLS* reviewer saw the wit in McCarthy's implicit genre reference: "Miss McCarthy has hit on the brilliant device of telling most of her story in the style of a woman's magazine romance" ("Review," 1963b: 901). Of course writing for *Esquire*, a magazine for men, as it described itself, carried the literary stamp of approval. One can wonder to what extent Mailer, whose novelistic ambitions had been frustrated since his first success with *The Naked and the Dead*, wasn't chafing at McCarthy's staggering success with *The Group*—despite his negative assessment of her accomplishment.

¹⁶Summarizing the criticism of the novel, which reflected a certain bewilderment with the book's runaway success, Grumbach observes: "But *The Group* had been born into a new reading world," a world different from the one that had received McCarthy's earlier fiction, "a world already primed for the appearance of any novel that is rumored to have sexy scenes" (1967: 195). The novel, Grumbach asserts, is "profoundly feminine" and "the majority of novel-readers in this country are women, and they are as well the novel-buyers and novel-borrowers; it follows that such a book . . . would intrigue a mass audience" (196).

¹⁷In an essay on *The New Yorker's* history, Louis Menand analyzes the magazine's "distaste for subject matter and vocabulary that were utterly commonplace in virtually every other literary forum" (1990: 30) and its effect on the acceptance of stories and articles. He cites editor William Shawn's editorial solution to a theater review by Kenneth Tynan that used the word "*pissoir*": renaming it "a circular curbside construction" (29). Commenting with characteristic finesse on the problem posed by the intimate object in Roth's story, Menand casts the dilemma this way: "'Goodbye, Columbus' is reported to have been turned down because the story involves an item Shawn considered unprintable, a diaphragm. ('A circular cervical construction' was evidently not proposed as a substitute)" (30). I am grateful to Louis Menand for filling me in on Roth's publishing experience with *Goodbye, Columbus*.

¹⁸As Elizabeth Hardwick observes in the essay on her friend's technique, without reference to gender: "Accuracy, unusual situations documented with extreme care, mean for the reader a special kind of recognition" (1962: 37).

¹⁹Jean Cohen, quoted in Morris (2000: 339). This notion emerges from *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992), which reaffirms a woman's right to choose: the right "to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life" (Morris, 2000: 336).

²⁰This is a double restriction since the number of doctors performing abortions is decreasing. Faye Ginsburg: "Another hidden element [in the backlash against abortion rights] is the loss of practitioners. We are losing the generation of doctors committed to working in clinics, helping women at incredible personal risk. They're reaching an age at which they can't do it anymore, and medical schools no longer routinely train students in abortion procedures. So the battle's being lost as a war of attrition on the front of medical training. Meanwhile, people aren't mobilized because they feel the battle has been won" (2000: 25).

²¹It is important to note, however, that the privacy of this "private matter" is incomplete—as it has been from the start. A woman's privacy—her right to choose—passes willy-nilly through the intervention of the doctor. For a groundbreaking analysis of the way in which the limits of a woman's sexual autonomy are figured in confessional poetry, and the implications of these limitations for an understanding of postwar privacy, see Nelson (1999).

²²In a report from Paris, Suzanne Daley quotes a woman on the matter of drug-induced abortion. It felt "more natural," she said; "it felt more private, too" Daley (2000).

²³White wrote this in a letter to McCarthy, which McCarthy thanked her for. Quoted in Kiernan (2000: 524). Hardwick also wrote, trying to make up for the parody and commenting on the information: "I don't always know to whom the information is addressed. Is it the writer informing the reader, or is it the writer informing the girls, or the girls speaking to the reader" (Kiernan, 524). Hardwick casts her questions as "technical" ones for a fiction writer, but she clearly remains ambivalent about whether the information should be put out there in the first place—an ambivalence that gets acted out in her parody, "The Gang" (1963). The reaction to and reception of McCarthy's fiction show that when "women's secrets" are exposed, they shock men and women—though not necessarily alike, and not for the same reasons. Sometimes, they even agree.

²⁴No restrictions are placed on the doctors who prescribe Viagra. Politt comments that if restrictions comparable to those governing Mifepristone (RU-486) were required for dispensing Viagra, only cardiologists could prescribe the drug (2000).

²⁵Kiernan (710). In this interview McCarthy distinguishes between "feminism on economic grounds," with which she is in sympathy, and feminism in the "domestic sphere," which she disdains. Earlier, in the *Vogue* interview, she had stated her dislike for a feminism she construed as based on "feminine envy, envy of men" (1963: 144).

²⁶1968 interview (Gelderman, 1988: 253).

²⁷With apologies to Gilbert and Gubar's famous provocation in their revisionary study of female authorship: "Is a pen a metaphorical penis?" (1979: 3). In an article entitled "The Bright Pack," about what it takes to "be a literary It Girl in New York," two of the writers, Larissa MacFarquar and Katie Roiphe, are said to "like looking back to the Forties and Fifties and wonder whether the writer Mary McCarthy—drinking and smoking, dancing, cavorting, making an ass of herself—had a better time than they do" (Haskell, 2000: 99). This is a feminine literary genealogy McCarthy might have enjoyed. I thank Lise Esdaile for this reference.

²⁸What McCarthy's and Lessing's literary interventions show is the degree to which, as Joan Scott remarks, "feminine particularity secures the universality of masculine representation." Since the "abstract rights-bearing individual who came into being as the focus of liberal philosophical debate in the seventeenth and eighteenth century somehow became embodied in male form," it becomes difficult to unsettle that sense of general entitlement through the vicissitudes of female form (1988: 25). What would happen to our ideas about privacy if we imagined the citizen in a woman's body?

References

- Atlas, James. *Bellow: A Biography*. New York: Random House, 2000.
- Bogan, Louise. *What the Woman Lived. Selected Letters of Louise Bogan: 1920-1970*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973.
- Borger, Gloria. *Washington Week in Review* (PBS). September 29, 2000.
- Brooks, Peter. *Body Work: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993.
- Chesler, Ellen. *Woman of Valor: Margaret Sanger and the Birth Control Movement in America*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992.
- Daley, Suzanne. "Europe Finds Abortion Pill Is No Magic Cure-All." *New York Times* October 5, 2000: A3.
- Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality*. Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage, 1980.
- Gelderman, Carol. *Mary McCarthy: A Life*. New York: St. Martin's, 1988.
- Gilbert, Sandra and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979.
- Ginsburg, Faye. Interview. *Barnard Summer* 2000: 21-25.
- Gornick, Vivian. "Love with a Capital L." *American Scholar* Autumn 2000: 136.
- Gross, Beverly. "Our Leading Bitch Intellectual." *Twenty-Four Ways of Looking at Mary McCarthy: The Writer and Her Work*. Ed. Eve Stwertka and Margo Viscusi. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996.
- Grumbach, Doris. *The Company She Kept: A Revealing Portrait of Mary McCarthy*. New York: Coward McCann, 1967.
- Hardwick, Elizabeth. *A View of My Own: Essays in Literature and Society*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1962.
- Haskell, Robert. "The Bright Pack." *W Magazine* December 2000: 98-99.
- Hicks, Granville. Review of *The Group*, by Mary McCarthy. *The Saturday Review* August 31, 1963: 19/30.
- Jarrell, Randall. *Pictures from an Institution*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.
- Jauss, Hans Robert. *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*. Trans. Timothy Bathi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994 [1970].
- Jen, Gish. *Mona in the Promised Land*. New York: Vintage, 1997 [1996].
- Johnson, Joyce. *Minor Characters: A Young Woman's Coming of Age in the Beat Generation*. New York: Pocket Books, 1990 [1983].
- Kiernan, Mary. *Seeing Mary Plain: A Life of Mary McCarthy*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2000.
- Kolata, Gina. *The New York Times* September 26, 2000: A1.
- Lejeune, Philippe. *Moi aussi*. Paris: Seuil, 1986.

- Leonard, John. Review of *Bellow: A Biography*, by James Atlas. *New York Times Book Review* October, 15, 2000: 10-11.
- Lessing, Doris. *The Golden Notebook*. New York: HarperPerennial, 1994 [1962].
- Levin, Tamar. *The New York Times* July 21, 2000: A27.
- Mailer, Norman. "The Mary McCarthy Case." *The New York Review of Books* October 17, 1963: 1-3.
- . *An American Dream*. New York: Dell, 1966 [1965].
- May, Elaine Tyler. *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*. New York: Basic Books, 1988.
- McCarthy, Mary. "Dottie Makes An Honest Woman of Herself." *Partisan Review* 21:1 (January-February 1954): 43-52.
- . "Mary McCarthyism." Interview. By Brock Brower. *Esquire* July 1962: 62-67.
- . "Mary McCarthy Said." Interview. By Peter Duval Smith. *Vogue* October 1963: 98+.
- . *The Group*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1989 [1963].
- Menand, Louis. Review of *The Complete Book of Covers from "The New Yorker": 1925-1989*. *The New Republic* February 26, 1990.
- Millett, Kate. *Flying*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990 [1974].
- Moi, Toril. *Simone de Beauvoir: The Making of an Intellectual Woman*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994.
- Morris, Debra. "Privacy, Privation, Perversity: Toward New Representations of the Personal." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 25:2 (Winter 2000): 323-351.
- Nelson, Deborah. "Beyond Privacy: Confessions between a Woman and Her Doctor." *Feminist Studies* 25 (Summer 1999): 279-306.
- Podhoretz, Norman. *Doings and Undoings: The Fifties and After in American Writing*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Company, 1964.
- Pollitt, Katha. "The Moral Property of Women." *The Nation* July 10, 2000: 9.
- Review of *The Group*, by Mary McCarthy. *Newsweek* September 2, 1963a: 80-83.
- . *Times Literary Supplement* November 7, 1963b: 901.
- Roth, Philip. *Goodbye, Columbus and Five Short Stories*. New York: Vintage, 1993 [1959].
- . "Re-reading the Novels of Saul Bellow." *The New Yorker* October 9, 2000: 82-90.
- Sand, George. *Oeuvres autobiographiques*. Two volumes. Paris: Gallimard, 1970.

- Sanger, Margaret. "The Status of Birth Control: 1938." *The Nation* April 20, 1938: 324-328.
- Sayre, Nora. *Previous Convictions: A Journey Through the 1950s*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995.
- Scott, A. O. "A Finished Woman." Review of *Seeing Mary Plain: A Life of Mary McCarthy*. *The New York Review of Books* September 21, 2000.
- Scott, Joan. *Gender and the Politics of History*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.
- Wiggins, Marianne. Review of *Writing Dangerously: Mary McCarthy and Her World*. *The Nation* November 16, 1992.
- Yagoda, Ben. *About Town: The New Yorker and the World It Made*. New York: Scribner, 2000.